

Dramatic Prominence on Speech Communication

Yoshikazu Shimizu

Terayama's Dialect in Aomori

Shuji Terayama (1935.12.10 — 1983.5.4) was born in Misawa City in Aomori Prefecture —the northern most prefecture of Japan's Tohoku area. Terayama's dialect originates from the Tohoku district, but his accent couldn't be found in Aomori, Hirosaki, Tsugaru or Goshogawara (the cities in which he was raised). As his father was a detective in a prewar special police station, his family often moved due to his father's many job transfers. Therefore in his boyhood, Terayama had been exposed to many different variants of Tohoku dialect in Aomori.

Terayama was interested in the Professor Higgins character from *My Fair Lady*, because of Higgins' ability to identify the particular part of London from which somebody comes solely from their accent. Higgins was able to identify both where someone was born and where they grew up as well. In a similar way, Terayama, by virtue of growing up in many different places assumed different identities as well.

The USA has different accents also due to the fact that it consists of people who came from many different countries. My nephews and nieces who live there are third-generation Japanese-Americans. They have since gotten married with Japanese, American, English, and Frenchman, and thus have taken on multiple identities. In a similar sense, Terayama also has multiple identities.

Terayama wrote *Encouragement of Runaway* (Iede-no-Susume『家出のすすめ』). In fact, he ran away from Aomori to Tokyo. He, however, would never be able to speak standard Japanese. One would think he might have been able to find other people from the country in Tokyo. However, since he had been brought up with “multiple identities,” he would never instinctively speak any standard language. He went on to become a dramatist, and staged his plays in Iran, France, Germany, USA, The Netherlands, UK, as well as all the islands of Japan.

Terayama wrote most of his theatrical dramas in standard Japanese, but he wrote radio dramas in different dialects. Presumably Terayama thought his audiences would listen more attentively to sound; accent, intonation, rhythm, and so on in a radio setting. That is, Terayama paid more attention to sound in radio dramas than in the theater.

Terayama also took notice of ancient children's songs in theatrical dramas, because the songs included dialect. We can find some of Terayama's own Tohoku dialects in these songs which allow us to understand Tohoku's background. Because Terayama was considered to be an avant-garde artist, he conveyed the essence of the poor districts in

which he was raised in Tohoku. Takagi Kyoza was also from Aomori, and wrote “Malumero”; poems in Tohoku dialect. James Kirkup then translated them into English. Surprisingly, this translation reminds us of desolated villages in England or Ireland. Kirkup’s translation strongly carries our mind back to John Millington Synge’s plays laid in Ireland. Although the following poem is set in the Tohoku district, Kirkup’s translation reminds us of a miserable country in Ireland.

Life; Wedding Night

That’s only the willow rustling,/Blown by the wind./Don’t cry./Don’t cry./Brides shouldn’t cry?/Are you crying because we have no money?/Why did we have to get married in this/Miserable way?/We can make believe we’re playing at houses. (p.301) (Translated by Nakano Michio and James Kirkup)

Terayama also quoted ancient children’s songs in his theatrical dramas. In *The Crime of Dr. Garigari* (*Das Verbrechen Des Professor Garigari*), their songs are included: *Warum weint die Braut, /Die an Brokat und Seidendamast baumelt, /Die Puppenbraut frs Schwestern-Spiel/wollen wir mit dem Seil verschnren. /Das Familienoberhaupt ha ° t Brute. /Sie soll blutige Kleider anziehen. /Das Famlien-Gebet: /Fluch ber den fluchbeladenen Mond/der 15 Nacht. /in ihrem roten Kimono/wollen wir sie lebendig begraben. /Keine Braut darf zu uns kommen. / Jeder Wind, der von drau ° en kommt, / blst in die Hlle.* (p.49.) (Deutsch von Manired Hubrict)

In this song, we can see why Terayama included these songs into his plays?especially when we compare and interpret the poetry and lyrics. Through quotation of these songs in English and in German, we can more clearly understand the life in Tohoku’s poor people as expressed by their dialect. These translations are heavy in the cold, northern climate of Tohoku. Because both England and Germany are also cold, they are particularly appropriate languages and cultures which can understand the subtleties of what Terayama was trying to say. Though the Tohoku dialect is impossible to translate exactly into either English or German, we are still able to appreciate the actual lives expressed in them. In fact, Terayama’s style of expression is very ambiguous. We can’t interpret his expression in any one particular way, because he had multi-identities. That is, one expression has many meanings. For example, Shakespeare made the witches in *Macbeth* say “Fair is foul, and foul is fair.” Witches have two minds, and indeed Terayama understood these witches’ changeable minds even in his high school days. Professor Higgins also understands multi-identities, because as a phonetician, he was able to identify these multi-identities through his ability to understand fine shades of differences in accents.

Terayama expressed multi-identities in songs through dialect. As we can’t find only one

meaning, we can understand multi-meaning by way of different translations, and the different shades of meaning expressed by these different translations. In other words, English and German each have their own identities, and since they are both northern countries, they are particularly appropriate for Terayama's Tohoku plays.

Finally, we can find at least one way to improve intonation, accent, rhythm through *My Fair Lady*, and we can also find Terayama's multi-identities through its translations into other foreign languages. Terayama's dialect didn't belong to any one particular place. However some try in vain to focus on only one identifiable accent. We must understand, though, that Terayama's accent belongs to no single place, even though we notice Terayama uses strong accents. Terayama's multi-identities are thus in the end concealed, despite the fact that he spoke in a very strong accent.