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Mugen no : Dreams, Memories and Recollections

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【講演記録】

夢幻能についての英語解説@Noh Reimagined 2018

2018年6月29日・30日、ロンドンのKings Placeで、“Noh Reimagined 2018 Sublime Illusions”が開催された。能楽研究所も企画の段階から様々な形で協力し、29日には山中が理化学研究所の入来篤史教授（神経科学）やロンドン大学のSemir Zeki教授とともにOpening Talkを担当、30日は宮本圭造所員と山中の両名で、Noh Mask, Noh Movement: Illusory Devicesと題するセミナーを担当した。国際交流基金が実施したアンケートではトーク、セミナーともに評価が高く、また休憩時間などに個別の好意的コメントや熱心な質問が多く寄せられたことをご報告しておく。

以下に掲げるのは、29日のOpening Talkの原稿である。〈井筒〉の半能上演に先立つ曲目解説も兼ね、夢幻能を、直訳のthe noh of dream and Illusionとしてではなく、dreams, memories and recollectionsに関わるものと捉え、現代に生きる我々にとってどういう意味があるかという視点で説明している。これは、現在進行中の別プロジェクト「英語版能楽全書」に収録する夢幻能の解説（プリンストン大学のTom Hare教授と議論を重ね、山中が日本語で書いたドラフトをHare教授が英訳しては、その英文のニュアンスについて確認し合い、細かな修正を加えていく、という作業を繰り返して作成した）を、20～25分程度のトーク用に短縮したものである。まず、わかりにくい日本語の意を汲んで的確な英語に訳してくださったHare教授に、心から感謝申し上げます。

また、今回は学会発表やアカデミックな場ではなく、ロンドンの一般観客に向けて山中が英語でおこなうトークだったので、聞いてわかりにくい部分はできる限り排除すべく、上記英語版能楽全書用の原稿とは文の構造を変えたり、違う単語に置き換えたりしたところがある。夢という仕掛けが用いられる文学作品名や「土地の記憶」の例なども、イギリスの観客に照準を合わせたものとなっている。こうした工夫については本学のSteven Nelson教授が全面的に協力してくださった。併せて深く感謝申し上げます。

(山中 玲子)

Mugen nô: Dreams, Memories and Recollections

Reiko Yamanaka

The following is the manuscript for the opening talk of an event titled “Noh Reimagined 2018—Sublime Illusions”, which took place at Kings Place, London on the 29th and 30th of June 2018. I would like to thank Prof. Tom Hare (Princeton University) for his masterful translation of a difficult Japanese text, and Prof. Steven Nelson (Hosei University) for his help in adjusting it for oral presentation.

***Mugen nô* (the noh of dream and illusion)**

For the next twenty minutes or so, I would like to talk to you about *mugen nô*, one of the themes of this event. Roughly speaking, noh plays can be divided into two groups: *mugen nô* and *genzai nô*. *Genzai* means present or “real time”. *genzai nô* plays have a style or structure similar to many Western dramas; something happens on stage and after some conflict, there is a resolution.

But *mugen nô* is very different. It is the most important form of noh drama and we might translate it as “the noh of dream and illusion.” But that translation is a little cumbersome, so when thinking about *mugen nô*, it might be useful for us to link it with the terms “dreams,” “memories,” and “recollections.”

In *mugen nô*, things not directly visible on stage, such as longing, suffering, jealousy and other kinds of emotions and psychological states, become the focus of dramatic attention. The structure of *mugen nô* uses a character called the *waki*, a priest or official of the royal court. He is a representative of the audience and provides a platform for the main character to tell a story. It is because of the existence of *mugen nô* that Noh is considered a really special dramatic form. If not for the forms and conventions of *mugen nô*, noh drama itself would probably not have gained the lofty if difficult reputation it has as “classical drama.”

In *mugen nô*, the main character or *shite* is not a living human being, but the spirit of a person who died long ago. In these plays, the *shite* character encounters

the waki and then appears in the *waki's* dream.

Imagine, for a minute, how it works with our memories. Sometimes a surprising string of associations that has nothing to do with where we find ourselves at that moment, happens to come together by virtue of the interaction of our emotions and memories. It's almost like cleaning out a dresser drawer, where blouses and stockings and scarves and handkerchiefs are all mixed up together, and when we pull one of them out, another one comes along, tangled up with it.

In a similar fashion, in *mugen nô*, somebody who died long ago might appear and tell us about his or her memories. The conventions of realistic time and place disappear, and the *shite* can remember those particular things he or she wants to remember, so all the twists and turns of a long love affair, for instance, can be set aside, and a specific memory that a woman has of her lover, a memory that she has cherished for a long time, can become the focus of what she recounts to the audience.

The noh play *Izutsu*

Izutsu, a representative *mugen nô*, a part of which will be performed this evening, takes its materials from an old tale, which goes as follows:

Once upon a time, a young boy and girl, who were neighbors, used to be playmates and play by a well in their village, looking down into it where they would see their reflections on the surface of the water. When they grew up, they became bashful and didn't see each other as much as before. All the same, neither of them would accept the arrangements their parents were trying to make for their marriages. Eventually, the young man attached a poem to a love letter he wrote to the young woman. Paraphrased, the poem means something like, "The two of us used to play together and mark our heights on the post beside the well, but look how much I've grown up now, in the time we haven't seen each other!" The young woman replied, "Since that time when we used to compare our heights by the well, my hair has grown way past my shoulders. If not you, then who should help me do it up as is appropriate for a grown woman?" Their love matured and they were married.

For a while, the two lived happily together, very much in love, but eventually the man took a mistress in another village called Takayasu, and started visiting her secretly. The woman didn't resent him for that, but she worried about his safety, when he went away to visit the mistress. The woman composed a poem, saying, "When the night falls, white waves break on the shore, yet will you still go off all alone?" She weaves into the poem a pun on "white waves," which also meant "thieves and brigands." When the man heard the poem, he understood how much pain he was causing her and broke off the affair with the woman from Takayasu.

The man in the story was supposed to have been the famous lover, Ariwara no Narihira, and the woman, one of his loves. It's easy enough to imagine a play in which this story was enacted on stage over a long period of time, with various different scenes and several characters. But that's not how it's done in the play *Izutsu*.

In *Izutsu*, only the ghost of the woman appears, and the play takes shape from her memories, like this:

The *waki*, a priest, visits the ruins of a temple, and a beautiful woman appears. The woman tells the story of the two playmates who grew up to be lovers, but she does it out of order: she first recounts the story of her husband's affair with the woman in Takayasu, then delves deeper into the past to tell how the playmate of her childhood later on became her lover. As she recalls the past, she is reminded of her longing and the experience of waiting for him. Then she reveals that she herself is the ghost of the woman from the tale she's been telling, and abruptly disappears.

The *waki* drifts off to sleep and the woman's ghost reappears to him in a dream, which forms the second half of the play, she dons a robe and hat that her lover had left her in remembrance, does a dance and looks down into the well to see herself transformed into her lover. At this point she achieves a catharsis, a recognition of how precious her experience with him was.

So then, what the noh play *Izutsu* depicts is not the ups-and-downs of the love affair from the original source (a collection of tales known as *Ise monogatari*). It is, rather, the feelings of love and longing she felt for her lover. We don't really know if she felt this love at each and every moment during the story she has told. Rather,

she looks back on her life from the world beyond the grave and what she recalls are memories of love. We in the audience are given the opportunity to look into the well with her, to see her lover's reflection.

Now I would like to turn to a more general consideration of dreams, memories, and recollections.

Dreams

There are, of course, many literary works, in both Japan and around the world, that treat dreams. There are many cases where a long story turns out, in the end, to be merely a dream. We could, for example, cite *Alice in Wonderland*, *A Christmas Carol* and *The Wizard of Oz*. In China, too, one could point to *Zhen zhong ji*, *The World Inside a Pillow*, which became the basis for the Noh play, *Kantan*: the *shite* in that play takes a nap on an enchanted pillow and has a dream of fifty years of splendor, but on waking, he discovers that the entire dream took place in the short time it takes to cook rice. That, though, is the exception to the rule: it's only in *Kantan* that a long experience like that is characterized entirely as a dream. The dreams in *mugen nô* don't otherwise take that form.

Now it's true that in Japan, dreams were sometimes thought to be the revelations of gods and buddhas. In noh, however, such revelations are made not through dreams but through visions. it's usually the ghosts of human beings that make themselves known through dreams, in the hope of salvation.

The French author Paul Claudel said, *Le drame, c'est quelque chose qui arrive, le Nô, c'est quelqu'un qui arrive*, that is, "In drama, it's a matter of something happening, in Noh, it's a matter of someone appearing." The dream, then, becomes a means for a ghost to "arrive" from the other world.

Who does this ghost want to speak with? It wants, of course, to speak with the *waki* and to be consoled by him. And there are cases where the ghost must be placated or appeased. But it's not just the *waki* who has the dream. The ghost who arrives from the other world is also speaking to each member of the audience. Through the *waki's* dream, we in the audience get to hear about the life of the

ghost, something we didn't know before.

What then is it that the ghost wants to tell us? What is it that the ghost is suffering from; what is it that the ghost wants to be saved from?

Often it is the sufferings of hell. This is the most primitive form of *mugen nô*: the ghost tells us what it was he or she did during life that merited damnation, and with that, seeks the prayers of the *waki* in order to obtain salvation.

There are cases, however, in which the ghost does not seem to have committed any great sins or crimes. The ghosts of warriors, for instance, are sometimes condemned merely for having died in battle, which, in Buddhist terms, can be considered a sin. In these cases, the ghost wants to recount how he or she died. Sometimes, a play originates in the desire of the living to find out how a loved one died.

In certain cases, the ghost wants to demonstrate that he or she lived a good and valuable life. Sometimes it's not simply a matter of hearing the words of the ghost, or placating its anger. Sometimes it's a way for the audience to experience the ghost's life vicariously. In the case of *Izutsu*, as mentioned earlier, it's a matter of coming to a better understanding of things that happened in the ghost's life that were not clear to the person at the time. Death and reappearance in a dream offer a fuller perspective on life to both the *shite* and the audience.

Memories and recollections

So let's consider how dreams are related to memory. This might be a matter of a specific individual's memory, as when a particular moment in that person's life was special, and in looking back on life from the perspective of death, the ghost looks back on that occasion. This isn't simply a replay of life, but rather a memory of something wonderful. Or it could be the memory of something particularly painful.

In some cases the memory might be less the memory of an individual than that of a place: long ago, here, something important happened. Such memories might be associated with a specific location or a specific group of people. We find something similar in the literary treatment of, say, the Fenlands, the moors of Yorkshire or even the white cliffs of Dover. The associations of a famous place may allow the

audience to understand the *shite* better.

Sometimes it is while narrating events from the *shite*'s past that the memories of the *shite* come alive. The *shite*'s feelings of incomplete love, resentment, obsession or even joy may be too strong for them to die peacefully, and they want to share these stories with someone, and in the sharing they learn more about themselves.

I should stress that it is not *just* resentment and negative feelings that drive this, but rather a need to recollect or re-enact important feelings or events. Let's return to Claudel's statement: "In drama, it's a matter of something happening, in Noh, it's a matter of someone appearing." To elaborate on Claudel's statement, in Noh, it's not a matter of recounting the circumstances behind an event, but rather giving an account of things that happened in the interior life of the *shite*, his or her passions or sentiments.

Noh can be long, but it's important that the audience become immersed in the story behind the *shite*'s memories. And in order for the audience to move out of the world of mundane experience and into the world of dreams, the music of the Noh ensemble plays an important role. It's valuable that the audience and the *shite* jointly share the experience of memory. Perhaps details in the background are not known to the audience, perhaps they don't really know what happened, but they do come to understand the emotions of the *shite*.

The main characters in Noh return to this world time and time again to tell their stories. We too, in the real world remember again and again certain things that happened to us at certain times. Noh, for its part, uses beautiful language culled from classical texts, unusual music, masks and a limited range of movements to condense the experience and memories of the *shite* for presentation on stage. In its essence, then, the performance resonates with our own experience and memories from the real world. Perhaps the existence of an art like this can offer some salvation to our lives as well.

Translated by Prof. Tom Hare