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T.S. Eliot and the Noh Plays

Keiji NOTANI

It is indeed miraculous that Pound acquired Ernest Fenollosa's manuscripts of the Noh plays of Japan and the poetry of ancient China. All of what I have to tell you today began at the moment when the widow of this American Orientalist entrusted them to Pound in the year 1913. They met in London. How did they get to know each other? According to Eliot, "Mrs. Fenollosa", having read Pound's poems in *Poetry* magazine, "recognized that in Pound the Chinese manuscripts would find the interpreter whom her husband would have wished; she accordingly forwarded the papers for him to do as he liked with. It is thus due to Mrs. Fenollosa's acumen that we have *Cathay*."¹ Here Eliot's reference is only to the Chinese poems, but Eliot could have mentioned Noh translations as well, if Pound's *Cantos* had begun to appear. It has been argued that Noh had exerted an important influence on *Cantos*.² Lawrence Chisolm, a biographer of Fenollosa's, presents a different story of their encounter: Pound met Mrs. Fenollosa... probably through Heinemann or Laurence Binyon, the British Museum's Far Eastern art scholar.³ This I think is more probable, since Binyon had a good chance to get acquainted with Fenollosa, who was primarily an art specialist. Whichever version is correct, it is true to say that Pound showed enough interest in the Japanese and Chinese classical literature, and Mrs. Mary Fenollosa believed in Pound's ability as a poet.⁴ Without this fortunate encounter, we would never have an essential part of the English Modernist literature.

One of the dominant characteristics of Modernist literature is the fact that it easily crossed over national and cultural barriers. It is truly

intercultural, and when we consider Pound and Eliot, we are struck with the impression that both of them are extremely open-minded to heterogeneous cultures, and this attitude turned them highly learned. And so, Eliot's anthropological, and Pound's Oriental interests have been discussed by many scholars.⁵ However, the Japanese Noh drama in relation to Eliot has received comparatively little attention.

Modernism is indeed international and intercultural. The age I look into is the age of literary Modernism, and on the other side of the planet, we would notice another sort of modernistic, revolutionary movement was raising a political and cultural storm. I mean Japan's Meiji Restoration, which began in 1868. With this, everything relating to the old regime of the Tokugawa Shogunate lost its traditional value and prestige. Japan started to modernize the nation on the model of the West.

Upon this turbulent stage, Fenollosa came up, accepting the professorship offered by the new government.⁶ Fenollosa was born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1853, and graduated from Harvard in 1874. As Van Wyck Brooks observes in the very beginning of his book *Fenollosa and His Circle*, "The Far East seemed closer to Salem than to any other American town."⁷ In 1878 Fenollosa was invited to teach philosophy and political economy at the Imperial University of Tokyo. It was Charles Eliot Norton who recommended him to Edward S. Morse, a famous zoologist and Darwinist, the latter factor was important for the new government which was reluctant to hire devout Christians for professors, and Morse arranged to send him to Japan.⁸ Fenollosa formed a good relationship with Okakura Kakuzo, the author of the well-known *Book of Tea*. And they were "opposed to the wholesale introduction of Western art and manners", and were "all for preserving the old life of Japan".⁹ Thus, Fenollosa by chance fell into a vortex, and found a mission to rescue Japanese traditional art. He started learning Noh, by learning how to perform Noh properly, under a great

master, Umewaka Minoru, who virtually restored Noh against the marked trend of destroying everything traditional and old. Since Noh had been a necessary part of official ceremonies at Kyoto, and long had been supported by nobles and governing class of samurai, there would have been a very good chance for it to disappear.

For Yeats and Pound, Ernest Fenollosa and Umewaka Minoru are “heroes of the highest rank,” because they saved the great art from perishing. Fenollosa was the first Westerner to appreciate Japanese art, and Umewaka literally saved Noh stages from being destroyed. At the present moment, there is in Japan a harsh criticism against Fenollosa’s way of accumulating his own wealth by trading Japanese artifacts (he is said to have collected around twenty-thousand items).¹⁰ Nevertheless, a lot of Japanese intellectuals still show great respect to him. Pound’s remark in the “Introduction” to *‘Noh’ or Accomplishment* is quite sensible: “He had unearthed treasure that no Japanese had heard of. It may be an exaggeration to say that he had saved Japanese art for Japan, but it is certain that he had done as much as any one man could have to set the native art in its rightful pre-eminence and to stop the apeing of Europe.”¹¹ Like Lafcadio Hearn, Fenollosa exerted a profound influence for the Japanese to recognize for themselves the importance of their national culture.

The widow of Fenollosa sent the manuscripts to Pound at the very best moment. Japanese Noh, through Pound and Yeats and possibly Eliot, gave an impetus to English Modernism. It gave them a chance to reflect on a poetics which suits a new age. While Pound was working on the manuscripts, he was living with W.B. Yeats as his secretary at Stone Cottage in Sussex. Each year from 1913 to 1915 during the winter months they worked together and shared their ideas at the rural retreat. It is clear that Noh influenced both Yeats and Pound, and there are researches tracing

the influence in Yeats's later plays such as *At the Hawk's Well* and in Pound's *Cantos*.¹² Yeats confesses in the "Introduction" to *The Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, the first book of Pound's Noh translations: "In fact with the help of these plays 'translated by Ernest Fenollosa and finished by Ezra Pound' I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect and symbolic, and having no need of mob or press to pay its way—an aristocratic form."¹³

Why are the Noh plays noble? In Yeats's opinion, "Realism is created for the common folk and was always their peculiar delight, and it is the delight today of all those whose minds educated alone by schoolmasters and newspapers, are without the memory of beauty and emotional subtlety."¹⁴ Yeats was attracted by the non-mimetic, non-realistic drama form. Pound helped Yeats to perfect his Hiberno-Japanese hybrid drama. *At the Hawk's Well* testifies the truth of his confession above.

James Longenbach, in his remarkably informative book *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats & Modernism*, observes that "Everything Pound and Yeats studied at Stone Cottage was chosen for its esoteric value: Noh drama, Chinese poetry, western demonology, even Lady Gregory's folklore... In their efforts to separate themselves from what they perceived as an ignorant public who rebelled at Synge and ignored Joyce, Pound and Yeats delved deeper and deeper into the esoterica from which their later works grow."¹⁵ They "shared a belief in the privilege of an artistic elite."¹⁶ Here we should note Modernism's outstanding feature of undemocratic nature.

As for Noh's influence on Pound, our attention is drawn to his note on Fenollosa's remark that "the Noh has its unity in emotion. It has also what we may call Unity of Image." Pound's note on this remark is that "This intensification of the Image, this manner of construction, is very interesting to me personally, as an Imagiste (sic), for we Imagistes knew nothing of these plays when we set out in our own manner. These plays are also an

answer to a question that has several times been put to me: 'Could one do a long Imagiste poem, or even a long poem in vers libre?'"¹⁷ Helped by Fenollosa's elucidation, Pound understood that the Noh plays, when separated from their music, singing, dancing, masks and costumes, and simply as eclogues as he sees his translations, can be long modernistic free verse. Pound must have been spellbound by the Japanese "quattrocento" art of Noh as he was mesmerized by the Italian "quattrocento." Daniel Albright even dares to make an interesting suggestion, based on his own assumption that "the only Western equivalent of the Noh plays is the séance", that "the *Pisan Cantos* are in a sense a huge Noh play, in which Pound plays the role of the priest seeking enlightenment, and Yeats plays the role of the spirit, who in life seemed a fussy old man, but in death revealed to be a spirit of poetical creativity."¹⁸ This is rather a deep insight that helps us to understand what Pound learned from Japanese drama. Apart from its non-mimetic and symbolical nature, he found the "most striking" feature of the Noh dramas is "their marvelously complete grasp of spiritual being. They deal more with... ghosts, than with men clothed in the flesh."¹⁹

It was in spring 1916 that Pound took Eliot to the premiere of Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*, "in a London drawing room, with a celebrated Japanese dancer in the role of the hawk." This dancer is Michio Ito, who is eternally memorized in the Canto 77 "Miscio sat in the dark lacking the gasometer penny," and Eliot himself remembers Ito's "marvelous performance," as he writes in his letter to Patricia Creacen.²⁰

Although it was not a pure Noh drama performance that Eliot attended, the experience changed his attitude to Yeats, as he confesses that "And thereafter one saw Yeats rather as a more eminent contemporary than as an elder from whom one could learn."²¹ The political and cultural vortex in Tokyo was translated by Fenollosa and Pound to a vortex of poetics in

London, which Eliot was now thrown into. The chance for Eliot to express his views on Pound and modern poetry in relation to Noh came round to him when he reviewed *'Noh' or Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan* for the August issue of *The Egoist* in 1917.

In the same year Eliot anonymously published *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry* in which he states his initial evaluation that "The Noh are not so important as the Chinese poems (certainly not so important for English) ; the attitude is less unusual to us; the work is not so solid, so firm. *Cathay* will, I believe, rank with the "Seafarer" in the future among Mr. Pound's original work; the Noh will rank among his translations. It is rather a desert after *Cathay*."²² This sounds really a harsh and discouraging judgment, which makes us assume that Eliot stands only on the periphery of the Noh circle in London, even when we find in later Eliot the figure of a senior poet sending an advice to a possible director of his experimental play *Sweeny Agonistes*: "The action should be stylised as in the Noh drama."²³ We are likely to consider that Eliot's encounter with Noh was not any in-depth engagement.

Soon after the judgment made in the Pound pamphlet, however, Eliot admits that there are some fine speeches like that "of the old Kagekiyo, as he thinks of his youthful valour":

He thought, how easy this killing. He rushed with his spear-haft gripped under his arm. He cried out, "I am Kagekiyo of the Heike." He rushed on to take them. He pierced through the helmet vizards of Miyanoya. Miyanoya fled twice, and again; and Kagekiyo cried: "You shall not escape me!" He leaped and wrenched off his helmet. "Eya!" The vizard broke and remained in his hand and Miyanoya still fled afar, and afar, and he looked back crying at him, "How terrible, how heavy your arm!" And Kagekiyo called at him, "How tough the shaft of

your neck is!” And they both laughed out over the battle, and went off each his own way.²⁴

Eliot quotes the same passage in his review, this time with the lamenting song of the chorus: “These were the deeds of old, but oh, to tell them! to be telling them over now in his wretched condition.”²⁵ Kagekiyo, once a hero of the Heike, is now blind and lives by alms. Receiving a visit of his daughter from afar, he tries to hide himself and bids her go away. Eliot’s curt appreciation that “There is nothing tenuous about this” conveys his deeply felt emotion.

The review on Noh appeared just two months after the publication of *Prufrock and Other Observations*, his first volume of poetry, by the Egoist Press. According to the editors of the first volume of *The Complete Prose*, “Egoist contributions can easily be seen through the prism of literary politics, but they should also be as incisive meditations on literary art.”²⁶ Articles written in Eliot’s formative years show how he is trying to find his own poetic voice. In this sense, the Noh review is surely worth our consideration. In his “apprentice years”, during those three years in wartime London, from his decision to settle in England in 1915 to his becoming “an integral part of literary London”²⁷ in 1918, Eliot, seriously worried about both financial and marital situations, showed a very keen interest in what literature, a good literature is. And in this period he came to know Japanese drama.

In the literary world of London in which Eliot was striving to establish himself, there were two figures he was always made conscious of: i.e., Yeats and Pound. As we have already seen, Yeats was now, after Stone Cottage days, a contemporary to Eliot rather than an elder. How did Eliot consider Pound? In his “Introduction” to *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* published in 1954, Eliot observes Pound’s motive was always “the refreshment,

revitalization, and ‘making new’ of literature in our own time.”²⁸ For him Pound “has always been, first and foremost, a teacher and a campaigner. He has always been, impelled, not merely to find out for himself how poetry should be written, but to pass on the benefit of his discoveries to others.”²⁹ Eliot’s overall evaluation of Pound is that “Mr. Pound is more responsible for the XXth Century revolution in poetry than is any other individual.”³⁰ This shows how deeply indebted Eliot feels, and his sincere respect goes to Pound as his master poet.

We sense there is Eliot’s self-fashioning working in his early criticism. In writing about other poets, Eliot builds up his own poetics. The importance of his review of Pound’s *‘Noh’ or Accomplishment* lies in the fact that this is the first piece of criticism Eliot wrote on his master, to be called “*il miglior fabbro*” in the dedication of *The Waste Land*. While discussing Pound, Eliot seems to have got an opportunity to reflect on his own poetry and on his career as a modernist poet.

Before turning to the Noh article, though, I believe we should take a look at “A note on Ezra Pound” which he published in September 1918 issue of *To-Day*, just a year after the Noh piece. Here in this essay, Eliot holds that the English critical mind is not properly located on the point, which should be in good literature. To produce good literature, Eliot maintains, it is absolutely necessary for “a poet to be highly educated,” and “the core of his education ought to be education in poetry.” “A large part of any poet’s ‘inspiration’ must come from his reading and from knowledge of history.”³¹ From this argument Eliot draws the conclusion that the “historical sense” is adamant to the success of any modern poet, as he would set force later in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” in the following year of 1919. Eliot proclaims in the most famous essay that “tradition cannot be inherited; you must obtain it by great labour.” To become a poet or to “continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year,” you need to have a historical sense. This

sense “involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence” and this historical sense is “what makes a writer traditional.”³²

In “The Method of Mr. Pound” which was also published in 1919, Eliot picks up again the topic of the historical sense, and states that “Mr. Pound has a unique gift for expression through some phase of past life. This is not archaeology or pedantry, but one method, and a very high method, of poetry.”³³ Looking into the past poetical works in English and in foreign cultures is the one necessary education to become a real poet. Pound, in Eliot’s estimation, writes poems to “the adult, sophisticated, civilized mind,”³⁴ and Eliot considers Pound as a successful poet who “has made masterpieces, some of translation, some of re-creation, by his perception of the relation of [the past] periods and languages to the present, of what *they* have that we want.”³⁵ And most importantly, Eliot’s understanding that “Pound’s erudition, his interest in the past, and his interest in the present are one”³⁶ exemplifies Eliot’s deep appreciation of his master. Pound knows how to “bring the past to bear upon the present.”³⁷ This is the ideal Eliot would eventually realize in *The Waste Land*.

So what did Eliot detect as “what they [the Japanese] have and we [the English speaking people] want,” and what else can we learn from the Noh article? I think there are four points: firstly, Eliot’s high evaluation of the role of translation; secondly, his implicit criticism on the relationship between Yeats and Pound; thirdly, his reflection on “the Noh and the Image”; and lastly, Eliot’s preoccupations with ghosts or the dead, which would be developed later in his life.

First of all, Eliot highly values translations, because, he says, a good translation has a “power of fertilizing a literature.” If a work is successfully translated, “a happy fusion” would occur “between the spirit of the original and the mind of the translator.” Eliot then presents a rather curious thesis: “I find that when the writing is most like Mr. Pound, it also presents the

appearance of being most faithful to the original.” The result of the fusion is “not exoticism but rejuvenation.”³⁸ Eliot’s idea is that translations cannot remain as foreign, but they should be assimilated, and invigorate and enrich one’s own literature.

With regard to the very close and productive relationship between Pound and Yeats, Eliot seems not happy, because Eliot objects to Pound’s use of Celtic English. The reference is to *Kayoi Komachi*, in which the Shite (the main character) expresses his feeling in the words: “I’ve a sad heart to see you looking up to Buddha, you who left me alone, I diving in the black rivers of hell.” Eliot criticizes this expression, saying that “the infinitive after “I’ve a sad heart,” and “the Celtic present participle serve here only as a distraction.” At first glance, it is difficult to understand why introducing the Irish usage is bad, and “Pound’s other sources—of his Provençal mood, or his Anglo-Saxon mood—give rather an added charm.” But when we read his discussion of Noh and image, we understand Eliot does not like personages in a Noh drama talking like Irish peasants. The point is wholly about the appropriateness of the diction. Eliot concludes that “Mr. Pound has no need of these accessories, for when he translates into English (and the Irish lapses are only occasional) he not only produces very fine poetry, but seems to bring us much nearer to the Japanese.” This may be true, but I still sense some dark feeling of jealousy or prejudice against the Irish is lurking behind this remark. My impression probably comes from his mentioning “colleens” and “Robert Burns” in the same passage.

As for the image and Noh, Eliot writes, summarizing Pound’s remark, that the Noh plays are “at their best an image, and therein consists their unity.” Following this dictum, Eliot observes that the essential nature of the Noh is in “the unity of the image.” Eliot continues to point out that “The peculiarity of the Noh is that the focus of interest, and centre of construction, is the scene on *the stage*. In reading *Hamlet*, for instance,

there is a perfectly clear image of a frosty night, at the beginning; in *Macbeth* there is a clear image of the castle at nightfall where the swallows breed. We imagine these, however, as they would be in reality; in reading the Noh, we have not so much help from our imagination, for the image we wish to form is the image on the stage. But in seeing the Noh, I imagine we have more help *for* our imagination.” Eliot, then, directs us to pay our attention, as an example, to Awoi no Uye’s “red, flowered kimono, folded once length-wise, and laid at the front edge of the stage,” which represents her struggles, sickness, and death. The red kimono on the stage is the image, and I believe, functions as a sort of “objective correlative.” Eliot’s gloss on this device is full of insight. “The English stage in the early twentieth century is merely a substitute for the reality we imagine; but the red kimono is not a substitute in this sense; it is itself important. The more symbolical drama is, the more we need the actual stage. The European stage does not stimulate the imagination; the Japanese does.” This idea of “not a substitute” but itself a reality and Eliot’s interest in actual reality or reality in presence should be considered with the ghosts of the Noh.

Concerning human emotions, Eliot writes that they are “very few, and are the same over all the world.” Eliot continues to state:

[L]ove and battle are the themes of Noh; but the ways of approaching these emotions are diverse. The Japanese method is inverse to that with which we are familiar. The phantom-psychology of Orestes and Macbeth is as good as that of Awoi; but the method of making the ghost real is different. In the former cases the ghost is given in the mind of the possessed; in the latter case the mind of the sufferer is inferred from the reality of the ghost. The ghost is enacted, the dreaming or feverish Awoi is represented by the “red kimono.” In fact, it is only ghosts that are actual; the world of active

passions is observed through the veil of another world. But these passions are just as real, though we see them in retrospect, as in *Kagekiyo*, or by inference, as in *Kakitsubata*.³⁹

The point is that in Noh the ghosts are enacted on the stage, and “the world of active passions is observed through the veil of another world.” Ghosts are real and not imaginarily represented in the psychology of the possessed. This “another world,” I believe, would have a deeper meaning in his vision of life, especially when pondering over his conversion.

The “image” character of Noh wins Eliot’s admiration. But when he expresses it, he really appreciates the reality of plays or characters. He mentions that “We do not forget ‘Changeful Tsunemasa, full of the universal unstillness,’ who was ‘loved by the Emperor when he was a boy, but was killed in the old days at the battle of the West Seas.’ He is as permanent as the youthful Theatetus. Kumasaka is as real. So are the ghost lovers [in *Nishikigi*], with as fine strangeness in their way as any lovers of Webster or Ford.”⁴⁰

In “The Possibility of a Poetic Drama,” originally appeared in the *Dial* in 1920, and collected in *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot says that “Permanent literature is always a presentation: either a presentation of thought, or a presentation of feeling by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world.” He continues to explain “In earlier literature... we find both kinds,” and “in some of the dialogues of Plato,” we have “exquisite combinations of both...” “Take the *Theatetus*. In a few opening words Plato gives a scene, a personality, a feeling, which colour the subsequent discourse but do not interfere with it.”⁴¹ Eliot seems so much intrigued by the description of Theatetus that he referred to him again as when he compares him to “Changeful” Tsunemasa. The Noh drama meets the standard of “permanent literature.” Personages or ghosts are universal presentations. In

his 1920 essay on Dante, he highly appraises Dante, the one poetic genius admired both by Pound and Eliot, by saying “Dante’s is the most comprehensive, and the most *ordered* presentation of emotions that has ever been made.”⁴² Eliot discerns a similarity between Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Noh plays.

A main feature of Japanese Noh theatre is that it deals with not only this world but also the other world of the dead. While reading Fenollosa’s drafts and notes, Ezra Pound was surely reminded of Dante, and wrote in the “Foreword to *Tsunemasa*” that “the parallels with Western spiritualist doctrines are more than interesting.”⁴³ As with Dante’s spirits, it is only by retelling the story of their life and death that the soul feels relieved. A cathartic effect is achieved by telling their life in this world and by having someone listen.

Japan is a country familiar to ghosts. Even in modern technological Japan, where every advanced gadget is fully employed, and robots receive respect from factory workers, people still believe in ghosts. This, I say, is not based upon those senseless TV shows, but on the hard economical evidence. You pay less for houses and apartments where former residents were killed or commit suicide. Real estate agents are required by law to notify the properties where such sad cases had happened. The Japanese people are very sensitive to the dead who left their wishes unfulfilled; there is the word “Kokoro nokori” (its literal meaning should be “heart left”; but the most suitable English equivalent would be “a strong attachment to this world”). If you die feeling “Kokoro nokori,” you will turn a ghost and lingering in the spot where your heart is attached. Thus, your spirit or ghost must be appeased. This is also a theme of the Noh plays.

Eliot’s deep interest in the so called “Mugen” Noh, which literally means “Noh of dreams and phantasms,” is seen in his selection of seven plays for his review. The choices were made out of fifteen plays in Pound’s book. All

but one (*Kagekiyo*) are Mugen Noh. The Shite (leading figure of the play) appears as an old man or woman, who starts a conversation with a secondary figure, the Waki, usually a Buddhist priest. They talk about the locus genii or a famous legend of the place and the Shite reveals he or she is in fact the spirit who has returned from the dead. The shite disappears only to reappear in the true form in the Waki's dream. Thus "the remembered past and the actual present are fused into a whole."⁴⁴

The enlightening sense which discerns the fact that this world and the other world are connected in one "Mugen," and the revelation that the present world can be looked at more clearly "through the veil of another world" are indispensable to appreciate literature like the Noh plays. By 1934, when he published *After Strange Gods*, Eliot's interest had been broadened to "the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life of its time and of other times,"⁴⁵ and now he was not simply thinking of literature per se. Eliot praises James Joyce's treatment of human emotions in "The Dead" for Joyce's "orthodoxy of sensibility" and "the sense of tradition." He quotes:

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead.⁴⁶

For Eliot "our degree of approaching 'that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead'" can tell whether we have ethical orthodoxy. The Noh article gave Eliot a good opportunity to reflect on what good literature is, and for all its brevity, there are expressed important ideas, albeit in embryonic form, to realize himself as a poet with the "orthodoxy of

sensibility.”

NOTES

The present article is based upon the paper I delivered at the 37th annual meeting of the T.S. Eliot Society held on June 17-21, 2016 in Rapallo, Italy.

1. T.S. Eliot, *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry*, in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, Vol.1: *Apprentice Years, 1905-1918*, eds. J.S. Brooker and R. Schuchard, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 639.
2. I have found most interesting Peter Nicholls’ “An Experiment with Time: Ezra Pound and the Example of Japanese Noh”, *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (Jan., 1995).
3. Lawrence Chisolm, *Fenollosa: the Far East and American Culture* (Yale University Press, 1963), 222.
4. A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet*, Vol. I, 239.
5. For Eliot’s deep interest in anthropology, see Robert Crawford’s insightful *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot* (Clarendon Press, 1987).
6. He was employed as a “Yatoi” or “Oyatoi Gaikokujin”, literal meaning of which is “hired foreigners”. There were several thousand *yatois* who were expected “to provide expertise in the wide range of fields” to “assist Japan in its quest for modernity and equality with Western nations.” For further information, consult *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (Kodansha, 1983-86), Vol. 2, 310.
7. Van Wyck Brooks, *Fenollosa and His Circle* (E.P. Dutton, 1962), 1.
8. *Ibid.*, 3.
9. *Ibid.*, 16. Fenollosa eventually became a Buddhist, and his grave was at Miidera (三井寺), Shiga, Japan.
10. See, for instance, Hosaka Kiyoshi’s treatment in his *Fenollosa—the Dark Side of a Benefactor of Japanese Fine Arts* (保坂清『フェノロサ——「日本美術の恩人」の影の部分』(河出書房新社, 1989).
11. Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* (New Directions, 1959), 3.
12. See, for example, Daniel Albright’s “Pound, Yeats, and the Noh Theater”, *The Iowa Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1985).
13. *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan*, 151.
14. *Ibid.*, 155.
15. James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats & Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 54-55.
16. *Ibid.*, 57.
17. *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan*, 27.
18. Daniel Albright, 50.
19. *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan*, 70.
20. T.S. Eliot’s letter to Patricia Creacen (26 May 1961) . *Letters of T.S. Eliot*, Vol. 6, 566.

21. T.S. Eliot, "Ezra Pound", in *Poetry*, vol. 68, no. 6 (Sep., 1946), 326.
22. T.S. Eliot, *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry*, 643.
23. "The action should be stylised as in the Noh drama... see Ezra Pound's book and Yeats' preface and notes to *The Hawk's Well*. Characters ought to wear masks; the ones wearing old masks ought to give the impression of being young persons (as actors) and vice versa. Diction should not have too much expression. I had intended the whole play to be accompanied by light drum taps to accentuate the beats (esp. the chorus, which ought to have a noise like a street drill). The characters should be in a shabby flat, seated at a refectory table, facing the audience; Sweeney in the middle with a chafing dish scrambling eggs." T.S. Eliot's letter to Hallie Flanagan (18 March 1933). *Letters of T.S. Eliot*, Vol. 6, 566.
24. T.S. Eliot, *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry*, 643.
25. T.S. Eliot, "The Noh and the Image: a Review of 'Noh or Accomplishment: a Study of the Classical Stage of Japan'", in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, Vol.1, 567.
26. "Introduction" to *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, Vol.1, lviii.
27. *Ibid.*, lx.
28. "Introduction" to *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (Faber and Faber, 1954), xiii.
29. *Ibid.*, xii.
30. *Ibid.*, xi.
31. T.S. Eliot, "A Note on Ezra Pound", in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, Vol.1, 749-50.
32. T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, Vol.1, 106.
33. T.S. Eliot, "The Method of Ezra Pound", in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926*. Vol.2 eds. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 142.
34. T.S. Eliot, "A Note on Ezra Pound", 749.
35. *Ibid.*, 750.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. T.S. Eliot, "The Noh and the Image", 564.
39. *Ibid.*, 566-67.
40. *Ibid.*, 567.
41. T.S. Eliot, "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama", in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926*. Vol.2, 280-81.
42. T.S. Eliot, "Dante", in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926*. Vol.2, 231.
43. *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan*, 54.
44. Peter Nicholls, 6.
45. T.S. Eliot, "Preface to the 1928 Edition", *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (Methuen, 1980), viii.
46. T.S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (Faber and Faber, 1934), 37.

T.S. Eliot and the Noh Plays

Keiji NOTANI

It is indeed miraculous that Pound acquired Ernest Fenollosa's manuscripts of the Noh plays of Japan and the poetry of ancient China in the year 1913. Without this, we would never have an essential part of the English Modernist literature. The widow of Fenollosa sent them to Pound at the very best moment. Japanese Noh, through Pound and Yeats and possibly Eliot, gave an impetus to English Modernism. Noh influenced both Yeats and Pound, as we can see in Yeats's later plays and in Pound's *Cantos*.

In the spring of 1916, Pound took Eliot to the premiere of Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*, "in a London drawing room, with a celebrated Japanese dancer, Michio Ito, in the role of the hawk," who is eternally memorized in the Canto 77: "Miscio sat in the dark lacking the gasometer penny." Although it was not a pure Noh drama performance that Eliot attended, the experience changed his attitude to Yeats. Yeats now became an "eminent contemporary" to compete with. Eliot was thrown into a vortex of poetics. The chance for Eliot to express his views on Pound and modern poetry in relation to Noh plays came round when he reviewed Pound's *'Noh' or Accomplishment* for the August number of *The Egoist* in 1917.

So what can we learn from Eliot's review essay on Noh? I contend there are four points: firstly, Eliot's high evaluation of the role of translation; secondly, his implicit criticism on the relationship between Yeats and Pound; thirdly, his reflection on "the Noh and the Image"; and lastly, Eliot's preoccupations with ghosts or the dead, which would be developed in his later poetry.

Keywords: T.S. Eliot; Ezra Pound ; Japanese Noh Theatre

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