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Of the handful of non-Western Shakespearean directors whose shadows stretch beyond their home countries, few cast a more formidable shadow than Ninagawa Yukio. His patented style, a flamboyant synthesis of Eastern aesthetics and Western texts, has entranced audiences from Tokyo to Stratford—although perhaps not always, as we shall see, for the same reasons. In his landmark *Macbeth* (premiered in Tokyo in 1980, performed in Edinburgh in 1985), Ninagawa framed the stage as a giant *butsudan*—a Buddhist altar for commemorating dead relatives—and metamorphosed Birnam wood into a roving grove of blossom-spangled cherry trees. He relocated *The Tempest* (1987) from an anonymous Mediterranean isle to the Japanese island of Sado-ga-shima and associated Prospero with Zeami, the thirteenth-century founder of *noh* drama who was exiled there. In 1994, he uprooted *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the Athenian woods, transplanting it to a Zen rock garden in Kyoto. Critics, especially Western critics, were awed by the visual poetry of his productions and the elegant allusions to traditional Japanese culture. Ninagawa's work has even been given the radiant imprimatur of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), which invited him to England on two separate occasions to direct productions of *King Lear* and *Titus Andronicus*.[1]

I thank W. B. Worthen, Pascale Aebsicher, and Sarah Werner for their inspiriting comments on an early draft of this essay. I also gratefully acknowledge my wife, Ayami Borlik, for translating the program notes and sharing her thoughts on the performance. Without her assistance, this piece could never have been written.

[1] Ninagawa's *Macbeth* opened in the British capital in 1987. Since then he has been a regular presence in the London theater scene, directing Japanese-infused productions of *The Tempest* (1992, sponsored by the RSC), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1996), *Hamlet* (1998, 2004), *King Lear* (1999, also with the RSC), *Pericles* (2003, at the invitation of Trevor Nunn and the Royal National Theatre), *Coriolanus* (2007), and *Twelfth Night* (2009). His 2006 *Titus Andronicus* was staged in Stratford as part of the RSC's Complete Works Festival.

In the wake of these initial accolades, however, a few Shakespeare scholars began to voice some sobering qualms. Kishi Tetsuo and Yeeyom Im have rebuked Western reviewers for drawing sloppy parallels with *kabuki* and *noh* theater, and accused Ninagawa of a kind of theatrical Orientalism, a gratuitous exoticizing of the plays that detracts from the text.[2] Certainly, any foreign spectator (particularly one such as myself with only a limited command of Japanese) needs to remain wary of succumbing to an aura of Otherness when attempting to decipher the work of non-Western directors. Nevertheless, auditing the complex cultural exchange that occurs when Shakespearean drama is reimagined on the international stage remains an urgent task for performance criticism. As Dennis Kennedy observes, "If we are to make the study and performance of Shakespeare fully contemporary and fully international we must worry less about his textual meaning and more about his prodigious appropriation (or misappropriation) in a global context."[3] But who can determine, and on what grounds, that Shakespeare has or has not been appropriated properly? While the Meiji era (1868–1912) witnessed a number of experimental adaptations in which Shakespeare was Kabukified, Japanese theater would, following a pivotal staging of *Hamlet* in 1911, seek to establish its authority by imitating Western standards of psychological realism, going so far as to replicate Royal Shakespeare Company set designs and to outfit Japanese actors in blond wigs or prosthetic noses. This Westernized style of performance came to be known as *shingeki* (New Drama). While researching this essay in the summer of 2010, I attended a *shingeki* performance of *Hamlet* in Tokyo modeled on Peter Hall's 1965 RSC production, complete with a replica of John Bury's ebony-walled set. Curiously, the show shared the stage on alternating nights with a Chinese production of *Hamlet*, a fact that conveniently illuminates the current predicament of Japanese theater, torn between Eastern and Western prototypes. This predicament finds powerful expression in Ninagawa's work. Because the director creatively mingles Eastern and Western styles with apparent abandon, his Japanese adaptations of Shakespeare have been dogged by accusations that they are neither Shakespeare nor authentically Japanese.[4] When Ninagawa brought an English-language *Lear* to London in 1999, many reviewers, irked that the Japanese visual rhetoric and

[2] Tetsuo Kishi, "Japanese Shakespeare and English Reviewers," in *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage*, ed. Takasahi Sasayama, J. R. Mulryne, and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 110–23. Yeeyom Im offers a more nuanced, moderate critique in "The Pitfalls of Intercultural Discourse: The Case of Yukio Ninagawa," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 22.4 (2004): 7–30.

[3] Dennis Kennedy, "Afterword: Shakespearean Orientalism," in *Foreign Shakespeares*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 290–303, esp. 301.

[4] John Peter, writing in the London *Times* (8 September 1996), quoted in Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 323.

the English verbal rhetoric failed to coalesce, seemed stranded in what Kennedy terms a "cultural no-man's land."[5] Yet Ninagawa's drama, I will argue, may be most provocative when it deliberately conspires to expose, rather than conceal, the cultural fault lines that persist in modern Japan and in the global *mise-en-scène* of late capitalist society.

Since the late 1980s, Ninagawa has become, for better or worse, something of a poster child for intercultural theater. The very label "intercultural" remains a vexed category in performance criticism, stirring both utopian aspirations of human camaraderie and anxieties that its pastiche aesthetic reflects and unwittingly endorses the cultural logic of postcolonial globalization with its voracious erasure of the local.[6] As Patrice Pavice reminds us, the term "*intercultural*" encompasses a broad spectrum of theatrical practices.[7] Should Ninagawa's *oeuvre* be lumped together with that of Western directors such as Robert Wilson and Ariane Mnouchkine, who emulate Japanese acting traditions? Likewise, can we mention Ninagawa's Tokyo-based productions in the same breath as those specifically devised for the international theater circuit? Conversely, a performance that might savor of Orientalism in the United Kingdom could be accused of a kind of Occidentalism when staged in Japan.[8] This shifting, chameleonic quality of Ninagawa's work, its capacity to destabilize the expectations of both Western and Eastern viewers, may be what makes it so beguiling and difficult to pigeonhole. In a 1995 interview, Ninagawa chafed at the idea that his hybridized style was intended for an international market and rejected the label "Japanesque."[9]

[5] Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*, 323. Ninagawa's *King Lear* received acerbic reviews from Benedict Nightingale, "The Sadness of This King Is Not Enough," London *Times* (29 October 1999); and Michael Billington, "King Nigel's Shakespearean Tragedy," *Guardian* (30 October 1999).

[6] For a utopian view of the liberating potential of world theatre, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of the Theatre: A European Perspective* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1997). More skeptical accounts can be found in Dennis Kennedy, "Shakespeare and the Global Spectator," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 131 (1995): 50–64; W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 117–68; and Yong Li Lan, "Shakespeare and the Fiction of the Intercultural," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 527–49.

[7] Patrice Pavice attempts to chart some of the differences and subcategories of intercultural theater in his introduction to *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 8–9.

[8] Dennis Kennedy has charged Ninagawa with perpetrating a kind of Occidentalism in "Shakespeare and the Global Spectator," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 131 (1995): 50–64, esp. 61.

[9] "Interview with Ninagawa Yukio," in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, ed. Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers, and John Gillies (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 208–19, esp. 211. In his defense, it must be said that Ninagawa's *japonisme*, in contrast to that of Kenneth Branagh's 2007 film of *As You Like It*, was aimed initially at Japanese audiences, as Kawai Shoichiro observes in "Ninagawa Yukio," in *The Routledge Companion to Directors' Shakespeare*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Routledge, 2008), 269–82, esp. 272.

He agreed to take *Macbeth* abroad, he claimed, at the instigation of his producer, Nakane Tadao, who hoped to demonstrate the universality of the staging. By looking at Ninagawa's first effort to direct a play by Christopher Marlowe, I do not concern myself here with his ballyhooed ability to validate claims of Shakespeare's universal genius. Instead, I argue that Ninagawa's adaptations deserve critical attention for their self-reflexive comments on the peculiar quandaries of intercultural theater. Seldom has he conveyed these quandaries with the force and clarity achieved in this production of *Doctor Faustus*. As this review unfolds, the intrusion of Japanese spectacle upon the English text felt designed—like the magus's moral transgressions—not only to titillate but also to unsettle and perturb.

Throughout the past decade or so, Ninagawa has fitfully drifted from the formula of mashing Eastern and Western dramatic traditions. The change may be a response to criticisms of his work; it also stems from Ninagawa's conviction that Shakespeare has become, thanks to the 1990s film boom and his own success, familiar enough to Japanese audiences to require no cultural translation.[10] Yet the same cannot be said for Christopher Marlowe and his Renaissance morality play. Ninagawa's recent production of *Doctor Faustus* at the Theatre Cocoon in Tokyo was, for the most part, a triumphant return to form, but a return with a difference: the production never permitted the audience to forget that they were watching a Japanese appropriation of an English text. The production did not seamlessly merge Eastern and Western idioms. Instead, the predicament of Japanese actors mounting a performance of an English classic came across as problematic, tantamount to the courageous but doomed flouting of damnation by Marlowe's tragic hero.

The unsettled relationship between Japanese and English drama was evident even in the theater's appearance. Although the Theatre Cocoon is housed in the ultramodern Bunkamura arts complex (billed by its web site as a "cross-cultural, multi-media facility" that aims to "promote an interchange of people, art, and things"), there had been an evident attempt to imbue it with the ambiance of the old *kabuki-za*, complete with the vertical striped curtain of burnt orange, green, and black.[11] Red paper lanterns were strung around the edges of the auditorium. As the crowd filtered in, the *fue* (flute) and *otsuzumi* (drum) played a desul-

[10] *Kabuki* elements continued to feature prominently in Ninagawa's *Pericles* (London, 2003), and *Twelfth Night* (Tokyo, 2005; London, 2009).

[11] See "About Bunkamura," at the official Bunkamura web site, http://www.bunkamura.co.jp/english/about/index.html (accessed 18 July 2011). The *Kabuki-za*, *kabuki*'s flagship theater in Tokyo, has just been demolished and is undergoing a total reconstruction for the fifth time in its history. It will be flanked by a forty-nine-story office building, a fitting symbol of the collision of traditional and modern culture in contemporary Japanese society.

tory duet. The Prologue concluded his speech by chasing up the curtain, as is traditionally done in *kabuki*, with the piercing clack of the *hyoshigi*, the wooden clapping sticks, struck in crescendo. But instead of unveiling a *kabuki* version of the tragedy, the curtain rose on a thoroughly Gothic-looking study and a Faustus clad in the long black cloak of the European Renaissance scholar. Enormous wooden books, some larger than double elephant folios, lay strewn about the room. Faustus would later scamper up them like stairsteps to bestride his desk (which often served as a stage within a stage), an apt visual allegory of the correlation between knowledge and power. The Good and Evil Angels, predictably dressed in white and black robes and suspended from wires, were cast in the mold of the medieval *psychomachia* tradition rather than as apparitions of Japanese *noh*. Wagner, meanwhile, wore black hose and a black gown garnished with a white Elizabethan ruff. The only Japanesque touch was a small *sensu* (folding fan) looped around Faustus's right wrist, with which he occasionally toyed as he mulled over his prospective career paths. In this scene and throughout the performance, Faustus's comportment and delivery (with a few key exceptions) accorded with Western notions of theatrical realism.

The probability that Ninagawa would seek a Japanese equivalent for the Faust legend was great, given his casting of Nomura Mansai in the title role. Nomura is a respected actor in the *kyōgen* tradition of Japanese theater, with considerable Shakespearean experience. He has played Hamlet, directed a *kyōgen* version of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and performed in a *kyōgen Comedy of Errors*. Fans of the film *Ran*, Kurosawa's adaptation of *King Lear*, may also recall his memorable supporting role as the blind flutist Tsurumaru. Nomura is best known in Japan for starring in the *Onmyo-ji* movies (translated as *The Ying-Yang Master I* and *II*) as Abe no Seimei (circa 921–1005 AD), the famed Heian-era magus of the Ministry of Divination. Given that Seimei allegedly had the power to command demons and used the pentagram as a personal crest, he was an ideal match for the Faust archetype. But the production made no allusions whatsoever to Japan's once-robust tradition of occult magic. Instead, Valdes and Cornelius were dressed as nineteenth-century European illusionists in tuxedos and top hats. Following Faustus's request that they perform some "demonstrations magical" (1.1.143),[12] Valdes's cane suddenly leaped from his grasp and orbited through the air around his arm. For this reviewer, the effect was bathetic; apparently, the powers for which Faustus sells his soul can be purchased for $19.99 at an online magic shop. Yet such legerdemain is a staple of the play's perfor-

[12] All citations from the play are taken from the B-text in *Doctor Faustus*: *A Two-Text Edition (A-Text, 1604; B-Text, 1616)*, ed. David Scott Kastan (New York: Norton, 2005), cited parenthetically in the text.

mance history, most notably in Orson Welles's 1936–37 New York production sponsored by the Works Progress Administration.[13] More to the point, magic translates more readily for a foreign audience than do the arcane controversies of Protestant theology, since the laws of physics are enforced on stages throughout the world, whether in Tokyo or Ontario. It is no coincidence that Ninagawa's most acclaimed adaptations, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, offer ample leeway for supernatural *coup de théâtre*. It seems almost inevitable, then, that the director would reach for *Doctor Faustus* in his first dip into the repertoire of early English drama.

In a notorious bit of theater lore, Elizabethan actors staging Marlowe's tragedy at Exeter panicked and stopped the performance when they became convinced "there was one devell too many amongst them."[14] No one watching or participating in this production could make the same mistake. Nevertheless, Ninagawa's *Faustus* was a colorful, literally, high-flying and boisterous realization of the play in which the director's own brand of theatrical sorcery was on exuberant display.

The first spellbinding moment of the performance came when Faustus summoned Mephistopheles. As Faustus intoned the Latin spell, a conjuror's circle, projected by the overhead lighting system, swirled around his feet. Propelled from below the stage to the rafters at rocket speed, Mephistopheles appeared in an enormous silver dragon costume, soaring and flapping his wings, as the sound system blared the *Dies Irae* from Verdi's *Requiem*. When Faustus ordered Mephistopheles (played with ferocious intensity by Katsumura Masanobu) to return in the shape of a Franciscan friar, he promptly descended back into the pit. However, the area beneath the stage, known in Elizabethan theater slang as "hell," was illuminated by crimson light. Since the stage was raised, Mephistopheles' costume change, aided by a team of actors who unclasped and reclasped his aerial harness, was entirely visible. The moment elicited audible gasps from the audience.

This proved to be only the first of many attempts to deconstruct hell as a theatrical illusion. When Faustus asked Mephistopheles how he had escaped from hell, Katsumura, floating fifteen feet in the air, spun about to face the silver-tinted glass wall at the rear of the stage. His reply, "Why this is hell," was all the more chilling for being delivered to the audience's reflection. It was as

[13] Lois Potter describes Welles's production in detail in "Marlowe in Theatre and Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 262–81.

[14] This story is recorded in the margins of a sixteenth-century book owned by "J. G. R." and was also reported by William Prynne in *Histrio-Matrix* (1633). Both versions are reprinted in *Doctor Faustus*, ed. Kastan, 181.

if we, an anonymous horde of faces, were the real demonic legion and he an indignant spirit imprisoned in the damnation of our gaze. This tableau lingered for two long seconds when a sudden flash turned the reflective wall translucent, revealing a two-tiered dressing room backstage bathed in red light where one could see various actors applying makeup, adjusting their *kimonos* and *obis*, or practicing their lines and blocking. Hell was not only below the stage but also behind it. Decorated with traditional *tatami* mats, red lacquerware furniture, folding screens draped with *kimonos*, Japanese parasols, a shelf of wigs, and even a prominently displayed *noh* mask, the backstage area was like a time warp back to the Edo era (1603–1868). Since I could not yet read the program notes in which Ninagawa explained his concept for the production—a *kabuki* troupe staging *Doctor Faustus*—this moment was, for me, as jarring as it was stunning. The jarring sensation was, no doubt, intended. Ninagawa is a past master at such Brechtian effects. In fact, he recycled this set design from his 1995 *Hamlet*. In that production, however, the exposed dressing rooms were visible while the audience was being seated and morphed into the chambers of Elsinore once the play began, foregrounding the fact that these were Asian actors impersonating Caucasian characters.[15] In *Doctor Faustus*, the exposure of the backstage was perhaps more dramatic for being deferred, while also reminding the audience that these were humans impersonating demons.

On the downside, unmasking the demons risked attenuating Faustus's tragic grandeur. Yet few twenty-first-century spectators believe in the literal existence of such spirits. So showing the actors slipping into their red spandex body suits and aerial harnesses served to vindicate Faustus's doubts about the afterlife. Insinuating that hell is, like the Masque of the Seven Deadly Sins, merely a play put on to delude Faustus, the production thus managed to extend the tragedy's reinterpretation of hell as a psychological condition rather than a geographic place. Despite its medieval trappings, *Faustus* is, for Ninagawa, a thoroughly modern play. In his comments in the program notes, Ninagawa explained that he approached Marlowe's text as a dramatization of Arthur Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer*. He likens Faustus to the French symbolist poet in that they both embrace madness and intoxication to access heightened states of reality and rebel against bourgeois morality.[16] Nomura's Faustus was on a heroic yet doomed quest "posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps" (to enjoy the whole

[15] This production played at the Barbican in 1998. See Jon M. Brokering, "Ninagawa Yukio's Intercultural *Hamlet*: Parsing Japanese Iconography," *Asian Theatre Journal* 24 (2007): 370–97; and Kawai Shoichiro, "Ninagawa Yukio," 277.

[16] Program notes, *Theatre Cocoon: Faust's Tragedy*, ed. Ohori Kumiko (Tokyo: Tokyu Bunkamura, 2010), 5.

truth in one soul and one body).[17] The director's notes describe Faustus as aspiring to a "revolutionary transformation of the world." In this respect, Ninagawa, who still fondly recalls his heady experiments with radical avant-garde drama in the 1960s, has a whiff of Faustus about him.

On stage, however, Mephistopheles seemed to stand in for the director. When the Holy Roman Emperor asked to inspect the neck of Alexander the Great's lover, we could see Mephistopheles frantically rummaging backstage through a prop box until he found a mole. He raced down a staircase to slap it on her just as the Emperor approached. As Faustus signed the contract with Lucifer, Mephistopheles stood in the orchestra pit conducting with the music while playing air-traffic controller to the squadron of demons hovering above the doomed conjuror. In the second half of the play, Mephistopheles played more to the audience. Trading his friar's garb for a gleaming white suit, he wandered through the aisles and even materialized in the balcony, gloating over his victim's impending fall.

While Ninagawa thought of Faustus as a precursor of Rimbaud, Nomura apparently took a biographical approach to the role. This interpretation may have influenced the actor's costume at the play's end, when he appeared in a shoulder-length blondish wig that made him look uncannily like the portrait (supposedly) of Marlowe found in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Having studied Charles Nicholl's *The Reckoning*, Nomura speculates in his interview that Marlowe may well have known that certain powers-that-be were conspiring to have him assassinated.[18] For Nomura, the tragedy voices the playwright's own anxieties about facing death bereft of God. Instead of relapsing to a craven fear of Christian hell, his final desperate soliloquies articulate the existential dread of the modern humanist, unable to believe in the consoling delusion of the afterlife.

Beyond its scandalous conception, the production featured some *risqué* moments, in keeping with Marlowe's reputation as the bad boy of Elizabethan drama. During the scene at the Vatican, Nomura performed the sacrilegious pranks with genuine rage. At one point, he pretended to sodomize a cardinal with a candlestick. Nevertheless, the Vatican scenes were the funniest in the production. Time was modulated throughout; so while Faustus and Mephistopheles terrorized the Pope's banquet in real time, the cardinals' and monks' faces distorted in slow motion into uproariously grotesque expressions of fear and trembling.[19] In the parade of the Seven Deadly Sins, meanwhile, Lechery

[17] Arthur Rimbaud, "A Season in Hell," in *"A Season in Hell" and "Illuminations,"* trans. Bertrand Mathieu (Brockport, NY: BOA Editions, 1991), 56.

[18] Program notes, *Theatre Cocoon: Faust's Tragedy*, 11.

[19] Although the costuming and setting were entirely Western, the direction here may have owed something to the tradition of slow-motion sequences in *kabuki*. To Japanese viewers with

emerged to perform her striptease in black silk stockings and an anatomically implausible bra. With its decadent hedonism, metatheatricality, and surreal spectacle, the performance had a Fellini-esque quality (Ninagawa even cast two dwarves as flying demons).[20] After Faustus signed the pact, he and Mephistopheles leaped up on his massive desk and danced an elaborate tango. Commenting on this moment in the notes, Ninagawa states that he chose the tango as a musical expression of Faustus' ecstatic pursuit of the utmost limits of sensuous experience.[21] Music figured prominently in the production, alternating between the soft strains of the *samisen* (the three-stringed Japanese lute) and *Carmina Burana*, between the tango *La Cumparasita* and Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, further underscoring the tension between East and West, profane and sacred. The tango scene also created a sexual tension between Faustus and Mephistopheles, verging at times on the homoerotic. Mephistopheles slipped a woman's red *kimono* over the scholar's robes and took the lead in the dance, which culminated in a kiss. In a traditional Japanese wedding, the bride changes into a red kimono at the end of the ceremony. So draping one over Faustus may have been an acknowledgment of the *shingeki* actor's real Japanese identity, as well as a symbol of the character's feminization and loss of purity. The homoeroticism was made yet more noticeable by having Faustus embrace a topless Helen of Troy, played—as it would have been originally—by a feminine-looking young man (although I had to check the program for verification) with prosthetic breasts.[22] Her appearance may have been an homage to the *onnagata*—the male actors in *kabuki* who specialize in female roles. While many *onnagata* roles are courtesans, Helen was not, as I half-expected, attired as a *geisha*. The red-lit backstage space from which (s)he emerged, nonetheless, emphasized the similarities between the theater and the old Edo pleasure quarters. In renouncing the Christian God, this Faustus found himself lured into a dissolute underworld which the production visually—if somewhat sporadically—associated with the racy milieu of *kabuki* during its glory days in the late seventeenth century.

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only a hazy sense of the doctrinal distinctions that fissured Renaissance Europe, the farcical scene likely conveyed contempt of religion in general rather than papistry in particular.

[20] In an interview, Ninagawa remarks that back in the 1970s he "would show Fellini movies, not Shakespeare, to the actors" ("Interview with Ninagawa Yukio," in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, 210).

[21] Program notes, *Theatre Cocoon: Faust's Tragedy*, 5.

[22] Ninagawa is not the first director to cast a male actor as Helen. Other notable productions that have done so include Christopher Fettes' 1980 staging at the Lyric Hammersmith and a 1989 performance directed by Barry Kyle at the Swan Theatre in Stratford. See David Bevington, "The Performance History," in *Doctor Faustus: A Critical Guide*, ed. Sara Munson Deats (London: Continuum, 2010), 55–56.

Given Ninagawa's penchant for spectacle, it is not surprising he opted for the B-text of the play, in a new translation by Kawai Shoichiro.[23] The 1616 version affords some unique and wonderful stage business—such as Faustus conjuring moving trees and a zombie army—which Ninagawa exploited with his signature razzle-dazzle. When Benvolio decapitated Faustus, two black-clad puppeteers like those in Japanese *bunraku* lifted up the ersatz head on a string. The duel between Alexander the Great and Darius, meanwhile, was executed in the style of a *kabuki* sword fight, with exaggerated gesticulations and sustained poses (known as *mie*). The tavern scene resembled a traditional *izakaya* (a kind of Japanese pub) and was played in a vaguely *kyōgen* style; the Hostess wore a plain commoner's *kimono* as she served drinks to Robin, Dick, and the Horse Courser. Unfortunately, in the opinion of many critics (myself included), the B-text diminishes Faustus by having him squander much of his twenty-four-year lease by performing parlor tricks and outfoxing drunken courtiers. To his credit, Ninagawa was conscious of this liability. During the scene in which Faustus magically imports grapes in winter, Mephistopheles stood in the orchestra pit, dangling a pocket watch and grinning with malicious, conspiratorial glee at the audience. This moment was echoed visually in the final scene in Faustus's study, when the shadow of a giant pendulum swayed back and forth across the stage. If Faustus's last hour did not inspire a dread of eternal punishment, his death still aroused sympathy: the extinguishing of a vibrant consciousness that refused to detach body from soul. The production may have lacked a certain spiritual *gravitas* (a lack no doubt exacerbated by my meager Japanese). But it more than compensated with its visual wit and metatheatrical high jinks, through which Ninagawa transformed Faustus's predicament (torn between medieval faith and modern skepticism) into the plight of the postmodern metropolitan subject suspended between localized and globalized identities.

At first blush, *Doctor Faustus* might seem rather resistant to intercultural adaptation. Of course, any contemporary director of the play, regardless of nationality, must overcome the challenge of involving modern secular audiences in the abstruse disputes of Reformation theology. This may pose an even larger hurdle for non-Western audiences and perhaps explains why Marlowe's most famous play is rarely performed in Asia. Although Buddhism has a fatalistic streak and accepts reincarnation (not unlike the Pythagorean metempsychosis invoked by Faustus), neither Buddhism nor Shinto promotes the idea of a personal relationship with one's God. How can you make viewers in twenty-

[23] For more on the differences between the 1604 and 1616 versions, see David Bevington, "Staging the A- and B-Texts of *Doctor Faustus*," in *Marlowe's Empery: Expanding His Critical Contexts*, ed. Sara Munson Deats and Robert Logan (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2002), 43–60.

first-century Tokyo relate to the psychospiritual torment of a lapsed Calvinist? Ninagawa's solution was "to blend the lofty world of European theology with Japanese *kabuki* and its stylized portrayals of the tawdry Edo demimonde to mirror Faustus's inner conflict between spiritual and earthly delights."[24] With each backstage illumination, the significance of the demonic became progressively clearer: hell was not an infernal realm of torment but a playful evocation of the *ukiyo* (floating world) culture of Edo Japan, with its headlong embrace of transient pleasures, including the glamorous illusions peddled by *kabuki*.[25]

Ninagawa's aim was not only to adapt the play for Japanese audiences but also, as he explains in the notes, to stage a *Faustus* as scandalous as Marlowe's would have been in 1590.[26] Whether this tactic was entirely successful depends on the expectations of the beholder. Some of Ninagawa's critics might find the flickering appearances of *kabuki* actors backstage another instance of the director's contrived exoticism. To appraise Ninagawa's approach properly, however, one needs to situate it in the context of the history of Japanese drama and its relationship with the West.[27] As previously stated, Japanese theater was dominated for much of the twentieth century by *shingeki* (New Drama), which sought to recreate authentic productions of European plays in accordance with the dictates of Western theatrical realism codified in Ibsen's heyday. Early in his career, Ninagawa recognized that for a Japanese theater company to produce only straightforward *shingeki* would be fundamentally dishonest, even slavish. From this angle, the self-conscious *japonisme* of Ninagawa's Shakespeare is a bulwark against Anglophone cultural imperialism. Ninagawa's *Faustus* created a theatrical mishmash that has no real precedent in the history of Japanese drama: a *kabuki* troupe staging a *shingeki* production. By portraying the Westernized Faustus as seduced and bedeviled by a distinctively Japanese performance tradition, Ninagawa "[staged] the metadrama" of his own inter-cultural theater.[28]

[24] Program Notes, *Theatre Cocoon: Faust's Tragedy*, 5.

[25] Marlowe's tragedy is sometimes read as a cynical spoof of Calvinist predestination: if your doubt is a symptom that you have been damned in advance, what incentive do you have to be good? If it is safe to assume that this dimension of the play eluded most Japanese spectators, Nomura's pleasure seeking had a similarly blasphemous impetus, which would be lost on most Western viewers if this play were performed in London. Interestingly, the term *ukiyo* in Japanese is a homophonic pun on a Buddhist phrase meaning "sorrowful world" (which sounds identical but is written with different characters). If earthly life is fleeting, as the Buddha claims, why not eat, drink, and be merry at the theater while you can?

[26] Program Notes, *Theatre Cocoon: Faust's Tragedy*, 5.

[27] For more on Ninagawa's work and its place in the history of Japanese Shakespeare, see Arthur Horowitz, *Prospero's "True Preservers": Peter Brook, Yukio Ninagawa, and Giorgio Strehler. Twentieth-Century Directors Approach Shakespeare's "The Tempest"* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 113–42; and Andrea Nouryeh, "Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage," in *Foreign Shakespeares*, 254–69.

[28] Lan, "Shakespeare and the Fiction of the Intercultural."

Faustus's rejection of European theology brought him into contact with the world of *kabuki* in a way that mirrors Ninagawa's recoiling from European-inspired *shingeki* to find inspiration in Japan's own dramatic heritage. The conflict between spiritual and earthly delights operated on another level, as a conflict between Western and Eastern orientations in the director's own body of work and, more broadly, in the history of post-Meiji Japanese culture.[29]

Considering that Marlowe perversely identifies with cultural Others in order to inveigh against the hegemonic values of Tudor England, his plays seem eminently suited to showcase Ninagawa's intercultural aesthetic and the challenge it poses to Eurocentric and—one might add, perhaps redundantly—Bardocentric norms. To begin with, Marlowe is not a global icon of world culture, so the temptation to read the Japaneseque flourishes as evidence of his play's universality is not so strong. In Japan, as in most of the non-English speaking world, Marlowe's most famous tragedy plays second fiddle to Goethe's verse drama: the theater program spelled the title of the play in Japanese as *The Tragedy of Faust*. He was singularly fascinated by the predicament of the stranger in the strange land.[30] Furthermore, Marlowe revels in exotic spectacle to a greater degree than his more famous contemporary; in his *Tamburlaine* plays, he also gazes further East. When reviewing an intercultural performance of his work, it is worth recalling that, unlike Shakespeare (who as far as we know never left England), Marlowe traveled abroad. As a government agent who infiltrated the Catholic seminary in Rheims and seems to have operated as a double or possibly triple agent, Marlowe is often depicted by his biographers as trapped between Protestant and Catholic factions, between English and Continental identities. He embodies an emergent Renaissance cosmopolitanism that prefigures that of our contemporary globalized culture. The skepticism in his plays is an outgrowth of a cultural relativism nourished by reading and travel. It is highly appropriate, then, that Faustus, too, asks for books and embarks on a grand tour of Europe. Entertaining foreign dukes with his conjuring tricks, the nomadic magus is also oddly similar to the globe-trotting Ninagawa who brought his productions to London at the RSC's behest. By tapping into the play's sense of the rootlessness of the early modern intellectual and relating it to that of the postmodern metropolitan *homme du monde*, this production made this Renaissance morality play, despite its arcane classical and religious allusions, feel prophetic and rel-

[29] Minami Ryuta detects a similar trend in Ninagawa's 2005 *kabuki* production of *Twelfth Night*. He examines the ways in which the director's work is self-consciously "haunted" (rather than bedeviled) by the ghosts of *kabuki* in his incisive essay, "'What has this thing appear'd again tonight?': Replaying Shakespeares on the Japanese Stage," in *Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia*, ed. Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta (New York: Routledge, 2010), 76–94.

[30] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980), 144.

evant. When I heard it in Japanese, recuperating from jet lag, Faustus's wish to employ his magical powers to "make a bridge through the moving air / To pass the ocean with a band of men" (1.3.103–4), and the vision of him circumnavigating the globe "upon a dragon's back, / That with his wings did part the subtle air" (3.0.17) sounded like premonitions of modern jet travel. On a metaphorical level, the conjuror's fantasy of jigsawing the continents together seems to have been realized. But is this erasure of place something that the play necessarily invites us to applaud? For instance, it is noteworthy that the scene in which Faustus imports grapes during winter associates the power of the nascent global economy to transcend space and time with black magic. *Faustus* has been read as equating imperial conquest with devilry.[31] If the play is somewhat equivocal about this burgeoning historical development, Ninagawa's production was equally ambivalent about its consequences.

In this light, Ninagawa's staging of *Faustus*'s tragic climax takes on a pointed resonance. Rather than being manhandled into hell, Nomura's Westernized Faustus was dragged backstage into the green room by a horde of *kabuki* actors impersonating Western actors impersonating demons. Emily Bartels has argued that Marlovian drama "exposes the demonization of the other" in European imperialist discourse and that Faustus's tormented monologues highlight an "otherness within the self."[32] At moments, Ninagawa's Faustus managed to weirdly dramatize Bartels's thesis. The production could be taken as a metatheatrical statement on the current predicament of Japanese drama: reluctant to merely ape Western theater yet unable to either fully embrace or escape from its own traditions. The Japanese theater finds itself in a kind of intercultural limbo: uneasy, dislocated, vertiginous, and self-reflexive, yet indisputably exhilarating. If this be damnation, Ninagawa, like Faustus, appears willing to be damned.[33]

[31] Toni Francis, "Imperialism as Devilry: A Postcolonial Reading of *Doctor Faustus*," in *Doctor Faustus: A Critical Guide*, 111–23. While Marlowe's anti-heroes are propelled by "the acquisitive energies of English merchants, entrepreneurs, and adventurers" (Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 144), this often proves their undoing. The Latin proverb on the Corpus Christi College portrait alleged to be of Marlowe is apt: *Quod me nutrit, me destruit* (That which nourishes me, destroys me).

[32] Emily C. Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1993), xv, 115.

[33] A brief epilogue: as soon as the thunderous applause faded, my wife and I sprinted out into the lobby to catch the last bullet train home, and almost bumped right into Ninagawa. Stunned, I could only manage to stammer in disbelief, "It's Ninagawa-*san*." My wife and I bowed as he walked past. He smiled (a smile that conveyed both a monk-like humility and the radiant joy of someone who absolutely loves doing what he does), bowed ever so slightly back in recognition, and, like Faustus into a welcoming hell mouth, vanished behind a door leading backstage.