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**CONFLICT, CONFLICT ÜBER ALLES?:
CONFLICT VS. REVELATION AS STAGE POETICS AND PARADIGMS**

0. I propose to approach disentangling the concept of conflict, and to test it by reference to some categories of Nô plays in Japanese theatre, expecting a significant feedback from this to theory. I shall speak here by way of the poetics of drama, or better of stage or theatrical narrations, because I assume it is an **exemplum** clearly foregrounding modes present also in other literary and semiotic genres.

1. Doubting the Eternal Necessity of Conflict

1.1. I take as my starting point not only some discussions within semiotics but primarily the definitions of conflict by the Oxford English Dictionary, Nietzsche, and Weber. The OED has as its primary definition "fighting, contending with arms", all other meanings being secondary, "transferred or figurative", in particular "the clashing or variance of opposed principles, statements, arguments, etc." (313/ 731). Max Weber speaks of **Kampf** (struggle) as: "[Ein] Gemeinschaftshandeln von Menschen,... [ein] Streben, den eigenen Willen gegen einen widerstrebenden anderen... durchzusetzen" (138) -- "a collective activity of people, an endeavour to enforce [or: carry out] one's will against an opposed different will"; Nietzsche delimits it more fully as opposed wills and ideals (131). In the upshot, both the Latin root in **confligere** (a shock, a striking together) and its main cluster of meanings is best exemplified by opposing armies. This concept haunts European philosophy at least since Heraclitus, for whom conflict (**polemos**) is the principle of a cosmic class conflict, creating gods and humans, freemen and slaves, and it is canonized in the founding Christian opposition of God to Devil (cf. Suvin, "Soul"). The ideal horizon to which conflict tends is the victory of one side. Skeletally, it is "A and B both want C, they fight, who wins?"

Such a conflict implies a collision between wills and interests of different persons and groups of people. As of the middle of 19th Century, conflict between opposed tendencies within an individual also comes to the fore, and finally a distributively shared yet individualistically adversary pseudo-ideal of "me only" egotism -- both codified by psychoanalysis. Yet in "cold" societies changing only slowly, such as medieval Japan, the generally accepted framework of the community and its values may gain an overriding and paradigmatically undoubted precedence over any particulars, even if this is in practice hypocritically violated (for example by warlords claiming to act in the name of the consensual emperor). Thus, for both historical and semiotic reasons, my thesis is that conflict is only the adversarial or antagonistic form of opposition, confrontation or contrast (cf. for some clues Simmel 13-14): in a first approximation, conflict could be thought of as personalized and simultaneous contrast of incompatible wills and/or values. Philosophically and semiotically speaking, we would today have to ask which Sinaitic Tables established that drama, or stage action, as an *exemplum* for general human behaviour must necessarily be based on conflict of opposed subjects, their wills and ideals?

To anticipate somewhat the conclusion which will be arrived at after verification from a highly significant historical corpus: I cannot imagine human relationships (for ex., as refracted and condensed by a stage story or narrative plot pattern) not shaped by opposition or contrast. But I can see no valid reason that they must be shaped by adversarial opposition. This is well brought out by Hesiod's myth of the two Erises (goddesses of Strife): the irksome (**bareia**) Eris

making for discord and evil war, and the good (**agathe**) Eris making for fruitful competition between neighbouring peasants, artisans or singers (vv. 11-26).

1.2. The answer would briefly be that this is the conclusion, central orientation and rarely argued horizon of a major and powerful current of societal action and justification which solidified around Descartes's time (with strong roots in the monotheistic tradition which he simply split into clerical and lay turfs). Since then, this dogma has dominated almost undisputed the Euro-American and bourgeois tradition of economical, political, and philosophical theory and practice, including drama and all diegetic (plotted) theatre. Its argument was perhaps most richly and radically formulated by Hegel in the famous chapter on mastery and slavery of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. He presented two possibilities for the absolute founding antitheses which constitute self-consciousness or individuality (though in other places he seems to have believed such antinomies could finally be sublated in the Absolute Spirit). First, each "individual" is an absolute Self, that is, a consciousness "oriented toward the death of the other one....They affirm themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle." Without such a split into opposed extremes, there would be only a "dead unity," in which the two opposed individualities would "remain indifferent to each other, [remain] as things, free": in the bourgeois dispensation, freedom is incompatible with a hospitable world. Or second, a reified consciousness may exist for -- and tied to -- another, independent consciousness: "one is the master, the other the slave (**Knecht**)." In the "unhappy consciousness" the Master-Slave relation is then internalized within a split Self (cf. Taylor 159). Obversely, civil society as a whole is then for Hegel (as already noted by Hobbes) "the battleground of the individual interests of each against all."^{1/} Marx's critique then both begins from this and exasperates it into a revelation of a "more or less hidden civil war within existing society" (*Communist Manifesto*, MEW 4: 473, see also *Kapital*, MEW 23: 316) in view of its superseding.

It is safe to conclude that the concept of adversariness is deeply embedded in the monotheistic (God vs. Devil, scapegoating) structures of all Euro-American social practices, including cultural institutions and speech genres. As Barthes remarked, precisely in a contrast to Japanese culture, "Antithesis is a privileged figure of our [bourgeois] culture....these contraries...[regulate] our whole morality of discourse" (171 -- on his tracks, this is argued in Suvin, "Soul"; cf. on adversariness also the suggestive Allen, though I disagree with her deriving it from patriarchy, 312). Analyzing Bateson's studies of another Asian society, Berman (whose Batesonian term for adversary is "schismogenic") concluded that

we [in the West] are trapped in the notion that schismogenic situations, which are in fact profoundly neurotic, are exciting, and that anything else must be dull.... Schismogenesis...is learned; it is as much an acquired habit as is the nonschismogenic behavior characteristic of Bali. (214)

Abstracting any process into antitheses or contraries can only be done by strong simplification, and this dichotomizing simplifies whatever it abstracts. In particular, any "formal simplification of complex and often traditional situations into simple winning or losing" introduces a "zero-sum logic" particularly well suited to capitalism (Jameson, "Soseki" 132), and to its games -- football or poker.

In the capitalist dispensation -- "a society in which conflict of interest is the **principium individuationis**" (Marcuse 111) -- this adversariness crystallizes as competition between billiard-ball individual entities (physical and legal persons, nation-states, etc.), lauded as the principal social and psychical engine of progress. All accumulators of capital and seekers after profit are pitted into a ceaseless struggle with workers and with other capitalists (cf. at least Wallerstein 60-63 and passim). Even supposedly critical voices have mythologized this "American religion of competitiveness" (Bloom viii), seeing it as predetermined, even biologically innate, rather than contingent.

However, it is both logically and historically dubious that conflict as predetermined adversariness is more than simply one possibility of philosophical inquiry, literary plots, and human behaviour in general. This would include the use and effects of power as the capacity to achieve an outcome, which is not necessarily synonymous with oppression and conflict. It is incorrect, for example, to classify as adversary the Socratic method, which is based upon convincing Socrates' -- no doubt easily persuaded -- dialogic partner that his opinions are wrong (Moulton 156-57). In *Sophistes* 225 Plato approaches this in the dichotomy between violent fight, bodies, and controversy, which involves words and leads to debate. The convincing or converting the opponent amounts to a radical change of his former views and horizons and/or their subsumption under those of Socrates. Perhaps we could follow Ricoeur's contention that we may see hermeneutics today as polarized between the "recollection of meaning" and the "exercise of suspicion". The former is the manifestation of a meaning, a revelation and proclamation, theologically speaking a kerygma. The latter is Marx's, Nietzsche's and Freud's hermeneutics of "demystification, ...a reduction of illusion," and Ricoeur significantly adds that "In our time we have not finished doing away with *idols* and we have barely begun to listen to *symbols*" (Freud 27).

2. On Zeami's **mugen nô** (Deity Nô)Plays

2.0. First, a caveat: I have argued elsewhere at length why and how a contemporary critic must be very cautious when generalizing about Muromachi-age Nô in general (see Suvin, "Revelation"). Our view today is a result of 400 years of filtering and refraction. The resolute shogunal moulding of Nô into an official institution from the 17th to the 19th Century cut it off from the commoners and congealed it into rigid upper-class forms; and the post-Meiji refraction of the last 100+ years largely retained that tradition within its own, nostalgic -- and sometimes indeed chauvinist -- "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm) of a quintessential "Japaneseness." Thus, whenever a critic foregrounds some plays and aspects of Nô, it should be clearly seen as what it is: a particular slant rather than "as it really was." This is how I shall approach the Deity and Warrior Nô categories by their major creator, Zeami Motokiyo.

The contingent nature of determining significant units or macro-texts (cf. Barthes 155ff.) holds in spades for the various Nô categorizations. The commonest one is a division into five categories, the Deity, Warrior, Woman, Miscellaneous, and Final Piece, which reposes on the nature or type of the **shite**-role, "established [by Zeami] as the single central figure" (Shimazaki 42).² This system was arrived at, first, by revising and watering down Zeami's parameters after his banishment, and then in the reactionary reorganization of Nô under the Tokugawa shogunate (cf. Yokota-Murakami, "Nô" 12; also eadem, "Poetics" 306 and 309-11). It was transformed into a modern canon by developments after 1870 which culminated in the publication of the canonic repertoire by Nogami Toyochirô in 1935/36 (Yokota-Murakami, "Poetics" 314; cf. Rimer xxvii). For such reasons, based on the power-imposed closure, a theoretically minimally satisfactory grouping of Nô plays on the basis of clear, compatible and encompassing parameters is not yet present.

I shall attempt to build on the crucial distinction between **genzai nô** (where the role played by the shite or protagonist is a dramaturgic agent alive in the time of the story) and **mugen nô** (the "visionary" plays where this agent comes from outside of that quasi-empirical time, being a deity or spirit). Zeami himself created all types of Nô plays, but his major innovation seems to lie in the series of masterpieces which codified the **mugen nô**. For reasons both of fascination with his talent and of ideological preference by the Japanese commentators (formulated by Haga Yaichi in 1899 as "the essence of Nô is the ghosts," cf. Terasaki 27), the main impression about Nô plays is based on the "visionary" plays; in Europe, this was furthered by the elitist fantasies of Pound and particularly Yeats. True, the **genzai** vs. **mugen nô**

----- --mugen nô ----- genzai nô -----

2.2. Zeami inflected Deity Nô away from fierce agents actively and even conflictually intervening into events (**aragami**), including a much greater number of important female deities (cf. Dômoto "Bangai-kyoku," and Yokota-Murakami, "Nô" 18, 24 and passim, and "Poetics" 306-08), to benevolent guarantors of an existing state. Furthermore, he practically invented the Warrior Nô, in 13 plays of which at least half are masterpieces. What do Zeami's Nô deities and warriors stand for or signify? There is little doubt that one of their central intertexts and signifieds are the long-duration power relations and value horizons of Japanese politics, in the society as a whole and in the shogunal court in particular. Our distinctions between religion and politics do not obtain in the Middle Ages, when the deities were guarantors and indeed personifications of "an ordered country," as monotonously repeated in one after another Deity Nô. However, before proceeding to this, I believe much more work is due on the signifier level.⁴

It is generally accepted that Zeami created, from the template first established in Deity Nô (cf. Konishi, *History* 526 and passim), the Warrior Nô -- as well as some Woman Nô -- in which the shite plays a human, not a deity (cf. his explicit championing such a procedure in Rimer/Yamazaki 157 and Quinn 79). What does this mean, dramaturgically and semiotically? My argument will again be proposed first in the form of a synoptic table:

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TABLE 2: ZEAMI'S EDUCATION OF WARRIOR Nô FROM DEITY Nô

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SIGNS: ___ = same		^/^ = changed	-- -/^ = mixed (partly changed)
PARAMETERS	<u>Deity Nô</u>		<u>Warrior Nô</u>
ACTION	revelation (of the true state of the protagonist)	___	revelation (of the true state of the protagonist)
AGENT (SHITE ROLE)	deity	^/^/^	human
VALUE	"+" permanence = fertility, was always there	-- -/^	"-" permanence = nirvana, sought at end after struggle in war and with desire
TIME-HORIZON	seems empirical present but underlying reality is cyclical	-- -/^	begins as empirical present, turns into recapitulation of past (often in dream)
DIACHRONY	revelation of permanent presence: maejite = incarnation of deity, nochijite = aspect of deity	-- -/^	revelation of struggle and of attaining permanent absence: maejite = specter, nochijite = ?????
AFFECT INDUCED	blessing of permanence (felicific)	-- -/^	<u>main</u> : beauty of passions' impermanence, mono no aware (pain-allaying); <u>subordinate</u> : peace of nirvana
CONFRONTATION OR OPPOSITION	ignorance vs. } knowledge }	___	<u>main</u> : as in Deity Nô
		-- -/^	<u>subordinate</u> : conflicts as below

INDIVIDUALIST CONFLICT

none {	-- -/_	marginal or contained: -- <u>main</u> : passion vanquished
{	^/\^	by impermanence; <u>subordinate</u> : possibly conflict
		of martial vs. artistic fame, rarely between agents

I should explain that at the beginning of Warrior Nô the shite-role of the play's first part (the **maejite**) appears on the stage in the same way as in Deity Nô -- as a lay person, usually an old man, of the locality the side-player (the **waki**-role) is visiting. But instead of a felicitic or happiness-bringing divine revelation or theophany, the Warrior Nô proceeds then to a tale of woe and regret. The syntagmatics of this type therefore diverge strongly from that of Deity Nô, having a shorter first part and longer second part in which, after the ghost's disclosure, his past glory and present suffering are recounted. The Warrior Nô paradigm also partakes of the *revelation of a final permanence*, an absolute cosmic closing chord, as supreme value. But if the paradigm's syntax is the same, the semantics diverge. The permanence is in Warrior Nô not a positive but either a frankly negative permanence (the dead warriors arrive from the special realm of perpetual, bloody torture in frenzied battle, the **ashuradô**, which befits their passion); or, at best, it may perhaps become at the end of the play, in a second and final revelation, the "positive negativity" or zero of Buddhist nirvana: the warrior's pre-history is usually recounted to the **waki**-role, who is a priest, so that he may pray for his salvation through purgation of his martial passion as well as of any other earthly attachment.

[The originating parameters in the above Table 2 are the first two, the play's overall action and central agent (shite-role), which amount to transplanting the same central understanding of *action (or story) as revelation* from divine to human dramaturgic agents. This shift is simultaneously feasible and problematic. It is possible because the humans are dead, it is problematic because their passions are still human. Both divinities and fallen warriors come from outside the quasi-empirical or human horizons on the stage, personified by the permanently present side-player, and thus deny their exclusive validity, yet both can manifest themselves within such human spacetime. Furthermore, both these types of agents appear in two shapes -- in a kind of disguise and then **in propria persona** -- in the two parts of these Nô plays. In Deity Nô, the numinous fullness of the Shinto divinities makes of the shite-role of the play's first part (the **maejite**) a human incarnation of the same deity that appears in the second part (as **nochijite**) in one of its divine aspects. In Warrior Nô, that joy-bringing succession and clear uplifting movement necessarily gives way to the troubled succession from misleading spectre -- presented by Zeami, in a direct copy of Deity Nô, in seemingly human form -- to vision of the warlike nobleman from the past, much more vivid than the marginal stage-ghosts in the tradition of Euripides and Seneca (e.g. in *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*). The vividness can be attributed to various factors of the Japanese cultural tradition, such as the psychology of the original samurai with their "inability to escape the ties of a past life, love, hate, longing, and pride... characteristics [that] persecute Zeami's shite" (Hare 242), and which in Nô come to a head precisely in Zeami's education of the warrior ghosts out of the resplendent Shinto divinities that bring the blessings of fertility at the end of any Deity Nô play. This is why I have substituted the more specific "passion" for the "desire" of Table 1.

For all these reasons, Zeami's adaptation of the Deity-Nô model has to modify it much more strongly in the second part of the Warrior plays, where the real situation will out.] The founding divergence between Deity and Warrior Nô is that the fallen warriors' afterlife not only contrasts with the impermanence of their earthly life, it also differs radically from the "positive," conflictless permanence of the Shinto deities. Reaffirming the evergreen continuity of time's ongoing cycle, the deities ensure and bring forth the future to an audience that is ideally

supposed to represent the community. Their fulness of value and time -- the potential simultaneity of all times -- is in sharp contrast to the dead warriors bringing up their past for anamnesis and redemption out of time. [No doubt, in both Deity and Warrior Nô the audience in the present also experiences delight and probably (more so before the Edo period) a magico-religious awe at seeing in the shite-role's apparition respectively the promise of communal felicity or the representative passion and comforting of the great transgressor (cf. Ruch, "Medieval" 306); this should qualify my oversimplified isolation of positive vs. negative permanence, necessary for a tabular overview. Still, Warrior Nô addresses, albeit in heterodox ways, the horizons of the warrior class that composed the Muromachi shogun's court, Zeami's main patrons, and the only connection that I can see to the community's future is an awful warning about the price of conflict.

The Warrior Nô therefore induces an affect quite distinct from the joyful, strong but tranquil, communal felicity of the Deity Nô (though the affects of these two Nô categories are symmetrically obverse and quite compatible). The Warrior-Nô revelation works through a number of passionate affects, such as the affection for another person -- kin, lover, master -- or the striving for fame, but finally leaves the spectator with two main, complementary affects: first, of the sweetly sad beauty of that special impermanence of passions mentioned above, well-known in the Japanese poetic tradition and retrospectively named **mono no aware**, the sense of the fugacity or tears of things (cf. Morris 208-09); and second, of the final peace of nirvana. However, the latter does not always come about, and when it does this usually happens in the last verses and last seconds on stage, after the main dance. Furthermore, while the stage agent may have freed him/herself of passion, this achievement can only be transmitted to the audience by way of a sympathy affect, complementary to yet also sustained by the clash of desire and fugacity. The protagonist may (in some plays, not always) by his confession and the **waki**-role's sympathetic intercession have been purged of "wrongful clinging" to earthly ambitions and passions (**môshû**), but the audience must affectively cling to the protagonist's story.

For both these weighty reasons -- the brief, indeed sometimes omitted, instant of mostly verbal affirmation that the shite-role's passions have been extinguished, and the affect-laden transmission of all stage propositions -- the shite-role's supposed release into nirvana does not seem to me so important for the spectator as verbally inclined commentators looking for official religious doctrine would have us believe. The popular imagination and art of medieval Japan freely chose among elements of official Buddhist doctrine and then even more freely or fancifully alloyed them with aspects of other "available traditions and doctrines" so as to make them "most emotionally and aesthetically satisfying to the need of the moment" (Ruch, "Coping" 100 and passim). In particular, "[the Nô] plays...are not religious rites or treatises, but art; and their goal is not primarily to set forth ideas....An accurate account of Nô should convey its lack of [doctrinal] rigor." (Tyler, "Path" 170, and see Gundert 5). There is an inherent and, as far as I can see, unresolvable contradiction between the peace of nirvana as value-horizon striven for and explicitly invoked, which unites conflictlessness with full absence of passion,⁵ and Zeami's refunctioning of nirvana as affect to be induced in a spectator who balances it with the aching beauty of the warrior's doomed passions. Though Zeami's plays often abound in explicit, mainly religious, ideologemes, their rhetoric is not primarily conceptual or doctrinal but primarily performative or topological, inasmuch as they directly present imaginative transpositions of human relationships. The dead warriors arrive at will across the supposedly strictly separated realms of posthumous transmigration, in every play they are found "clinging to the [earthly] place of their greatest love, deepest hate, or greatest pain" (Ruch, "Coping" 102), usually near their grave. This is why I have in Table 2 called nirvanic yearning a "subordinate" affect. The Nô plays mingle "accuracy of canonical detail" with a "disregard for overall paradigm integrity [concerning the Buddhist afterlife, DS]" in a doctrinally incoherent "illogical eclecticism of

major scope" (Ruch, "Coping" 103 and 129): which was yet, I would maintain for the superior instances at least, affectively coherent.

2.3. Finally, and for our purposes here most interestingly, the last two parameters of Table 2 deal with *opposition* and *conflict*. In this case, Zeami's twofold adaptations in the Warrior Nô template are not complementary but divergent. Deity Nô had no trace of conflict of individual wills. It simply told, by stage means, a story (**katari**, the principle of classical Japanese theatre) enacting the **waki**-role's -- and the audience's -- advance from ignorance to knowledge, or from blindness to enlightenment: a trajectory characteristic for epochs of practically absolute, and thus notionally and discursively unchallengeable, norms such as partly the European and even more so the Japanese Middle Ages (**in sua voluntate è nostra pace**, as Dante formulated it). In Warrior Nô it was impossible to fully evacuate individual subjects and their oppositions or confrontations. First, there is the brute fact of death in war, as a rule recapitulated in the final dance; often, however, the opponent is either not important, simply an agent of destiny, or non-existent, as in the suicide of the eponymous protagonist of *Yorimasa*, so that this as it were background conflict seems to me subordinate. Second, there may be a "conflict" (or better contrast) within the protagonist, which is in some cases also double: the tension between two passions (poetic and martial fame in *Tadanori*), and the overall or umbrella opposition between any earthly desire and the fleetingness or impermanence (lack of stay, **hakanasa**), which is in Buddhism seen as unavoidable suffering and in this Nô category evidently demonstrated. This is a full inversion of the happy enlightenment from the Shintoist Deity Nô into the **lacrimae rerum** enlightenment, sometimes tending toward a more complex, bittersweet but equally blessed, nirvana.

Zeami's opus testifies that he took for granted there could be plays based on conflict. He was well aware of the existence of conflicts in empirical life. But parallel to this -- and on the model of Deity Nô, which knows no conflict -- there could also, and with equal right, exist whole groups of plays based on revelation, which subsumes and overrides secondary conflicts (if we can still call them so).⁶ An excellent example of such subsumption is the usual Deity-Nô tension between the **waki**-role's initial misunderstanding of the situation and of the shite-role's identity, and the **waki**-role's final arrival at understanding, a "conflict" which progresses through an initial mistaken argument for which he is rebuked: "Only when the waki has accepted the contradiction or understood the riddle does the shite gradually begin to reveal his true character" (Brazell, "Atsumori" 15; cf. also Shimazaki 170). All arguments soon subside in mutual agreement, as the **waki**-role and the audience are enlightened into the overriding value-horizon at the end of any Deity Nô. From the point of view of any post-Christian or adversary tradition, these are only seeming or fake conflicts (this is argued at length in Suvin, "Revelation").

Thus, **genzai nô** as a rule has some (often attenuated) forms of conflict, while in the passage from Deity to Warrior Nô we might observe the return of conflict; Warrior Nô seems to me determined by the tension between conflict and revelation. This is why, as shown in the two Tables, it is a "mixed" form, making a virtue of some intrinsic conceptual contradictions. Therefore, the discussion of the anamorphic transformations of Deity into Warrior Nô may provide some indispensable insights and textual bases toward a general theoretical conclusion.

3. Revelation as Story Alternative to Conflict

3.1. I feel impelled to share with you a certain sense of discomfort, if not amazement, at the thesis I am here developing: that we should, with all prudent disclaimers, in certain specified cases recognize the legitimacy of revelation and celebration. Is that compatible with the heritage (which I do not wish to lose) of the Marxist lesson of class-struggles, or with Nietzsche's and Freud's lessons of hypocrisy as the inevitable basis of all ruling-class pieties? Indeed, there are

both possible pitfalls and cognitive increments here: denial of conflict is often crass ideological obfuscation by the ruling class. But if celebration has often been staged by the Powers-That-Be for conservative purposes, celebrating a Novum is equally possible. And nobody (in particular no social group) can or does exist by denial only; at a minimum, the affirmative aspect of life and performance ought to be understood too. Further, class conflict is not a simple conflict of interests or values but also a struggle for the control of historicity -- and celebration is always a focus or metonymy for historicity. Any functioning society is a contradictory unity of class struggle and community, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of negative suspicion and positive build-up of meaning -- what Gramsci analyzed as a hegemony. I find revelation simply too important to be conceded (as the Left has often most misguidedly done) to the rulers and their ideologists. Bloch's Principle of Hope, Bakhtin's notion of plebeian carnival, the Left Existentialists' **promesse de bonheur**, Jameson's utopia as complementary to ideology (Jameson, *Political* 286-92), as well as the tradition of celebrating (say) the First of May or Eighth of March would be my allies here. Perhaps most impressive is the final horizon of Walter Benjamin, his fragments of messianic time (cf. Suvin, "Arrested").

As I argued in the previous section, Zeami's opus is mainly oriented toward passions or affects.^{7/} Now the fact that conflicts give rise to strong affects seems immediately clear within the Euro-American tradition from Shakespeare and Hobbes to Freud and Hollywood. Individualist (Euro-American) scholars therefore take it as an unstated premise that a/ there is no theatre art without strong affects being transmitted to the audience; b/ this happens by means of conflict (accompanied by empathy); c/ therefore, all plays must have conflict and empathy. Assuming the major premise a/ to be correct, the minor premise b/, about the ubiquitous necessity of conflict, is too limited, a proposition confined to a type of civilization where economic and political strife overtly affirms that man is wolf to man. However, Zeami's Deity Nô are not conflictual but congratulatory, and in Warrior Nô (as well as in some beautiful Women Nô on unhappy love, such as *Izutsu* or *Matsukaze*) he systematically expunged conflicts or subordinated them to revelation and pacification. This, however, does not at all expunge the affects. On the contrary, one could argue that the affects are in some ways intensified by his procedure, as a rhetorics of double negation: if the shite-role incarnates some powerful emotion(s), then presenting the antithetic yearning as strongly as possible makes its refutation all the more effective and final.

3.2. My conclusion is that all structural dominants of stage (and other) narrations exfoliate in function of their overriding epistemological framework. It does not have to be notionally formulated, but it always reposes on a "structure of feeling" (Williams, *Marxism*). In that sense, Kamakura-period Japan had a deeply hegemonic epistemic regime in which it was difficult to make those qualitative distinctions indispensable for conflict (cf. Harootunian 32 and passim). The hierarchical Japanese tradition strongly privileged status-bound emotional propriety and suavity over a clash of thesis-antithesis which presupposes an at least hypothetical parity of confronted ideals (cf. Nakane 36, also 67 and passim). Consubstantially to this, the astoundingly rich verbal, musical, and gestual "polyphony" of Nô is not at all similar to Bakhtin's Dostoevsky or to European theatre but a means to building up emotional "monophony" in a pyramidal subsumption. In such an epoch, whose absolute ethics are usually justified by an absolute cosmology, oppositions -- as different from the openly antagonistic conflicts -- tend to be (at least perceived as) metonymic, as of part to whole, and they tend to be resolved by supersession. No doubt, once the spectators left the performance, the esthetic revelation could be seen as functionally tied to claims of sacredness permitting access to very conflictual positions of political power; the history of Japanese Buddhist sects as well as of performance genres is full of such functionalizations. Of Weber's two bases for charismatic rule, "revelation and the sword" (435), the second one is occulted in such claims. Nonetheless, for the present purposes of finding

argument in favour of my hypothesis the fact that such celebration "is one of the oldest and most attractive features of Japanese civilization, and...the simplest way to account for this happiness and almost ritual praise of things is to point to Shinto, the way of **kami**, the indigenous spirits or gods" (Miner, *Introduction* 11, and cf. also 150 and passim) -- for example, in Deity Nô. True, celebration is often linked with desolateness to constitute perhaps the most frequent "dual theme" of classical Japanese literature; "for Japanese poets...the celebration and the sense of desolation became intermingled" (Miner, *Introduction* 90 and 153). But this mingling does not speak against my thesis. On the contrary, "the austere combination of deprivation and beauty is very like that in many **nô** plays" (Miner, *Introduction* 115) -- for example, in Warrior Nô.

3.4. If we accept the hypothesis dethroning the absolute sway of adversariness in favour of allowing revelation as a second principle of story-telling, at least two sets of consequences follow.

First, it would be mandatory to further take into account the semiotics of performance rather than only comparative dramaturgy. My argument would be much strengthened if we shifted the focus to what actually happens in any theatre. It functions as a nested frame of two concentric circles. Whatever unfolds on the stage, the outer circle that includes the stage-audience traffic is a frame "of a deeply collaborative kind" (Sharratt 146) -- both among the stage ensemble (actors and all other stage people) and in the tacit dialogue between the stage and audience ensembles that in fact constitutes the story told and its Possible World (see Suvin, "Performance"). However conflictual what is told may be (or not be), the telling is co-operative and indeed revelatory. And even when it reveals desolation, the fact of its esthetic framing and control is celebratory: crying out for happiness. The theatrical encounter has an inalienable utopian element: a landscape of sheer immanent presence with a horizon of meaning.

Second, within narrative semiotics, including stage narration, it would behoove us to work out the strengths and limitations of these two poetics or fundamental alternatives of stage story. I can here mention two sub-themes:

1/ As argued earlier, revelation is a formal or syntactical organizing device; it can reveal Heaven or Hell (as in Dante's "demonic epiphany" of the *Inferno*, Frye 223), Purgatory or Limbo. Thus, Beckett's opus (not casually immensely popular in Japan) is a revelation of arrested Limbo, near-zero sense, desolateness without celebration. When Joyce resuscitated the notion of epiphany in *Stephen Hero*, it had contracted to a brief and occasional moment bounded and suffused by triviality. Beckett went his guru one better and rooted it durably and permanently in the absence of the Millennium. His work is a black Mystery-play, the exact inverse of a Deity Nô (cf. Takahashi 261, also Suvin *To Brecht*). It should be at least mentioned that he can be seen as the culmination of one hundred years of European discomfort in literature and theatre -- and outside them -- with individualist conflict: either toward finding a non-individualist sense to such events (as in the final discussions of Shaw's plays, and most richly as in Brecht) or toward giving conflict up in favour of grotesque, symbolism, or an absolute desolateness (as in early Maeterlinck); perhaps most interestingly, all such cross-purposes thwarting amiability meet in Chekhov's black vaudeville, revealing desolation beneath conflict.

However, it should be again stressed that this thumbnail sketch too reveals a double horizon. On the one hand, individualist conflict as the only, so to speak God-given necessity, is an ideological prejudgement which is at odds both with experience and with ethics. On the other hand, it turned out that celebration -- the positive or uplifting revelation -- was believable (rather than fake ideology, as shared by much Hollywood and Zhdanov) only in periods of long-standing consensus on indisputable societal horizons and values. In our age of Fichte's "perfectly sinful society" or Weber's "disenchantment," hermeneutics of suspicion are deeply justified: "in the secularized and reified world of modern capitalism," a revelation or epiphany "is [not]

possible as a positive event, as the revelation of presence" (Jameson, *Political* 135) -- or at least annunciation rather than denunciation is possible only as a rare exception (cf. Moylan). Attempts at celebrating fake "common interests," e.g. of a company or a nation, if not of "western civilization," only achieve Hegel's reified and ideologized "dead unity." As Hegel exemplarily demonstrated in his analysis of Diderot's novels in the *Phenomenology*, a "negative" dialectics is to be favoured at such historical periods of decay. That case is the rule in the present social formation, as it was of course when the Tokugawa ideologists stressed the celebration of the rulers (cf. Yokota-Murakami, "Poetics" 317). At such times, warnings such as the anarchist poet Kaneko Mitsuharu's, who means by opposition civic ideologico-political resistance, are to be heeded:

Of course I'm against **Yamato-damashii** [the racial spirit of Japan];

Giri and **ninjô** [duty vs. passion] make me want to vomit....

I'm sure opposition is the one decent thing in life

To oppose is to live

To oppose is to take hold of yourself.

("Hantai" ["Opposition"], ca. 1917, tr. modified from Keene, *Dawn* 358)

2/ In revelation, the opposition or contrast is defined not as a conflict of individual wills and ideals but as a confrontation with life and world (the flow of events in time) from the vantage point of absolute judgment -- in Dante (cf. Auerbach 165ff.) or Deity Nô of divine knowledge, in Warrior Nô of ambiguous death, in Beckett of atheist Limbo. Revelation (or at least the medieval Japanese type of it) does not deal in the **emotion-drenched** morality of good protagonist vs. bad antagonist but in the epistemology of who sees or understands more. The "adversary" is not evil but delusion, the solution is not in victorious individualist will -- indeed, that will is the problem -- but in increasing insight into generally valid laws (cf. Loy 296 and passim).

Notes

1/ Hegel, ch. (B.) IV. A, properly titled "Independence and Dependence of the Self-Consciousness," quotes from 144-46; cf. Taylor, especially 148-61. My application of this to Japanese culture was catalyzed by Jameson, "Soseki" 136.

Gellrich has an interesting argument about Aristotle's silence on conflict in Hellenic tragedy, which she attributes largely to Plato's view of strife as evil, and which was decisively broken by Hegel in his *Aesthetics* (8-9, 12-15, 97-101, and passim). Disappointingly, in Gellrich's book, subtitled "The Problem of Conflict since Aristotle," the concept and/or necessity of conflict is not delved into.

2/ "Shite" literally means doer, he is the central and dominant player in Zeami-type Nô.

For quicker orientation, I recall the standard historical periods referred to: Kamakura -- late 12th to early 14th Century; Muromachi -- 14th to 16th Century; Edo -- 17th to 19th Century; Meiji -- 1866-1912.

3/ As indicated by the little overlap at the bottom of Table 1 between **mugen nô** and my "other categories," the boundary between my second and third categories is deficient. In particular there are in Woman Nô obviously some plays (e.g. *Seigan-ji*, *Eguchi* or the plant-spirit plays such as *Bashô*) which are homologous to the laudatory Deity Nô, and some (e.g. *Yuya*, *Sôshi-arai Komachi*, *Senju*, *Yoshino Shizuka*) which tend toward a conflict, albeit backgrounded, muted and/or finally amicably resolved or superseded. In between, some plays are rather similar,

possibly homologous, to the Warrior Plays. For the complexities of the Woman-Nô category as constituted in the Edo-period, which also contains some plays that are possibly derivative from the revelation model but do not precisely follow either the conflictual or the revelatory pattern, a separate investigation is needed. Were this not so inelegant, my second category ought more precisely to be called "Warrior Nô and some Woman Nô and possibly some plays from the **goban date** Fourth and Fifth Pieces." It is therefore adopted here as a provisional and intermediary step, clearly calling for further work.

4/ There are two important matters that I cannot enter upon here. My justification is that, before proceeding to them, I believe much more work is due on the signifier level.

First, Nô plays are crucially dance performances with text and music, so that (for example) the passage from Zeami's Deity to Warrior plays is also the passage from what he called the **shûgen** or congratulatory style, a calm "music of joy for peace" (Benl 222-24 and passim), to a different style of dance and music.

Second, there is an overriding **telos** of Nô plays, which is beginning to become discernable only in the last two decades or so. There is little doubt that one of the central intertexts and signifieds of Zeami's Nô deities and warriors are the long-duration power relations and value horizons of Japanese politics, in the society as a whole and in the shogunal court in particular. Our distinctions between religion and politics do not obtain in the Middle Ages, when the deities were guarantors and indeed personifications of what the Deity Nô call "an ordered country." This would, for one thing, entail an as clear as possible differentiation between Zeami and his followers, considerably more conformist to hegemonic ideology and to the relentless pressure and close supervision of the Tokugawa shogunate, especially upon the overtly political Deity Nô (e.g. Nobumitsu). All this led to an exclusive focus in those plays on increasingly bland and clichetized approbation in the service of social control and indeed of State oppression, including the downgrading and elimination of Zeami's female deities and his general principle of yin-yang balance (see Yokota-Murakami, "Nô" 295, 148, and passim).

5/ This is the Buddhist **a-ranâ**, dwelling in Peace -- cf. *Diamond Sutra* 9, in Conze ed., 44-45.

6/ That in many Nô plays there is to be found little or no conflict in the Euro-American or monotheistic sense is no new discovery, but on the contrary widely acknowledged (ten sources are adduced and discussed in Suvin, "Revelation" 152). In the more prudent and correct cases, conflictlessness is confined to **mugen nô**. However, so far as I know this major, and in my opinion supremely significant, lesson has scarcely been used for the elaboration of any general theory of theatre narration or stage story (Brecht's **Fabel**).

7/ This matter of affects is crucial for any discussion of Nô as plays composed to have given effects for given audiences. It is also the major unresolved crux of present-day theatre theory (I approach a possible way in through Brecht in Suvin, "Emotion"). Cf. some interesting hints on the "affect pattern" of **mono no aware** in Hijjya-Kirschner 214.

8/ See Pavis, s.v. "Conflitto", p. 97.

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