

***Noh Hamlet ? : The Key to Unravel “Noh”***A Lecture at the University of Chester, UK, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

## 『能ハムレット』とは？「能」鑑賞の鍵

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**Abstract** これは2013年10月15日、英国チェスター大学における筆者の『英語能ハムレット』独吟独舞公演に配布された『能ハムレット』鑑賞資料の一部である。能はドラマか、それともオペラか、あるいはバレエか。そのいずれでもなく、そのすべてである。能は、謡いと舞いと劇を基本とする総合芸術。14・5世紀に禅の影響下、観阿弥・世阿弥父子によって大成された日本最初の演劇戯曲で精神性を尊重する。今は広く世界で鑑賞される詩劇となった。緊張感や簡素・静寂・幽玄の美、秘すれば花、が尊重される。歌舞伎がもつばらこの世を扱うのに対し、能の関心は来世に及ぶ。それゆえ「生か死か、それが最大の問題」であるハムレットは能の主人公に相応しい。だが長い間、夏目漱石の提唱にもかかわらず、シェイクスピア能は生まれず、また一音一音を強く謡う謡いは、単語の一音節を強く発音し、子音が多い英語では不可能と考えられてきた。宗片は好きなシェイクスピアの英語のせりふを、好きな謡いの節で謡いたかった。そして1980年代について英語謡曲は実現した。『英語能ハムレット』である。さて、能を理解する鍵は主題への興味とともに想像力を働かせることである。特に独吟独舞の場合は、ハムレットのせりふも、オフィーリアのせりふも、さらに地謡も一人で謡いながら舞うため、だれのせりふか、聞き分けなければならない。また、舞台正面に小袖（着物）が出されたら、「ああ、あれはオフィーリアかもしれない。すでに埋葬されたオフィーリアかも」などと想像をたくましくすること「難解とされる能鑑賞の鍵は想像力」。後で質問に答え、皆で祝言の謡い「高砂」を謡う。

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**Key words:** Noh, Zeami, Zen Buddhism, Shakespeare, *Noh Hamlet*, English Noh  
能、世阿弥、禅、シェイクスピア、『能ハムレット』、英語能

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**Lecture:**

- What is Noh? Is it drama, opera or ballet? None of these and all of these. Noh is a composite art based on the three elements: singing, dancing and drama.
- The Japanese life and culture in the middle ages, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, were strongly influenced by Zen Buddhism, which was imported from India through China in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is known that Zeami, the founder of Noh, practiced Zen, whose purpose is to experience a spiritual enlightenment. In spite of such facts, Noh is today a poetic opera which may be appreciated universally.
- There are three traditional theatre arts in Japan: Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku puppet theatre. Noh was founded in 14<sup>th</sup> century by Kan'ami and Zeami, father and son, as spiritual type of drama. Kabuki and Bunraku are scions of Noh, both beginning in 17<sup>th</sup> century as more or less mundane compared with

Noh.

- Noh is an intense dance drama—where intensity is expressed in quiet, controlled movement, where silence can be more significant than speech or music, and its aesthetic communication with the audience avoids anything overt. The quality aimed at, at all times, is subtlety. Zeami said, “Keep it secret, and it is the flower.” The actor’s seeming lack of expressiveness nevertheless aims to move the audience. The experience of Noh could be the experience of a lifetime.
- Noh is a drama whose texts are highly poetic, and whose presentation must be in every point beautiful. And Noh is concerned with not only this world but the world from where no traveler returns.
- Such drama must be the perfect theatre form in which to present a man whose obsession is “nobleness”—as in the soliloquy:

To be or not to be, that is the question;  
Whether 'tis *nobler* in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,...

- Noh singing requires to sing each syllable of every word stressed, prolonged, and meaningful. Noh singing in English, therefore, seems impossible, as was taken for granted until the 1970s.
- I wished to sing my favourite lines of Shakespeare in my favourite Noh melodies. I wished to adapt *Hamlet* into a Noh play. It was impossible until 1980. But one day I noticed....
- The key to unravel Noh is to work your imagination. In order to appreciate Noh, it is imperative that you work your imagination.

### *Noh Hamlet* (The text as One Man Show by Kuniyoshi Munakata, October 15, 2013)

*Hamlet* O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!  
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:  
So excellent a king; that was, to this,  
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother  
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven  
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!  
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,

ハムレット: ああ、この余りにも固い肉体が溶けて  
とろけてひと滴の露となってしまうといい。さも  
なくば、自殺はならぬという永遠の掟がなかった  
ならば。—おお神よ！神よ！この世のあらゆる営  
みがなんと浅ましく厭わしく無益に思えることか。  
忌々しい、これは雑草のはびこる庭だ。成長し種を  
つけている。下等な連中がこの世を完全に支配して  
いる！ああ、こういうことになろうとは！  
たったふた月。いや、ふた月にもならぬ。父王が  
亡くなられて。すぐれた王であった。今の王に比べ、  
太陽神ハイペリオンと半人半獣のサチュロスの違  
いだ。母をあれほど愛しておられた。強い風が母の  
顔に当たるのをただ見ていることはできなかった。  
おお、天よ！大地よ！こんなことまで思い出さね  
ばならぬとは。母は父にすがっていたものだ。

As if increase of appetite had grown  
 By what it fed on: and yet, within a month—  
 Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!—  
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
 With which she follow'd my poor father's body,  
 Like Niobe, all tears:—why she, even she—  
 O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,  
 Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,  
 My father's brother, but no more like my father  
 Than I to Hercules: within a month:  
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
 She married. O, most wicked speed, to post  
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
 It is not nor it cannot come to good:  
 But break my heart: for I must hold my tongue.

**The lines to follow are the same as printed on pp. 7 - 9 in *The ISHCC Bulletin* No. 19, performed in Manchester in December, 2012. See References.**

**From “The Post-performance Discussion”:**

As I said before, Noh singing requires the singing of each syllable stressed and prolonged. So it had been supposed to be impossible in English.

My first attempt was realized in 1974 while I was at Harvard University. At Emerson Hall I showed my experimental Noh dance “Hamlet’s first soliloquy” (“O that this too too solid flesh would melt...”) in Noh choreography, but still I could not sing Noh melody in English; I just spoke as I have shown you today. I returned to Japan in 1975, encouraged by students and teachers to continue my study and make up a complete Noh play “Hamlet”.

Back in Japan, around 1980 I found I was able to sing Shakespearean verse in Noh style. One day I noticed that mono-syllabic English words can be sung in Noh style: “To be or not to be” just like in Japanese “Ta-ka-sa-go-ya”. Then after various trials, I found even longer words could be sung in Noh style.

By the way, there are two ways of singing in Noh style: “Tsuyo-gin” (strong singing) and “Yowa-gin” (soft singing). Also, both of them are sung in a rhythmic or non-rhythmic way. So, there are four different ways of Noh singing. The Noh texts are mostly written in verse. And there are some other parts written in prose to be spoken. (So, Noh texts are very much like Shakespearean plays, mostly in blank verse, iambic pentameter, and some parts in prose.) I have shown you tonight these five styles of delivery in my solo

まるで食べる程に食欲が増すかの如くに。それがなんとひと月も経たぬに一ああ、もうこんなことを考えるのは止そう一脆きもの、その名は女一まだひと月。あの時に履いた靴がまだ真新しいというに。父の亡骸につき添った。ナオビのように泣きぬれて。その母が、正にその同じ人が。ああ、獣さえ、理性を持たぬ獣でさえ、いま少し嘆き悲しんでであろうものを。それが叔父と結婚。叔父といえは父の弟。とはいえ、父とはまるで似ていない。僕があゝの怪力無双のヘラクレスに似ていないと同様。ひと月も経たぬ間に。偽りの涙の塩が、あの赤く泣きはらした目にまだ残っているというのに。もう結婚してしまおう。何という悪どい素早さ一不倫の床に急ぐとは！これは善いことではない。善いことが起ころうはずもない。ああ、わが胸よ、張り裂けてしまえ、口外は出来ぬゆえ。

以下、『融合文化研究』19号、7－9ページ掲載（2012年12月マンチェスター公演）に同じ。参考文献（References）参照。

performance of *Noh Hamlet*.

Incidentally, if you compare the texts of Zeami and Shakespeare, the representative dramatists of the East and West, you could write your MA thesis, and if you compare their dramaturgies, you might be able to write even a doctoral dissertation.

Now, Zeami, the founder of Noh in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, said repeatedly that the two essential elements of Noh are singing and dancing. In other words, all other elements, such as Noh orchestra music, or gorgeous costumes and various masks, or props and stages and so on, are of secondary importance. The most important hand prop is the fan. The folding fan was invented in Japan, perhaps some time in the eighth century.

In Noh, “dancing” means all movements, including still standing and slow walking as if sliding. Of course there are genuine dances as you have seen one before the last scene of the play.

Tonight I used *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute) music for the dance. *Shakuhachi* has not been used in Noh orchestra after the age of Zeami for five or six centuries, but I love the spiritual or religious sound and sometimes I collaborate with *shakuhachi* players. Tonight’s piece was composed and played by an American artist, Marcus Grandon.

Ernest Fenollosa said in one of his papers posthumously edited by Ezra Pound, “All the slow and beautiful postures...lead up to the climax of the hero’s dance.” Arthur Waley was mostly concerned with giving the dramatic text of Noh to the Western reader in essentially literary terms.

I intended to show you tonight only the essence of Noh: the poetic text, its Noh style singing and Noh style dancing. And I sang all lines, not only of Hamlet but the chorus and Ophelia and Horatio. That was the reason you were expected to exercise your imagination. The key to unravel Noh is to work your imagination. In order to appreciate Noh, it is imperative that you work your imagination.

Zeami, in his first thesis, *Fuushi-Kaden* or Flower Transmitting Thesis, written in the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, says that the purpose of Noh is to promote the happiness and longevity of all people, men and women, high and low.

### **The Comment after the performance:**

Thank you so much for your performance of Noh Hamlet. This was an unforgettable theatrical version of Hamlet. As a spectator I was both drawn in to the work and challenged by it. The rhythm of the whole performance gave me time to really exercise my imagination, to connect with Shakespeare's verse in a starkly intimate way. The line that went straight to my heart was 'All that lives must die.' I have read and listened to this many times, but never heard it in the way I heard it that night.

The post-performance discussion was very much appreciated and we would very much welcome you back to perform next time you are in the UK. I have put a short clip of the work on the Facebook pages of your Centre for Research in to Education and creativity through Arts Practice (RECAP)

[https://www.facebook.com/creativityresearch?bookmark\\_t=page](https://www.facebook.com/creativityresearch?bookmark_t=page)

<http://www.chester.ac.uk/recap>

All best wishes, **Allan Owen, The University of Chester**

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