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— パフォーマンス分析 —

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## イギリス政治劇作家 David Hare の 3 部作 ——パフォーマンス分析——

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David Hare (1947-) はイギリスを代表する現代政治劇作家の 1 人である。「演劇界におけるイギリス社会制度の監視人」の異名をとる Hare は、1970年に劇作を始めて以来、報道機関、英国国教会、司法・政治制度などを題材にした、いわゆる New Left と呼ばれるスタンスによって描かれた政治劇を数多く発表してきた。1991年10月、イギリス司法制度について取り上げた作品『Murmuring Judges』がロンドンのナショナル・シアターで上演され、大成功を収めたことにより、政治劇作家 Hare の名はよりいっそう知られるようになった。昨年5月に起こった大きな政治的变化——18年間続いていた保守党政権から Tony Blair 率いる労働党政権への政権交代劇——などに見られるように、今世紀末のイギリスは、政治的・社会的変容の時代を迎えている。この意味で Hare の描く現代イギリスの政治劇は、その時代を顕著に映し出す、いわば鏡のような役割を担っていると言えよう。

本稿では、1993年に前述の劇場において「The David Hare Trilogy」と題し上演された、上記『Murmuring Judges』を含む Hare の政治劇 3 部作（現代英国人と宗教の問題を描いた『Racing Demon』と、1992年イギリス総選挙における労働党の選挙運動をモデルにした『The Absence of War』の 2 作品と共に上演）をプロット、登場人物の性格描写、演出、テーマという 4 つの側面から、パフォーマンス分析を試みた。そして、これら 3 部作の分析を通して、Hare にとっての「政治劇とは何か」について論じた。

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# The David Hare Trilogy: A Performance Analysis

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## I.

“A three-part examination of major British institutions, written by one of our leading contemporary playwrights.”<sup>(1)</sup> This is the description of The David Hare Trilogy itself.<sup>(2)</sup> The trilogy was performed by the Royal National Theatre Company in the Olivier Theatre (the RNT’s largest stage) from 2 October to 20 November 1993. The David Hare Trilogy comprises *Racing Demon* (1990),<sup>(3)</sup> *Murmuring Judges* (1991),<sup>(4)</sup> and his new play *The Absence of War* (1993).<sup>(5)</sup> Their respective subjects are as follows: the religious uncertainties of the modern Church of England; the law i.e. the police, the judiciary and the prison service; the State which focuses on the Labour Party and its background politics and packaging of socialism. In short, David Hare has written a trilogy of plays examining the crisis facing three great British institutions.

To learn about these organizations and to gain a wide range of thinking on each subject, Hare interviewed many various workers: unhappy vicars, police constables, high-ranking policemen, judges, MPs and strategists planning the 1992 General Election, etc. In his book about this research, Hare writes that he finds people work admirably in spite of having their own doubts about the work they do and fearing that respect for their various professions has declined.<sup>(6)</sup>

It seems to me that this perception forms the basis of some common themes through the trilogy. First of all, we can see three different crises of faith in these plays. We have to work as members of society as long as we belong to it. Therefore, most of us are forced to spend a fair amount of our time at work. Inevitably, many of us in organizations cannot help shaping “acceptable private and social dimensions for the self.”<sup>(7)</sup> This causes complication or doubts about ourselves, so that we may find difficulty in keeping our faith. Such crises of faith seem to exist in these three plays.

Secondly, we can see a faction-versus-authority epitome: “the eternal battle

between the individual conscience and the institution.”<sup>68</sup> It would be better to say that is the battle between idealism and realism, or between conscience and compromise. To consider the self or faith profoundly, we are always conflicting with the authority which dominates us. Accordingly, even if we have some doubts and fears about ourselves or our professions, and even if we try to struggle to reform or change the status quo, we inevitably confront the reality by the name of authority. As a result, all we can do is abide by the inevitable. Then, like the protagonists in the trilogy, we cannot help but yield to the power of authority which compels us to compromise on the present terms.

Through the trilogy which is based on these two common themes in spite of having three different subjects, what did David Hare really intend to present to the audience? In other words, what functions was the trilogy intended to fulfil as political theatre? And what did the director (Richard Eyre) and the stage designer (Bob Crowley) do to present the trilogy in accordance with Hare’s intentions? Conversely, how much did they influence these plays in presentation? Were all plays successful or not? To consider these matters, I would like to analyse these three plays by means of comparison of four aspects: plot; characterization; staging; theme. Finally, through such comparison, I would like to analyse David Hare’s intentions in respect of the trilogy.

## II.

Firstly, comparing the plots of these three plays, I observed that the plot of *Racing Demon* is quite similar to that of *The Absence of War*. The former focuses on a priest in a South London parish and his parish team fighting a losing battle in the urban wasteland. The latter focuses on the Labour leader and his private office fighting in a National Election campaign. To put it more simply, the plots of both plays develop by just showing the characters’ day-to-day lives in order to survive. Moreover, these two plays are true tragedies, for they both show us a portrait of a man who has martyred his private life to an ideal he is incapable of fulfilling.

On the other hand, unlike the other two plays which have only a one-sided view, *Murmuring Judges* contains three stark juxtapositions in its plot. The contrapuntal flow of this play is very useful to emphasize three different worlds: the police, the judiciary, and

the prison service. Concerning the reason why he chose the Law as the second subject of the trilogy, David Hare says:

..... when I went to see the lives of lawyers, it was quickly clear that they were only one small different part of a process. And it was the process itself, the three different parts of it and how they relate—or rather how they don't relate—which is what most interested me.<sup>9)</sup>

Therefore, he wanted to present those three different worlds to the audience, but he had trouble in finding ways of presentation. Hare talks about the structure of *Murmuring Judges* like this:

It was painfully difficult to find a structure which could accommodate all three. The whole point is that each one is a sort of trade union, and does not connect to the others. So you can imagine my pleasure when I found the operatic metaphor, and in particular when I realised the triangular structure of *The Magic Flute*. Just as *The Magic Flute* begins with those three famous chords—and everything follows from them—so the play, whether anyone notices it or not, is constructed musically: ensemble, duet, aria, duet, ensemble.<sup>(10)</sup>

Thanks to his device, this play is cleverly controlled. I like this operatic metaphor, the contrapuntal flow because the use of the triangular structure of *The Magic Flute* shows us the ironic and climactic scene that contrasts one of the lawyers' brilliant social gatherings (viz. the Royal Opera House) with the prison world. Ironically, however, owing to this juxtaposed method, it cannot be denied that this play seems to be superficial. This implies that "the satire tickles rather than stabs."<sup>(11)</sup>

Finally, the most dramatic plot common to three plays is the juxtaposition of the playwright's revealing insights into the workings of the church with a series of confessionals from the professionals in *Racing Demon*. In this play, each character is granted a soliloquy to express his or her doubts and fears. In brief, Hare takes advantage of the highly dramatic quality of this technique. This method is suitable for this play not only

to provide emotional impact for the audience but also to make the story easy to understand. About these soliloquies, Hare says:

We were lucky in *Racing Demon* because we had the device of prayer. Because of the prayers, characters could do the direct monologue to the audience—what in Shakespeare is called “Aside.” .....The right to address the audience creates a different style of theatre from simply watching what’s going on.<sup>(12)</sup>

David Hare also says that he is very keen to continue using direct monologue to the audience through the whole trilogy and he actually practised it.<sup>(13)</sup> Yet the method of using soliloquies in the other two plays seems to be less fruitful than in *Racing Demon*, because it appears to me that the prayer is the most natural way of using direct monologue to the audience. On these bases, I believe *Racing Demon* is the best among the trilogy as regards plot.

### III.

Let us now turn to characterization. The main protagonists in each play are well described, particularly as very different types of clergymen in *Racing Demon* are distinguished by respective monologue and dialogue. We can see four different private lives of the clergymen who are not usually allowed to be private: Lionel, who suffers mental anguish as a result of his own absence of faith and domestic discord; a young evangelical, Tony, who finally determines to bring the Gospel to the people; a happy priest, ‘Streaky,’ who is completely harmonized with his profession and environment; Harry, whose secret life which is later revealed by a journalist. The characters in this play are extremely rich in variety.

In *Murmuring Judges*, there are two main protagonists: Irina Platt, who is a female barrister from Antigua, and an inquisitive policewoman, Sandra Bingham, whose father is also a policeman. Surprisingly, both of them bring their scruples to bear on a male-oriented system of connivance. I can easily understand how they are placed in a dilemma, however, it seems to me that both characters are too good and they lack realism. For this reason,

their characteristics appear to be very prosaic and stereotypical. Furthermore, unlike in *Racing Demon*, David Hare does not deeply allude to the characters' mental states in this play, so that it is difficult to understand their complexity of mind. That is the reason why I think characterization of this play is rather superficial and wanting in realism.

In *The Absence of War*, the characteristics of the main protagonist, George Jones, the leader of the Labour Party, the main protagonist, are very obviously described by Hare. George is a very attractive character—decent, good-natured, ebullient, and humorous. He loves the theatre, the Bible, and scrambled eggs. Unfortunately, unlike Tony Blair of the Labour Party who won the National Election to become British Prime Minister last year, George becomes a tragic figure at the end of this play. This Cockney bachelor is so humane and natural that I cannot help thinking that Hare has a real interest in this character. By describing this character in detail, I believe that Hare intends to show that the problem with this play is that it sees Labour politics almost exclusively in terms of personalities. In other words, Hare implies that if only George had seen more prudent, more ruthless and more enthusiastically backed by his shadow chancellor, he might have won. I think it is quite important that Hare created this play as not only one of the records of Labour's election campaign but also as the true tragedy of a real individual. Otherwise this play would become a mere record of the National Election in 1992, and could not be called a creative drama. That is to say, the depiction of George's personal suffering and agony clearly brings out the difficulty of living in the political world as well as carrying through one's political convictions: this technique makes this play successful as a personal drama, and consequently imbues it with not only profundity but also universality. Therefore, the apparent description of the characteristics of George is absolutely necessary for *The Absence of War*. It can be said that Hare's decision is completely appropriate as regards characterization.

#### IV.

I will now analyse the staging of the trilogy. I believe that the director, Richard Eyre, and the stage designer, Bob Crowley, succeed in giving life to the trilogy, by virtue of the magnificent staging.

In *Racing Demon*, it is certain that Richard Eyre directs the play in such a way as not to destroy the atmosphere of the original text. Also, Bob Crowley's stage design is not crude but very simple and plain enough to create the reality of priests' lives which Hare intends to describe. Thanks to the rather quiet staging, this production is complete as a kind of psychological description of the protagonists which enables the audience to understand the play. I would also add some observations about the good casting and acting. The various personalities of the protagonists are distinctly performed by each actor. It seems to me that they make this production successful by the correct timing of the pauses between their lines. Each actor's controlled acting is one of the most important elements in helping the audience to understand the psychological aspect of this play.

In contrast with *Racing Demon*, performances of *Murmuring Judges* and *The Absence of War*, are much better than the texts. In other words, the spectacle is bigger than the texts. Crowley's magisterial array of photographic blow-ups in particular produces an important and impressive theatrical effect. In addition, we can appreciate some splendid reproductions: the Royal Opera House in *Murmuring Judges*; the Whitehall Cenotaph, the central lobby of the House of Commons at Westminster, and the Manchester Rally in *The Absence of War*. I believe all these reproductions give the audience a sense of immediacy and are very helpful in making these plays dynamic. By just reading the texts, we may find these two plays lacking in dramatic tension. However, once Eyre's fluid directing and Crowley's gorgeous set and the actors' performances are added to the presentation, they completely harmonize with the texts and enable us to experience dramatic tension. I am personally fond of John Thaw's acting (as George Jones of *The Absence of War*): he creates his own character who is attractive and makes his presence strongly felt. In conclusion, I would assert that these three productions are successful.

## V.

As has been stated, all three plays have two common themes: the crisis of faith, and the discord between the individual and authority. I would now like to explain them in detail, by focussing particularly on the case of *Racing Demon*.

In this play, a parish priest, Rev. Lionel Espy, experiences doubts concerning his



own faith in God owing to fatigue caused by overwork, and God with His perpetual absence. Lionel struggles to survive with his parish team somehow in the urban wasteland where public indifference has rendered him impotent. We may perceive Lionel's own doubts and fears from his dialogue:

It [the Church of England] has no connection with most people's lives.<sup>(14)</sup>

So much of what passes for religion is simply nonsense. Close the church doors and all tell God how wonderful he is. .... The doors should be open. A priest should be like any other man. Only full of God's love.<sup>(15)</sup>

Neglecting these doubts and fears which Lionel harbours regarding himself and his job, his local bishop (the Bishop of Southwark) insists that all the Church has to do is preserve its authority and history:

Start talking to our members and you'll find we hold a thousand different views. Only one thing unites us. The administration of the sacrament. .... As a priest you have only one duty. That's to put on a show. .... We're talking about authority. History. What the Church of England *is*.<sup>(16)</sup>

Now Lionel is conscious that he faces his crisis of faith and that there is a gap between his own ideal for his profession and the reality of the Church of England. The Bishop of Southwark says to Lionel, who can no longer compromise with authority:

Feed my sheep. That's what he told us. Feed my sheep. Feed them. And you give them nothing but your own doubt.<sup>(17)</sup>

In other words, Lionel can no longer fulfil his job description by spreading a faith he has himself lost. As a result, Lionel is ousted from his parish by his local bishop, and finally the parish team had to be dismissed. At the same time, Lionel loses his home life because he has neglected his family. He finishes up in solitude and feels his powerlessness in front

of the power of authority after he has lost everything. Surely Lionel is a loser in the battle between idealism and realism. However, he is not special but just like us. For we always have to live with an awareness of our existence in society. We must fight with our own doubts. We cannot completely win the battle, as there is always authority in front of us. As long as we live in society, the battle between the individual and authority, or conscience and compromise haunts us persistently.

Correspondingly, we can find the same notion in the other two plays. In the case of *Murmuring Judges*, the notion appears as these two things: the crisis of public confidence in the Law about which two female idealists in the play are worried, and the impotence of the ideal in front of reality. The authority, which means the lawyers in this play, no longer tries to get down to the nitty-gritty, so that miscarriages of justice have frequently happened. David Hare says:

If you ask me the simple question, 'What do lawyers *do*?' then I think, in criminal law at least, the essential answer is: 'They hand people on.'<sup>(18)</sup>

In short, authority is always indifferent to the lives of the lower classes. It seems that Hare intends to attack not only many legal absurdities but also individuals who create such absurdities.

As for *The Absence of War*, like the priests in *Racing Demon*, the politicians are destroyed by their own uncertainties: it is the same absence of faith that we are faced with throughout the trilogy. Being involved in society, politicians have lost their ideals which they had in the beginning. This play also raises serious issues with real passion. What does it mean to be a socialist now? Why has P.R. packaging become so important? And why has it become so apparently impossible for a politician to speak the truth from the heart? Throughout, David Hare is writing that idealism is compromised by the pragmatism which is necessary to gain political victory, i.e. to become the authority.

To summarise, it would appear that Hare takes a serious view of individuals rather than institutions. I believe this is related to his idea about political theatre. Hare says about the trilogy:

It is important that I make clear that primacy of this distinction in my mind between art and life, because although this book [*Asking Around*] and my trilogy of plays do not have common characters or actions, it will be perfectly obvious to everyone that they do indeed have common themes. In each of the plays, although I have been writing about a particular institution, I have left it to the audience to draw parallels from their own lives.<sup>(19)</sup>

He also says:

I do understand it [the distinction between art and life] is of interest and that the comparison between the play and real life is a very fascinating thing----but I do have to keep silent; otherwise the play will not be seen by people dispassionately.<sup>(20)</sup>

Some of his comments show that he does not intend to write didactic plays but to simply present the life of people in contemporary Britain to the audience. It is apparent that Hare's stance toward political theatre is completely different from other well-known political playwrights' such as Brecht's.<sup>(21)</sup> Hare obviously has a sense of crisis about British institutions, because he says "it is clear we need to move on."<sup>(22)</sup> That is the reason why he has completed a trilogy about them. However, unlike Brecht, his intention is not to change the world radically. Concerning this, Hare says:

A playwright above all other writers responds unknowingly to the mood of the times. But, more than this, my intention in the plays was never to theorize about the overall state of my three institutions. It has been much more to portray the lives of the people trying to survive in them.<sup>(23)</sup>

To sum up, Hare tries to concentrate on depicting the reality of the world. But, why does he set out to do this? I assume that Hare, primarily wants us to be conscious of our own doubts and fears in a more individual and profound way. For even if we are aware of the crises of British institutions, we tend to think the real state of collapse is not going to

happen during our lifetime. So, if we do not have such a sense of crisis and do not worry about British institutions, they can never be reformed. Therefore, it seems to me that Hare thinks we should change our consciousness, before we change the world of the situation which is not satisfactory. In order for this to happen, we should apply this consciousness to our everyday lives. That is the reason why David Hare has written this trilogy which demonstrates the power of theatre as a place where society can confront the flawed nature of its own institution.

In conclusion, it must be said that the above are David Hare's theories of political theatre. He says "British society needs not abolish its institutions, but to refresh them."<sup>(24)</sup> Consequently, Hare intends to convey that we must change our consciousness first, then it is natural we will gradually try to reform the situation. This was demonstrated in 1997, when the Blair Government, which used to be the Opposition Party, took office something which seemed impossible several years ago. I believe that is the real meaning about political theatre for Hare.

#### Notes

(1) *The Mail* on Sunday, 10 October 1993.

(2) David Hare (1947-) is one of British leading political playwrights, namely, a theatre's scrutiniser of British institutions: press, church, judiciary and politicians. Upon leaving university he formed the Portable Theatre Company, which toured Britain for three years. He wrote his first play, *Slag*, in 1970, while Literary Manager at the Royal Court Theatre. Since then he has written not only plays but also original screenplays for cinema and television. His first feature film, *Wetherby*, won the Golden Bear at Berlin in 1985.

(3) *Racing Demon* first seen in the Royal National Theatre's Cottesloe Theatre on 8 February 1990, directed by Richard Eyre, designed by Bob Crowley, with lighting by Mark Henderson, and music by George Fenton.

(4) *Murmuring Judges* first seen in the RNT's Olivier Theatre on 10 October 1991. The production played in repertory there until May 1992. It was directed by Richard Eyre, designed by Bob Crowley, with lighting by Mark Henderson and music by Richard Hartley.

(5) Première in the RNT's Olivier Theatre on 2 October 1993, when the full trilogy was

seen together for the first time. It was directed by Richard Eyre, designed by Bob Crowley, with lighting by Mark Henderson and music by Richard Hartley.

(6) David Hare, *Asking Around* (Faber, 1993), p. 3; hereafter cited as *Asking Around*.

(7) Richard Allen Cave, *New British Drama in Performance on the London Stages: 1970 to 1985* (Colin Smythe, 1987), p. 212.

(8) *The Guardian*, 4 October 1993.

(9) Lyn Haill, *The Royal National Theatre Programme: The David Hare Trilogy* (Battley Brothers Printers, 1993), p. 23; hereafter cited as Haill.

(10) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

(11) *The Sunday Times*, 10 October 1993.

(12) Haill, p. 24.

(13) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

(14) David Hare, *Racing Demon* (Faber, 1990), p. 3.

(15) *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

(16) *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

(17) *Ibid.*, p. 80.

(18) *Asking Around*, p. 61.

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 4.

(20) *The Sunday Express*, 3 October 1993.

(21) Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956): a German dramatist, poet, director, and theoretician. His plays can be roughly divided into four periods: romantic-nostalgic (1918-29), didactic (1928-38), more generally humanist (1938-45), and again didactic (1945-56).

(22) *Asking Around*, p. 8.

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 5.

(24) *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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