

KANGAROO: AN EXAMINATION OF
JAPANESE THEATRE IN THE 1960s AND A TRANSLATION

by

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Raisa A. Stebbins has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in (major).

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This paper is dedicated to Takemoto-sensei, Johnson-sensei, Shigeto-sensei, and Nancy Simon for all of the time they spent helping me through this process: to my parents, for putting up with the near constant barrage of facts about Japanese theatre; and to doughnuts, without which this paper never would have been completed.

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Introduction

When I originally proposed this project, I literally knew next to nothing about Japanese theatre. *Kabuki*, *Nō*, and the puppet theatre were only vague concepts—and the possibility of contemporary Japanese theatre never even crossed my mind. Furthermore, the more I thought about it, I realized that the focus of my theatrical education had been on Western theatre, which seemed somewhat limiting. Once I had begun researching, I discovered that there is a dearth of contemporary Japanese plays published in English. One source proposed that Japanese plays tend to be incomprehensible to Western readers, another that contemporary plays lost too much in translation. To me, this seemed like an interesting and puzzling challenge to a budding translator. Could I successfully translate a Japanese play? Moreover, could I make it playable for English-speaking actors?

As I have worked through the translation process, I became increasingly interested in the state of being of Betsuyaku's characters and their transformative natures during the play. Names were of great interest to me, and in particular, how names govern existence and the relationship between language and actuality—especially in regard to kangaroos. How does a name describe a thing? What happens when you change a name? Does changing a name change the nature of a thing?

In selecting a play, I resolved not to choose a play from the traditional Japanese theatre primarily because plays from the traditional theatre generally use archaic language, have a significant number of deeply cultural puns, and, as a result, are fairly difficult to comprehensively render into English for professional translators—and certainly not playable for American actors. Thus, I picked *Kangaroo* (カンガルー;

Kangarū), which I discovered partially by chance. As a Betsuyaku Minoru play appears in nearly every anthology of contemporary Japanese drama published in English today, he seemed like a particularly good choice—especially given his prolific output. In addition, I have always been fond of Absurdist theatre and welcomed the idea of translating the preeminent Japanese Absurdist. *Kangaroo*, which was written in the same time period as his two masterpieces, *The Little Match Girl* (マッチ売りの少女; *Matchi-uri no Shōjo*) and *The Elephant* (象; *Zō*), has not acquired the fame of the others. The reason, I think, is that *Kangaroo* is a comedy, and the others are decidedly more serious. *Kangaroo* is not a particularly long play and written in modern, albeit colloquial, Japanese. *Kangaroo* also met the other criteria for my project: it has not been published in translation, nor has it ever been performed outside of Japan. Thus, I decided that it would be an excellent project for me.

The following is intended as a very basic introduction to the history of Japanese theatre, major historical events surrounding *Kangaroo*'s time period, the Theatre of the Absurd, and the playwright so that the reader will be better able to comprehend the background against which *Kangaroo* was written. Japanese theatre is a vast topic, hardly covered in full in this study, and there are a number of excellent books written in English on the topic, which I highly recommend. The most pertinent of these volumes are listed in my bibliography. There are several sources used in this paper that I have translated from their original Japanese—these sources are noted in the footnotes. With regard to the Romanization of Japanese, the Japanese names that appear in this paper are left in their original format: family name first and personal name second; a macron is used to indicate

a long vowel and an apostrophe is used to differentiate single consonant and vowel syllables.

Finally, I embarked on this project in the spring of 2010, and in the year since then, I have grown quite fond of Betsuyaku and his plays, and I hope that this paper will help others find the same joy that I have.

A Brief Historical Introduction to 1960s Japan

In order to comprehensively explore Japanese drama in the late 1960s, it is important to note the significant historical events during this time period—especially since there is an undeniable connection between politics and drama in 1960s Japan. As David G. Goodman observes, “The transition from modern to postmodern drama in Japan was...integrally related to the question of nuclear weapons,” and the question of nuclear weapons was essentially linked to Japan’s relationship with the United States after World War II.¹

Japan’s defeat in World War II dealt a devastating blow to the country. Beyond sheer physical losses, Japanese citizens felt betrayed by their government, as Japan had never before been invaded or so decisively lost a war. That the Emperor—the spiritual and symbolic head of the Japanese Empire—announced the surrender, rather than the Prime Minister or his Cabinet, was crushing to the people of Japan. There was a sense of lost national identity—that perhaps the belief system upon which the country was governed was wrong: “Defeat was traumatic because it had discredited the institutions and values for which millions of Japanese had just given their lives, in particular the Emperor system, its institutional expression, and the philosophical and mythological systems of thought that informed it.”²

¹ David G. Goodman, *After Apocalypse: Four Japanese Plays of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asian Program, 1994), 1.

² David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s: The Return of the Gods* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1988), 19.

To quote Hachiya Michihiko, a Japanese doctor, at the time of the surrender: “The one word—surrender—had produced a greater shock than the bombing of our city.”³ The surrender of Japan, publicly announced in Japan at noon on August 15, 1945, led to six years of foreign occupation. Thus, “the prologue to the new alliance [between the U.S. and Japan]...was a period of ambition, fear, hate, conquest, and foreign rule.”⁴

One of the major events during the American Occupation of Japan was the creation of a new constitution. This constitution established the Japanese government as a popular sovereignty governed by a parliament, which made the Emperor officially a symbol of the State without any real power and served as a method to exonerate the emperor system of blame for the war. One part of the new constitution was the Japanese official renunciation of war, which would later cause friction between the two countries, and within Japan itself. Article 9 of Japan’s constitution reads as follows:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes...In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.⁵

This resolve to no longer maintain any armed forces or to attack another country, a popular decision, particularly pleased the leftists.

At the end of World War II, “the United States faced a world in which the militant Communism of Stalin’s last years was posing the greatest threat to its security in its entire history. A series of shattering events...forced Cold War considerations onto every

³ Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narrative of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28.

⁴ George R. Packard III, *Protest in Tokyo: the Security Treaty Crisis of 1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 4.

⁵ The Constitution of Japan, Chapter II, Article 9.

U.S. foreign policy decision.”⁶ America could not, after all, occupy Japan forever, and while Japanese independence was the goal of both countries, the U.S. nonetheless had concerns about how to protect its own interests and the Free World. These concerns were strengthened by the resolve of Japan, the major industrialized nation between the US and the USSR/Communist China, to dissolve its armed forces. As a result, in addition to the peace treaty, the US also coerced Japan into signing the Security Treaty Between the United States of America and Japan in 1951. This treaty “enabled the United States to achieve its two major objectives of giving Japan independence and providing for its own strategic security in the Far East. The occupation might end, but U.S. military power would remain in Japan under new legal arrangement between sovereign nations.”⁷

Concerning the terms of the treaty, Takemae Eiji writes,

In the summer of 1951, Washington attempted to give the bilateral security pacts an aura of mutuality, but no mutuality was involved. The base agreement was one-sided and riddled with inequalities. The US Joint Chiefs inserted what became known as the ‘Far East clause,’ a purposefully vague provision that allowed Washington to use American forces in Japan to insure ‘international peace and security in the Far East.’ In other words, the United States could use its installations in Japan to support military operations in other parts of Asia without consulting Tokyo beforehand. US troops would be stationed on Japanese soil for an indefinite period as an automatic right not contingent on Japanese assent. Thus, the treaty could not be terminated by Japan alone but required the consent of the United States.⁸

The language of the 1951 treaty clearly made Japan a submissive partner in the alliance. Due to the conditions of the Japanese surrender and the war-torn nature of the nation, the government was obligated to accept this treaty, but for the majority of the Japanese people, “the treaty could be tolerated at best for a brief period as a step toward national

⁶ George R. Packard III, *Protest in Tokyo*, 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ Eiji Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan*, trans. Robert Ricketts and Sebastian Swann (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2003), 503.

recovery, but by no stretch of the imagination could it be accepted as a permanent or even a long-term arrangement.”⁹ Once the details of the 1951 treaty had been released, after the treaty had been signed and ratified, the left charged that the treaty itself violated Article 9 of the Constitution by permitting U.S. forces to be based in Japan.¹⁰ In addition, many of the Japanese people considered it a continuation of the Occupation.¹¹ However, despite general public distaste, the treaty was, for the most part, seen as a necessary evil, one that Japan would do away with once she had recovered from the war.

“By 1957, however, the clouds of defeat and apathy were beginning to disappear and a new sense of national pride was emerging hand in hand with the nation’s growing strength and prestige.”¹² Thus, by the late 1950s, Japan had regained and surpassed much of its former international economic and social status, and the Japanese people were starting to reconsider the security treaty. All in all, the major objections to the 1951 treaty were as follows:

(1) it was one-sided and unequal in that it gave the United States the right to station troops in Japan but contained no specific obligation for the United States to defend Japan; (2) the treaty had no time limit; (3) the clause permitting U.S. troops to quell internal disturbances at the request of the Japanese Government was unsuited to a treaty between sovereign and equal nations; (4) the United States could use its Japan-based troops outside Japan without consulting Japan in advance: this could lead to retaliatory attacks against the bases by a future enemy of the U.S. and thus could involve Japan in a war against her will; (5) nothing in the treaty prevented U.S. forces in Japan from being equipped with nuclear weapons; (6) there was no precise obligation for the U.S. to abide by the U.N. Charter in acting under the treaty.¹³

In light of the general dissatisfaction with the treaty, especially with the American military bases, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke made overtures towards President

⁹ George R. Packard III, *Protest in Tokyo*, 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22-3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 47.

Eisenhower about revising the treaty. Eisenhower was receptive, and in 1958, both countries started to consider revision. However, this process brought new concerns to light. If Japan, now economically recovered, were to make a new “mutual security treaty” with the United States, how would that affect Japan’s relations with its Communist neighbors? If the United States and the USSR went to war, would Japan be pulled in? Since fighting a war was unconstitutional, and Japan had dissolved its armed forces, wouldn’t it be better to dissolve the treaty, or even to continue maintain the treaty that had been forced upon them?

The main conservative party in Japan—the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), to which Prime Minister Kishi belonged—favored revision. The liberal parties, composed of the Japanese Socialist Party (日本社会党; *Nihon Shakai Tō*; JSP) and the Japanese Communist Party (日本共産党; *Nihon Kyōsan Tō*; JCP), were against revision. Since the LDP controlled the Diet, the majority of the Left’s political power lay in its strong relationship with the labor unions and its ability to stage large-scale demonstrations. The other major leftist political entity to become involved in the protests of 1960 was the *Zengakuren* (an acronym for 全日本学生自治会総連合; *Zennihon Gakusei Jichikai Sōrenngō*; All-Japan Federation of Student Self-government Associations). The *Zengakuren* was made up of radical leftist students, although it should be noted that the *Zengakuren* were not Communists, and often clashed with Communist and Socialist leaders. In Japan,

University students...occupied a special position. They were, in their own eyes, and in fact, an elite group who had survived the fiercely competitive examination system, and their leaders, representing all classes, felt it their distinct duty and privilege to enlighten the ‘masses’ and cure society’s ills. They scorned politics

and election campaigns, preferring instead to wage ‘struggles’ as a kind of vanguard of the oppressed.¹⁴

The *Zengakuren* turned out to be an important participant in the 1960 riots. Packard argues, “the massive participation of students had as much to do with their feelings of shame and inferiority left over from World War II as it did with their proclaimed desire to prevent World War III. It revealed the disgust of the younger generation for anything that smacked of defeatism and subservience....”¹⁵ These students were strongly against the security treaty and just as strongly for the new constitution, especially for Article 9.¹⁶ This sense of shame derived not only from the actuality of having lost the war, but also from devaluation of prewar values, leaving the younger generations in charge of rebuilding the Japanese national identity. Shima Shigerō, one of the founders of the Bund, a Communist student group, said of the anti-security treaty campaign:

Our primary motivation was to revive our own humanity. We had been reading Marx’s early writings; we had been alienated to such an extent under the capitalist system as to become part of the machine, completely losing our humanity. We believe there is a clear line of demarcation between ourselves and the Communists of the prewar days. Their primary motivation was the spirit of martyrdom. In contrast our primary concern is the emancipation of ourselves as human beings.¹⁷

Although the Bund was a Communist student group, the feeling of the reclamation of humanity was also apparent in the *Zengakuren* and student groups as a whole. Of the treaty and the protests, actor-director Suzuki Tadashi said, “...in one sense, we believed that nothing had changed [after the treaty struggle]. We thought to put on plays because

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 336.

¹⁶ Kazuko Tsurumi, “Some Comments on the Japanese Student Movement,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 1 (1970): 106.

¹⁷ Kazuko Tsurumi, “Some Comments on the Japanese Student Movement,” 106-7.

of the sad lot of human kind... ‘This pitiful sense of loss’ or ‘impotence’ was now taken to be the normal condition of man...”¹⁸

Unlike the 1951 treaty, the draft of the proposed new mutual security treaty, to be called The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan (日本国とアメリカ合衆国との間の相互協力及び安全保障条約; *Nippon-koku to Amerika-gasshūkoku to no Aida no Sōgo Kyōryoku oyobi Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku*) was published before signification or ratification, which allowed the Left to raise a public outcry. During the period between the announcement of the proposed treaty and its ratification, Tokyo was the stage of increasing, though primarily peaceful, demonstrations. However, friction among the various leftist groups resulted in confusion about what the movement against the treaty should actually focus on:

It was a question whether the movement was to be a truly revolutionary one, led by activist students and the hard core of the labor movement, in which violence might play a part in overthrowing the treaty and unseating the conservatives [preferred by the Zengakuren], or whether it would place equal stress on parliamentary opposition and the ‘democratic process,’ accepting the lesser goals of overthrowing Kishi, dissolving the Diet, and discrediting the treaty in the eyes of the world [preferred by the Socialists].¹⁹

Despite large-scale protests, and perhaps due to these inner conflicts, the leftists were unable to stop Kishi from signing the treaty on January 19, 1960, and bringing it to the Diet for ratification. This had serious ramifications on Japan’s relationship with the Soviet Union. Immediately following the signing of the treaty, the Soviet government sent a memo to the Japanese Ambassador to the USSR, reading: “Is it not clear to everyone today that in conditions of a modern rocket-nuclear war all Japan with her small and thickly populated territory, dotted moreover with foreign war bases, risks sharing the

¹⁸ Akihiko Senda, *The Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i, 1997), 4.

¹⁹ George R. Packard III, *Protest in Tokyo*, 171.

tragic fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the very first minutes of hostilities?”²⁰ The Japanese Communists quickly picked up and projected this idea. Japan’s primary concern during the treaty revision process “was the question of whether or not the treaty would drag Japan into an unwanted war in some other part of the Far East.”²¹ In order to get the treaty approved, Kishi forced the Diet vote while the leftists were staging a sit-down protest in another part of the Diet Building. The public response was, not unexpectedly, rather negative. As Hidaka Rokurō, editor of the book, *Senkyūhyaku Rokujūnen Gogatsu Jūkūnichi* (Nineteenth of May, 1960) wrote:

May 19, 1960, along with December 8, 1941, will become an unforgettable date for the nation. It is well known that on December 8, 1941, the surprise attack against Pearl Harbor touched off the Pacific War which cost the lives of 1,200,000 of our countrymen, but May 19, 1960, was the day when the government, under Kishi Nobusuke, who had been involved in planning the surprise attack, delivered a surprise political attack against the nation and against democracy.²²

The flames were fanned further by the fact that the date upon which the treaty would be automatically ratified corresponded with the date of President Eisenhower’s scheduled visit to Japan on June 18, 1960. This visit never occurred because on June 15, 1960, during large-scale protests around the Diet, *Zengakuren* members stormed the Diet and the resultant clash between students and police left one woman dead. The Left immediately identified Kamba Michiko, the first and last casualty of the 1960 protests, as a martyr. Thus, although the treaty had been ratified, the protests did not cease. “The question now was not whether one believed in the new treaty but whether the democratic process would survive.”²³ In this way, the focus of the protest shifted from the treaty to

²⁰ Ibid., 184.

²¹ Ibid., 202.

²² Ibid., 237. It should be noted that the Attack on Pearl Harbor occurred on December 8th in Japan, not December 7th.

²³ Ibid., 272.

Kishi himself. In the end, after pushing the treaty through ratification and into law on June 23, 1960, Kishi promptly resigned and the protests were broken off.

The revision of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty and the protests and opinions surrounding it would strongly impact the Absurdist plays written in the late 1960s, because many young playwrights had participated in this conflict. Tsuno Kaitarō, a prominent member of the activist Japanese theatre in the 1960s wrote:

We, on the other hand, are attempting to reaffirm our tradition, even when we find it distasteful, in order to deal directly and critically with it. Our hope is that by harnessing the energy of the Japanese popular imagination we can at once transcend the enervating clichés of modern drama and revolutionize what it means to be Japanese.²⁴

²⁴ David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 16.

An Introduction to Japanese Theatre

It is important to consider Japanese traditional theatre when discussing contemporary Japanese theatre, because, like theatre in the West, Japanese contemporary theatre has evolved from its traditional roots. *Kangaroo* is a Japanese play written for a Japanese audience, who have, at least, some background familiarity with Japanese traditional theatre—most likely *kabuki*. Therefore, in order to properly understand contemporary Japanese theatre, the Western reader will benefit from some familiarity with Japanese theatrical history.

Japan has had a lively and much beloved theatrical tradition for at least thirteen centuries. The first documented theatrical performance is recorded in the *Kojiki*, the Record of Ancient Matters, in 712 CE. This particular entry records a mythological incident wherein the sun goddess, Amaterasu, grew angry and retreated to a cave. She was drawn out again by the bawdy dancing of Ame no Uzume, goddess of the dawn and revelry, and the laughter of the gods. Her dance is said to have inspired *kagura*, a traditional ritual dance form.²⁵ Although originally performed solely for the Imperial court, *kagura* soon filtered down into various regional folk rituals, where it became a theatrical dance form used to tell folktales. Thus, traditional theatre in Japan originated through religious ceremonies, and has often included elements of the supernatural, eroticism, and dance. Indeed, many of the plays performed in the traditional repertory today were written centuries ago and include the aforementioned elements. There are four types of traditional Japanese theatre: *bugaku*, *nō*, *kabuki*, and the puppet theatre; and there are several types of “modern” theatre.

²⁵ Thomas Immoos and Fred Mayer, *Japanese Theatre*, trans. Hugh Young (New York: Rizzoli), 34.

Bugaku (舞楽), a type of theatre that combines music and dance, was performed at court, Shinto shrines, and Buddhist temples. *Bugaku* dances came to Japan through China and Korea in the seventh and eighth centuries, and were later reorganized and made an essential part of court life until the Kamakura period (1192-1331), when its popularity greatly waned.²⁶ *Bugaku* dances, although more serious than *kagura*, are theatrical dances. *Bugaku* dances generally depict scenes from legend. *Bugaku* is sometimes performed in mask, and always accompanied by carefully prescribed musical instruments. Approximately fifty *bugaku* plays remain and are performed today. Currently, men perform most *bugaku* plays, but originally women performed the dances.²⁷

Nō (能) theatre formed from many sources: the traditions of *sarugaku* and *sangaku*, both improvisational theatrical traditions imported from China that resembled the Western commedia dell'arte; Buddhist morality plays which were blended with the peasant tradition of *dengaku*—fertility rituals; and epic ballad poetry, sung by blind monks accompanied by a *biwa* (lute), which eventually became dance sagas called *kusemai*. Kan'ami (1333-1384) and his son Zeami (c. 1364-c. 1443), both traveling players, united these myriad dramatic forms to create and formalize the *nō* theatre. *Nō* unifies dance, music, and drama by setting masked actors onstage to be accompanied by chanting and music. The use of mask is very important to Japanese religious ceremonies, because it allows the wearer to represent and ritualistically become a god or a demon.²⁸ Thomas Immoos writes, that after Zeami's death, "the general direction of development

²⁶ Thomas Immoos, *Japanese Theatre*, 51.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

[of *nō*] was away from realistic acting towards a stylized, symbolic manner of presentation governed by a strict ideal of beauty in line with the stoic code of honour of the aristocratic warrior class and expressing their emotions and ideals.”²⁹ As a result, *nō* plays focus on extremely serious topics, and so a lighter form of performance, called *kyōgen* (狂言), is performed during intervals to break up the solemnity.

Although there has been some innovation within the form, and new *nō* plays have been written, the repertory of two hundred and forty plays is well established. It includes five categories of *nō* plays: 1. Shinto gods; 2. Man (battle pieces); 3. Woman; 4. Humans in a crisis; 5. Manifestations of demons and Buddhist saviors.³⁰ *Nō* plays, many of which are several hundred years old, are often extremely difficult to understand as they are written in antiquated language and are full of allusions to songs and poetry popular in their time period—generally some time around the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. Thus, modern *nō* has a small, but dedicated following of people who have taken time to understand and appreciate this art form.

Whereas *nō* can be compared to Western opera, *kabuki* (歌舞伎) is far more similar to Western popular theatre. Although possibly derived from *kyōgen*—the comic interludes during a *nō* play—*kabuki* truly began in 1603 with a young woman named Okuni, who began a new form of dance-drama in the riverbeds of Kyoto. The original performers of *kabuki* were women, and they primarily performed dramas about everyday life. In 1629, during the Edo period, female performers were banned because they often served as prostitutes. Thus, the performance of *kabuki* was left to men. Immediately,

²⁹ Ibid., 75; cf. Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism, Revised Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 114.

³⁰ Thomas Immoos, *Japanese Theatre*, 43.

adolescent men filled the positions vacated by women, and developed the famous *onnagata* (female impersonator) role, but since the young men were also often available for prostitution, they, too, were banned from the stage. Generally, an all male cast performs today's *kabuki*—including *onnagata*—although women have started to reappear. *Kabuki* also has a narrator, whose job is to set the scene for the actors to perform in, and musicians accompany them for the dance pieces. *Kabuki* has two main genres in addition to the dance pieces: the historical plays (*jidaimono*) and the domestic plays (*sewamono*). The most famous of *kabuki* plays is the mammoth *Kanadehon Chūshingura* (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*), an eleven-act piece written originally for the puppet theatre concerning forty-six (technically forty-seven) loyal retainers who seek to avenge the death of their lord.

There has been considerable crosspollination between *kabuki* and the puppet theatre, both of which share playwrights and plays. Both dramatic forms appeared in order to entertain the emerging middle-class merchants, and, as such, are far removed from the serious, stylized nature of *nō*. However, the significant difference in the two forms is that the actors in the *kabuki* theatre are arguably more important than the characters that they play. *Kabuki* actors are known to change scripts in order to flatter themselves or even to add scenes that they are particularly good at. In response, traditionally, the audience of *kabuki* is very vocal in shouting out appreciation for the actors. There have been movements to modernize both *nō* and *kabuki*, some more successful than others, although this has been more successful in *kabuki* where newer plays co-exist with older plays, which we will be able to see in *Kangaroo*.

The Japanese puppet theatre is commonly called *bunraku* in the West, but the correct title is *ningyō jyōruri* (人形浄瑠璃; puppet ballad drama). This type of traditional theatre is performed with very large puppets—some nearly four feet tall—accompanied by a narrator and *shamisen*. Three puppeteers control the head and right arm, the left arm, and the legs, in descending order of importance. The puppet theatre is the original home in Japan for playwrights, especially for those who do not appreciate *kabuki* actors changing their plays, as the script is of utmost importance in the puppet theatre. Most famous of the puppet playwrights is Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725), who is well known for his plays about lovers' suicides.

In addition to the traditional forms of theatre, Japan also has several forms of “modern” theatre—which is to say, theatrical forms created after modernization and westernization. Thus, unlike all prior forms of theatre mentioned, both *shingeki* and *shimpa* are styles of Japanese theatre that draw on Western influence. *Shimpa* is an abbreviation of *shimpageki* (新派劇; New School Drama). *Shimpa* was Japan's next step in theatrical development, which emerged after Japan was opened to the West. Sudō Sadanori (1867-1907) is considered the originator of *shimpa* theatre. *Shimpa* was originally a protest against the conservative government. This new form of drama, while mostly amateur and political, introduced some Western conventions into the theatre that included: “darkened auditoriums and dramatic stage lighting,” and “the new dramatic subject of social and political struggle,” and it “re-introduced women to the stage.”³¹

Kawakami Otojirō (1864-1911) followed Sudō and made *shimpa* into a lasting form of drama. He was responsible for creating successful war plays based on Japan's

³¹ Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre*, 234-5.

campaigns in Korea and China. He also toured abroad with his company and was the first to bring Japanese theatre to the West. When he returned to Japan, he staged several of Shakespeare's plays and works by Maeterlinck and Sardou. *Shimpa* under Kawakami depended mostly on sensationalism and melodrama and certainly was not a profound form of drama. That being said, Kawakami's *shimpa* is notable because it proved that actors could perform outside of the traditional forms and make a profit. *Shimpa* was successful because, unlike *kabuki* and *nō*, it utilized modern themes, especially nationalism and Japan overseas, colloquial language instead of formalized or archaic language, and new and exciting conventions of performance and acting. However, since World War II, *shimpa*'s popularity has slowly faded, and while *shimpa* plays are still performed, they are redolent of melodrama and old-fashioned playwriting.

Shimpa, however, did form a bridge between *kabuki* and *shingeki* (新劇; New Theatre). *Shingeki* originated among Tokyo university students, primarily at Waseda and Keiō Universities. Theatre clubs were founded at both universities: *Bungei Kyōkai* (文芸教会; The Literary Association) by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1858-1933) at Waseda and the *Jiyū Gekijō* (自由劇場; The Free Theatre) by Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928) at Keiō. While the groups differed about the method of theatrical change—Tsubouchi was interested in serious study of Western literature as a method of reforming Japanese literature and theatre, while Osanai championed a complete break with traditional theatre and the creation of a new theatre based on contemporary Western ideas, primarily realism—the style of acting of both groups remained based in *kabuki*. Unfortunately, both groups dissolved not long after the beginning of World War I, and *shingeki* was left to the sporadic performance of amateur troupes. In 1923, however, Osanai and Hijikata Yoshi

(1898-1959) founded the *Tsukiji Shōgekijō* (築地小劇場; the Little Theatre at Tsukiji), which was the first theatre dedicated to the production of *shingeki*. The *Tsukiji Shōgekijō* was designed according to Western theatrical conventions, with a proscenium arch and a Western lighting system—in direct contrast to the traditional Japanese theatre, which, in both *nō* and *kabuki* is wide, but not very deep, and lacking a proscenium arch. The *Tsukiji Shōgekijō* subsequently became the center of the *shingeki* movement.

After the deaths of Tsubouchi and Osanai, *shingeki* became the haven of leftist intellectuals and thus was politicized. One of the positive outcomes of this shift was the affirmation of status for Japanese playwrights. The Japanese playwright had become much neglected with the advent of Western theatre.³² After the war started, when the increasingly militarized government began cracking down on leftist theatre, the focus of *shingeki* again shifted with the formation of the *Tsukijiza* (築地座; The Tsukiji Company), which aimed to focus on serious Japanese drama.

The American Occupation initially favored *shingeki*, because “they were distrustful of the ‘feudalistic’ traditional drama of *kabuki* and *nō*...”³³ However, as the Marxist influences of *shingeki* reemerged, support dwindled, and *shingeki* has gradually become a much smaller section of modern Japanese drama. Today, *shingeki*, while not enormously popular, is still performed regularly by the three major companies: *Gekidan Mingei* (劇団民藝; The People’s Art Theatre), *Bungakuza* (文学座; The Literary Theatre), and *Haiyūza* (俳優座; The Actor’s Theatre).

³² Ted T. Takaya, ed., *Modern Japanese Drama: an Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), xix.

³³ Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre*, 253.

However, the *shingeki* tradition of realism began to change in the fifties with the introduction of Absurdist theatre.³⁴ The introduction of Western Absurdism provided young Japanese playwrights with new source material and new ideas to work with. This new material coalesced into two new forms of theatre that appeared from the 1960s through the mid-1970s. Robert Rolf writes that the new playwrights of the 1960s

...were inspired by a combination of factors: the example of the absurdism of Ionesco and, especially, Beckett; participation in the nationwide demonstrations against the ratification in 1960 of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, which removed protest and anti-establishment stance-taking from the exclusive province of the Old Left; and the general exhilaration of the youthful international counterculture of the middle and late 1960s.³⁵

The *angura* (アンガラ; Underground) movement arose among leftist university students. These student writers set out to shock and disturb.³⁶ They were primarily concerned with the rejection of the tenets of *shingeki* drama and “the attempt to create a new, original, non-western contemporary Japanese theatre, rooted again in the native tradition.”³⁷ Part of this abandonment of *shingeki* traditions was to forsake traditional theatre spaces: *angura* troupes performed in tents, coffee shops, and the streets of metropolitan areas.

The *Shōgekijō Undō* (小劇場運動; the Little Theatre Movement), another 1960s avant-garde movement, was associated with Waseda University. Like the *angura* movement, it was a “revolt against conventional theatre.”³⁸ The *Waseda Shōgekijō* (早稲田小劇場; Waseda Little Theatre) formed around actor-director Suzuki Tadashi, with

³⁴ Ibid., 257.

³⁵ Robert T. Rolf, “Tokyo Theatre 1990,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 9, no. 1 (1992): 86.

³⁶ Brian Powell, *Japan’s Modern Theatre: a Century of Change and Continuity* (London: Japan Library, 2002), 178.

³⁷ Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre*, 259.

³⁸ The Japanese Playwrights Association, ed., *Half a Century of Japanese Theatre VI, 1960s Part 1* (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Co. Ltd., 2004), 1.

Betsuyaku Minoru as the central playwright. Both avant-garde movements sought to reconceptualize space and the relationship of the audience to the stage through experiment.³⁹ Many of these experiments went beyond physicality and into the writing of plays. Pulling ideas from the Western Absurdist, the playwrights of the *angura* and *shōgekijō* movements started to change the structure of their plays. Rolf writes, “The new dramaturgy often meant text structured nonlinearly to create a sense of cyclic or mythic, rather than historical, time.”⁴⁰ This structure can be seen in *Kangaroo*, and in several others of Betsuyaku’s plays. Since both of these movements were associated with universities and young people, they “opened up unprecedented opportunities for the younger generation in the modern Japanese theatre to gain first-hand experience,” which had previously been unavailable to many young people due to the somewhat mystic nature of the Japanese acting profession.⁴¹ Although *angura* and the *shōgekijō* movements were concentrated around a time period of great political unrest for Japan, the plays and ideas that emerged are still very important to Japanese theatre history.

Today, Japanese theatre consists of a composite of all the varieties of theatre mentioned above, and while some bits and pieces have been lost or have faded into history, it should be noted that Japan has had, and continues to have, a rich and varied theatrical tradition that has produced some truly excellent playwrights.

³⁹ Robert T. Rolf, *Modern Japanese Theatre 1990*, 86.

⁴⁰ Robert T. Rolf, “Tokyo Theatre 1990,” 86.

⁴¹ Ted T. Takaya, ed., *Modern Japanese Drama*, xxxvi.

A Brief Discussion of Absurdism

To better understand the Japanese Absurdist movement, it is helpful to examine the Theatre of the Absurd, which originated in Western Europe, particularly in France, during and after World War II, and traveled to Japan during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Critic Martin Esslin coined the term “Theatre of the Absurd” and further defined it in his 1961 book of the same name. He introduces the concept of “the Absurd” by quoting Albert Camus:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.⁴²

Esslin conceived the term “as a generic concept, a working hypothesis for the understanding of a large number of extremely varied and elusive phenomena.”⁴³ He included under this umbrella playwrights as varied as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, and Jean Genet, pointing out that the movement called the Theatre of the Absurd is “not an ideological position but rather...[the playwright’s] bewilderment at the absence of a coherent and generally accepted principle, ideology, ethical system...in our world.”⁴⁴ Thus, although all of these playwrights took radically different approaches to playwriting, there are some essential commonalities among them, which allow us to treat them as a group.

⁴² Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961), xix.

⁴³ Martin Esslin, *Reflections: Essays on Modern Theatre* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), 183.

⁴⁴ Martin Esslin, *Reflections: Essays on Modern Theatre*, 184.

In the devastation immediately following World War II, artists were left to “confront a universe deprived of what was its center and its living purpose, a world deprived of a generally accepted integrating principle, which [had] become disjointed, purposeless—absurd.”⁴⁵ Many of these artists subscribed to Friedrich Nietzsche’s statement that “God is dead,” and its implication that man is denied certainty of whether his existence has purpose or meaning—this is the “living purpose” that has been lost.⁴⁶

Therefore, the Theatre of the Absurd

bravely faces up to the fact that for those to whom the world has lost its central explanation and meaning, it is no longer possible to accept art forms still based on the continuation of standards and concepts that have lost their validity; that is, the possibility of knowing the laws of conduct and ultimate values, as deducible from a firm foundation of revealed certainty about the purpose of man in the universe.⁴⁷

If the purpose of man has become lost or unclear, the Theatre of the Absurd reasons, then the nature of art must change to reflect the new human condition:

...the Theatre of the Absurd is facing up to a deeper layer of absurdity—the absurdity of the human condition itself in a world where the decline of religious belief has deprived man of certainties. When it is no longer possible to accept simple and complete systems of values and revelations of divine purpose, life must be faced in its ultimate, stark reality.⁴⁸

Here, it is clear to see how Absurdist theatre, although originating in the West, might have greatly appealed to Japanese artists at the end of World War II, especially in light of the horror of the atomic bombings, and the “betrayal” of the emperor system and the values inherent in it.

Since the Theatre of the Absurd is a term, not an actual movement, it has only a few defining characteristics. Generally, plays that fall under the heading of Absurdism

⁴⁵ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 290.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 290-1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

are defined by irregular narrative, usually non-linear or cyclical; innovative use of language, including, but not limited to inventing words or manipulating grammar; and undefined characters—all used to dissociate man and the meaning of his existence, all of which appear in *Kangaroo*. One of the ways that the Absurdist playwrights attempted to recreate the purpose of man through the mystification of the ordinary—“We live in a world that has lost its metaphysical dimension, and therefore all mystery. But to restore the sense of mystery we must learn to see the most commonplace in its full horror...”⁴⁹ For example, in the beginning of Eugene Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano*, the Smiths’ initial dialogue is modeled on an English language primer.⁵⁰ Although in the context of a beginner’s language textbook the Smiths’ dialogue is entirely sensible, once removed from its context, we become overwhelmed, as Ionesco writes, by

some astonishing truths—that for example, there are seven days in the week...that the floor is down, the ceiling up, things I already knew as well, perhaps, but that I had never seriously thought about or had forgotten, and that seemed to me, suddenly, as stupefying as they were indisputably true.⁵¹

Indeed, these plays were so different from the previously established norm that Esslin writes:

it is only natural that plays written in so unusual and baffling a convention should be felt to be in special need of an explanation that, as it were, would uncover their hidden meaning and translate it into everyday language. The source of this fallacy lies in the misconception that somehow these plays must be reducible to the conventions of “normal” theatre, with plots that can be summarized in the form of a narrative. If only one could discover some hidden clue, it is felt, these difficult plays could be forced to yield their secret and reveal the plot of a conventional play that is hidden within them. Such attempts are doomed to failure...Instead of a linear development, they present their author’s intuition of the human condition by a method that is essentially polyphonic; they confront their audience with an

⁴⁹ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁵¹ Ibid., 87.

organized totality, rather like the different themes in a symphony, which gain meaning by their simultaneous interaction.⁵²

As shown above with *The Bald Soprano*, it is only by taking the familiar and making it strange that the Absurdist can explore the human condition.

Most significantly, these plays indicate a shift in the direction of thought—to the drama of man's interior, rather than his exterior. This can be seen in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, which examines, in excruciating detail, the action of waiting.

Kangaroo is also too far from being a conventional play for it to be easily explained. In *Kangaroo*, Betsuyaku employs a non-linear narrative, a complete disintegration of language, and highly undefined characters, all of which come together in order to make a successful Absurdist play.

As the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd, each in his own way, were exploring bringing the inner life of man to the stage, the major change in the new style of drama was the use of language. Most of the playwrights that have been associated with the Theatre of the Absurd have explored the absurdity inherent in language. Most importantly, they have concluded that human communication is impossible because language is fallible,

for if it is the translation of the total intuition of being into the logical and temporal sequence of conceptual thought that deprives it of its pristine complexity and poetic truth, it is understandable that the artist should try to find ways to circumvent this influence of discursive speech and logic.⁵³

Thus, some hallmarks of the Theatre of the Absurd are the difference between what is said and what is understood and the difference between what is said and what is done.

Things that might have once seemed so certain as to be unworthy of mention are now

⁵² Ibid., 13.

⁵³ Ibid., 296.

hauled out and picked over exhaustively, such as the identity of the dead Bobby Watson and the relationship between Mrs. and Mr. Martin in *The Bald Soprano*—“A yawning gulf has opened between language and reality.”⁵⁴ A great weakness in language, explored by the Absurdist, is the fact that everything in life is experiential, and no two people can have exactly the same experience, which makes the concept of a common language laughable: “If one man says ‘Grandmother’ and another man says ‘Grandmother,’ they *seem* to be saying the same thing, but are in fact talking about vastly different people.”⁵⁵ It is for this reason that many Absurdist plays have characters named “Man” or “Prostitute,” which allows both the audience and the actors to bring their own experiential associations to the character. Referring to language in Eugene Ionesco’s theatre, Esslin writes:

Ionesco’s theatre is a poetic theatre, a theatre concerned with the communication of the experience of states of being, which are the most difficult matters to communicate; for language, consisting largely of prefabricated, congealed symbols, tends to obscure rather than to reveal personal experience. When A. says, “I am in love,” B. will understand by it merely what *he* has experienced, or expects to experience. No real communication has taken place. Both remain imprisoned, as before, in their own experience...If, however, language, because it is conceptual, and therefore schematic and generalized, and because it has hardened into depersonalized and fossilized clichés, is a hindrance rather than a means toward such genuine communication, the breakthrough into the other human being’s consciousness of the poet’s mode of feeling and experience has to be attempted on a more basic level, the pre- or sub-verbal level of elementary human experience.⁵⁶

In this way, the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd sought to establish a new form of genuine human communication. This genuine human communication could take place between play and audience, as in *Waiting for Godot*, or between characters and also between play and audience, as in *Kangaroo*. Verbal versus sub-verbal methods of

⁵⁴ Ibid., 299.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 94-5; cf. Ibid., 135.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 135.

communication with respect to Betsuyaku Minoru will be further discussed in a later section.

Possibly the most famous Absurdist play is Samuel Beckett's *En Attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*). The play baffled theatergoers and critics alike, and a great many interpretations have been published. However, it should be noted that when *Godot* was performed at San Quentin prison in 1957, it was enthusiastically received, and seemingly easily comprehended. The reason for this, Martin Esslin argues, is because

the play provides an existential reconstruction of one of the basic human emotions and situations—it is a poetic image of the *act of waiting* itself. No wonder everyone immediately thinks of whatever it is that he has been vainly waiting for in his own personal, spiritual, or political life.⁵⁷

The reason for the enthusiastic response at San Quentin was that the inmate audience understood intimately the “act of waiting.” In this play, Beckett was able to bypass the weaknesses of language by creating a drama to which all members of the audience could react based on their own experiences. We will later be able to see a similar technique using the prior experience of the audience in *Kangaroo*.

The Theatre of the Absurd forever changed our perception of and our interaction with theatre. The Theatre of the Absurd “starts from the postulate that man’s identity—the answer to the question, ‘Who am I?’—is an insoluble problem...human character is infinitely evanescent and questionable; and character, the conception of character, is the basis of all drama.”⁵⁸ The question of character, especially at the end of World War II when man entered the nuclear age, “an age in which the threat of imminent mass death makes a mockery of all action,” became increasingly important—especially in Japan.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Martin Esslin, *Reflections: Essays on Modern Theatre*, 186.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵⁹ David G. Goodman, *After Apocalypse*, 191.

This then, is why the Absurdist movement is important to Japan and why it is pertinent to consider the Theatre of the Absurd when discussing modern Japanese theatre.

A Brief Biography of Betsuyaku Minoru

Betsuyaku Minoru (別役 美) was born on April 6, 1937, in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo (Manchuria). His father, who worked in the Information Bureau of the General Affairs Agency in the Manchukuo puppet government, died of tuberculosis in 1945.⁶⁰ Due to the Soviet invasion and subsequent occupation, his mother was unable to remove Betsuyaku and his four siblings from Manchuria. They were finally repatriated in 1946.

Betsuyaku's early years were a study in continued instability. After leaving occupied territory, the family moved from Kōchi, to Shimizu, and then to Nagano City, as Betsuyaku's mother struggled to find work to support herself and her children. Finally, she was able to gain stability for the family by operating a small restaurant cart.⁶¹ From then on, Betsuyaku was able to have a fairly normal childhood. He became interested in painting and originally wanted to go to school to become a painter; however, he was urged to consider a more lucrative career.⁶²

After Betsuyaku graduated from high school, his family relocated to Tokyo where Betsuyaku enrolled in 1958 at Waseda University in the Department of Political Science and Economics. He quickly became involved with the Waseda University's Free Stage (自由舞台; *Jiyū Butai*), where he fell in with Suzuki Tadashi, who would later go on to establish a rigorous methodology for actor training. At this time, Betsuyaku was

⁶⁰ Robert Rolf, "Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright," 横浜国立大学人文紀要. 第二類、語学・文学 35, no. 1 (1986): 54.

⁶¹ Robert Rolf, "Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright," 54.

⁶² Nobuko Tanaka, "When Godot Finally Arrives," *The Japan Times*. <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ft20070322a2.html>, 2007.

intimately involved in the anti-security treaty protests and worked as part of “the Free Stage contingent of the *Zengakuren*...in March 1961, during the demonstrations against the opening of a Nike missile range in Nijima.”⁶³ During this time he wrote his first published play, *A and B and a Woman* (AとBと一人の女; *A to B to Hitori no Onna*), which was performed by the Waseda University Free Stage in 1961.

However, likely due to his involvement with the student protests, Betsuyaku left Waseda in 1960, having been “removed from the rolls at Waseda for nonpayment of tuition.”⁶⁴ After leaving Waseda, he found employment at an independent labor union where he would remain from 1961-68. He continued to write plays, including his most famous, *The Elephant* (象; *Zō*) and *The Little Match Girl* (マッチ売りの少女; *Matchiuri no Shōjo*), first performed in 1962 and 1966 respectively. In late 1967, Betsuyaku received the 13th annual Kishida Drama Prize, an honor given to “up-and-coming playwrights...acknowledged as a gateway to success.”⁶⁵ After this personal victory, Betsuyaku left his union job to become a professional writer. At this time he also parted ways with Suzuki Tadashi citing “differences...over methods of theatrical creativity.”⁶⁶ In 1970, Betsuyaku married Kusunoki Yūko, an actress for whom he would write a number of plays.

After becoming a professional writer, Betsuyaku expanded his repertoire to include essays, fantasy stories, and short stories; however, he still maintains that he is

⁶³ Robert Rolf, “Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright,” 55.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶⁵ Eiko Tsuboike, “An Overview, Latest Trends by Genre: Shōgekijō (Small Theatre) Movement,” *Performing Arts Network Japan*, The Japan Foundation, www.performingarts.jp/E/overview_art/1005_06/2.html, 2010.

⁶⁶ Robert Rolf, “Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright,” 68.

primarily a playwright.⁶⁷ Part of his work during the last quarter of the century was dedicated to writing a small play every year for the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会; *Katatumuri no Kai*), which is composed of director Murai Shimako and Betsuyaku's wife, Kusunoki Yūko. As this particular company is a fringe, not-for-profit group, it has allowed Betsuyaku to explore his absurd world without concern for commercialism or moneymaking.⁶⁸ Aside from the Snail Theatre Company, Betsuyaku is notable among Japanese playwrights in that he has no permanent attachment to any single theatre, and many Japanese theatres have performed his works over the years.⁶⁹

Betsuyaku has continued to write at least one play, and sometimes as many as six per year since 1961. Currently he has written more than 130 plays and twice been the president of The Japan Playwrights Association. He served as the Director of the Hyōgo Prefecture's Piccolo Theatre, for which he wrote several plays, from 2003 until 2009.⁷⁰ For the most part he is uninterested in garnering fame and great fortune. He is primarily content to write plays and see to their production, to write other stories, and to give the occasional interview.

⁶⁷ Minoru Betsuyaku, "A Corpse With Feet by Betsuyaku Minoru," *Asian Theatre Journal* 14, no. 1, trans. Masako Yuasa (1997): 1.

⁶⁸ Minoru Betsuyaku, "A Corpse With Feet by Betsuyaku Minoru," 4.

⁶⁹ Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 182.

⁷⁰ Hyōgo Prefecture's Piccolo Theatre, "兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団前代表：別役実：年譜と年表," <http://hyogo-arts.or.jp/piccolo/profile2/betsuyaku-p.htm>.

The Drama of Betsuyaku Minoru

In an interview with Tanaka Nobuko, Betsuyaku said,

Japan was almost ten years behind the Western Absurdist drama movement, so we first experienced it in the sixties. Modern 'realistic' drama was starting to feel too patterned, and I felt that human beings were basically mysterious and that daily life is so absurd we don't know what to expect next. In Beckett's plays, there is no conflict between good and bad, just indefinite people in nonsense situations. That's all. I felt that this Absurdist approach was fresh and fertile.⁷¹

Betsuyaku Minoru belongs firmly at the head of the vanguard experimental theatre that blossomed in the 1960s. As well as being among the playwrights who adapted ideas posited by the Western Absurdist, he is also significant for making a truly Japanese theatre. In an interview for The Japan Foundation's *Performing Arts Network Japan*, he said,

I don't believe that the idea of the absurd was really that new in the East. I think you could say that due to the long-standing Eastern concepts of the human being as an unfathomable entity, the acceptance of the transience of all things and the protean natural [*sic*] of the world, there was already a natural understanding of a sense of the absurd.⁷²

For Betsuyaku, absurdism was not the revolutionary innovation of style and thinking that it was in the West, but rather a medium through which he could explore the complex psychological nature of human beings.

Robert Rolf suggests that the new Japanese playwrights in the 1960s were energized by the anti-*Ampo* protests and the international youth counterculture of the

⁷¹ Nobuko Tanaka, "When Godot Finally Arrives."

⁷² Minoru Betsuyaku, interview by Hirofumi Okano, "Artist Interview: Betsuyaku Minoru," *Performing Arts Network Japan*, The Japan Foundation, http://www.performingarts.jp/E/art_interview/0709/1.html, October 16, 2007.

period.⁷³ Instead, Betsuyaku says that he and his contemporaries were attracted first to film, not theatre. He says, “at that time, films were our only real source of artistic stimulation and inspiration.”⁷⁴ In contrast to Rolf’s argument, Betsuyaku says that he “...was tired of the kind of theatre that was bound by a political agenda and only had social revolution as its end game. I wanted to find some way out of that suffocating condition.”⁷⁵ Indeed, while it would be inappropriate to claim that Betsuyaku’s plays are completely without politics, a contrary example being *The Legend of Noon* (正午の伝説; *Shōgo no Densetsu*) (1974), which refers directly to the Emperor’s announcement of surrender, he decisively moves away from the concept of revolution, substituting instead, perhaps, resignation.

In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the works of Sartre, Brecht, Ionesco, and Beckett steadily made their way into Japan, bringing new ideas to young playwrights, who like Betsuyaku, were seeking new ideas. After reading a Japanese translation of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Betsuyaku says,

It was as if I had discovered a sense of liberation in the realization that rather than the social-political agenda we had been bound to until then theater could be based on the internal dramas of the individual like Beckett’s plays.⁷⁶

It was from this play that Betsuyaku discovered that it was indeed possible to create dramas on the stage that focused on “the internal dramas of the individual,” and Samuel Beckett proved to be a profound influence on Betsuyaku’s early plays. Indeed, the ideas of both Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett formed the basis for Betsuyaku’s early drama.

Robert Rolf writes, “From Beckett he derived an understanding of minimalism, the

⁷³ Robert Rolf, “Tokyo Theatre 1990,” 86.

⁷⁴ Hirofumi Okano, “Artist Interview: Betsuyaku Minoru.”

⁷⁵ Hirofumi Okano, “Artist Interview: Betsuyaku Minoru.”

⁷⁶ Hirofumi Okano, “Artist Interview: Betsuyaku Minoru.”

conviction that the simplest language, spare sets, and most basic human relationships could be the stuff of powerful theatre experiences and deep psychological insights.”⁷⁷

Truly, Betsuyaku’s plays are a study in minimalism. Nowhere is this more evident than in his stage directions. His plays usually call for a blank stage, often with a telephone or telegraph pole—an item, which, originally, mimics Beckett’s tree, and calls to mind the pine tree present in the background of all *nō* plays, but has become quintessentially

Betsuyakuian. On the subject of telephone poles, Betsuyaku says,

The telephone pole is an invocation of the single tree in *Waiting for Godot*. In its original form, the European theater stage is deeper [front-rear] than it is wide, creating what you could call a cylindrical space that gives the stage and the action taking place there a more 3-dimensional aspect and greater depth perception. This creates an environment that cultivates interest in things like the universe or the void...but the space of the Japanese theater is a “horizontal” one, as typified by Kabuki theater. The drama unfolds on a horizontal plane and all the movement is to the right and left. To balance that horizontal axis, and [*sic*] “vertical axis” becomes necessary, and that is why I used the telephone pole.⁷⁸

Thus the telephone pole provides a grounding point and location to the action on the stage. Because a telephone pole, a familiar and common object is frequently the only set piece on stage, the audience focuses on it to a greater degree than they might outside the theatre. Betsuyaku uses it to make the familiar strange and to increase the audience’s awareness of the void. By placing a telephone pole on stage, the audience of a Betsuyaku play is able perceive and comprehend the void without the embarrassment of self-consciousness, because, as Betsuyaku argues, an object existing in the void “serves to diffuse one’s gaze into the void, and there is thus a kind of limitless ability to absorb one’s emotions.”⁷⁹ Furthermore, it is arguable that the telephone pole is a more pertinent set piece for Japanese theatre than a simple tree because the telephone pole takes the

⁷⁷ Robert Rolf, “Tokyo Theatre 1990,” 93.

⁷⁸ Hirofumi Okano, “Artist Interview: Betsuyaku Minoru.”

⁷⁹ Minoru Betsuyaku, 手のこと, 電信柱の宇宙 (Tokyo: Hakusuisha: 1997), 22.

bleakness of Beckett's country road into the urban environment, reflecting the prevalent urban environments in Japan.

Communication, or lack thereof, is also a major theme in Betsuyaku's work.

Robert Rolf writes,

The underlying assumption...is that human communication is highly imperfect, and that the root cause of this difficulty is the unreliability of language, the great gap between actual phenomena and the words people employ to try to represent and explain them. Betsuyaku exploits this in many plays to develop his "relationship dramas": his characters' inability to communicate precisely leads them to explain themselves repeatedly, typically once too often as they are drawn into relationships that seldom have happy results.⁸⁰

Here, we can see further connections to the Western Absurdist, most notably Beckett and Ionesco. In 'A Brief Discussion of Absurdism,' I quoted Martin Esslin's conception of "genuine communication," which is that "the breakthrough into the other human being's consciousness of the poet's mode of feeling and experience has to be attempted on a more basic level, the pre- or sub-verbal level of elementary human experience."⁸¹ Betsuyaku too appears to have come to this conclusion in his plays. In his essay, "On Seeing" (見ること; *Miru Koto*), Betsuyaku establishes two important concepts that appear, in some variation, in many of his plays: *possession* (憑依; *hyōi*) and *objectification* (対象化; *taishōka*). While *objectification* signifies the fallibilities of language, *possession* is exactly the kind of sub-verbal mode of communication that Esslin originally noted in the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd. According to Betsuyaku, *objectification* can be maintained only while two characters are able to look at one another, but once they touch and maintain contact, they are able to *possess* one another. Indeed, "it's as if there is one person soliloquizing, because both of them have gone deep

⁸⁰ Robert Rolf, "Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright," 62.

⁸¹ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 135.

inside the other person.”⁸² In such a way, Betsuyaku’s characters are able to overcome the fallibility and the experiential nature of language.

There are other similarities between Betsuyaku’s work and that of the Western Absurdist—especially Ionesco. Both playwrights often use: “1) rapid-fire dialogue advanced by many characters in turn; 2) multiple conversations conducted simultaneously; 3) protracted reconfirmations of the details of the characters’ objective reality.”⁸³ The Japanese language, wherein the subject is often vague, enhances this kind of dialogue, but in addition, Betsuyaku utilizes deliberately vague language, which forces his characters to question and correct each other throughout each play. Rolf writes,

Man’s inability to be certain of the nature of his reality is a basic theme of much great art, whether theatrical, literary, or otherwise. In modern art this uncertainty has reached the extreme of a compulsion to reaffirm even the actuality, the simple details, of one’s environment and experience. Such uncertainty leads to lengthy, laborious discussion of what in earlier literature would have been “obvious”; of course, this is a common feature of the plays of both Ionesco and Beckett.⁸⁴

This feature is also common to Betsuyaku. Betsuyaku is noted for being a master of language.⁸⁵ However, the playwright himself would argue that he does not, in fact, know the Japanese language.⁸⁶ He notes that because he was born in Manchuria and moved fairly frequently during his early life, he speaks only Standard Japanese, which, in his opinion, is a neutral language compared with the many regional dialects of Japan.⁸⁷ By speaking a neutral language in a country full of dialects, Betsuyaku, as an outsider unable to fit in, has developed an acute sensitivity towards the use of dialect in language.

⁸² Minoru Betsuyaku, “見ること,” 電信柱のある宇宙 (Tokyo: Hakuuisha, 1997), 32. The translation here is my own.

⁸³ Robert Rolf, “Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright,” 60.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 61-2.

⁸⁵ Minoru Betsuyaku, “A Corpse with Feet by Betsuyaku Minoru,” 4.

⁸⁶ Minoru Betsuyaku, “日本語について,” 別役実評論集〇言葉への戦術 (Tokyo: Tori Shobō, 1982), 32.

⁸⁷ Minoru Betsuyaku, 日本語について, 32.

This sensitivity towards language makes Betsuyaku a superb writer of dialogue, because he is able to explore the tension between the vital energy of dialects and the neutralism of Standard Japanese.

While Betsuyaku is noteworthy for helping to create a new, contemporary Japanese theatre, he has never forgotten that he drew his early influences from Western theatre:

Our generation, that is people who began doing plays in the 1960s, was anti-*shingeki*. The word *shingeki* was depressing, old-fashioned, somber. We were very negative toward *shingeki*, and frankly that basic feeling has not changed. But the fact remains that our conception of drama as something intellectual and structured, is the product of a theatrical system that stretches from the days of the Tsukiji Little Theater [the first *shingeki* house, which brought Western-based drama to Japan] down to the present.⁸⁸

Another source of Western influence on Betsuyaku's writing is found in his essay, "On Creation" (創造ということ; *Sōzō to Iu Koto*), he discusses the tension Western artists have with God, because, in Betsuyaku's eyes, "God alone creates, and for man to create is an obvious betrayal towards God."⁸⁹ Therefore, the work of creating things causes "a feeling of tension towards God."⁹⁰ This tension, in Betsuyaku's opinion allows Western artists to create, and Betsuyaku acknowledges that he, as an Eastern playwright, does not have this tension. In order to write, Betsuyaku thus attempts to fool himself into believing that this feeling of tension exists within him, because otherwise he cannot be sure that he is engaging in a creative act, as otherwise the acting of creating is static and unemotional.⁹¹ He fools himself by contemplating the void itself, which Betsuyaku

⁸⁸ Robert Rolf, "Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright," 69-70.

⁸⁹ Minoru Betsuyaku, "創造ということ," 電信柱のある宇宙, 11. The translation of this essay is my own.

⁹⁰ Minoru Betsuyaku, 創造ということ, 11.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

defines as the illusion of the tension of creation.⁹² This then, is the most significant thing that Betsuyaku Minoru has taken from the Western tradition. However, regardless of what Betsuyaku has truly taken from the West and the Theatre of the Absurd, by the very fact that he innately lacks “a feeling of tension towards God,” he is able to take these influences and construct a style of playwriting uniquely Japanese and completely his own—drawn both from Japanese theatrical history and from his own interpretation of Western traditions.

⁹² Ibid., 16.

Kangaroo

By Betsuyaku Minoru

Characters:

Man

Prostitute

Her Pimp

Hat Maker

His Wife

Man in a Black Hat

His Mistress/Lover/Prostitute

Henchman/Follower #1

Henchman/Follower #2

Old Person

Veiled Singer

This is a poor vaudeville show. Therefore, this theatre should not be decorated, and so, before this theatre, the following prologue will be presented like a proper prologue.

Prologue

Prostitute: Lovely ladies and kind gentlemen, good evening!

Be delighted! Because you've been waiting and waiting for the curtain of
Kangaroo to open.

Not to worry, ladies and gentlemen!

Since you can't wait and we can't wait, tonight, by some miracle, the curtain
opens on *Kangaroo*...(murmurs)...It's a little unbelievable.

Man: People on the street!

Especially you ladies and gents walking by the theatre, are you listening?

The play is about to begin!

Right here and right now, in this very theatre, *Kangaroo*, a charming, two-act
farce will shortly begin!

Black Hat: Ladies and gentlemen, I'll let you in on a secret: this play is really interesting
and cheap.

It costs exactly five one hundred yen coins, or a five hundred yen bill—that's all
you need, if you've got a thousand yen bill, don't worry, we'll give you change!

Wife: Ladies and gentlemen, come in!

All you folks walking by—don't move; and everyone who's already passed the
theatre, Stop! Turn back!

If you don't watch *Kangaroo*, you'll have nightmares!

If you don't watch *Kangaroo*...(murmurs)...You won't wake up tomorrow. It's
true...

Old Man: Come on in, ladies and gents.

To just walk away laughing in a daze, that's not a benefit!

To just be laughing foolishly is not a benefit!

You gotta come in and see this thing...it's like tapping a watermelon, or touching a woman to see if she's good. (*Smack of wooden clappers*)

Pimp: Come, ladies and gents!

Out of all the underground theatre, ours is the best—you won't be wasting your time!

We got themes; we got ideas. We got a quarrel; we got romance. We don't leave philosophy out either...even if you think it's an artistic play, (*Smack of wooden clappers*) nothing bad will happen to you.

Henchmen: Come in, come in!

Kangaroo is starting!

Kangaroo is starting!

Can't wait, can you?

They say that *Kangaroo* is starting!

This prologue, in the form of hawking the show, was used in the Group of 66 Theatre Project, which performed at the Shinjuku Pit Inn Theatre, August 1968.

Scene One

Evening on the wharf. Under a lonely street lamp is an old-fashioned bench. Sometimes, we can hear a faint and sad steam whistle from a ship.

The Veiled Singer, in fashionable dress, strumming a guitar appears, he sings.

Veiled Singer: Maybe, in a past life, I might have been a one-eyed pirate

On a moonlit night, the sail is raised, and the gong sounds,

Perhaps my boat, like the wolf,

Pursued the catch three days and nights

Perhaps, because I was strong,

I fought and was never defeated

Perhaps my ship's white sail

Was, by a spray of blood,

Made all red

Perhaps I

Became old

Perhaps my boat,

Sank long ago.

During the song, an Old Man carrying a megaphone and wearing an expensive, gaudy striped jacket and a sailor's hat appears. Despite his jacket, there is something shabby about him. The Veiled Singer leaves, singing.

Old Man: *(Holding the megaphone, he poses, takes a deep breath, and shouts.)* The ship is leaving! The ship is leaving! The ship is leaving! The ship is really leaving!

From stage right, carrying a trunk, the Hat Maker and his Wife appear dressed for a journey.

Hat Maker: Hello Captain.

Old Man: Ah, beg your pardon?

Wife: We're going to board the ship.

Old Man: Ship?

Hat Maker: Yes, we're going to a foreign country.

Old Man: Hm, did you get your shots?

Wife: We got seven! Big needles too.

Old Man: Did you let everyone know that you were going...? It's a problem if you don't.

Hat Maker: No, it's okay, we told everyone: "Please don't be sad, surely we will meet again."

Wife: For every person we told, there were three we didn't. We left them letters.

Hat Maker: We left them letters on blue stationary with a floral pattern.

Wife: Goodbye, we wrote, we are going away on the ship.

Hat Maker: We are crossing over the sea....

Wife: Southwards....

Hat Maker: To a warm place....

Wife: If the wind blows....

Hat Maker: Please remember us.

Wife: And after we finished, we sealed the envelopes and left them on the table.

Old Man: I hope you didn't leave the letters on a table near a window, if the wind blew, they'd fly away.

Hat Maker: Not to worry, we placed weights on them.

Old Man: Weights? That should work. You'll need to wait awhile in this area. There's still time.

Hat Maker: This area. *(They search around the place a bit, loitering for a while.)*

Old Man: *(Once more with the megaphone)* The ship is leaving! The ship is leaving!

A young man appears, carrying a small bag.

Man: *(Waits for the Old Man to finish.)* Good evening.

Old Man: You here for the ship?

Man: Yeah.

Old Man: Are you going south?

Man: Yes.

Old Man: It's good to go south...because that's where the flowers are blooming aren't they?

Hat Maker: The songbirds are singing, Captain.

Wife: The brooks are flowing, Captain.

Old Man: Please join the line.

Man: Thank you. *(Lines up behind the couple.)*

Old Man: *(Takes a big breath.)* The ship is leaving...! *(They listen to hear how far his voice carries.)*

Hat Maker: (*Listens for people coming.*) No one...is coming, Captain.

Old Man: (*A little displeased*) Umm, nobody's coming, it does seem that way doesn't it?

(*Slowly, he approaches the three of them and circles them.*) Now for the hard part! There's some things you need to know to get on a ship. If you think you can just board a ship after arriving at the dock, you'll be making a big mistake.

Wife: I completely agree.

Old Man: You're misunderstanding completely!

Hat Maker: Of course, that makes sense.

Old Man: In order to get on a ship, you need three things. Do you know what they are?

One, a necktie. Two, a handkerchief. And three, courage. If you don't have a necktie, you won't be admitted to the ship's dining room. If you don't have a handkerchief, you won't be admitted to the ship's dining room. If you don't have courage, you won't be admitted to the ship's dining room. If you don't go into the ship's dining room, you'll die of hunger.

Hat Maker: Of course.

Old Man: (*Displeased.*) Do you have your ticket?

Hat Maker: I have it. (*Touches his breast pocket*)

Old Man: Show me.

Hat Maker: Here?

Old Man: Here.

Wife: To you?

Old Man: To me.

Hat Maker: But...? (*Looks around.*)

Old Man: Do you folks really know who's who at this port and how boarding a ship works?

Hat Maker: No.

Old Man: *(With exaggerated politeness)* This is where you show your ticket. To me.
(Puts out his hand.)

Hat Maker: *(From his breast pocket, he pulls out two large sheets of paper.)*

Old Man: *(Takes the papers, looks at them, and returns them.)*

Hat Maker: Is there a problem?

Old Man: *(Indicates that the Hat Maker should take the papers.)*

Hat Maker: But this time it's been correctly authorized.

Wife: Is there a problem?

Old Man: *(To the Man)* Your ticket...?

Man: *(From his breast pocket, pulls out a similar piece of paper.)*

Old Man: *(Takes the paper, looks at it, and returns it.)*

Man: *(Takes it)* Is it okay?

Old Man: I regret to say...

Man: Is there something wrong?

Old Man: You can't board the ship with this.

Man: I can't board the ship?

Old Man: This is not a ticket.

Hat Maker: What about ours? Are they bad too?

Wife: There's a stamp, they've been clearly stamped!

Old Man: (*To the couple*) The destination's not filled in. Let me explain it to you: the correct ticket has a destination written on it, and the stamp must be visible and clear.

Man: I have a destination on mine.

Old Man: There's no stamp. Besides, on the destination line, you've just written "foreign country."

Man: Yeah, a foreign country. I want to go to a foreign country. I want to go to any foreign country.

Old Man: It doesn't matter where. He wants to go to a foreign country. So, in short, not here. With that kind of thinking, you won't be able to board the ship.

Hat Maker: It's eminently clear that we have a destination....

Wife: We're going to Egypt. The reason for our trip is we've heard that they have delicious fish there....

Hat Maker: If I had my choice, I'd go to Argentina. There's delicious cabbage in Argentina.

Old Man: (*To the Man*) You've been cheated. There're a lot of shady characters in this town.

Man: But...

Old Man: You should be careful! We human beings must always watch out for cheaters.

Hat Maker: So, our tickets are no good, is that it?

Old Man: So it seems.

Man: A man in a black hat is coming.

Hat Maker: That's the guy.

Wife: That's the guy!

Old Man: That guy. Everyday, three people come to me who've purchased tickets from that guy. I was the guy hired to be here because of that guy. In short, I'm here to comfort those spirits that man has broken.

You folks have also been had. I'm really sorry. I can't believe how bad you must feel. I really don't know what to say to console you.

Besides, you're not bad people. You're not. If this is what happened because you were stupid, then you could accept defeat and move on....

I'm really sorry and don't know what to say to comfort you. Indeed, there are those in this world who take advantage of those who are weak....

Wife: Let's go.

Hat Maker: Where?

Wife: Let's go home. It's already dinnertime.

Hat Maker: What will everyone say? We've already had our going-away party.

Wife: If we say that the ship didn't leave....

Hat Maker: Again?

Old Man: I'm so sorry. I mean, it is so sad. I mean... (*Hugs young Man's shoulder*) I really don't know what to say...?

Man: (*Escapes Old Man's embrace*) Where is the ship?

Old Man: The ship?

Man: Yeah.

Old Man: (*Reading the Man's determination*) Okay, here is what I'm gonna do for you.

I'm gonna make an exception and give you three chances. Understand who I am,

I have the authority for those three poor people who appear each day.

Nothing in this world comes easily. However, maybe we can slip over the fence.

But, there might be a dog there. First, we'll play rock, paper, scissors.

Man: Rock, paper, scissors?

Old Man: If you win, you can board. The ship.

Man: If I win?

Old Man: Ah, rock, paper, scissors... (*Gets ready*) Wait a minute. Are you really gonna do paper?

Man: Yeah.

Old Man: I was gonna do scissors. Too bad. Now, the second chance: draw one. (*From his pocket, he pulls out some strings made of twisted paper.*) Pick one.

Man: (*Pulls one.*)

Old Man: Open it.

Man: (*Opens.*)

Old Man: What's on it?

Man: A circle and a triangle...

Old Man: I'm sorry; you were just a little off. Last chance: a riddle. Okay? What's a perfect circle in the sky?

Man: ...?

Old Man: What's a perfect circle in the sky?

Man: The sun...?

Old Man: The moon!

Wife: The moon! That's what I thought!

Old Man: (*Comforting the Man*) It's luck. It's just bad luck.

Wife: (*To the Hat Maker*) I really did think it was the moon, really I did!

Old Man: I don't believe you. Want to try?

Hat Maker: Yeah, but we probably won't be very good.

Old Man: Of course you will! You'll be fine! Things in this world are never easy, but...

Wife: Yes, go for it! Try to slip over the fence! But there might be a dog there.

Old Man: How about it?

Hat Maker: Well, I'll give it a try...

Old Man: Shall we start from rock, paper, scissors?

Hat Maker: Fine with me.

Old Man: Alright, rock, paper, scissors... (*Gets ready*) Scissors, right?

Wife: Dear, you should do rock.

Hat Maker: Right.

Old Man: Look, I'm paper.

Hat Maker: Yeah, I thought you might be...

Old Man: Want to try the next challenge?

Wife: Please.

Old Man: (*Pulls out the string of twisted paper.*) Please choose one.

Wife: That large one.

Hat Maker: (*Pulls*)

Wife: (*Takes it from the Hat Maker and opens it*) A circle and a triangle....

Old Man: What is a perfect circle in the sky?

Wife: The moon!

Old Man: The sun.

Man: *(Suddenly, starts to run...)*

Old Man: *(Stops him)* Where are you going?

Man: Let me go!

Old Man: What will you do?

Man: I'm going to ask other people to help me.

Old Man: They won't help you.

Man: Let me go!

Old Man: *(Forcibly restrains him)* It's useless, it's useless, it's useless....

Man: Let me go! *(Breaks free)*

Old Man: Don't you know why they won't help you?

Man: ...?

Old Man: *(Points)* You're a kangaroo.

Man: A kangaroo?

Old Man: Kangaroos are not permitted to sail on ships! That's how it's always been. If

you're a kangaroo, no matter how many shots you've gotten, or what kind of grand farewell party you've had, you can't board the ship. Everyone knows that.

That's the way the system works. *(To the Hat Maker)* Didn't you know that?

Hat Maker: I certainly know that.

Old Man: *(To the Wife)* Kangaroos can't board ships!

Wife: It's unreasonable to let kangaroos board. Camels are different....

Old Man: (*To the Man*) You can't get on.

Man: I am not a kangaroo.

Old Man: (*To the couple*) What do you guys think?

Wife: He has some nerve.

Hat Maker: The nerve of that guy, really....

Man: I am not a kangaroo.

Old Man: (*Approaches the Man, and gently, as if speaking to a much younger man/student, says*) Have you ever been to the zoo? Have you ever seen a kangaroo? I'm sure you have. Think about it again. Every single disgraceful thing that's called a kangaroo thinks that every other kangaroo—no matter how nervy—is a dumb animal.

No matter who it is, they are never fully convinced what others say about them is true.

Ergo, you are a kangaroo.

Wife: Ergo! A kangaroo!

Hat Maker: Ergo.

Man: But, I really don't look like a kangaroo.

Old Man: You don't look like a kangaroo. You don't look like one at all. No way, I thought! I said to myself, no way he's a kangaroo.

Wife: Well, I thought he must be a kangaroo, because he doesn't look like a camel.

Hat Maker: Not a camel! That's because a camel has a tail.

Man: No one's ever told me that before.

Old Man: (*Extremely gentle and kind*) They're just trying to be nice. The more gentle a person is, the harder it is to tell the truth.

Hat Maker: But...we all know what true kindness is...

Wife: That's it!

Old Man: Yes! You're on the right track. Understand me, true kindness—real kindness, that is—occurs when you show your true appearance, just as you are, and from this, courage arises...oh? (*And, looking off stage left, from his pocket he pulls out a whistle, and tootles on it*) Everyone, pull out your handkerchief and wave. (*Points*) It's leaving! Your ship.... (*Plays the whistle. Waves handkerchief.*)

A low tone, the steam whistle sounds. Sounds again.

Old Man: (*Full of madness*) It's sailing! It's sailing away! Look. Your ship. That is your ship. Look, it's sailing.... Everyone, pull out your handkerchief and wave. You've got to say goodbye. Hey, goodbye, hey....

The low tone of the steam whistle sounds. The Man, sits down, dejected, on the bench. The couple waves their handkerchiefs.

Old Man: It's sailing, it's sailing away! Isn't setting sail wonderful? Look, the passengers are waving to us. They're feeling nostalgic about us. I'd say that

everyone feels nostalgic when they're on a ship setting sail. Isn't a journey a wonderful thing?

The low tone of the steam whistle sounds. The three people see the boat off in a daze.

Old Man: (*Vacantly*) It's leaving us. It's as if we have no destiny now that the ship has left.... (*Wipes tears.*)

Wife: Why am I crying?

Hat Maker: Me too! Perhaps it's the season.

Wife: The captain's crying too.

Hat Maker: He knows people on the ship. That's why. I'm sure of it.

Old Man: I don't know anyone on that ship. They're complete strangers! Even so, I feel nostalgic.... (*Wipes tears.*)

Long ago, I knew people who sailed. When the ship went to sea, carrying away my cousin's family, I cried for three days. Oh, that was a terrible time. The wharf filled with people seeing them off—at the end, everyone was there, and it was as if they became one and cried as if they were howling. They didn't care who they embraced.

Hat Maker: I remember! At that time, my sons also sailed.

Wife: Our daughters too.

Hat Maker: Now they're all gone.

Wife: We cried.

Hat Maker: It was awful. My tears didn't stop for a week.

Wife: But, on Tuesday, you laughed.

Hat Maker: That was because of the milkman. But, soon, the tears began again.

Old Man: They left us. Those damn ships, why do they go out so agonizingly slowly—
like they're trying to make us feel bad? It was like the sun slowly sinking.

A low tone, twice, three times, the steam whistle sounds.

Wife: I'm hungry.

Hat Maker: I have peanuts! *(He shows her.)*

Wife: Just a few?

Hat Maker: Better than nothing! *(The two people crouch down and eat the peanuts.)*

Old Man: *(To the Man)* Did you see it?

Man: Yeah.

Old Man: How lonely, hey, aren't you lonely too?

Man: Yeah.

Old Man: Lonely. Very lonely. Very, very lonely.

(Embraces the Man's shoulder)

Hat Maker: Got any left?

Wife: Yeah.

Hat Maker: How many have you eaten?

Wife: Seven!

Hat Maker: I've had three. It's always like that. I don't even eat half of what you eat.

Are you lonely?

Wife: No.

Old Man: I'm lonely. Not only that, I'm cold. When I'm lonely, usually I'm cold. (*To*

Man) Hey, you, tonight, why don't you spend the night at my house.

Hat Maker: What do you think, Captain? Would you be so kind as to let us come along?

Wife: We do not snore and rarely talk in our sleep...

Old Man: I only have one bed.

Hat Maker: Underneath the bed is fine.

Old Man: There are two large trunks under the bed.

Wife: We'll take the corner of the closet?

Old Man: The corner of the closet is where I sleep.

Hat Maker: And in the other corner?

Old Man: There's where Goro sleeps!

Wife: Goro?

Old Man: (*To Man*) A dog. Mine. An aging female dog with a skin disease. Every morning, I melt sulfur and spread it over her; I think it hurts, because she has a violent reaction. It's all I can do. Don't you think so? In spite of everything, I must do it or tomorrow she'll be dead.

Wife: Let's go.

Hat Maker: Where?

Wife: I don't want to sleep with a dog with a skin disease.

Old Man: (*To Man*) Let's go. She's not going to jump up and bite us! Goro's always very well behaved.

Man: Why am I a kangaroo?

Old Man: Are you really a kangaroo, I wonder? Yeah, just as I thought; you're a kangaroo.

Man: Yeah, but you....

Wife: I think that he's kangaroo.

Hat Maker: I do too, but I didn't want to.

Old Man: Really...?

Man: Yeah, but you...

Old Man: Shh, don't talk so loudly. It's not a good idea to talk about this out loud. Okay, both of you—please check to make sure that the coast is clear.

Wife: Okay.

Hat Maker: Okay. *(The two people examine both upstage and downstage.)*

Wife: No one's here!

Hat Maker: Not a single person.

Old Man: Good—you're really lucky. You just came within an inch of being killed!

Man: Why?

Old Man: Shh, okay, listen carefully. The fact that this man is a kangaroo must only be known to the three of us, got it?

Wife: Yes.

Hat Maker: Yes.

Man: Please, wait a minute.

Old Man: For the moment you'd best be silent.

Wife: That's a good idea.

Hat Maker: Don't worry; we won't do anything to hurt you.

Old Man: That's exactly it! For my part, I'll keep silent, for the sake of this man...

Wife: I've come to the same decision; I also won't say a word. For the sake of this man.

Hat Maker: I won't either. For the sake of this man.

Old Man: So, we're agreed. (*To the Man*) Did you hear that? We're on your side. It seems we're all agreed! That's what's really important; although it's not easy to talk about this...in other words, if I were to summarize the situation, it would go like this! Do you get my point? First, you have a really big problem. A lot of people know your secret. Now, because of that, you must anticipate their good faith—to keep the secret, but you have to ask. Please don't talk to anyone else about your problem. Ask them, "Please be silent." Those people will have started to consider your request. That's us. It'll take us courage not to say anything. I mean, we'll become your accomplices. If we were to consider our own safety, it'd be natural to reject your request, but our good faith will not allow us to reject you. For the sake of righteousness, for the sake of truth, for the sake of history—risking death—we must protect this secret. We'll come to this decision, brushing off our tears. Let's not say a single word, we'll not talk about your secret—do you understand how committed we are?

Therefore, all we need is a single indication. Just one, small indication, consider our feelings...

Wife: That's all we need! A single indication is all we need. If only to indicate that you understand how we feel....

Hat Maker: We're not asking for everything! Just a little consideration for our feelings....

Man: Thanks...thanks, thank you.

Old Man: Wonderful!! Wasn't that a wonderful acknowledgement? But, there's no need to be overly grateful. We've only done what anyone would have.

Wife: The proper thing!

Hat Maker: The natural thing.

Old Man: But, what a good feeling it is to do the right thing for someone else. Right, everyone, let's slip off to my humble abode.

And let's shed tears to celebrate our good faith.

Hat Maker: Us too?

Old Man: Of course.

Wife: But, Goro...?

Old Man: Goro died last year....

Wife: Last year?

Old Man: Maybe it was the year before last. Well, dear friends, let's get up and go.

Led by the Old Man, while singing, the whole crew exits. Man, returns, sits on the bench.

The Hat Maker comes after him.

Hat Maker: What's wrong?

Man: Please go on ahead.

Hat Maker: Don't worry too much about what we've done for you! The truth is, (*Looks around the vicinity*) we're also kangaroos.

Man: (*In a whisper*) As a matter of fact, I'm really not a kangaroo.

Hat Maker: *(Even quieter)* To tell you the truth, we're not kangaroos either. Heehee.

(With that, he laughs and exits.)

Scene Two

The same place as Scene One, it is night. The Man is alone, lonely, sitting on the bench;

*the moon rises suddenly. Because of the sad music and the low tone of the steam
whistle, tears flow down his cheeks.*

The Veiled Singer slowly enters; he sings.

Veiled Singer: Goodbye Brazil

Goodbye Argentina

Goodbye Egypt

Goodbye India

Our boat has left us behind.

Goodbye Brazilian onions

Goodbye Argentinean cabbage

My sadness is like a camel

Goodbye Egyptian pumpkins

Goodbye Indian cucumbers

Our boat has left us behind.

Goodbye Brazil

Goodbye cabbage

Goodbye Egypt

Goodbye cucumbers

Our boat has left us behind.

The Veiled Singer, while singing, slowly exits.

From stage right, a large and grotesque, possibly small and cute, Prostitute enters. In her hand, she has a straw, and a small bottle, from which she is blowing soap bubbles. She slowly walks past the Man, then looks back at him over her shoulder.

Prostitute: What's up?

Man: Huh?

Prostitute: What're ya thinkin' about?

Man: Euh.

Prostitute: *(Sits beside Man.)* Shall I guess? Hm? You're thinkin' about your mother back home aren't you?

Man: Yeah.

Prostitute: That's what happens to everyone—whenever they feel lonely, they think about their mother back home. Are you hungry?

Man: Nope.

Prostitute: Really? You're not hungry, but you look so sad—you poor thing. You're still a poor thing, even if you're not hungry, don't you think? When I look at you, I think that you're miserable. *(She blows a soap bubble and shows it to him.)*

What do you think of this?

Man: Ah...

Prostitute: Isn't it pretty?

Man: It is pretty, very.

Prostitute: Want to try? It's not hard.

Man: Yeah, but....

Prostitute: You don't have to worry; these are cheap.... *(She hands over her implements.)*

Man: *(Tries to blow.)*

Prostitute: You're an expert.... Try it again!?

Man: Yeah. *(Blows.)*

Prostitute: You're really good. Do you want it?

Man: Nope. *(Returns it.)*

Prostitute: If you want it, I'm willing to give it to you, 'cause as I said before, it's really cheap.

Man: But....

Prostitute: It's okay to want it.

Man: No, but, if it's not too much trouble.

Prostitute: Not at all! Please take it from me, and, well, if you have something, inexpensive, I'd love to have it.

Man: Yeah, yeah, yeah. (*Searches in his pocket.*)

Prostitute: It's okay if you don't have anything.

Man: (*Takes something out.*) Yeah, this...

Prostitute: (*Takes it.*) Ah, what is it?

Man: A stamp! From a foreign country.

Prostitute: A foreign stamp? Pretty, but isn't it expensive—I can't take this.

Man: It's okay, let me give it to you—it's a gift!

Prostitute: A gift? I didn't expect you to think about a return gift—I can't accept this.

But, is this still worth anything?

Man: Yes.

Prostitute: Could I send a letter? To a foreign country?

Man: It's possible.

Prostitute: To India?

Man: India? Yeah, you can even send it to India.

Prostitute: I wonder if I should send a letter to India, is it okay to address it "To India," I wonder?

Man: Yeah, India?

Prostitute: I wonder what they'd think in India.

Man: They'll certainly be surprised.

Prostitute: Yes, certainly surprising. But I wonder if they'd think badly of a prostitute like me sending letters to India....

Man: Certainly not. The people of India are magnificent!

Prostitute: Yes, why?

Man: Ah, India. It's a splendid country! There are cows, and a large river flows there.

Ah, the dusky red water...it flows slowly. The people of India sit by the river and pay their respects to the dead. Everyone has profound, quiet expressions.

That's because they understand what it means to die. When India has a famine, millions of people die at one time, starving....

Prostitute: Starving...? But I'd hate to die hungry.

Man: If you became skin and bones starving, and survived—it'd be totally unbelievable.

Certainly....

Prostitute: Really...for us prostitutes it'd be terrible and hateful to become thin. I don't know why, I'm feeling very lonely....

Man: Hmm....

Prostitute: Would you like to starve to death?

Man: Yeah, if it's in India, starving to death is fine with me. When you die in India, your bones will be licked clean by the Buddha.

Prostitute: Licking bones, I wonder, isn't that obscene?

Man: No, there is no such thing. The way that it's done, the licking of bones is very gentle. It seems very lonely, to be a bone, just licked....

Prostitute: You are a strange person. But, I like strange people. They're not boring to have around. A guy I know can blow tobacco smoke out his nose, and swallow it in his mouth—can you do that?

Man: No.

Prostitute: Yeah, I think it's really hard. But that guy's younger brother can do something even harder! I heard that he slurped an udon noodle through his

nose—and once, I heard that he slurped two noodles at once! I want to see that sometime.

Man: Are you a kangaroo?

Prostitute: Do I smell like one?

Man: No.

Prostitute: But everyone says so.

Man: That happens to me too.

Prostitute: You too?

Man: Yes.

Prostitute: Ah! We're the same, aren't we?

Man: The same?

Prostitute: We're the same kind of being,

Man: Ah...

From stage right, a large, awkwardly-built man, the Prostitute's Pimp appears. He is trying to extract his nose hairs by wriggling them about. Finally, he pulls one out.

Prostitute: What are you doing here?

Pimp: Uh-huh.

Prostitute: Please come here! We've been talking about India...Here's person who can talk about India, he's very good at it...Besides, he wants to go to India, he tells me that he wants to go to India to starve to death! I told him about you, too.

That's okay, right? I told him you can blow tobacco smoke out your nose and swallow it with your mouth ...Why don't you show him? This guy seemed really interested, 'I wonder who could do such a thing?' he said....

Pimp: *(Pulls out a nose hair.)*

Prostitute: Will you quit that?

Pimp: Okay.

Prostitute: *(To the young Man)* Hey, this is who I was talking about. I just asked him to show what he can do, want to see it, right?

Man: Yeah, yeah.

Pimp: No way, I'm not gonna.

Prostitute: You can do it—you've got nothing to lose, and besides, look, you told me once about that thing that your younger brother can do—that really happened—he can slurp an udon noodle through his nose, he really can do it, right?

Pimp: Yeah.

Prostitute: Didn't I tell you? It's true! Didn't he do two at a time? Didn't you see it?

Pimp: I saw. He did two at a time! *(Pulls out a nose hair.)*

Prostitute: Please stop! Or you'll lose all your hair!

Pimp: They'll grow back.

Prostitute: You aren't a lizard. *(To Man)* So he actually saw it, and that's the truth, and I'll see it too, 'cause I just asked him. *(To Pimp)* When's that gonna be? You promised you'd show me someday.

Pimp: Eventually.

Prostitute: *(To Man)* It'll be eventually! It'll be soon! It'll be when they contact me
about a convenient time!

Pimp: *(Yawns)* Okay, it's about time for us to go.

Prostitute: We don't have to go yet, settle down! Okay, tell him that story about that
guy....

Pimp: Which story?

Prostitute: What do you mean which story?! You only know one story! It's the story
about the French way of friendship!

Pimp: No way!

Prostitute: *(To Man)* It's because he's bashful, he's being shy! But, it's a very good story.

(To Pimp) Please do it! He told me his story; please tell it!

Pimp: I was walking around smoking a cigarette, and....

Prostitute: That's it! *(To Man)* Did you hear that?

Man: Yeah.

Pimp: I came to this place on a hill where there's that smokestack, and I threw my
cigarette away.

Prostitute: He said he just tossed it!

Pimp: When I put my foot down to put it out, it rolled away from me....

Prostitute: Did you say rolled away?

Pimp: At that moment, a man came from behind me, and put it out....

Prostitute: For you!

Pimp: I was really happy about that.

Prostitute: And?

Pimp: And so, for no particular reason, we found ourselves walking around.

Prostitute: Did you leave him?

Pimp: I wanted to say goodbye, but....

Prostitute: Are you saying you couldn't say goodbye?

Pimp: Yeah....

Prostitute: *(To Man)* See, he couldn't, he really couldn't.

Man: Yeah, yeah.

Pimp: We got drunk at my usual bar! We started talking about all sorts of things! He
was a very great guy!

Prostitute: What'd you talk about?

Pimp: To be honest, that guy had really thought a lot about the profundity of life.

Pimp: According to him, life, in the end, cannot be explained.

Prostitute: Wasn't that a good story? *(To Man)* It's a heart-warming story.

Man: Yeah, very....

Prostitute: And then?

Pimp: And then...we parted....

Prostitute: What was his name?

Pimp: I didn't ask.

Prostitute: *(To Man)* He didn't ask! That's my favorite part! Not asking his name before
parting...they said to each other, "If fortune smiles upon us, we may meet
again..."

Pimp: Yeah, that's what we said, when parting, 'If fate exists, we'll meet again.'

Prostitute: Hey, I wonder if it isn't the French style, this way of meeting and leaving?

Man: Yes, that's the French way.

Prostitute: What a good story....

Pimp: (*Yawns*) It's time for us to go.

Prostitute: No way...we don't have to go. Hey, if we do the same thing the Indian way, I wonder what that'd be?

Pimp: The Indian way?

Prostitute: That's the way of licking bones.

Pimp: No way am I going to do that. It's time for us to go.

Prostitute: It's okay, I still have some things to say to him.

Pimp: Look, it's time to go.

Prostitute: (*To Man*) He's jealous! You see how we're flirting? That's why he's jealous, hey isn't he silly? (*To Pimp*) I got a stamp from him. Look, it's from a foreign country! It's expensive! I am going to use this to send a letter to India.

Pimp: To India?

Prostitute: Yup! Don't touch it; it's really expensive. He said I could have it, and for free! This is very important to him. Next to his life! He said he'd give it to me, (*To Man*) right?

Man: Yeah, you might say.

Pimp: Return it.

Prostitute: No! It's mine already!

Pimp: Give it back to him.

Man: No, it's okay.

Prostitute: You're the one who gave it to me, didn't you?

Pimp: Get up.

Prostitute: I don't want to!

Pimp: It's time to go.

Prostitute: Aren't you going to blow smoke out your nose and swallow it in your mouth?

If you do that, I'll go.

Pimp: I don't feel like it this evening.

Prostitute: For him!

Pimp: I don't want to!

Prostitute: You're embarrassed, aren't you?

Pimp: Bitch.

Prostitute: He's shy! Even though he's got a big body, hey, he's just a little kid. He says,

when evening falls, he gets really lonely, and—just like you—he starts

remembering his mother at home. You know, with tears falling down his face,

he says that he's *lonely!*

Pimp: Hey. (*Grabs her hand.*)

Prostitute: (*Shakes free.*) No!

Pimp: You won't go?

Prostitute: I won't go.

Pimp: Hey. (*Grabs her again.*)

Prostitute: (*Escapes*) Hey, punch him out for me, he's really cruel. He hits me and kicks

me! He takes all of my money! I never have anything! Hey—hit him! He's a

bad guy! Hit him and teach him a lesson! He always torments me. He's

terrible! He even pulls my hair. I am always crying! Always, always crying.

Hey, please, hit him. Hit him and teach him a lesson....

Pimp: *(Rather taken aback. Gently,)* Little idiot, hey, what's wrong with you, hey...?

Prostitute: *(Circles around Man while clinging to him.)* Quick, quick knock him off, kill him. If you don't, he'll strangle me. Come on, please.

Man: You...but...you. *(Tries to calm her down.)*

Prostitute: *(Points finger at Pimp)* Murder him, knock him off, and beat him up. He makes me do this, while he doesn't lift a finger! I can't forgive him for that. *(Clings to Man)* Hey, you can't imagine how I've suffered for this man...And even though I do it, he says that my work's bad—I can't believe him! He hits me and kicks me!

Pimp: You've said plenty. That's enough.

Prostitute: Hurt him, hey, please. Kill him. I can't stand it anymore, when he looks at me, I feel nauseous. Kill him, kill him, please, kill this guy—I beg you...! *(She seems to fall apart, falling onto the floor, sobbing profusely.)*

For a short while, the Prostitute cries in front of the two men, who stand in a daze.

Pimp: *(Approaches Prostitute, and gently says,)* Hey, let's go. I won't do anything to hurt you. Hey, please quit crying, we have to go. *(He helps her up.)* This guy's no good for you.

Prostitute: *(Gets up listlessly. The Pimp pulls out a handkerchief and gives it to her. The Prostitute wipes her tears.)*

Pimp: (*Gently,*) Let's go, huh, I won't do anything to hurt you—and I really will think about it. And it's not as if I haven't thought about it. Hey, you may not think so, but about once a month there have been times that I've thought about getting out of the city. I'd rent a car.

Prostitute: (*While wiping tears*) Just once, I want to cry deeply in a place where I'm alone.

Pimp: I agree, whenever you want.

Prostitute: Will you look the other way?

Pimp: Ah, anytime.

Prostitute: A quiet place somewhere.

Pimp: You want to be somewhere close to a lake, don't you?

Prostitute: Yeah, I insist that we lay out a mat. And that's where, from morning and until evening, I want to cry.

Pimp: I'll take you. I'll rent a car, and borrow a mat; I'll buy a bag of peanuts....

Prostitute: (*Stands up, still hanging her head, and says to the Man*) Goodbye, I'm going to go with this guy. You heard me, didn't you? To a lake. I insist on laying out a mat; I want to let all my tears flow. For your sake. While I'm doing this, this man will look the other way. Don't forget me. (*Looks over her shoulder.*) If only you felt the same, I would have gone with you—didn't I just say that? I said so sometime ago, so it's your fault. But, I'll try to send a letter to India, and I'll write about you.... Goodbye.

They exit. A lonely steam whistle sounds. The Man, absent-mindedly, sits on the bench.

The Hat Maker, looking over his shoulder, stealthily appears.

Hat Maker: Please hide right away.

Man: Why?

Hat Maker: It's dangerous. It seems that the Black Hat Man's gang is eager to make you
reveal your secret.

Man: My secret?

Hat Maker: It's those guys!

Man: What is?

Hat Maker: *(Whispers)*

Man: Eh?

Hat Maker: *(Whispers)*

Man: What?

Hat Maker: Can't you hear me?

Man: Yeah.

Hat Maker: The matter of you being a kangaroo!

Man: But, about that...

Hat Maker: Shh. Do you really get that now you're being chased by some kind of
danger? Don't you get it?

Man: It's dangerous?

Hat Maker: Your ears may be cut off.

Man: No way.

Hat Maker: Way. You gotta hide. (*Points stage left.*) There's a small coal ship moored over there. That's where our comrades are waiting for you. The password is "cat"—got it?

Man: Cat?

Hat Maker: Yeah, and they're gonna say "smokestack." "Cat" and "smokestack," please don't forget. Now, please get going. After this, you don't have to worry about us, got it? Don't worry!

Man: Yeah, thanks.

Hat Maker: Now, go please. Over there. Hide here and wait for a signal! (*Sneaks away off stage right.*)

Man: I understand. (*Remains sitting.*)

The steam whistle can be heard in the distance. The Man blows soap bubbles.

Scene Three

Same wharf as Scene Two. The Man is blowing soap bubbles. The Veiled Singer appears, singing.

Veiled Singer: Moon,

What is hanging on the telephone pole?

As for that,

It's the flu of the earthworm.

Moon,

What is walking on top of the roof?

As for that,

It's a herring with Grave's disease.

Moon, please cry

As for my soul,

It was a herring, long pickled in salt.

Moon, please cry,

As for my soul,

It was an earthworm, long dried out.

Moon, please cry,

For the sake of the herring,

Moon, please cry,

For the sake of the earthworm.

In the middle of the song, the Man, frightened by an unknown sensation, stands and exits.

The Veiled Singer also exits, while singing.

Presently, from stage right, the Hat Maker and Wife and the Old Man appear; they are

tied up in rope. The people holding the rope are the Black Hat Man's

Henchmen 1 and 2. They are followed by the Black Hat Man and his Mistress.

Mistress: *(Stops.)* Oh, the moon. *(Says something like.)*

Black Hat: Indeed, the moon. *(Says something like.)*

Henchman 1: Boss.

Henchman 2: The preparations are ready.

The Henchmen have tied the Hat Maker and Wife and the Old Man to the street lamp.

The Black Hat Man and his Mistress sit in chairs that the Henchmen have prepared for them.

Black Hat: By the way, who the hell are these guys?

Henchman 1: Ah, they've got a secret.

Black Hat: What kinda secret?

Henchman 2: They won't say!

Black Hat: Hm, well, must be a hell of a secret.

Henchman 1: This evening, my partner and I were walkin' around the neighborhood, right, and passed by these guys; we looked at each other and they started laughin' funny.

Black Hat: I see.

Mistress: Suspicious, isn't it?

Henchman 2: We're really annoyed, see, so we followed 'em. Then they looked back at us and giggled.

Mistress: Again?

Henchman 1: Yeah, boss, they laughed at us twice!

Black Hat: I see, they're suspicious.

Henchman 2: Please let us talk to them, boss, those guys gotta awesome secret.

The Old Man whispers in the Hat Maker's ear. The Hat Maker whispers in his Wife's ear, all three snicker.

Henchman 1: Look! Again, boss, they laughed again. That's three times!

Henchman 2: Boss, we shouldn't let 'em talk. If we don't watch 'em carefully, I dunno what'll happen.

Henchman 1: Really boss! Everyone in town's been gettin' the same feelin'. Before they met us, there's no doubt that these funny guys were wanderin' about all over the place...

Henchman 2: The geezer at the watch store said, "It seems like those guys have an awesome secret, no doubt about it!"

Mistress: You gotta make 'em talk.

Black Hat: Got it.

Henchman 1: But how ya gonna make 'em talk, boss?

Black Hat: That's the crux of the problem.

Henchman 2: I think we oughta hurt 'em a little, no big deal.

The three people exchange glances and laugh.

Henchman 1: They're laughing at us again, whatta bunch of hyenas.

Black Hat: Oh, calm down. I'll show you how to make 'em talk. Which one looks like a talker?

Mistress: The old man is useless!

Henchman 2: If ya wanna make a woman talk, starve her.

Black Hat: Seems like that'll take awhile.

Henchman 1: I think you should hurt the husband.

Henchman 2: That kinda guy—he's easy—just pull on his ears a little, and he'll cry like a baby.

Black Hat: (*Misses the Mistress's comment.*) How about the old guy?

Henchman 1: That guy's no good. It'll take time! With that kinda guy, you gotta appeal to his sense of compassion, and to do that takes lots and lots of time.

Black Hat: Okay, why don't we try to hurt the cute husband a little first? There's no need to really hurt him—all we gotta do is play with him a little.

Henchman 2: No problem at all.

Black Hat: You, try it.

Henchman 2: Me?

Black Hat: Yeah, lightly.

Henchman 2: But, how...?

Black Hat: His ears...pull them.

Henchman 2: Yeah. (*He approaches the three captives.*)

Old Man: Hey.

Henchman 2: What.

Old Man: No matter what you do, we won't tell you a thing.

Henchman 2: Why?

Old Man: Because it's a secret. *(The three people laugh.)*

Henchman 2: It doesn't matter who you're talkin' about, if someone hurts ya, you'll
wanna talk. And that's 'cause everyone will choose not-pain over pain.

Old Man: Would you talk if someone pulled your ears?

Black Hat: No way, captain.

Wife: Are you okay?

Hat Maker: I'm not worried if it's just my ears.

Old Man: Okay, hey, try pulling mine.

Henchman 2: What do ya want me to do, boss?

Black Hat: Pull his. *(Points to Hat Maker.)*

Henchman 2: *(Doesn't want to touch the Hat Maker's ears, but grabs them and pulls.)*

Hat Maker: *(It takes him a moment to realize that it's his ears being pulled.)* Ouch.

Henchman 2: Are you going to talk?

Hat Maker: *(Thinks)* No.

Henchman 2: *(Pulls)*

Hat Maker: Ouch.

Henchman 2: Gonna talk?

Hat Maker: No.

Henchman 2: S'no good, boss.

Black Hat: Do it harder.

Henchman 2: Right. *(Pulls)*

Hat Maker: Ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch....

Henchman 2: Gonna talk?

Hat Maker: No.

Henchman 2: Still no good, boss.

Black Hat: He's pretty tough.

Old Man: You did good.

Wife: I'm so proud of you.

Hat Maker: Yeah, but, it hurt!

Black Hat: *(To Henchman 1)* You take over.

Henchman 1: Me?

Black Hat: It's no biggie; hit him two or three times on the cheek.

Henchman 1: Okay. *(Approaches the three people)*

Old Man: Hey, have you ever been hit in the face?

Hat Maker: No, captain.

Old Man: Well, it's not so bad. Not any worse than a pulled ear.

Wife: Hang in there.

Hat Maker: Yeah, I'll try.

Henchman 1: Boss, should I use a stick or something?

Black Hat: Do you have one?

Henchman 1: No.

Black Hat: Just hit him with your bare fist, but lots of times.

Henchman 1: *(Pulls back to hit Hat Maker)* You son of a bitch. *(Strikes Hat Maker)*

Hat Maker: Ouch.

Henchman 1: Gonna talk?

Hat Maker: No.

Henchman 1: Son of a bitch.

Hat Maker: Ouch.

Henchman 1: Gonna talk?

Hat Maker: No.

Henchman 1: Son of a bitch, son of a bitch, son of a bitch.... (*Continues to strike Hat Maker.*)

Hat Maker: Ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch....

Henchman 1: Gonna talk?

Hat Maker: No.

Henchman 1: (*In disappointment*) He's saying no, boss.

Black Hat: Is that so?

Old Man: You're so brave—that was amazing.

Wife: You really took it well.

Hat Maker: Yeah, thanks.

Black Hat: Don't you think that it'll be more effective if you come up with a plan?

Henchman 2: I suggest pinching, boss, how about choosing a tender place somewhere?

Henchman 1: That doesn't seem well thought out.

Mistress: On top of that, it's got no class.

Black Hat: At this point, you've gotta come up with something tough and classy.

Henchman 1: If that's what you want, boss, we're gonna need tools. If we just had the right tools, boss, we could show you a really awesome torture.

Henchman 2: For example, boss, suppose you have two carriages. Tie a fellow's right foot on the carriage here, and his left foot on the carriage here, and have one carriage run here and the other run there, at the same time.

Black Hat: What are you saying?

Henchman 1: Okay, boss, you got two carriages.

Black Hat: Okay.

Henchman 1: Tie a fellow's left foot on the carriage here, and his right foot on the carriage here, and run the carriages in different directions at the same time.

Black Hat: But wouldn't you be splitting him up from the crotch...?

Henchman 2: Isn't that what torture is?

Black Hat: Oh, yeah.

Mistress: Are you gonna do it?

Henchman 1: We don't have any carriages.

Mistress: Well, then you can't.

Henchman 2: However, there are other ways. Suppose you have an abacus and stones.

Mistress: An abacus and stones?

Henchman 2: Yeah, you make a fellow kneel on an abacus, and proceed to put the stones one by one on top of his thighs. Gradually, the sharp edges of the abacus beads will dig into his legs, and then the cuts'll start to bleed.

Mistress: And then?

Henchman 2: That's it. If you do something like that, no one could keep from talking.

Mistress: I see.

Black Hat: Did you come up with that?

Henchman 2: Yeah, kinda.

Henchman 1: Mine's easier, boss. I don't need many tools. All I need is a small stick of bamboo. If I had that, I could stab it under a fellow's fingernail. And after that, I'd light it on fire. Gradually, while the stick is burning, bamboo oil will gush out suddenly from under the nail.

Black Hat: Really?

Henchman 1: That's what I came up with.

Mistress: Do you have a bamboo stick?

Henchman 1: No....

Henchman 2: All he brought was a first aid kit, 'cause all he thought about was letting them go.

Henchman 1: But boss.

Mistress: Alright, I'll do it.

Black Hat: You?

Mistress: That's right!

Black Hat: Stop.

Mistress: Why?

Black Hat: You'll get hurt.

Mistress: It's okay, it's not like I'm going to do anything violent. (*Opens first aid kit, pulls out a hypodermic syringe.*)

Black Hat: What's that?

Mistress: It's an injection.

Henchman 1: You're gonna give 'em a shot?

Mistress: That's right.

Old Man: Hey.

Black Hat: What.

Old Man: What are you going to inject us with?

Black Hat: Shut up. *(He says, but in spite of this he is still interested in this plan.)* What are you going to inject them with?

Mistress: Surely some kinda vaccine.

Wife: That's no good! My husband's already had all his shots.

Mistress: That's okay, it doesn't matter if he's had his shots, it'll still work.

Old Man: Hey, be careful! It's not good to get shots two or three times.

Black Hat: *(To Old Man)* Don't start screaming wildly. *(To the Mistress)* On the other hand, is it really safe?

Mistress: No problem, try it and you'll see.

Hat Maker: Don't—I would hate it if you injected me with the same two shots. There's a great possibility that I might die.

Henchman 1: You probably won't die.

Henchman 2: You won't die.

Wife: I would never allow him to do such a thing.

Old Man: Me, too. I won't let him, I will tell the world about this atrocity.

Black Hat Man: How about something different? Something light....

Mistress: Yes, but there's no such thing. It's all the same. It's just an injection. It's more civilized than a horse-drawn carriage, and easier to do.

Hat Maker: There's not a chance of that, if you approach me with that, I'll bite you.

Wife: If you do it, I'll kick you.

Mistress: You, go, and roll up his sleeves.

Henchman 1: Okay. (*Approaches the Hat Maker, but is not able to roll up his sleeve.*)

Mistress: Right, just cut the sleeve where we've gotta inject. (*Hands over scissors.*)

Wife: No way, I just made those clothes! I won't allow you to do such a thing.

Hat Maker: I won't allow it.

Mistress: Go and do it.

Henchmen 1 & 2: (*Approach the three people.*)

Black Hat: Alright, ready to talk now?

Hat Maker: What shall we do, captain?

Old Man: Nothing. We won't talk at all. Come on, didn't we pledge to each other that
we'd never talk, even if we died.

Hat Maker: Yeah, we did, but...

Wife: It's okay, it's just a suit.

Hat Maker: But, what about those shots? I might die!

Mistress: Well, are you guys ready?

Henchmen 1 & 2: (*Tear a hole in the sleeve of the suit.*)

Wife: Is it okay, captain?

Old Man: Yeah, they're just shots. They're not poison.

Wife: Shall we talk captain?

Old Man: No way, this is not a game, we'll be called backstabbers.

Black Hat: Talk! Even if you rat on them, I'll keep it a secret.

Old Man: But I'll kill you, if you betray us, afterwards, I will kill you.

Wife: You'll be okay, dear. It's nothing more than a shot! It's okay; there've been plenty
of cases where people have been given two shots by mistake!

Henchmen 1 & 2: *(Finish their job)*

Mistress: Now, look the other way.

Black Hat: Have you ever given a shot to anybody?

Mistress: No.

Black Hat: Well then, you don't know how.

Mistress: I've seen it.

Old Man: Stop. Hey, you have to make her stop. If you think that giving shots is easy,
that's a big mistake. There are lots of cases where mistakes were made in the
injection of shots and people have died.

Wife: Are we going to die?

Old Man: Of course we're going to die; there's lots of ways to mess up an injection.

There are some who give shots too deep, some who give shots too shallow, and
some who give shots in a vein.

Black Hat: Did you know this?

Mistress: The deeper, the better.

Old Man: That's a lie. Fool, hey, make her stop. She's totally ignorant about injections.

Black Hat: It's just because you won't talk. You gonna talk?

Old Man: No. I won't

Mistress: *(To Henchmen)* Disinfect his arm with this.

Henchman 2: Okay. *(Wipes the Hat Maker's arm with alcohol.)*

Hat Maker: Captain, please forgive me.

Old Man: Do you want to become a backstabber?

Mistress: You must decide. (*Holds syringe up to the light, and looks at it.*)

Hat Maker: I said no, and no matter what you say, it's still no. (*Struggles.*)

Wife: Please talk, it's okay, it's okay to be a backstabber. If you just ask the boss, I'm sure he'd find a way to forgive an old man like you!

Black Hat: Indeed, that's true, I can protect you; I can protect one or two old people like you.

Old Man: Will you talk?

Hat Maker: Yes, captain.

Wife: Yes, captain.

Black Hat: Great, it's settled.

Mistress: (*While watching the syringe, in a murmur.*) Stop! Whether you struggle or shake with fear, it won't do you any good! I don't care whether you talk or don't talk, but I'll inject you with an injection! I really want to give you an injection. I really want to know what happens!

Black Hat: But, you....

Mistress: (*To the Hat Maker, quietly.*) You have to make a decision. You have to. You want to give this a try as well? Until now, no one has ever tried to inject two shots in such a short time...It's a new thing. Depending on how you spin it, it could be an adventure. And in addition to that, I'm not the one choosing to do it, you are.

When you were young, I bet you always wanted to go on an adventure. But always, before going on an adventure, you'd think that you had to save some

money to prepare. Actually, what you really need to do is to just go out and kill people, or set fire to houses, or steal things...Isn't that right? That's your mistake. Do you get it? Now, however, look at our situation, if only you had the will, this could be your grand adventure. You're gonna suffer and die at my hands in order to protect your friends' secret. If you have the will. In short, supposing you have the will to die, I can tell you that this syringe is filled with a poison that will kill you, not the medicine that will immunize you.

Hat Maker: *(Absent-mindedly.)* Adventure...

Mistress: Didn't you always want to become a pirate...?

Hat Maker: In a pirate's crew....

Mistress: I bet you really wanted to go out to sea and raise a signal flare.

Hat Maker: Sound the gong....

Mistress: Are you gonna protect the secret? Or are you going to save your own life by betraying them?

Hat Maker: I will protect! I will protect the secret.

Mistress: *(To all present)* Okay, this man has decided. *(Gives him a shot.)*

The Hat Maker stands for a little while, but before long he slowly collapses and falls.

Everyone covers their eyes. Only the Mistress briskly returns to the first aid kit and cleans up.

Black Hat: Is he dead?

Mistress: Yes, for the sake of honor.

From stage left, the Man absent-mindedly appears. Henchmen 1 and 2 watch him carefully and then intercept him. The Black Hat and his Mistress also casually surround the Man.

Man: Good evening.

Henchman 1: What the hell are you...?

Man: I just arrived in this town today, but I couldn't board the ship.

Black Hat: Aha! You're the one who bought my ticket!

Man: Yeah, it was you, but the truth is, that the ticket did not have a stamp....

Black Hat: A stamp? Who said that you needed to have a ticket with a stamp?

Old Man: Hey, run away. You gotta run away!

Man: Ah, captain.

Old Man: Run away immediately. We didn't talk! Despite everything, we didn't talk.

Look, even though this man died, he didn't say a thing...because he wouldn't talk, these guys killed him....

Henchman 1: Hey, boss, this is the guy! The secret's about him!

Old Man: Run away, run away!

Man: *(Bewildered.)*

Black Hat: Why don't you run away?

Man: But...why?

Wife: For your sake, my husband died! For your sake....

Man: For my sake...?

Black Hat: Because he kept the secret they're protecting.

Man: He's dead? (*Approaches.*)

Wife: For your sake!

Man: Why?

Mistress: That man wouldn't tell your secret....

Man: My secret?

Mistress: Yes, for the sake of that, he died. Look at him, can't you see he's dead?

Man: Dead...

Mistress: He died! Please tell us the secret if you don't want anyone else to die.

Man: What?

Old Man: Don't you dare speak! This guy died for the sake of the secret.

Wife: He died! For the sake of the secret.

Mistress: This woman and that man also, for your sake, they are committed to die! What do you think about this?

Old Man: It is my intention to die! It's true, dear friend.

Wife: Mine too. I am unafraid!

Man: But....

Mistress: Are you really going to keep quiet?

Man: About what? What do you want me to say?

Old Man: I want you to get this straight, if you talk, then you'll stab us in the back.

Mistress: What the hell is your secret?!

Man: Ah, my secret.... In short, I'm a kangaroo.

Mistress: A kangaroo....

For a moment, nothing on stage makes a sound.

Old Man: (*Low tone*) You've always been a kangaroo, haven't you....

Wife: I always thought you were a kangaroo....

Man: But, you guys....

Mistress: Now I see. You've betrayed these two people! Come, you, tie him up, and after that, release the old man and the wife! They're no use to us anymore.

Black Hat: Okay, we'll let you guys take care of the rest of it.

The Mistress and the Black Hat exit. The Henchmen do their work as they were told and then exit.

Old Man: Very soon you'll know what you've done.

Man: I've no idea what's going on.

Old Man: You killed that man, you know. You made that man's precious death completely worthless!

Wife: You killed him; you killed my husband! I hope you never forget that!

The Old Man and the Wife carry the Hat Maker out, leaving the Man tied up. Schedule an intermission here, which will give the audience a chance to urinate. That is, if you still have an audience.

Scene Four

Same place as the Scene Three; the Man is sitting, tied up to the street lamp. It is the middle of the night.

The Veiled Singer slowly enters, looks at the moon, and strums his guitar. He does this for a while, and then exits.

From stage right, the Prostitute appears holding a large doll. She pretends to be dancing until she arrives at the bench, where she puts the doll to bed.

Prostitute: You've gotta go to sleep now. 'Cause it's night. When night comes, everyone goes to bed!

Man: Good evening.

Prostitute: *(Turns her head.)* Ah?

Man: Good evening.

Prostitute: Oh, what happened to you?

Man: I got tied up.

Prostitute: Really, you were tied up. You're a strange person; each time we meet, I'm surprised.

Man: You haven't been to sleep yet?

Prostitute: That's right—this evening's been very busy. Don't you think this doll's cute?

Man: Yeah, it's very cute....

Prostitute: I got it from a customer. If you give this doll milk, it pees.

Man: Pees?

Prostitute: That's right—wanna hold it?

Man: Sure, but, my hands....

Prostitute: Ah, right, should I untie you?

Man: No, if you untie me, you'll get hurt.

Prostitute: I'm used to things like that.

Man: You don't have to untie me. I'm okay if you don't. But, if you wouldn't mind,
could you please pinch me?

Prostitute: Do you think you're in a dream?

Man: No, it doesn't seem like that, but I really need a pinch. Or else a punch or a kick....

Prostitute: I don't wanna.

Man: Why?

Prostitute: 'Cause that's strange!

Man: Is that strange?

Prostitute: It's strange, no matter what.

Man: I don't know why, but I want to get hurt right now.

Prostitute: Wanna kiss this doll instead?

Man: Yeah.

Prostitute: Here. (*Brings the doll to him.*)

Man: (*Kisses.*)

Prostitute: How was it?

Man: Very good.

Prostitute: You're very good at that.

Man: I may be killed.

Prostitute: Do you wanna die?

Man: Yeah, I don't mind dying. But, if I can, I don't want to die here....

Prostitute: In India?

Man: Yeah.

Prostitute: That's right, I remember you saying that! You wanna starve to death in India.

Man: Yeah, I want to go to India. I don't always know where I'd like to go. But, right now, it seems like I want to go to India. There's no mistaking it, I want to go to India to starve to death. Perhaps, India is calling me.

Prostitute: India...?

Man: India is saying, 'Please come to India'...When I go to India, I'll go to the very middle of the desert, and I'll dig a small hole, and get into it. With just my head sticking out. Because the Indian moon is big, I'll cry when I watch it.

Prostitute: Will you remember me?

Man: Sure, I'll definitely remember you. After that, when morning comes, the sun'll rise. Because the Indian sun is large and strong, it'll make me into skin and bones—surely my nose will bleed. At the same time as the nosebleed, all of the unneeded things inside me will flow out. Then, surely, I'll just sit silently, and I won't be tied up like this, in fact, that makes it even more exciting. And perhaps, a lot of gaunt Indian people'll come and gather, and, sitting around me, they'll cry silently, as they look at me. Day after day after day....

Prostitute: I'll cry, too.

Man: Thank you. Sooner or later a multitude of cows'll gather. And then, they'll lick me kindly.

Prostitute: Your bones?

Man: In various places. Sooner or later the wind'll blow, and rain'll fall, and then,
without knowing it, I'll die. The Indian people and the cows'll both crown my
head with sand, and then walk off into the distance...

Prostitute: Do you wanna be saved?

Man: If I can be saved.

Prostitute: I'll save you.

Man: But, even if I'm saved, I can't go to India.

Prostitute: There's a guy I know—he wears a black hat, and he deals with foreign tickets.

Man: I was definitely cheated by that man.

Prostitute: Yes, but, sometimes he doesn't cheat people! 'Cause I know a person who
bought a ticket from that guy, and really went somewhere.

Man: I bet, but no matter how many times I try, I'd be tricked.

Prostitute: Okay, but there's no reason to die now, is there?

Man: Yeah, you're right.

Prostitute: Why don't you try to live?

Man: I could try living. But I don't have my umbrella or my toothbrush.

Prostitute: I'll lend you mine.

Man: But those are for women.

Prostitute: I even have men's things, if that's what you really want....

Man: Do you have a pillow too...?

Prostitute: I've got a pillow too, in a new case.

Man: Who was that guy?

Prostitute: Which one?

Man: The one from some time ago, that big guy....

Prostitute: Ah, that's a friend of mine.

Man: You're going to lend me his stuff aren't you?

Prostitute: Wrong—you're a fool—I'll lend you stuff I got from other customers.

Man: Really...?

Prostitute: Okay, want to try to live?

Man: Yeah, maybe I'll try to live.

Prostitute: Well then, I'll untie you. (*Unties.*)

The Pimp appears from stage right.

Pimp: Hey, what're you doing?

Prostitute: Ah, can you untie this rope? It's really tight.

Pimp: Fool. Little fool. Get outta here right away. If you hang around here, I'm gonna
have to hurt you.

Prostitute: Is there something wrong?

Pimp: About twenty or thirty people're comin' here and bringin' knives, and they're
comin' just to kill this guy.

Man: Me?

Pimp: 'Zat right?

Man: That's right, they're coming to kill me. 'Cause a little while ago, they said they'd
make me remember.

Pimp: Yeah, that's what they said.

Prostitute: Come on, help me; I'm saving this person.

Pimp: Help you? Me?

Prostitute: Yes, this guy's gotta go to India.

Pimp: I can't do that. Helpin' people's not in my nature.

Prostitute: You gotta help; or do you think it's okay that this man will be killed right in front of your eyes.

Pimp: I wanna get the hell outta here.

Prostitute: I can hear the screams of this person. That voice'll reach my ears and keep me awake at night.

Pimp: I really can't do it—it's not a joke. Don't keep askin' me for help. If you wanna save him, then do it. I'm outta here. (*Attempts to go.*)

Prostitute: You.

Pimp: What.

Prostitute: Don't you want friends? How long are you gonna be alone? Lemme tell you 'bout these things called men—doesn't matter who—there are times that they just need friends. You haven't got any. Why? Why's that? Doesn't that make you lonely? Supposin' if you help this man, he'll become a true friend, so the next time you're in some kinda danger, he'll definitely save you. Don't you want that kind of friend?

Pimp: There's nothin' wrong with havin' friends, but whether or not this guy becomes my friend is a different problem.

Prostitute: Why's that?!

Pimp: If I save him, he'll go to India, right?

Prostitute: He'll write you a letter.

Pimp: A letter....

Prostitute: You've never gotten a letter have you? How wonderful is it—to suddenly get an occasional letter from friends in far off places. You just wouldn't understand.

Pimp: Do you really think he'll write a letter, from India?

Prostitute: You'll be his lifesaver.

Pimp: But let's stop this talk. They'll get me before I even help this guy. There's a crowd over there.

Prostitute: Aren't you strong?

Pimp: I'm strong, but my bare hands're no good. Those guys've got knives!

Prostitute: Don't worry about that. Someone once said: if you're willing to die, there's nothing you can't do.

Pimp: Come to think of it, I'd rather run away. I just can't get into the spirit of things.

Prostitute: Aw, please.

Pimp: I won't do it; I really can't do it. Don't be stupid—you're gonna get hurt. (*Exits.*)

Prostitute: (*To his back*) Coward, scaredy-cat, yellow-belly, backstabber, I won't ask you, I'll do it alone!

Man: He left us, didn't he?

Prostitute: (*Downhearted*) He wasn't like that in the old days. He was very kind then, and he was strong too. (*Notices she has the doll in her hand.*) This kind of thing. (*Throws it away.*)

Man: Didn't he give it to you?

Prostitute: Yeah, he used to treat me like a kid... That's okay, I'll protect you.

Man: No—it's okay. It's really okay. But, there's just one thing...

Prostitute: What is it?

Man: I know that this is a difficult thing for me to ask you to do, but I'd appreciate it if
you'd go a little ways away and watch as they kill me.

Prostitute: You want me to watch you die?

Man: Yeah.

Prostitute: No way, I can't do that.

Man: All you have to do is watch. If I know you've agreed to watch, then, dying'll be
easy.

Prostitute: No way, don't say that. I'll help you, really, if I truly commit myself, then we
can definitely do it. (*Circles around to the Man's back, attempts to untie the
rope.*)

*From stage right, the Black Hat Man, with an air of composure, appears. He picks up the
fallen doll.*

Black Hat: (*Politely*) Good evening, young lady, is this yours?

Prostitute: (*With a start, stands up*) Well, it is mine, but I will give it to you, and, in return,
I want you to spare this man's life.

Black Hat: Well now, this is an interesting situation. I'm truly humbled by it. However,
young lady, this is not mere child's play. I'll give this back to you and in return,
please move away from this man a little. Blood may fly.

From stage right, the Mistress, leading the Old Man, the Hat Maker's Wife, and the Henchmen, who, in each hand, are an assortment of knives, enter. The Prostitute wraps her arms around the Man.

Mistress: Who's this woman?

Black Hat: The owner of this doll.

Mistress: Let's get her to move out of the way.

Black Hat: *(To Henchmen)* Let's get her to move out of the way.

Henchmen 1 & 2: Okay. *(Approach her, grab her by the scruff of the neck, and peel her off the Man.)*

Prostitute: What d'ya think you're doin'?! *(Turns towards them, and she kicks them away.)*

Henchman 1: Shit!

Henchman 2: You bitch. *(Grabs at her.)*

Man: Please wait, aren't you guys here to kill me?

Henchman 1: We are, but this woman's in the way—and there's nuttin' we can do about it.

Man: She won't get in the way—you won't right?

Prostitute: Of course I will. I'll be damned if I allow you to touch me.

Mistress: Why don't you pull her ears? I think it'd be good if you pull her all the way to the ocean and leave her there.

Henchman 2: Okay. *(Pulls her ears.)*

Prostitute: Ouch, asshole! *(Kicks him in the belly.)*

Henchman 2: Ah, *(Clutches his stomach)* fuck! Bitch!

Henchman 1: You bitch. *(Grabs at her.)*

Prostitute: What? *(And again, she kicks him away.)*

Henchman 1: Ah. *(Curls up clutching his stomach.)*

Prostitute: Hey, I got 'em! Look, they're still groaning. You saw that, right?

Man: Thanks, but I really think you should go over there. Watch out—they've got
knives!

Mistress: You.

Prostitute: What.

Mistress: Is this really what you wanna do?

Prostitute: This's what I really wanna do.

Mistress: Well, I see. S'there anyone who'll loan this bitch a knife?

Black Hat: You do it.

Mistress: Okay, *(Takes a large knife from the Henchmen, and gives it to the Prostitute.)*

Will this work?

Prostitute: *(Tries swinging it.)* It'll work.

Mistress: You might be killed here.

Prostitute: Of course, but I might kill all of you.

Man: Please stop, you might be killed.

Prostitute: Don't worry, I'll take a few of them with me.

Mistress: *(At the same time)* Who'll do it?

Old Man: I will. *(Abruptly bolts towards the Prostitute, ignoring her attempts to defend herself, and striking at her cheek, he hits her relentlessly, and knocks her knife*

down.) Back off!—You’re just a woman! (*Approaches the Man.*) I can’t believe you wanna take this woman with you!

Man: No, you don’t understand, but I appreciate what you’ve tried to do.

Old Man: This woman is in danger of being killed for your sake.

Man: I told her to stop.

Old Man: She didn’t stop. (*From his breast pocket, pulls out a knife, and presses it against the Man’s nose.*) That woman didn’t stop....

Man: But I wanted her to stop....

Old Man: What’re you trying to say? (*Stands up.*) At the very least this woman would have been killed. For your sake.

The crouching Prostitute stands, suddenly, and makes the Old Man eat her punches.

Old Man: (*Is thrown away.*) Bitch—the hell’re you doing?! (*He positions his knife; all are taken aback.*)

*When the Pimp says, “Wait,” he appears slowly from stage right. The timing must be just right. If the moment’s dramatic enough, the audience might say: “Hoorah!” or “You’re the man!”**

Pimp: Wait!

Prostitute: I knew you’d come!

* Translation note: This is a *Deus ex machina* by the Pimp in the *kabuki* style. See ‘A Discussion of Translation’ for further explanation.

Pimp: I'm not a coward.

Prostitute: It's true, you're not a coward.

Pimp: I'm not a scaredy-cat.

Prostitute: You're not a scaredy-cat.

Pimp: I'm not a yellow-belly or a backstabber.

Prostitute: Of course, I know that. Long ago, you were kind, and you were strong too.

Pimp: (*From his breast pocket, pulls out a terrifying dagger.*) This's what I went to get.

These guys—look at 'em—they all have weapons. I was the only guy without one. That wouldn't be fair, would it?

Prostitute: That's right! It can't be that way—it's not fair.

Pimp: Look, it's glittering. I went and sharpened it. 'Cause it hasn't been used for a while. That's why I sharpened it. A little. It'll cut well. I'll just hurt these guys a little with this. Well, where d'you want me to hurt 'em?

Prostitute: Well, these guys pulled my ears. So, first, chop their ears off.

Pimp: Ears? That's great, just lemme do that. (*Gets ready.*) But, which ear? The right? The left?

Prostitute: Both, chop both off.

Pimp: Right, both. (*Gets ready.*) But, if I chop off both ears, they won't be able to answer when I call 'em.

Prostitute: It's okay, every time we need 'em to do somethin', we'll just hit 'em.

Pimp: Yeah, that's one way to do it. If we do that, I can chop off both ears. Well, who wants to go first?

Black Hat: Hey, wait.

Pimp: You wanna go first?

Black Hat: No, that's not it. Let me explain: I've no intention of fighting you—and that's not because—and I want you to know this—because I'm weaker than you. As you can see, I've got a knife too, and I also have a bunch of henchmen. But, please, listen carefully: we want to hurt the man, not the woman.

Mistress: We've no business with the woman, or with you.

Pimp: That so? You got business with the guy. I didn't know that.

Black Hat: If you've got that, then take your woman and go somewhere else.

Prostitute: You gonna do what he says?

Pimp: Course not. (*Cuts the Man's ropes. Everyone gulps and approaches them with their knives.*) Hey, didn't you hear me? You really want me to chop off your ears? Truth is, this guy's one of my guys—and if any of you even thinks about laying a hand on one of my guys, come forward. But, lemme warn you, you won't get away with just your ears cut off. (*And he cuts a mie.**)

Black Hat: Hey, you serious?

Pimp: You bet I'm serious, 'cause this guy's goin' to India.

Black Hat: To India?

Pimp: To India. He wants to go to India so he can have his bones licked clean by the Buddha. That's how good of a henchman he is. You got that? If you get it, I want you to put away your weapons and walk away from here without causin' trouble. If you do that, I won't chase after you or chop off your ears.

* A *mie* (見得/見栄), or dramatic pose is done in *kabuki*. There is expected audience response. For further explanation of *mie*, please refer to 'A Discussion of Translation.'

Black Hat: Okay, I get it. Since you're gonna be like that, we'll go. But it's not because we're saying we've lost—we've got more knives and in terms of numbers, there's no comparison. If we got in a fight, we'd definitely win. But getting hurt over such a trivial matter is foolish.

The whole group starts to withdraw slowly in an orderly line.

Prostitute: *(Approaches the Black Hat's back, and kicks him in the buttocks.)* Hey, worm!

Black Hat: You bitch. *(About to grab her.)*

Pimp: *(With the knife)* I wouldn't do that if I were you! She's a woman!

And, having been waiting for this opening, the Old Man quickly runs up to the Man, and stabs his breast. The Man gives a long—so long that it seems impossible—scream, while slowly crumbling to the ground.

The Prostitute covers her ears and faints.

As the stage slowly darkens, the Veiled Singer appears, singing.

Veiled Singer: When someone dies, the wind blows,

Even if no one dies, the wind blows,

So even when the wind blows,

It doesn't mean that someone's died.

When someone dies, night falls,

Even if no one dies, night falls,
So even when night falls,
It doesn't mean that someone's died.

But someone has died,
And the wind blows and night has fallen,
Someone has died,
Perhaps someone has died,
The wind blows and night falls
Someone has died.

Scene Five

*Daytime, it doesn't matter where. If possible, it should be a field. The sun shines warmly throughout one's body; it is tranquil. Straw mats are spread out, and on them the Prostitute and the young Man are sitting, and playing house. Nearby, the same large doll is sleeping. The Prostitute is mincing daikon radish leaves on a cutting board. The Man is reading the newspaper.**

Prostitute: *(While chopping)* Dear...

Man: What do you want?

Prostitute: Isn't the weather nice?

*It should be exceedingly evident throughout this scene that they are merely pretending to play house. As a result, each character's speech simultaneously becomes more polite and more stilted.

Man: Yeah, it's nice weather.

Prostitute: The breeze is blowing gently.

Man: Yeah, the wind is blowing gently.

Prostitute: Ah, dear, did you hear that?

Man: What?

Prostitute: Just now a bird was singing.

Man: It's a skylark.

Prostitute: It sounded like a nightingale to me.

Man: It might be a cow.

Prostitute: A cow isn't a bird, you know.

Man: Is a horse a bird?

Prostitute: Well, birds fly, you know.

Man: Horses run.

Prostitute: Snakes crawl.

Man: That's a cow over there, right?

Prostitute: The yellow ones over there are dandelions, dear.

Man: The things swimming over there are carp.

Prostitute: Very soon, the afternoon siren'll sound. When it sounds, we'll eat. Are you
hungry, dear?

Man: Not really.

Prostitute: Well that's no good—a man has to have a good appetite—if he doesn't, it's
like a woman who doesn't have a bowel movement. I wonder if maybe you're

not gettin' enough exercise. That must be it, why don't you take a walk over there until it's time to eat...?

Man: Yeah, but, that's too much trouble.

Prostitute: Is that so...men are always like that—they say it's not worth the effort. But, dear, it's really important for you to take care of your body. You're still young—you've got your whole life ahead of you.

Man: Ah, the cow moored.

Prostitute: That wasn't a cow, what you heard was a horse neighing. Your miso soup—do you like it strong or weak?

Man: Well, let's see...why don't you make it medium?

Prostitute: Okay, I'll make it medium. Do you want me to cut the daikon pickles thicker or thinner?

Man: I like them thin, if you don't mind.

Prostitute: You want them thin, then I'll slice them thinly.

Man: Smells good.

Prostitute: It's my special miso soup—I made it just for you.

Man: Isn't it the fragrance of plum blossoms?

Prostitute: Maybe it's the hot soup, or maybe the daikon pickles.... Now dear, how do you think the baby is.

Man: Sleeping.

Prostitute: Really?

Man: Really.

Prostitute: Oh, you're such a liar. Look, it's awake—this's why I can't rely on men.

(Takes the doll up in her arms.)

Man: Is it really awake?

Prostitute: It's really awake, but while we're having our meal, it'll go to sleep for us. Will you put it to sleep over there?

Man: Of course, dear.

Prostitute: Okay, it's ready. *(Sets the table.)*

Man: But, the siren hasn't sounded yet. The afternoon one.

Prostitute: It's okay; it'll sound eventually. *(Puts rice into bowls.)* Here's your rice.

Man: *(Takes it)* Thanks.

Prostitute: The main ingredient of my special miso is tofu.

Man: What else?

Prostitute: Green onion.

Man: Let's eat.

Prostitute: Let's eat.

The two people have a quiet meal.

Prostitute: Is it delicious?

Man: Yeah, it's delicious.

Prostitute: What do you like?

Man: The daikon pickles are delicious.

Prostitute: What about my special miso soup?

Man: The miso soup is delicious too.

Prostitute: How so...?

Man: Well, for example...it's, uh, very, extremely, irresistibly....

From stage right, posing as a policeman, the Pimp appears.

Pimp: Oh, you folk are eatin', aren't you.

Prostitute: Oh, how horrid, it's that person.

Pimp: (*Squats*) It looks delicious.

Prostitute: Don't do that—you're so rude.

Pimp: (*Stands up*) I'll just be hanging out over there, until your meal is done....

Prostitute: That's won't work—if you walk around over there, you'll kick up dust.

Pimp: But...

Prostitute: What do you want?

Pimp: As a matter of fact, there's a small thing that I wanted to ask you about....

Prostitute: Why don't you just sit—you're blocking the view.

Pimp: Well, if that's the case, please allow me to join you.

Prostitute: Since you're here, I guess I'll give you some tea.

Pimp: Thank you very much. The tea's delicious, madam.

Prostitute: You said you had something to ask me; what is it? Did some thieves escape?

Pimp: No, madam, it's not the thieves that escaped, it's a murderer.

Prostitute: Oh, a murderer.

Pimp: Yeah.

Prostitute: Why'd you let that man escape—that's careless.

Pimp: Yes, indeed, it was truly careless.

Prostitute: Well, capture him quickly!

Pimp: Yeah, that's why I've come here—to look for him. How about it? Have you seen
anyone who looks like a murderer?

Prostitute: *(To Man.)* Have you seen him?

Man: Was that man large?

Pimp: No, if I had to say, I'd say he's a hairy fellow.

Man: Besides us, there are only cows here.

Pimp: There are cows?

Prostitute: One just yawned over there.

Pimp: Aha, it did yawn. I see, those are cows over there. That's 'cause they have horns,
isn't it? Without horns, they'd be horses.

Prostitute: But why are there cows here? Do you know?

Man: No.

Prostitute: How about you?

Pimp: Is that a trick question?

Prostitute: No.

Pimp: Ah, I don't know.

Prostitute: I don't know either.

Pimp: By the way, don't you think that those cows are running straight towards us?

Man: I wonder why they're coming this way?

Pimp: In all probability, they're running the other way—but maybe they're running straight at us—don't you think?

Prostitute: In all probability, it seems in all probability.

Pimp: Yes, and in all probability, they're running straight at us. In short, there's no way to know what kinds of thoughts cows have. But, I've bothered you enough. Remember, there's nothing more important than being careful. (*Departs stage right.*)

Prostitute: I wonder if they're coming towards us.

Man: They're facing the other way.

Prostitute: Would you like a second helping?

Man: That's enough.

Prostitute: Right, tea?

Man: Thank you for this meal—it was really good.

Prostitute: It was nothing. What are you doing this afternoon, dear?

Man: Uh, yeah...the afternoon.

Prostitute: Normally, in the afternoon, we can: take a nap, cut the lawn, make a pond in the garden, or make a dog house.

Man: Let's make a dog house.

Prostitute: But, we don't have a dog.

Man: Do we have cat?

Prostitute: Cats don't live in houses.

Man: Why?

Prostitute: Because they're smart.

Man: Well, let's sing a song. Loudly.

Prostitute: But I can't keep that up for very long! The longest song I know only has four verses.

Man: Well, let's laugh.

Prostitute: Are we really gonna laugh?

Man: Yeah. Laughter has no limits.

Prostitute: Could we really go on forever?

Man: When we can't continue, we should stop.

Prostitute: That makes sense.

Man: Wanna try doing it?

Prostitute: Okay.

Man: *(Tries and fails.)* Why don't you start it?

Prostitute: But I don't want to laugh at all. You proposed it, you do it.

Man: Yeah. *(Tries.)*

From stage left, the Hat Maker's Wife, who has become a door-to-door insurance saleswoman, comes out.

Wife: Good day.

Prostitute: Ah, good day.

Wife: Nice weather isn't it?

Prostitute: It's truly good weather.

Wife: When we talk about the weather—the better the weather, the better.

Prostitute: That's true—there's nothing better than good weather.

Wife: Your laundry will dry immediately.

Prostitute: Right, and you won't need an umbrella.

Wife: And you start to feel bright and cheerful.

Prostitute: But the best thing is that it's warm.

Wife: However, madam, on a day just like this—when the weather's good, and it's warm
and mild—that's when accidents happen.

Prostitute: Accidents?

Wife: That's right, madam, can't you see? There's a horse standing over there.

Prostitute: That's a cow.

Wife: Ah, is it a cow?

Prostitute: It's a cow, 'cause it has horns.

Wife: Really? You're right—it does have horns. I thought it was a horse because it has
four legs...but let's not worry about that, let's assume that those cows are
running straight towards us. If they are cows, they'll come with their horns in
front of them.

Prostitute: Right. Certainly.

Wife: Coming here, they'll hit your husband, hard.

Prostitute: Oh.

Wife: Those horns will pierce your husband's body deeply.... Blood will flow copiously,
and after that, your husband will pass on to the next world. Because he was
pierced deeply—by what we call a cow's horn...

Prostitute: Do you really think so?

Wife: I really think so, and if that happens, what will happen to the surviving wife and
little baby?

Man: I'm going to die?

Wife: That's what's going to happen, and, if that happens, what will happen to the
surviving wife and little baby?

Man: Is that a trick question?

Wife: No.

Man: Well, I've got no clue.

Prostitute: Well, what's going to happen?

Wife: Are you asking what's going to happen?... Surely you're going to have a lot of
problems.

Prostitute: Yes, that's probably what will happen—I'll have lots of problems.

Wife: And at that moment? Here I am, in order to provide you with advice, madam...

(From her bag, she pulls out documents.) The truth is that I am a door-to-door
insurance saleswoman.

Man: Door-to-door insurance saleswoman?

Prostitute: Have you ever heard of that?

Man: No.

Wife: Insurance is a very good thing. When you buy insurance, when, for example—like

I just said—your husband suddenly passes on, you'll be able to receive a lot of
money.

Prostitute: Oh my...

Wife: It really is a lot. Usually, everyone is amazed. They say things like, ‘Is it really okay to receive this much money?’

Prostitute: But, I don’t feel good about this.

Wife: No, it’s totally fine. You don’t need to worry, even a little—the reason why I’m saying that is because we charge a small membership fee from everyone.

Man: Ah, I see. So that means, that if I die, then you’ll pay the money, but if I don’t die, then you get to keep the membership fee, is that it?

Wife: Not at all. If you haven’t passed on by the time that the policy expires, then we will return all of the membership fees.

Prostitute: Well, if that’s the case, it sounds like you’re going to take the loss.

Wife: That’s exactly the way it works.

Prostitute: How do you stay in business?

Wife: Well, somehow we get by—and that’s because we believe that, you, madam, and your baby deserve our utmost concern.

Prostitute: I don’t believe it.

Wife: But, everyone else does. Won’t you enter into a contract?

Prostitute: What do you think?

Man: I don’t believe it!

Wife: Be reasonable, madam, are you really going to tell me that you don’t believe that?

See those horses standing over there—even if they’re actually cows—do you really think that they won’t start running?

Prostitute: They might run.

Wife: They will run. Until now, they've been eating grass—it's just about time for their exercise. Let me tell you about cows—they always exercise after eating. They will run.

Prostitute: Do you think they'll run?

Man: They might run.

Wife: Please enter into a contract—you won't lose anything.

Prostitute: Shall we enter a contract?

Man: It's okay if we enter.

Prostitute: We accept.

Wife: Thank you. (*Hurriedly puts away the documents.*) I'll leave and send my assistant over to you right away, and he'll give you the documents to sign—I know this goes without saying—but if you don't sign the documents before you pass on, we can't guarantee....

Prostitute: I wonder if he'll come before the cows run?

Wife: I'll see to things at once. I'm sorry to have disturbed you. (*Exits.*)

Prostitute: Wasn't that wonderful?

Man: Why?

Prostitute: We now have insurance.

Man: Yeah.

Prostitute: I wonder if those cows will run?

Man: Yeah, I wonder. (*Tries to laugh.*)

Prostitute: What happened?

Man: I still can't do it.

Prostitute: What?

Man: I can't laugh.

Prostitute: Sooner or later, it'll become funny.

The Black Hat Man in the guise of a high-pressure telephone salesman quickly appears.

He brings a telephone wrapped in a wrapping cloth.

Black Hat: Sir, it's a secret, but I have a demo telephone—how about it?

Man: Telephone?

Black Hat: Yes, that's right. This thing isn't bad either. Actually, I'll tell you the story—

the telephone company went bankrupt, and instead of the usual severance pay,

we just got telephones. If I don't sell this, my wife and child will walk the streets.

Hey, so, sir, I'll sell it to you cheap?

Man: What am I going to do with a telephone?

Prostitute: A telephone? How nice he is, bringing it here....

Black Hat: That's right, would you like to look at it? At the risk of repeating myself—it's

actually a brand name phone. (*Shows them.*)

Prostitute: Well, that's a nice one.

Black Hat: You can tell because the gloss is better, madam.

Prostitute: How's the reception?

Black Hat: Of course the reception is good—please try it.

Prostitute: (*Puts it to her ear.*) I can hear.

Black Hat: Can you recognize that sound?

Prostitute: No.

Black Hat: It's a hippopotamus.

Prostitute: A hippo?

Black Hat: Yeah.

Prostitute: I called the zoo, didn't I?

Black Hat: That's right—your husband should try it, too.

Man: (*Listens.*)

Prostitute: Can you hear anything?

Man: Yeah.

Prostitute: What?

Man: Someone's laughing....

Prostitute: Wow, laughing...?

Man: Yeah, it seems terribly funny. I wonder who could it be?

Black Hat: Indians.

Man: Indians?

Black Hat: Yes, you called India. Therefore, they are Indians. This telephone can be used
in foreign countries, too.

Prostitute: Wow...

Man: But, do Indians really laugh?

Black Hat: Of course they laugh, sir. At the time when I was formally employed, I often
spoke with Indians, and they certainly laughed. Indians, sir, laugh before they
eat and before they sleep.

Prostitute: Are we going to buy it?

Man: What?

Prostitute: This telephone, it's very good.

Black Hat: Please buy it, sir, and you'll get it cheaply.

Man: But I can't believe that Indians can laugh.

Black Hat: What do you think, sir, your wife is for it—and this'll really help me....

Wife: Aren't you going to buy it?

Man: Eh, yeah, I'll buy it.

Prostitute: He said we'd buy it. (*Pays the money.*)

Black Hat: Thank you, sir, I'm really indebted to you, because of this, my wife and child will feel at ease because they'll walk the streets without getting lost. Sorry for disturbing you. Thank you again. (*Exits.*)

Prostitute: (*While listening to the telephone.*) Dear, I can hear a steam train running; I wonder where it's going? Don't you want to ride a steam train...?

Man: (*Tries to laugh*) Aah, haa....

Prostitute: What happened?

Man: Yeah, perhaps, I can laugh.

Prostitute: Really?

Man: Yeah, aah, aah, haa....

Prostitute: (*Places the telephone receiver to her ear again.*) There's someone over there. There's someone right over there. Being silent. They're listening to me, definitely. I wonder who it is. I wonder if it's an Indian? It can't be an Indian; they'd talk—in Indian....

Man: (*Frantically trying to laugh.*) Aah, hahaa, hahaa, aah, aah, haa, hahaa, haa, haa, hahaa, (*Gradually starts to laugh. That being said, it's hard to know whether it can be called a laugh.*) Hahaa, hahaha, aah, hahaha, aah, hahaha, hahaha....

Prostitute: (*Notices*) You laughed. Eh, you're laughing, aren't you?

Man: Hahaa, hahaha, aah, hahaha....

Prostitute: Well, you're laughing. (*Laughs.*)

Little by little, after that, the two people laugh violently. The laughter continues. They laugh for a while. And then cease. The two people are exhausted and disheartened. For a little while, they face each other, and catch their breath. Before long, the Man grabs his stomach and falls on his side.

Prostitute: What's wrong?

Man: Ah...it hurts.

Prostitute: Where? Where does it hurt?

Man: (*Holding his stomach.*) Here.

Prostitute: Does it hurt terribly?

Man: The pain's terrible; it really hurts.

Prostitute: I wonder why, I wonder if it's 'cause you laughed. Well, we'll just have to call the doctor.

Man: It's okay. You don't have to call the doctor. Don't call one, please.

Prostitute: That's no good; it might be your appendix. If it's your appendix, and you don't do something about it, you'll die. (*Takes the telephone receiver.*) Hello,

hello, is this the doctor? Hello, you're a doctor, aren't you? Please come quickly.
It's my husband; his stomach hurts. Eh? It's his stomach! His stomach hurts.
It's true! It's terribly painful. It may be his appendix. Won't you please come?
Eh? We can't go! Because it hurts so terribly...he's sleeping. I won't wake him,
because it hurts. We can't go. If you can't come, it's a problem. It truly is. Are
you really a doctor? Can't you hear? He's groaning. That groaning voice is my
husband's. It seems he'll die. If you won't come quickly...?

*In the middle of the phone call, the Old Man disguised as a doctor comes out. The
Prostitute continues talking into the telephone facing him.*

Old Man: *(Tapping her shoulder.)* Hello.

Prostitute: *(Places the phone down)* Well, what took you so long? He says that he's
experiencing a lot of pain.

Old Man: You may not think so, but I actually ran over here. Where is the sick person?

Prostitute: He's over here. His stomach hurts.

Old Man: I see; his stomach is it? What happened?

Prostitute: It's because he laughed.

Old Man: Hahaa, you did say that it's because he laughed.

Prostitute: It's because he laughed really hard. He probably shouldn't have laughed so
hard.

Old Man: Well that's exactly what he shouldn't have done. You see, when you laugh, you have to be really careful.... *(From his bag, he pulls out a stethoscope and taps the Man's body.)*

Prostitute: What do you think?

Old Man: Hm, he looks quite weak.

Prostitute: Will he get better?

Old Man: Of course. And I have some good medicines and a lot of syringes.

Prostitute: Are they expensive?

Old Man: I normally do not accept payment from those who are poor.

Prostitute: Really, what a kind man you are.

Old Man: Are there any cows?

Prostitute: Cows? We don't have any, but there are some over there.

Old Man: *(Looks, immediately averts his eyes.)* Hahaa, over there, huh, I had this feeling that we were being watched...by those cows.

Prostitute: Do you think they're watching us?

Old Man: Of course they're watching us, but we should simply ignore them. As you know, if cows think that you're watching them, they will become increasingly restless.

Prostitute: My husband still doesn't have insurance yet.

Old Man: That's no good. He really should get some insurance; and insurance is really not a bad thing, you know.

Prostitute: Though we've entered into a contract, the assistant still hasn't brought the documents.

Old Man: That's not good. That's not good at all. It's like not having any insurance at all!

Prostitute: I don't know what's going on; it's been a while since I've heard anything.

Old Man: Well, madam, what do you want me to do? Shall I give him a shot or shall I give him some medication?

Prostitute: I don't know, but I've heard that an injection would probably be quicker and more effective.

Old Man: Exactly, madam. *(From his bag, he takes out a large knife, and slowly cuts into the Man's chest.)*

The Man's long, long scream resounds. The Prostitute covers her ears and faints. The scene is silent, night on the wharf...

Quietly the Veiled Singer appears and sings. It is the same "Someone Dies" song as the one at the end of Scene Four.

Scene Six

Night at the wharf. The Veiled Singer is sitting on the edge of a plain wooden coffin, placed at center stage; he faces the other side of the coffin, and from his guitar come deep sounds.

The Prostitute, carrying crimson roses, stands next to the coffin, looking down fixedly at it.

The coffin has no lid, and the corpse, covered with a white piece of cloth, can be seen lying down inside.

From stage left, the Hat Maker couple and Old Man, from stage right, the Pimp, the Black Hat Man, the Mistress, and Henchman 1 and 2 appear, walking slowly.

During this scene, everyone, except for the Veiled Singer and the Prostitute, is constantly moving slowly. Sometimes they stop, and, lost in thought, look at the corpse in the coffin. They engage in conversations with each other, but they are not particularly tied to them. Each person occupies his or her own separate world.

Mistress: *(Becomes aware of Hat Maker, absentmindedly)* Hah...looks like you failed again, didn't you.

Hat Maker: Yeah...sorry about that.

Wife: When I came back, he was alive. My husband just can't get anything right, you know.

Hat Maker: She's right, you know. I just can't do anything right. I just don't have the talent.

Old Man: It's not just a matter of talent. You just don't have the enthusiasm for it...you lack the passion.

Hat Maker: You're right. I just don't have the passion.

Old Man: Now look over here—they did this guy right.

Hat Maker: *(Looks in the coffin.)* Now, this is how it should be done. Note how it does not move...

Pimp: But the screaming, this one was exceptionally good at it.

Wife: Oh yes, I could just feel my chest tightening.

Hat Maker: Are you trying to say that this guy's scream was like the ship's steam whistle?

Henchman 1: You've got it all wrong. Listen, this's what a ship's steam whistle sounds like *(He tries to do demonstrate.)* But this guy's scream sounded something like this. *(Attempts to do it, but can't. To Henchman 2)* You show them what it sounded like.

Henchman 2: Now first, you have to understand how the knife was stuck in. It was right there.... *(Tries, but cannot do it.)*

Black Hat: Stop, you fool. This is how it's done. *(Tries.)*

Mistress: Wow, your technique's completely different.

Black Hat: That's not the way to do it. But, I'll admit, it's pretty close.

Mistress: What do you mean—it doesn't even come close. I've heard that voice somewhere; I think it was on a day when the wind was blowing...

Prostitute: It was way up there...in a town that grew these tall chimneys.

Mistress: Really...

Prostitute: I heard it, too. And I cried when I heard it.

Hat Maker: *(While hesitating.)* You know, I really feel that I might be able to come close to producing that scream....

Old Man: What makes you think you can do it?! No way—you were sleeping at the time of the scream! In fact, you were snoring loudly.

Wife: I don't think he was snoring, but he was certainly asleep. Talk about embarrassing.

Hat Maker: No really...I really think I can scream like that. Now about that injection, I don't think it contained anything poisonous. In fact, I think it was nothing more than calcium. Look...don't you think I've grown a little fat.

Mistress: No matter what was in the syringe, you'd still get fat.

Wife: Remember, you'd get fat even if you ate parsley.

Hat Maker: But what if it contained something other than poison? What if it had nutrients? That'd really make me feel betrayed.

Black Hat: Now listen...you shouldn't concern yourself with those kinds of thoughts. What's really important is your commitment. Besides, I've heard of a lot of people, even today, who've died after having calcium injected into their system.

Pimp: Yeah, but...there've also been people who died without ever getting a shot.

Old Man: How?

Pimp: Well, I gotta confess that I added a special personal touch...

Hat Maker: But do you really think he's dead? *(As he is about to touch the corpse in the coffin...)*

Prostitute: *(In a sudden and sharp tone.)* Don't touch him!

Hat Maker: Okay. *(Reflexively jumps back.)*

At this point, the people slowly awaken from their half-sleepwalking state.

Old Man: So do you think that you're better than the rest of us? You've got some nerve...do you think that this one is just for you?

Prostitute: I found him first, you know.

Old Man: Now you wait a minute, I'm the one who saw him before any of you. We're the ones who saw him first.

Wife: That's right! We saw him before any of you. You saw him with us, didn't you?

Hat Maker: Absolutely. Of course I saw him. What's more, I even spoke to him.

Mistress: Come on, dear.

Black Hat: Hold on here. I was the first one. I saw him before any of you. And, of course, I spoke with him, too.... But that doesn't mean that he's what I want.
(Staring at the Prostitute, he moves away from the coffin, and goes to a corner of the stage. Henchman 1 and 2 follow.)

Old Man: Well, I don't want him either. But I wanted to tell you that this guy doesn't just belong to one person. *(He stares at the Prostitute, and moves away from the coffin, and goes to the opposite corner of the stage as the Black Hat group. The Wife follows.)*

Mistress: You know, don't you, he doesn't just belong to you. *(Goes to the Black Hat group's gathering place.)*

Prostitute: *(To Pimp)* Come on, dear.

Pimp: *(Moves away from everyone)* Let 'em touch him, he belongs to everybody.

Prostitute: I don't want to....

Pimp: Let 'em touch him.

Hat Maker: *(Also away from everyone.)* Thank you. If I'd only known that he was dead, then....

Wife: Okay, dear, they're going to let you touch him now.

Hat Maker: Okay.

Mistress: *(Coldly.)* Now, sir, you can touch him.

Hat Maker: Really? If that's the case, I will.... *(He looks at the Prostitute for just a second and bows his head, crouches and touches.)* Thanks. *(Bows his head to the Prostitute.)*

Prostitute: It's okay. If there's anyone else who wants to touch him, it's okay.

Mistress: Okay, you guys, come over and touch him.

Henchman 1: Well, we're not really that interested....

Mistress: Come and touch him!

Henchman 1: Yes ma'am. *(Reluctantly walks forward, and approaches the coffin, bows his head to the Prostitute, timidly touches the corpse, bows his head to the Prostitute again, and retraces his steps.)*

Mistress: Your turn.

Henchman 2: Yes ma'am.

From this point on, the scene starts to look like the ceremonial incense offering at a funeral. Instead of burning incense, the people touch the corpse. Needless to say, the Prostitute, who stands on the side of the coffin with the red rose blossoms, plays the grieving widow; the Hat Maker is like the director of a funeral service. Only the Veiled Singer strums his guitar as if nothing has happened.

Mistress: Your turn.

Black Hat: I know. *(Very formally touches the corpse.)* You do it.

Mistress: Okay. *(Touches.)*

Old Man: You do it, too.

Wife: *(Stands up)* But, how about you, captain?

Old Man: Eh? Me? Well, if you insist.

Wife: *(Touches.)*

Old Man: (*Touches.*) It was a good scream....

Prostitute: (*Returns the Old Man's final bow, and she notices that everyone has taken their turn.*) Why don't you come and do it?

Pimp: I'm okay.

Prostitute: Why?

Pimp: I don't need to touch him—I don't feel it's necessary. And you should do it.

Prostitute: Really? Okay. (*Approaches the coffin, bows her head to the Black Hat's group and the Old Man's group, and touches the corpse.*) He was a good person. His scream was good, but so was his story of India, which he told very well. (*Places the roses in her hand on top of the corpse.*)

Hat Maker: Why don't you touch him once....

Pimp: I don't feel like it.

Hat Maker: But you....

Pimp: I don't feel like doin' it.

Mistress: Why?

Pimp: Do I gotta have a good reason? I just don't wanna.

Old Man: You're a strange fellow.

Prostitute: You should take your turn, it's really nice.

Pimp: I don't need to do that.

Henchman 1: That guy's embarrassed, boss.

Black Hat: Shut up.

Wife: If you really want to do it, just do it.

Mistress: That's right, you're just being difficult.

Pimp: What do you mean by that?

Prostitute: Hey, please do it for me.

Pimp: Well I can do it...but it's these guys over here....

Prostitute: *(To the Pimp)* Don't worry about them—come on now.... *(She takes the Pimp with her to the side of the coffin.)* You know, the best place's his forehead.

Pimp: Here? *(While pointing, notices his surroundings.)* Okay, you guys, look the other way.

Mistress: What's the matter?

Prostitute: Hey, it's okay. Look, there....

Pimp: *(Nervously touches the corpse.)*

Prostitute: Hey, isn't that good?

Pimp: Yeah.

Hat Maker: Since we've all done it, let's go bury him.

Pimp: A burial?

Hat Maker: Uh-huh.

Black Hat: What're we talkin' about here?

Hat Maker: In short...you know? It's something they often do when someone dies.

Wife: We'll express our condolences.

Old Man: Yes, and after that, we'll cry.

Prostitute: I don't mind cryin'.

Mistress: Who's going to give the eulogy?

Black Hat: You do it.

Henchman 1: I really couldn't do that.

Black Hat: Why?

Henchman 1: I've never done it before.

Black Hat: What about you?

Henchman 2: I couldn't either. I can't get in the mood.

Hat Maker: How about you?

Old Man: No way, I'm tired of this guy.

Prostitute: If that's the case, then please, just go away....

Old Man: Well, I don't feel like goin' anywhere.

Pimp: Come on, shut up.

Old Man: I just can't get into the mood to be silent.

Hat Maker: Come on, we've got to do something, if we do nothing, we'll be totally
useless.

Wife: We don't want to hear from you, just sit down.

Prostitute: Hey, I wonder what kind of person that man's mother is?

Old Man: I hate your thoughts; they're always crazy.

Prostitute: Nothin' wrong with my thoughts.

Hat Maker: Rightly so—her ideas are always logical. In short, if he had a mother, then he
would have been born.

Black Hat: That's enough, just shut up, why don't you...?

Hat Maker: But we've got to do something....

*From this point on, the people each enter into their own world. Absentmindedly, they are
lost in their thoughts. The guitar, as expected, sounds as if nothing had changed.*

Mistress: *(Absentmindedly)* It's okay, everyone stand up, and enclose this man in a circle,
come now....

The people slowly stand up, and crowd around the coffin in a semicircle, standing. They place their palms together, and look downwards into the coffin. In the following conversation, the speaker raises his or her head, and speaks facing out into the distance, and that's the position they take.

Black Hat: After that...?

Mistress: After that, we are going to do various things.

Pimp: Such as...?

Hat Maker: How about eating something? Whatever we can find...?

Mistress: That's good. Do you have anything?

Wife: A few peanuts.

Mistress: That's good; I'll pass them out....

The peanuts are handed over in turn. When each person gets one in their hand then,

Mistress: For the sake of that man....

All: We will now partake of this peanut.

The cast, each in their own world, while they make sure of the taste, they eat the peanut.

When finished eating, again, the cast puts their palms together, and casts their eyes downward.

Black Hat: And then what...?

Mistress: We're gonna talk, about that man. You can say anything....

Henchman 1: That guy, went to India....

Henchman 2: That guy died of starvation in India....

Black Hat: He had his bones licked by the Buddha....

Hat Maker: He dug a hole in the desert on a moonlit night....

Wife: He went into the hole and cried....

Prostitute: The wind was blowing, I cried, too....

Pimp: It was really cows that licked him. It wasn't the Buddha....

Old Man: He was a kangaroo....

Pimp: Did it move?

Old Man: No.

Prostitute: He was a real kangaroo....

For a moment, even the guitar stops.

Black Hat: Let's go.

Mistress: Why?

Black Hat: It's the end.

Wife: Let's go.

Hat Maker: Where?

Wife: It's time to sleep.

Henchman 1: Let's go.

Henchman 2: You go.

Henchman 1: What about you?

Henchman 2: I'll be going too....

Old Man: It's the end.

Pimp: The end....

Black Hat: Let's go.

Wife: Let's go.

Henchman 1: Let's go.

Henchman 2: Let's go.

No one moves. The Veiled Singer stands up, and slowly leaves the coffin. And, at the same time, from the Prostitute's mouth, as if she's murmuring, a curse-like song flows forth, all the members of the cast continue it, and following that, they start to dance slowly.

Prostitute: The kangaroo is sorrowful.

All: Sworrowful, sworrowful.

Prostitute: It's because.

All: Becoose.

Prostitute: It's because he is a kangaroo.

All: Beroose.

They surround the corpse, while they all are singing, sadly, however, they dance with elegance.

Prostitute: We are all kangaroos.

All: Kyanguehru, kyanguehru

Prostitute: We're going to eat peanuts.

All: Ayte.

Prostitute: We're going to cry.

All: Curay.

Prostitute: The kangaroo is a kangaroo.

All: Kyanguehru, kyanguehru.

Prostitute: The kangaroo is sorrowful.

All: Sworrowfool, sworrowfool.

Prostitute: The kangaroo is smelly.

All: Swelly, swelly.

Prostitute: Let's kill the kangaroo.

All: Loot's kyll, loot's kyll.

Prostitute: We smell.

All: Swell, Swell.

Prostitute: We are smelly.

All: Swelli, swelli.

Prostitute: Let's kill ourselves.

All: Kyll hourselles, kyll hourselles

Prostitute: Let's kill the kangaroo.

All: Kyanguehru, kyanguehru.

Prostitute: Let's kill the kangaroo.

Suddenly the whole cast stiffens and remains standing in place.

Old Man: *(Sorrowfully shouts)* KYANGUEHRU!

All: *(Darkly)* LOOT'S KYLL. *(They bow their heads.)*

There is a moment.

Black Hat: And then...?

A moment, blackout.

Curtain Call

When the lights come up, the whole cast is surrounding the coffin, arranged in a semi-circle. The guitar is, as ever, playing. From inside the coffin, the corpse gets up, takes the red roses and bows his head. He then hands the flowers to the Prostitute, the Prostitute

takes them and bows her head, and then she hands them to the Pimp. The red roses are handed to the following: Hat Maker, Black Hat, Mistress, Henchman 1, Henchman 2, Wife, Old Man. The person who receives the flowers, takes them, bows their head, hands the flowers to the next person, and then exits the stage. Meanwhile, there must not be any pauses in the applause from the audience. Last to receive the flowers is the Old Man, he takes them and bows his head, and calls the Veiled Singer over. The Veiled Singer is called to the center of the stage and bows his head, and gets into the coffin. The Old Man covers him with the white cloth and exits. For a while, nothing changes. The audience gradually gives up and goes home.

A Discussion of the Translation

The translation of Japanese plays is a complex subject. Ted T. Takaya writes that good examples of Japanese drama “may remain untranslated because their uniquely Japanese character may forever elude the best efforts of potential translators.”⁹³ He goes on to argue, “The ‘Japaneseness’ of these plays can best be obtained, then, at some cost to stageworthiness.”⁹⁴ This “uniquely Japanese character” appears both in content and in the language itself, and Takaya argues, in order to make a Japanese play palatable to an English-speaking audience and actable for English-speaking actors, much of what makes the play “Japanese” must be removed. During the course of this project, I determined that he was, for the most part, correct, especially in context of the literal translation of the Japanese into English. However, I would argue that the content of *Kangaroo* is fairly easily understood through the addition of a few dramaturgical notes in the program, as it does not contain too much content that would not be easily grasped by English-speaking audiences.

Takaya also says that Western focus has always been on the traditional forms of theatre.⁹⁵ Indeed, many more traditional than contemporary plays have been translated. Possible reasons might be that there are a fairly limited number of traditional plays still in the repertory, thus making a full body of work possible; that the scholarship required to translate a traditional play is more intensive, and thus, perhaps more interesting to Western scholars of Japan; or that the Japanese traditional forms of theatre are actually more familiar to us in the West. Certainly, at the beginning of this project, I was not at

⁹³ Ted T. Takaya, *Modern Japanese Drama*, ix.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, x.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, xvi.

all aware of contemporary Japanese theatre. For the Western audience, the traditional theatre is a scholar's domain—requiring comprehensive knowledge of the piece's time period and culture, in addition to the structure of the Japanese language. In essence, Japanese traditional theatre is difficult for the casual reader, and virtually impossible to perform regularly for Western audiences because it requires such familiarity with the texts, and many of the formal props, such as *nō* masks are as old as the plays and passed down through the leading acting families. Contemporary Japanese theatre, on the other hand, is much easier for a Western audience to comprehend, as it draws from Western theatre. However, the Western audience will find the contemporary theatre to be quite different from Western theatre because its roots are in the traditional theatre, which—most especially *kabuki*—is what makes up the basis of the Japanese perception of what makes “good theatre.”⁹⁶ That being said, I believe that *Kangaroo* is far from being incomprehensible to the English-speaking audience, and that, with some careful dramaturgical notes, an English-speaking audience might enjoy *Kangaroo* immensely.

It is at this point, I should point out that I am, in no way, shape, or form, a professional translator. At the time of writing, I have had nearly four years of collegiate Japanese, and I have never been to Japan. Thus, this project proved to be quite a challenge, and an excellent exposure to colloquial Japanese. As language classes generally present language in an unrealistically perfect “textbook” form, having a chance to read conversational Japanese was extremely educational. Betsuyaku is, as mentioned above, particularly sensitive to language, and he is very good at writing believable dialogue for his characters, which make him an excellent playwright to study.

⁹⁶ Ibid., xvi.

Colloquial Japanese, I believe, is very difficult for translators. First, depending on the local dialect, it can have cultural connotations similar to that of an American Northeastern dialect or an American Southern dialect. Secondly, in colloquial Japanese, as in colloquial English, words are often dropped, modified, or rearranged, and, furthermore, often more is implied than actually said. This is an additional challenge for any translator, and was particularly difficult for me. As a result, I required a good deal of help in order to comprehend the actual meaning of lines beyond the literal.

In addition, the Japanese language, as any student thereof knows, is deliberately, seemingly impossibly, vague. Of course, this is why Japanese is a language well suited to Absurdism, and Betsuyaku is a masterful user of language. Even in Standard Japanese, subjects are commonly presumed to be understood, and, consequently, are dropped. This is quite frustrating to the budding translator; it is often quite difficult to tell to whom the sentence is referring—especially when the sentence is given outside of the context, or when there are several possible subjects. Colloquial Japanese is even more vague. Not only are dropped subjects mystifying to translators, Betsuyaku uses dropped subjects in order to further bemuse and confuse his characters about the topic of conversation and their realities. Betsuyaku “exploits the distinct qualities of the Japanese language: in Japanese the individual is not established as a responsible agent in a Western sense...the subject is kept vague....”⁹⁷ This allows Betsuyaku to explore the breakup of human relationship via language. However, keeping the same distance from the subject in English is quite difficult, and in many cases, I was forced to include the subject, so that the English would make sense.

⁹⁷ The Japanese Playwrights Association, *Half a Century of Japanese Theatre VI, 1960s Part I*, 253.

Another particularity of the Japanese language that lends itself well to Absurdism is the use of *sore* (それ). *Sore* literally means “that,” but is also used as “it” in discussion of a previously mentioned topic. Betsuyaku uses this a great deal and to great effect. The use of *sore* allows the topic of conversation to become increasingly vague and causes Betsuyaku’s characters to spend great lengths of time trying to understand what they are actually talking about. Furthermore, confusion about the subject of conversation allows Betsuyaku to isolate each of his characters; regardless of whether or not they are on stage alone, they are inevitably alone in their inability to comprehend the conversation because of their subjective realities. In *Kangaroo*, this sense of perpetual confusion, especially in the context of the state of being a kangaroo, is difficult to maintain in English.

A perpetual problem faced by translators is the problem of jokes, puns, and colloquialisms. *Kangaroo* is actually quite a funny play, and I was occasionally hard pressed to maintain the comedy. A particular pun that comes to mind occurs in scene one. When the Old Man offers his customers three chances to board the ship, he says:

しかし、ものにはウラがある。ウラにはイヌがいると云うわけさ。

Shikashi, mono ni wa ura ga aru. Ura ni wa inu ga iru to iuwakesa.

Literally, this sentence reads: “However, there is a back way. But the rumor is that there may be a dog in the back way.” The pun, of course, is on the word *ura*, which means both a back way and a backyard—thus the dog. He proposes another way that the three people might get on the boat, punning that they may sneak through the backyard of the wharf. Unfortunately, as with most puns, this one does not work particularly well in English. Instead of “a back way,” we would likely use “another way,” and thus the pun not only falls flat, but also becomes inexplicable. In order to reconcile the pun, and to

maintain the feeling of the line, I have translated it: “However, maybe we can slip over the fence. But there might be a dog there.”⁹⁸ While this is not quite as clever as Betsuyaku’s original line, it manages to get both the pun and the point across.

I was also occasionally hard pressed to catch the many colloquialisms used throughout the piece, most especially by lower class characters like the Pimp or the Henchmen. A good example of this occurs during the Pimp’s long story about his French-style friendship. The Pimp says,

例のところでイッパイやったよ。

*Rei no tokoro de ippai yatta yo.*⁹⁹

Literally, this reads: “At the usual place, we did it to capacity!” However, any speaker of Japanese, who had spent time in Japan, would know that this line actually reads: “We got drunk at my usual bar!”¹⁰⁰ The word *ippai* literally means “to capacity,” or “the amount necessary to fill a container,” or “a drink.” Here, it has the colloquial connotation of many drinks. This kind of thing was especially difficult for me.

In addition, the Japanese language is far more concise than English, and often simple lines, like this one, by the Mistress in scene four, lose most of their brevity in translation:

何なの、あの女は？

*Nani na no, ano onna wa?*¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, trans. Raisa Stebbins (2011), 48.

⁹⁹ Minoru Betsuyaku, *カンガルー、マッチ売りの少女*；象：別役実戯曲集 (Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 1969), 105.

¹⁰⁰ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 66-7.

¹⁰¹ Minoru Betsuyaku, *カンガルー*, 124.

The line literally reads as, “What is this woman?” but in English, it should read more along the lines of “Who the heck is this woman, and what is she doing here?” conveying a healthy dose of distaste for the Prostitute.¹⁰² Since in the English version, the lines have become longer, much of the rapid-fire nature of the dialogue has been lost. Another example of this problem is the word *anata/anta* (あなた・あんた). This word literally means “you;” however, unlike the many other Japanese words for “you,” this can be either extremely derogatory (i.e. when the Prostitute is trying to insult the Pimp) or be extremely intimate (i.e. while the Prostitute and the Man are playing house).¹⁰³ The derogatory meaning can usually be translated into English simply as “you,” and the tone of voice in which it is used will generally convey the meaning. However, the intimate connotation of *anata* is a little bit harder. Since the intimate “you” — thee/thou/thy — is no longer used in common English, I have chosen to translate it as “you,” but to add “dear” onto the sentences in which it is used intimately, which serves to get the connotation across.

The biggest problem, I believe, that plagues translators of Japanese, and that I had to address during this project, was the problem of politeness. The Japanese language is particularly puzzling to speakers of English because there are numerous levels of politeness, and how characters address one another indicates the relations between them. While we do have polite language in English, we certainly do not have the same distinct levels of politeness as the Japanese. In translating *Kangaroo*, I have done my best to keep as much of a sense of the polite language as possible. For example, when the Pimp,

¹⁰² Ibid., 99.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 96; 105.

playacting as a policeman, asks to join the Prostitute and the Man at their table in scene five, he says,

では、失礼させていただきます。

*Dewa, shitsureisasete itadakimashite.*¹⁰⁴

Literally, he asks, “Well, please receive me causing you rudeness.” As he does not wish to inconvenience her, he does not simply come out and ask to sit down, instead he apologizes for being rude over his placement at their table. The closest translation in English is something along the lines of “Well, if that’s the case, please allow me to join you?”¹⁰⁵ Although this is fairly polite by English standards, it is still not nearly as humble as the Japanese. Use of polite language in *Kangaroo* also provides some indication of character. The Mistress often appears coquettish through her use of polite language. On the other hand, because Japanese has polite forms of speech, the effect is more dramatic when the impolite forms are used.

Although the Black Hat Man, his Mistress, and his Henchmen are all gangsters, the Black Hat Man and the Mistress use fairly standard forms of colloquial speech, occasionally fluctuating into the polite forms of speech. The Henchmen, however, often use very impolite speech. When they fight with the Prostitute in Scene Four, they use the word *chikushō* (畜生), which, depending on context can mean anything from “brute” to “asshole” or even function as an indiscriminate curse word—much like the English “fuck,” “shit,” “damn.” However, during the fight scene, there is a delightful repetition of *chikushō*, which does not survive translation.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, in addition to *chikushō*,

¹⁰⁴ Minoru Betsuyaku, *カンガルー*, 124.

¹⁰⁵ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 109.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

Japanese has any of a number of words for “bitch,” two more of which are used in this scene: *abazure* (あばずれ), *kono yarō* (このやろう). Thus, unavoidably, in translation some of the vitality of the fight scene is lost through the removal of one sort of repetition and the introduction of another.

Kangaroo is an interesting play because, for the most part, it is not a play wherein the “Japaneseness” outweighs the story. However, there are a couple of cultural puzzles in the play that a Western audience without much knowledge of Japanese culture could not be expected to comprehend. The first is the Man’s reason for going to India: he wants to starve to death and have his bones licked clean by the Buddha.¹⁰⁷ This, of course, means that he wants to go to India, starve, and have his bones cleansed in the Ganges River—in Japanese, he uses the verb *nameru* (なめる), which means “to lick.” This provides the impetus in scene four for the Man to talk about the cows licking his bones clean—which is a possible pun on the sacredness of cows in the Hindu tradition. In short, what the Man actually wishes to do is to go to India and become an ascetic. This is a lofty and pure goal, much the same as wishing to become a priest, and why it is important that the Prostitute is able to talk him out of it by asking him to “try living”.¹⁰⁸ A Japanese audience would definitely get these implications, but an English-speaking audience probably would not.

Another significant cultural nuance that an English-speaking audience would likely not understand relates to the Pimp and *kabuki*. Before his entrance in scene four, Betsuyaku has placed this stage direction:

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

「待ちな」と云ってこの時、ヒモが下手からユックリと現われる。いいところである。大向うから声がかかるかもしれない。「待っています」もしくは「大統領ッ」

*“Machina” to itte kono toki, himo ga shimote kara yukkuri to arawareru. Ii tokoro de aru. Oomukou kara koe ga kakarukamoshirenai. “Matteimasu” moshiku wa “Daitōryō.”*¹⁰⁹

In English, this reads as, “When the Pimp says, ‘Wait,’ he appears slowly from stage right. The timing must be just right. If the moment’s dramatic enough, the audience may say: ‘Hoorah!’ or ‘You’re the man!’”¹¹⁰ This note draws directly on *kabuki* and the behavior of the Japanese audience in the theatre. Unlike today’s English-speaking audience, the Japanese audience historically was very noisy. This tradition continues somewhat today. When a major dramatic moment occurs in *kabuki*, the audience may be so moved that they will shout out either the actor’s stage name; *matteimashita* (待っていました), which means, literally, “we’ve been waiting for this” (I have translated this as “hoorah!”); or *daitōryō* (大統領), which literally means “president!” (I have translated this as “You’re the man!”). I find that the English-speaking audience, which has been well trained over the years to sit quietly in the theatre, will refuse to respond, even when directly addressed or questioned by the actors, preferring, instead, the anonymity of silence. The audience of the *kabuki* theatre is not at all like this, and, as a result, the atmosphere of a *kabuki* show is generally lively. Thus, in

¹⁰⁹ Minoru Betsuyaku, *カンガルー*, 126.

¹¹⁰ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 101.

this part of scene four, the Pimp takes on the wildly energetic and much-loved persona of a *kabuki* star.

This is even more emphasized at the end of scene four when the Pimp “cuts a *mie*” (見栄を切る).¹¹¹ The *mie* (traditionally: 見得, Betsuyaku uses: 見栄) is a traditional *kabuki* pose. The *mie* occurs at the height of an extremely dramatic or emotional scene and is a distinct element of *aragoto kabuki*.¹¹² It is expected that the audience will immediately become very excited when the Pimp cuts a *mie*, because they will realize that this portion of the play is of particular dramatic importance. There are a number of different kinds of *mie*, but the audience can expect that the Pimp will either open his eyes very wide or cross them, and he will strike a very dramatic pose. It is likely that the Japanese audience, being familiar with *kabuki*, will also shout out in praise of the actor as described above. Unfortunately, even the most detailed of dramaturgical notes will likely not encourage the English-speaking audience to respond similarly to a Japanese audience, and they will likely find the *mie* comedic rather than dramatic. However, I have decided to leave both the note on audience participation and the *mie* in the translation because I believe that they are both important to the interpretation of the play, and that Betsuyaku included them deliberately as a humorous reference to *kabuki*.

The other moment of possible cultural confusion to an English-speaking audience occurs during scene six, in the funeral. This funeral is conducted like a traditional Japanese funeral, but the major difference, as Betsuyaku notes, is that instead of burning

¹¹¹ Ibid., 103.

¹¹² *Aragoto kabuki* (荒事歌舞伎) is a specific style of *kabuki* developed by the great Ichikawa Danjūrō I. *Aragoto* means “rough style” and refers to this style’s wild, dramatic movements. The subjects of this style of *kabuki* are usually famous samurai. Its counterpart is *wagoto kabuki* (和事歌舞伎), which is the “soft style”; these plays are generally tragic romances.

incense, each person touches the corpse.¹¹³ In a traditional Japanese funeral, the deceased is dressed in white, and each of the guests will offer a stick of incense to the deceased. The guests will also offer flowers. All of these aspects appear in *Kangaroo*, and while they are hardly incomprehensible to the English-speaking audience, the Japanese-speaking audience would understand the connection with Buddhism and the Man's desire to have his bones licked clean by the Buddha.

This project has been invaluable to me in learning how to be a translator and in improving my Japanese. As a reader of translated texts, I have always preferred the most literal translations; conversely, as a translator of plays, I find that I am interested in literal translation only up until the point where literal translation loses the gist of the line. As a result, this translation of *Kangaroo* walks something of a middle road between the literal and the artistic interpretation, in that I have tried to keep as much of Betsuyaku's original wit and linguistic grace intact as possible. Furthermore, this project has gone a long way in expanding my knowledge of colloquial Japanese. Although written colloquial Japanese is certainly nothing like spoken colloquial Japanese, in terms of slurring syllables together, this project provided an opportunity for me to encounter and study the nature of colloquial Japanese so that I might better understand it.

¹¹³ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 128.

Critical Discussion of the Transformation of the Self in *Kangaroo*

David Goodman writes,

Post-*shingeki* drama has two main characteristics. First, it is characterized by the identification of a character or characters with an archetypal, transhistorical figure (a god) into whom they metamorphose; and, second, by a concern with the interrelated questions of a personal redemption (salvation of the individual) and social revolution (salvation of the world).¹¹⁴

Indeed, *Kangaroo* contains both transformation into a deity and salvation. In order to clearly illustrate this, I will examine the use of names in terms of the experiential nature of language, and how the transformation of names is linked to the transformation of Self.

As Betsuyaku Minoru's sensitivity to language has been noted and discussed extensively in preceding chapters, it is enough to say that every word in *Kangaroo* is carefully selected. As a result, the fact that he chooses not to give his characters personal names and name them only with descriptors is telling—a tendency that appears in nearly all of his plays. These descriptive names, rather than making the characters more human, serve to make them into a stereotype. Thus, the audience is able to bring their own connotations to them, thus emphasizing the fallibility of language, caused by the experiential nature of human existence.

For example, let us compare the Hat Maker and the Pimp. From their names alone, we have a good sense of their jobs and their social standing. Furthermore, we might even be able to make assumptions about their behavior. We can assume that the Pimp, as a keeper of prostitutes, is likely to be familiar with a rougher life. Consequently, we can guess that his diction may be coarser and that he might be familiar

¹¹⁴ David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 10.

with physical violence. We can guess that the Hat Maker, on the other hand, is socially and probably morally upstanding. He is likely not terribly rich, but not terribly poor. His diction is likely to be medium—that of the middle class. In contrast to them, we have the Black Hat Man. As his name suggests, he wears a Black Hat, which, ideally, helps the audience identify and differentiate him from the other male characters. More than that, we cannot initially say.

Betsuyaku's method of naming also gives us a sense of relationships between people. Before they even appear onstage, we know that the Prostitute is related somehow to the Pimp, the Hat Maker is married, and the Black Hat Man has not only a mistress, but also henchmen. This last fact gives the audience even more of an idea of who the Black Hat Man might be. He is the sort of man who has a mistress; thus he is perhaps less morally upstanding than the Hat Maker and slightly higher on the social ladder than the Pimp. The fact that the Black Hat Man has henchmen indicates that he occupies some position of power.

In addition, our understanding of the pre-existing social positions of the characters is further illustrated by looking at the women. The three female characters—the Wife, the Mistress, and the Prostitute—are also easily described through their names. The Wife is married to the Hat Maker, and thus, respectable like him. We can assume that she is likely polite and well behaved but not extraordinary. The Mistress belongs to the Black Hat Man, and so we can conclude that she is familiar with the seedier sides of life, as the Wife might not be, but that while less respectable than the Wife, she still holds a position of status. The Prostitute, then, clearly, is on the bottom of the social ladder depicted in the *Kangaroo* cast list. She is perceived as, socially, less morally upright than any other

character, male or female in the play. Therefore, we can expect her to speak colloquially and behave as coarsely as the Pimp.

The three other characters in this play—the Veiled Singer, the Old Man, and the Man—are slightly more mysterious to us. The Veiled Singer is, of course, veiled, but it is impossible to guess the gender or nature of this character until he appears on stage. The Old Man is differentiated from the other characters by the fact that he is old, and therefore, not young. The Man, as a result, is the opposite—he is not old, therefore he is likely young. Moreover, none of these characters is indicated as having a prior relationship with any of the others.

The audience of *Kangaroo* should be able to derive these conclusions, or some like them, from the cast list alone—even before the play begins. Furthermore, each member of the audience likely has his or her own personal impression about how each character might behave based on their names. These impressions are based on individual experience, and likely all differ in some way. Thus, by giving his characters generic titles, Betsuyaku is able to draw from his audience's experience, rather than confining himself to a character purely of his own imagination, for which the audience will have no context. This is typical of plays belonging to the Theatre of the Absurd. However, Betsuyaku uses these simple descriptive names upon which to base his dramatic transformation of Self.

We all have an idea of what a man is, and Betsuyaku exploits this experiential understanding by telling us that what we think is a man is not a man at all, but in fact, a kangaroo. During the course of *Kangaroo*, the Man metamorphoses from a simple man into the Kangaroo—an extraordinary figure worth sacrificing another human life in order

to protect it. The obvious question that the play asks its audience is, “What is a kangaroo?” According to the Old Man near the end of scene one, kangaroos “think that every single one of them, no matter how nervy, is a dumb animal. No matter who it is, they are never fully convinced what others say about them is true.”¹¹⁵ The Man displays this last trait throughout the play. He doesn’t listen when the Old Man tells him that he cannot board the ship, he doesn’t believe that he’s in danger from the Black Hat Man when the Hat Maker tells him to hide, he doesn’t believe the Prostitute when she tells him that the Black Hat Man will give him a real ticket, and, most importantly, he doesn’t believe that he’s a kangaroo.¹¹⁶ It is exactly the fact that he doesn’t believe that he is a kangaroo that makes him a kangaroo.

The simplest question that the audience might ask is, of course, “Why a kangaroo?” Certainly there are any of a number of other animals mentioned in the script that Betsuyaku might have chosen. However, I would argue that the kangaroo was a deliberate choice simply because of its rarity and its strangeness. Every other animal mentioned in the script, with the exception of the camel, is a relatively common animal. Even the camel has a fairly sizeable range of habitat. The kangaroo, on the other hand, lives only in Australia, and as the Old Man notes briefly in scene one, outside of Australia, kangaroos can only be seen in zoos.¹¹⁷ Kangaroos, then, are physically and geographically “other.” Once again, I argue, in choosing a kangaroo, Betsuyaku is experimenting with the idea that human existence is purely experiential: likely his expected audience has only a vague conception of a kangaroo based on what they’ve seen in zoos. The kangaroo is, as a result, a mystery. In this way, Betsuyaku creates a

¹¹⁵ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 51.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47; 72-3; 94; 58.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

yawning gulf between those who are human and those who are kangaroo, which is larger than the gap between the social positions of any of the other characters.

This line of questioning will lead us to the final, and probably most important question in the play: “What does it mean to be a kangaroo?” In order to understand and answer this question, it is important to discuss the conception of the deity in Betsuyaku’s drama in order to trace the development of the ideal and the change in name leading to the transformation of Self from man into kangaroo.

David G. Goodman writes, “Christianity had a profound influence on Japanese theatre.”¹¹⁸ This applies in the greatest degree to the theatre produced after World War II: given that the Japanese people, as mentioned earlier in this paper, had lost all basis of their national identity, the concept of salvation was thus electrifying. The effects of Christianity in Betsuyaku’s work are most clearly outlined in his essay “On Creation” (創造ということ; *Sōzō to Iu Koto*). As previously mentioned, in this essay he discusses his process of creation as based on the Western tradition, wherein, as Betsuyaku sees it, “God alone creates, and for man to create is an obvious betrayal towards God.”¹¹⁹ Thus, in order to create, the Western artist has to directly face this betrayal, and, as Betsuyaku argues, it creates a feeling of tension towards God (神に対する緊張感; *kami ni taisuru kinchōkan*) within him.¹²⁰ For Betsuyaku, as a Japanese playwright, therefore, the problem with creation is that he does not naturally have this feeling of tension towards God. Thus, to create, this essay argues, Betsuyaku must fool himself into believing that this tension exists within him, or else he cannot be sure that the creative act is

¹¹⁸ David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 17.

¹¹⁹ Minoru Betsuyaku, 創造ということ, 11. The translation, again, is my own.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

occurring.¹²¹ It is in this way that we can observe that which Betsuyaku has really taken from the Western tradition. While Samuel Beckett might have been his entry point into the world of Absurdist theatre, it is the tension between God and man in the Judeo-Christian tradition of creation that is Betsuyaku's truly Western influence, or as Senda Akihiko describes it, "[the] sharp religious yearning" in Betsuyaku's work.¹²²

The Judeo-Christian tradition is reflected in many ways in Betsuyaku's plays. Themes of God, a sacrificial lamb, and salvation are plentiful. In *Kangaroo*, the Man's gradual transformation from "Man" to being called "The Kangaroo" suggests the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, and the sudden demise of the Hat Maker, in order to protect the Man's "secret," is reminiscent of a sacrificial lamb. Finally, the Man's desire to go to India to have his bones "licked clean by the Buddha" is a theme of salvation.¹²³ The Japanese Playwrights Association writes, "One might say that Betsuyaku's Absurdist dramas are portraits of the Japanese people's expulsion from the garden."¹²⁴ There is definitely in *Kangaroo* a sense of "something lost even before begun," especially since the ship that the characters are trying to board leaves at the end of scene one.¹²⁵ The characters have already been cast from the garden, and now would like nothing else but to return. The Man is an excellent example of this: he wants to go "to a foreign country, I want to go to any foreign country."¹²⁶ The Hat Maker couple, also, would like to go away to somewhere warm where breezes blow—a clear picture of

¹²¹ Ibid., 12.

¹²² Akihiko Senda, *the Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre*, 80.

¹²³ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 63.

¹²⁴ The Japanese Playwrights Association, *Half a Century of Japanese Theatre VI, 1960s Part I*, 253.

¹²⁵ Akihiko Senda, *the Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre*, 4.

¹²⁶ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 46.

paradise.¹²⁷ Thus a major theme of *Kangaroo*, as in many Betsuyaku plays, is “wanting to go away, but [being] unable to leave.”¹²⁸ This view frames the start of the play, which sets the stage for the Man’s transformation into the Kangaroo.

Why, we might ask, is it the Man who is transformed? What sets him apart from the others? This question may be answered by looking back at the exploration of connotation earlier in this chapter. All the other characters in the play have fairly well defined characteristics and roles denominated by their names. The Man, however, does not. We know that he is not old, we know that he is not a woman, and we know that he has no relationships with any of the other characters. More than that, we’re unable to say, and while we all have an idea, based on life experience, about what the word “man” means, Betsuyaku’s characterization is, nonetheless, vague. The Man’s relationships with the Hat Maker, his Wife, and the Old Man are entirely ordinary until the Old Man tells him that he is a kangaroo, but other than this change, the Man still seems fairly ordinary to the audience until he is killed for being a kangaroo. Betsuyaku writes,

I find it difficult to believe the tradition that first Christ appeared then gathered about him his twelve disciples. I believe, rather, that there first existed a group of thirteen, held together by some sort of unshifting, yet peculiar relationship; then, at the end of their ceaseless wandering, in the context of the Jewish faith giving rise to the Christian belief, the idea of the special ‘relationship’ was somehow perfected.¹²⁹

According to this logic, the Man—whose relationships with the other characters in the play rely on the fact that “he is a kangaroo”—is revealed to be the Kangaroo in scene six. Although he is a kangaroo in life, the Man becomes the Kangaroo after death: all traces of his humanity are washed away and he becomes a Christ figure. It is important to note,

¹²⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹²⁸ Akihiko Senda, *The Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre*, 3.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 48.

here, the difference between “a kangaroo” and “the Kangaroo.” The former is at some distance from humanity, but is representative of the Man while he is alive, and the latter is the divinity freed from its mortal corpse—the Man after death. Therefore, after his death, his human identity, “Man,” is washed away and replaced by his super-human identity, “the Kangaroo.” Betsuyaku uses kangaroos to represent the metamorphosis into the divine as described by David G. Goodman.¹³⁰

Does the Man really become a Christ figure? As we have discussed above, Betsuyaku has created a conception of creation that derives from the Judeo-Christian tradition. From this and from the tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd, we will see how the Man metamorphoses into the Christ figure of the Kangaroo. In *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Martin Esslin writes, “The moment the objective...becomes an ideal it embodies itself in an organization with its own struggles for power, its own intrigues and politics, its own tactics and strategies. As such it becomes a matter of life and death for all who serve the ideal.”¹³¹ This development of an ideal can clearly be seen in *Kangaroo*, and in the development of the “special ‘relationship’ ” that Betsuyaku sees in the moment of Christ’s death. The objective, of course, is the making of the Man into a kangaroo, which occurs midway through scene one, when the Old Man says, “You are a kangaroo.”¹³² The transformation of the objective into the ideal occurs at the end of scene one when it is explained to the Man that it is actually quite dangerous to be a kangaroo, and the Old Man, Hat Maker, and his Wife swear a pact never to speak about it.¹³³ From this moment on, the state of being a kangaroo is truly a matter of life or death for all involved; it

¹³⁰ David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 10.

¹³¹ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 66.

¹³² Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 50.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 57.

becomes an ideal. This ideal reaches its height at the end of scene four when the Man dies, and is further punctuated when he dies again at the end of scene five. Once he has died, the ideal is no longer confined to a mortal body and is thus able to grow and so the Man becomes the Kangaroo. Furthermore, we can see the development of the “special ‘relationship’” that Betsuyaku speaks of in the Judeo-Christian tradition—which is to say that the Man becomes greater than his humanity, and, as a result, his relationship with the others has changed, and he becomes an ideal. It is an achievement of Betsuyaku’s theatre that he can make a man transform into a kangaroo and that the kangaroo can be, as Esslin says, “a convincing image of the objectives of *all* human endeavor.”¹³⁴

However, one might argue, how can the Man be a Christ figure? He betrays his own secret to the Black Hat Man in scene three. Is it possible to be both a Judas figure and a Christ figure? In a radio talk on February 8th, 1983, Betsuyaku

described his view of the Passion of Jesus Christ, namely, that Judas is the character most deserving of sympathy because he is the victim of the entire situation. Betsuyaku regards evil as relative, not absolute as, he thinks, Christianity does. While expressing his respect for the ‘wisdom’ of Christian teaching, he said that developing an awareness of the relativity of evil was the task set for Christianity after Christ.¹³⁵

Thus, a Judas figure in a Betsuyaku play cannot be totally evil—and, conversely, neither can a Christ figure be totally good. While the Man is obviously a victim—although he comes to the city to travel to a foreign country, he is drawn into a situation far beyond his control, which he does not understand—he is also a victimizer in his inability to comprehend the situation in order to validate the Hat Maker’s death.¹³⁶ In this way, the

¹³⁴ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 67.

¹³⁵ Robert T. Rolf, *Betsuyaku Minoru: Contemporary Playwright*, 73.

¹³⁶ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 90.

Man can be both a Judas figure and a Christ figure—neither truly good nor evil, but removed from humanity nonetheless.

In his introduction to *The Elephant* (象; *Zō*), Betsuyaku writes, “Not everyone can be classified as treacherous. And all victims cannot be dismissed as pitiful. Often, people are merely indifferent.”¹³⁷ The indifference of the characters in *Kangaroo* is most obvious in scene six, when the characters gradually become bored with the ritualistic funeral service. If the Man has metamorphosed into a Christ figure, how can that be? However, the characters are shaken out of their indifference when they attempt to leave, but are, once again, unable to leave, and they are drawn into the Prostitute’s song at the end of the play.¹³⁸ It is during this song that the Man’s identity shifts finally from a man to a kangaroo to the Kangaroo—an acknowledgement of the Man’s metamorphosis into a divine figure.

Robert Rolf writes, “Betsuyaku’s characters seek...to expiate their sins.”¹³⁹ This action can be seen in the Prostitute’s song, which Betsuyaku describes as being sung like a curse, only appropriate in Betsuyaku’s godless world, and when the character all clasp their hands together, as if in prayer.¹⁴⁰ In this incantation, Betsuyaku demonstrates the breakdown of language—the other characters are literally unable to repeat what the Prostitute says. This disintegration of language, coupled with the curse-like refrain of “Let’s kill the kangaroo!” gives rise to Goodman’s second point: salvation.¹⁴¹ In *Kangaroo*, salvation is not focused on “personal redemption (salvation of the

¹³⁷ Akihiko Senda, *the Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre*, 77.

¹³⁸ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 134-6.

¹³⁹ Robert T. Rolf, *Modern Japanese Theatre 1990*, 96.

¹⁴⁰ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 134.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 135-6.

individual),” but on “social revolution (salvation of the world).”¹⁴² Living in a godless society, from which no one can escape, humanity, when faced with a god, can do nothing but come together to kill it. Thus, the Kangaroo must die, and the aftermath of which is the only time the group is united during the play. This is what Betsuyaku describes in “On Creation” as a commentary on God (神に対する批評, *kami ni taisuru hihyō*), which, according to the playwright, is necessary for “creation” (創造, *sōzō*).¹⁴³

However, it is important to remember, “In these plays [post-*shingeki*] ‘salvation’ is virtually indistinguishable from damnation.”¹⁴⁴ The text clearly points out that the Man has reached salvation: “His bones were licked clean by the Buddha,” but the others are still trapped in a place from which they would like to escape, but can’t leave.¹⁴⁵ Having killed their Christ figure, the characters in *Kangaroo* are left with exactly what they started with: nothing. Furthermore, due to the fallibility and eventual deconstruction of language, none of the characters in the play are able to make a meaningful connection with any of the others: they start alone and end alone. The group dynamic, however, has changed. Unified by the slaying of the Christ figure, the characters, while unable to communicate with one another, have nonetheless come together through action—the “sub-verbal level of elementary human experience” as described by Martin Esslin.¹⁴⁶ Clearly, salvation, in *Kangaroo*, is also the same as damnation. Thus, the Man, unwilling, confused, and ignorant, is killed in exchange for the existence of the rest, and is metamorphosed into a most peculiar kind of Christ figure—the only kind that can exist in Betsuyaku’s godless world.

¹⁴² David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 10.

¹⁴³ Minoru Betsuyaku, 創造ということ, 15.

¹⁴⁴ David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 23.

¹⁴⁵ Minoru Betsuyaku, *Kangaroo*, 133.

¹⁴⁶ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 135.

David G. Goodman writes that the coming of a divine figure is an “effective means to deal with the atomic bomb experience.”¹⁴⁷ While this may be true, in *Kangaroo*, there is another reason why there is a divine figure. Betsuyaku, himself, says,

...Kafka said that before the gods, man is always in the wrong. Even when it is the gods that are wrong, it is always man that is judged to be wrong. If it is truly the human being that is always in the wrong, this is tragedy. But if the human being is judged to be in the wrong even when it is the gods that have been wrong, this is comedy—I believe that this is the ultimate form of absurdist comedy. I believe that we want some transcendent entity not as an object of worship but as a means to confirm whether human beings are indeed in the wrong or not.¹⁴⁸

This leaves us with the final question of who is correct? Who is wrong? Is the Man really a kangaroo? To use Betsuyaku’s given logic, the Man truly is a kangaroo, and it is his own inability to believe it that makes him so. By becoming a deity disbelieving in his own divinity, he is a god in the wrong, yet in denying the others’ identifying him as a kangaroo—he judges the human beings to be in the wrong. Therefore, according to Betsuyaku, the human beings in *Kangaroo* are correct and the god is wrong—thus allowing Betsuyaku’s clever, dark Absurdist comedy to be an effective commentary on the position of god in the godless society that arose in Japan in the era following World War II.

¹⁴⁷ David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 10.

¹⁴⁸ Hirofumi Okano, *Artist Interview: Betsuyaku Minoru*.

Conclusion

Translation is a curious challenge. Throughout this project I have been faced with the question: how can one take a work from one language and one culture and make it meaningful and even entertaining to another culture? When I originally proposed this project, I was concerned that *Kangaroo* would be incomprehensible—that it would contain so many elements of Japanese culture that Western audiences would find it uninteresting, or even worse: unpalatable. However, at the conclusion of this process, I have come to find that sometimes humor is universal; it is truly comedic in both English and Japanese to tell a man that he's a kangaroo. Although there are some parts of *Kangaroo* that will remain mysterious to most of the English-speaking audience—the references to *kabuki* theatre for one—for the most part, I think that *Kangaroo* is entirely palatable and certainly funny to an English-speaking audience, and that it could, and should, be performed in theatres in America today. The conception of an ordinary person who metamorphoses into a god-like figure is no less significant today than it was when Betsuyaku originally wrote the play.

In today's uncertain world, no less turbulent than the period in which the play was written, I firmly believe that the play is still pertinent. Betsuyaku's characters are delightfully universal; they could just as easily walk the wharfs of modern America as they could have in 1960s Japan. Unlike many of Betsuyaku's more serious plays, *Kangaroo* is noteworthy because its world is not specifically confined. It does not explicitly take place in Japan, nor does it obliquely refer to the atomic bombings of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It does not discuss or refer directly to World War II; it simply takes place in a country from which people want to escape, and is thus universal.

From conception to completion, this project has taken me about a year and has led me to become deeply involved with Whitman's Japanese Department and Theatre Department. To them I am deeply indebted. As a result of this project, I have become more proficient in Japanese and have become deeply passionate about Japanese theatre. In the future, I hope to continue to promote Japanese theatre as an important expression of the art form, and to continue translating Japanese plays. Consequently, I hope that greater attention is given to the great tradition of theatre in Asia, and that the body of translated work grows each year.

List of Plays

A and B and a Woman (AとBと一人の女)

Published in 不思議の国のアリス, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1970. First performed by the Waseda University Free Theatre (早大劇団自由舞台), 1961.

A Balmy Spring on the Sumida River (春のうららの隅田川)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1997.

A Certain Different Story (或る別な話)

Published in マッチ売りの少女・象, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1969. First performed by the Waseda Little Theatre's Experimental Stage (早稲田小劇場研究公園), 1968.

A Corpse with an Atmosphere (雰囲気のある死体)

Published in 木に花咲く, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1981. First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1980.

A Corpse with Feet (足のある死体)

Published in 足のある死体, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1982. Translated by Masako Yuasa, found in “A Corpse With Feet”. First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1982.

A Dog Facing West, with its Tail Facing East—Sequel to Samurai Facing West (犬が西むきや尾は東—「にしむくさむらい」後日談—)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 2007.

A Lullaby Preventing Sleep (眠っちゃいけない子守唄)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1984.

A Peony Standing, a Peony Sitting (たてばしゃくやく すわればぼたん)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture's Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 2003.

A Pink Elephant and Five Gentlemen (ピンクの象と五人の紳士)

First performed by Actor's Theatre Productions (俳優座劇場プロデュース), 1994.

A Place and Memories (場所と思い出)

Published in にしむくさむらい, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1978. First performed by the Hand Society (手の会), 1977.

A Red Elegy (赤色エレジー)

Published in 木に花咲く, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1981. First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1980.

A Rundown Car and Five Gentlemen (ボンコツ車と五人の紳士)

Published in 数字で書かれた物語, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1974. First performed by the Structured Group Theatre (群像座), 1970.

A Scene with a Bus Stop (バス亭のある風景)

Published in あーぶくたった、にいたった, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1976. First performed by NAC Group (グループ・ナック), 1976.

A Scene with a Corpse (死体のある風景)

Published in 数字で書かれた物語, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1974. First performed by Singer Lily's Concert (歌手リリィのコンサート), 1974.

A Scene with a Red Bird (赤い鳥の居る風景)

Published in マッチ売りの少女・象, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1969. First performed by the Group of 66 Theatre Project (演劇企画集団66), 1967.

A Short Story on the Report on the Investigation of the a la Carte Murders Nowadays (コント・アラガルト当世殺人考)

First performed by the Kiyama Office (木山事務所), 2004.

A Small House and Five Gentlemen (小さな家と五人紳士)

Published in マザー・マザー・マザー, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1980. First performed by the NAC Group (グループ・ナック), 1979.

A Spy Story (スパイものがたり)

Published in 不思議の国のアリス, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1970. First performed by the Group of 66 Theatre Project (演劇企画集団66), 1970.

A Story Written in Numbers (数字で書かれた物語)

Published in 数字で書かれた物語, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1974. First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1974.

A Telephone Call in June (六月の電話)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1995.

A Town and an Airship (街と飛行船)

Published in *そよそよ族の反乱*, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1971. First performed by the Young Actors (青俳), 1970.

A Witch's Cat-Hunting (魔女の猫探し)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1993.

A Yellow Parasol and a Black Umbrella (黄色いパラソルと黒いコーモリ傘)

Published in *そよそよ族の反乱*, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1971. First performed by the Group of 66 Theatre Project (演劇企画集団66), 1970.

Alice in Wonderland (不思議の国のアリス)

Published in *不思議の国のアリス*, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1970. First performed by the Little Theatre Players (俳優小劇場), 1970.

Alice in Wonderland's Mad Hatter's Tea Party (不思議の濃くのアリスの帽子屋さんのお茶の会)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1984.

An Escaped Convict Who Carries a Hot-Water Bottle (湯たんぼを持った脱獄囚)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1986.

An Inari Shrine Around the Corner (向う横町のお稲荷さん)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1988.

And Then There Were None (そして誰もいなくなつた)

Translated by Robert N. Lawson, found in *Four Plays by Betsuyaku Minoru*. First produced by Honda Theatre (本多演劇プロデュース), 1982.

Blue Sky, Small White Cabbage Butterfly (青空・もんしろちょう)

First produced by Kiyama Office (木山事務所プロデュース), 2000.

Broken Scenery (壊れた風景)

Published in *あーぶくたつた、にいたつた*, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1976. First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1976.

Bubbling and Boiling (あーぶくたつた、にいたつた)

Published in あーぶくたった、にいたった, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1976.
First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1976, and then directed by
Fujiwara Shimpei at the Literary Theatre Atelier (文学座アトリエ), 1982.

Cat Town (猫町)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1999.

Chairs and a Legend (椅子と伝説)

First performed by the Hand Society (手の会), directed by Sueki Toshifumi
1974.

Cinderella Who Sings (歌うシンデレラ)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1990.

Clammbon Laughed (クラムボンは笑った)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1996.

Dance, Dance, Little Snail (舞え舞えかたつむり)

Published in 天才バカボンのパパなのだ, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1979.
Performed by the Snail Theatre Company and the Hidaka Project (かたつむり
の会+日高企画), 1978.

Darn it Alright, but I Will— (もーいいかい、まーただよ)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1988.

Don Quixote Blowing in the Wind (風に吹かれてドンキホーテ)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1993.

Dry Weather and Five Gentlemen (カラカラ天気と五人の紳士)

First produced by the Actor's Theatre (俳優座劇場プロデュース), 1992.

Giovanni's Journey to His Father (ジョバンニの父のへの旅)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1987.

Godot Has Come (やってきたゴドー)

First performed by the Kiyama Office (木山事務所) as part of the Betsuyaku
Festival, 2007.

Guess Who's Behind You (うしろの正面だあれ)

First performed by the Actor's Theatre (俳優座劇場), 1983.

Hagoromo (はごろも)

First produced by Kiyama Office (木山事務所プロデュース), 2002.

Hiking (ハイキング)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1984.

I Am Alice (アイ・アム・アリス)

Published in 不思議の国のアリス, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1970. First performed by the Little Theatre Players (俳優小劇場), 1970.

I'm Clever Bakabon's Papa (天才バカボンのパパなのだ)

Published in 天才バカボンのパパなのだ, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1979. First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1978.

I'm Not Her (その人ではありません)

Published in 足のある死体, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1982. Translated by Robert N. Lawson, found in *Four Plays by Betsuyaku Minoru*. Performed by the Snail Company and the Hidaka Project (かたつむりの会+日高企画), 1981.

If a Boy Hits a Walking Dog (いぬもあるけばぼうにあたる)

First produced by the Actor's Theatre (俳優座劇場プロデュース), 1998.

If Dust Piles Up (ちりもつもれば)

First produced by the Actor's Theatre (俳優座劇場プロデュース), 2001.

If I Go to Sea, I May Become a Waterlogged Corpse (海ゆかば水く屍)

Published in 天才バカボンのパパなのだ, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1979. First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1978.

If I Open the Window, I Can See the Harbor (窓を開ければ港が見える)

Performed by the Actor's Theatre and Kiyama Office (俳優座劇場+木山事務所), 1985.

If I Pass by the Impossible (むりがとおれば)

First performed by the Actor's Theatre Productions (俳優座劇場プロデュース), 2003.

If the Rain Falls from the Sky (雨が空から降れば)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1997.

Izayoi Diary (十六夜日記)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1999.

Kangaroo (カンガルー)

Published in マッチ売りの少女・象, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1969. First performance directed by Fujiwara Shimpei, at the Literary Theatre Atelier (文学座アトリエ), July 1967.

Letters from the Wildcat—the Legend of Ihatōbo (山猫からの手紙—イーハトーボ伝説)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1990.

Lieutenant Shirase's Antarctic Expedition (白瀬中尉の南極探検)

First performed by the Hand Company (手の会), 1986.

Little Red Riding Hood's Christmas in the Forest of the Wolves (赤ずきんちゃんの森の狼たちのクリスマス)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1986.

Looking Out the Window (窓から外を見ている)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1993.

Mama, Mama, Mama (マザー・マザー・マザー)

Published in マザー・マザー・マザー, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1980. First performed by the Hand Society (手の会), 1979.

Mary's Lamb (メリーさんの羊)

First produced by Jean Jean (ジャン・ジャン・プロデュース), 1983.

Maximilian's Smile (マクシミリアン博士の微笑み)

Published in そよそと族の反乱, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1971. First performed the Waseda Little Theatre (早稲田小劇場), 1967.

Momotaro—Born From a Peach (ももからうまれたももたろう)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1988.

Moon and Egg (月と卵)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1998.

Namu Died in the Spring Under the Cherry Blossoms—Account of the Circumstances in the Cherry Orchard in this Land (花のもとにて春死なむ～本朝・櫻の園・顛末記～)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 2010.

One House, One Tree, One Son (一軒の家・一本の樹・一人の息子)

Published in にしむくさむらい, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1978. First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1978.

Our House, Our Town (わが師・わが街)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1992.

Our Town, Kōbe (神戸・わが街)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 2004.

Peter Pan, Kidnapping (さらって行ってよピーターパン)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 1997.

Playing House (おままごと)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 2000.

Red Moon (アカイツキ)

Written 1989.

Sandpit (すなあそび)

First performed by the Group of 66 Theatre Project (演劇企画集団66), 1988.

Sick (病気)

Published in 足のある死体, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1982. Translated by M. Cody Poulton, found in *Half a Century of Japanese Theatre VI 1960s Part I*. First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1981.

Sleeping Beauty (眠れる森の美女)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1990.

Snow White in the Egg (卵の中の白雪姫)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1988.

Song of the Telegraph Pole (電信柱の歌)

First performed by the Hirosaki Theatre (弘前劇場), 2004.

Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter (はる・なつ・あき・ふゆ)

Performed by the Japanese Theatre Council and the Kiyama Office (日本劇団協議会+木山事務所), 1993.

Star Time (星の時間)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1983.

Stepping on the Cat (猫ふんじやった)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1991.

Stories of a Witch, Part 1: the Uninvited Guest (魔女物語その1 : 招待されなかった客)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1990.

Stories of a Witch, Part 2: You Can Sleep Here (魔女物語その2 : 寝られます)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1991.

Stories of a Witch, Part 3: the Death Like a Death (魔女物語その3 : 死のような死)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会)

Tale of the Foreign Travels of Two Knights (諸国を遍歴する二人の騎士の物語)

First performed by BARCO (バルコ), 1987.

The Absurdity of the Three Little Pigs (三匹の子ぶたのトンチンカン)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 2007.

The Autumn of Count Dracula (ドラキュラ伯爵の秋)

Performed by BARCO and the Kiyama Office (バルコ+木山事務所), 1989.

The Blue Horse (青い馬)

Published in 数字で書かれた物語, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1974. First performed by Studio Nova (スタジオ・ノーヴァ), 1972.

The Camel (らくだ)

First performed by the Mingei Theatre (劇団民藝), 2009.

The Carnival that Came from the Forest (森から来たカーニバル)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1994.

The Cat Consultant (ねこ・こんさるたんと)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1995.

The Cherry in Bloom (木に花咲く)

Published in 木に花咲く, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1981. Translated by Robert T. Rolf, found in *Alternative Japanese Drama: Ten Plays*. First performed by the Youth Theatre (青年座), 1980.

The Chick (雛)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1995.

The Conference (会議)

Published in 足のある死体, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1982. First performed by the Hand Society (手の会), 1982.

The Day of Insects (虫たちの日)

Published in 天才バカボンのパパなのだ, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1979. Translated by Robert N. Lawson, found in *Four Plays by Betsuyaku Minoru*. 1979. First produced by Jean Jean (ジャン・ジャン・プロデュース), 1979.

The Elephant (象)

Published in マッチ売りの少女・象, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1969. Translated by David G. Goodman, found in *After Apocalypse: Four Japanese Plays of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. First performed by the Shingeki Free Theatre (新劇団自由舞台), 1962.

The Fallen Angel (墮天使)

Published in マッチ売りの少女・象, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1969. First performed by the Group of 66 Theatre Project (演劇企画集団66), 1966.

The Flying Monkey King (飛んで孫悟空)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 2005.

The Gate (問)

Published in 不思議の国のアリス, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1970. First performed by the Waseda Little Theatre (早稲田小劇場), 1966.

The Incident of the Salad Murder (さらだ殺人事件)

Directed by Fujiwara Shimpei at Literary Theatre Atelier (文学座アトリエ), 1986.

The Information Desk (受付)

Published in マザー・マザー・マザー, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1980.
Performed by the Snail Company and the Hidaka Project (かたつむりの会十日高企画), 1980.

The Last Bride of Bluebeard (青ひげと最後の花嫁)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1989.

The Last Supper (最後の晩餐)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 2000.

The Left Foot's Beauty Mark (ホクロのある左足)

First performed by the Hyōgo Prefecture's Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 1998.

The Legend of Noon (正午の伝説)

Published in 数字で書かれた物語, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1974. Translated by Robert T. Rolf, found in *Alternative Japanese Drama: Ten Plays*. First performed by the NAC Group (グループ・ナック), 1975.

The Little Match Girl (マッチ売りの少女)

Published in マッチ売りの少女・象, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1969.
Translated by Robert N. Lawson, found in *Alternative Japanese Drama: Ten Plays* and *Four Plays by Betsuyaku Minoru*. First performed by the Waseda Little Theatre (早稲田小劇場), 1966.

The Move (移動)

Published in 移動, Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1971. Translated by Ted T. Takaya, found in *Modern Japanese Drama: an Anthology*. First performed by the Hand Company (手の会), 1973.

The Narrow Road of Tenjin (天神さまのほそみち)

Published in マザー・マザー・マザー, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1980. First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1979.

The Nose (鼻)

First performed at the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1994.

The Other Owner (もうひとりの飼主)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1997.

The Return of Pinocchio (帰ってきたピノッキオ)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1998.

The Revolt of the Soyosoyo Tribe (そよそよ族の反乱)

Published in そよそよ族の反乱, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1971. First performed by the Actor's Theatre (俳優座), 1971.

The Room (部屋)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1985.

The Sea and a Rabbit (海とうさぎ)

Published in 数字で書かれた物語, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1974. Performed by the Little Players and Studio Nova (俳小+スタジオ・ノーヴァ), 1973.

The Snow Falls on Tarō's Roof (太郎の屋根に雪降りつむ)

First performed by the Literary Theatre Atelier (文学座アトリエ), 1982.

The Squid Eraser (いかけしごむ)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1989.

The Street Corner Incident (街角の事件)

First performed by the Hand Company (手の会), 1984.

The Sunny Evening Sky (Good Summer Season Air) (夕空はれて (よくきくうきゃく))

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1985.

The Tadpole is the Son of the Frog (おたまじゃくしはかえるの子)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 1985.

The Tale of the Latest Fifth Lunar Month (当世風雨月物語)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 2001.

The Tale of the Night, the Stars, and the Wind (夜と星と風の物語)

From *The Little Prince*, 2006.

The Tapir, or the Fasting Artist (獺、もしくは断食芸人)

Published in *そよそよ族の反乱*, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1971. First performed by the Five Month House (五月舎), 1972.

The Town in the Wind (風の中の街)

First performed by Hyōgo Prefecture's Piccolo Theatre (兵庫県立ピッコロ劇団), 1995.

Thirty Days Hath September (にしむくさむらい)

Published in *にしむくさむらい*, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1978. First performed by the Literary Theatre Atelier (文学座アトリエ), directed by Fujiwara Shimpei, 1977.

This Road is the Road that Came Once Upon a Time

First performed by the Kiyama Office (木山事務所), 1995.

Thoughts of an Amusement Park (遊園地の思想)

First produced by Actor's Theatre (俳優座劇場プロデュース), 1996.

Three Sisters of a Thousand Years (千年の三人姉妹)

First produced by Art Sphere (アーツフィアプロデュース), 2004.

Toilet This Way Please (トイレはこちら)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1988.

Transparent Watercolor

First performed by the Group of 66 Theatre Project (演劇企画集団66), 1992.

Trap Street (トラップ・ストリート)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 2004.

Underneath the Chiming Apple Tree (りんりんりんごの樹の下で)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 2002.

While Tying the Gold-Brocaded Satin Damask Obi (金欄緞子の帯しめながら)

First performed by the Literary Theatre (文学座), 1997.

Wildcat Barber (猫理髪店)

First performed by the Kiyama Office Productions (木山事務所プロデュース), 1998.

Wind Salesman (風のセールスマン)

First performed by Project Tom (トムプロジェクト), 2009.

Why is the Blue Bird Blue? –the Adventures of Chiruchiru and Michiru (青い鳥ことり
なぜなぜ青い～チルチルとミチルの冒険)

First performed by the Circle Theatre Group (演劇集団円), 2006.

Yellow Sunday (黄色い日曜日)

Published in *そよそよ族の反乱*, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1971.

You Must Go, Laura (消えなさいローラ)

First performed by the Snail Theatre Company (かたつむりの会), 1994.

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