

Review of *Noh King Lear*, Kioi Hall, Yotsuya (29th April, 2009)

『能リア王』再々演（四ツ谷・紀尾井ホール）レビュー

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Abstract: ハズリットが言うように、シェイクスピアの『リア王』は、作者がその生涯において最も真剣に取り組んだ、その意味で確かにベスト・プレイである。これが能への改作に適さないはずはない。感情の起伏振幅の大きさを表現するのに、最高度の技能が求められる。「能」には「技能」の意味がある。能にはシェイクスピアの少なくとも 200 年前の技能が求められる。能は洗練された悲劇的美意識を舞台上に生み出すのに最適だ。先日、紀尾井小ホールで行われた上田邦義氏の翻案では、この洗練された感覚が得られた。わたしは同劇が 2008 年 5 月渋谷のセルリアン能楽堂で行われた際にも観能したが、今まで観た他のシェイクスピア劇の改作と比較して、上田氏の作品は能とシェイクスピア劇のそれぞれの伝統に忠実である。上田氏の作品が現代の舞台より能舞台に向いている理由は、「橋掛け」にある。それはこの世とあの世への橋渡しであり、リア王が悟りへの道に入るのを表現するのに「橋掛け」が力強く感じられる。それでもやはりわたしは、主役の二人リア王とコーディーリアの掛け合いの中で、シェイクスピアの原文がもっている詩の生命が躍動するのを見て素晴らしいと思った。だがこの『能・リア王』のポイントは、作者が付け加えたアイ狂言の歌に示されていることは確かである。「思えばこの世は三つの世界。心と言葉と行動と。三つとも大事のこの世かな。三つとも大事なこの世の世界。三つの世界が一つにならねば。リア王殿は救われぬ」。この作品は、真の（深い意味の）異文化交流に成功している。それは作者のこの、ホリスティック（全人的）な人間観にあるように思う。

If the Romantic critic William Hazlitt's observation that 'The *Midsummer Night's Dream*, when acted, is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime' is one that has been proved wrong by most productions of the play I have seen on the Tokyo stage, I think he was right at least about *King Lear*: 'It is then the best of all Shakespeare's plays, for it is the one in which he was the most in earnest.' The play has a bearish, overwhelming quality that is hard to snap out of. It makes you want to talk but you feel imprisoned by your words: as Lear says, like 'a poor, bare, forked animal'. This quality of earnestness would seem to make it particularly suited to Noh drama, the art of perfection above all theatrical others, as the scope of Lear's tragedy combines with the rigour of Noh to provoke a response that may just as well be gratitude for the gift of life as one of sadness.

I saw Ueda Kuniyoshi's *Lear* adaptation at the Cerulean Tower Noh theatre in Shibuya last May, and have to admit I prefer the intimacy of the traditional setting to the proscenium

arch of the Kioi Hall in Yotsuya, where the adaptation was staged this April. In particular, the Noh *hashigakari* is effective at expressing a central metaphor of the play of life as a journey or transition. As Edgar puts it,

Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither.
Ripeness is all.

In other respects, however, the adaptation was unchanged from last year, and still achieved the refined aesthetic effect at which this style of cultural fusion excels.

The adaptation was divided according to the conventional tripartite structure of Noh drama, or *jo-ha-kyu*. A lengthy prelude (*jo*) covered Cordelia's return from exile in France and reconciliation with her father at the end of Act 4. A soldier appears bringing orders for the couple's imprisonment, leading into the shorter, more complex *ha* section which included some of Lear's greatest lines: 'Ripeness is all', 'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods'. In fact, most of the lines (with the exception of 'Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!') were taken from the last two acts. Finally, the Fool appears to tell the story of *King Lear*, concluding with a song which is worth quoting in length as it so clearly expresses the point of this production:

There are three worlds:
The world of words, the world of behaviours,
And the world of mind and heart;
The three are all important,
But, until they accord with one another,
Lear will not be saved.

I suppose it is this holistic interpretation that made this adaptation a truly transcultural one. Lear (played by Endo Hiroyoshi) really was Lear with his great white mane and old man's *okina* mask, but fitting that he should play the second as the *tsure* (companion) to Adachi Reiko in the main *shite* role as Cordelia. Born in 1925, Adachi is the oldest female Noh performer in Japan, although you would not have guessed so seeing her face hidden behind her mask. One line missing from Ueda's adaptation was that early sign of Lear's madness in Act 2, Scene 4, reeling at his daughters' ingratitude:

O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!
Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,
Thy element's below!

Some critics argue that these lines signify not only Lear's misogyny but also the suppression of the female nature within him; it is this failure to recognise his innate gentleness that leads to the tragedy. If that is so, then in this adaptation Lear finds in Cordelia not only a daughter but a mother. For foreigners also, the sounds and appearance of the Noh adaptation may well offer something that they can't receive from Shakespeare productions in their native language. This was a production that took me quite by surprise but then as Hazlitt's contemporary Charles Lamb said (also quoted in Prof Ueda's programme notes) 'the play is beyond all art'.