

The ever-changing and unstable images of Ophelia's body are real in the sense that they are both true and chaotic. Reading the question of the female body in Hamlet in this way will contribute, I hope, to making Ophelia's body as well as the Shakespearean text itself closer to our cultural moment. It will help us to discover genuine possibilities for a change in body politics, so that we can make our bodies truly our own again.

(Hamlet and Japan, p. 152)

These words conclude an essay by Emi Hamana, 'Whose Body is it Anyway? A Re-Reading of Ophelia'. I came to Hamlet and Japan with the ignorant expectation that, if the book contained criticism by Japanese scholars, I would find an outlook significantly different from that of their Western counterparts. How wrong I was. As Hamana's passage shows, she is fully on the same wavelength as many Western feminists, or indeed modern critics in general. The text is viewed as 'patriarchal, a cultural product of the Elizabethan age', but also as offering possibilities for subverting the patriarchal system; it is the task of feminist body criticism to do so by redefining a female body in ways which challenge the patriarchal representation (p. 143). 'Ophelia's body presents itself indeed as a site of discourses which define, control, and contain it' (p. 145). The author shows herself well read in recent criticism, especially feminist criticism, and it comes as no surprise to read in note 1: 'Dympna Callaghan suggests that it is of vital importance to explore "the complexities and political implications of recovering the female body for the feminist critical project . . ." ' (p. 152). It is not the case, as these words might lead some to conjecture, that Hamana's essay is derivative; she is simply part of an international trend, and argues capably within it.

Much of Hamlet and Japan is, in fact, devoted to exactly such criticism as one might find in Western compilations offering recent approaches to a Shakespeare play. The book consists of three parts. Part 1 comprises essays mainly concerned with the history and ideas of Shakespeare's age, and Part 2 offers five essays attempting to reconsider 'the representations of Ophelia and Gertrude' (Introduction, p. xi). Together, these two parts occupy the first 184 pages.

As often, I found the criticism concerned with the female characters perhaps the most stimulating, though at times also the most infuriating. I don't concur with Hamana that Ophelia's body is a 'site of discourses', yet—curiously, in view of our theoretical disagreement—her reading of Ophelia struck me as remarkably probing and illuminating. Toshiko Oshio's 'Ophelia: Experience into Song' (pp. 131-42) was also rewarding, but might have been yet more adventurous. Her emphasis on the songs as telling us most about Ophelia seems to me convincing, as does her contention that it is in them that the character shows herself a potent figure. But the nature of Ophelia's sexual obsession is hardly explored. Still, a fine essay—perhaps the pick of the bunch, along with Hamana's. Amongst the essays dedicated to Gertrude, Akiko Kusunoki's "0 Most Pernicious Woman": Gertrude in the Light of Ideas on Remarriage in Early Seventeenth-Century England' (pp. 169-84) struck me as consistently perceptive and well informed, though at times too facile in its political assumptions (for example, in 'Hamlet's love for his mother is restored after her desexualization', p. 181).

The essays in Part 1 are perhaps less exciting and more predictable in their conclusions, but all deserve to be in print as respectable scholarly work. If there was one general worry I had in reading them it was the frequent encounter with the idea that somehow at the end of the play a transformed Hamlet offers us hope. This trend starts with the editor's comment, in her introduction, that Soji Iwasaka, who writes an essay on Hamlet and...
melancholy (pp. 37-56), 'does not neglect the hero's spiritual transformation in Act V, when he succeeds in transcending the temporal' (p. x). Yasunari Takahashi asserts that 'Hamlet's speech on the fall of a sparrow provides ultimate proof of his transformation ... the tone bespeaks a hitherto unexhibited transparence' (p. 16), and Toyoki Shimizu mentions Hamlet's 'serene philosophical stance in "the readiness is all"' (p. 60). It does not occur to such commentators (and they are a majority) that the fall-of-a-sparrow speech may be taken—and perhaps is intended to be seen as—something quite different: 'There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all' (v. ii. 213-16, Arden edition, ed. H. Jenkins). There is, surely, something laughable (though presumably not intended as such by Hamlet) in the idea that the fall of a sparrow should reveal 'special providence'. I see in the platitudinous talk about 'If it be now' etc. a sign of intellectual decline in the hero rather than anything else, and find his 'The readiness is all', given his actions both before and after this speech, both unconvincing and pretentious.

I don't mean, of course, that my response is the only possible one, but I do feel that Hamlet's admirers, in these essays and in criticism generally, take his words too much on trust. It is reassuring, therefore, to see the odd dissenting note among the essays in Hamlet and Japan, as in Hidekatsu Nojima's statement: 'The famous speech prior to the catastrophe, "the readiness is all" ... does not point to any spiritual enlightenment, as commonly believed' (p. 29).

In any case, it is possible to find much of value in work that one does not agree with, and although, for example, Takahashi's view on the end of the play strikes me as too optimistic, his essay 'Speech, Deceit, and Catharsis: A Reading of Hamlet' (pp. 3-20) is particularly good on the ambiguities, opaqueness, etc. of much of the language in this play. There is considerable—and welcome—variety in the topics covered in Part 1, contrasting with the emphasis on female characters in Part 2.

Apparently much had already been said about the specifically Japanese experience of Hamlet in a book the editor mentions on p. ix, Toshio Kawatake's Nihon no Hamuretto (Hamlet in Japan; Tokyo, 1972), according to which (in Ueno's words) 'the history of importing Hamlet is nothing but an epitome of the modernization of Japan'. Nevertheless, Part 3 gives one some insight into this matter, and to me was ultimately the most absorbing section of the book. Although I knew that Shakespeare had become a figure of major interest in Japan, I was still surprised to learn about the extent of the phenomenon. Thus, in 1990 there were no fewer than seventeen different productions of Hamlet, or adaptations of it, staged in Tokyo alone. So many performances of just one Shakespeare play is apparently exceptional, but the informative 'Shakespeare and Hamlet in Japan: A Chronological Overview' by Takeshi Murakami (pp. 239-303) shows just how solid and strong Japanese support for Shakespeare has become and is likely to remain. Why Hamlet in particular should be such a favourite does not become altogether clear, despite an interesting paragraph by Kazuko Matsuoka in 'Metamorphosis of Hamlet in Tokyo' (pp. 227-38) to the effect that psychologically the Japanese have been put into a state something like Hamlet's 'perpetual youth' as a result of hearing daily about the world's troubles while belonging to a society that gives them a sense of never being able to wield any real authority; perhaps this is even more the case now that the average life-span in Japan has moved to over 80 (p. 233). I shall conclude my comments on this valuable book by referring to the one essay—and it happens to be an excellent one—by a non-Japanese, namely Adrian James Pinnington's 'Hamlet in Japanese Dress: Two Contemporary Japanese Versions of Hamlet' (pp. 205-25), which gives an interesting account of the leading modern translation of the play by Yûshi Odashima, and of Kuniyoshi Munakata's reworking of the play into a Noh performance.

John O'Meara's Otherworldly Hamlet contains two essays which had already—and
rightly—been published, respectively in Cahiers Élisabéthains (1989) and Hamlet Studies (1988). To these are now added two other good essays, and the group of four does give something like O'Meara's general view of the play. But I feel that the format of this little book is not conducive to presenting his work in the best light. At present, the essays are often just a little too general, assertive, and difficult to produce a really solid achievement, excellent though some of the insights offered are. It would have been better to write a longer, more thorough, detailed, and lucid book. Even so, I found much of interest, and especially upon rereading the most complex sections.

All in all, Hamlet obviously continues to appeal everywhere as a play seen as offering us something of unique importance, and presumably not just as an enigma.

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Richard Dutton gives good reasons why civic pageantry is neglected in the classroom, citing its occasional nature and literary and dramatic marginality. Having depreciated the literary value of the pageants, he seeks a different justification for this collection. Civic pageantry is valuable, he writes, for 'our understanding of those times and of the place of dramatic spectacle in early modern negotiations of national, civic and personal identity' (p. 7). Further, to continue to neglect the civic drama 'distorts our perception' (p. 8) of the canonical works written by Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and others; that is, civic pageantry offers a key to the true significance of their dramatic works. This is a pretty small tail to wag such a large dog. Dutton's statement can only be true, I believe, if the main value of the plays of the Jacobean public stage is taken to be their reflection of negotiations of identity, but such a critical prescription is unbearably limiting. Dutton does not elaborate on the notion that civic pageantry is crucial for the perception of the great plays of the age, though his conclusion that it continued the biblical and moral tradition of the earlier drama into the later age, and his following remarks, point to its possible literary interest and provide a starting-point for consideration of the literary connections of the formal and civic drama. Much of this has already been done in the works listed in the select bibliography of critical and background works (though there are more of the latter than the former) and elsewhere. (I have discussed the relationships of Middleton's speech of Zeal in The Magnificent Entertainment, his The Triumphs of Truth, and A Game at Chess in my Middleton's 'Vulgar Pasquin': Essays on 'A Game at Chess', (1995), 40-2.)

Despite its new historicist aegis, the collection has canonical authorization. The works it includes come from the pens of some of the better-established Jacobean playwrights. The first is Dekker and Jonson's The Magnificent Entertainment Given to King James . . . , with a speech contributed by Middleton, written up and published by Dekker in 1604, and his part in the show published by Jonson earlier in the same year. The present edition for the first time conflates the early quartos, usefully giving readers an account of the whole of what James should have seen. Munday's Lord Mayor's show, The Triumphs of Reunited Britannia (1605) presents a dramatic account of Brutus' foundation of Britain that may have significance for King Lear, as Dutton discusses elsewhere (Literature and History, 12 (1986), 137-51). More accomplished is Middleton's The Triumphs of Truth (1613), printed here with his entertainment written for the opening of the New River water-supply. Finally, Webster's Monuments of Honour (1624) brings the reign to a close. Thus this edition collects examples of two of the three main categories of civic pageant: royal entries and shows honouring civic dignitaries, notably Lord Mayors. Although entertainments for royal progresses are mentioned, none appears here; the exclusion is not explained.

The texts of the shows are appropriately glossed and learnedly annotated. As a reviewer