## THE GREEN PARK: A NOH PLAY

Waki: A ClergymanShite: 1. An Old Woman

2. Lucrezia Warren Smith

Scene: London

(A stylised tree stands center-stage and musicians are seated on folding stools at the right. The Waki enters. wearing a black cassock.)

Waki. It is late, (Shidai)

I must hurry.

They will be waiting and are in such need of help.

They will be waiting and are in such need of help.

I am a clergyman, a parish priest, (Nanori) returning through St. James's Park to my cure of souls.

How beautiful (Michi-yuki)

it alway is after Evensong.

The Abbey, uplifting; outside, the stillness

of a clear summer night; a

pale, gold light

softens the sweet air.

(He circles the stage.)

Shadows lengthen across
the grass among the trees;
Waterbirds nest
beside the silver lake; a
path of flowers
through a forest glade; a
green thought

in a green shade

A green thought in a green shade.

Oh! In my reverie I've crossed the Mall (Tsuki-zerifu) and entered The Green Park quite unaware.

(The Shite enters. wearing a mask. chignon. and a full-cut gown of reddish-purple silk with bell sleeves. She carries a broken tree branch with a few elm leaves on it.)

Shite. I live nearby (Issei)

but when the evening is spread out against the sky,

I am more at home

among these trees.

I look for peace

in this deserted place:

the haunt of lovers,

refuge from corrupting care.

Fear no more (Sashi)

the furious winter's rages,

for the human voice

can quicken trees to life and the

excitement of the elms, rising and

falling -

their leaves alight;

colours thinning and thickening,

from blue to the green

of a hollow wave,

like plumes on horses' heads ¬

brings on an ecstasy.

All my life (Uta)

I have made my way to this solitary spot.

The world has raised its whip!

Where will it descend?

I can stand it no longer.

I cannot sit beside him

when he stares so

and does not see me

and makes everything terrible:

sky and tree,

children playing ¬

dragging carts,

blowing whistles,

falling down -

all are terrible.

He is selfish and I

am not happy without him.

He makes one so solitary;

there is no one I can tell.

My wedding ring is loose,

the fingers have grown so thin.

Waki. What a sad sight,

(Mondo)

that woman, angular and old,

Who talks to the trees

in the gathering twilight.

Shite.

Why should I suffer,

I have done no wrong.

He isn't himself;

he says cruel, wicked things,

talking to himself,

talking to a dead man

But who is it

that acts this way?

She must be deeply troubled

and in need of help.

Shite.

Septimus Warren Smith

pointed in agony, in relief;

my wedding band was gone.

The bond was cut.

Waki.

But what are you saying;

What exactly happened?

How has all this

come about?

(A chorus of six or eight men in cassocks and surplices has already entered and knelt. on red-velvet hassocks which they carry.)

Shite.

Experience changed the innocent oval

to a face, lean, contracted, and hostile.

The European War had tutored him:

,There are no lasting emotions.

Chorus.

The Great War put an end to the intoxication of poetry, extinguished the fluttering red-gold flame, infinitely ethereal and insubstantial; exposed the bestiality of eating and copulation, of

of eating and copulation, of eddying whims and vanities without lasting emotions. His comrade was killed and

he felt nothing!

Shite.

There died a myriad;

and he too is destroyed,

the man who finished

a masterpiece

at three in the morning

and ran out to pace the streets,

who fasted one day

and drank another,

who devoured Shakespeare, Darwin

and Bernard Shaw.

He fought bravely

and won promotion.

He survived

to marry without love, to

experience

sudden thunderclaps of fear.

He did not want to die;

life was good, the sun

was hot, and he grasped

a greater truth.

But visions

plagued him;

an old woman's head

in the middle of a fern;

his dead friend

without mud or wounds.

Even the doctors pursued,

prescribing a hobby and exercise.

He had to escape

or they would get him.

He flung himself, vigorously,

(Sashi)

(Kudoki)

(Uta)

violently, from the open window

onto the area railings.

Once you falter men pursue you

(Kuri)

Chorus.

They hunt in packs, scouring

the desert.

They desert the fallen

and vanish into the wilderness.

Shite.

Human nature is remorseless;

the soul knows no defence.

Chorus.

The rack and the thumbscrew are

applied without pity.

Limbs are exposed,

wounds laid bare.

Shite.

The unfeeling worship conformity and

-

penalize despair.

They love to impress, to impose,

their own features on the face of the populace;

to feast on the wills of the weak.

Chorus.

His was not

(Kuse)

(Sashi)

the slow sinking of a waterlogged will.

(She dances.)

His body was macerated,

nerve fibres alone were left,

spread like a veil

upon a rock.

The elms beckoned,

the leaves were alive

and connected by millions of fibres

with his own body.

They fanned it

up and down.

When the branches stretched,

he too made that statement.

The sparrows fluttered,

rising and falling;

the white and blue

Leaded by with black branches;

Sounds made harmonious

with premeditation;

the spaces between,

significant as the sounds.

And, in his delusion -

the most exalted of mankind;

the criminal

who faced his judges;

the victim

exposed on the heigths;

the fugitive;

the drowned sailor;

the poet

of the immortal ode;

the lord

who had gone from life to death.

Shite. His soul had been forced.

(Rongi)

An indescribable outrage.

Chorus. Closeness drew apart.

Rapture faded and he was alone

Shite. It was more than a shilling

thrown into the Serpentine.

Chorus. He had flung it all away.

Death was defiance.

Shite. Fear no more

the furious winter's rages.

Chorus. There is an embrace in death,

an attempt to communicate.

(The Shite lets down her hair. and removes her outer robe. revealing a tiered dress of gathered chiffon in greens and gold. The Waki faces the audience for his speech.)

Waki. The Great War! (Machi-utai)

This must have happened

sixty years ago.

She cannot be that old.

Is she mad?

In this deepening light
she seems
to grow younger,
to move
as though her body
relived the experience.

Skite. O God

(Issei)

release my soul from its dream.

Mankind

can do no more.

Appease

the misery of the living and the remorse

of the dead.

My dress flames.

(Waka)

My body burns.

(She dances.)

Chorus.

He had thrown himself

from the window.

Up had flashed the ground; Through

him,

blundering, bruising,

went the rusty spikes.

There he lay with a thud,

thud, thud in his brain,

and then a suffocation

of blackness.

Had he preserved

(Kuri)

the thing that mattered?

A thing

wreathed about with chatter

defaced, obscured

in all our lives,

a thing let drop every day

in corruption, lies, chatter?

A thing let drop every day

in corruption, lies, chatter?