

# The Dynamics of Melodrama: *Shinpa*

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## 1 “Life which enhances existence”

As I boarded a riverboat from Azumabashi Bridge bound for Hamarikyū Gardens I heard an announcer’s voice say “On your right, you can see the Meiji-za, known as the home of *shinpa*.” This moved me deeply; not because the announcer’s words have not changed since the 1950s, but because the continued use of the announcement indicates that *shinpa* is still part of the sensibility of the populace even today.

Ōzasa Yoshio has written that from the end of Meiji to early Taisho, and “in the first thirty years of Showa before, during and after the war,” *shinpa* “lived its life and often led the era. At least, as modern drama, it was *shinpa* which played at large theatres like the Meiji-za and the Shinbashi Enbujō, *shinpa* which commanded

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large audiences, and *shinpa* which was loved and moved the hearts of so many people” (1).

Even during the late Meiji period when *shinpa* was at the height of its popularity, contemporary critics thought it to be old-fashioned, and predicted its imminent demise. Since then, the expression “*shinpa*-like” has been used in a derogatory way. But even if it lost much of its popularity over a long period of time, and was continually looked down upon, *shinpa* maintained its life and continued to be popular. We tend to think of the literary value and meaning of a work first, and consider the financial and popular success of the drama secondarily or even ignore it altogether, but if we focus too much on the value of the “work” and its “significance in theatrical history,” we will miss the cultural significance of those plays which were unabashedly popular but had no profound “meaning.” As I briefly mentioned in my introduction, if we discuss theatre without incorporating the so-called the “‘poor’ text and ‘rich’ stage” aspects, we won’t be able to touch what I may call the true pulse of the eras.

Kubota Mantarō has pointed out that the “class of audience” of *shinpa* in the late Meiji period, when compared with that of kabuki, “was intellectually exceedingly advanced.” “Similar to the Tsukiji Little Theatre at one point, the majority of [the audience] consisted of high school graduates and better... if you know what I mean. I mean a class of a certain birth was main audience” (2).

Ōzasa Yoshio early on disagreed with Kawakami Otojirō’s idea that *shinpa* originated from *sōshi shibai*, and suggested that it is instead rooted in the theatre of Ii Yōhō and his followers. I agree with this view in principle, but I do think confining the origin of *shinpa* to the school of Ii is also misleading. Before becoming famous as a sophisticated and handsome *shinpa* actor, Ii was a multidimensional performer who articulated the zeitgeist of the era. In other words, it is untenable to trace the origin of *shinpa* to *sōshi shibai*, but it is equally untenable to divorce its origin from the “mood” of the era, which also gave birth to *sōshi shibai*.

With the death of Takada Minoru in 1916, it is often said that the tradition of *sōshi shibai* in *shinpa* ended. But I wonder if it was the death not just of *sōshi shibai*, but also the death of Naturalism in *shinpa*. Takada once said:

We could go as far as to say, we do not have a thing called theatre. ([...] Both Danjūrō and Kikugorō were excellent actors, but) if we take away music and dance from [their] performance, I do not think they can stand alone on stage. [...] How can we make the future of our theatre? “Go back to Nature” that is the only thing

that exists. We are to go back to Nature, make Nature our teacher, and we should strive to make Nature our ideal (3).

However, *shinpa* was beginning to produce works which did not have the character which Takada represented. It started producing works which did “not possess life which enhances existence” contrary to philosophy of Takada and his supporters (4). The important thing is this paradox that, not despite of, but because of this [tendency against Takada], *shinpa* was able to maintain itself commercially, and has continued to maintain its life to this day. In other words, *shinpa* was able to sustain its life because it changed its direction (albeit unconsciously) by divorcing itself from the “life which enhances existence” desired by a certain class. Often, this is discussed as a *shinpa*’s “fall.” However, as we will see later in detail, when *Onnakeizu* (*A Women’s Pedigree*, adapted by Yanagawa Shunyō), which almost set an example of one dimension of the image of *shinpa*, was first performed in 1908, what does it mean that both the Yushima and Menoso scenes were performed to the accompaniment of *yosogoto jōruri*, a staging device which allowed for the realistic use of offstage music? The Yushima scene, which is not found in the original novel, uses the famous *kiyomoto* piece *Michitose*, while the Menoso scene uses the *nagauta* music from *Kanjinchō*. Of course these were personal choices made by Ii, Kitamura Rokurō, and Kawai Takeo, the actors whom Ihara Seiseien referred to as the “Urbanites” (5). But the reasons why these performances became commercially successful, turning *Onnakeizu* into a perennially popular play, and determined the future direction of *shinpa*, may be precisely because audiences found a “life which enhances existence” in these performances.

Such a short-sighted and fragile “life” was offered by the so-called “Edo Native” kabuki playwrights — not just Kawatake Mokuami (d. 1893), but also Kawatake Shinshichi III (d. 1901) who wrote *Kagotsurube* and *Omatsuri Sashichi*, and Takeshiba Kisui (d. 1912) who wrote *Megumi no Kenka* — up until the late 1890s and early 1900s. When the old school had taken its last breath, “frivolity” and “Edo flavour” were incorporated into *shinpa*, and I think these were two of elements contributed to its survival. In other words, *shinpa*, which is supposed to have come into opposition with the old school, had actually complemented the latter. It is easy to criticize such a development, but we cannot criticize the appetite of the audience which has supported *shinpa* as a commercial enterprise. This may be analogous to Kitamura Tōkoku’s evaluation of literary works of the Ken’yūsha as having “pitiful uncultured taste.” I have to wonder, however, if ignoring the taste of audiences, and taking the class or psychology of audiences lightly or even despising them, may have contributed to the poor quality of “modern drama.”

Kabuki seeks its basis in the “classics” and “tradition,” while it has also begun to claim a new form of expression as *shinkabuki*. On the other hand, *shingeki* is proud of its position as “avant-garde.” However, when one moves away from the expression of “frivolity,” it also removes itself from the “frivolity” which lies beneath the love and hatred in the audience’s daily lives. Most audiences who do not seek anything lofty have nowhere to go. Prior to the advent of cinema, the only thing which could resonate with such feelings was *shinpa*. It is pointless to discuss “modern drama” without considering *shinpa*, as it has not only affected the audiences who saw the first- and second- class *shinpa* dramas at urban theatres, but it also gave rise to third-class *shinpa* travel theatre tropes, influenced a wide variety of media including cinema and popular music, maintained its constant popularity, made a strong impact on the minds of ordinary people, and filled their hearts.

In this context, let me first make a detour in reconsidering modern drama.

## 2 Shunryūsha and Theatre Schools

After theatre schools were officially established in Japan, Ouyang Yuqian and Lu Jingruo of the Shunryūsha, pivotal figures in China’s modern theatre movement, both came to study in Japan. There were three theatre schools in Tokyo at the time: the Teikoku gekijō haiyū yōsei-jo (Imperial Theatre Acting School), the entertainment section of Bungei Kyōkai (which was later renamed The Drama Research Institute or Engeki kenkyūjo), and the Tokyo haiyū yōsei-jo (Tokyo Academy of Drama), which was later renamed Tokyo haiyū gakkō).

The curriculum of the Imperial Theatre Acting School placed an emphasis on acting skills, while Bungei Kyōkai offered many theoretical classes (6). In comparison, the Tokyo Academy of Drama, which was established in 1908 by Fujisawa Asajirō, one of the well-known actors of early *shinpa*, [36] strikes a balance between acting classes and drama theory. In addition, the school boasted a roster of excellent instructors. Fujisawa instructed the show of Shunryūsha a year earlier in 1907, and it is possible that he learned from this experience.

Until it renamed itself the Tokyo haiyū gakkō (Tokyo School of Acting), the school taught male students only. It is often said that this is because Fujisawa wanted to avoid a competition with his friend Kawakami Otojirō and his wife Sadayakko’s Imperial Academy for Actresses, but we cannot forget that it was common sense at the time that female roles were played by *onnagata*.

Further, it is a characteristic of modern drama that it required an acting school. Unlike the vocational actors of the previous generation, modern drama presupposed amateurism as a basic principle. In the French modern theatre movement, for example, Andre Antoine was an employee of a gas company, and he was an amateur who could not enter a traditional acting school such as the Conservatoire. Because of this, he was able to develop such unconventional acting techniques as the one known as “Antoine’s back,” in which he stood with his back to the audience, a “realistic” method of acting compared to the styles of his contemporaries.

At the Jiyū Gekijō (Free Theatre) of Sadanji II, Osanai Kaoru chose not to use an acting school, but to utilize professional kabuki actors and make them into amateurs. By removing kabuki-style lines and body movement, Osanai planned to make former kabuki actors into amateurs. At the Bungei Kyōkai, in contrast, actors were amateurs. This had to do with the fact that Tsubouchi Shōyō was instructing students from Waseda University. As such, the training of performers, in particular actresses, was a pressing need.

It is common to discuss modern Japanese drama by focusing on *shingeki*, and to talk about it in terms of the actors, actresses, and their disciples who belonged to the Jiyū Gekijō and the Bungei Kyōkai. Although these two institutions tend to dominate the discussion, we should note that, for those who wished to pursue acting in the late Meiji period, the Imperial Theatre School of Drama and the Tokyo Academy of Drama must have been extremely important. Judging by the fact that numerous famous actors from *shinpa* and those who belonged to the later Jiyū Gekijō and Bungei Kyōkai attended the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Academy of Drama, this school must have commenced amidst high expectations and played a significant role in the theatrical world.

### 3 “The Great Failure” and the Fujisawa Asajirō’s Network

When we think of the foreign drama which had a strong impact on Japan’s modern theatre, we tend to think of Ibsen, Gorky, Chekhov; and when we think of the history of performance, theory, the performance of adapted drama, and the study of translation, we tend to focus overly on Shakespeare. In reality, however, it was representative Western melodramas such as *La Traviata* and *La Tosca*, which were introduced to a large Japanese audiences as “Western Drama” in the first half of the Meiji period. Adaptations of these melodramas, set in Japanese contexts and

characters, were performed by various kabuki theatre, female kabuki groups, and *shinpa* performers.

It is difficult to call these adaptations and performances a success. However, without these attempts, the later glory of dramas translated from foreign languages and performed at the Jiyū Gekijō and Bungei Kyōkai would have never existed. In other words, adaptations during the Meiji era were a great failure, yet there were important lessons learned from this failure. Fukuchi Ouchi adapted *La Tosca*, and it was first performed at the Kabuki-za as *Maiōgi urami no yaiba* (*The Dancing Fan & The Resentful Blade*) in 1891. It was also recited by a *rakugo* storyteller San'yūtei Enchō at a vaudeville theatre and the story became quite popular. Osada Shūtō published an adaptation of *La Traviata* as a drama in the journal *Shirayuri* in 1896, and in 1903 a female-only theatre troupe, the Nakamura Nakakichi Company, performed it under the title of *Ibutsu no Techo* (*The Heirloom Pocketbook*) at the Masago-za (7). Further, Matsui Shōyō's adaptation of *La Tosca* was performed at the Teikoku Gekijo by a *shinpa* theatre troupe featuring Ii Yōhō, Kawai Takeo, Fujisawa Asajirō, and Kitamura Rokurō (figure 5) and was well-known.

On the other hand, among those who were involved in *shinpa* and *shin'engeki* prior to *shingeki*, there were those who hoped to find an ideal of drama distinct from melodrama.

For example, Mori Ōgai who returned from Germany in 1889 and Hanabusa Ryūgai who wrote plays for *shinpa* had stated their goal to see *seigeki* (spoken drama) in which one can use oral language and normal conversation, as an ideal. They were thinking of modern drama in a narrow sense, such as Ibsen. In 1903, Ryūgai adapted Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* for a Japanese production. In 1907, Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* was translated, and its premier of this show was *Uma dorobō*, produced by Shinjidaigeki kyōkai and led by Inoue Masao of *shinpa*. Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* was first performed by Kamiyama Sōjin, Isawa Ransha, and Yamakawa Uraji, all from Kindaigeki Kyōkai.

Two who contributed to the performance of melodrama and social drama were Kawakami Otojirō and Fujisawa Asajirō who were in Kawakami's troupe. These individuals not only contributed to the performance of adaptations of Western plays but also made a legacy in the history of Japanese modern theatre by building acting schools.

Although Fujisawa Asajirō, who was a famous *shinpa* actor, created the Tokyo Academy of Drama in order to nurture *shinpa* performers, all graduates but one

entered *shingeki* theatre companies — partly due to the influence of instructors such as Osanai Kaoru and Masumoto Kiyoshi. Kawamura Karyō who took over the position from Osanai and Masumoto joined the Geijutsuza Theatre Company led by Shimamura Hōgetsu, and later on contributed to kabuki and *shinkokugeki*.

In addition, Fujisawa Asajirō made a different contribution to cinema through his position at Yoshizawa Shōkai, a film production and import company in the Meiji period. Fujisawa taught many stars who later came to play important roles in early Japanese cinema, including Iwata Yūkichi and Moroguchi Tsuzuya. The influence of Fujisawa encompassed those who were in opera department at the Teikoku Gekijo and taught by Giovanni Rosi and Iba Takashi who became famous in the music world by creating Asakusa Opera.

As such, a variety of people performing in different genres were influenced by Fujiwara Asajirō — not only *shinpa* but also *shingeki*, *kageki*, Asakusa Opera, and cinema. It is extremely important to note this contribution of Fujisawa. Through these various genres, Fujisawa has influenced the psychological formation of not only the *shingeki* audience but countless members of the general populace.

When Ouyang Yuqian first visited Japan in 1904, *shinpa* was entering its best years and it was the most influential genre of all. It is also noteworthy that he said that he met Li Yōhō at Shōchiku film studios when he visited Japan for the second time. This episode is impressive, reminding of us the trend of the time. When he came to Japan for the final time in 1956, he said about *shinpa*: “Hongō-za, Tokyo-za, and Meiji-za. They are all dear to me. I feel nostalgic whenever I hear the sound of wooden clappers” (8).

Japan’s “modern drama” is often discussed as if it is a synonym of *shingeki*, but as is often the case in any country, the reality is far more complex. From the perspective of popular audiences, *shinpa* occupied a much more important place than *shingeki*. It is noteworthy in this context that Osanai Kaoru was never mentioned by those who were involved in Shunryūsha. It is important to think of the influence of *shinpa* and *shingeki* on Shunryūsha when reevaluating the history of modern drama, which has focused too much on the figure of Osanai.

## 4 A Tapestry of References: The Dramaturgy of *Onnakeizu*

Kabuki playwrights utilized familiar “worlds” (*sekai*) whose stories and protagonists were known to the audiences, and made use of these plots and heroes to produce different dramas. The protagonists in these dramas were thieves,

entertainers, and women from pleasure quarters, who would have been familiar from oral storytelling forms to even completely illiterate members of the audience. Kabuki playwrights wove new stories from audiences' memories of legends, heroes, and historical stories. Later on, however, unknown characters came on stage without any context. Many contemporary dramas used these anonymous, life-sized characters, and the audiences were fascinated by these characters acting out various, subtle emotions.

In this context, *shinpa* too is divorced from the memory of traditional plays. Both Hayase Chikara and Kawashima Namiko are the names of fictional characters from the original novels. At the end, these names came to be proper nouns which evoke certain images, but originally, although allegorical, they were mere names of fictional characters.

*Shinpa*, however, made liberal use of the collective memory of past dramas. This is usually presented as criticism, a complaint that *shinpa* had not broken away from kabuki techniques. From the perspective of drama history, however, this is only a natural course of events and should not be criticized. I do not mean that *shinpa* only utilized the memory of the "traditional drama" called kabuki. What I mean is that *shinpa* knew how to draw things out of fertile and various memories which were stored in the drama of the previous generations. This method used to be an ordinary characteristic any country's theatre. Even in a well-known foreign modern play, while characters, lines, and images are of a unique quality, they also contain elements of premodern legends, folkloric characters, and theatrical memories. We know that Ibsen used Scribe's methods while criticizing him. Ibsen also relied on legends and folkloric memories to mold his characters and plots. According to Peter Brooks, Ibsen "while maintaining the morality and theatrical tension of a melodrama, [...] recreated a social drama" (9). Chekhov's characters which seemed original are also based on popular dramas of the past. Natasha in *Three Sisters* is a case in point: she is the stereotype of a lady's maid which is often found in plays in other countries. It is the genius of Chekhov that Natasha does not seem like a stereotype.

Apart from the meaning of the history of theatre, in a genealogy starting from Tsubouchi Shōyō to Okamoto Kidō and to Mayama Seika, these playwrights all created characters using theatrical memories fully and referring to images from past in their successful plays about historical figures. For example, in his war drama, just before a novel combat scene, Kawakami Otojirō inserted a parting scene of a child and a parent to *gidayū* musical accompaniment. By incorporating this scene, Otojirō was able to capture the hearts of the popular audience.

On the other hand, it was a tendency of Japanese *shingeki* to try to divorce itself from the memory and the wisdom of the dramaturgy from the past. This is where Japanese *shingeki* differed from its counterpart in the West. Further, it may be said that this trend has contributed to the thematic orientation of “modern drama,” which continued to fail to stimulate the imagination of the audience.

By contrast, *shinpa* dramatist used the images from the past, and this should not be looked down upon. Instead, it was a virtue of *shinpa* to do so in a modern era in which originality was worshipped. By using archetypal plots as a basis, the dramatist was able to eliminate the process of providing the storyline and was able to lead audience to further reaches of the imagination. When one reads the lines aloud, instead of reading silently, the maturity of the lines shine through. The rhythm of the lines, the ease of understanding, the method of weaving a tapestry of information using many performers’ lines, or skillfully calculated visual effect — these are all impressively done.

From the perspective of recent multidimensional research of various visual arts, and in particular scholarly efforts reevaluating the meaning of “melodrama,” learning about *shinpa*’s dramaturgy has special importance. Here, I turn to a technique used in the Yushima and Menoso scenes from *Onnakeizu* which continues to survive as a *shinpa* staple.

In the Yushima scene, setting up the scene of Yushima Tenjin, which was not found in Izumi Kyōka’s original novel, is important. Needless to say, Tenjin is the god of learning, but at the same time, Yushima was a pleasure quarter. Unlike novels, the scene is cleverly set to rely upon the characteristics of the theatrical art in which audiences experience emotion through both aural and visual stimuli. As soon as the curtain opens, the audience of the time would have intuited the different upbringing and the circumstances of Otsuta and Hayase Chikara. In the opening scene, one can hear the famous *kiyomoto* piece *Michitose*. This is not only a device to create a mood. While the visual aspect of Tenjin suggests the world in which Chikara lives because of the symbolic aspect of Tenjin as relating to the world of learning, the *kiyomoto* music indicates the world of the pleasure quarters in which Otsuta lives. The opening scene dramatically allows the audience to intuit the two conflicting worlds inhabited by the protagonists.

In addition, the choice to let audience hear *yosogoto jōruri* as *kiyomoto* during this scene is a wisdom passed down from Edo kabuki dramatists. In particular, it is well-known that Kawatake Mokuami used this technique as an extremely skilled dramatization method. One characteristic of *yosogoto jōruri* lies in the systematic borrowing of meaning from the past. A *yosogoto jōruri* can be an original

composition, but it is common to use an existing popular tune as a referent to the past. In the Yushima scene, for example, a celebrated tune *Shinobiau haruno yukidoke* (a.k.a. *Michitose*) from Mokuami's *Kumonimago ueno no hatsunaha* is used. Here, the method called *mitate* is also used as a form of reference to the past. A pickpocket named Mankichi evokes the character of Ushimatsu and the pair of Otsuta and Chikara evokes the characters of the pair of Michitose and Naozumurai. There even is a line: "By now, I am afraid of a masseur," suggesting a reference to the masseur Jōga [who appears in *Kumonimago ueno no hatsunaha*]. This line, in effect, hints at a romantic relationship which cannot be attained in this world.

Of course this has been a dramatization technique of kabuki playwrights since the Edo period. From the conventional standpoint of modern drama, this dramatization method has been dismissed as a relic of kabuki. This can also be said of other arts and expressions, but it is nonsense to deny aesthetics and values of the past using the standards of later times. In particular, in the case of the works of artists such as Kyōka who sought to challenge the values of modern times, could there be any better technique than using audiovisual materials and referring to the past? Because of this, Kyōka himself actively accepted the dramatization introducing the Yushima scene which is not found in his novel. Here, it is important to discern rich references to the past, and this is precisely where one should find the true worth of melodrama.

In addition to the metaphor of Tenjin, a plum tree is used symbolically on stage. Plum, originally, is a symbolic image of Tenjin Sugawara Michizane. This is not a mere sketch of Yushima Tenjin; for the audience of the time, the scene resonates with the story of the puppet theatre classic *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami* (*Sugawara and The Secrets of Calligraphy*). The conflated images must have aroused the imagination of the audience — for the disciple Takebe Genzō (Hayase Chikara) has betrayed the expectation of his teacher, the main character Michizane, and run off to marry Koshimoto Tonami (Otsuta) only to be expelled from his discipleship. In both stories, however, the disciple characters swore their loyalty to teachers nevertheless.

In response to Chikara's famous line: "The moon shines, but my heart is filled with darkness," there is a stage direction to show and hide the moon using lighting. Furthermore, alluding to the popular *kiyomoto* phrase of "falling snow in returning spring chill," the director let the audience imagine unseen snow by appealing to their sense of hearing. These referrals of theatrical memories are not a simple "device to create a mood" but an expression to draw out multi-layered memories.

Hayase says he would go back to Shizuoka, and Otsuta utters her famous line: “Is Shizuoka further than Hakone?” This is not only a skillful expression of Otsuta’s ignorance. For Tokyoites of the Meiji period who knew the previous era of Edo, Shizuoka is a name which triggers the memory of Edo. Later, in the Shizuoka scene, Hayase hurls defiance at others relating to a genealogy, which relates to the title of this play. It was Hayase’s indignation against hypocritical views on family, order, and ethics of the new Meiji system aimed at careerism. In his reference to a brisk and spirited pitch which belonged to the old order of Mokuami-style, one can detect loyalty to the previous era which was proud of “Edo Natives,” which also meant “Tokugawa Natives.”

In the Menoso scene, the references are even more complex. In this scene, a celebrated *nagauta* piece *Kanjinchō* is heard as *yosogoto jōruri*, and Togashi is replaced with Otsuta, Yoshitsune with Taeko, and Benkei is replaced with Koyoshi. But an important dramatization to note is where Koyoshi combs Taeko’s hair (figure 6). This refers not only to a kabuki scene with a music piece of *Shinobiai haruno yukidoke*, in which Michitose combs Naozumurai’s hair. It also resonates with the origin of *yosogoto jōruri* in *dokugin* (i.e. the solo of *nagauta*), and the origin of *dokugin* in the hair combing scene of the eighteenth century (Tenmei Period). As such, this dramatization consists of multilayered references.

Mayama Seika, Kawaguchi Matsutarō, and Ōnishi Nobuyuki all used *yosogoto jōruri* in their *shinpa* dramas, but the power to arouse people’s emotion through these references weakened after each generation. This is not because of the skills of individual dramatists or actors, but because of the different dramatic memories that audiences possess. The fact that this reference method using dramatic memories had not declined can be seen by looking at different artistic genres. In addition to literature, cinema, in which *shinpa* [actors and writers] dominated initially, often used this method, and even today, references to dramatic memory has become an important theme of critical study of literature and cinema. Japanese modern drama is the only genre in which the use of multilayered referrals to dramatic memory is despised and it took some distance from this technique. Instead, modern drama sought mediocre “originality,” “to be current” and “be aware of social issues” and these goals have come to constitute its value system.

## 5 The Age of *Hototogisu*: Illness and Fate

Next, I would like to discuss fate and illness which are the characteristic motifs of *shinpa*.

Some have argued that for the intellectuals of the Meiji Period who saw the feudal Edo period as evil, it was not difficult to accept the theory of evolution. When Japan was undergoing a drastic transition and confusion, evolutionary theory which is governed by rational rules and reason must have been attractive.

But for those members of the populace who had accepted incurable diseases and difficult issues with the *ie* system as seemingly supernatural karmic retribution and fate, they continued to represent karmic relation and fate even if the new science attempted to explain these phenomena in terms of genetics and social issues. In the theatre, one can trace this tendency in the reaction to *shinpa* dramas such as *Onnakeizu*, *Hototogisu* (*The Cuckoo*), and *Onogatsumi*. A conventional reaction from theatre professionals has been to dismiss this emphasis on karmic relations and the idea of fate as superstitious, and this is also a reason for the contemptuous position *shinpa* had been given by many other theatre professionals. However, a polarized dichotomy between truth (Western authentic science) and superstition (Japanese misunderstanding caused by the lack of advancement of science) would not solve the problem of drama and art.

Rather, in that misunderstanding lies a source of *shinpa*'s seductiveness. *Shinpa*'s values can be found in this "old-fashioned" style, as *shinpa* continues to suggest a paradoxical answer from the Meiji period to the present day in which anything "new" is superior to the old.

For example, the Menoso scene in *Onnakeizu* ends with the lines of Otsuta and Koyoshi: "This must be our fate." One can even say that this story itself is based on an old-fashioned "karmic" world. It is a mistake to conclude, however, that the play itself is old-fashioned. If we were to say that "this drama is old-fashioned," Kyōka and his mentor Ozaki Kōyō would have leapt with joy. In the Meiji Period when Kōyō and Kyōka worked, "fate" had already been a "nasty convention." That is precisely why Kyōka wanted to present this paradox of fate in the Meiji age of progress and advancement which denied old habits.

In Tokutomi Roka's *Hototogisu*, a karmic relation is embodied in a metaphor of tuberculosis. The important thing here is that even if the storyline may seek the reason for unhappiness in tuberculosis, the "old-fashioned" audience understood this [state of misery] as "fate." If one applies Enlightenment thinking to understand this phenomenon, one may reckon this as caused by misunderstanding based on ignorance. But this approach would not help us to understand Japanese drama. Like Ibsen in his *Ghosts*, the playwright was able to gain the audience's approval because he showed that it was also fate to understand genetics as the denial of

“superstition which is called fate” by science which lies at the bottom of Naturalism. “Genetics” was also a major theme in the popular *shinpa* drama *Onogatsumi*, which was originally a novel by Kikuchi Yūhō, and later on became a movie.

While lonesome Otsuta in *Onnakeizu*, who has no relatives, breathes her last in a futon on the second floor of Menoso, Namiko in *Hototogisu* who is the daughter of a high-ranking army officer and the wife of Navy Second Lieutenant Kawashima Takeo, dies in a sanitary bed in a well-equipped and splendid mansion in a doctor’s presence.

Here, the images of death presented by the heroines of these two celebrated *shinpa* tragedies seem completely opposite visually. Otsuta laments her karmic circumstances on one hand, and Namiko nevertheless dies prematurely as a result of scientifically proven causes despite the best treatment she receives from modern medicine. The words that resonate with the audience are, however: “I wish I could live a thousand and ten thousand years,” “Why do we have to all die?” and “I won’t be born as a woman next time.” The message that audience receive about Namiko, who is going to die from tuberculosis, is that her illness is a result of karmic retribution. Karmic retribution is part of fate, and the kind of medicine she receives is also part of fate. One should not take this emphasis on fate lightly. Rather, one should note *shinpa* stage techniques which skillfully visualize the stark contrast.

I must wonder if there ever was a kabuki play in which death itself as a result of illness was visualized as a subjective image. Needless to say, *jōruri* contains many fascinating images in which miraculous healing is a major theme. For example, in *Sesshū gappōgatsuji*, the play was structured to deliver a strong message about Shuntokumaru’s release from a karmic illness through a miracle. I can point out numerous impressive deaths in kabuki and *jōruri*, but these deaths are usually from suicide or homicide and not as a result of illness.

Interestingly, the visualization of tuberculosis as an illness is most emphasized in *Hototogisu* – much more so than the fate of Namiko. The shawl that Namiko wears in the Zushi Beach scene is used to visualize Namiko’s illness, unlike that of Omiya and Kan’ichi in *Konjiki yasha*, in which the shawl was used to evoke a sensual image.

More impressive than a shawl as an evocative tool is Namiko’s white handkerchief. Namiko waves this handkerchief slowly when she has to leave Takeo. It is made larger than standard size (figure 8) to make a significant impression on stage. This white handkerchief evokes the contrast with the color of blood [which Namiko

may vomit on it because of tuberculosis]. The main protagonist of *Hototogisu* is an allusion to illness, and a chain of karmic relations.

One should remember that, from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, Meiji Japan was still in the age of *Hototogisu* (lung diseases) although Japan narrowly escaped from the fear of cholera. I suggest that, in a chain of images of “illness” to which Otsuta, Omiya, Namiko and other *shinpa* heroines continue to fall, there hides an important mentality of the Meiji and Taisho eras. When I took a look at the records of kabuki performance from the Meiji and Taisho eras, I was surprised to find a strange genre called “hygiene drama” in and around the Kansai region. This is an interesting phenomenon considering the afore-mentioned mentality. It is only at the time of Kawaguchi Matstutarō in the Showa period that heroines of *shinpa* drama were finally released from being an embodiment of illness.

However, in a visual art such as drama, “karmic relations” also have to be visualized. This task was assumed by many villains. Chiji'iwa Yasuhiko played a villain for Namiko in *Hototogisu*, and the grotesque type that Igarashi Dengo played for Okou in *Nihonbashi* both represent a decisive contrast between virtue and vice which is a marked characteristics of melodrama.

Another motif in *Hototogisu* was a relationship with a mother-in-law in the context of a family system. This motif would remind many drama fans of the theatrical memory which may go back as far back as *Shinjū Yoigoushin*, and at the same time, this motif refers to a traditional theme of ill-treating stepchildren, which goes back to the Medieval Period. This theme of maltreating stepchildren is also a favored theme in Western melodramas. It is already noted that a group of works which are often seen as expressing genuine Japanese mentality — *shinpa*'s representative works since the 1930s such as Kawaguchi Matsutarō's plays dealing with artistic accomplishments and pleasure quarters, and Hasegawa Shin's *kokugeki* which deals with chivalrous themes — were actually inspired by Western popular novels and movies. For example, Ozaki Kōyō's *Konjikiyasha* is based on a popular American novel. In this context, the theme of karmic retribution found in *shinpa* and *kokugeki* dramas may have aimed to be a novel idea instead of being old-fashioned. To investigate, then, the mentality of the audience for whom the innovative dramas were also considered karmic may be interesting. *Shinpa* has not received enough scholarly attention and this theme should be taken up as part of a multidimensional study of *shinpa* drama.

## 6 The “Philosophy of Costume” in *Shinpa* Drama

Izumi Kyōka wrote far less about women’s facial features compared to his detailed descriptions of their dress. Tanizaki Jun’ichirō also described few details of his characters’ emotional lives. When we turn our eyes to ukiyo-e, *bijinga* often has a standardized face and sometimes the body of the model is half hidden. I suggest that this is because these playwrights aimed to express much more through their depictions of costumes. In theatre, too, up until kabuki and *shinpa*, playwrights were successful in portraying individuals and the world through costumes. Subtle quality and pleats of costumes express the sense of people’s lives, a sensual image of a removed *uchikake* outer robe, the unspeakable emotion expressed through one glove which is half taken off, and finally the layers of colors which reflect emotional layers. Although the world in which costumes deliver inner subtleties has not been completely lost in modern theatre, Japan’s “modern drama” has often overlooked these expressions.

Considering the dramatic impact that the theatre lost through this oversight, Kitamura Rokurō and Hanayagi Shōtarō were right to be extremely passionate about costuming. In particular, Hanayagi is known for his love of costume and he was absolutely absorbed in it. He wrote two books on the subject, and certain *shinpa* fans took pleasures in going to the theatre just to see the costumes that Hanayagi selected.

This approach to costume may appear frivolous from the perspective of a modern concept of drama, in which the characters’ personality and inner lives have to be the first priority. In visual arts such as theatre and painting, however, it was proper to emphasize the outside which is the costume. Apart from dramas and paintings, unlike the present-day in which both kings and salespersons wear the same suit and drive a car, it used to be common in pre-modern times to express one’s status, occupation, age, ranks, etc. through clothes and accessories. Attention to the details of and a passion for clothes, which goes back to ancient times, is not only a love of fashion but the expression of existence itself.

In modern dramas such as those of Ibsen and Chekhov, playwrights place emphasis on visual elements; the colors and materials of costume were directed. Several people have commented on the reasons for these instructions (10), but even modern plays paid attention to something other than inner lives. Chekhov’s *The Seagull* begins with the question: “Why do you wear black all the time?” This line aims to make a contrast with the title which evokes the color white. As Bernard Rudofsky has pointed out, “an illusion which is provoked by costume makes a

stronger impression than an illusion which was provoked by lines and the backdrop of the stage” (11).

The actress Sugimura Haruko reminisces:

*Musashino-fujin* (*Madame Musashino*) was performed at the Mitsukoshi Theatre. Because of the budget or something, there was no costume ready for the show. I was told that I could go to the Mitsukoshi Department Store and picked whatever I liked. I was delighted and I picked one piece after another. I remember people were saying that my kimono was especially excellent (12).

Tamura Akiko also discussed her deep attachment to costume, and her use of it as a way of self-expression. But here, one can detect the aesthetic ideas of Sugimura who had left unforgettable performances not only in the world of *shingeki* in a narrow sense, but also in other genres, especially, in cinema. Sugimura’s attachment to artistic expression through costumes and props, and her unique professional insight which was nurtured through these expressions all contributed to her success in the “commercial theatre” and cinema.

It is an absolute prejudice to neglect costume, and to dismiss spending money on costume as commercialism. Of course, the roles that costume play differ based on the nature of the play. Jean Giraudoux has argued that: “The protagonist’s body is divorced from the costume” (13). If I can borrow this expression, *shinpa* “is a play in which body fits right into costume.”

Especially in the pleasure quarters, which *shinpa* often depicted, it was common in real life to express one’s status through one’s kimono and belongings and even gestures were part of this value system. Thus it was reasonable that Kitamura and Hanayagi had opinions about costume. What is characteristic about *shinpa*’s costuming is that it visually symbolized the relationship between the Edo period in which statuses and occupations were expressed through clothes, and the Meiji period in which people strived to be released from this.

Similarly, as represented in Taeko in *Onnakeizu*, the *hakama*-style of female students of the Meiji period was the liberation from the kimono-style in which women needed to be tied up tightly with an obi. One can also see this in the photographs of Hiratsuka Raichō (14).

In England, Shimamura Hōgetsu and Natsume Sōseki were exposed to the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites whose models wore no corsets, and the stage of

Ellen Terry, who also became the model for these painters. Shimamura and Natsume were inspired by these “outer” images.

On the other hand, one can see the emotion that a spirited geisha hides in her shamisen (properties) symbolically depicted in Kyōka’s *Shirasagi*.

When one considers the meanings of the handkerchief and the shawl that touch Namiko’s skin, the gloves which were sent to Takeo in *Hototogisu*, and the shawl that Omiya and Kan’ichi wrap themselves up in *Konjikiyasha*, what *shinpa* has visualized on stage has been different from kabuki, and it is significant in this context. In *A Doll’s House*, Nora’s stockings, gloves, shawl etc. are successful in evoking a sensual visual effect. Even in an “empty space,” costume has always existed. In other words, modern theatre in a narrow sense of the word forgot about drama’s ability to express a variety of things through costumes; or rather neglected costume’s ability to express them.

For example, when Kawaguchi Matsutarō wrote a play starring Hanayagi Shōtarō, Kawaguchi said that he gave a priority to the images that Hanayagi conceived for costumes:

I wrote numerous plays for Hanayagi, but there were times that we set a character before writing, and asked Hanayagi to think of costumes for these characters. Hanayagi often purchased a roll of kimono material when he found something he liked, and prepared the material for the stage. He did not mind expenses for the cost — he spent liberally on costumes and stage properties. (15).

This approach may appear utterly silly from the standpoint of modern drama in which a play is an independent entity. If one adopts the perspective of a time when costumes defined people, however, Kawaguchi’s approach is more significant. In other words, one may say that both actors and audience nowadays lack such sensual imagination evoked by costume. For example, Hanayagi Shōtarō used a pattern called *dōjigoushi*, which is traditionally used in *Kurumabiki* in kabuki, for the kimono of Osetsu in *Fūryū fukagawauta* written by Kawaguchi. This was to appeal to the memory of audiences, and stimulate their chain of memory to bring certain images to mind.

A dramatization technique to give a priority to costumes first, however, has been neglected rather than being made light of. Perhaps because costume has nothing to do with the favored topic of “inner struggles.” From a viewpoint of an argument for “independent work,” “ignorant” playwrights like Kawaguchi who gave priority

to costume were given unjustifiably low positions. They are thought to have influenced a general audience very little. Similarly, it is difficult to argue about playwrights Yukitomo Rifū and Kawamura Karyō of *shingeki* as “independent” playwrights, even though they left strong impressions on large audiences.

They created characters through their costumes, and gave them a sense of life, but today’s readers and audiences have lost their ability to read meanings from costumes. As Yoshida Mitsukuni has said about clothes earlier: “Japanese intellectuals have shown little interest in the culture of clothes” (16).

From the plays originating in the Edo period to *Kyōka* and Tanizaki, there are few descriptions of interior lives. Most of the characters were depicted through the detailed descriptions of costume, hairstyle, and their belongings. Kawaguchi used the “exterior” costumes to deliver messages; in this sense, Kawaguchi was an “authentic” writer. However, there are not many “issues” in his work that those critics who like to argue about “essence” and “interpretation” can discuss, and they are not able to discern dynamics which go beyond interpretation and consciousness. For example, the fact that Matsui Sumako was so insistent about the details of her costumes at the *Geijutsu-za* was treated as a proof that she did not understand the essence of the play. Here, a standpoint that the selection of the costumes is also an important interpretation of the play is completely neglected. Costume was seen as having nothing to do with the essence of the play.

In “modern drama,” on the contrary, playwrights who have “conscience” and who have “suffered” are considered to be able to write works which embody “essential issues.” Even if there are only “pure characters” who appear the same with any costume, as long as the playwrights depicted the “inner lives” on which audience members can project themselves, critics supported these works because these plays were easy to discuss.

*Shinpa* is not old because it deviates from “modern” values; it was able to present extremely attractive pleasures because it maintained the feelings which can go back to pre-modern time. In *shingeki* drama too, the performers who left attractive footprints in its history tended to utilize the power that costume can unleash.

## 7 Seductive Stage Settings

Next I have to discuss the stage setting, which was one of the major attractions of the *shinpa* drama.

We tend to understand drama from the Meiji and Taisho eras from the scripts or the printed material which has survived to this day. This is also the case with *shinpa*. When we try to see through the eyes of the audience of the time, however, we should not forget the attraction of the stage art and lighting. When we look at the largest advertising medium of the time, the advertising pamphlets known as *ebanzuke*, the stage setting and electric lighting were major selling points of many plays. If one were to ignore the pleasure and desire of the actors and audience, and judge the values of drama only through the script, one would be left with a dull narrative.

The depiction of customs tends to be neglected in contemporary plays, but it has been an essential role of drama to express emotional culture in a wide sense of the word. In realistic dramaturgy and dramatization since the nineteenth century, in order to show an accidental meeting and an event which spans many hours naturally, the setup of the scene is important. Especially for those capricious audience members who take no notice of certain lines, it was even economical to present these customs through visually obvious stage settings.

The *shinpa* dramas from the Meiji and Taisho periods became famous for their dramatization of the novels published in newspapers. This was a time of literary gems — large numbers of people were fascinated by the descriptive passages of Ozaki Kōyō and Tokutomi Roka. The fact that giving shape to these literary gems fascinated those who saw *shinpa* plays did not necessarily reduce the value of the performances. This is rather noteworthy when we think of the audience's desire for stage expression and their acceptance of it.

Around the time of *sōshi shibai* of Kawakami Otojirō, visual artists who had studied in the West such as Yamamoto Hōsui and Takahashi Shōzō used the rules of perspective and their realistic stage backdrops were well-received. Shizuma Kojirō's popular Kansai-based *shinpa* company employed the Western-style artist Asai Chū and his stage setting was much talked about. For audiences that were used to typical *arimono* settings and those who did not know about cinema, to see such popular places of the time — a health resort, a cottage, a true likeness of a beach, a train station, a hotel, and popular cafés such as Shiseidō and Fugetsudō — recreated as panoramic scenes for the background of the stage and having actors play against it was an indescribable joy.

I have discussed in my previous book (17) a certain kabuki *zangirimono* technique: in a scene of a train station where large numbers of the general public come and go, by presenting a group of people who missed the train, the dramatist visualized

the existence of a certain class which did not fit into the Meiji social order. In addition, *shinpa* stage setting's use of the rules of perspective allowed dramatists to depict to depict "missing each other and farewell" which were used often in *pièce bien faite* to cinema. Popular *shinpa* stage settings such as beaches, cemeteries, and stations were all used to visualize scenes of parting. Meiji technology of oil painted stage-sets and the power of lighting created an impression of "distance" and it made strong impressions on the audiences. Oceans and beaches are often used in *shinpa* favorites such as Atami in *Konjikiyasha* and Zushi in *Hototogisu*. *Onogatsumi*, *Chikyōdai*, and *Ushio* all used oceans and beaches as scenes. Kitamura Rokurō once said: "At one point, *shinpa* automatically meant beach." I cannot discuss individual plays in detail here, but the ocean scene in *shinpa* plays, unlike kabuki's regular beach scenes depicting places noted for scenic beauty, was an "individual" scene using a realistic oil painting of a desolate out-of-the-way village. Takada Minoru was able to create the sorrow of an ordinary fisherman in his celebrated crying scene in *Onogatsumi* because of the ocean, which was mediocre and had no charm. The substantial appeal of ocean scenes in *shinpa* was its embodiment of the transformation of the conception of nature, corresponding to what modern literature has called the "discovery of scenery."

Let me now turn to scenes set in cemeteries (Figure 10). When the Kawakami Otojirō Theatre Company performed an adaptation Hamlet in 1903 starring Fujisawa Asajirō, Yamamoto Hōsui's stage setting of Aoyama Cemetery became popular. It was nothing like the conventional kabuki cemetery scene in plays by Nanboku and Mokuami, that of a ghastly and overgrown cemetery, which begins with the sound of wooden drums (*mokugyo*) and a large gong. As shown in detail by the oil painting's realistic depiction, Asajirō's cemetery was an orderly, bright Western cemetery. The climactic scene of *Hototogisu*, which became one of the three most popular *shinpa* plays, ends with a visit to Namiko's grave by her biological father, First Lieutenant Kataoka, and her husband, Kawashima Takeo. In 1875, Zōshigaya, Aoyama, Somei, Doutateyama, Kameido, and Yanaka Cemeteries were established. The establishment of these new cemeteries was related to governmental policies on religion, temples, and shrines, as well as policies on hygiene. However, it was also necessary to change the image of "death" at this time.

In the Aoyama Cemetery scene in *Hototogisu*, there is a grave with an inscription reading, "the Grave of the House of Kataoka." Next to this, there stands another grave with an individual name, "the Grave of Namiko" (in the original novel, it reads "the Grave of Kataoka Namiko"). Her husband Takeo approaches the grave and says: "This should be Kawashima Namiko, and not Kataoka." While he was away, her mother-in-law forced Namiko to divorce Takeo against Namiko's will.

According to Yanagita Kunio's *Senzo no Hanashi*, after the Sino-Japanese War, the custom to build graves with individual names of the war-dead spread rapidly. For example, we see an image of a grave for an individual in Suzuki Kiyokata's painting *Ichiyō joshi no haka*, and in the impressive depiction found in the beginning of Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro*. The name of individual engraved on a gravestone, however, makes us wonder about the relationship between the dead and the household. At Zushi Beach, Namiko repeats that she does not like to be part of the Kataoka family. Thus Namiko's intention to refuse the *ie* is emphasized visually through the inscription on her grave.

In the cemetery scene, the sound of a bird makes an impression while Takeo attends her grave. Kimata Tomoji has noted that the legend of the bird carrying the souls of the dead has existed for a long time and in particular a little cuckoo (*hototogisu*) is believed to carry the souls of the dead (18). The title *Hototogisu* (不如帰) is not only a metaphor of coughing up blood and tuberculosis, but also that of the soul of Namiko.

## 8 The Figure of Kubota Mantarō

Let me return to where we began our discussion. While *shinpa* abandoned its mission to give the elite students "a life which breaths into one's life," and the "successes in this world" that Hazama Kan'ichi in *Konjikiyasha* and Hayase Chikara in *Onnakeizu* embodied turned out to be an empty dream of the past, *shinpa's* world of "a certain taste" continued to fascinate audiences. As Isoda Kōichi has pointed out about Ken'yūsha and *shinpa*, "along with its plays and popular entertainment, they are deeply connected with sensitivities which lie at the base of customs" (19). Those ordinary Tokyoites who lost their homes after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, could only find "sensitivities which lie at the base of customs" in *shinpa's* unique taste, even when it was called old-fashioned and became the target of ridicule. This popularity became solidified with Kubota Mantarō and the works of Kawaguchi Matsutarō in the Showa period.

*Shinpa* dramatized Kagawa Toyohiko's *Shisen o koete* and premiered nearly ten works by Kishida Kokushi in the Taisho and the early Showa period. Many critics classified the Japanese theatre world into kabuki, *shinpa*, and *shingeki* up until the 1930s. It was only *shinpa* at the time, which possessed the amplitude to express the world and the mentality of Kawaguchi Matsutarō, Kishida Kokushi, and Mafune Yutaka. Kubo Sakae was close to Hanayagi Shōtarō and Ōe Ryōtarō, and "in 1938, after *Kazanbaichi* premiered, I was approached by Hanayagi Shōtarō and

attempted to write a play called *Mizumachi ringo-en* for the first performance of renewed *shinpa* drama scheduled for November” (20). This later contributed to the making of *Ringo-en nikki*.

It was Kubota Mantarō who connected the two worlds (of *shinpa* and *shingeki*). While Kubota was alive, he was an important figure for *shinpa* more so than for the Bungaku-za company, which he helped to found. Today, Kubota’s world is occasionally performed by *shingeki*, but he became less relevant for the “Theatre Shinpa” as a revenue-producing drama company. This is also related to the fact that, although an Edo and Tokyo boom has continued and Asakusa of the past is often discussed, the spotlight only falls on Nagai Kafū, ironically a man of the Yamanote high-city. The name of Kubota, who was born and bred in Asakusa was not much appreciated. In short, the world Kubota depicted was not the Tokyo that the mass media wanted to sell, nor the high-spirited “six wards which are filled with people’s vitality,” but the Asakusa in which artisans lived quietly. I should note, however, Ōzasa Yoshio’s point that the works of Mantarō dramatize many characters from rural communities (21).

Kubota disliked the characteristic style of Takada Minoru’s performance. Takada, however, was a significant performer who represented an important aspect of early *shinpa* and was widely accepted as a great actor. Unlike the impression he made during a later part of his life, Kitamura Rokurō was performing fight scenes in *sōshi shibai* and war plays. Kitamura, needless to say, respected Takada. Differing assessments of Takada may be where Kitamura, upon whom the destiny of *shinpa* rested, and Kubota who was so close to Kitamura, departed from each other in their sensitivities and feeling towards *shinpa*. In other words, Kubota evaded a disposition of *sōshi* in *shinpa*.

Minakami Takitarō wrote in 1929 on the relationship between Kubota and *shinpa* which was rumored to be on the verge of extinction.

While Mr. Kubota knows every aspect of *shinpa* drama, he is caught in between the old (*kyūgeki*) and new dramas (*shingeki*), and is deeply sympathetic to the most boring, unattractive, and unpopular *shinpa*. [...] *Shinpa* is sensible. Every character [in it] goes through hardships, and this makes the stories interesting. Furthermore, the more sensible *shinpa* is, the more timid it is. It is only a legend now that once upon a time, *shinpa* dreamed of dominating the theatre scene. *Shinpa* is sensible and timid as if it is convinced of its own defeat. [...] Most of the people gave up on *shinpa*, which lost its aspiration. Even if Kubota cannot hope for the future of *shinpa*, but it is clear that he is nevertheless deeply sympathetic to its future. [...] While learning detailed artistic skills, *shinpa* has not been recognized. Such state

of *shinpa* may be appealing to poetic sentiment of Kubota. Kubota disliked the artistic expression of Takada Minoru, whom everybody recognized as a representative actor of *shinpa*. [...] Kitamura Rokurō, who criticized people's performance without reserve, spoke very highly of Takada. What if Takada did not die [...] is a typical grumbling of *shinpa*, but perhaps the only person who goes against this opinion must be Mr. Kubota.

Today's *shinpa* drama is a form of realism. It is to be called realism (*genjitsu-shugi*); it is a realism which hesitates. For example, it is a depiction of certain customs which have nothing to do with contemporary social and economic organizations. It is not to do with newly devised business which is the favored subject of people but *shinpa* insists on realistic depiction of human feelings of ordinary life, which seems to be a thing of the past. [...] Mr. Kubota is solidly opposed to treating social issues. He rejected treating unconcealed issues as an obstacle to his emotional realism. [...] There is no *shinpa* plays which treat a social issue as a central theme. Plays which treat social issues such as Ibsen's or labour ideologies do not appeal to *shinpa*. [...] Avoiding confusion and entanglement in that confusion, both [Kubota and *shinpa*] remained hiding in their fortresses. It is understandable that both remained sympathetic to each other. In reality, it is certain that *shinpa* will disappear if we do not take any action. But I suspect Kubota would let it disappear (22).

These words may be true regarding Kubota. Composing a poem about his later, unsuccessful life, Kubota called it "a dim light at the end of my life." Even from his youth, Kubota was known for depicting dying things but certainly whatever he touched was destined to die. However, the words of Minakami should be taken as a generally accepted idea among the intelligentsia about *shinpa* from the Meiji to the early Showa periods. The real picture of *shinpa*'s theatre production is more or less different. For one, apart from the era of *sōshi*, *shinpa* has treated so-called "social drama" (*shakai-geki*) which was developed from bestsellers of Nakamura Yoshizō and Kagawa Toyohiko. Another point is that although the intelligentsia may have shared Minakami's opinions of *shinpa*, for the majority of populace, *shinpa* was much more necessary than *shingeki*. In fact, *shinpa* continued to be performed monthly, and there were many unnamed theatre troupes that toured provincially. As Japanese cinema made its transition from silent movie to talkie, *shinpa* provided a treasure chest of essential material.

What we must note is that while *shinpa* dealt with the changes in taste and mores that were occurring in society, it also preserved old-fashioned sensitivities and dramaturgical technique such as karma and the idea of rewarding good and punishing evil (*kanzen chōaku*). These elements stimulated the memory of

audiences and eventually resonated with them. The history of *shinpa* includes, despite its popular appeal, many members of the intelligentsia and artists from many different fields. In addition to those mentioned above, these artists included Osanai Kaoru and Murayama Tomoyoshi. Although from a contemporary perspective, *shinpa* appears to stand in stark opposition to “realism,” from a certain period, *shinpa* occupied an important position in thinking about Japan’s development of realism in theatre. One is often under a false impression that *shinpa* was already in decline during the Taisho era and that the *shingeki* avant-garde had come to dominate the theatre scene. When one looks at media from the era, however, it is obvious that *shinpa* continued to be popular part of show business. Taking the neighboring genre of cinema into consideration, and disregarding *shingeki*, *shinpa*’s actors, programs, materials, and methods all played important roles well into the Showa period.

Minakami commented that “*shinpa* will surely die if it does not change.” A few years after he wrote this comment, saviors appeared for *shinpa*. These were an author, Seto Ei’ichi, who wrote *Futasujimichi*, Mizutani Yaeko who was a *shingeki* actress at the Geijutsu-za, and Kawaguchi Matsutarō who was an editor of a publishing company (Plato Publishing Company) while Osanai was in Osaka. Kawaguchi Matsutarō later received the first Naokishō Award. In particular, Kawaguchi’s characteristic perspective and approach and the emergence of Mizutani as an actress transformed and revived *shinpa*. For this transformation, colloquial lines and the drama-making method of Kawaguchi were essential. In other words, Kyōka’s lines were written specifically for *onnagata*; his lines may be called “disguised-as-women style.” For me personally, I treasure the memory of Mizutani’s performances of Kyōka plays as true *shinpa*, but for Kawaguchi and Toita Yasuji, I heard Mizutani’s performance of a heroine was a strange one (23).

## 9 About Kawaguchi Matsutarō — the sense of time in *shinpa*

In the context which I have discussed so far, one may say that Kawaguchi Matsutarō embodied a return to certain aspects of Meiji and Taisho period *shinpa*. More specifically, he maintained an old-fashioned sense and an appeal to popular taste of “frivolity” on one hand, while keeping close ties with a publishing boom in the early Showa period and the movie industry.

The common people that Kawaguchi depicted, however, were different from those that lived in the imaginations of the intelligentsia imagined. They were not “lively”, nor “overflowing with energy”, nor “the masses from whom we expect great

things". What Kawaguchi depicted was nevertheless the world that the masses themselves wanted to see — a world for those who would rather be lazy than energetic, a world that was overly sentimental; a world which is not so "useful." Chance meetings between parent and child who cannot reveal themselves to each other, couples who cannot be united due to their different social statuses, and the suffering of the first-born who needed to raise his or her siblings in the absence of parents, these were themes shared with *shingeki* and they represented the world that many people in his audience knew in their own lives until the 1950s. (Postwar *shinpa* would treat much "happier" subjects than these examples.) After the Tokyo Olympics, however, a real sense of life and the sensitivities which lie at the base of customs were all uprooted. Simultaneously, the position that *shinpa* "occupied within the world of drama was going to be limited." However, something important was overlooked in this process — a crucial dramatic memory which is hidden in the dramaturgy of *shinpa*.

One aspect of Kawaguchi's dramaturgy is often overlooked. In a realistically staged theatre, one of the unavoidable problems is how to express time in a fictional framework. How do you "naturally" express the passage of a few hours, from daytime to evening and then to night, in one act within one hour of a stage performance? In Japanese classical drama and kabuki, the passage of time is often signaled by generally-accepted conventions such as dialogue or by the sound of a temple bell. This was also the approach used in *kizewamono*, kabuki's most realistic genre.

Time in drama is set according to the necessity and the flow of the story. In other words, unnecessary time in printed materials is nevertheless needed in the theatre. For example, conversation and *jōruri* narration which seem superfluous on the printed page may be necessary to allow for changes in costume and stage scenery. To maintain the attention of the audience and tension on stage during these scenes requires the skills of actors and playwrights.

In a *shinpa* play, as in the works of Kubota Mantarō and Kawaguchi Matsutarō, a single stage direction can be expanded to great effect by music, light or the call of a street vendor. A brief but deep sense of passing time can be expressed through the sound of the wooden clappers of the fire patrol as they fade off into the distance. Using pauses between lines and silence, and the voices of various street vendors — these are the methods through which one can naturally fast-forward time. For example, a supporting role actor nonchalantly turns on a light, letting audience realize that time has passed. This is one of the techniques used to indicate a transition of time. Or, sometimes, indistinct conversation of the performers on stage is covered by the sound of musical accompaniment at a vaudeville theatre

coming from neighboring houses, bringing the act to the end. This is yet another way to handle the passage of time.

These methods are often considered to be stereotypically “*shinpa*-like,” but the street vendors and the effect of music accompaniment are to mark time in an effective and truly prose-like way. This is a well-calculated way to deal with time. It is easy to judge Kubota and Kawaguchi’s professional masterful performances, dismissing them as relics of the nineteenth century and as “commercial drama.” I believe, however, that any works — even those dealing with splendid topics and marvelous endings — can learn from many of the dramatic techniques of *shinpa*.

In other words, in drama, one should not be blinded by the excellence of the themes treated and the characters presented. A logical and impressive hero, an energetic and healthy individual who can understand others — *shinpa* playwrights depicted lives which are nothing like these. But why, then, have the filmed versions of Kawaguchi’s works, which deal with ordinary lives, been valued and discussed all over the world? Audiences who have watched the movies do not criticize the foolishness of *geidōmono* (which dealt with artistic learning) and *hahamono* (which dealt with mothers), or the characters who were depicted as cheap. Someone who criticizes those would be condemned as having a shallow understanding of things. When steps away from concerns about topics, characters, and themes, and instead pays attention to what one hears, the value and attraction of what appeals to one’s own eyes, subtle and yet rich expressions of *shinpa* which are delivered by its costume, sounds and the sense of time must shine through, although their brightness may be low.

In comparing the adapted play *Tsuruhachi Tsurujirō*, for which Hasumi Shigehiko became the recipient of the first Naokishō Award, with the original American movie *Bolero* (dir. Wesley Ruggles), he wrote:

It is not my intention here to question the fact that one was able to receive a literary award for an adaptation of a popular American movie not so long ago in Japan. What I want to do is the opposite: to express my amazement at the extraordinary ability of Kawaguchi Matsutarō to adapt from other works. This is the case in *Ugetsu monogatari*. As one can discern from the fact that the distribution of characters of *Ugetsu monogatari* consists of a tactful mixture of Ueda Akinari and Guy de Maupassant, once in this author’s hand, all the materials became a story in which the background of the original stories — such as the state, the historical timeframe, and cultural contexts — became irrelevant. It is within this framework that Maurice Ravel and *shinnai* shamisen met intimately in their performance (24).

It is known that *Tsuruhachi Tsurujirō* and many of Hasegawa Shin's richly sentimental *matatabimono* for *shinkabuki* and *shinkokugeki* were actually adapted from overseas. It is in this sense that the works of *shinpa* and *shinkokugeki* are to be re-read and re-evaluated. They not only inspired many masterpieces of Japanese cinema, but held multiple perspectives which included the incorporating of talents which "went beyond cultural contexts."

We ought not to forget that the fields in which Kawaguchi worked were those of the popular entertainment industry. He was working intimately with two genres which had a close tie with *shinpa*: novel and cinema.

While Kawaguchi was a bestselling author, he continued to write plays, becoming famous and wealthy. In this sense, he was like his contemporary Osaragi Jirō. One may say, however, that Osaragi is rather similar to Hasegawa Shin, as the background and inner qualities that Kawaguchi had were the opposite of Osaragi who was a member of the elite. Kawaguchi differs from other prolific writers of postwar "commercial theatre" such as Hōjo Hideshi and Kikuta Kazuo, in that he did not attempt to print and publish his scripts.

Of course that is partly because Kawaguchi had a salary from Daiei as an executive in addition to being a bestselling author. But Kawaguchi consciously did not publish his popular works. Kawaguchi considered his scripts to be only for stage performance, and considered them to be a sort of consumable product. In this sense, Kawaguchi was apparently an authentic successor to the kabuki playwrights of the Edo and early Meiji periods. He was also similar to Victorien Sardou, a major nineteenth century playwright. This attitude of Kawaguchi may be criticized as "a lack of consciousness as a playwright" from the perspective of modern drama which asserts the independence of the script. However, one may find the value of Kawaguchi precisely in this lack, and because of it, Kawaguchi's plays were able to capture the psychology of popular audiences.

Since before the war, Kawaguchi was renowned as a stage director, but his script-writing has not been discussed as much as it should have been. Ōzasa Yoshio has stated:

Kawaguchi's scripts have been disparaged. Or rather, one often hears that the acting exceeded the script. Kawaguchi did not publish a single script during his lifetime despite his stable reputation as a bestselling writer. This is because he considered his work as written specifically for the particular actor, and that it was not "literature." Even if people say that his script is loose or nonsense, Kawaguchi never changed his conviction that the most important thing is to bring out the best in the actors (25).

This characteristic of Kawaguchi was utilized in what he excelled at — such genres as *geidōmono*, *karyūmono*, and *hahamono* — which were the sources of novels, movies, *rōkyoku* popular oral narratives, and popular music of the early Showa period. Kawaguchi did not treat much of *matatabimono* which was not so close to *shinpa*, but his method of using protagonist's nomadic lives and the sense of being a stranger was effectively used in *geidōmono*.

Furthermore, one may say that the life of Kawaguchi itself was a type of *geidōmono* in which glory comes after suffering, a *karyūmono* in which one overcomes difficulties with one's physical body and assertiveness alone, and a *hahamono* in which a protagonist continues to search for an ideal mother with whom he could never meet. Without money, education, or networks, an illegitimate child who became an apprentice of a plasterer at Imado, Kawaguchi became an established writer and gained both fame and wealth after his apprenticeship and suffering. Could there be a better tearjerker for popular audiences than this? This is not Kawaguchi's fiction, but he lived half his life in this way. Such a "tearjerker" idea complements the negative image of *shinpa* held by those who have never seen the world of *shinpa* or Kawaguchi. But I would say that these characteristics are not particularly *shinpa* or Japanese. Rather, these traits are often seen in general entertainment. Jean-Marie Thomaseau wrote on melodrama in France:

Popular audiences were enthusiastic about stories of suppressed virtue becoming vindicated. This phenomenon was to last all through the nineteenth century. Melodrama [...] provides order, underscores trust in virtue and family, and pays respect to ownership and traditional values. As a result, melodrama attempted to create a simple and practical conventional virtue (26).

Kawaguchi's most frequently performed masterpieces were *Tsuruhachi Tsurujirō*, *Fūryū fukagawauta*, and *Meiji ichidai onna*, and these are all prewar works. His postwar works are *Yūjo yūgiri* and *Kōjo Kazunomiya*. This roster of his popular works, however, is also indicative of Kawaguchi's world and the quality of his sensitivities. In other words, the essential motifs of Kawaguchi's world were unreasonable duty [*giri*], glory after much suffering, sacrifice and so forth. From the liberated democratic values and sensitivities of the postwar period, these themes may be called a "virtue of suppression" and should be negated. But because of such a contradiction, Kawaguchi's world continues to resonate with popular sensitivities. That is where the glory and fame of Kawaguchi lay.

## 10 The *Shinpa* “Face” and the Filmic Image

Kawaguchi’s career is related to Mizutani Yaeko’s entry into *shinpa* and also the fact that it was right after the movies became the talkies in 1935. Early films picked a theme, be it about an individual or a world which audience members could intuitively understand based on their cultural memory. In Japan, kabuki and *shinpa* provided the vast amount of source material. What I would like to point out here is that the “face” of a particular role in a movie came to epitomize the image of a role which was originally unfixated. This was the case in *shinpa* which influenced film in a significant and intimate way.

For Namiko in *Hototogisu* or Omiya in *Konjikiyasha*, I automatically imagine the face of Mizutani Yaeko. When I see these works in an archive, I remember the dazzling beauty of Kinoshita Yoshinosuke, Kitamura Rokurō, and Kimura Misao seen in the initial media appearance of an illustration or photograph. But in the Meiji and Taisho periods, the only audiences who could actually see these stages were those who lived in the urban centres. In a tour of local cities, Omiya and Namiko were played by those *onnagata* whose appearance was far from that of the “dazzling beauty.” As movies became commonplace, however, the images of smart-looking *onnagata* such as Tachibana Sadajirō and Kinugasa Teinosuke came to circulate nationwide. Ordinary-looking Omiyas and Namikos in local touring companies became strange for those who had become used to the characters through movies. (According to the magazines from this era, supporting roles were treated differently.) As a result, the image of a particular role which should be variable on stage became fixed through the standardized “face” of a movie. Audience felt that “Namiko should not look this way” even though the face of Namiko had not existed anywhere originally.

This was also the case with kabuki plays, many of which became movies. There are quite a few audiences who came to fix their image of the role through memories of early movies. For my generation and up, for the role of Ōishi Kuranosuke, we automatically imagine the figures and voices of Hasegawa Kazuo and Matsumoto Kōshirō VIII. This should not be laughed at. Several people have pointed out the merits and demerits of generalization of a certain image, which came with the spread of the modern technology of copying.

Although an important relationship between *shinpa* and movies has been discussed in terms of movie history, it is also essential to think of the “face” of the heroine through many layers of memory of audience in theatre and cinema.

## 11 The Genealogy of Lamentation

The tears shed in *shinpa* theatre both by performers and audience have been a subject of ridicule in modern drama. But if the individuals on stage cry often, the representative works of modern drama often made us cry. For example, why do characters in Chekhov's play cry so often? Ibsen is known for his multitude of stage directions, but explicit directions for crying in his scripts are scarce. In contrast, there are many instructions by Chekhov to cry. Nina, Arkadina, Ranevskaya, Irina and the others — many of his characters shed tears. His men cry often too: Chevtakin, Vanya, Telegin, Treplyov, Trophimov. But nobody would consider Chekhov more sentimental than Ibsen. One needs to investigate their dramaturgy, ideal plays, and the quality of acting.

Anne Vincent-Buffault has described French theatre audiences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the age of melodrama (27). Audiences in that period cried out loud in theatres. Illustrations similar to those in Shikitei Sanba's 1811 satirical work *Kyakusha Hyōbanki* are also seen in the West. A slovenly weeping face is often seen in these records. Roughly speaking, in that age, while aristocratic taste which detests overt expressions of emotion gradually spread amongst the bourgeoisie, melodrama which had its eyes on vulgar laughter and cheap tears dominated the theatre. This is prior to the advent of so-called modern drama but it is also important to remember that this was the context that modern drama was born from. Ibsen's and Chekhov's stage directions to cry, therefore, should be understood in this context. In other words, the meaning of a stage direction to cry differs compared to that of the previous era. The premise of modern drama is to divorce itself from melodrama, and nobody would think a play with many instructions to cry is a play which makes audience cry. Tears, however, are an important element of drama, and if one takes an aspect of "tear is for others" lightly, the history of drama cannot exist. Nevertheless, in the history of modern drama, overly lachrymose plays are frowned on.

Of course, it is not easy to cry. One cannot cry only because one wishes to do so. In the culture of the elementary school, it is a disgrace to show tears in public once one becomes a grade four student. Tears themselves, however, have a healing effect; and thus it is socially necessary to have a place to shed tears. In the movie *The End of the Affair*, which was originally a novel written by Graham Greene, there is a scene where the heroine Julianne Moore walks down a street with an expressionless face. She later enters a church alone and begins to weep silently. The church is a public space in which one is allowed to shed tears. I must wonder if there is a custom to cry in a temple or shrine in Japan.

Theatre is one of a few public spaces where one can cry in front of people. I suspect that the reason the theatre has been exceedingly attractive to audiences is because it is a “privileged” field in which one is allowed to shed tears. In the memoir of Sawamura Sadako, she talks about a small, shed-like cinema in Asakusa in which the screen showed only images of the railway. The seats of this theatre were made to shake during the performance. The majority of audience members are shop boys and female workers from the countryside and they cried just watching the scene of the railways. Once the show was over, they left the theatre looking refreshed (28).

Nowadays, this function of theatre has been forgotten, and the only public space in which one can cry as an adult is in the darkness of a movie theatre. Even today, at a trivial scene, one can hear audience members sobbing. At one time, the theatre too was a space to weep. Yanagita Kunio has referred to the rarity of crying in his *Teikyūshidan*. Tears, however, are an important element of drama. In *jōruri* or kabuki, one can have a crying scene monthly because it has a scene of lamenting, but it is increasingly rare to see audience members cry. Ichikawa Kodanji IV was known as “dripping tears” and “an actor who cried” (29), but the tradition of actors who could coerce audiences with their tears ended with Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII and Andō Tsuruo, both born in the last years of Meiji. A history of tears could still be written about movies, but it is difficult to write a history of tears about theatre anymore. To make audiences feel better is an essential aspect of plays. Without an element of tears for others the history of drama would not exist in any country.

Needless to say, the act of crying is not limited to climactic scenes played by *onnagata* and actresses. Scenes where male characters weep, for example Mitsuhide or Matsuōmaru, are some of the best-known in kabuki and *jōruri*. Ichikawa Kodanji IV was renowned for his tearstained (*otokonaki*) scenes in plays by Kawatake Mokuami. In modern times, the masculine tears of Sadanji II, Takada Minoru in *shinpa*, and Sawada Shōjirō and his allies in *shinkokugeki* all impressed a wide range of audiences in a different contexts.

Mayama Seika, Hasegawa Shin, Yukitomo Rifū, Kawaguchi Matsutarō, Hōjō Hideji, Kikuta Kazuo, Noguchi Tatsuji, Obata Kinji, Tsugami Tadashi — in *shinpa*, *shinkokugeki*, and in the world of commercial theatre, “masculine tears” continued in the postwar period, and were popular among general theatregoers. However, *shingeki* stood in opposition to kabuki, later surpassed by *angura* and came to exist as a “small theatre” in a limited sense — “postwar theatre” in the narrow sense of the word which is discussed in a systematic framework is not anything like that. In reality, however, from my oldest memory of theatre scenes in the 1960s and 1970s,

I do not think those who came to see plays in this period — not just those those who came to see the “commercial plays” but also those serious-looking audiences of *shingeki* — saw “postwar theatre” in such a way. *Shinpa*, in particular, survived the war and the postwar period by filling the hearts of the audience members by arousing the sympathies of those who could not fit into the new age, and by presenting a past that people could cherish. Postwar theatre, however, is often discussed without such sentiment.

Today when youth, novelty and vitality are valued above all else, *shinpa*'s function has weakened. However, it is also true what Chekhov said: “where there is nothing else to be said, it is always youth, youth”. *Shinpa* is an important genre, whether we think of the ways in which the modern orientation of radical youth was co-opted by Japanese sensibility, or whether we think of the multiple other areas of sensibility outside of theatre history that it touched.

## NOTES

- (1) Ōzasa Yoshio, *Shinpa no hon to Hanayagi Shōtarō no koto*, *Hon*, February 1991.
- (2) Kubota Mantarō, *Jo ni kaete Yanagi-kun ni*, Yanagi Eijirō, *Shinpa no rokujūnen*, Kawaide shobō, 1948.
- (3) Takada Minoru, *Shizenshugi shin-engeki o tonau*, *Shōtenchi*, January 1901.
- (4) Same as [2]
- (5) Ihara Seiseien, *Dangiku ikou* Reproduced Version, Seiabō, 1973. On the use of *yosogoto jōruri*, see: Ōe Ryōtarō, “Yushima no kotonado”, *Engekikai*, June 1951.
- (6) Please see *Kabuki* vol.111 (October 1908) for each training school's curriculum.
- (7) I was instructed by Ms. Yoshida Toshiko on Nakamura Nakakichi
- (8) *Ginza Hyakuten*, September 1956.
- (9) Peter Brooks, *Merodorama-teki sōzōryoku*, Trs. Yomota Inuhiko and Kimura Keiko, Sangyō tosho, 2002.
- (10) Mouri Mitsuya, *Ibusen no riarizumu* Hakuhōsha, 1984.
- (11) Bernard Rudofsky, *Mittomonai jintai*, Tr. Katō Hidehiko and Tada Michitarō, Kashima shuppansha, 1979.
- (12) Sugimura Haruko and Koyama Yūshi, *Joyū no isshō*, Hakusuisha, 1970.
- (13) Iwase Takashi, *Kotengeki to zen'eigeki*, Hakusuisha, 1972.
- (14) Hanyū Kiyoshi, *Yosooukoto ikirukoto*, Keisō shobō, 2004.

- (15) Kawaguchi Matsutarō, *“Ichidaionna no akadaimyō,” Hanayagi Shōtarō, Butai no ishō*, Kyūryūdo, 1965.
- (16) Yoshida Mitsukuni, *Kyō no chaato*, Asahi shimbunsha, 1976.
- (17) Kamiyama Akira, *Kindai engeki no raireki: kabuki no “issnin nishō”*, Shinwasha, 2006.
- (18) Kimata Tomofumi, *Imēji no kindai nihon bungakushi*, Sōbunsha shuppan, 1988.
- (19) Isoda Koichi, *Rokumeikan no keifu*, Bungei shunjū, 1983.
- (20) Uchiyama Jun, Kaidai, *Kubota Sakae Zenshū*, Vol. 3, San’ichi shobō, 1961.
- (21) Ōzasa Yoshio, Kubota Mantarō “Kumoribi”, *Dorama no seishinshi*, Shinsuisha, 1983.
- (22) Minakami Takitarō, “shundeī” zakkān, *Kaigara tsuihō*, Nihon hyōronsha, 1933.
- (23) Toita Kōji, Shinpageki no haigo ni aru kabuki, *Bungaku*, January 1956.
- (24) Hasumi Shigehiko, Ravel to shin’nai, *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, Special Issue, May 1992.
- (25) Ōzasa Yoshio, *Hanagao no hito*, Kodansha, 1991.
- (26) Jean-Marie Thomaseau, *Merodorama: furansu no taishū bunka*, tr. Nakajō Shinobu, Shōbunsha, 1991.
- (27) Anne Vincent-Buffault, *Namida no rekishi*, tr. Mochida Akiko, Fujiwara shoten, 1994.
- (28) Yamaguchi Masao, Kabuki, karakuri, karada, *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, Special Issue, May 1992.
- (29) Abe Yutaka, Hasegawa Kanbei Jitsuwa, *Engei gahō*, May 1928.