

AWOI NO UYE: A PLAY BY UJINOBU

By EZRA POUND

INTRODUCTION

The rough draft of this play by Fenollosa and Hirata presents various difficulties. The play is one of the most profound of all the psychological Noh, and with the text before them even Japanese skilled in the art are diffident of insisting on the precise interpretation of certain passages. I wish to say quite simply that if I go wrong I shall be very grateful for correction from any scholar capable of providing it. In certain places it is necessary for me to choose one meaning or another. The poetry of the longer passages is, I think, substantially correct in our rendering, and certainly worth presenting even if the rest of the play were sheer chaos.

The story, as I understand it, is that the "Court Lady Awoi" (Flower-of-the-East) is jealous of the other and later co-wives of Genji. This jealousy reaches its climax and she goes off her head with it when her carriage is overturned and broken at the Kami festival. The play opens with the death-bed of Awoi, and in Mrs. Fenollosa's diary I find the statement that "Awoi, her struggles, sickness, and death are represented by a red, flowered kimono, folded once lengthwise and laid at the front edge of the stage."

The objective action is confined to the apparitions and exorcists. The demon of jealousy, tormenting Awoi, first appears in the form of the Princess Rakujo, then with the progress and success of the exorcism the jealous quintessence is driven out of this personal ghost and appears in its own truly demonic ("henya") form,— "That awful face with its golden eyes and horns revealed." The exorcist Miko is powerless against this demon, but the yamabushi exorcists "advancing against it making a grinding noise with the beads of their rosaries and striking against it" finally drive it away.

The ambiguities of certain early parts of the play seem mainly due to the fact that the "Princess Rokujo," the concrete figure on the stage, is a phantom or image of Awoi-no-Uye's own jealousy. That is to say, Awoi is tormented by her own passion, and this passion obsesses her first in the form of a personal apparition of Rokujo, then in demonic form.

This play was written centuries before Ibsen declared that life is a "contest with the phantoms of the mind." The difficulties of the translator have lain in separating what belongs to Awoi herself from the things belonging to the ghost of Rokujo, very much as modern psychologists might have difficulty in detaching the personality or memories of an obsessed person from the personal memories of the obsession. Baldly: an obsessed person thinks he is Napoleon; an image of his own thought would be confused with scraps relating perhaps to St. Helena, Corsica, and Waterloo.

The second confusion is the relation of the two apparitions. It seems difficult to make it clear that the "henya" has been cast out of the ghostly personality, and that it had been, in a way, the motive force in the ghost's actions. And again we cannot be too clear that the ghost is not actually a separate soul, but only a manifestation made possible through Awoi and her passion of jealousy. At least with this interpretation the play seems quite coherent and lucid.

Rokujo or Awoi, whichever we choose to consider her, comes out of hell-gate in a chariot "because people of her rank are always accustomed to go about in chariots. When they, or their ghosts, think of motion, they think of *going in a chariot*, therefore they take that form." There would be a model chariot shown somewhere at the back of the stage.

The ambiguity of the apparition's opening line is, possibly, to arouse the curiosity of the audience. There will be an air of mystery and they will not know whether it is to be the chariot associated with Genji's liaison with Yugawo, the

beautiful heroine of the play "Hajitomi," or whether it is the symbolic chariot drawn by a sheep, a deer, and an ox. But I think we are nearer the mark if we take Rokujo enigmatic line "I am come in three chariots" to mean that the formed idea of a chariot is derived from these events and from the mishap to Awoi's own chariot, all of which have combined and helped the spirit world to manifest itself concretely. Western students of ghostly folklore would tell you that the world of spirits is fluid and drifts about seeking shape. I do not wish to dogmatize on these points.

The Fenollosa-Hirata draft calls the manifest spirit "The Princess Rokujo," and she attacks Awoi (represented by the folded kimono). Other texts seem to call this manifestation "Awoi-no-Uye," i.e., her mind or troubled spirit, and this spirit attacks her body. It will be perhaps simpler for the reader if I mark her speeches simply "Apparition," and those of the second form "Hanya."

I do not know whether I can make the matter more plain or summarize it other than by saying that the whole play is a dramatization, or externalization, of Awoi's jealousy. The passion makes her subject to the demon-possession. The demon first comes in a disguised and beautiful form. The prayer of the exorcist forces him first to appear in his true shape, and then to retreat.

But the "disguised and beautiful form" is not a mere abstract sheet of matter. It is a sort of personal or living mask, having a ghost life of its own; it is at once a shell of the princess, and a form, which is strengthened or made more palpable by the passion of Awoi.

Japanese art amounts to very little if the spectator expects to have things trepanned into him, but it is both profound and vigorous if the spectator will allow his faculties to act.

AWOINO UYE

Scene in Kioto.

Daijin. I am a subject in the service of the Blessed Emperor Shujakuin. They have called in the priests and the high-priests for the sickness of Awoi-no-Uye of the house of Sadaijin. They prayed but the gods give no sign. I am sent to Miko the wise to bid him pray to the spirits. Miko, will you pray to the earth?

Miko.

*Tenshojo, chishojo,
Naigeshojo, Rakkonshojo.*

Earth, pure earth,
Wither, by the sixteen roots
(Wither this evil)!

Apparition. It may be, it may be, I come from the gate of hell in three coaches. I am sorry for Yugawo, and the carriage with broken wheels. And the world is plowed with sorrow as a field is furrowed with oxen. Man's life is a wheel on the axle, there is no turn whereby to escape. His hold is light as dew on the Basho leaf. It seems that the last spring's blossoms are only a dream in the mind. And we fools take it all, take it all as a matter of course. Oh, I am grown envious from sorrow. I come to seek 'consolation. (*Singing*) Though I lie all night hid for shame in the secret carriage looking at the moon for sorrow, yet I would not be seen by the moon.

Where Miko draws the magical bow,
I would go to set my sorrow aloud.

(*Speaking*) Where does that sound of playing come from?
It is the sound of the bow of Adzusa!

Miko. Though I went to the door of the square building,
Adzumaya

Apparition. you thought no one came to knock.

Miko. How strange! It is a lady of high rank whom I do not know. She comes in a broken carriage, a green wife clings to the shaft. She weeps. Is it . . .

Daijin. Yes, I think I know who it is. (*To the apparition*) I ask you to tell me your name.

Apparition. In the world of the swift-moving lightning I have no servant or envoi, neither am I consumed with self-pity. I came aimlessly hither, drawn only by the sound of the bow. Who do you think I am? I am the spirit of the Princess Rokujo, and when I was still in the world, spring was there with me. I feasted upon the cloud with the Sennin,¹ they shared in my feast of flowers. And on the Evening-of-Maple-leaves I had the moon for a mirror. I was drunk with colour and perfume. And for all my gay flare at that time I am now like a shut Morning-glory, awaiting the sunshine. And now I am come for a whim, I am come uncounting the hour, seizing upon no set moment. I would set my sorrow aside. Let someone else bear it awhile.

Chorus. Love turns back toward the lover, unkindness brings evil return. It is for no good deed or good purpose that you bring back a sorrow among us, our sorrows mount up without end.

Apparition. The woman is hateful! I cannot keep back my blows. (*She strikes.*)

Miko. No. You are a princess of Rokujo! How can you do such things? Give over. Give over.

Apparition. I cannot. However much you might pray. (*Reflectively, as if detached from her action, and describing it*) So she went toward the pillow, and struck. Struck.

Miko. Then standing up . . .

Apparition. This hate is only repayment.

¹Spirits not unlike the Irish "Sidhe."

Miko. The flame of jealousy

Apparition. will turn on one's own hand and burn.

Miko. Do you not know?

Apparition. Know! This is a just revenge.

Chorus.

Hateful, heart full of hate,
Though you are full of tears
Because of others' dark hatred,
Your love for Genji
Will not be struck out
Like a fire-fly's flash in the dark.

Apparition. I, like a bush

Chorus.

. . . . am a body that has no root.
I fade as dew from the leaf,
Partly for that cause, I hate her,
My love cannot be restored
Not even in a dream.

It is a gleam cast up from the past. I am full of longing. I would be off in the secret coach, and crush her shade with me.

Daijin. Help. Awoi-no-Uye is sinking. Can you find Kohijiri of Tokokawa?

Kiogen. I will call him. I call him.

Waki (Kohijiri). Do you call me to a fit place for prayer? To the window of the nine wisdoms; to the cushion of the ten ranks, to a place full of holy waters; and where there is a clear moon?

Kiogen. Yes, yes.

Waki. How should I know? I do not go about in the world. You come from the Daijin. Wait. I am ready. I will come. (*He crosses the stage or bridge.*)

Daijin. I thank you for coming.

Waki. Where is the patient?

Daijin. She is there on that bed.

Waki. I will begin the exorcism at once.

Daijin. I thank you. Please do so.

Waki (beginning the ritual). Then Gioja called upon En No Giojo, and he hung about his shoulders a cloak that had swept the dew of the seven jewels in climbing the peaks of Tai and of Kori in Uoshine. He wore the cassock of forbearance to keep out unholy things. He took the beads of red wood, the square beads with hard corners, and whirling and striking, said prayer. But one prayer.

Namaku, Samanda, Basarada.

(During this speech the "Apparition" has disappeared. That is, the first "Shite," the "Princess of Rokujo." Her costume was "The under kimono black satin, tight from the knees down, embroidered with small, irregular, infrequent circles of flowers; the upper part, stiff gold brocade, just shot through with purples, greens, and reds.")

(The Henya has come on. Clotbed in a scarlet hakama, white upper dress, and "The terrible mask with golden eyes." She has held a white scarf over her head. She looks up. Here follows the great dance climax of the play.)

Henya (threatening). O, Gioja, turn back! Turn back, or you rue it.

Waki. Let whatever evil spirit is here bow before Gioja, and know that Gioja will drive it out. *(He continues whirling the rosary.)*

Chorus (invoking the powerful good spirits). On the East stand Gosanzu Miowo.

Henya (opposing other great spirits). On the South stand Gundari Yasha.

Chorus. On the West stand Dai Uaka Miowo.

Henya. On the North stand Kongo. . . .

Chorus. Yasha Miowo.

Henya. In the middle Dai Sai

Chorus.

Tudo Miowo
Namaku Samanda Basarada!
Senda Wakaroshara Sowataya
Wun tarata Kamman,
Choga Sessha Tokudai Chiye
Chiga Shinja Sokushin Johutsu.

Henry (overcome by the exorcism). O, terrible names of the spirits. This is my last time. I cannot return here again.

Chorus. By hearing the scripture the evil spirit is melted. Bosatsu came hither, his face was full of forbearance and pity. Pity has melted her heart, and she has gone into Buddha. Thanksgiving.