

The Aesthetics and Politics of “Dreaming Back”: Yeats, Pound, Japanese Noh Plays, and Their Stone Cottage Collaboration

Youngmin Kim

Abstracts: In the winters of 1913-14, 1914-15, and 1915-16, Yeats and Pound spent their time together at a small cottage in Ashdown Forest, Sussex. This so-called “The Stone Cottage Spiritual Workshop,” the literary collaboration between Yeats and Pound, initiates the modernist movement. The process of their literary collaboration has manifested itself in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *The Dreaming of the Bones*. *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* is the most systematic statement of Yeats’s poetics to appear before the first edition of *A Vision* in 1925, and *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1917) is closely modelled on the mugen Noh, most particularly on *Nishikigi*. Both provide Yeatsian aesthetic manifesto of the open spiritual poetics that underlies his later dramatic theory of theater and poetry. And like the plays *Nishikigi* and *Motomezuka*, Yeats discovered the dramatic and theatrical representations of the dreaming back of the dead in his later plays.

Key words: Yeats, Pound, Stone Cottage, Noh plays, *Nishikigi*, spiritualism

Author: Youngmin Kim is professor of English at Dongguk University, Korea.

E-mail: youngm@dongguk.edu

제목: “환몽”의 미학과 정치: 스톤 카티지 회동의 예이츠, 파운드, 그리고 일본 노극

우리말 요약: 1913년부터 1916년의 기간 동안 예이츠와 파운드는 영국 서섹스의 애쉬다운 포리스트에 소재한 조그만 카티지에서 함께 겨울을 보냈다. 이른바 “스톤 카티지 영혼의 워크숍”이라고 명명할 수 있는 이 문학적 공동작업은 모더니즘 운동의 효시가 되었다. 그들의 문학적 공동작업의 결과 『평온한 달의 부드러운 침묵』의 산문집과 『해골의 꿈』이라는 극이 탄생하였다. 전자는 1925년판 『비전』의 초판이전에 등장한 예이츠의 시학의 가장 체계적인 이론서라 할 수 있고, 1917년 판 『해골의 꿈』은 일본의 니시키기와 같은 노극을 본격적인 모델로 하여 탄생한 것이다. 두 작품 다 예이츠의 극이론과 시론의 이면에 자리잡은 열린 영혼의 시학의 미학적 선언문을 제시하고 있다. 니시키기와 모토메즈카 등의 노극을 모델로 예이츠는 그의 후기 극에서

“죽은 자의 환몽”의 극적 재현을 창안하게 된 것이다.

주제어: 에이즈, 파운드, 스톤 카티지, 노(能)극, 니시끼기, 영혼주의

저자: 김영민은 동국대학교 영어영문학과 교수이다.

I. Introduction:

In May 1909, Olivia Shakespear introduced Pound to Yeats at 18 Woburn Buildings, and then Yeats invited Pound to attend his Monday Evenings which was the most exclusive society of poets in London. This was Pound's first meeting with Yeats. In the winters of 1913-14, 1914-15, and 1915-16, Yeats and Pound spent their time together at a small cottage in Ashdown Forest, Sussex. In his biography of Yeats, *The Life of W. B. Yeats*(1999), Terence Brown reports on this event of how Pound became Yeats literary secretary:

From November in 1914 until the end of January (when Yeats had set out on his American tour) Pound had in fact been sharing quarters with Yeats in a house in the Sussex countryside, where he had acted as amanuensis and reader to the elder poet, whose weak eyesight had become an increasing problem in the heavy schedules of literary work he set himself. That winter together had been the culmination of a relationship which had gone so far by November 1912 as to allow Pound to amend some of the poems which he had arranged for the Irish poet to submit to *Poetry* (Chicago) for publication. (212-213)

In fact, this literary collaboration between Yeats and Pound during what I would like to call “The Stone Cottage Spiritual Workshop” is significant, in that both modern poets par excellence collaborate and comment on each other's project and initiate the modernist movement.

In his trailblazing masterpiece on the critical biography of Yeats, *Yeats:*

The Man and the Masks(1948), Richard Ellmann elaborates the specifics of what Yeats and Pound had done for the workshop:

During the first winter [1913-14] [when] Pound acted as his secretary Yeats was working on an essay to prove the connection between the beliefs of peasants, spiritualists, Swedenborg, and Henry More; his thoughts were full of ghosts, witches, and supernatural phenomena. Pound, on the other hand, had a project of his own. He was the literary executor of Ernest Fenollosa, a scholar who had spent many years in Japan studying the Noh drama. (213)

James Longenbach's *The Stone Cottage* (1988) also provides an in-depth study of the collaboration between Yeats and Pound in terms of their common interest in the Noh and spiritism. Frank Kermode in his *The Dancer* (1957) suggested that Yeats came to encounter the turning point in building his vision of the theatre when he discovered the Noh plays. Much of what Yeats understood of the Noh plays came, in fact, by way of Pound who worked at the translations of Ernest Fenollosa's manuscripts. In this context, this article will take note of the initiation of Pound and Yeats into Japanese Noh plays at Stone Cottage, and use the collaboration workshop as the framework for the Yeats's development of his aesthetics and politics of the spiritism, which has produced *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *The Dreaming of the Bones*.

II. Initiation into Japanese Noh Plays

In "Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places," composed in 1914 and published first as an appendix to Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, Yeats has discovered "a world of spirits" in which "we have within us an 'airy body' or 'spirit body' which was our only body

before our birth as it will be again when we are dead and its ‘plastic power’ has shaped our terrestrial body as some day it may shape apparition and ghost” (22). Since making this discovery, he has lived in excitement, constantly comparing accounts of such spirits, in the legends of Aran and Galway, in Homer, Herodotus, Dante, Paracelsus, Swedenborg, and Blake, and even in the Noh plays. Yeats concludes the essay with his excitement with Japanese Noh play:

Last winter Mr Ezra Pound was editing the late Professor Fenollosa’s translations of the Noh Drama of Japan, and read me a great deal of what he was doing. Nearly all that my fat old woman [medium] in Soho learns from her familiars is there in an unsurpassed lyric poetry and in strange and poignant fables once danced or sung in the houses of nobles. (*A Vision and Related Writing* 24-25)

Then, Yeats describes two unnamed plays which Yeats knew from Pound: *Nishikigi* and *Motomezuka*. These plays are representatives of the mugen Noh, the ‘Noh of ghosts.’ Yeats himself reconstructs the stories of *Motomezuka* and *Nishikigi* which make readers feel Yeats’s own rhetoric and visions of new theater of spiritism in the context of the Noh play:

In one [*Motomezuka*] a priest asks his way of some girls who are gathering herbs. He asks if it is a long road to town; and the girls begin to lament over their hard lot gathering cress in a cold wet bog where they sink up their knees and to compare themselves with ladies in the big town who only pull the cress in sport, and need not when the cold wind is flapping their sleeves. He asks what village he has come to and if a road nearby leads to the village of Ono. A girl replies that nobody can know that name without knowing the road, and another says: ‘Who would know that name, written on so many pictures, and know the pine trees they are always drawing?’ Presently the cold drives away all the girls but one and she tells the priest she is a spirit and has taken solid form that she may speak with

him and ask his help. It is her tomb that has made Ono so famous.

Conscience-struck at having allowed two young men to fall in love with her she refused to choose between them. Her father said he would give her to the best archer. At the match to settle it both sent their arrows through the same wing of a mallard and were declared to equal. She being ashamed and miserable because she had caused so much trouble and for the death of the mallard, took her own life. That, she thought, would end the trouble, but her lovers killed themselves beside her tomb, and now she suffered all manner of horrible punishments. She had but to lay her hand upon a pillar to make it burst into flame; she was perpetually burning. The priest tells her that if she can but cease to believe in her punishments they will cease to exist. She listens in gratitude but she cannot cease to believe, and while she is speaking they come upon her and she rushes away enfolded in flames. Her imagination has created all those terrors out of a scruple, and one remembers how Lake Harris, who led Laurence Oliphant such a dance, once said to a shade, 'How did you know you were damned?' and that it answered, 'I saw my own thoughts going past me like blazing ships.' (*A Vision and Related Writing* 25)

Another of Japanese Noh is highly Yeatsian. Yeats retells the story of two young people in *Nishikigi*:

A priest is wandering in a certain ancient village. He meets with two ghosts, the one holding a red stick, the other a piece of coarse cloth, and both dressed in the fashion of a past age, but as he is a stranger he supposes them villagers wearing the village fashion. They sing as if muttering, 'We are entangled up—whose fault was it, dear?' Tangled up as the grass patterns are tangled up in this coarse cloth, or that insect which lives and chirrup in dried seaweed. [. . .] To the priest they seem two married people, but he cannot understand why they carry the red stick and the coarse cloth. They ask him to listen to a story. The two young people had lived in that village long ago and night after night for three years the young man had offered a charmed red stick, the token of love, at the young girl's window, but she pretended not to see and went on weaving. So the young man died and was buried in a cave with his charmed red

sticks and presently the girl died too, and now because they were never married in life they were unmarried in their death. [. . .]

The priest, who does not yet understand that it is their own tale, asks to be shown the cave, and says it will be a fine tale to tell when he goes home. The chorus describes the journey to the cave. The lovers go in front, the priest follows. They are all day pushing through long grasses that hide the narrow paths. They have found the cave and it is dyed with the red sticks of love [. . .]. Left alone and too cold to sleep the priest decides to spend the night in prayer. He prays that the lovers may at last be one. Presently he sees to his wonder that the cave is lighted up 'where people are talking and setting up looms for spinning and painted red sticks.' The ghosts creep out and thank him for his prayer and says that through his pity 'the love promises of long past incarnations' find fulfilment in a dream. (*A Vision and Related Writing* 26)

In both plays, the spirits of the dead remain bound to earth by the memory of a tragic event in life and are condemned to relive their suffering, often at a place that has become legendary, until they are released in an act of repentance and forgiveness. On the Noh stage, this tragic event is represented in the slow and beautiful dance. The relation of this understanding of Yeats's excitement in Japanese Noh dramas to his own accounts of his 'discovery' of "the world of spirits" as well as to the stories and themes of Japanese Noh plays in "Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places" is self-evident.

Noh is a dance theater. In the Medieval through 19th century Japan, there are dramas such as Kyogen (comedies), Noh, Kabuki, and Puppets (Bunraku). Early dramas were called Kyogen and were mostly comic interludes which were traditionally performed between Noh performances. Kyogen, including satires, farces, mimicry and romances, is considered "folk theater" and not as formally developed as Noh or Kabuki. The wealthy middle class emerges in the 17th century, and cities established two types of theaters: the popular kabuki theater where actors performed with colorful costumes, lively music, and painted faces, and the bunraku puppet theater where three puppeteers

would bring each large and beautifully costumed puppet to life before an audience. Noh Drama is a "dance-drama" that was very popular in the rich and powerful elite class of medieval Japan, including the court in the 14th century. It is still performed today. The actors wear masks of a woman, a demon, and an old man, along with musicians sitting behind the actor and a chorus (*jiutai*) of eight people on the right side of the stage who narrate the story by chanting.¹⁾

Yeats's connection with Japan in terms of the Noh Plays derives not only from Ezra Pound. Yeats's interest in Japan comes mainly from Yone Noguchi who is a friend of Yeats. Yeats first met Yone Noguchi in London in 1903 and in New York in 1904. Noguchi even visited Stone Cottage in the winter of 1913. As with Ezra Pound, Noguchi becomes a source for Yeats's further knowledge of the Noh plays.²⁾ Edward Marx, in his essay "Yone Noguchi in W. B. Yeats's Japan," provides the evidence for this encounter:

From August 1916 to January 1919 Noguchi published at least seventeen No translations in *Poet-Lore*, *The Poetry Review*, *The Egoist*, and *The Quest*, as well as in *Yokyokukai* and other Japanese periodicals and in *The Modern Review* of Calcutta. He published, in English, a new article on "The Japanese Noh Play" in *The Egoist* in 1918 and articles in the *Japan Times* on "Awoi no Uye, a 'No' Play," "Fenollosa on the Noh," and "Yeats and the Noh Play of Japan." In addition, he published a Japanese articles in Japanese on the new foreign studies of No, on Yeats and the No, and on Ernest Fenollosa's relationship with Minoru Umewaka." (128)

Noguchi visited Yeats again in New York in 1919, and he asked him if Yeats had the intention to visit Japan. Yeats answered, "Yes!" Soon after that, Noguchi returned to Japan and talked with Keio University over the possibility of inviting Yeats to Japan. However, the plan for Yeats's lectureship at Keio University did not work. Yeats was never able to visit Japan.³⁾ Nevertheless, Yeats, stimulated by Pound and Fenollosa's translations

on the Noh plays, had envisioned Japanese Noh plays as the visionary model for his future theater.

Most Yeats's early drama before 1916 are embedded in anti-realistic staging, occult themes, and legendary characters at a moment of profound spiritual conflict. Like the Noh plays, Yeats employed a chorus and musicians in *On Baile's Strand* (1903) and *Deirdre* (1907), the supernatural dance in *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), the tale of a legendary hero at a moment of spiritual crisis in *The Shadowy Waters* (1900), *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), and *The King's Threshold* (1904), and encountering of mortal with immortal in *The Countess Cathleen* (1892) and *The Hour Glass* (1903). In short, Yeats relies on stylized stage design of the anti-naturalism in his earlier drama.

However, after the influence of the Japanese Noh plays, Yeats changed his vision of the theater in terms of spiritism. Yeats wrote in a 1916 introduction to "Certain Noble Plays of Japan" that "with the help of [the] Japanese 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" (*Essay and Introduction*, 221). Yeats's own visual moving image or screening of the specific details of what is displayed on the stage in the Noh plays is worth while to read closely:

The players wear masks and found their movements upon those of puppets: the most famous of all Japanese dramatists composed entirely for puppets. A swift or a slow movement and a long or a short stillness, and then another movement. They sing as much as they speak, and there is a chorus which describes the scene and interprets their thought and never becomes as in the Greek theatre a part of the action. At the climax instead of the disordered passion of nature there is a dance, a series of positions and movements which may represent a battle, or a marriage, or the pain of a ghost in the Buddhist purgatory. (*Essay and Introduction* 221)

A large list of studies on the influence of the Japanese Noh plays upon Yeats's dramas reveals the characteristics of Yeatsian drama in relation to Yeats's own or internal evidence in the plays themselves as well as to his understanding of the Noh plays. The latter include his use of masks, chorus, dance, and principles of staging and property design, dramatic structure, setting, theme, and last but not in the least, his spiritism according to which the spirits of the dead exist as the medium, the in-between beings among humans, and dream back their passions in the world of the living.

In the next sections, I will demonstrate how Yeats connects the Noh plays with the Irish legends and beliefs in terms of the world of spirits, when he and Pound worked together through Fenollosa's Noh plays at Stone Cottage in the winters of 1913-16. I will select *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *The Dreaming of the Bones* as the theoretical and theatrical manifestations of the final results of the collaboration workshop.

III. *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*

As we noted in the previous section, Yeats has been working on "Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places" which was published in 1914. However, in another text, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, written early and finished in May 11, 1917, Yeats confirms and extends the connection between his vision of the theater and the Japanese Noh plays, giving a name to the condition of the spirits who remain bound to earth by the "passionate events" of life: the "dreaming back of the dead."

Per Amica Silentia Lunae (which means "the friendly silence of the peaceful moon") is the most systematic statement of Yeats's poetics to appear before the first edition of *A Vision* in 1925. It provides Yeatsian ontological, epistemological and aesthetic manifesto of the open spiritual poetics that

underlies his later of theatre and poetry. What is at stake in this poetic statement is the nature of the world of spirits as well as Yeats's understanding of the Japanese Noh plays. His main argument is that a purgatorial state exists between "Anima Hominis" (the soul of the man) and "Anima Mundi" (the spirit of the world). The Anima Hominis refers to the realm of experience accessible to the ordinary human being, and the Anima Mundi refers to the spirit of the world, the "vast luminous sea" of spirit to which artists and heroes aspire and from which human beings originate and to which eventually we all return. This state of "in-between" is the "condition of air" inhabited by spirits of the dead bound to earth by the passionate reliving based upon the intensity and the necessity of their lives. The dead spirits are condemned to re-enact these retroactive tracing until the passions are expiated and the spirits released from their suffering. This is what Yeats called "dreaming back" of the passions of the dead. Yeats argues that artists and mediums can apprehend this phenomenon.

In "Anima Mundi, VIII," Yeats believes that spiritism, in all kinds "of folklore or of the seance room, the visions of Swedenborg, and the speculation of the Platonists and Japanese plays" will let us humans to "see at certain roads and in certain houses old murders acted over again, and in certain fields dead huntsmen riding with horse and hound, or ancient armies fighting above bones or ashes," because "passion desires its own recurrence more than any event." For this reason, Yeats further argues, "[a] ghost in a Japanese play is set afire by fantastic scruple, and though a Budhist priest explains that the fire would go out of itself if the ghost but ceased to believe in it, it cannot cease to believe" (*Mythologies* 354). This ghost in a Japanese play set afire by a fantastic scruple and unable to escape memory of it is, in fact, the spirit he knew from Motomezuka, the "phantom lovers in the Japanese play who, compelled to wander side by side and never mingle," crying "We neither wake nor sleep and, passing our nights in a sorrow which

is in the end a vision, what are these scenes of spring to us?" ("Anima Hominis, X," *Mythologies* 339). They also refer to the lovers he knew from Nishikigi, and it is to these that he returns in definition of the purgatorial "condition of air" itself. This in-between locus is "the place of shades who are 'in the whirl of those who are fading,' and who cry like those amorous shades in the Japanese play:

That we may acquire power,
Even in our faint substance,
We will show forth even now,
And though it be but in a dream,
Our form of repentance. ("Anima Mundi, X" *Mythologies* 357).

The lines are from Pound's "Nishikigi" (*The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* 85), and summarize the central conceit of several of Yeats's later plays.

Per Amica Silentia Lunae (1917) is composed of Prologue, "Ego Dominus Tuus" (an invocation poem), "Anima Hominis" and "Anima Mundi" (two prose reveries), and Epilogue. In its opening poem, "Ego Dominus Tuus," Ille evokes "the mysterious one" which represents the figure of "mask":

I call to the mysterious one who yet
Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
And look most like me, being indeed my double,
And prove of all imaginable things
The most unlike, being my anti-self,
And, standing by these characters, disclose
All that I seek; (*Mythologies* 324)

In "Ego Dominus Tuus," against Hic's criticism, Ille argues that he evokes his own "double" who looks most like himself but in fact proves "the most

unlike.” He calls this latter part as “the other self, the anti-self or the antithetical self” (331) who is his “own opposite,” “double,” or “daimon.” Ille’s double or anti-self is in fact the Other of Hic’s self. Between the self and the Other, one undergoes the act of wearing the Mask. In fact, Hic’s argument against Ille is that he would find himself and not an image or symbol. Hic has a free creative imagination within the limitation of the finite world of necessity, and art is the creative effort of the conscious will to find a style “by sedentary toil / And by the imitation of great masters” (*Mythologies*, 323). Elsewhere in 2001, the author discusses *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* as the intertext to *A Vision*, and argues that the mirror represents “the winding movement of nature,” “the path of the serpent,” and the burden of time and tradition, reflecting only the finite world, and proposes “breaking the mirror” and “meditation upon the mask” as the alternatives for liberating the self away from the eternal damnation of the wandering spirit in the in-between region of the condition of air.⁴⁾

Against the grain of my own argument, I wish to return to the original statement of Yeats himself and to reread the Yeatsian context of “the wearing of a mask.” Yeats’s poetizing is as follows:

I think all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other life, on a re-birth as something not one’s self, something created in a moment and perpetually renewed; in playing a game like that of a child where one loses the infinite pain of self-realization, in a grotesque or solemn painted face put on that one may hide from the terror of judgment . . . Perhaps all the sins and energies of the world are but the world’s flight from an infinite blinding beam. [. . .] If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are, and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves though we may accept one from others. Active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code, is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask. (“Anima Hominis, VI” *Mythologies* 323).

In fact, Yeats's active virtue of "deliberate sacrifice" or "a discipline upon ourselves" in the form of wearing "a mask"—"a grotesque or solemn painted face put on that one may hide from the terror of judgment"—in the Japanese Noh plays will give us daring and heroic penetrating eyes and life-bearing breaths, the double gazing eye and the double breaths which look into and breathe into the supernatural world. In short, the mask is the "daimon," an emotional antithesis to all that comes out of internal nature, providing the freedom from the repressing self and from the dominant personality which is necessity. This is the main reason why the Noh plays need "the act of wearing the masks" which signifies the deliberate sacrifice for the purpose of disciplining oneself.

IV. *The Dreaming of the Bones*

Out of his encounter with the Noh plays from Stone Cottage Collaboration Workshop, Yeats was suddenly awakened to understand the nature of the spirits of the dead and came to envision the world of the "condition of air," thereby beginning to formulate the aesthetics of "dreaming back." Yeats could write *Four Players for Dancers*. Each play is modeled after a Japanese play: *At the Hawk's Well* (Yoro), *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (Aoino-ue), *The Dreaming of the Bones* (Nishikigi), *Calvary* (Sumidagawa/Miwa).⁵⁾ James Longenbach's *Stone Cottage* (198-200) describes the event of the performance of *At the Hawk's Well*. The play reveals the initiating influence from the Japanese Noh plays. It was dictated to Pound in their third winter at Stone Cottage in 1915-1916, and was first performed in the London drawing room of Lady Emerald Cunard in the spring of 1916. Pound and Eliot attended and Michio Ito danced the role of the hawk. Costumes and masks were made by Edmund Dulac. A second performance,

two days later, was in the drawing room of Lady Islington, which held 300, including Queen Alexandra.

However, the first convincing play to be influenced by the Japanese Noh plays in terms of conception, mood, and structure is *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1917) which is closely modelled on the mugen Noh, most particularly on *Nishikigi*. Masaru Sekine's plot of *Nishikigi* demonstrates this dream play in a concise manner.

A travelling monk, who introduces the story, prays for unhappy souls, and consequently communicates with spirits of those he has liberated in a dream sequence. The travelling monk, in this case, set the scene in the northern village of Kyo, and encounters a village couple who recount the pathetic story of a local man who, after wooing a woman for three years, and being constantly rejected, died heartbroken. Their tale is interwove with repeated references to both *nishikigi* and *hosonuno*. These local handicrafts add realism to the village couple, provide colour on stage, link the text and, most significantly, provide poetic images for their ill-fated love: the love tokens the man repeatedly leaves at his beloved's door, *nishikigi*, or decorated branches. The cloth she constantly wears is *hosonuno*, or narrow cloth, too narrow in practical terms, to make the two overlapping, front sections of a *kimono*, and therefore an apt symbolic description for an ill-matched couple. The supposed villagers lead the monk to the lovers' tomb, asking him to pray for the deceased.

The monk prays and spends a night by their tomb. The now freed ghosts, delighted, wish to thank the man whose goodwill released them from remorse. No longer earth-bound, they appear in front of the monk, expressing their gratitude by demonstrating the customary courtship rituals of their region. The man, in conclusion, performs a vigorous *okoto-mai* dance, celebrating the fact that he and his beloved will marry in the next life, until dawn breaks, and they disappear. Thus, although the theme of this play is tragic, the conclusion, like that of a medieval miracle play, shows God's power, symbolized by the priest's intervention to prevent human suffering. (Sekine 62)

Terence Brown's synopsis of Yeats's play, *The Dreaming of the Bones*, is also succinct and revealing:

In a place of mountain and sky, a young man meets a stranger and a young girl. The young man is a rebel who has fled from Dublin and the Rising which he participated and hopes to make good his escape from Ireland by way of the western coast. He is led by the stranger to a mountain summit, where we realize he is in the company of the spirits of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla, who in Irish nationalist historiography were the pair of lovers who traitorously invited the Normans into Ireland to serve their partisan cause. They are the primal sinners in an Irish Fall which brought conquest and English rule. In Yeats's play, they are condemned to spend eternity in erotic longing for one another. Their lips can never meet and they cannot be released from their torment of desire unless one of their race forgives them. The young man is tempted to do so, so affecting is their condition, until recognition dawns and he declares he cannot. Forgiveness, in any moral equation he understands, is impossible. (Brown 242)

The First Musician provides the scene and the mood of the play with ghostly suggestion:

First Musician.

Why does my heart beat so?
 Did not a shadow pass?
 It passed but a moment ago.
 Who can have trod in the grass?
 What rogue is night-wandering?
 Have not old writers said
 That dizzy dreams can spring
 From the dry bones of the dead?
 And many a night it seems
 That all the valley fills
 With those fantastic dreams.
 They overflow the hills,
 So passionate is a shade,

Like wine that fills to the top
 A grey-green cup of jade,
 Or maybe an agate cup. (*Varioum Plays* 762-63)

In the mood of shadowy somnambulist spiritism, “dizzy dreams can spring / From the dry bones of the dead,” in a rhetocial question. Then, a traveller, a young man, approaches a place of the ruined Abbey of Corcomroe, and encounters a man and young woman, who are mysterious strangers and tell a tale of ancient lovers and passion unresolved. As in the Noh play, the strangers wear masks and gradually reveal themselves to be the spirits of the lovers of whom they speak of. They are the traitors Diarmuid and Dervorgilla themselves who invited the Norman invasion of Ireland. When the three characters reaches the summit just at dawn, the Young Man in an objective perspective looks out over the landscape. It was ruined by the invasion from the Normans 700 years ago when Dermot betrayed his country and invited the Normans to wage the war against the King who is Dervorgilla’s husband. The Young Man realizes that the strangers are the ghosts of Ireland’s own internal and subjective sense of guilt. He pronounces that he can never forgive them after having the objective consciousness of tragic guilt in the past.

Yeats intends to adapt the Japanese model of the Noh convention and appropriates it for his purposes. The ghosts are the lovers Diarmuid and Dervorgilla, and their “passionate sin” led to the invasion of an English army into Ireland, while the Young Man as the traveller is a fleeing Irish nationalist soldier after the 1916 Easter Uprising. He is also bound by his own passion that he cannot grant the strangers the forgiveness they seek. The understanding of the relation of spirit world to the world of the living, in terms of “dreaming back,” has its origin in the mugen Noh. Therefore, *The Dreaming of the Bones* is more firmly in Noh tradition than any other

Yeats's plays. The conceit of the dreaming back of the dead allows Yeats in *The Dreaming of the Bones* to combine Ireland's past with its present in a single dramatic unfolding. And like the plays *Nishikigi* and *Motomezuka*, Yeats discovered the dramatic and theatrical representations of the dreaming back of the dead in his later plays, although Yeatian play demonstrates the politics of the spiritism rather than the aesthetics of the spiritism.

V. Conclusion: The Poetics of "Dreaming Back"

Yeats and Pound worked together through Fenollosa's Noh plays at Stone Cottage during the winters of 1913-16. Before the Stone Cottage gathering, Yeats has already discovered the world of spirits and ghosts. During the collaboration, under the influence of the Japanese Noh plays, Yeats began to formulate the structural principle of "dreaming back," in which the memory of a tragic event in life binds the spirits of the dead to earth and entangles them to relive their suffering until they repent and forgive and then be released from the eternal damnation of cyclical suffering. After the Stone Cottage Workshop, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* and *The Dreaming of the Bones* were produced as the final results of the collaboration. *A Vision* is the result of the four year collaboration project (1917-1921) with his wife, Georgie-Hyde Lees. In *A Vision* (1937), Yeats himself confirms the connection between his theatrical vision and the vision of the moment of "dreaming back of the dead." This visionary moment refers back to "the condition of the air" of the spirits who remain bound to earth by the "passionate events" of life, the idea of "in-between world" which has been initiated from Swedenborgian essay and the collaboration workshop at the Stone Cottage.

Per Amica Silentia Lunae is the systematic statement of Yeats's poetics to

appear before the first edition of *A Vision* in 1925. It demonstrates Yeatsian aesthetic manifesto of the open spiritual poetics in which a purgatorial state exists between “Anima Hominis” and “Anima Mundi.” Artists and the heroes aspire to the spirit world which is the “vast luminous sea” of spirit. This state of “in-between” is the “condition of air” inhabited by spirits of the dead bound to earth by the passionate reliving based upon the intensity and the necessity of their lives. The dead spirits are condemned to re-enact these retroactive tracing until the passions are expiated and the spirits released from their suffering. Among the *Four Players for Dancers*, *The Dreaming of the Bones* most strongly exemplifies the process of the politics of “Dreaming Back.”

In *A Vision* (1937), one recognizes the matured version of the poetics of “Dreaming Back.” Dreaming back is one of the six stages of the moment of vision. In Book III, “The Soul in Judgment,” the agent of the moment of vision is in fact the still unpurified dead between lives, that is, between death and a new conception. Yeats assumes that the Spirit, the agent which is the figure or “metaphor” of becoming Unity of Being, is situated in the period between death and birth. And the Spirit or visionary consciousness becomes the Emersonian “transparent eyeball,” a camera eye through which we trace the labyrinth from inside the realm of the moment of vision, a realm which ultimately belongs to the unconscious. The Spirit repeatedly lives the events that had most moved it. The events “occur in the order of the intensity or luminosity, the more intense first, and the painful are commonly the more intense” (*A Vision*, 226). If the Passionate Body (past) does not disappear, it haunts the Spirit (future) in the form of the painful dreams of the past. After this suffering, the Spirit finds the Celestial Body (timelessness). In short, pain and pleasure are the structural principles in the Dreaming Back.

After its imprisonment by some event in the Dreaming Back, the Spirit (future) relives that event in the Return and turns it into knowledge, and then falls into the Dreaming Back once more. In this context, the Spirit finds the

concrete events in the Passionate Body (present). The Spirit can obtain the names and words (or language) of the events from some chosen incarnate Mind which is the unconscious. According to Swedenborg, all spirits are the Dramatis Personae of the dreams which constitute our unconscious. When the Husks of the other dead are separated from their Spirits, then a Spirit can draw knowledge of language from them. When the Spirit and the Passionate Body are joined, the apparitions are visible to the seer in the form of a vision. The vision is repeated until the apparitions fade into the "Thirteenth Cone" and are forgotten by the Spirit.

Notes

- 1) For an introduction to the Noh dramas, see Masaru Sekine and Christopher Murray's "What Is Noh?" *Yeats and the Noh*, Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Books, 1990, 22-32.
- 2) According to Edward O'Shea's *A Descriptive Catalogue of W. B. Yeats's Library* (1985), there are seven books by Noguchi in Yeats's library: *Hiroshige, Japanese Hokkus, The Pilgrimage, Seen and Unseen, The Spirit of Japanese Art, Through the Torii, and The Ukiyoe Primitives*. Noguchi's *Japanese Hokkus* is dedicated to Yeats.
- 3) A second attempt to invite Yeats to Japan was tried by Hojin Yano, President of Toyo University who was also a poet, translator, and scholar of English letters. He met Yeats in Ireland in 1927 and the two remained friends and correspondents, but the plan was cancelled again. Yano is the source for Yeats's introduction to Zen Buddhism via D. T. Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (1927) and *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (1938).
- 4) See the author's "Per Amica Silentia Lunae As Intertext to *A Vision*," *The Yeats Journal of Korea* 15 (June 2001), 109-123.
- 5) For the extensive study of the connection between Yeats's *Four Plays for Dancers* and the Japanese counterparts, see Masaru Sekine and Christopher Murray's *Yeats and the Noh*, Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Books, 1990; Yoko Chiba, "The Shamanistic Elements in Yeats and Noh." *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies* X (1992). Ed. Richard Finneran. Special issue on "Yeats and the Theater: Yeats International Theatre Festival." Guest Ed. James W. Flannery. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992. 89-114; For the texts of Yeats's plays, see Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa. *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan*. New York: New Directions, 1959.

Works cited

- Brown, Terence. *The Life of W. B. Yeats*. Dublin: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.
- Chiba, Yoko. "The Shamanistic Elements in Yeats and Noh." *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies* X (1992). Ed. Richard Finneran. Special issue on "Yeats and the Theater: Yeats International Theatre Festival. Guest Ed. James W. Flannery. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992. 89-114.
- Clark, David. R. *W. B. Yeats & the Theatre of Desolate Reality*. Washington, DC.: The Catholic U of American P, 1993.
- Ellmann, Richard. *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*. New York: E. O. Dutton & Co., 1948.
- Kermode, Frank. "The Dancer." In *Romantic Image*. London: Routledge and Paul, 1957. Reprint. London: Ark, 1986.
- Longenbach, James. *The Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.
- Pound, Ezra and Ernest Fenollosa. *The Classic Noh Theatre*. New York: A New Directions Paperbook, 1959.
- Yeats, William Butler. *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*. New York: Collier Books, 1965.
- _____. "Certain Noble Plays of Japan." *Essays and Introductions*. London: Macmillan, 1961. 221-37.
- _____. *The Dreaming of the Bones*. The Variorum Edition of The Plays of W. B. Yeats. Ed. Russel K. Alspach and Catharine C. Alspach. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985. 1st ed. 1966.
- _____. *Eleven Plays of William Butler Yeats*. Ed. A. Norman Jeffares. New York: Collier Books, 1964.
- _____. "Per Amica Silentia Lunae." *Mythologies*. London: Papermac, 1989.
- _____. "Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places." *A Vision and Related Reading*. Ed. A. Norman Jeffares. London: An Arena Book, 1990. 1-28.

Manuscript peer-review process:

receipt acknowledged: Nov. 10, 2013

revision received: Dec. 20, 2013

publication approved: Dec. 30, 2013

Edited by: Ilhwan Yoon