

Editorial Preface

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Le discours politique des médias de masse et ses caractéristiques constituant des conditions préalables pour la manipulation de la conscience publique

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L'objectif principal de cet article consiste à révéler les caractéristiques du discours politique des médias de masse et ses particularités définissant des potentiels manipulateurs.

On qualifie le discours comme «un texte lié aux facteurs extralinguistiques – pragmatiques, socio-culturels, psychologiques et d'autres facteurs;... un discours étant considéré comme une action sociale raisonnable» [8, p. 136].

Les types de discours sont classés conformément aux spectres de l'action sociale. La diversité de l'action sociale conditionne également la diversité du type de texte et ses genres. C'est la raison pour laquelle, les chercheurs orientent leur attention aux différents types de discours qui sont économiques, médiatiques, scientifiques et etc. En considérant la création du discours dans une situation donnée et le facteur de disposition des différents rôles et règles sociales des participants de discours, ils distinguent deux types de discours – personnel (personnel-orienté) et institutionnel (statut-orienté). Au dernier type, le discours politique des médias est également attribué.

Ayant un rôle spécial dans la société, le discours politique des médias de masse, à la différence d'autres types de discours (expressif, scientifique) se caractérise par le déroulement dans un temps réel et par l'intérêt pragmatique qu'il suscite de ce fait. La communication politique est en principe liée aux discours des médias, par conséquent, les possibilités de contact direct des politiciens avec la population ont été limitées dans le monde contemporain. Dans le discours des médias de masse les journalistes agissent en tant qu'un médiateur entre les politiciens professionnels et le public de masse non-professionnel. Puisque la population reste éloignée du gouvernement, elle ne peut pas observer directement le processus de la prise de décision qui concerne la vie publique et les journalistes façonnent l'opinion publique comme le "récitateur" sur la politique et les politiciens. Ainsi, les médias de masse sont pratiquement les seuls outils de communication des politiciens et de public.

Le discours des médias de masse et le discours politique disposent de nombreux points similaires et se croisent dans certains domaines d'application. Par exemple, le discours d'un politicien à la conférence est un discours politique, sa transmission à la télévision est déjà le discours des médias de masse. Le texte de la loi renvoie au discours politique, cependant sa ratification ou les notes de type informatif relatives à l'explication de son activité donnée par l'auteur est celles des médias de masse. Un reportage sur la remise des prix cinématographiques est le discours des médias de masse, alors que celui sur la remise des prix du gouvernement est le discours politique. Il est tout à fait possible de continuer citer des exemples d'application du discours politique et des médias de masse.

Ainsi, le discours politique des médias de masse émerge dans le croisement des deux discours – le discours politique et le discours des médias de masse. Nous pouvons généraliser de façon suivante: le discours politique des médias de masse est une expression communicative complexe. Étant une expression communicative complexe, le discours politique des médias de masse dispose un objectif comme un résultat du langage dont le texte est prononcé de façon verbale qui concerne le contexte répondant aux objectifs et aux devoirs qui fait l'objet de lutte pour le gouvernement à travers la formation changeant de situation, socio-culturelle et pragmatique de l'opinion publique. Le discours politique des médias de masse se caractérise par un certain nombre de conditions préalables pour la manipulation de la conscience publique. La raison de son potentiel manipulateur est qu'il constitue la

structure intentionnelle de ce type de discours. Son objectif – le gouvernement: sa possession, sa réalisation, sa protection. [11, p. 13.]. La mission principale du discours politique des médias de masse - consiste à influencer la formation de l'opinion publique. La réussite des buts et des tâches sont assurés si le discours politique des médias de masse est un événement communicatif et si toute communication est une influence à destination spéciale.

La gestion de l'activité de l'interlocuteur est le principal mécanisme à destination spéciale. N'importe quelle activité, ainsi que n'importe quelle information influence le public avec un but défini. Les moyens de communication de masse sont orientés dans une direction institutionnelle à la formation de l'opinion du lecteur (téléspectateur, auditeur). Ainsi, possédant une force d'influence, le discours politique des médias de masse manipule l'opinion publique qui est nécessaire pour le destinataire. Ceci - étant sa mission, permet que le gouvernement atteigne ses objectifs.

Le contexte socio-culturel du discours politique des médias de masse se caractérise premièrement, par son orientation à l'audience de masse, deuxièmement par les particularités nationales-culturelles, troisièmement par son idéologie. Etant un type institutionnel de la communication, le discours politique des médias de masse influence les larges couches de la société et ceci est sa principale mission et moyen. En effet, l'audience de masse se différencie par des valeurs et mécanismes qui peuvent être gérés. Q. Chichkov appelle les moyens de communication de masse comme le moyen d'influence le plus fort [3, p. 703-726.] « En réunissant des différents groupes hétérogènes, la communication de masse "fait fondre" la masse des gens instruits ayant certains valeurs » [9, c. 11.].

L'audience du discours politique appartient à une certaine culture. En effet, l'aspect important du discours politique des médias de masse est le fait d'avoir des caractéristiques nationales et culturelles. «La construction du système de discours avait été dictée par les exigences et les règles de la civilisation» [6, p. 15.]. Le discours politique des médias de masse surgit dans la condition de vie concrète, non pas dans le domaine abstrait et c'est la raison pour laquelle, il a des caractéristiques nationales et culturelles. Par conséquent, le texte du discours politique des médias de masse est un produit culturel et représentant. En même temps, le discours politique des médias de masse contribue aux particularités culturelles de l'époque.

Etant sous l'impact de certains domaines et servant les intérêts politiques des d'autres groupes sociaux, le discours politique des médias de masse détient une lourde charge idéologique. En reflétant les regards, la conviction, les orientations de valeur d'un groupe social, le discours politique des médias de masse a une idéologie ("les idéologies - ce sont les principales convictions de n'importe quel groupe social" [1, p. 6]). Les caractéristiques idéologiques, étant la condition préalable de la manipulation du discours politique des médias de masse, sont aujourd'hui "l'outil de l'idéologie, non d'information". L'idéologie est un "moyen de domination dans le monde contemporain". L'idéologie "consiste à atteindre des objectifs et des intérêts, y compris, des normes, des valeurs et des autres principes pour la réalisation et la légalisation du pouvoir"[2, p. 118]. Etant inévitables, les idéologies apparaissant directement ou indirectement, ouvertement ou secrètement, communiquent à son audience sur le "vecteur" des idées et sur les rapports relatifs au thème du discours. De ce fait, le contexte socio-culturel du discours politique des médias de masse permet de réaliser l'orientation manipulateur de ce type de discours. Ce contexte, consistant l'orientation destinée à l'audience de masse, apparaît non seulement comme la condition préalable de la manipulation, mais également comme la condition nécessaire [10, p.160]. Celui qui reçoit le texte (destinataire) dispose une certaine culture, certaines idéologies et leurs interactions aident atteindre son intention. Le discours politique des médias de masse dispose des ressources de gestion des connaissances de la société sur le monde et conformément à cela, il a également sa réaction comme l'information.

La société contemporaine est tellement en contact étroit avec l'information et dépendante de celle-ci qu'on l'appelle "information" et les membres de cette société "consommateurs indépendants" du siècle informatique [5, p. 36]. Le mot information, au sens le plus large du mot, signifie le reflet du monde réel [4, p. 28.]. Cependant, la transmission d'informations n'est pas la confirmation des faits de réalité, c'est leur interprétation, c'est-à-dire, la transition à la réalité d'information. D'une manière générale, l'information engendre des processus du raisonnement dirigé et une situation émotionnelle. En formant nos pensées, l'information forme notre expérience et définit notre angle de vue à l'environnement. En présentant des informations pertinentes, le discours politique des médias de masse influence. Ayant des buts et des missions subjectifs, le discours politique des médias de masse reflète certains intérêts. A cause de l'interprétation de la réalité de la personne dans le texte, ce type de discours se différencie avec son subjectivité et contribue à la manipulation avec l'information nécessaire pour le destinataire.

Pour résumer ceux qui ont été mentionnés ci-dessus, nous pouvons dire que le discours politique des médias de masse est un événement communicatif libre formé au point de croisement du discours politique et du discours des médias de masse. Son intentionnalité, son orientation de masse, ses particularités typiques nationales et culturelles, ses caractéristiques idéologiques, informatiques et subjectives créent la condition préalable nécessaire pour la manipulation de la conscience. Ainsi, le discours politique des médias de masse dispose tous les moyens pour la gestion des opinions et des attitudes de l'audience dans la mesure où il y a une nécessité.

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Dis-Articulations of the Real and the Artistic Image in Contemporary French Culture

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Abstract

Contemporary French culture is pervaded by a polemical critique of the relation between the image and the real, in particular in relation with the increasing popularity of the overtly sexual content of avant-garde films by filmmakers such as Catherine Breillat or Gaspard Noé. This article aims to examine the mechanisms and characteristics of the apparently ambiguous reflection – or articulations – of reality in Breillat’s cinematic image. In so doing, I establish a connection with the socioeconomic theory developed by Jean Baudrillard on the relation between contemporary images and the real. Reading Baudrillard’s polemical critique in relation to Breillat’s polemical image and questioning their mutual resonance will precipitate a rethinking of Breillat’s cinematic ethic and strategy in relation to its socioeconomic context – the ascendancy of publicity and pornographic images upon the visual environment of contemporary France as analyzed by Baudrillard.

Keywords: French cinema, pornographic image, real, female body

As the polemical French filmmaker Catherine Breillat once noted: ‘Se regarder dans le miroir, c’est pouvoir se regarder droit dans les yeux’ (Le Vern). Being the medium of a self-reflection, mirrors indeed embody the encounter between a viewer and his or her own image. These encounters constitute crucial sequences in Breillat’s films, which always play with the reflective power of mirrors. As critics and scholars have analysed, mirrors constitute for Breillat a symbolic medium for her feminist reflection, confronting her characters’ patriarchal gaze by showing pure images of the female body and, by extension, displaying their own misconception of the female (Vasse). However, as Hoberman points out in ‘Gray Anatomy’, Breillat’s films are more self-reflective than simply reflective. Indeed, Breillat’s films themselves work as a symbolic medium of self-reflection, since, through the reflection on the characters’ patriarchal gaze, the viewers’ gaze is also challenged. For Hoberman, watching Breillat’s films in fact consists in ‘watching the watching’ of the female.

However, as Breillat argues in interview: ‘An image exists only when you give it meaning, and that meaning depends on your vision. [...] Cinema never films reality [...] People do not always realize that. They

think that in cinema an image is an image, but that is not the case' (Sklar 26). Breillat's cinematic image, instead of being the medium of a truthful self-reflection of reality, would thus be a damaged mirror, which reflects its referent but in a distorted way. This essay aims to examine the mechanisms and characteristics of the apparently ambiguous reflection – or articulations – of reality in Breillat's image of the female. In so doing, I will establish a connection with the socioeconomic theory developed by Jean Baudrillard on the relation between contemporary images and the real. Reading Baudrillard's polemical critique in relation to Breillat's polemical image and questioning their mutual resonance will precipitate a rethinking of Breillat's cinematic ethic and strategy in relation to its socioeconomic context – the ascendancy of publicity and pornographic images upon the visual environment of contemporary France.

How and when has the real become unwatchable?

Catherine Breillat has now become a well known figure of contemporary French cinema. She is particularly famous for violating a traditional implicit rule associated with cinematic representation: the taboo of sex. Associated with the feminist artistic movement that developed in France since the 1970s with female artists such as Catherine Millet and Claire Denis, Catherine Breillat films sex and the female body in an unusually overt way that flirts with the limits of pornography and of representation itself. This is particularly true in her film *Anatomie de l'enfer*, produced in 2004, which she considers to be the acme of her cinematic style (Clouzot 134). This film begins with a chance encounter at a gay nightclub, as a result of which an unnamed woman (played by Amira Casar) pays an unknown man (played by Rocco Siffredi) to, on her instructions, 'watch her where she is unwatchable' (*Anatomie de l'enfer*, my translation). During four nights, the man will explore her body, watching the female, the unwatchable. This film's scenario in fact derives from Breillat's novel *Pornocratie*, itself borrowed in part from Marguerite Duras's *La Maladie de la mort*.

What interests me in Catherine Breillat's film, and oeuvre in general is the reaction of the public. Indeed, when I first watched *Anatomie de l'enfer* a couple of years ago now, I went through a series of emotional states and had to wait a few weeks before formulating a first judgement on this film. I was first extremely shocked and disgusted, like I think most of her public, but then I progressively questioned the reason behind such a violent reaction. What is so shocking in Breillat's work? Her image obviously. The close-ups, the way she shows the female body, the queasy details, the displayed intercourses are an ordeal for the viewer. Maybe hell itself, of which she shows the anatomy. However, when you think about it, these images are nothing but 'natural' images: a body, genitalia, sex. This is the truth of the body, the body in all its reality, but that I apparently could not stand when first watching *Anatomie de l'enfer*. In fact, the body as shown in Breillat's film seems to be 'less real' than the body shown in the erotic shades of pornography or in the mass media displaying of photoshopped model's bodies. As such, it appears that Breillat's image shows something 'unwatchable' but that, in fact, happens to be most real. I was thus left with one question: How and when has the real become unwatchable?

Catherine Breillat is not the first to discuss this issue in the French intellectual landscape. The sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard did it before as he was studying the transformations of contemporary societies due to the rise of mass consumerism, mass media and neoliberalism. Baudrillard indeed described the postmodern condition as the experience of the 'death of the real'. For him, the invasion of the public space by mass media images changed human self-perception and perception of reality: what we think is the real is in fact only a reality-show, a 'simulation' of reality while reality itself becomes inaccessible, unwatchable. To illustrate this argument, Baudrillard takes the example of Borges' fable *On the Exactitude of Science* in which an Empire was represented in a map that was so precise that it actually was of the size of the Empire itself. Progressively, the people began to consider the map as the true Empire and, what was actually the Empire was abandoned and turned into a desert. The image created an alternative reality. For Baudrillard, our contemporary societies are similar: images are simulacra, they have no link to reality anymore, they just create another, different reality. Moreover, in trying to preserve an appearance of reality, these images exaggerate their non-existent relation to reality up to the point of becoming 'hyperreal', as Baudrillard puts it (*Simulacres* 1).

However, Baudrillard warns, such an intricate relation to the real is, in itself, 'diabolical' because utterly deceptive ("Evil Demon" 85). He argues: '[Images] only seem to resemble things [...] Or rather, they really do conform, but their conformity itself is diabolical.' (ibid.) These images deceive the viewer who believes in their faked reality. As in Borges's Empire, the simulation replaces the real, which is abandoned underneath the hyperreal images. Reality is condemned to desertification and disappearance from disuse: it turns into the 'désert du réel' (*Simulacres* 10). This is why Baudrillard sees images as developing 'a fatal strategy of denegation of the real and of the reality principle.' ("Evil Demon" 94). As such, the contemporary image is, Baudrillard suggests, a copy without prototype, what he calls a third order simulacrum. He points out:

The secret of the image [...] must not be sought in its differentiation from reality, [...] but on the contrary in its "telescoping" into reality, its short-circuit with reality, and finally, in the implosion of image and reality' ("Evil Demon" 93).

An ambivalent relation to the real: Breillat's cinematic image

For Baudrillard, every contemporary images are affected by this phenomenon and carry a twofold creative and destructive power regardless of whether they are photographs, adverts or even cinematic images ("Evil Demon" 84): they all are hyperreal simulacra characterized by their 'telescoping' into reality. Catherine Breillat's cinematic image does not seem to escape this rule. At the origin of fierce debates on the limits of representation and the relation between images and reality, her films – *Anatomie de l'enfer* most notably – have often been criticized for the supposed triviality and superficiality of their images. The latter supposedly show, at the same time, *too much* and *not enough*, are too close and too far from reality. As Manohla Dargis, New York Times

critic, argues: "Anatomy of Hell" is more than a lapse; it is a *brutal self-parody* of a filmmaker who, having stripped down to the nitty-gritty once too often, may finally have *nothing left to show*' (12, my italics). For Dargis, as for many detractors of Breillat's film, images in *Anatomie de l'enfer*, on the one hand, a form of 'brutal parody' of representation, a succession of too close close-ups that exaggerate the triviality of the real. And, on the other hand, they simultaneously seem superficial and from any deep meaning. Many critics may disagree with Dargis' negative critique – as I do – yet she does pinpoint a crucial characteristic of Breillat's cinematic style: the ambivalent relation of her image to the real.

Breillat's images indeed develop an ambivalent relation with the real. The omnipresence of pornographic motifs, reinforced by the use of close-ups to capture female genitalia and the naked body in general, highlights the close relation Breillat's image cultivates with the real. Uncompromising in the displaying of the body, Breillat's image insists on the sexual body, displaying it in all its queasy aspects. The viewer cannot but be overwhelmed by these unavoidable images that show *too much, too closely*. However, this insistence on sexual motifs, what Grønstad calls the 'visual illicit', seems to contrast with the blurred reality of the film. Set up in vague spatiotemporal and narrative frameworks, giving no indication whatsoever of date, place or even names, the film indeed blurs the limits of reality. The story also gives a clear importance to the dream, taking place during five nights, five dream times – the one of the encounter and the four experimental nights – and filming the woman asleep. Moreover, the woman's suicide attempt and the references to mental illness add a schizophrenic dimension to the film. Accordingly, the viewer never knows what is true and what is not; what is a dream – or nightmare – or the real. Like the man looking through the damaged mirror (see figure 1), the viewer does not know if what he sees is the real or a distorted reflection. This distorted gaze corresponds to Baudrillard's analysis of the 'television of the real' ("Evil Demon" 88), its distortion by contemporary images. It is all the more so as the first message on the screen at the beginning of Breillat's film indicates that the actress, Amira Casar, has been replaced by prostheses during the sequences of sexual intercourse and the close-ups on genitalia. Accordingly, even the most basic aspect of bodily display is based on a trick. Conversely, when Amira Casar's actual body is filmed, it looks like a puppet or a doll (see figure 2): as Emma Wilson argues, its stillness, unnatural ivory colour and 'dormant materiality' seem unreal (18). The woman looks more like a doll – Hans Bellmer's dolls in particular, as Clouzot points out (12) – than a real human being (see figure 3).

'Parceque je suis une femme': on showing images that are not watchable

Breillat's images in *Anatomie de l'enfer* develop an ambivalent relation to the real. Her images, like the ones described by Baudrillard, flirt with the limits of reality, being exaggeratedly close to the real and far from it at the same time. However, Breillat's images do not match Baudrillard's vision of contemporary images. Indeed, Breillat's images set off many debates and are seen as exceptions rather than the norm. My point is that, if Breillat's images perfectly embodied what Baudrillard criticizes, they would not cause such debates and would

look like those of Hollywood or Disneyland – which Baudrillard often mentions as examples of how contemporary images have become hyperreal and mere simulacra. In fact, I think that if Breillat's images do share aspects with the hyperreal and simulacra contemporary images while not being totally like them, it is because Breillat plays with the characteristics of the image in order to reverse their 'veiling' of reality. In other words, Breillat's image, I argue, play with and distort the characteristics of the image as analysed by Baudrillard in order not to veil reality but, on the contrary, to unveil it. As such, Breillat's film is the *Matrix's* 'red pill' that reveals what the real truly is, the desert of the real and tries to inhabit it again. Interestingly, *Matrix* screenplay is based on Baudrillard's theory and the screenplay even includes some quotes from his books such as the following: 'Welcome to the desert of the real'.

What leads me to think of Breillat's image as a revelation of reality is that the quest for reality is a crucial motif in the film. The film is centred on an attempts to reveal what is real and what is not in the fake images of female bodies shown by pornography and the photoshoped models on publicities. The film indeed opens with the enigmatic woman's statement, 'parceque je suis une femme', which is used by the woman as a justification for her suicide attempt. Breillat's film seems to respond to such a statement, highlighting what it implies to be a woman in contemporary societies and what being a female truly means. This quest for the reality of the female is made in spite of – and, as Breillat highlights, in order to change – the man's merciless gaze upon the female. As Breillat stressed: '[*Anatomie de l'enfer*] est le parcours initiatique de l'homme' (Devanne). Breillat opposes and tries to change the reality of the female as conceived by the man. The man being here for both the film's character and the contemporary audience, either male or female, influenced by a patriarchal logic. This patriarchal logic is expressed by the man's affirmative peremptory sentences, his conception of the female appearing as indisputable: 'La fragilité des chairs féminines impose le dégoût ou la brutalité', says the man. Breillat firmly opposes this reality. Accentuating the contrast between the disgust and inclemency of the man's gaze upon the female, and the uncluttered and pure aspect of Amira Casar's body, Breillat insists on the unfairness of the man's severe judgement. The four-night exploration of the woman's body thus appears as an exploration and revelation of the contemporary misconception of the female.

Crucially, for Breillat, contemporary images are at the origin of such patriarchal misconceptions. In her screenplay to *Romance*, she describes the contemporary image as 'une forme de prostitution audiovisuelle' (8), a prostitution of reality. For her, the over-eroticization of the female body and its technically-implemented transformation in photoshoped adverts alienate the reality of the female. Accordingly, Breillat, like Baudrillard, puts the blame on contemporary images for their damaging effect on reality. Crucially, Breillat's film appears to dig out for and reclaim this forgotten, damaged real. As Breillat explains:

All the images of sex and bodies that we see are marred by perversion. [...] Artists have the responsibility to represent sex from another point of view. This is what I have to address, and what I must do is show images that are not showable (Murphy).

Anatomie de l'enfer is about showing the 'unshowable', watching the unwatchable (Grønstad). This is encapsulated in the main theme of her film: as Breillat reminds us 'essentially, she's paying him to watch her where she can't be watched' (Murphy). The viewer is encouraged, forced even, to face the unwatchable: the fact that an alternative reality exists behind the veil of contemporary images and conceptions of the female. As Breillat points out: 'The difficulty lies in the attempt to see ourselves in a different way than we are envisaged by society' (Murphy). Her film thus consists of a surgery of the gaze: it is a dissection of the viewers' vision of the real, aiming to free it from the pre- and mis-conception the latter have of their reality. *Anatomie de l'enfer* thus helps the audience to cultivate 'an eye capable of seeing something other than what is given to be seen', as Silvermann puts it (227). Breillat's camera itself, opening up a new vision of the female for us to see, embodies this alternative, freed gaze. Filming through the damaged mirror, as a symbolic reminder of her attempt to distort our perception of the real, Breillat's camera captures an alternative order of reality, revealing its very possibility and existence (see figure 2). *Anatomie de l'enfer* thus indeed is *The Matrix*'s 'red pill' that reveals the presence of an alternative reality behind the simulation, the fake reality of the 'matrix'. As Breillat nicely puts it, her image 'donne une existence à ce qui existe' (10).

I however must emphasise that, if Breillat's image suggests an alternative reality beyond the simulation, Breillat's project is not a nostalgic call for retrogression or a return to some original reality that would lie behind the veil of simulation. Her project as well as her art has, as she puts it, 'l'exigence d'être novateur' (ibid). This is why her image aspires to offer alternative possibilities, alternative orders of reality, freed from the simulation but different from some long gone original reality. Baudrillard himself, in his later works, questioned the very possibility of the supposedly original real, coming closer to a Lacanian interpretation of the real as 'impossible'. As such, Breillat offers the possibility of an alternative order of reality to her audience. While it shares aspects with the Baudrillardian hyperreal and simulacrum image, Breillat's image thus reveals the deceptive nature of the simulation, instead of contributing to it.

'Le cinéma, c'est de la peinture[...] en mouvement'

A question remains, however: why does Breillat's image, at first sight, resemble Baudrillard's perverse image? I read this inchoate resemblance as a consequence of the unfamiliarity of contemporary viewers with images that exceed the simulation. Breillat's image, unlike Baudrillard's hyperreal one, only appears exaggeratedly real to the viewers because they forgot what is real. As such, it seems to me that what is so shocking about Breillat's image is not so much her ambiguous relation to pornographic images, but the gap between what advertising and pornography make us consider as the real, and Breillat's unveiling of the possibility of an alternative order of reality.

Breillat's alternative displaying of the reality of the female is what, for her, makes her oeuvre a 'cinéma moral' (Breillat8). Her cinematic ethic does not focus on morality through the filming of moral actions or trying to impart a final moral – 'la morale au cinéma' (ibid). On the contrary, she wants to show the truth of the female body, to reveal it as it is without judging it. This is precisely where Breillat's image and Baudrillard's theory meet again: Breillat's 'cinéma moral' opposes the 'immoral' image as described by Baudrillard ("Evil Demon" 84). With her 'cinéma moral', Breillat undermines the 'immoral logic, without depth, beyond good and evil, beyond truth and falsity' of the image's telescoping into the real that Baudrillard identified ("Evil Demon" 90). I thus see Breillat's work as a deconstruction of the image in order to create a new one. Indeed, her work on the image goes so far as to upset the most basic logical and causal relation of representation that links it to the real: it dissects the viewers' perception of their reality, as it were. As such, Breillat's film only keeps the most basic structure of images, its *anatomie*, in order to completely rethink and recreate it. This deconstruction can be read as an attempt to reach the 'degré zéro' of the artistic image, echoing Roland Barthes' 'degré zéro de l'écriture'.

As I previously noted, Breillat's project is fundamentally innovative and does not aim to regress to an original form of reality – or of image. However, Breillat's reconstructed image does appear to draw on the experience of artistic images of the past. If Baudrillard clearly expressed his nostalgia for the paintings of the old masters (Critique), Breillat also demonstrated her desire to turn her moving image into a moving painting. Indeed, as Emma Wilson suggests, Breillat's moving image in *Anatomie de l'enfer* brings to life the static image of the sexual paintings of the nineteenth century (see figure 4). Courbet's *L'Origine du monde*, Manet's *Olympia* and Ingres's *Grande Odalisque* are resonant with the choreography of the bodies in sexual relation, the contrast of the colours, the succession of close-ups, and Amira Casar's positions in the film. In fact, *Anatomie de l'enfer*'s stills themselves served as the basis for an artistic exhibition before the film was released (Tylski). As Breillat insisted during an interview 'J'ai toujours dit que pour moi le cinéma, c'est de la peinture [...] en mouvement' (Tylski).

The future of images

However, I consider that this step backwards in art history constitutes the foundation of Breillat's innovation. She gives a possibility of futurity to contemporary images through the creation of a new image on the ashes, on the *anatomie* of previous forms of images. Her image would thus be conjugated in Kristeva's 'future perfect' (364), this time thought to re-conceive a different future. Breillat creates the image that *will have been* if the media, consumerism and capitalism had not turned images into a destructive process. She gives a possibility of future tense to the image through a step backwards into its past. Breillat's image is thus a bridge between the past and the future of the image. Crucially, in giving a future to the artistic image, Breillat fundamentally opposes Baudrillard's critique. Indeed, Baudrillard polemically announced the death of the image and contemporary art in general. He suggested:

Mais que peut encore signifier l'art dans un monde hyperréaliste d'avance, cool, transparent, publicitaire? Que peut signifier le porno dans un monde pornographié d'avance? Sinon nous lancer un dernier clin d'oeil paradoxal celui de la réalité qui se rit d'elle-même sous sa forme la plus hyperréaliste, celui du sexe qui se rit de lui-même sous sa forme la plus exhibitionniste, celui de l'art qui se rit de lui-même et de sa propre disparition sous sa forme la plus artificielle: l'ironie. ("Complot")

However, for Kellner, 'Baudrillard's dismissal of art and aesthetics blocks the necessary work that needs to be done. While his analyses are certainly a provocation to new thinking and practice, one must go beyond Baudrillard to make his insights productive for aesthetic theory and practice today'. By offering a possibility of future to the artistic image, Breillat goes against – even beyond – Baudrillard's pessimistic critique.

There remains a final question of whether this is a step beyond or towards Baudrillard. Kellner indeed wisely questions how consciously provocative Baudrillard's critique was. As Turner reminds us: 'The provocateur in Baudrillard was just as strong at the end of his life as in his early years when he first encountered, and embraced, pataphysics' (2005). As a practitioner of this science of imaginary solutions, his critique indeed matches the pataphysical strategy seeking to upset traditional Cartesian logic in order to open up new intellectual perspectives that the movement wanted to create. This is why Baudrillard's death sentence can be read as an attempt to shake an artworld that is running out of steam and to encourage contemporary artists to generate a resurrection of the image. Lotringer further argues:

The only legitimate reason art would have to exist nowadays would be to reinvent itself as art. But this may be asking too much. It may not be capable of doing that, because it has been doing everything it could to prove it still is art. In that sense Baudrillard may well be one of the last people who really cares about art.

Baudrillard polemically stated that art is not art anymore, encouraging people to recreate art instead of searching for proof that art is art. And this is precisely what Breillat does: she deconstructs and recreates the image in order to recreate art and thus reality itself, in a sense fulfilling Baudrillard's hopes.

Both relying on the polemical aspect of their works and theses as a way to shake the art world, Baudrillard and Breillat both implement a strategy of disruption to end what Baudrillard calls 'la dictature des images' ("Complot"). Grønstad argues in that sense: 'Rather than being stigmatized as representatives of an over-hyped "shock cinema", I suggest that the films in question [Breillat's films] more usefully be regarded as an antidote to the numbing complacencies and stock humanity of much mainstream cinema' (164). Allowing her public to watch the unwatchable, and, by so doing, disrupting the alienated gaze of her audience, Breillat's image frees the

audience's perspective from the dictatorship of the image. Through disruption, and the valorization of an 'other' image, Breillat thwarts the 'complot de l'art', that, in Baudrillardian terms, 'can parody this world, illustrate it, simulate it, alter it; (but) never disturbs the order, which is also its own' (*Critique* 110). What is promising in Breillat's image is that it does disturb this order. Her images are the explosion Baudrillard was waiting for when he described with feigned pessimism: 'What will happen will never be explosion but implosion. Never again will we see energy in its spectacular and pathetic form [...] but only the cold energy of simulacra, its distillation in homeopathic doses into the cold systems of information' ("Evil Demon" 90).

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Appendix



Figure 1: Catherine Breillat, *Anatomie de l'enfer* (screenshot)



Figure 2: Catherine Breillat, *Anatomie de l'enfer*(screenshot)



Figure 3: Hans Bellmer, 'Die Puppe', 1934

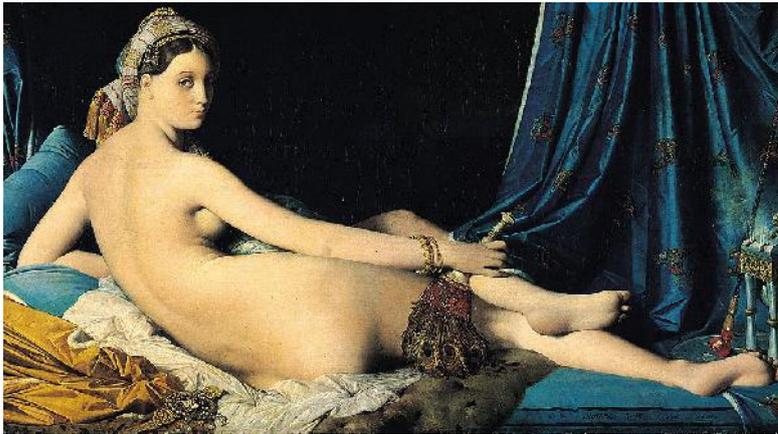


Figure 4: Manet, *Olympia*. 1863

Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*, 1814

Catherine Breillat, *Anatomie de l'enfer*(screenshot)

Courbet, *L'Origine du monde*, 1866

Translating Shakespeare in Early Twentieth-Century Japan: The Case of Tsubouchi Shōyō, Natsume Sōseki, and Okakura Yoshisaburō

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Abstract

This paper discusses what Shakespeare in Japanese translation loses and gains in terms of translational equivalence. A good test case can be provided by three important works from the early twentieth century by Tsubouchi Shōyō, Natsume Sōseki, and Okakura Yoshisaburō. Shōyō's 1911 rendition of *Hamlet* was the first full-length, literal translation of Shakespeare into Japanese. However, despite his efforts to approximate Shakespeare's language, Shōyō's translation failed: his deference to the original work, including the transliteration of character's name and Greco-Roman allusions, crucially separated the foreign from the domestic. Furthermore, the play's imagery was lost on the target audience. Indeed, in his critical essay, Sōseki expressed doubt about the translatability of Shakespeare's authentic voice into the vernacular, arguing that Shakespeare should be accommodated by Japanese culture rather than Japanese culture by Shakespeare. Sōseki's perspective on translating the Bard was shared by Okakura, whose 1916 translation of the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew* made extensive use of Japanese equivalents of Shakespeare's language and imagery. In fact, by employing a translational strategy based on a cognitive process of learning things unfamiliar to the target reader, the translation localized nearly all Western-derived elements into the Japanese context without making any changes to the plot. As such, Okakura's translation not only represents a gain in translational equivalence by capturing Shakespeare's spirit, but also intercultural and transcultural possibilities amid the current academic interest in global "Shakespeares."

Keywords: Shakespeare in translation, Shakespeare and Japan, Tsubouchi Shōyō, global Shakespeares, East Asian Studies, translation studies

1. Introduction

"Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated" (3.1.113). (Note 1) In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Peter Quince's confusion indicates that Bottom is lost in translation, and the translated Bottom is not identical to the original one, though Bottom is Bottom. Similarly, Shakespeare in translation is generally figured to constitute a loss, and, for centuries, translators grappling with the Bard have had to tackle losses arising from linguistic (e.g., semantic, syntactic, and phonological) and cultural differences. As Shurbanov avers, "[a]ny kind of translation is an act of transferring information across linguistic and cultural boundaries, the degree of genealogical and contractual relatedness

between the two languages and cultures it attempts to bridge is important to take into account” (53). How translatable works are, therefore, depends upon the degree of cognation between the source and target languages. Translation is all the more formidable between fundamentally different registers, such as Japanese and English, and Japanese translators of Shakespearean texts have indeed weighed what experts in translation studies call equivalence between Shakespeare’s language and Japanese. (Note 2)

This paper discusses what is lost and gained in Japanese translations of Shakespeare, primarily in relation to types of equivalence during the translation process. It analyses a test case of three important works from early twenty twentieth-century Japan: (1) a 1911 direct, full-length rendition and production of *Hamlet* by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935), who was the first to translate Shakespeare’s entire works in 1928; (2) a biting critique of Shōyō’s translation by Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), widely esteemed as modern Japan’s greatest novelist; and (3) a 1916 archaic rendition of the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* by Okakura Yoshisaburō (1868–1936), the doyen of English studies in Japan, who served as head of the English Department at the principal teacher training institution for secondary schools, the Tokyo Higher Normal School. (Note 3)

Shōyō’s staging of *Hamlet* was memorable for being the first to deploy a direct, full-length translation that kept the original character and place names, as well as the first to use entirely Western costumes and actresses in female roles. The performance of Shōyō’s translation was innovative in a literary culture that had often adapted Shakespeare’s texts into local settings, and in a theatrical environment in which actresses had been officially banned from the theatre during the feudal period.

However, what has attracted scholarly attention is that, despite its commercial success, Shōyō’s translation received harsh criticism in aesthetic terms when mounted at the Imperial Theatre (*Teikoku Gekijō*) by the Literary Arts Society (*Bungei Kyōkai*), which he established in 1906 (Powell, 47; Kishi and Bradshaw, 23). (Note 4) The most thorough critique was offered by Sōseki. His testy comments on Shōyō’s *Hamlet* deserves due consideration, given that he devoted much of his youth to an exhaustive study of English. At the behest of the Ministry of Education, he was sent to Great Britain in 1900–1901 to study English literature, and attended weekly private tutorials in London with W. J. Craig, who served as the principal editor of the first Oxford Shakespeare (1894) and, whilst mentoring Sōseki, oversaw the first Arden Shakespeare series. Sōseki’s profound knowledge of and in-depth insight into Shakespearean texts is best illuminated in his 1904 monumental critical essay, “On the Ghost in *Macbeth* (Makubesu no yūrei ni tsuite).” Familiar with one of the most problematic parts of the play, the entrance of Banquo’s ghost, Sōseki refutes arguments that Banquo’s ghost is merely a subjective hallucination, and should, therefore, be invisible on stage, by focusing on Macbeth’s psychology and imagination. Sōseki’s achievement is all the more astonishing in so far as he reached the same conclusion as the doyen of nineteenth-century Shakespeare criticism, A. C. Bradley’s argument in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) several months before the classic work was published (Kobayashi, 2005). A look at his critical comments on Shōyō’s translation can provide in-depth insight into losses and gains arising from translating Shakespeare into the vernacular: Sōseki held the translator culpable for his fidelity to the source text, arguing that such a literal translation did not strike a chord with the target audience.

Less acknowledged, but not less important, is that Sōseki’s perspective was shared by Okakura. He also spent 1902–1905 in Britain, France and Germany to study English literature and the teaching of English, and, on his return, figured pre-eminently as “the most famous teacher of English” (Toyoda, 27). Okakura published a large amount of Japanese translation of English literary texts, arguing that

transferring the source's meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries was feasible only when different coordinates between English and Japanese were carefully negotiated. Okakura's view crystallized in his archaic rendition of the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, which appeared in a 1916 edition of *Eigo Seinen* as part of a jumble of Shakespeare pieces celebrating the tercentenary of his death. (Note 5) The translated text is juxtaposed with the English text, with notes and glosses in the margins at the bottom of every page, so that students of English can compare them.

Translations of English literature in general and of Shakespeare in particular is more than a product of purely linguistic considerations (Huang, 2011). They are, as Ewbank elucidates, "mediated through the particular poetics and politics of a culture and "move on a sliding scale towards adaptations" (7). Adaptation studies, as Sanders notes, are not "about making polarized value judgements, but about analysing process, ideology, and methodology" (20). The present study, therefore, will examine losses and gains not as a dichotomy but as a process or continuum, illuminating how "the particular poetics and politics of a culture" operate on each translated or critical work.

2. Gained and Lost in Shōyō's Translation

Before proceeding to discuss the aforementioned three examples, it will be helpful to give a brief account of the early history of Shakespeare in Japanese. As Hoenselaars puts it, the nineteenth century witnessed the spread of Shakespeare in translation, which resulted in "people's familiarity with Shakespeare around the globe" (1). Japan was not exempt from that global trend, and a considerable effort was invested in translating Shakespeare into the Japanese vernacular once Japan resumed diplomatic relations with Western nations in 1868. Translation was considered necessary to demonstrate Japan's cultural proximity to the West, as Miyoshi points out: "[t]he fact that an English text could be translated into Japanese, and *vice versa*, was seen at least partially as an act of demonstrating Japan's cultural compatibility with Britain at a time when the British Empire ruled the world" (278). Indeed, the Japanese were preoccupied by the idea that any civilized nation-state had translated all of Shakespeare's works into the vernacular, as a Japanese expert in English studies, Takemura Satoru, contends: "almost any first- or second-class civilised nation in the world has at least one rendition of the entire works of Shakespeare" (210). Such translation was inevitably expected to preserve and replicate an "authentic" Shakespeare (Minami, 78–80).

Indeed, as Satō puts it, the Japanese renditions of Western literature entered a new phase in the 1890s, when direct, literal translation gained favour (2): original imagery and both character and place names were retained, without any changes to the plot. (Note 6) For instance, when translating the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* in 1891, Isobe Yaichirō, a founder of the National English Association in Japan (*Kokumin Eigakkai*), boasted that "the original text is transferred verbatim" in the translation (2). Doi Shunsho, an actor who worked with Shōyō, added to his 1904 Japanese rendition of *The Merchant of Venice* his comment that "it is culpable to orientalise a Western taste" (1).

A similar trajectory was followed by Shōyō's 1911 Japanese rendition of *Hamlet*. Remarkably, he strives not only to approximate Shakespeare's language by deploying archaic words derived from traditional theatres, such as *kabuki* and *kyōruri*, but also to share the rhythm and gravity of Shakespeare's blank verse by making extensive use of the traditional verse scheme. As he later wrote, "[t]he language of my *Hamlet* was inevitably touched by *kabuki* and the seven-five syllabic meter of traditional Japanese poetics" (Gallimore, 50).

The basic rule of Japanese prosody concerns syllables in a phrase. What matters is not the number of stresses and accents, as in English verse, but the number of syllables. A syllable in Japanese almost always consists of a consonant followed by a vowel, with an exception of “n,” which is regarded as an isolated syllable. The most fundamental numbers of syllables in Japanese classical verse—for example, *waka* and *haiku*—are five and seven, and the combination creates a lyricism that strikes a deep chord with Japanese audiences. Shōyō’s flexible use of this metrical system achieves some success in making the target audience hear the musicality that the source audience would have heard. Comparing a section of Hamlet’s soliloquy with its translation demonstrates the point (each number indicates corresponding phrases):

Shakespeare

And thus (1) the native hue of resolution
Is sickled o’er with (2) the pale cast of thought,
And (3) enterprises of great pith and moment
(4)With this regard their currents turn awry,
And (5) lose the name of action. (3.1.85–90)

Shōyō

(1) *ke tsu shi n no/ mo to no i ro ha/* (2) *a o ji ro i/ yū ryo ni shi ro cha ke,/* (3) *i ka na da i ji no/ ku wa da te mo,/* (4) *ko no yu e ni so re,/ ha te ha* (5) *ji tsu kō no/ na wo u shi na u* (111).
(Note 7)

Shōyō’s masterly use of the metrical system is eloquently shown in a five–seven–seven–five syllable structure: “*a o ji ro i / yū ryo ni shi ro cha ke,/ i ka na da i ji no/ ku wa da te mo.*” His daring attempts to approximate Shakespeare’s language emerge not only in the Japanese phonological equivalent of Shakespeare’s verse, but also, as each corresponding number illustrates, in the original syntactic order: he retains the syntactic features of Shakespeare’s play. The feat is all the more amazing, given the absence of cognation between Japanese and English. This indicates that Shōyō strives to pay great deference to the semantic, syntactic, and phonological aspects of Shakespeare’s language.

However, for most critics, Shōyō’s translation was provocative. Although the sources of the problem are variously located, the major problem was, as Powell puts it with reference to contemporary newspapers, that “the language of *Hamlet* was in fact a barrier to understanding” (49):

There are several contemporary complaints that it was hard to understand. He had mixed elegant and vulgar speech levels, as indeed Shakespeare does, but the audiences found this confusing. Not only that, but the deliberate use of archaisms from a variety of different historical periods compounded the problem. (Powell, 48)

Although Shōyō worked as “Shakespeare does,” his faithful translation provided the target audience with a separation of the foreign from the domestic. Arguably, most alienating to them was his transliteration of the original’s similes and metaphors, and his reticence about the use of “words associated to Japanese or Chinese legends and traditions” (Tsubouchi, 1978-88, 583) and of words that “have specific associations and historical background” (Tsubouchi, 1916, 16). A notable instance can be observed in 3.4, in which Hamlet blames Gertrude for her hasty remarriage following her husband’s

death.

Shakespeare

Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow—
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself (3.4.52–55)

Shōyō

Kore goranze kono nisugata to kono shouzō, chi wo waketa kyoudai nagara, kono kimi no kedakasa rippasa haipirion no chijire gami jiyōbu jin no takabitai. (156)

In dexterously transposing Shakespeare's verse into Japanese prosody, Shōyō transliterates "Hyperion" as "*haipirion*" and "Jove" as "*jiyōbujin*." Yet, such imagery was not easily acceptable to the Japanese, as Shōyō himself was aware:

All the similes and metaphors as well as lofty phrases sound odd and alien. . . . Most Japanese, who listen to "old Pelion, or the skyish head/ Of blue Olympus," are not quite sure if such names would refer to mountains or rivers. Similes, such as "Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove," evoke majestic imagery to those familiar with European literature, but such imagery is totally lost to most Japanese. (1911, n.p.)

The translator admits that his rendition does not resonate with the target audience, in large part because Shakespeare's imagery is lost in the literal translation.

What is perceived as Shōyō's aesthetic failure can be better illuminated by reference to translation studies. As Nida and Reyburn argue, "figurative language is very closely related to the cultural specialities of any language community", and such expressions "can only rarely be translated literally" (41). (Note 8) Nevertheless, such imagery is essential in understanding plays in the sense that, as Caroline Spurgeon elucidates, "the image. . . gives quality, creates atmosphere and conveys emotion in a way no precise description, however clear and accurate, can possibly do" (9). In addition, as Wong puts it, "unlike imagery meant to be read, imagery spoken on the stage has to satisfy the requirement of instant comprehensibility" (207). Despite, or perhaps because of, Shōyō's audacious attempts to approximate an authentic Shakespeare, his translation does not readily evoke such "atmosphere" and "emotion" for the receptor's mind, and failed to overcome the absence of cognation between the source and target culture in early twentieth-century Japan.

It is fair to say, from this perspective, that Shōyō's translation is comparable to what Nida calls "formal equivalence," which is "concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept. . . . The message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements" in the source language. The formal equivalence prompts the target reader to identify "as fully as possible with a person in the source-language context, and to understand as much as [one] can of the customs, manner of thought, and means of expression" (159). (Note 9) This suggests that although Shōyō's use of words and rhythm derived from *kabuki* and *kyōruri* is concerned with localizing Shakespeare, his rendition is actually in close proximity to what Brandon calls "the early canonical translations," whose aim was to "preserve the 'authentic' voice of Shakespeare in a

vernacular language” (7). Since such desire for authenticity effected a crucial separation of the foreign from the domestic, Shōyō’s canonical translation failed, despite his use of traditional Japanese theatrical schemes. (Note 10)

Shōyō’s translation furthermore disregards “dynamic equivalence,” which Nida argues complements formal equivalence in translation. Briefly, dynamic equivalence encourages translators to use words and phrases that transfer meaning across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and yet also preserve the imagery that readers in the source context would experience with the source text. (Note 11) Figuring prominently as a proponent of such equivalence was a celebrated novelist and critic, Natsume Sōseki, who offered a biting critique of Shōyō’s translation.

3. Sōseki’s Critique of Shōyō’s Translation

Sōseki’s critical essay, “Dr Tsuchouchi and Hamlet,” though admitting that “[i]t is hard to imagine the pains of translation unless one has experienced them for oneself, and in that respect I have a deep regard for what Dr Tsubouchi has done,” aptly articulates what Shōyō’s rendition of *Hamlet* loses in terms of fidelity to the original text:

[I]t is to my profound disappointment that it is precisely because the Doctor is so faithful to Shakespeare that he ends up being unfaithful to his audience. He uses not a single word or phrase to appeal to Japanese psychology or customs. To the very last, his distorted Japanese follows Shakespeare to the word... (Gallimore, 48)

For Sōseki, the problem is not that Shōyō’s translation is incorrect, but that it remains too “faithful” to formal Shakespearean features to strike a chord with the target audience. Sōseki is acutely aware that Shakespeare’s figurative language is too “unnatural” as a means of expression and that unless the audience or reader were a “native” of Shakespeare’s “unique kind poetic country,” one would be “denied the right to savour its pleasures; that is the particular challenge of Shakespearean drama” (Gallimore, 47). Therefore, readers and audiences, Sōseki argues, cannot “savour its pleasures” if unable to appreciate Shakespeare’s poetry in Japanese:

If you are the kind of person who just goes along with the story, as anyone can do, but ignore the poetry, or else are unwilling to make the effort to understand Shakespeare’s poetry, then you will incur nought but frustration and mental conflict. (Gallimore, 47)

If “people are unable to enjoy those rhythms that emerge from the particular arrangement of accents in recitation,” Sōseki contends, “most of them will not bear sitting long hours in the theatre” (49):

Shakespeare was a poet, and poets steal fire from heaven. . . . [W]e have to become aware of the magical force of these words to appeal to audiences with rhythms that transcend common sense. This is to say that the lines in Shakespeare’s plays should be accepted as music than can hold an audience’s interest just as the *nō* and *utai*. If we neglect this point, then we can only end up destroying both the words “as they brush the treetops with mountain mist” and the rhythms of the everyday language (Gallimore, 49).

Sōseki’s criticism indicates that, despite Shōyō’s efforts to translate Shakespeare’s poetry by deploying the Japanese language and rhythm derived from *kabuki*, his desire to preserve the Bard’s authentic voice destroys “the magical force” of Shakespearean language and imagery. As a result, his translated text can neither appeal to the audience nor hold its interest. As Borlik notes, the critic assumes that “[i]f

Japanese playwrights were to write in effusive pentameter and pepper their verse with allusions to Greco-Roman gods or the Bible the result could only be an awkward travesty” (386). Sōseki argues that the translator instead needs to accommodate the Bard in one’s culture, rather than accommodate one’s culture in the Bard. His claim underscores the loss resulting from Shōyō’s intention to preserve Shakespeare’s authentic voice in the vernacular. For him, it was essentially impossible to translate that voice into Japanese. (Note 12)

Sōseki’s proposal arguably refers to what Baker calls “connotative equivalence,” whose aim is to describe or evoke a similar image in the minds of speakers of the target language as of the source language, or refers to what is perceived as “transculturation,” by which “elements of a source ‘culture’ are taken up or naturalized into a target ‘culture’ so that these elements lose, wholly or partly, their foreign condition and cease to be perceived as ‘other’” (Pratt, 102). This suggests that Sōseki’s insistence on the right to translate Shakespeare into Japanese cultural idioms emanates from his ambition to “read Shakespeare from a ‘Japanese point of view’ . . . without deference to Eurocentric sensibilities or standards of literary value” (Borlik, 398). For him, Shakespeare should be accommodated by Japanese culture, not Japanese culture by Shakespeare. Sōseki’s approach to accommodate the Bard to Japanese cultural idioms sharply contrasted with Shōyō’s desire to impose the Bard’s authentic voice on them.

4. Okakura’s Dynamic Equivalence-Oriented Approach to Shakespeare

It is doubtful whether Sōseki’s argument gained favour at a time when most Japanese scholars of English studies strove to replicate the understanding of the source reader (Satō, 57). However, his insistence on transculturation was quite possibly shared by Okakura. Similarly to Sōseki, he was acutely aware of the gulf between the source and target cultures, as demonstrated in his introduction in a locally produced annotated English edition of *Hamlet* (1932):

If our minds have not been so much cultivated as to be deeply touched by literature, even when it is what has been perceived as the flower of literature since old times, we should remain faithful to our current tastes. . . . How is *Hamlet* relevant to our minds, and why is the play regarded as a masterpiece? I find it of much importance to raise such questions and seek to identify its answer in our minds. (Tsuzuki, n.p.)

In stunning contrast to Shōyō, Okakura suggests that “our current tastes” should not be forcibly integrated into the framework of what Eurocentric sensibilities perceive as the Bard, but should remain faithful to current Japanese tastes. Such an approach to Shakespeare guided him towards seeking Japanese equivalence with which to express similar ideas of Shakespearean texts. Indeed, that idea is succinctly voiced in his 1933 lecture in the Shakespeare Society of Japan:

How can Shakespeare be made intelligible? An answer to the question is to make a comparative study by drawing a parallel between the West and Japan. We also had drama in the age of Shakespeare, and the development of the drama bears resemblance to that of the West. Therefore, findings derived from research on Japanese theatre makes the Western theatre more readily comprehensible. (Okakura, 1933, 47–48)

His claim to exploit a shared semantic code in understanding Shakespeare became crystallized in his audacious attempts to localize the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Of special interest is that Okakura's translation includes an introduction that is not in the original, which claims that: "an old folktale says that Rōshō in a country of Shu had an ephemeral dream of prosperity for fifty years. That is a Chinese story, and this is Shakespeare's writing" (Okakura, 1916, 6). This Rōshō episode in fact derives from a *noh* piece, *Handan*, familiar to the educated Japanese, in which a youth named Roshō stays a night at an inn during his trip. Waking up to find that the imperial power has been delegated to him, he exults in his prosperity, yet soon realizes that it was only a dream.

The aim of this introductory piece is clear, when compared with the plot of the Induction: a lord finds a tinker, Christopher Sly, in his intoxication and decides to play a trick on him. In Sly's sleep, the lord's attendants carry him to his "fairest chamber." (1. 44), make the tinker "wrapped in sweet clothes" (1. 36), prepare a "most delicious banquet" for him (1. 37), to persuade him to be "a mighty lord" (1. 63). Waking up to find that he has become a lord, Sly boasts "Upon my life, I am a lord indeed, / And not a tinker, nor Christopher Sly" (2.71–72). By presenting a similar classical Asian play as the Induction, Okakura appeals to the semiotic equivalent between the stories of Roshō and of Christopher Sly, after which he invites readers into the world of Shakespearean text, so that the plot makes more sense to Japanese readers. More strikingly, though making no changes to the original plot, he changes characters' names (for example, the renaming of "A Lord" as "Daimyo") and relocates the setting of the play to accommodate a fictional feudal kingdom in ancient China. Hence, the play is also retitled with a distinctively exotic oriental flavour as *Handatsuke Ikake Daimyō* (*A Tinker Daimyo Concocted*).

Okakura further spices up his text with archaic and bombastic Japanese words and phrases derived from classical literature, as well as uses Japanese syllabic metre. One eloquent instance of its use appears in scene 2:

Shakespeare

We'll show thee Io as she was a maid
 And how she was beguiled and surprised,
 As lively painted as the deed was done. (Induction 2.53–55)

Okakura

Hidari no otodo no aoi no ue no
On ryō ni osoware te uwanari uchi no simoto ni kurusimu
Sono arisama wo sonomamani egaitaru mo omeni kake mashō. (1916, 105)

[Back translation]

Lady Aoi, a daughter of the Minister of the Left,
 Was possessed and attacked by a jealous ghost,
 Which we'll show you as lively painted as the deed was done. (Note 13)

On top of his extensive reorganization of the syntax and deployment of flexible combinations of seven- and five-syllable phrases, all Greco-Roman allusions undergo a localisation process when shifted into Japanese: Io, who is raped by Jove, is translated into a noble woman courtier, Lady Aoi, in *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji Monogatari*), a national classic in Japan. She is a legitimate wife of the protagonist, Hikaru Genji, whose lover, Lady Rokujō, is so intensely jealous that she leaves her body spiritually in

order to possess and murder her rival. (Note 14) In translation, Io's agony is localized as Lady Aoi's. Although Lady Aoi's anguish is not identical with Io's, her description undoubtedly strikes a deeper chord with the Japanese.

Meanwhile, where Japanese equivalence does not work, Okakura uses common nouns in favour of sense-making:

Shakespeare

Wilt thou have music? Hark! Apollo plays,
 And twenty caged nightingales do sing
 Or wilt thou sleep? We'll have thee to a couch
 Softer and sweeter than the lustful bed
 On purpose trimmed up for Semiramis. (Induction, 2. 34–38)

Okakura

Itotake no koe ga goshomō nara are are tenjō no ongaku ga
Mata kago no uguisu kazuamata saezuriatte orimasuru
Oyasumi ga gyoi naraba otoko ni otore si mashō
Site so took no futsukurato negokochi no yoikoto ha
Youen no aneki no nedokomo monokaha de gozaru. (1916, 134)

[Back translation]

Will you have string music? Hark! Heavenly music here
 And lots of caged bush warblers do sing.
 Or will you sleep? We'll have you to a couch,
 Which is softer and sweeter than
 The lustful bed for a queen.

Whilst translating “music” into music played by traditional Japanese wind and string instruments (*itotake no koe*), Okakura simply changes “Apollo plays” to “Heavenly music (*tenjō no koe*),” and “Semiramis” to “a queen (*aneki*).” Indeed, he explains with reference to “Adonis” (2.49) in additional notes that “I have transposed Adonis into ‘a youth,’ because I cannot find any equivalent for a beautiful youth in the oriental mythology” (105). In addition, the above quotation illustrates that not only Greco–Roman allusions but also other Western-derived words and phrases undergo localization, as demonstrated in the translation of “nightingales” into “bush warblers (*uguisu*),” which are familiar to the Japanese.

Such equivalent translation also provides the Japanese reader with a deeper understanding of the play's meaning. For instance, the renaming of popular “ale” as “unrefined sake (*nigori zake*)” and aristocratic “sack” as “refined sake (*seishu*)” would have augmented insight into what Thompson calls “a comic contrast of social levels” (60). It is fair to say that Okakura seeks to capture the spirit of Shakespeare's text by exploiting an equivalent semiotic code between the source and target cultures. Indeed, his translational assumption, as his disciple Fukuhara Rintarō observed in 1937, derives from a notion of “Equation,” the aim of which is to appreciate the West by assimilating aspects of Western

cultures into their Japanese equivalents (116).

Okakura's principled approach to Shakespeare is comparable to the psychological theory of education known as "apperception," a cognitive process in which an individual makes sense of an idea by assimilating it into the body of ideas that he or she already possesses:

Things can be made intelligible through "categories." In short, things are comprehensible on a basis of one's experiences as a single unit. . . . We can clearly understand what we have experienced, but struggle to grasp what we have not experienced. In this light, our familiarity with Japanese gives much weight to our comprehension of English. (Uei, 146)

From this perspective, his translation operates as a means of understanding Shakespearean texts by assimilating them into the body of semiotic and cultural codes already possessed by target readers. His translation reflects his ambition to read Shakespeare from an intercultural standpoint, without complete deference to Eurocentric sensibilities.

Indeed, Okakura took a strong stance against deference to Eurocentric hermeneutics of the Bard, as demonstrated in his essay on *King Lear*, in which he writes: "deference to appraisals [of Shakespeare's texts] by the likes of a great poet Shelly, a masterly essayist Lamb, and, more recently, the doyen of literary criticism, Bradley, gets on my nerves" (1934, 12). Okakura, therefore, attempts to undercut the desire of scholars of English studies to replicate the authentic voice of Shakespeare in the vernacular, largely by striving to negotiate with Shakespeare on Japanese cultural terms instead of imposing him on Japanese culture. In this light, both Okakura and Sōseki prefigure Japanese intercultural practitioners of Shakespeare, such as Kurosawa Akira and Ninagawa Yukio. Although translation normally figures as a loss, it is fair to say that Okakura's ambitions to localize Shakespeare reward fresh insight into intercultural possibilities of translating the Bard in Japan, given current academic interest in global "Shakespeares."

5. Conclusion

According to Brandon, Asian students learning Shakespeare in late nineteenth century followed a similar path, in the sense that their translations used indigenous and traditional verse forms to approximate the Bard's blank verse, which suggests that the "touchstone for judgement is the original English Shakespeare" (7). Whereas Shōyō's translational practice rang with the Asian tendency to preserve the authentic voice of Shakespeare in the vernacular by approximating the form of the original, Sōseki expressed doubt about such standards by claiming that Shakespeare should be accommodated by Japanese culture rather than Japanese culture by Shakespeare. Indeed, Okakura sought not to approximate the formal features of Shakespearean text, but to capture what is perceived as the Shakespearean spirit by exploiting a semiotic equivalence accessible to the target reader. Whilst Shōyō's formal equivalence can be seen as a loss in terms of the target audience's receptivity, Okakura's dynamic equivalence or "transculturation" offers a fresh insight into how to translate Shakespeare in terms of intercultural and Asian "Shakespeares" popularized by global Shakespeare scholars. Soseki's criticism and Okakura's translation find their most eloquent expression in the highly acclaimed films of *Macbeth* and *King Lear* by Kurosawa and violently beautiful intercultural productions, including *NINAGAWA Macbeth*, by Ninagawa. Their practices can be traced to Okakura's call to seek out a Japanese equivalent of Shakespeare to understand his plays from a Japanese point of view.

In stark contrast to artistic practitioners, Japanese translation of the Bard seems to follow Shōyō's tradition of preserving the authentic voice of Shakespeare in the vernacular. Indeed, major translators of Shakespeare not only transliterate the name of characters and places as well as Greco-Roman allusions, but also strive to approximate his blank verse and puns, even when the result does not strike a chord with the target audience. Arguably, such translators, most of whom have been Shakespeare academics, consider it their mission to convey the Bard's authentic voice to the target audience. In this sense, the touchstone for judgement continues to be "the original English Shakespeare." However, as Huang favours "the Aesthetics of Transculturation" by saying "Asian readings can help us to reach back to alternative ways of knowing Shakespeare" (2011, 196), audacious intercultural approaches to translation will enrich perspectives on his plays. In this light, Soseki's critical comments and Okakura's translation should be indispensable readings not only for historians of Shakespeare's reception in Japan, but also for translators of Shakespeare.

*All Japanese names appear as the family name followed by the given name. A macron over a vowel indicates that the pronunciation is lengthened. All translations of quotations from Japanese books and articles are mine unless otherwise indicated.

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Notes

- Note 1. All citations from Shakespeare refer to *The Oxford Shakespeare*.
- Note 2. Wong and Luong have discussed Chinese and Vietnamese translations of Shakespeare in terms of translational studies.
- Note 3. In this essay, Tsubouchi Shōyō is referred to as “Shōyō” and Natsume Sōseki as “Sōseki,” given the familiarity of the Japanese with their given names.
- Note 4. The aim of the Bungei Kyōkai, devoted to pioneering new Western drama, was artistic, as well as educational and instructive (Kishi and Bradshaw, 20).
- Note 5. Although unknown outside Japan, Okakura was influential in English studies, and well acquainted with Shōyō and Sōseki. It is thus fair to say that his translation was conceived in response to their translational and critical works.
- Note 6. This study adopts Baldick's definition of imagery as “a rather vague critical term covering those uses of language in a literary work that evoke sense-impressions by literal or figurative reference to perceptible or ‘concrete’ objects, scenes, actions, or states, as distinct from the language of abstract argument or exposition. The imagery of a literary work thus comprises the set of images that it uses; these need not be mental ‘pictures’, but may appeal to senses other than sight. The term has often been applied particularly to the figurative language used in a work, especially to its metaphors and similes” (106).
- Note 7. This Japanese translation divides each idiom into syllables in order to explain the syllabic metre. For example, “ke tsu shi n” is actually one idiom “Ketsushin (決心)”
- Note 8. Nida and Reyburn also argue that “[b]ecause figurative language is proportionately less frequent than nonfigurative, it carries more impact” (41).
- Note 9. Nida and Taber define formal equivalence as the “quality of a translation in which the features of the form of the source text have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language. Typically, formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard” (201).
- Note 10. Morton argues that Shōyō “was chiefly concerned with ‘naturalising’ the text so that it seems to read as it were ‘at home’ in Japanese” (25). However, his 1911 rendition of Hamlet was not naturalised, despite his use of the traditional verse form. His intention throughout his career was to preserve the authentic voice of Shakespeare in the vernacular. See Kobayashi (2006).
- Note 11. A more detailed account is provided by Nida and Taber, who defines dynamic equivalence as the “quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors. Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful” (200).
- Note 12. See Kawachi 39–40.
- Note 13. In old Japan, “the Minister of the Left” (*Hidari no Otodo* or *Sa Daijin*) was second only to the Chief Minister, a position equivalent to that of today's Prime Minister.
- Note 14. Hikaru Genji is the second son of an emperor. He renounces his status as a member of the imperial family for political reasons and lives as an imperial officer. In addition, “Cytherea” (Induction 2. 50) is translated into “*Yōkihi* (Yang Kwei-fei or Yang Guifei),” who is a romantic but tragic historical queen familiar to the Japanese

OF IRRELEVANCE

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Irrelevance means not connected with something in question. It is not relevant or not pertinent or not to the point or not relating to the concerned subject. Thus a thing that does not readily apply to a matter in hand is irrelevant. Relevance is the outcome of logical argument. Illogical argument is alias and akin to irrelevance. What a fool or a tired brain speaks is immaterial and unnecessary as well. A good student knows what to write. But the best student knows what not to write. Thus tact of omission saves a judicious soul from irrelevance.

In literature there are texts, summary and précis. The text or story contains the whole episode of the entire plot and character in detail. Summary squeezes the total matter and highlights the entire fact in retail. Précis precise the whole matter in a nut shell. It is the extract of the entire fact and contains only the specific and relevant points. So, both texts and summary are pregnant with digression and thereby is the store house of irrelevant matter. Thus irrelevance means superfluous or not required. But in reality irrelevance exists everywhere. It takes time; it wastes valuable time of human life, from cradle to grave, through its omnipresence. Sincere survey reveals that the entire agenda of human life is full of irrelevant works. Relevant study of irrelevancy reveals that man is sadly interested and thereby badly busy with irrelevant matters. It is just like addiction. So, human soul cannot be detached from those businesses that return nothing. In fact, most part of entire life, man is busy for nothing. He hankers after to fulfill his own interest.

Decision regarding judicious investment of both time and money is very difficult. Very few people can do it perfectly. As such, nothingness becomes the output. Thus man is busy having no relevant return at all. This very truth is realized by man only when his death is imminent and knocks at his door. Alas! he is too late then. Man cannot free himself from the clutches of irrelevant matters, since he speaks much, thinks much and does much irrelevant works. His emotion is so uncontrollable. The funny thing is that his net outcome is very little in comparison his gross works. And most part of his gross work is irrelevant. Irrelevance should be just like pickles that cannot be taken to fill up the stomach but it tastes tasty in full stomach and it helps the stomach to digest its contents. If anybody takes much pickle in empty stomach he will suffer from stomachache. So care should be taken so that irrelevant matter does not cross its limit. Its presence is required, like pickle, but that must be timely, proper and proportionate as well. In a tragedy comic gives relief to the spectators. But the whole tragedy should not be replaced by comic itself, as is usually happens in case of parasite. A tree gives shelter to the parasite. In course of time his parasite becomes the cause of death of the tree itself. Yet the tree welcomes parasite to stay together and live together. This is the destiny and tragedy of giving shelter. Theme is always short. Explanation renders it voluminous. To explain any matter the author becomes so emotional that many times he loses brake. As a result irrelevant topics get entry into the main stream. If the author does not control this flood gate then his whole plan will be frustrated due to digression. Because, in such a condition less important plots get priority and main plot is cornered. It is just like ill weeds grow apace.

A farmer knows it. So he removes the weeds from his farm house so that the growths of main trees are not hampered. Similarly, only an expert author can control his emotion and proceed with the central theme with his protagonist. But a novice author fails successfully. So he becomes the prey of irrelevancy thereby digression. As a result he is badly criticized by the merciless critics and thereby sadly hurt.

When an author starts to write something, infinite numbers of themes like ceaseless waves of sea flash in his mind's easel. He becomes perplexed and faces many hurdles to choose and pick up the right and relevant shell of the sea. Here needs expertise. A good writer knows what to write. But a great writer

knows what not to write. Tact of omission is an important factor. It is really an art. Very few authors know this tactics. So the outcome of a novice writer does suffer from irrelevant matters. This digression is very dangerous and dilutes the central theme of the plot in general. For this event an author cannot be held responsible. Literature is a store-house of contemporary social document. It is not science. Science is guided by formula. But literature reflects and manifests the motion of romantic souls. Emotion has no base and no brake as well. It moves anywhere like a bird that flies in any direction of the unobstructed sky. Further, emotion is violent in nature too. For, it does not obey any rule rather it breaks the established rules. It breaks all barriers and crosses all boundaries.

In any lunch or dinner, generally, protein is always less but the dish contains full of carbohydrates. This huge unwanted foodstuff damages the general health and causes disease. So the doctor advises the patient to take balanced diet instead of unnecessary foods. Irrelevance talk is equivalent to rubbish. Gossiping is the store house of such garbage. In gossiping mood man can say anything without any hesitation. He speaks and gets relief through catharsis. Here attention is not required. Attention paves the way for in depth analysis which is against the atmosphere of any gossiping environment. For serious discussion academic institutions are appropriate place. But no body goes to a club or coffee house to enrich knowledge. The visitors go there for relaxation to revitalize the tired nerves. The visitors hail from all walks of life. So, general discussion, having no expert knowledge, is appropriate, so that all can participate in the discussion and enjoy well. Also participation of all renders the debate and discussion enjoyable more. Here enjoyment is the prime factor not to show geniusness. To show expertise there is appropriate place. Those who are interested to expose themselves they are well advised to go there not to join this baseless and brakeless discussion full of casual talks.

For mere enjoyment, superficial knowledge is sufficient. With incomplete knowledge a person dares to talk on quantum mechanics in the morning and on quality control in the evening of that very day. Such a half genius can give extempore speech on any topic promptly, smartly and untiringly as well. Expert knowledge renders a gossip into academic discussion in which all cannot take part. As a result discussion ends very shortly. Here, half genius is the right person to convene, conduct and continue enjoyable discussion.

Short speech contains little lies. Long speech contains much lies. For, he who speaks more, speaks more lies. Lies and irrelevant talks are akin, since both waste time and complicate life as well. Long discussion means long irrelevance. In brief history, irrelevance finds no shelter. Though irrelevance is unwanted, yet any discussion or talk suffers from irrelevant points. The probable reason, it seems, irrelevance is the spontaneous talk. Man does not get chance to speak. Everywhere he faces restrictions. So whenever he gets chance he speaks everything caring whether it is relevant or irrelevant it matters little. As a result in his quite unaware the relevant or main topic is burdened with heaps of huge rubbish. Thus irrelevance is the outcome of suppression. A hungry person or animal devours whatever he gets. Similar is the case of irrelevance. Relevance needs attention. Machine is guided by motion. Motion can offer attention, which emotion cannot. Man is guided by emotion. So machine can perform any job untiringly with perfect attention which man cannot do at all. Also machine can perform any repetitive job with expertise. But man either feels bored or is angry when he is asked to repeat anything. He cannot work at a stretch. He needs rest. To him variety is the spice of life. He crazily wants to add spice in life. So he searches for diversion. This search for diversion paves the entry for digression. In fact attention causes pain. Attention is akin to pain. Very few persons can bear or tolerate that pain. Only wise persons can bear it. This answers why we see very few wise persons around us who can speak with relevance for long.

Both relevant and irrelevant talks offer enjoyment. Relevant discussion, as already discussed, needs attention. But irrelevant discussion needs no brain. It is just free enjoyment like fresh and free air. It costs nothing but cures mind free of cost. Free service or free enjoyment is warmer than paid enjoyment. So, irrelevant discussion is more enjoyable than relevant opinion that needs higher attention with expertise knowledge. In any examination, a problem namely 'odd man out' is given to the examinee to test general intelligence. Here the question offers various options. Only the odd man to be identified, considering it as irrelevant or inappropriate in the present context in question. Here expertise is required to identify the odd man since all the alternatives are equally likely. Only an expert can identify the irrelevant matter at ease. Also an expert seldom adds irrelevant theme in any contribution. Since, expert is numbered there is none to out the odd man. As such the world is infested with so irrelevant things and thereby does suffer from irrelevancy.

A FORMAL AND INTERPRETATIONAL ANALYSIS OF SOME IFEJIOKU TERRACOTTA FIGURES

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Abstract

Ifejioku figures are not new developments in the Nigerian art scene. Quite a number of these pieces adorn galleries and museums across the world. A few are located within the country but not sufficient for scholarly studies. Dates of the nineteenth to the twentieth century have been attributed to the production of these pieces. Ossissa is still chosen as the location for its fabrication, yet, no workshop is located there. This study however, attempts to address issues of Origin, age and the workshop location of these magnificent pieces. Methods including the Iconographic and classificatory approaches are adopted for this research. Evidence shows that the style and form of this montage derives largely from Ossissa. Influences from other related art cultures like Urhobo, Isoko, Ekoi, Igbo, Ijo and Ekpeya are noticeable. However, the practice of burying the pieces before and after use is indicative of a societal tradition. It is evident that in the nearest future pre-historic, Modern and Post-modern art works would soon be used to answer not only questions of origin but of social behavioural patterns, artistic tendencies and past cultural interactions.

Keyword: Typology, Montage determination, influences, illustration.

1.1. Introduction

In 1999, Bridget Nwanze made a major contribution to the study of art pieces from Ossissa. She distinguished various types of pieces through studies and research. Concerning the origin of these magnificent pieces, she was able to establish their Ossissa heritage. Through her study, she searched for information from the libraries and Museums in Lagos, Benin, and Ibadan. She even went back to the Ossissa town were quite a number of fragments still exist. More so, the search took her as far as to the British Museum in London, and Scotland, were quite a number of examples adorn their collections. It was these early efforts that led to this present research. This study not only looks at the likely origin of the pieces but attempts a classification and interpretation of these art forms.

1.2. The Ossissa people and concept of Ifejioku

Ossissa is a town in Ndokwa local government area in Delta State, Nigeria. They are close neighbours with the Urhobo and are basically an agricultural community (Nwanze, 2013). As regard their origin, tradition speaks of Igala and Benin influences (Nwanze, 2013). With respect to their language, the Igbo language as well as other linguistic traits combine to form an Ndokwa dialect. The town has a history of terracotta production which dates between the early nineteenth to twentieth century respectively.

Despite these dates, there is a tendency to believe that the works maybe older than the dates associated with them. Nwanze (1999) claims that during all Ifejioku festivals in Ossissa that the remaining works are excavated for rituals. Then after the ceremony, they are returned to the ground. In other words, if this is a normal procedure, how then can these pieces be effectively dated?

The question thereof arises, Are the dates associated with these works exact? Secondly, if these works are actually done by the Ossissa people? Because if the works were made by the Ossissa people, then why bury them after every ritual? Or were they trying to hide the left overs from traffickers? Before we make our summations, it is important for us to know the concept of Ifejioku (yam cult) in Igbo land and observe the diverse forms of these Ifejioku pieces.

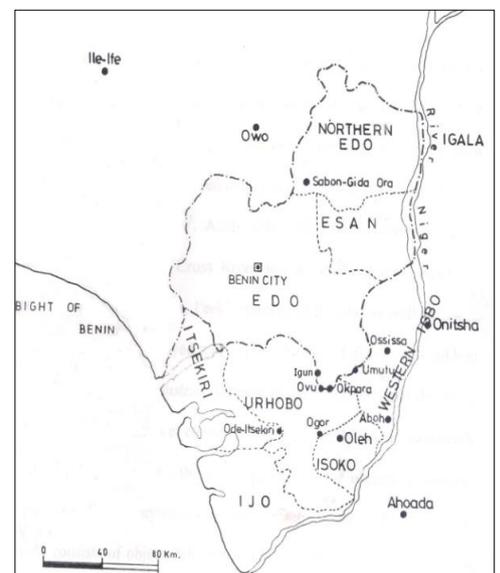


Fig 1: Map showing major towns including Ossissa from Western Niger Delta of Nigeria

Ifejioku, as Njoku (2012) claims, is an Igbo yam festival. It is an Igbo conceptual reference to civilization, fertility and harvest (Nzumafo Njoku, 2012). It is believed that as yam being the prestige and culturally important crop of the Igbo people, its cultivation and harvesting is linked with Ifejioku (Nzumafo Njoku, 2012)

Ifejioku, Aniajoku, Ufejioku, Njokuji, Ihinkoku, Aniajoku, Ahajoku, Fijioku, Ajoku, Aja Njoku or Ajaamaja are all the various names the yearly yam festival in Igbo land is called (Njoku, 2012). Njoku (2012) states that it is a festival that encapsulates all aspects of the Igbo life and culture including cosmology, religion, philosophy, work, leisure and many more expressions. Ifejioku centres around the yam myth where yam saved the entire Igbo culture from starvation. In Igbo culture, according to (Njoku, 2012) yam is the king of all crops as well as measure of manhood. The new yam festival is regarded as the biggest festival in Nri tradition (Nwokoye 2012). Nwokoye claims that the Nri people call it Omwa Asato or Ilo Muo festival as myth had it that "Chukwu" God instructed Eze Nri to sacrifice his first son, to avert famine. According to the legend the Eze Nri obeyed Chukwu's (Supreme God) instruction and yam sprouted on the grave of his son. It is in memory of this event that Eze Nri ritualized yam as Ifejioku and crowned it as the king of crops (Nwokoye, 2012).

Small wonder, the Ossissa people depicted sculptural pieces in honour of this tradition. The display of male figures flanked by his female wives and members of his family forms a significant aspect of their culture.

Considering the influences of Ossissa origin, where Benin and Igala cultures were mentioned, the origin of their sculptural traditions are questionable. As questions regarding the origin of Ossissa pieces, are attributed to Benin artist? Since the Benin's had a tradition of both metal and mud traditions. Or were their works executed by Igala or Igbo neighbours? At this point, it is important to hear the views of some scholars as regard the form and possible origins of these figures.

1.3. Views of some scholars as regard the forms and origin of the Ossissa Ifejioku figures

Quite a number of scholars such as Fagg (1990), Adepegba (1995), Willett (2000), Mack (2000), Price (1976), Nwanze (2012) Odokuma (2001), Njoku (2013), have written on the origins and forms of these art pieces.

Speaking of the form and origin of these pieces, Fagg (1990) says that the Ifejioku terracotta alter piece is a yam spirit of the Ukwuani Ibo people of Ossissa west of the Niger. Fagg (1990) shows in his book, a central male figure flanked by his wives, one pregnant and the other one giving suck. He claims that right in front of the male figure, is an Ikenga, in the form of a flat stool and a fowl (chicken) which is about to be sacrificed. A child like a figure is depicted in front without legs. Since the figure is carrying a box like a container near the altar he may be a priest.

Nwanze (2012) opines that the Ifejioku sculptural terracotta of Ossissa is symbolic images representing the yam god-Ifejioku. She claims that the pieces convey very little of the impression they give in their actual place of use. She further speaks of the existence of eight different pieces with most of them in the Museum of Scotland Edinburgh and the British Museum in London. Others in her words are in the National Museum Lagos and Benin respectively with few fragments in Ossissa. She believes that these are works of the Ossissa people.

Concerning the presence of the Ikenga (personal altar), it is important for an explanation and possible a definition of this concept. Since, it forms part of the paraphernalia found in the Ifejioku montage.

Ikenga means a personal altar which is dedicated to the right hand among the Igbo and Igala. (Visiona *et al.*, 2001). This concept is related to the belief that strong hands or arms are agents of physical power in such actions as hunting, farming, and warfare. (A history of Africa, 2001). The forms of Ikenga vary in different communities, while some are depicted in human forms others are simply designed as a stool.

Cole and Aniakor (1984) describes the Ikenga as the prevailing idea of an excellent yam farmer who accumulates wealth and prestige, titles, a large family and finally an honoured place among prosperous and respected.

Although, the structure of Ikenga is not what this study is about, the fact is that, as part of a collective whole, the Ikenga features in the Ossissa montage.

Roy (1979:116) relates the Ikenga to success and achievement which is based on the ability of the right hand. This concept seems to be shared by the Igala, Urhobo, Isoko Esan, and Ijo groups and parts of the lower- Niger.

(Odokuma, 2001). A lot of literature on the origin and significance of the Ikenga is studied by historians such as Delange (1994).

Adepegba (1995) talks about the much published Ifejioku figure as a sculpture rather than pottery with up to five to seven figures.

Willett (2000) writes that the pottery sculpture of Ifejioku is the giver and protector of yams from the river-rain Igbo village of Ossissa west of the river Niger. He further claims that the figures he had shown in his book, is one of the several pieces taken to England in the 1880s.

Mack (2000) only illustrates one Ifejioku piece and says it is a terracotta altar for the yam cult. He comments on the complex human figure which shows elaborate body scarification. He concludes that the piece was probably made by either a man or by a post-menopausal woman.

Price (1976) only illustrates the Ifejioku piece in her book with little information.

Nwanze (1999) conducted a detailed research on these figures. Since she is from the community, she feels she would be able to communicate effectively with the priest and people and at least conduct a more precise research.

Odokuma (2001) attempted a classification of the various examples evident in some Museums in Nigeria and in Europe. She observed about two major types, based on the treatment of the eyes. She claims that type (style A) has two sub styles. The eyes of this type A is completely closed while the style B the eyes are opened.

Most of the scholars reviewed based their opinions on the oral tradition collected from the people. The foci of their claims were however only on the history of the people, with the exception of Odokuma and Nwanze who examined the forms. However, this study would attempt to examine the origin of the Ossissa Ifejiokwu styles through an interpretation of their forms and traditions. As well as a classification and analysis of intricate textile ornamentations. Relationships with other cultures would also be addressed.

4. Method of analysis

In order to study these pieces effectively, a formalistic and iconographic approach is used. It is indeed, important to explain what and how these approaches are used. As regard formalism, it is an approach that stresses the importance of form over content, as the source of pieces subjective appeal. (Adams, 1996:16) in other words, a formalist, recognizes primarily the aesthetic effects created by the constituent parts of the design (Adams, 1996:17). Adams (1996) says that balance, order and proportion as well as pattern and rhythm constitute the basis of the artist visual language. Then of course, the composition of the work (Adams 1996:17). Basically, formalism has to do with art, for art sake the way elements and principles of art are used and not its symbolic meaning.

The other approach used in this study is iconography. Iconography deals with the meaning of an art work. It delves into the significance of the subject matter, content or theme of any artwork.

Adams (2001) defines iconography as an approach which considers content rather than form. One of the leading pioneers of the iconographic method was from Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968).

He recognized three levels of reading works iconographically. The first level he calls Pre-iconographic or primary or subject matter (Adams 1996:36). The second level which is the secondary level, he calls the level of convention and precedent. Then the third level has to do with its intrinsic meaning. Which Adams (1996) refers to as the synthetic level of interpretation where data is combined from diverse sources.

5. Classification, Analysis, Description, and Interpretation of some Ifejioku figures

They are two distinctive styles based on the treatment of the eyes. The first style is style A which has two other sub-styles. The eyes are completely closed (Odokuma 2001:40).

This style shows a highly stylized depiction of the Ossissa Ifejioku pottery figures. Here, the eyes are completely closed while the mouth is sealed and other facial features are geometric. The figures seem to be wearing elaborate coiffures as their faces show diverse cultural marks. They also seem to be carrying some implements and other cultural accoutrements. One of the female figures depicted, seems to be pregnant. Other figures both male and female are attached to the wall of the pot.

Style A (1800-1900 A.D)



Figure 2: Ossissa Ifejioku Terracotta (style A)
Courtesy of Christina Price, made in
West Africa, Studio Vista, London 1976.

The first sub-style of style A shows a more rounded feature (figure 3). Here, the eyes are completely closed as well as the mouth. The nose and mouth are proportionately executed. Unlike the previous Ifejioku in figure 2 this one is mounted on a stand. More so, its features are more rounded and it is not as naturalistic as its “style A” counterpart. Possibly, it was done by another artist in a different period or area. This piece in question shows a central male figure flanked by two female figures. Noticeable on the chest of the woman are some cultural accoutrement possibly relating to farming or ancestral worship. Along obvious mark runs down the forehead of the figures to the nose. Similar facial mark depictions are common in the Ekoi mask (figure 4), Urhobo figure (figure 5), Isoko figure (figure 6), Igbo (figure 7), Ekpeya (figure 8), and the Ijo figures (figure 9). (Odokuma, 2001).

Style A Substyle 1(1800-1900 A.D)



Figure 3: Ossissa ifejioku figure (Style A) (sub Style 1) Terracotta
Courtesy National Commission for Museums and
Monuments (Nemm) Benin in Odokuma (2001)
Institute of African Studies University of Ibadan.

Figures with related features



Figure 4: Ekoi head
National Commission for Museum & Monuments Lagos



Figure 5: Urhobo figure
Courtesy: African Arts, Vol. IX, No 4, July 1976, Height: 156cm



Figure 6: Isoko figure
Courtesy: African Arts, Vol. IX, No 4, July 1976,



Figure 7: Igbo figure
National Commission for Museum & Monuments Lagos



Figure 8: Ekpeya figure
National Commission for Museum & Monuments Lagos. (NCMM).



Figure 9: Ijo figure
Courtesy: Roy Christopher The Stanley's Collection, 1979. Height: 72.4cm

Style A Substyle 2

The second sub-style of style A, are slightly rounded with ball-like hair shapes and fleshy facial features. The cultural mark which runs down from the forehead to the nose is evident here. Compared to the previous montage, this particular one seems to be more naturalistic.

All the figures on this tableau seem to be the seated and fused into the wall of the stand. The style is elaborately decorated and shows a single male figure flanked by two female. The figures are depicted with closed eyes.



Figure 10: Ifejioku Terracotta from Ossissa. Style A sub-Style 2 Courtesy of Roy Christopher. Africa Sculpture. The Stanley Collection, 1979.

Another figure also belonging to the second sub-style is the group Ossissa montage of figure 11. It represents a central male figure, flanked by two female figures, as well as children and animals. Once again, the elaborate hair-do and crown are evident. The facial features and body forms are semi-naturalistic with some geometric elements distributed in some prominent areas. For instance, the nose and ears are highly geometric and expressive. Their necks are thin and long and are designed with some intricate decoration. The design on the stand, varies from work to work. In this montage, the male figure in the centre, as in most examples continues to fan himself while his wives take care of the family. The single mark that runs down from the forehead to the nose is obvious. It is important to note here, that most of these pieces show the zoomorphic presence of animals. Fertility features of breast feeding mothers are also evident. Cultural items like gongs, cases, fans, tusks, beads, containers just to mention a few are obvious.



Figure 11: Pottery sculpture in the altar of Ifejioku. Courtesy Nigeria Museum, Lagos, In Frank Willett's African art an introduction 2000.

5.5

Style B

Style B is much more naturalistic than style A. However, the difference between style A and B is in the treatment of eyes. For instance, figure 12 shows another Ifejioku figure with a male flanked by two females.

This time, the coiffure and cap or crown of the male figure are more distinct. The eyes are wide open unlike those of style A. More still, the entire body is depicted naturalistically and proportionally. The neck is not bare but beaded as the central figure carries an intricate fan. Between two female figures, one is breastfeeding and the other is holding a child-like figure. The one holding the child-like figure, seems to be heavily pregnant and the stomach is aesthetically designed. The figure in front of the pregnant woman, is executed in similar style. It seems in one way to be a child and in another an oraclist. The reason for this assumption is simply because, legs were not depicted.



Figure 12: Terracotta altar for the yam cult (style B)
Ossissa. Courtesy of John Mark African
Arts and Culture.

Some of the best Ifejioku pieces are no more in the Nigerian country. A great deal of them are in the British Museum London and other European and American collections. A good example is this Ifejioku pieces of fig 13. This style falls under style B sub style 2 and it represents a more naturalistic montage which is heavily ornamented. The eyes are wide open and the usual arrangement of the other collections are noticeable here. However, this piece seems to show varied cultural marks. For instance is the presence of the major fore-head mark and five lines under the eye-lid as well as circular marks by the facial sides of the figures. And on the neck of the figure, marks are used to highlight beads on the neck. Both the male and female coiffure, particularly the female are highly decorated.

Style B Substyle 2

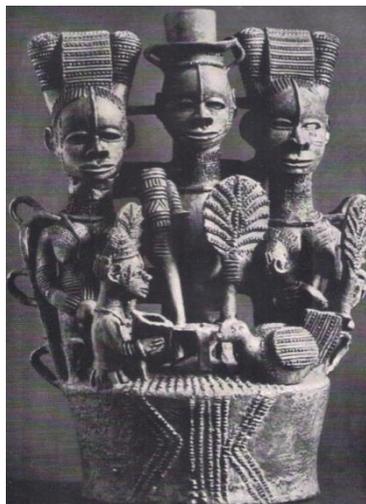


Figure 13: Ifejioku terracotta altar pieces from Ossissa (style B)

Courtesy William Fagg's Nigerians images 1990.

The style B (sub-style 2) is also significantly outstanding. The treatment of the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and neck is highly naturalistic. The coiffure as well as their cultural accoutrements are decorated. This time, the figure, which seems at one stage to be a priest is shown with his legs sitting on a chair. The Ikenga fowl and gong all seem to be present. The stand's design is significantly different from the other styles. However, with the exception of a smile this montage is like style B sub-style 2, however, the smile can be described as the "Ossissa smile".



Figure 14: Ifejioku piece.

6.0. Interpretational iconography

Since iconography (Adams, 2001) has to do with writing about an image, the interpretation of these works lie in what they signify. These works individually, depict a man with wives and in some cases, the whole family. Features of kingship or nobility are displayed on most of these pieces as well as ancestral worship. To buttress the point, Nwanze (2012) states that since it was the tradition of Ossissa people to renovate their ancestors, Ifejioku was conceived as farmer spirits who ensures production and fertility. Looking at the works critically, one is made to see that these Ifejioku pieces are simple reflections of the social, spiritual, and professional lives of the people. The form of the head and structure of the entire figure proves that these works are actually done by and for the Ossissa people. Although, of course influences from neighbouring cultures such as Igbo, Ijo, Urhobo, Isoko, Ekoi and Ekpeya are noticeable. There are also slight Benin influences particularly in the hierarchical positioning and various depictions of stands. The figures also display elaborate texturing which may connote some form of authority and language.

Since the Ifejioku pieces were supposed to be made to glorify the yam cult, one cannot really see any depiction of it. In most of the pieces discovered, the yam crop seems not to be shown. Could it have been made for another purpose? Or is the yam synonymous with fertility? Are the pregnant women a reflection of the fertile soil and the children, the yam?

It is indeed obvious that the male figure in most of the montages, seem to be content and satisfied with his achievements as well as his possessions. The presence of the Ikeuga shows this contentment, the Ifejioku montage is a holistic collection of the origin, history, social life of the people's lives.

6.1. Discussion and result

The findings reveal that despite the fact that the Ossissa people trace their origins to Igala and Benin cultures with traces of Igbo incursions, evidence of diverse cultural influences is noticeable. However, two styles are identified by the number of works found within and outside the country. Style A and B were distinguished with their sub-styles. This classification was based on the treatment of the eyes. Another outstanding trait in their depictions, is the presence of a male figure flanked by two female figures. The centrality of the male may be connected to the position of males in the society. That in some parts of Africa, life evolves and revolves around the man. In other words, the male is like the sun as other planets revolve around it.

Also, the polygamous nature of African men is depicted on the montage. One must not forget the simplicity of the figures as well as the intricacy of the body designs. From all indications, it is evident that the Ossissa people may have been behind the production of these art works. And certainly the works were made specifically for

ancestral worship. The total Igbo cosmological belief system is depicted in these corpuses. However, each of the figures represented can be interpreted into certain functions. The male, female, children, items constitute a holistic view point their belief systems and cosmology.

7. Conclusion

It is indeed true that certain traits from neighboring cultures such as; Igbo, Igala, Benin, Urhobo, Isoko, Ekoi, Ekpeya, just to mention a few, show affinities with Ossissa figures. There is a great possibility that more distant connections with Ossissa origin can be traced using the attributes of these images. It must be mentioned here that the interpretation of art forms through formal analysis is one of the ways of tracing the migration of a people. Even if, oral tradition is regarded as an important historical source of information, it can be manipulated and distorted for political reasons.

But documentary records of events is a sure way of preserving information. However, in Africa south of the Sahara, art forms were used to record events. Other methods include; festivals, incantations, songs, dances, language, and greetings just to mention a few.

As regard the Ifejioku pieces the question of where it was produced and why the production stopped has not been adequately addressed. What led to the stoppage of its' production? Was it by the ruler-ship? or did the real artists behind these magnificent works migrate? Or could it be that the artists were not living in Ossissa? There is also the issue of the continuous excavation of the remaining pieces in order to perform the Ifejioku ceremony. It is indeed important to note that in Edjekota a town in Urhobo land lies a terracotta head whose origins are unknown (Foss 2004 and Odokuma 2006). The possibility that since these works were buried, means the production of the works may have ceased. In the case of the Ossissa figures, the production of these pieces also ceased. However, the works carry a form of Ossisaic "origin" particularly as regard its form, facial features, and content. Although, "yam" is not shown in the montage, the signature of its significance is depicted. Since the yam cult signifies fertility and ancestral worship, these traits, however, can be observed in the presence of the pregnant and sucking mothers. For now, we can still accept that these pieces were possibly executed by the Ossissa people, but where their workshops are, can not be found.

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