

KAWAUCHI REVIEW

COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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Making “the Glories”: Queen Anna’s ‘Political Self’

Sumiko Ozaka

Queen Anna, the wife of King James I, has been traditionally considered a frivolous and silly woman.¹ She has been characterized by her devotion to the pleasures of life. According to Adolphus Ward’s description of Anna in the *DNB*, for example, she is a pleasure-seeker, having a fondness for “the shows and the free expenditure.” Ward labels her’s as a “mostly frivolous existence.”² He states that Anna idled away the day and particularly enjoyed courtly entertainments:

The serious business of Queen Anne’s life might almost seem to have consisted in its pleasures. Of these the chief was her participation in the entertainments . . . If the name of Queen Elizabeth is traditionally associated with the greatest period of our drama, that of Queen Anne—Ben Jonson’s Oriana, or, as he afterwards preferred to name her, Bel-Anna—links itself in its turn with the history of the English mask, and of cognate entertainments.³

Likewise Roy Strong, in his *Henry Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance* (1986), associates Anna with “pleasure” and “extravagance.”⁴ Strong, in his description of the genetic character of “a Maecenas of the arts,” asserts that “from his [Henry’s] mother, Anne of Denmark, came his love for the visual arts and those of festival.”⁵ He labels, however, the originator of these traits as a debauchee: “On the whole Anne lived for pleasure, passing her time moving from one of the palaces assigned to her to the next.” Strong considers Anna’s “love for the visual arts and those of festival,” unlike that of Prince Henry, as nothing more than her “pleasure.”

These characterizations of Anna as all “frivolity” and “indulgence” totally ignore Anna’s persistent character: a shrewd and strong-willed politician. Though Ward has no choice but to recognize her influence on “artists and craftsmen of various kinds,” he insists Anna’s “influence was less direct and in general less potent upon affairs of state.”⁶

Strong agrees with Ward on her lack of political sense: She “deliberately avoided politics, devoting herself instead to dancing, court entertainments and the design and decoration of her houses and gardens.”⁷ Various sources reveal, however, that Queen Anna, far from being frivolous, was continually maneuvering to promote her political power and involving herself in the power politics throughout her life.

This paper tries to describe the ‘political self’ of Queen Anna, the wife of King James I. As Barbara Lewalski’s definition of the early Stuart court indicates, Anna was one of “three centers of power” and stood “in some oppositional tension vis-à-vis” James.⁸ In her early days, Anna desired to consolidate her position as the mother of the future King, Prince Henry, and was opposed to James’s rising favourite, Robert Carr. After Henry’s sudden death, she continued to stand against Carr, and his allied Howards, the earls of Northampton and Suffolk. Hereafter there follows the track of Anna’s construction of her ‘political self,’ focusing on her strong attachment to Henry and her aversion against James’s political circles.

I

Anna always wanted to increase her authority. One of the most important factors was her relationship with her eldest son, Prince Henry. The Venetian ambassador, Zorzi Giustinian, reported to the doge, in 1607, that Anna had a strong attachment to Prince Henry: “I have received your instructions to thank the Prince of Wales for his offer. I will do so when I go to visit the Queen, who is devoted to him and never lets him away from her side”(SPV, 11:10).⁹ In the 1610-11 Christmas season, famous for the newly installed Prince of Wales’s first masque, *Oberon* (1610-11), Anna exploited Henry’s masquing to make her presence conspicuous.¹⁰

Anna, violating dancing protocol, succeeded in centering herself in Henry’s first masque, *Oberon*. While Ben Jonson briefly recorded “*the measures, coranto’s, galliards, & c*” (420) in his printed text, William Trumbull the Elder, who attended the performance, gave a detailed account of Anna’s self-display:

The prince then took the queen to dance, the Earl of Southampton the princess, and each of the rest his lady. They danced an English dance resembling a pavane. When the queen returned to her place the prince took her for a coranta which was continued by others, and then the gallarda began, which was something to see and admire. The prince took the queen a third time for *los branles de*

Poitou, followed by eleven others of the masque.¹¹

Here the masquers, Prince Henry, Southampton and other noble peers, having displayed their elaborate dances, selected their ladies from the audience and invited them to dance. In the initial stately dance (“a pavane”), Henry “took the queen.” Anna’s initial invitation by Henry is quite predictable, since the guests of honours, such as ambassadors and prominent figures, were usually invited to the initial dance and honoured in public. According to dancing protocol, the person invited to a dance could then select his or her new partner (of the opposite sex) from the audience to the next dance. In the following faster dances (such as “a coranta,” “gallarda,” and “*los branles de Poitou*”), to which younger persons or those of minor standing were generally invited, Anna continuously desired to be at the center herself. She made Henry invite her again when she “returned to her place.” Anna did not even allow all the other masquers, “eleven others of the masque,” to select their partners. She made them perform their duty to give her honour respectively. Anna’s demand was so strong that, after all, Henry had to invite her “a third time” in his own performance.

II

Anna was continually standing in “some oppositional tension vis-à-vis” her husband, James, especially concerning the matters of Prince Henry. In fact, at the very beginning of the new reign, just before her progress south to London, Anna defied James, who had appointed the earl of Mar to the official guardianship of Prince Henry. James’s appointment was to be expected, since Mar’s family, for three generations, “had honourably exercised the governance of the sovereign princes of this realm in their young age.”¹²

In May 1603, Robert Cecil, one of James’s reliable political advisors, received the report from Northern England that Anna had not started from Edinburgh even after her scheduled date of departure, 14 May. On 15 May, Lord Norris, who was in Doncaster, reported in his letter to Cecil that Anna would not start her progress soon. He asked Cecil the date of her departure:

I meet divers reports here in Yorkshire that the Queen will not begin her journey shortly; wherefor I have stayed from proceeding farther northward. . . . But I would know from you whether her Majesty’s coming be so sudden as that I may not come thither; for

here they say she will not set forward this month. How long you think in likelihood it will be ere she set forward, is all I seek.¹³

Lord Norris had been sent as a member of the official delegation to Berwick, a town on the border, to welcome the new queen. He sensed that some sort of accident had occurred to the queen and stopped his journey north in Doncaster. Cecil received a letter of the same purport from another member of the delegation, Lord Lincoln, who informed of Anna’s inconvenience to start the progress.¹⁴ It was James who had sent this official delegation. Just one month before, on 15 April, James, on his progress south in Topcliff, commanded the Privy Council to send the delegation to welcome Anna, who did not accompany him on his progress and was scheduled to leave Scotland later.

But we have thought good to put you in miynde that it shall be convenyent that besydes Jewells you send some of the Ladyes of all degrees who were about the Queene, as soone as the funeralles be past, or some others, whome you shall thinck meetest and most willing and able to abyde travaile, to meet her as farre as they can at her entry into the Realme, or soone after; for that we hold needfull for her honor. . . .¹⁵

According to Edmond Howes, who continued Stow’s *Annals*, these members had started from London on 2 May, four days after Queen Elizabeth’s funeral.¹⁶

A contemporary Scottish Church historian, David Calderwood, recorded in his writings that Anna had miscarried in Stirling on 10 May, five days preceding Lord Norris’s report to Cecil. Three days prior to her miscarriage, on 7 May, Anna, intending to bring Henry to London, suddenly left Edinburgh for Mar’s castle at Stirling so as to get Henry, who had been kept and nursed there under Mar’s official guardianship:

Upon the seventh of May, the Queene tooke journey to Stirlin, accompanied with some noblemen, where she had not beene before by the space of five yeeres. Her intentioun was to bring the Prince her sonne [Prince Henry] with her. Her purpose was perceived by the Ladie Marr and her sonne; and, when request prevailed not, the Ladie Marr and her sonne, and the Laird of Keir, gave a flatt denyall, and would not suffer the Prince to goe out to the Torwood or whether the Queene would have had him. Hammiltoun, Glencarne, Linlithquo, the Lord Elphinstoun, the Maister of Orkney, came to Stirlin, weill accompanied with their

friends, but gott not entrie in the castell, unlesse they would entir,
 everie principall man, with two and himself.¹⁷

Mar's family members gave Anna "a flatt denyall." They knew Anna's "*purpose*" and feared her 'abduction' of the prince. Anna's associates in Scotland, some nobles and lairds, could not get Henry from them. However, Anna never retreated from Stirling nor withdrew her demand. The news of the deadlock in Stirling soon became well-known in the English court. The Venetian secretary, Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli, who had just had his first audience with the new king at Greenwich, reported to the doge Anna's sudden journey to Stirling and her intention. Scaramelli revealed in this report that the cause of Anna's miscarriage was not an accident but her *intentional* violence towards her body:

The Queen, however, was desirous to have her eldest son with her in Edinburgh, and went, accordingly, to Stirling; but as she could not induce anyone to carry him off, she conceived a violent repugnance to seeing him. . . . The Queen flew into a violent fury, and four months gone with child as she was, she beat her own belly, so that they say she is in manifest danger of miscarriage and death.

(*SPV*, 10:40)

The news of Anna's serious condition was also conveyed to the Continent. Marin Cavalli, the Venetian ambassador in Paris, reported, "In Scotland, the Queen, finding that she could not take her son to England, was completely upset, for she was pregnant" (*SPV*, 10:42). By the time of James's first audience with English nobles and the ambassadors, the "oppositional tension" between the new royal couple had become common knowledge on the Continent as well as in the English court.

Sir James Sympyll expressed in his letter to Cecil that James was very angry with one of Anna's associates, whom he considered as the principal instigator:

The King told me that the Earl of Linlithgow should be certified by me that he was too bold in that he attempted to join himself as a surety with the rest of the noblemen for the Prince's delivery to the Queen without his Majesty's warrant; and that if he should deal in rigour with them all, they should lose their heads.¹⁸

The first step James took to resolve this situation was to exercise his authority over his nominee. He sent back the earl of Mar, who had

attended him on his progress and was then with him in England. According to Calderwood, Mar arrived at Stirling on 12 May, two days after Anna’s miscarriage:

The Erle of Marr came from the King upon the 12th of May, with full commissioun to the Queene to goe to England. The Queene would not looke upon him, but desired to have the letters which were sent from the King. He refused, unlesse he gott presence to discharge his secreit commissioun. The Queene sent a letter with post to the King, the Erle of Marr did the like; wherupon the King sent the Duke of Lennox thither from Court.¹⁹

Anna, who might have been in bed in Mar’s castle at Stirling, would not allow him to have an audience. Before Anna’s “unfitness to remove” was reported to the English court from the North, James had to order the dispatch of the Duke of Lennox and the discharge of Mar from his hereditary post. The Venetian secretary, Scaramelli, reported on 18 May 1603 (28 May 1603 by Venetian dating): “On receipt of this disagreeable news . . . to-day the Duke of Lennox has left for the same destination [Scotland] to take what steps may be necessary” (*SPV*, 10:40). Following these decisions of James, a Scottish Privy Council was held in Stirling castle. On 23 May the Council recorded: “The Erle of Mars dischaarge of his keiping of the Prince. Warrant for delyverie of the Prince to the Duke of Lenox” (*PCS*, 6:571). In addition to these resolutions, according to Calderwood, the council “appointed so manie noblemen to attend upon her [the Queen]; of which number the Erle of Marr was not one, to pleasure the Queen. All parteis being contented, as seemed, the Erle of Marr tooke journey toward England immediatlie after.”²⁰ On 2 June, Lord Burghley, who had just arrived in York, said to Robert Cecil in his letter: “I hear her Majesty meaneth to be here sooner by much than I expected. Her Majesty, as my letter purporteth, will set forward as this day being the second of June, and to be at Berwick the fourth being Saturday next . . .”²¹ About two weeks behind schedule, Anna, accompanied by many nobles and Prince Henry, arrived at Berwick and received a royal welcome from the official delegation.²² According to Scaramelli, James originally “intended later on to bring the Prince in state to London as Prince of Wales” (*SVP*, 10:40). At the end of his progress, however, having reacted to letters from Anna “with disgust,” he was forced to give up his original plan and discharge Mar from his hereditary post. He gave “her leave to bring her son with her to England” (*SPV*, 10:43).²³

III

Prince Henry died in November, 1612. According to John Chamberlain's letter to Dudley Carlton, dated 12 November 1612, Henry died of "this ordinarie ague" that had "rained and raged almost all over England since the later end of sommer."²⁴ Chamberlain reported that Henry's illness took a sudden turn for the worse and his death was really unexpected:

My very goode Lord: When I was closing up my letter to you the last weeke, I understoode more of the Princes sicknes then I was willing to impart, for I knew yt could be no welcome newes any where, and I was in hope the world might amend: but going the next morning the fifth of November to heare the bishop of Ely preach at court (upon the 22 verse of the third chapter of the Lamentations) I found by the King and Quenes absence from the sermon, and by his manner of prayeng for him how the case stode. . . . I cannot learn that he had either speach or perfect memorie after Wensday night, but lay as yt were drawing on till Friday between eight and nine a clocke in the evening, that he departed. . . .The King when he saw no hope left went away on Friday morning to Tiballs, and the Quene removed the same day to Somerset House. His death was exceding grevous to them both, but specially to the King who takes yt with more impatience then was expected. . . .²⁵

Though Chamberlain observed thus, Henry's death was certainly a catastrophe for Anna. Anna's lasting grief would be suggested by her absence at Prince Charles's installation as Prince of Wales four years later: "The Quene wold not be present at the creation, lest she shold renew her grieffe by the memorie of the last Prince who runs still so much in some mens mind. . . ."²⁶

During the Christmas season of 1613-14, Anna certainly suffered great emotional hardship. Henry had gone. Anna had lost her important chance to consolidate her political power. On the other hand, after Robert Cecil's death in May 1612, James's political circle became closely-knit. James's new favourite, Robert Carr, was "created baron of Branspeth in Westmerland and earle of Somerset" in November 1613.²⁷ Within two months, on 26 December, Somerset got married to a daughter of James's Lord Chamberlain, the earl of Suffolk. Anna attended their wedding ceremony at White Hall, "beeing won and having promised to be present."²⁸ James was now firmly supported by his close allies, two Howards and his new favourite—the earl of

Northampton, his nephew, the earl of Suffolk, and Suffolk’s son-in-law, the newly created earl of Somerset, Robert Carr.

The startling ascendancy of James’s new Scottish favourite, Sir Robert Carr, originated in the death of a member of James’s political circle two years earlier, during the Christmas season when Henry’s *Oberon* was performed. According to the Venetian ambassador, Marc’ Antonio Correr, not only “a seat in the Council and a ribbon of the Garter” but also other important offices in the kingdom “are vacant” because of the death of the earl of Dunbar, “who was brought up with his Majesty and possessed his entire confidence”(SPV, 12:115). It was Sir Robert Carr, a groom of James’s bed chamber, who filled these political vacancies. Correr, reporting to the doge in April, observed: “After the death of the Earl of Dunbar, Robert Carr, also a Scot, a youth of a most modest nature, and always beloved by the King, has made such strides in his favour as it would seem that he alone is to dispose of everything”(SPV, 12:135). By the spring of the following year, 1612, Sir Robert Carr was not only induced into the English peerage as Viscount Rochester, and admitted to the Order of the Garter, but also sworn into the Privy Council.²⁹

As Viscount Rochester, Robert Carr, began to climb the ladder of advancement, Anna’s political activities were to be mentioned in courtly correspondences. Anna seemed to be in conflict with Rochester before Robert Cecil’s death of May 1612. Chamberlain reported to Carlton on 29 April: The “Quene is perfectly reconciled unto him [Rochester] and he hath don her goode offices.”³⁰ Prince Henry might have some bearing on these conflicts, since two months after this, Anna and Henry were mentioned as allied in opposition to Rochester. Viscount Fenton, James’s Captain of the Guard, in a letter to his cousin, the earl of Mar, the former guardian of Prince Henry now in Scotland, wrote: “Rotchester is exceiding great vith his Majestie, and if I shuld saye trewlye, greater then onye that ever I did see; kareyes it handsumlye, and begins to have a great deall of more temper; yet can he not find the rycht waye to pleis ather the Quein or the Prince.”³¹ In fact, Anna and Henry were involved in factional competition, intensified by the death of Cecil. Chamberlain wrote to Carleton about the behaviour of office seekers in June 1612. He added, “But the Quene and the Prince are earnest in Sir H. Wottons behalfe, and the Lord of Rochester is not willing after his late reconciliation to oppose himself, or stand in the breach against such assailants.”³² Anna, in conspiracy with Prince Henry, was standing in

“oppositional tension vis-à-vis” James’s new favourite, Carr, during the period prior to Henry’s sudden death.

IV

The earl of Somerset, Robert Carr, was deprived of all his offices and sent to the Tower before the Christmas season of 1615-16. Two Venetian ambassadors, Gregorio Barbarigo and Antonio Foscarini, reported to the doge (20 November 1615 by Venetian dating) as follows:

The very day on which we wrote our last, Lord Wotton went to the earl of Somerset, and in the king’s name demanded of him both the seals and the lord chamberlain’s staff. . . . Shortly afterwards the earl of Somerset was removed for examination before four judges, and subsequently to the Tower, where he yet remains.

(SPV, 14:65)

It was one of Anna’s allies, the earl of Pembroke, who was appointed as James’s Lord Chamberlain, “in place of the earl of Somerset” (SPV, 14:100). James had now a new favourite, Sir George Villiers. In January 1616, the Venetian ambassador, Gregorio Barbarigo, informed the doge of his rise: “In place of the earl of Worcester (*Uster*) to whom His Majesty has given the privy seal, he has made Sir [George] Villiers, Master of the Horse. . . at the present he is very high in His Majesty’s favour” (SPV, 14:104). Anna’s aversion against Somerset had never faded. Her power and shrewdness are remarkably demonstrated during the period prior to Somerset’s fall. She not only blocked the pardon of the declining Somerset, but also supported “a Northehamptounshyre man,” George Villiers, and succeeded to deploy him as James’s new favourite in place of Somerset.³³

Only half a year after Somerset’s Christmas wedding, in June 1614, one member of the allied triangle, Somerset’s great-uncle-in-law, the earl of Northampton died of “a swelling in his thigh which increasing daily.” According to Chamberlain’s letter to Carleton, dated June 30 1614, Northampton, who “so litle expected death,” considered Anna’s associates—the earl of Pembroke and Anna’s Lord Chamberlain, Pembroke’s uncle—as his enemies:

The day of his [Northampton’s] death or next before, he wrote a letter to the King . . . as likewise to the earle of Somerset, wherin he requested . . . that the earle of Pembroke and the Lord Lile [Lord Chamberlain, Robert Sidney] shold not have any of his offices,

because accounting them his enemies he wold not they shold triumphe over him when he was gon.³⁴

In the following month of July 1614, Suffolk was appointed to the late Northampton's office of the Treasurer, and Somerset to Suffolk's previous office of the Lord Chamberlain. Chamberlain's report on the appointments of these new offices revealed James's strong attachment to Somerset: "At the same time he [James] made the earle of Somerset Lord Chamberlain willing that no man shold marvayle that he bestowed a place so neere himself upon his frend, whom he loved above all men living."³⁵

Soon after the death of Northampton, Anna, anticipating reorganization at the center of James's political circle, attempted to induce James to appoint one of her associates, the earl of Pembroke, to his Lord Chamberlainship, "a place so neere himself." For Chamberlain, informing Carlton of Northampton's death, touched on Anna's activities: "Yt is now verely thought the Lord Chamberlain shalbe shortly made Lord Treasurer and Lord Somerset Chamberlain, yet the Quene doth pretend a promise for the earle of Pembroke."³⁶ Though Anna failed in attaining this ambition, she never lessened her assault upon James's political circle. In October 1615, the two Venetian ambassadors, Foscarini and Barbarigo, reported Anna backed the anti-Suffolk and Somerset members in the Privy Council: "New disputes have arisen between the Treasurer and the earl of Somerset with their backers on the one side, and on the other almost all the Council; to the latter side the queen also inclines" (*SPV*, 14:45).

Within a month of this report, Anna blocked the opportunity of the redemption of the declining Somerset, whom James "loved above all men living." According to the report of the two Venetian ambassadors, (7 November 1615 by Venetian dating), Somerset, already accused of "having poisoned a knight of high standing," was said to have "appropriated a considerable quantity of the Crown jewels." James accepted Somerset's petition. The Chancellor, however, "refused to affix" the great seal to the order. He was summoned to the Privy Council in James's presence along with Somerset. The Chancellor defended himself. Somerset pressed "his petition." Both were "on their knees." The two ambassadors described James's exercise of his authority and the unexpected ending:

While the rest of the Lords of the Council who were present were hanging on the king's lips, His Majesty said that he had loved Somerset, thinking him of good character, and he would continue

to do so. Then turning to the Chancellor and the others, he said that it was not in his power or in that of any of them to divert him from his purpose, but it rested with Somerset alone if he should not prove unworthy. He then commanded the Chancellor to affix the seal without making any reply, because he desired it, and commanded it by his royal authority, and so he passed to his own apartments. When this came to the queen's knowledge she immediately left her palace for the king's, and contrived to induce him to suspend the order to put the seal to the pardon, and it has never been affixed.

(SPV, 14:58)

The decisive element for understanding Anna's *subversive* power here would be that she could cancel James's exercise of "royal authority," which the Chancellor tried to do in vain. James could not redeem his own favourite even if he "desired."

Anna was also connected with the ascendancy of James's new favourite, George Villiers. According to the recollection of George Abbot, the archbishop of Canterbury, long after Anna's death, Villiers was knighted and appointed as a groom of James's bed chamber in the presence of Anna and Somerset:

King *James*, for many insolencies, grew weary of Somerset; and the Kingdom groaning under the Triumvirate of *Northampton*, *Suffolk*, and *Somerset*, (though *Northampton* soon after died) was glad to be rid of him. . . . We could have no way so good to effectuate that which was the common desire, as to bring in another in his room. . . . It was now observed, that the King began to cast his eye upon *George Villiers*, who was then Cup-bearer, and seemed a modest and courteous Youth. . . . In the end, upon importunity, Queen *Anne* condescended, and so pressed it with the King, that he assented thereunto: Which was so stricken while the Iron was hot, that in the Queen's Bed-chamber, the King Knighted him with the Rapier which the Prince did wear. And when the King gave order to swear him of the Bed-chamber, *Somerset*, who was near, importuned the King with a Message, that he might be onely sworn a Groom: But my self and others that were at the door, sent to her Majesty, that she would perfect her work, and cause him to be sworn a Gentleman of the Chamber.³⁷

Anna's action here was crucial at the very first moment of Villiers's ascendancy, since Villiers' chance for promotion had been blocked by one of Somerset's associates. Chamberlain informed Carleton of Somerset's interruption on 24 November 1614: "The fortune of Villers the new favorit seemes to be at a stand or at least not to go very fast

forward for when yt was expected he shold be made of the bed-chamber, one Carre a bastard kindsmen of the Lord Chamberlain is stept in and admitted to the place. . . .”³⁸ Later in 1618, one year before Queen Anna’s death, the former Venetian ambassador, Antonio Foscarini, mentioned the alliance of Anna and Villiers: “Since the fall of her enemy, the Earl of Somerset, Mr. Villiers has risen, supported by her and dependant upon her”(SPV, 15:393). Anna was at first indifferent to Villiers, but she pushed him forward, as Somerset’s opponent, in the very first stage of his advancement, and continued to support him ever after.³⁹

V

Queen Anna was a shrewd and strong-willed politician, and was constantly promoting her political power. She was so ambitious that she desired to be the queen of the queens. During the 1608-9 Christmas festivities, Anna plotted the deification of herself and refused to play a part in *The Masque of Queenes* (1608-9). She desired to be presented at the beginning of the performance:

The Glories of *Bel-anna* so well told,
 Queene of the Ocean; How that she, alone,
 Possesst all vertues, for wch, One by One,
 They were so fam’d; And, wanting then a head,
 To forme yt sweete, and gracious *Pyramede*,
 Wherin they sit, it being the soveraigne Place
 of all that *Palace*, and reserv’d to grace
 The worthiest *Queene*. . . .

(415-22)

Anna did not desire to dwell in “the House of Fame”(360) as one of the “worthy *Queenes*”(746). She desired to reign over them as the “worthiest *Queene*.” After the Christmas season of 1615-16, the ascendancy of Sir George Villiers, the future earl of Buckingham, was inversely proportional to Anna’s weakening health. Nonetheless, in Anna’s closing years, two years prior to her death in 1619, Anna’s political instrumentality and strong will were still reported in regard to the appointment of James’s Captain of the Guard.⁴⁰ “The serious business” of Queen Anna’s life was this constant building of a solid reputation for herself, that is, the “Glories” of herself, who reigned at “the soveraigne Place” in “the House of Fame.”

Notes

- ¹ As Ben Jonson indicates in his printed text of *The Masque of Queenes*, the Queen identifies herself not with “Ann” but with her native Danish proper name “Anna”: “The Name of BeL-ANNA I devis’d to honor hers proper, by; adding, to it, the attribute of Fayre”(663-64). As for her continual native identification, see her signatures in her letters written in the later years to Sir George Villiers in *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History; Including Numerous Royal Letters: From Autographs in the British Museum, and One or Two Other Collections*, ed. Henry Ellis, vol. 3 (1824; New York: AMS P, 1970) 100-01. The quotations from Jonson’s texts refer to *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, vol. 7 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1941) with line numbers within parentheses.
- ² Adolphus W. Ward, “Anne of Denmark,” *The Dictionary of National Biography Founded in 1882 by George Smith*, vol.1 (1917; London: Oxford UP, 1959-60) 441.
- ³ Ward, “Anne of Denmark,” *DNB*, 1:435.
- ⁴ Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance* (1986; London: Pimlico, 2000) 10.
- ⁵ Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales*, 3,10.
- ⁶ Ward, “Anne of Denmark,” *DNB*, 1:436.
- ⁷ Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales*, 10. Though Anna is known as a promoter of the masque, she ceased her performances in the first half of her English reign. She presented only six masques, five Christmas performances out of sixteen seasons and Henry’s installation masque: *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1603-4); *The Masque of Blacknesse*(1604-5); *The Masque of Beautie*(1607-8); *The Masque of Queenes*(1608-9); *Tethys Festival* (1610); *Love Freed From Ignorance and Folly*(1610-11). Anna’s masques are extensively examined in the traditional criticism. This paper examines the texts as the expression of the promoter’s desires. As for the analysis of the texts as “the development of the organic form,” see Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (1965; New York: Columbia UP, 1981). Orgel, in his further study, considers the symbolism of the text as “the expression of the monarch’s will” in *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (1975; Berkeley: U of California P, 1991). Goldberg, developing Orgel’s political analysis, examines “the ideological function” of the text. See Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (1983; Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989).
- ⁸ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (1993; Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994) 15.
- ⁹ *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, ed. Horatio F. Brown, vol. 11 (1904; Nendeln: Kraus-Thompson, 1970) 86. Hereafter cited as *SPV*.
- ¹⁰ Within parentheses after the title of the masque are indicated the Christmas season of the performance with New Style.
- ¹¹ ‘A Short Account of the Masque Made by the Prince of Wales’ in ‘Papers of

- William Trumbull the Elder 1611-12.’ Quoted from *Jonson* 10: 522-23.
- ¹² For Mar’s appointment, see *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots 1547-1603*, ed. Annie I. Cameron, vol. 11 (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1936) 280.
- ¹³ *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquess of Salisbury, presented at Hatfield House, Herfordshire*, ed. M. S. Giuseppi, vol. 15 (London: HMSO, 1930) 90. Hereafter cited as *Salisbury MSS*. For Anna’s scheduled dates of her progress, see Robert Cecil’s letter to the Council in April, *Salisbury MSS*, 15:53.
- ¹⁴ *Salisbury MSS*, 15:90.
- ¹⁵ *Original Letters*, 3:70.
- ¹⁶ As for the members of the delegation and their departure date, see Edmonde Howes, *The Annales, or Generall Chronicle of England, begun first by maister John Stow, and after him continued and augmented with matters forreyne, and domestique, auncient and moderne, unto the ende of this present yeere 1614* (London, 1614) 823.
- ¹⁷ David Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, vol.6, 230-31. Quoted from *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, ed. David Masson, vol. 6 (Edinburgh: H. M. Register House, 1884) 571, n.1. Parenthetical reference is editor’s. Hereafter cited as *PCS*.
- ¹⁸ *Salisbury MSS*, 15:116.
- ¹⁹ Calderwood, in *PCS* 6:571, n.1.
- ²⁰ Calderwood, in *PCS* 6:571-2,n.1.
- ²¹ *Salisbury MSS*, 15:118-19.
- ²² Anna arrived at Berwick by 6 June, 1603. As for the dates of her progress from Berwick to York, see *Salisbury MSS*, 15:126.
- ²³ As for the dates of James’s progress south, see “The True Narration of the Entertainment of his Royal Majestie” in *Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First, His Royal Consort, Family, and Court*, ed. John Nichols, vol.1 (1828; New York: AMS P, n.d.) 53-120.
- ²⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, vol. 1 (1939; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1962) 388.
- ²⁵ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:388-90.
- ²⁶ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 2:32.
- ²⁷ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:485.
- ²⁸ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:485.
- ²⁹ As for the creation of Carr as the Viscount Rochester, and his induction to the Knighthood of the Garter, see *SPV*, 12:135-36, 142. As for his admission to the Privy Council, see *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:346.
- ³⁰ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:346.
- ³¹ *Supplementary Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar & Kellie preserved at Alloa House, Clackmannanshire*, ed. Henry Paton, (London: HMSO, 1930) 41. Hereafter cited *Mar and Kellie*.
- ³² *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:359-60.
- ³³ *Mar and Kellie*, 56.
- ³⁴ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:541-2.
- ³⁵ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:548.
- ³⁶ *Letters of Chamberlain*, McClure, 1:542.

- ³⁷ John Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State*, (1659; Westmead: Gregg International, 1969) 456-57.
- ³⁸ McClure, *Letters of Chamberlain*, 1:559.
- ³⁹ Leeds Barroll examines the reflection of Anna's political initiative in this period in his reading of the 1615-16 season performance, *The Golden Age Restored*. See Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England: A Cultural Biography* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2001) 148-51.
- ⁴⁰ In 1617, Anna deployed Sir Henry Rich, a son of her favourite Penelope Rich, as James's Captain of the Guard, and blocked the appointment of William Cecil, Robert Cecil's son. Cecil missed the post even if he received promising responses from James and the earl of Buckingham, George Villiers. As for Anna's blockade and strong enmity toward William Cecil, see his letter to Buckingham in *Salisbury MSS*, 22:54-55.

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2004 : Traversées de Shakespeare

Denis Devienne

*Nuages, oui,
L'un à l'autre, navires à l'arrivée
Dans un rapport de musique. Il me semble, parfois,
Que la nécessité se métamorphose
Comme à la fin du Conte d'hiver
Quand chacun reconnaît chacun, quand on apprend
De niveau en niveau dans la lumière
Que ceux qu'avaient jetés l'orgueil, le doute
De contrées en contrées dans le dire obscur
Se retrouvent, se savent. Parole en cet instant
Leur silence ; et silence leurs quelques mots
On ne sait si de joie ou de douleur*

Yves Bonnefoy.- *Dans le leurre du seuil* (Mercure de France, 1975.-
repris chez Gallimard en coll. Poésie, sous le titre : *Poèmes*, p.300).



A l'heure où paraissent, autour de Shakespeare, deux nouvelles biographies (celle de Wilson et celle de Greenblatt) ainsi que la traduction anglaise de la plupart des essais d'Yves Bonnefoy sur le sujet, voici que paraît en français le roman avec lequel John Updike (né en Pennsylvanie en 1932) a choisi, en 2000, d'aborder *Hamlet* dans une tradition apparemment toute anglo-saxonne.

On connaît la boutade préférée des étudiants d'Oxford : Shakespeare n'a jamais existé, c'est un autre homme, vivant à la même époque et portant le même nom, qui a écrit toutes ses pièces. John Updike procède à l'inverse : Hamlet n'est pas du théâtre, c'est un homme qui a vécu dans un autre temps que sous la reine Elisabeth et dans un Danemark de réalité. Autant dire : un bon personnage-ou plutôt un bon sujet- de roman.

Ce n'est pas exactement d'Hamlet, en effet, que *Gertrude et Claudius* raconte l'histoire. Updike raconte principalement la vie de la

mère, du père et de l'oncle du prince danois. Ces trois personnages, ainsi que d'autres protagonistes de la pièce, voient, comme dans un roman de Queneau, leur nom changer avec chaque nouvelle partie du livre, qui en contient trois. Gerutha devient Geruthe puis Gertrude, comme Amleth, Hamblet puis Hamlet, par exemple. Updike s'amuse, oui, mais surtout il paie ses dettes aux trois sources principales de son histoire en respectant l'orthographe propre. Le romancier va puiser directement dans les sources dont Shakespeare s'inspira sans doute indirectement, par le biais d'une pièce perdue de Thomas Kyd. Et surtout, au fur et à mesure que le roman avance, les sources utilisées sont moins anciennes pour illustrer le changement central qui sert de cadre au roman : le passage de l'immuable monde nordique au doute d'une nouvelle ère, cosmopolite, européenne ou, du moins, anglaise.

Ce doute, c'est Claudius qui l'immisce au sein du couple royal. Feng-Claudius -une superbe composition du romancier-, est l'oncle d'Hamlet et ce frère cadet du roi revient auréolé d'images et d'objets rapportés de Byzance et de Venise, de poésie *hérétique* de troubadours. Mais ce doute provient aussi de la christianisation d'un paysage où l'Homme d'avant (le roi viking Hordenvile et tous les ancêtres -venus du Jütland, du Seeland, wendes, scandes- d'Hamlet) acceptait la guerre, les brumes, la violence, et l'ennui. Dans des scènes de repas, de chevauchées, de fauconnerie, le talent d'Updike dépeint ce monde en transition, souvent proche, dans cette très belle traduction française, des *Abbés* de Pierre Michon. Le troisième facteur de ce doute, c'est le jeune Hamlet qui l'importe. Hamlet a appris le scepticisme à Wittenberg. Il est vrai que tout ne vient pas de l'étranger dans ce scepticisme fortement lié au goût précoce du théâtre chez Hamlet enfant: *Etre sincère puis ne pas l'être, puis l'être sans l'être- de tels revirements le fascinent*, dit Corambus-Polonius (p.51). Enfin, les derniers des briseurs de certitude, ce sont les impératifs de l'amour, tels que les romans courtois que lit Gertrude, les définissent.

Pour peindre cette genèse, cette pré-histoire d'Hamlet, Updike fait aussi nombre d'allusions à l'avenir du jeune homme : c'est à dire à Shakespeare.

Outre à *Hamlet*-même, le roman prend leurs couleurs à d'autres pièces.

Le début, tout en légèreté, expose ainsi une Gerutha-Gertrude en tous points semblables à la Katherine de la *Mégère apprivoisée* et ne trouvant son mari à son goût qu'après qu'il lui en a rebattu. Une morale misogyne ?

De même, le leitmotiv du courroux du roi peut avoir été emprunté à Lear ou au Leontes du *Conte d'hiver*. La deuxième partie bâtit, à travers divers lieux (Elseneur et un manoir secret avec sa treille de vigne) et avec divers comparses pittoresques, un dispositif romanesque qui hérite de *Roméo et Juliette* et d'*Othello*.

C'est cependant l'Hamlet d'avant *Hamlet* qui naît dans ce joli roman. Avant *Hamlet* et ses « problèmes », exposés en 1920 par T.S. Eliot dans un des essais fondateurs de la critique moderne. Avant que la psychanalyse ne s'empare du personnage. Si le personnage d'Hamlet est devenu un mythe, c'est que Shakespeare lui a donné assez de force pour retrouver vie dans la somme de ses diverses versions. Le roman d'Updike offre donc un de ces avatars.

Chronique aux dialogues très vivants, parfois un peu crue ou cruelle, *Gertrude et Claudius* a un grand devancier: Oscar Wilde, qui bâtit une nouvelle géniale sur le dédicataire mystérieux des *Sonnets* de Shakespeare. Sauf que Wilde cherchait à faire mystère la vie, là où Updike cherche à rendre vivant un mystère littéraire.

Quel que soit l'éclat des flambeaux de l'hyménée, on épouse aussi la part d'ombre de son compagnon, écrit Updike (p. 212). Une manière de parler de la vie conjugale comme du mariage des Histoires anciennes avec leurs fictions modernes.

Autre exemple d'échanges, traductions ou tractations transatlantiques à travers le temps. Eloignons-nous apparemment de Shakespeare.

Au générique de fin du dernier film de Wolfgang Petersen, *Troy* (*Troie*), on lit que le film « s'inspire librement de l'*Illiade* d'Homère. »

L'auteur du scénario de cette adaptation est l'étonnant David Benioff, le jeune scénariste (et l'auteur du roman que le film adapte) de *La Vingt-Cinquième Heure*, le puissant film de Spike Lee. Un auteur dont l'univers, new-yorkais, amer et lyrique, semble à mille lieues de celui d'Homère. Mais à au moins autant de distance de celui de Wolfgang Petersen, le réalisateur de *Das Boot*, ou plus récemment de *Dans la ligne de mire*, avec Clint Eastwood et de *Air Force One*, deux films d'action à suspense, l'un pauvre, l'autre lamentable, sur la sécurité du président des Etats-Unis.

Du mythe grec, ne reste qu'un des aspects, s'il en eut jamais un

autre. Mythe non plus parce que l'on nous raconte une histoire à vocation sacrée et fondant une culture, ou une société, dans sa vérité exemplaire- mais mythe en tant qu'histoire qui existe dans ses diverses versions répétées et qui est mythe parce qu'elle est la somme de ces versions. Voire de ces Histoires. En effet, le parti pris de situer l'action précisément *en 3200* avant Jésus Christ, d'ôter toute présence visible des dieux et de présenter Achille, dans le prologue, comme « celui qu'on considère comme le plus grand guerrier de tous les temps. », ce parti pris donne l'idée que nous sommes dans *l'Histoire*. Et après tout, pourquoi pas ? (si tant est que l'on résiste à la tentation d'une représentation qui souhaite nous convaincre par un réalisme aussi douteux qu'outrancier, comme un autre film récent, *la Passion du Christ*, de Mel Gibson, s'y essaie non sans contradictions.)

Adapter librement les faits relatés par Homère dans une Histoire humaine mais assez lyrique. Le film de Petersen se tient à ce cahier de charges avec une certaine réussite. La mer couverte de navires, l'armée troyenne dans la nuit, les murailles de Troie (filmées à Mexico ou à Malte) et rappelant les grandes scènes babyloniennes de *l'Intolérance* de Griffith, ou les scènes de combat d'Achille, avec des effets spéciaux (ralentis, échos, chorégraphie souple et alambiquée) inspirées sans ridicule du cinéma chinois, hong-kongais ou taiwanais, tout cela confère au film une certaine aura. On n'est plus dans le péplum même si on est à Hollywood.

Le changement central est ailleurs : dans la caractérisation des personnages. Agamemnon et Achille en particulier. Dans l'importance donnée à tel ou tel autre personnage. Briseis, en l'occurrence.

Certes le choix des comédiens est plus qu'approprié (et c'est l'un des privilèges en même temps qu'une des limites d'Hollywood, que d'avoir une palette aussi spécialisée de comédiens) mais approprié *aux choix du scénario*. Ce sont donc ceux-ci qui peuvent surprendre. Brian Cox en Agamemnon cauteleux, avide et narquois, est aussi parfait que Brad Pitt en Achille rebelle splendide mais obéissant à des intérêts qui lui sont étrangers.

Et de ces choix, deux commentaires.

Le premier est purement conjoncturel. En tant de « guerre

américaine », un film de guerre américain n'est jamais innocent ou neutre, sans doute. Que dire de celui-ci ? La guerre de Troie est présentée comme injuste et comme une manipulation de taille. Agamemnon est, selon les mots d'Achille, dans le film, *un roi de loin bien moins grand que (Priam)*. Troie donne d'ailleurs son titre au film de façon bien plus directe que chez Homère.

Ceci dit, toujours dans la bouche d'Achille, ce sont lui et ses Myrmidons, obscurs soldats sacrifiés, qui gagneront par leur combat, l'immortalité. Film sur la guerre, sur Troie, sur toutes les guerres, sur toutes les guerres américaines ? Sans position ou ambigu ?

Le deuxième commentaire porte sur les sources du scénariste. David Benioff a lu Homère. Mais le spécialiste en littérature qu'on apprend qu'il est, ne s'est-il pas aussi laissé guider par des sources plus anglaises ?

Tout d'abord, Hélène de Troie. Elle est peut-être pour la littérature anglaise autre chose que pour Homère ou que pour nous pour qui elle est beauté à peine humaine, certes, mais aussi objet des vicissitudes du temps et des débats de la morale. Pour les Elisabéthains, - Christopher Marlowe en particulier, Shakespeare, également - Hélène de Troie est à la fois l'infini « enclos » dans un être et l'expansion infinie du désir : au-delà des mers, des murailles. (On peut lire un article de Marjorie Garber sur ce sujet dans *Two Renaissance Mythmakers.-Selected papers from the English Institute 1975-1976* : « *Infinite Riches in a little room : Closure and enclosure in Marlowe* »)

Et c'est bien ainsi que Petersen filme l'actrice allemande qui joue Hélène: sous le bras de son mari dans la prison de ses bijoux, derrière la lourde barre de sa chambre-geôle, dans une cale sous un voile, sous un dais derrière les hautes murailles de Troie, parlant peu. Peut-être n'est-ce là que la suggestion d'un interdit ou d'un inaccessible mais l'alternance de ces plans avec ceux de la mer sans fin ou de la foule des soldats peut nous laisser rêver à Marlowe.

Cette double capacité à être à la fois présence *et* image fait peut-être qu'Hélène revienne dans les livres d'Yves Bonnefoy, et c'est peut-être par la médiation d'Hélène que son travail de traducteur de Shakespeare resurgit dans ses poèmes.

Car c'est bien de Shakespeare, semble-t-il, qu'il s'agit.

De 1601 ou 1602, vraisemblablement, date sa pièce *Troilus et Cressida*, inspirée d'un épisode de *L'Iliade* développé auparavant par

Boccace puis par Chaucer. Pourquoi l'évoquer ?

D'abord à cause de Briseïs, la Troyenne consacrée à Apollon, puis captive des Grecs. Elle n'apparaît pas chez Shakespeare mais, comme Troïlus (Troïlos, fils de Priam lui aussi) et Cressida (Chryseïs, la Troyenne, elle aussi captive des Grecs), elle est mise par l'adaptation au centre même de l'action. Elle est même le moteur de la métamorphose d'Achille dans le film.

Ce parallélisme seul suffirait pour éclairer le travail du scénario. Mais, sans vouloir comparer Shakespeare avec Wolfgang Petersen, on notera, qu'Ulysse a pour l'un comme pour l'autre un rôle-clef, bien que très différent, dans la présentation d'Achille notamment. Sa voix ouvre et ferme le film. Dans *Troïlus et Cressida*, Shakespeare lui donne la longue tirade sur la *crise du degré* (I, 3, tirade que René Girard analyse longuement dans *Shakespeare : les Feux de l'envie*) et la tirade sur la puissance d'oubli ou d'immortalité, que le temps seul détient (III,3).

En outre, chez Shakespeare, particulièrement, Ajax est une bête. Petersen lui donne le même rôle, même s'il le rend sympathique.

Enfin, encore comme *Troïlus et Cressida* dans son ensemble, le film baigne par moments dans une sombre angoisse sexuelle qui n'est pas seulement liée à la jalousie de Ménélas. A Achille aussi, même si ce n'est pas dans ses rapports avec Patrocle, *contrairement* à la pièce de 1602. Associées à cette angoisse, dans le film comme dans la pièce, sont deux scènes, l'une de viol collectif avorté, l'autre de meurtre collectif avéré (et dont le rapport donnerait à René Girard l'occasion de maints commentaires indéniables).

Les dieux sont absents dans *Troïlus et Cressida* aussi et ces rapprochements ne tiennent peut-être pas qu'à la richesse de *L'Illiade*. Outre qu'il s'agit là de la reprise du thème de la justice humaine dans son lien trouble avec la vengeance personnelle, du rapport de la guerre et du meurtre, c'est peut-être un indice que Benioff signe ici son adaptation avec un cachet très anglais.

Pour nous amender alors, et éviter que par deux fois ne soit renouvelé le rapt d'Hélène, on dira que ce film, discutable mais efficace, a le mérite, qu'il faut accorder au cinéma américain plus souvent qu'on ne le fait, de renouer avec une ou avec plusieurs œuvres anciennes. A nous de les relire.

Ulysse, puisque c'est lui, et non Hélène, qui, avec Enée, est, dans la logique du film de Petersen, l'avenir de *L'Illiade*-, l'Ulysse de Shakespeare (*Troïlus et Cressida*, I,3), aura le dernier mot, pour nous

excuser d'avoir tout mélangé:

*Et quand le général n'est pas comme la ruche
De qui les butineurs assurent tous l'entretien,
Quel miel doit-on attendre ? L'ordre étant escamoté,
Le plus méprisable fait admirer son masque.*



- John UPDIKE.- *Gertrude et Claudius*.- Trad. de l'anglais par Michèle Albaret-Maatsch.- Seuil, 2004.- 232 p.
- Yves BONNEFOY.- *Shakespeare and the French Poet*.- Chicago U.P., 2004.-294 p. Trad. du français et présenté par John Naughton.
- *Troy*.- réalisé par Wolfgang Petersen.- Etats-Unis , Warner Bros, 2004.- 2 heures 40.



A Shakesperean year over the Atlantic

*Clouds, indeed,
One to the other, ships on term
Musically connected. Sometimes it seems to me
That necessity undergoes metamorphoses
Like at the end of the Winter's Tale
When all are truly known by all, when one finds out
From level to level into the light
That those whose pride or doubt had cast
From faraway land to faraway land into phrasing obscure,
Meet again, aware again. Word at this moment
Is their silence ; and silence the little they say
One knows not whether of joy or woe*

Yves BONNEFOY.-*In theThreshold's Lure* (1975)



2004 was a Shakesperean year across the Atlantic. On both sides. In France, American John Updike's 2000 novel came out in an elegant translation by Michèle Albaret-Maatsch. *Gertrude and Claudius* is a witty (what else would we expect?) book based upon Hamlet's history different versions. In America, the Chicago U. Press published a compilation of Yves Bonnefoy's essays upon Shakespeare's plays and

poems. Often tipped for the Nobel prize, Yves Bonnefoy comments on Shakespeare in a distinctly original perspective, one which has been his own for half a century, as one of the major French translators of our times: beyond words, rhetoric and fiction, what is the inner truth? So far, nothing new or so it seems.

However, both Updike's novel and Bonnefoy's essays and previously unpublished interview have one thing in common. They take nothing for granted. Their Shakespeare, if only one, lives away from ideologies and thought fashions in our time.

Updike discovers a humorous and powerful story of real Scandinavians confused by their changing times: new religion, new ideas. These ideas could be those imported from Wittenberg by a long-time student first named Amleth, then Hamlet, and eventually Hamlet. Characters' names in this book indeed change according to the chapters, as in some of Raymond Queneau's fiction. Thus did Updike underline the sources he used both with their however relative historicity. But those new ideas turning Denmark upside down are in fact mainly Claudius'. This tremendous character, so far almost noticeable and noticed, could take his place among the novelist's best achievements. Claudius, the European, keen on heretic troubadour poetry, hawks, travels (to Byzantium or Venice) and maybe love. Claudius embodies the old new world. And Gertrude the gullible or bold (or both) novel reader.

Thanks to its translation, this old Scandinavian world on the edge is livingly pictured for the French reader. The fog, the wilderness, the silence and the somewhat animal background of the story suggest that the translator might have taken some rhythms and colours from French novelist Pierre Michon's praised *Abbés (Monks)*, a book published in France by Verdier (2002).

Updike draws Hamlet back to his own time and Hamlet is certainly not easy to draw back there. Translation or not translation? That might be the question. Yves Bonnefoy would perhaps qualify that conclusion. His version of *Hamlet*, the one Patrice Chéreau used for his now classic directing of the play in Nanterre some fifteen years ago, is of course much more faithful than Updike's. However, so deep is Bonnefoy's quest for hidden though simple truths, that some of his choices as a translator were indeed criticized or labelled as adaptations.

Bonnefoy is certainly the most revered poet in France today and strange it is that his poems have apparently borrowed little from

Shakespeare, compared to what they owe to other poets (such as Yeats, whom he has also (but so much less) translated, or Jouve (another Shakespeare translator) or Dante). American critics could easily demonstrate how Bonnefoy's views are closer to the Victorian or Romantic Shakespearean Historiography than to theirs (meaning our times'). Some could or will do so. I would rather suggest that Japanese readers accept both sides of the problem (which is not only Hamlet's any more). On the one hand, of course American critics of our time did give fresh impulse to European Shakespearean studies by strongly setting forth social and historical backgrounds, for instance. On the other hand, American scholars should find interesting if not revealing scopes in Bonnefoy's claims or discoveries: art competing with nature, philosophy struggling with its own embodiment of words, beauty seeking knowledge and maybe deluding it. The poetical search, in Bonnefoy's words, for the *transient* and *unshown* experience of facing *presences*, which are the words' truth. These are the backgrounds that the French poet likes to illuminate in plays rather less familiar to readers in France such as *The Winter's Tale* or *Anthony and Cleopatra* for instance but also in plays they know more, or so it seems, like *Othello*, *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*.

Far from the Atlantic, let us hope that Japanese Shakespeare lovers can sail with this double compass: the reality of Hamlet as a man translated into fiction in time again by an American novelist, and the fictions invented by scholars made real again out of time by a French translator.

Another example of European texts in American versions brings us to Shakespeare again.

It's German Wolfgang Petersen's recent Hollywood film: *Troy*.

The film, quite an achievement in its way, had the opportunity to use a major asset in American filmmaking: its crowd of actors fit for any given character. However, there are many striking features in screenwriter David Benioff's brilliant and faithful adaptation of Homer's *Iliad* and what Petersen makes of it.

First, the way Helen –a character so important for Marlowe, an image so often used in Elizabethans' and Jacobean's times, and such in Yves Bonnefoy's poems - is filmed.

Second, two collective rape/murder scenes.

Third, the focusing on a rather underrated female character

(Briseis).

These draw parallels with Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. Other links could be the climatic part devoted to Ulysses and the deeply sexual concern at stake through power struggle and obscure envy. One explanation for this not so odd (and not so) hidden reference to Shakespeare might be found in René Girard's scapegoat theory of human desire. Girard indeed comments on the play extensively in *Shakespeare: The Fires of Envy*.

Benioff, who studied English and Irish Literature before working in Hollywood, may simply have figured it out himself by reading Shakespeare's play or its potential sources (the translation of Homer by Chapman or Hall, Boccaccio, Chaucer, stories of Troy by Caxton or Lydgate, among many).

Whether Shakespeare's play is a secondary or primary source for Benioff is not the point. Or rather both would be fine to prove that, along with Wilson's and Greenblatt's biographies, there was many a voyage across Shakespeare last year.

Creativity in William Blake: Definite Vision-Inducing Agents

Catalin Ghita

1. Introduction

My study is centred on an explicit analysis of Blake's creativity. More specifically, I envisage certain aspects of this theme which have been approached only sporadically. In my interpretation, vision is induced by a number of agents, which fall into two main classes or categories. Thus, one may speak of 'indefinite agents,' i.e. phenomena which lack a clear ontological status and can be best referred to as 'states' (imagination, inspiration), and of 'definite agents,' i.e. phenomena which ontologically acquire an autonomous status and can be best referred to as 'beings' (God, angels and devils, saints and prophets, spirits of deceased persons, and the Muses). Since I intend to deal with the former elsewhere,¹ I shall now focus my critical attention on the latter.

All these factors are scientifically valid so long as one postulates Blake's sanity. There is not a shadow of doubt that the artist's contemporaries, even the most benign and tolerant of them, regarded him as a lunatic. His mental tribulations were the only factor which could account for his strange social behaviour and passionate arguments. Nowadays, however, hardly anyone bothers about this erstwhile inflammatory issue.² Blake was in the possession of a rich, exquisite psyche, which allowed him to explore regions never dreamt of. Therefore, Brenda S. Webster's assertion, that 'critics in their efforts to bridge the distance between Blake and his reader and get as far away as possible from the idea that he was mad may have become rather too Blakean' (2), is rather strange and confusing. Not only does it fail to offer a valuation of the numerous critical efforts towards Blake's 'rehabilitation,' but it enhances our legitimate doubts about an extensive and exclusively psychological approach to the artist's work. The following sentence avails nothing in persuading an increasingly cir-

cumspect reader: ‘There is a tendency to accept his prophetic assertions at face value and submit to his obscurities as rightfully imposed tests of one’s worthiness as a reader’ (2). But it is for this reason that any approach to Blake’s work is desirable; ironically, it is precisely for the same reason that Brenda S. Webster takes pains to clarify what she believes to be a challenging conundrum.

2. The Problematic of Blake’s Insanity

According to David Morse, the inevitable clash between Blake and his contemporaries arises from the former’s incapacity to adjust himself and his demeanour to the harsh rules of a bourgeois society. The predictable outcome is the poet’s banishment from active public life, and, eventually, his financial demise. Morse argues that art is a *sui generis* form of industry, which ensures a financial, if not a social, contract, the beneficiaries being the body politic, on the one hand, and the artist, on the other. If the terms of both parties are not met, the most powerful imposes its will on the weaker — Blake is dubbed ‘an unfortunate lunatic.’

Many of Blake’s problems as an artist arose from his failure or refusal to see that genius alone was not enough; it was requisite that he should act in conformity with the notion of how a society painter should behave and furnish society with appropriate artistic services. Art is one of the service industries. In the Romantic period the writer and artist become a perennial source of embarrassment: they draw attention to themselves in ways that are unseemly; they insist on their genius and on the uniqueness of their vision in a way which, if it does not smack of self-advertisement, appears incongruous, disproportionate, not to say mad. . . .
(229)

A slightly different approach to the theme would posit the idea of insanity as a cunning invention of Blake’s own, as this tended to become a behavioural *topos* in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, a hallmark of distinction between the artists, forced to inhabit a bourgeois milieu, and the philistines: ‘Blake exploited rumors about his madness in order to insist on the importance of mental reality and of an individual imaginative perspective’ (Dabundo 288). Moreover, questioning the idea of ‘madness’ in the eighteenth century literary milieu, Damon points out that, at the time, ‘it was little more than “Enthusiasm”’ (*William Blake* 207). After carefully examining all the available data which make up the case of Blake’s virtual

lunacy, Damon draws the conclusion that the artist's sanity is a fact proved by the self-conscious character of all his acts: 'By the Law's rule-of-thumb definition, Blake was legally sane, since he always was entirely conscious of the nature and significance of his acts' (*William Blake* 210). It is Damon's opinion that, once a critic has labelled Blake 'lunatic,' he must so label all visionaries (cf. *William Blake* 211). All things considered, though, Damon's firm belief in the metaphorical consequences of Blake's strange demeanour underlines a positivistic attitude towards the theory and practice of artistic creation, one that fails to acknowledge the capital role played by the obscure forces of various vision-inducing agents.

As a matter of fact, some of Blake's contemporaries are rather firm in their belief that the artist is mad. Lady Hesketh writes, in a letter to Johnny Johnson (31 July 1805), that she does not doubt 'he [Blake] will poison him [Hayley] in his Turret or set fire to all his papers, & poor Hayley will consume in his own Fires' (Bentley, Jr. 40). Nonetheless, in an epistle to Robert Southey (27 April 1830), Caroline Bowles expresses a somewhat milder opinion on the subject, adding a tone of concession: 'Mad though he might be, he was gifted and good, and a most happy being' (Bentley, Jr. 40). Robert Southey, just like William Wordsworth (who is far more interested in Blake's madness than in Byron's sanity), takes the former's insanity for a fact, but finds it at once fascinating and sorrowful. In an emotional response to Caroline Bowles (8 May 1830), he depicts the artist as a unfortunate *vates*, ignorant of his own mental distress:

Much as he is to be admired, he was at the time so evidently insane, that the predominant feeling in conversing with him, or even looking at him, could only be sorrow and compassion. His wife partook of his insanity . . . You could not have delighted in him — his madness was too evident, too fearful. It gave his eyes an expression such as you would expect to see in one who was possessed

(Bentley, Jr. 40-41).

The list of the people who deemed Blake insane comprises illustrious, as well as obscure, names (the Swiss-born painter David Fuseli; Blake's patron, William Hayley; Dr Benjamin Heath Malkin; a sneering columnist, Robert Hunt . . .). However, I must stress the idea that quite a few contemporaries, such as James Ward, Seymour Kirkup,³ John Linnell,⁴ and Samuel Palmer,⁵ boldly raise their voices and testi-

fy to the artist's sanity. Finally, although important for our topic, the point *per se* is so intricate, that no conclusive proof can be produced either *pro* or *contra*. Since he can be considered 'legally sane' and was evidently capable of sustained, self-conscious, purposeful creative work, I regard it as only fair that his œuvre be granted the tribute of a valid, systematic approach.⁶

3. Definite Vision-Inducing Agents

Unlike the indefinite vision-inducing agents, the definite ones number among themselves a series of explicit and, to a certain extent, determinate factors. The definite agents display a clear and independent, if mystical and, from a perceptive viewpoint, subjective, identity, and can be best referred to as 'beings.' This supernatural class includes God, angels, demons, saints, prophets, various spirits, and the Muses. Generally, the visionary self's attention is arrested by the potent presence of such entities and can do nothing but obey the latter's aesthetic command. I have divided these instances into five main subcategories, which I shall analyze accordingly.

3.1. God

The supreme being seldom, if ever, manifests itself, but its revelation is one of the most important, even capital, stimulants of prophetic creativity. The influence exerted by the absolute spirit is not only poetic, but also gnoseological and ethical in its contents. The ordinary human being lacks the appropriate instruments which may enable him to acknowledge properly the presence of God, and distinguish the latter from his messengers. Blake, however, never claims to have been in such a serious predicament, and, moreover, insists in *Annotations to 'An Apology for the Bible' by R. Watson*, that the munificent Creator has never failed to communicate with his creations: 'It is strange that God should speak to man formerly & not now. because it is not true . . .' (E 615).⁷ The ability to visit mentally God's celestial abode is considered, in *Annotations to 'The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds'*, the *sine qua non* of the creative process in general: 'The Man who never in his Mind & Thoughts travel'd to Heaven Is No Artist' (E 647). Nevertheless, in *Annotations to Lavater's 'Aphorisms on Man'*, Blake seems to believe that God cannot be perceived *in se*, and that any description based on an act which springs from the sensorium is suffused with anthropomorphic traits: 'it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth' (E 600). Briefly, this means that the

visionary senses the presence of God in the shape of man, for, in truth, God eludes form in the basic sense of the word. Consequently, all pictorial reproductions of divine visions show God as a man, but the chief reason lies in the artist's being true to the Biblical creed: God created man in his own image. In point of fact, Blake writes in *Annotations to Swedenborg's 'Divine Love and Divine Wisdom:'* 'But God is a man not because he is so perciev'd by man but because he is the creator of man' (E 603).⁸

Blake explicitly states that it is God from whom all visionary creations originate, including his own *magnus opus*, *Jerusalem*. As a plain recipient of a divine message, the creative self cannot acknowledge the possession of any personal merits; his sole ontological purpose is to preserve the *arcana caelestia*, if I may use Swedenborg's syntagm.⁹ Moreover, in his Hebraic plea, the poet does not hesitate to mock implicitly the Platonic myth of the god Theuth (Thoth), inventor of writing:

Reader! [*lover*] of books! [*lover*] of heaven,
And of that God from whom [*all books are given*],
Who in mysterious Sinais awful cave
To Man the wond'rous art of writing gave,
Again he speaks in thunder and in fire!
Thunder of Thought, & flames of fierce desire:
Even from the depths of Hell his voice I hear,
Within the unfathomd caverns of my Ear.

(E 145)

In this sense, Blake's opinion is quite consistent with that formulated by Xenophanes. The Greek poet and philosopher extols the merits of the Homeric poetry, written under the influence of 'divine influences' (*phusis theazousa*). Additionally, the work produced under the guidance of the godly voice is innately endowed with supreme beauty: 'Whatsoever a poet writes under possession (*enthousiasmos*) and the divine spirit (*hieron pneuma*) is very beautiful' (Russell and Winterbottom 4).

Moreover, I believe that Blake's idea of God closely parallels an Emersonian formulation. According to the theory expressed in *The Over-Soul*, the supreme being is nothing less than 'that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other . . .' (153). Emerson subsequently underlines the fact that 'within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One' (153). Blake, too, conceives of an all-encompassing

and all-integrating spirit, for, in a dialogue with Crabbe Robinson, he declares that '[w]e are all co-existent with God — members of the Divine body. We are all partakers of the Divine nature' (apud *Blake Dictionary* 158). Again, in *Annotations to Berkeley's 'Siris,'* the poet stresses the fact that 'God is Man & exists in us & we in him' (E 664). These examples prove, beyond any shadow of doubt, that the predisposition to spiritual unity and integration stems from the artists' idea of an internally fissured universe, a cloven world which stages a perpetual clash of opposing principles, spiritual and material, holy and demonic, divine and human. It is only through their 'marriage' that progress and, eventually, redemption are made possible. For Blake, just like for Emerson, it is not God's existence which justifies that of man, but vice versa: God exists inasmuch as he mirrors man's sublime form. When man listens to the divine voice, he has access to the most refined and treasured part of his own soul.

3.2. Angels and Devils

Angels and devils are rather controversial characters in Blake's work, and their traditional function is more often than not reversed. Thus, the angels are incapable of transcending their rectitude, and fall a prey to their own righteousness, whilst the devils are fiery geniuses, masters of the art of rebellion who reject conventional truth and accredited religious beliefs. It is through the mediation of the latter that humankind's progress is rendered possible.

In *A Memorable Fancy* found in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, a mysterious angel presents the creative self with successive visions of a stable, a church, a mill, a cave, an 'infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city' (E 41), 'the black & white spiders' (E 41), the 'head of Leviathan' (E 41), the 'pleasant bank beside a river' (E 42) and, again, 'the stable and the church' (E 42), as well as the mill. The imaginative pattern is circular, and the *topoi* bear a special significance within the Christian frame of thought. The stable is Christ's birth-place, the church is the spiritual body of the Lord, the mill is a metaphor of the Last Judgment (the separation between the good and the evil), and the cave is a Platonic symbol of the Earth as a secluded *lieu*, whose darkness prevents its inhabitants from acquiring the *gnosis*, the ultimate knowledge. In point of fact, Blake textually mocks Aristotle, Plato's most revered disciple, when he writes that 'I in my hand brought the skeleton of a body, which in the mill was Aristotles Analytics' (E 42), after carefully describing the cannibalistic

feast of the aggressive monkeys (a metonymy of ancient Greece's analytical schools of philosophy). But perhaps the most significant episode of the vision occurs towards the end, when the angel admits to having been influenced by the force of the creative self: 'So the Angel said: thy phantasy has imposed upon me & thou oughtest to be ashamed' (E 42). In the end, the voice of the visionary self proclaims the biunivocal character of their artistic relationship: 'I answer: we impose on one another' (E 42). In the juxtaposition of the angelic and the human, each enhances the other.

Another *Memorable Fancy* describes the spiritual confrontation between an angel and a devil. After being defeated by the devil's argument, according to which 'no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments: Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse: not from rules' (E 43), the angel chooses immolation: he is consumed by the Satanic fire, and, in a Phoenix-like apotheosis, resurrects as the prophet Elijah. In a derisive undertone, Blake adds that he has befriended this angel, now turned into a devil, and that they 'often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense . . .' (E 44). As in the aforementioned case of the angel, the relationship between the creative self and the devil is biunivocal: the influences exerted by the former on the latter and vice versa are kept in equipoise by both similarities and dissimilarities.

In a letter to Dr Trusler, dated 16 August 1799, Blake speaks plainly about the pre-set rules of artistic creation, implying that the visionary has no freedom of choice, but, rather, obeys the command of his vision-inducing agent. His acting otherwise would result in the sudden demise of the visionary state: 'in this which I send you have been compelled by my Genius or Angel to follow where he led . . .' (E 701). Then, in an epistle to William Hayley (6 May 1800), the artist demands pardon for his enthusiastic foibles, mentioning coyly that angels accompany him: 'Forgive me for expressing to you my Enthusiasm which I wish all to partake of Since it is to me a Source of immortal Joy even in this world by it I am the companion of Angels' (E 705). Another account of angel-inspired poetry is found in Catherine Blake's letter to Anna Flaxman, dated 14 September 1800: 'we not only talk but behold the Angels of our journey have inspired a song to you' (E 708).

3.3. Saints and Prophets

Not only angels and devils, but also saints and prophets communicate actively with the creative self, and deliver aesthetically-oriented

message. However, their advice is shaped in accordance with no formal theological exhortations, and Blake's accounts are no orthodox homilies. In an epistle to John Flaxman (12 September 1800), Blake recounts one of these spiritual visits, among whose guests one finds Ezra and Isaiah (cf. E 707). A *Memorable Fancy* found in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* tells about a dinner with Isaiah and Ezekiel: Blake asked the prophets to offer their lost works to the public, to which Isaiah said 'none of equal value was lost. Ezekiel said the same of his' (E 39). As regards the face and the direct voice of God, Isaiah declared: 'I saw no God. nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing . . .' (E 38). Ezekiel confessed that he cherished 'the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite' (E 39). It is noteworthy that the viewpoints expressed by Isaiah and Ezekiel coincide perfectly with Blake's, and the metaphysical considerations of the two prophets are, to a certain extent, Blake's own ideas in careful disguise. It may well be that the artist fervently pursues his dream of completing a Bible of Hell, wherein ethical, as well as ontological, contraries could somehow be reunited, and the voices of the (self-appointed) righteous would be heard in tune with those of their brilliant usurpers.

3.4. The Spirits

It is the poet's ardent desire, as expressed in *Annotations to Lavater's 'Aphorisms on Man,'* that all men ought to be able to engage the Divinity in a lively, sincere spiritual conversation: 'O that men should seek immortal moments O that men would converse with God' (E 595). Nevertheless, in the end, Blake rectifies this statement by adding that God and his holy subjects can only be known through the mediation of good spirits, who have been entertained by the Divinity, and who can, consequently, offer advice. The reader should be aware of the fact that spirits are either benign or malevolent: 'So it is impossible to know God or heavenly things without conjunction with those who know God & heavenly things. therefore, all who converse in the spirit, converse with spirits. [*& these are either Good or Evil*]' (E 600).

In truth, Blake declares, in an epistle to Thomas Butts (10 January 180[3]), that he is constantly guided by spiritual entities: 'I am not ashamed afraid or averse to tell You what Ought to be Told. That I am under the direction of Messengers from Heaven Daily & Nightly . . .' (E 724). Yet, this attitude is more or less imposed on the artist by the very laws of creativity — he must act so lest he should be condemned

to perpetual suffering and desolation: 'Refuse & bury your Talent in the Earth even tho you should want Natural Bread. Sorrow & Desperation pursues you thro life! & after death shame & confusion of face to eternity — ' (E 724-25). The same topic is reiterated in another letter to the same Butts (25 April 1803): 'I must not bury the Talents in the Earth . . . ' (E 728), Blake concurrently underlining his visionary liberty afforded by the company of the spirits: 'I may converse with my friends in Eternity. See Visions, Dream Dreams, & prophecy & speak Parables unobserv'd & at liberty from the doubts of other Mortals' (E 728). Finally, in an epistle to Thomas Hayley (11 December 1805), the artist decides that one must take up Christ's Cross and follow in his footsteps, 'Persisting in Spiritual Labours & the Use of that Talent which it is Death to Bury. & of that Spirit to which we are called — ' (E 767).

Again, in a letter to the faithful Butts (6 July 1803), *Milton's* (or perhaps *Jerusalem's*) authorship¹⁰ is attributed to the genius of celestial beings. Predictably enough, the creative self modestly professes to have no intellectual involvement whatsoever in the composition of the epic: 'I may praise it since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary the Authors are in Eternity' (E 730), not forgetting to add that '[t]his Poem shall by Divine assistance be progressively Printed & Ornamented with Prints & given to the Public — ' (E 730).

One of the most famous accounts of the influence exerted by the spirit of a deceased person is the Robert Blake episode. According to J. T. Smith, in 1788, Robert, then long dead, revealed the secret of what will be known as 'illuminated printing.' As Aileen Ward presents it synthetically, this solution to one of Blake's most ardent questions was 'an ingenious method of relief etching achieved simply by painting his text and designs on the copperplate with a fine brush or pen in acid-resist, and then "biting" the plate in acid to reveal his outlines, printing, and hand coloring' (24). This revelation brought about only the first step in a long process of art technique development.¹¹ In point of fact, it is Blake himself who describes his daily spiritual communion with his departed brother, in a letter to William Hayley (6 May 1800): 'Thirteen years ago. I lost a brother & with his spirit I converse daily & hourly in the Spirit. . . I hear his advice & even now write from his Dictate — ' (E 705).

That Blake relishes¹² the company of illustrious men, eager either to extol or rebuke, in any case, always ready to offer advice, is an undisputed fact. In an epistle to John Flaxman, dated 12 September 1800,

he gives a versified account of spiritual encounters with various poets and mystics: ‘Now my lot in the Heavens is this; Milton loved me in childhood & shewd me his face / . . . Shakespeare in riper years gave me his hand / Paracelsus & Behmen appeard to me . . . ’ (E 707). On the other hand, in a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth, dated 19 February 1826, Crabb Robinson testifies to Blake’s artistic visions, whether they be pictorial or textual. Their composition is induced by definite agents — spirits of long-departed people — whose dictation is faithfully recorded by their mortal recipient. From a creative theory perspective, it is noteworthy that the dictated words acquire a material, if fleeting, quality, and that their reification forms an independent vision:

He receives visits from Shakespeare Milton Dante Voltaire & c & c & c And has given me repeatedly their very words in their conversations — His paintings are copies of what he sees in his Visions — his books — (& his MSS. are immense in quantity) are dictations from the Spirits — he told me yesterday that when he writes — it is for the Spirits only — he sees the words fly about the room the moment he has put them on paper And his book is then published — ’

(Bentley, Jr. 29)

One of Blake’s rather obscure biographers, Frederick Tatham, underlines the importance of spiritual agents in Blake’s creativity, pointing out, at the same time, the casual nature of these encounters: ‘He said that he was the companion of spirits, who taught, rebuked, argued, & advised, with all the familiarity of personal intercourse’ (Bentley, Jr. 217).

Some of the most famous spirits number among themselves ancient and modern poets. According to Allan Cunningham, whilst in Felpham (Sussex), Blake ‘forgot the present moment and lived in the past; he conceived, verily, that he had lived in other days, and had formed friendships with Homer and Moses; with Pindar and Virgil; with Dante and Milton. These great men, he asserted, appeared to him in visions, and even entered into conversation’ (Bentley, Jr. 181). The readers are given details about an unnamed Miltonic piece of poetry, offered to Blake in a rare moment of oral ecstasy: ‘Milton, in a moment of confidence, entrusted him with a whole poem of his, which the world had never seen; but unfortunately the communication was oral, and the poetry seemed to have lost much of its brightness in Blake’s recitation’ (Bentley, Jr. 181).

In all probability, Felpham constitutes a crucial *topos* for the advancement of Blake’s visionary faculties, including artistic compo-

sition. In a letter to John Flaxman (21 September 1800), written shortly after the Blakes' arrival at their country cottage, the artist praises the spiritual atmosphere of the natural surroundings. It is here that the dictate of heavenly spirits is clearly audible: 'Felpham is a sweet place for Study. because it is more Spiritual than London Heaven opens here on all sides her golden Gates her windows are not obstructed by vapours. .voices of Celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard & their forms more distinctly seen . . .' (E 710).

3.5. The Muses

The ecstatic madness generated by the Muses is properly described in Plato's the *Phaidros*. Socrates explains that there are three varieties of divine frenzy: the oracular (or mantic), the kathartic and telestic (as a result of various ritual ablutions), and the Muse-sent. In our particular case, the last is essential:

Third, a possession and madness from the Muses, capturing a tender, unspoiled soul and rousing it and firing it to frenzy, both through songs and through other forms of poetic composition, educates the oncoming generation by giving luster to countless deeds of the men of old; but he who approaches the poetic gates without Muses' madness, confident that he will become a real poet by dint of craft alone, remains outside: the creative effort of the safe-and-sane man is left totally in the shade by that of the madmen.

(245a)

Thus, in this dialogue, which has been interpreted as both a reiteration of the *Ion* encomiastic discourse on the nature of poetry and a reconsideration of the aesthetic reprimands of the *Republic*,¹³ Plato rejects any form of creativity which entails ratiocination and artifice, and even personal participation. The poet completely subjugates his creative will to the apparently omnipotent control exerted by a superior agent, i.e. the divine Muses.

The invocation to the Muses is instanced in the opening lines of Blake's *Milton*. Forging an utterly unconventional speech, the creative self beseeches the 'Daughters of Beulah' to take possession of the body's right hand, which is subtly connected to the brain, the seat of paradise, the source of aesthetic ecstasy. Blake's attitude to the Muse parallels Pindar's, the latter wishing to translate into intelligible language his Muse's arcane idiom: 'Prophesy (*manteueo*), Muse, and I will be your interpreter (*prophateusō*)' (Russell and Winterbottom 4). A critical eye may be surprised to discover material elements in a con-

text apparently devoid of materiality:

Daughters of Beulah! Muses who inspire the Poets Song
 Record the journey of immortal Milton thro' your Realms
 Of terror & mild moony lustre, in soft sexual delusions
 Of varied beauty, to delight the wanderer and repose
 His burning thirst & freezing hunger! Come into my hand
 By your mild power; descending down the Nerves of my right arm
 From out the Portals of my Brain, where by your ministry
 The Eternal Great Humanity Divine, planted his Paradise
 And in it caus'd the Spectres of the Dead to take sweet forms
 In likeness of himself . . .

(E 96)

Fairies may also be included in this subcategory. K. M. Briggs, an authority on the subject, notes, however, that fairies do not act and live independently, being in constant communication with humans: 'Many creatures pursue their own lives and destinies without any wish to hold communion with mankind, anxious only to shun human interference. This is not so with the fairies' (95). One of these diminutive characters is the putative agent who dictates *Europe a Prophecy*. The episode, evoked by Blake at the very beginning of his work, takes place in the poet's garden at Lambeth, and retains a certain pastoral freshness, an Arcadian reverie that is at the heart of the neo-Anacreontic tradition in European poetry: 'They hover'd round me like a cloud of incense: when I came / Into my parlour and sat down, and took my pen to write: / My Fairy sat upon the table, and dictated EUROPE' (E 60). Nonetheless, the aforementioned fairy fails to impose its spiritual power on his human companion, becoming, instead, the latter's servant. K. M. Briggs is of the opinion that 'perhaps Blake continues in the tradition set by the magicians and followed by Prospero, that which advises harsh, peremptory treatment of spirits to keep them under subjection' (162). It is still unclear whether or not this subjection is due merely to physical force: 'Seeing himself in my possession thus he answerd me: / My master, I am yours. command me, for I must obey' (E 60).

4. Conclusion

As I have shown so far, Blake's definite vision-inducing agents are, generally, coercive characters, eager to command. Only in two cases (i.e. that of the angels and demons and that of the fairies) have the animate entities been influenced and even dominated by the creative self.

This self is the potent factor of knowledge, who, due to the intervention of particular agents (be they definite or indefinite), is capable of decomposing and recomposing the exterior universe *ad libitum*. The visionary is endowed with the rare capacity to adjust the sensory and intellective data so that they may match *realia*. Alternatively, a keen critic may assert that the very reality is fashioned in such a way as to match the data processed by the visionary self in its dual aspect: empirical and creative.

As I have attempted to prove throughout my study, the problematic of Blake's creativity is genuinely complex, requiring an examination of multi-layered literary, philosophical, and theological concepts. In order to offer an apposite demonstration for this topic, I first considered the author's alleged insanity, whereupon I analyzed the welter of agents that play a significant role in the production of the prophetic books: God, angels and devils, saints and prophets, the spirits and the Muses.

Notes

- ¹ Cf., in this respect, my forthcoming study 'Indefinite Vision-Inducing Agents: "Imagination" and "Inspiration" in William Blake'.
- ² One should note that there is at least one seminal study on the subject of Blake's insanity: Paul Youngquist's *Madness and Blake's Myth*. Youngquist debatably argues that Blake suffers from schizophrenia, and that writing becomes a cure in the artist's desperate attempt to fight mental disorder and thereby contain the malady. For more information, cf. the preface to this book. Damon also approached the theme. For further details, cf. *William Blake* 207-11.
- ³ For more details, cf. Bentley, Jr. 41.
- ⁴ For further details, cf. Davis 145.
- ⁵ For more details, cf. Davis 156.
- ⁶ This was the premise which I have tried to demonstrate in a former article of mine, 'Poetic Quaternaries: William Blake's Unsystematic System,' in *Shiron* 42 (2004): 19-39.
- ⁷ All Blake quotations are drawn from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Ed. David V. Erdman. Commentary Harold Bloom. Newly revised ed. Garden City, NY: Anchor / Doubleday, 1982, hereafter abbreviated to E.
- ⁸ An interesting, if succinct, analysis of this problematic (but from a different perspective) is found in *Fearful Symmetry*. For further details, cf. Frye 32.
- ⁹ *Heavenly Secrets* contains a detailed explanation of the Biblical text, together with accounts of Swedenborg's visions of the spiritual universe. The book was published in London between 1749 and 1756.
- ¹⁰ That Blake's letter to Butts refers to the composition of *Milton* is Damon's

conjecture (for more details, cf. *Blake Dictionary* 275). However, in his preface to *Jerusalem*, entitled *To the Public*, Blake writes: ‘After my three years slumber on the banks of the Ocean, I again display my Giant forms to the Public . . .’ (E 145). In the aforementioned letter, the poet uses the same syntagm, claiming that ‘none can know the Spiritual Acts of my three years Slumber on the banks of the Ocean unless he has seen them in the Spirit or unless he should read My long Poem descriptive of those Acts . . .’ (E 728). A satisfactory explanation is offered by Geoffrey Keynes in a note to *The Letters of William Blake, with Related Documents*: ‘The title-page of this [i.e. *Milton*], dated 1804, indicates that there were twelve books, though only two were finished about 1808. The rest of the material seems to have been transferred to the longer poem, *Jerusalem*, finished about 1818’ (55). In the end, however, the question of the ‘three years slumber’ as a catalyst for the composition of either *Milton* or *Jerusalem* remains open.

- ¹¹ Dealing with the problematic of Blake’s illuminated manuscripts, Joseph Viscomi brilliantly synthesizes the evolution of Blake’s artistic technique: ‘Looking back from the last year of his life, Blake could see the great contrast between his early and late illuminated books. The first six years of production progressed through a series of three formats: leaves printed on both sides and lightly washed (1789-93), color printing (1794-95), and single-sided printing with borders and richer coloring (c. 1795). After 1795, the format remained the same, though the coloring style continued to become more elaborate’ (60).
- ¹² It is certain that at least the recipient of such visits is convinced of their factuality.
- ¹³ Cf. Else 49.

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Inward Impulse and Outward Fact: Maggie's Fate in *The Mill on the Floss*

Yan Guo

The Mill on the Floss is the novel most visibly close to George Eliot's life. As in many novels loosely classed as autobiographical, this closeness shows itself in various ways. It creates the long and seemingly accurate chronicle of actual events, the successful externalized conscious and unconscious disguise and transformation. It is a novel where the author is recalling the landscape and feelings of her childhood, in ways both gratifyingly indulgent and rationally analytic. On the whole, it explores the development of Maggie and Tom, education, memory, and the nature of childhood, but whereas in the opening and major portion of the novel the country, the society, the home, and the family are firmly painted, in the last two Books they are indicated briefly through the pressures acting on Maggie, or rapidly sketched in, as in the introduction of the Guests and their circle — whose existence, rank, and manners reveal a more complex social structure than the earlier account of St Ogg's had hinted at.¹ The depiction of the environment and community is an important source of the novel's vitality. In this essay, I aim to analyze the reasons and factors which influence Maggie's unhappiness and the meaning of her final death. In the first section, George Eliot's attitude to the society of the novel will be introduced. Through the comparisons with other critics, George Eliot's characteristics will be made clear: in deploring the oppressive narrowness of St Ogg's, George Eliot has not abandoned her faith in hidden beauties, redeeming virtues, and the potential heroism of the obscure and mundane. In the second section, the factors which influence Maggie's unhappiness will be examined. Maggie is not grossly oppressed or threatened by social forces. Her unhappiness is caused not by an uncongenial society or a perverted morality but by the barrenness of her domestic circumstances. In the third section, Maggie's attachment to St Ogg's and the meaning of her final death will be con-

sidered. Her remorsefulness springs from a violation of her own values rather than society's. It is the flood that provides her with an opportunity for the ultimate self-exoneration.

I

On completing the third volume of *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot wrote to John Blackwood that she was “grateful and yet rather sad to have finished — sad that I shall live with my people in the banks of the Floss no longer” (Letters, III, 279). When the first reviews regretted what they took to be the author's antagonism toward Tom and the Dodsons, she had occasion to reiterate her objectivity as well as her attachment to the world of *The Mill on the Floss*.

I have certainly fulfilled my intention very badly if I have made the Dodson honesty appear “mean and uninteresting,” or made the payment of one's debts appear a contemptible virtue in comparison with any sort of “Bohemian” qualities. So far as my own feelings and intentions are concerned, no one class of persons or form of character is held up to reprobation or to exclusive admiration. Tom is painted with as much love and pity as Maggie, and I am so far from hating the Dodsons myself, that I am rather aghast to find them ticketed with such very ugly adjectives.

(Letters, III, 299; cf. 397)

It is useful to keep such declarations in mind when we discuss George Eliot's attitude to the society of *The Mill on the Floss*, for they express something of the penetrating and comprehensive intelligence, the judicious sympathy, with which she regards humanity and through which she seeks to avoid a melodramatic simplification of life. Simply to condemn St Ogg's, to make it responsible for what happens to Maggie, would constitute a drastic departure from that large-minded understanding and tolerance. This is not to say that in *The Mill on the Floss* she succeeds always in doing justice to the complexity of experience she has made us feel: in the often disparaged ending she seems beset by confusion and irresolution, and distorts and evades through melodrama the issues that the book raises.

To understand George Eliot's feelings toward provincial society at its most depressing, and to demonstrate convincingly the lack of animosity in her treatment of St Ogg's, we must turn to the novel itself. As several critics have noted, there are in the book many animal images. These have been taken to denote “those elements in the society of St Ogg's which are destructive in the sense that they narrowly

restrict the imagination and partially destroy the capacity for adequate emotional response.”² Now though George Eliot in her commentary and narrative explicitly shows St Ogg's to be provincial in the worst sense of the word — its intellectual atmosphere is benighted, its emotional life bleak, it is almost entirely lacking in sensitivity, warmth, and generosity — to call it destructive is to overstate the case. It must be clear that while Maggie's imagination does not find scope or encouragement in her environment, it is certainly not starved by it or even exceptionally restricted. Her imagination and “capacity for emotional response” continue to grow; reacting to domestic circumstances, she becomes more tender towards her family and at the same time more dissatisfied with her lot. Her imagination and responsiveness, expressing themselves as impetuosity, plunge her as a child into one minor crisis after another; near the end they bring about her climactic dilemma. Society is responsible for Maggie's distress mainly as its values operate through her consciousness, and these values are as much her own as the desires and aspirations with which they come into conflict. And since the novel does not put forward with any emphasis a more enlightened environment as an alternative to St Ogg's, there is little encouragement to believe that Maggie would have fared better in a different society.

Critics who see *The Mill on the Floss* as an indictment of St Ogg's usually point to a passage in Book Four, Chapter I, where a somewhat over-elaborate and curiously exotic comparison of ruins on the banks of the Rhine with those on the Rhone introduces a direct and full examination of the values of Maggie's people. In contrast to the glamour and romance suggested by the Rhine castles, says George Eliot, “these dead-tinted, hollow-eyed, angular skeletons of villages on the Rhone oppress me with the feeling that human life — very much of it — is a narrow, ugly, grovelling existence . . .”. Then, about the sort of world she has to present in her story, she adds:

Perhaps something akin to this oppressive feeling may have weighed upon you in watching this old-fashioned family life on the banks of the Floss, which even sorrow hardly suffices to lift above the level of the tragic-comic. It is a sordid life, you say, this of the Tullivers and Dodsons — irradiated by no sublime principles, no romantic visions, no active, self-renouncing faith. . . Here, one has conventional worldly notions and habits without instruction and without polish — surely the most prosaic form of human life: proud respectability in a gig of unfashionable build: worldliness without side-dishes.

(Book Four, Chapter I; 272)

Although George Eliot goes to say “I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness,” she does not actually equate St Ogg’s with the abandoned villages on the Rhone. Rather, she compares, always speculatively and with much hesitation, reactions to two kinds of provincial sordidness. First she is concerned with the “effect produced on us by these dismal remnants of commonplace houses, which in their best ways were but the sign of a sordid life, belonging in all its detailed to our own vulgar era.” Then to this impression she likens the annoyance that she supposes reader to feel with “these dull men and women” of St Ogg’s, who could be seen “as a kind of population out of keeping with the earth on which they live — with this rich plain where the great river flows forever onward, and links the small pulse of the old English town with the beatings of the world’s mighty heart.”³ The qualification of the tentatively suggested similarity between the Rhone remnants and St Ogg’s is strengthened by the tone and bias of the account of “the religious and moral ideas of the Dodsons and Tullivers” that immediately follows the passage just cited. Eliot writes:

I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness; but it is necessary that we should feel it, if we care to understand how it acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie — how it has acted on young natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts. . . . In natural science, I have understood, there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions. It is surely the same with the observation of human life.

(Book Four, Chapter I; 272)

Here, we can see Eliot’s characteristics: the qualified belief in social progress, the recognition of familial affection and the ties of the past, the sense of an almost cosmic interconnectedness of phenomena, the scientific allusion and the philosophic stance. But what we should particularly notice is that all these things act to dignify the life of the Dodsons and Tullivers. As the description of their life continues, it becomes a little more clearly sympathetic. Though it is always mocking and humorous, the account is not unamiable and certainly not intolerant.

Their theory of life had its core of soundness, as all theories must have on which decent and prosperous families have been reared and have flourished; but it had the very slighted tincture of theology. . . . Their religion was of a simple, semi-pagan kind, but there was no heresy in it — if heresy properly means choice — for they didn't know there was any other religion, except that of chapel-goers, which appeared to run in families like asthma. . . . To be honest and poor was never a Dodson motto, still less to seem rich enough being poor; rather the family badge was to be honest and rich; and not only rich, but richer than was supposed.

(Book Four, Chapter I; 273)

There is clearly no admiration for the Dodsons or idealization of them here, and yet the passage radiates with the warmth of understanding and familiarity, a warmth that a critical emphasis on “these emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers” misses altogether. We must not ignore the reservations that make the link between the ruined villages on the Rhone and the thriving town on the Floss. George Eliot goes on directly to indicate that in spite of this comparison, in spite of the “sense of oppressive narrowness” with which the village remnants affect her, the “obscure vitality” they suggest has its own interest, significance, and dignity. Even in her wry description of the parochialism of St Ogg's there is evident belief in the mixed nature of things. She is as skeptical about the existence of consistent and purposeful malignity as she is about the existence of perfect goodness, and in her portrait of provincial culture she steers carefully away from an impression of unredeemed moral squalor. She repeatedly cautions the reader against melodramatic interpretations of the motives of the characters. The rich historic past and pleasant appearance of St Ogg's as well as the staunchness and integrity of the Dodsons and Tullivers indicate that life here is not made up of unrelieved opportunism. When she ultimately affirms her allegiance to familial, personal, and social ties, Maggie expresses the values of her environment in an individually revitalized way.

When the entire picture of the community is recalled, the ambiguous irony of the intricate comparison at the beginning of Book Four seems less elusive than at first reading. It becomes clear that in deploring the oppressive narrowness of St Ogg's George Eliot has not given up her faith in hidden beauties, redeeming virtues, and the potential heroism of the obscure and mundane.

II

Critics run the risk of distorting the novel. Reva Stump sees the society of St Ogg's as being almost unredeemed in its animalism; as a result, she is led to describe it in terms of somewhat incongruous perversions — effeminacy as well as crudeness, mechanization as well as brutality.⁴ For her, Tom's drowning foreshadows the “symbolic drowning” of the Dodson way of life, while Maggie's prefigures “the total destruction to which this way of life is leading.”⁵ She continues to observe that the “river is only the second cause of Maggie and Tom's death. The first cause is the society itself”; it is the “machinery of St Ogg's, symbolized in general by the mill, which crushes Maggie and Tom.”⁶ There are two important and closely related points here. The first is the town's implication in Maggie and Tom's death. The second has to do with the author's attitude to St Ogg's and provincial society in general but also with her ideas about social evolution. This is the view that in *The Mill on the Floss* Eliot tries through commentary, action, and symbol to suggest the movement and direction of old-fashioned provincial consciousness as well as to describe a primitive stage of social development and the dilemma of the individual at odds with her time and place.

As some critics have argued, the social environment of *The Mill on the Floss*, does indeed interact with the plot. For society is “bound up with the working out of the theme” largely through the heroine's inner conflict. Maggie is not grossly oppressed or threatened by social forces. The “tumult in her own soul” results from the clash of her private aspirations with her stubborn sense of responsibility and attachment to family, friends, society, and environment.

In spite of her rebelliousness as a child, in spite of the town's final rejection of her, Maggie is not described as a conscious and willful outcast. Unlike Philip who from the beginning despises the provincialism of St Ogg's and is consistently spurned by the town, Maggie feels completely at home in the region. When he argues against her “narrow asceticism,” Philip attempts almost to return her dissatisfaction with life against what he calls “the dead level of provincial existence” but without much success, for that is not the real source of her unhappiness. Maggie's ardent nature makes her glow with a nobler vision and higher goals than her social environment can apparently satisfy, but her local ties remain strong. She is fond of St Ogg's and loves the mill. It is only after Mr Tulliver's bankruptcy and illness, with her home

pervaded by a spirit of obstinate gloom, vindictiveness, and single-minded determination to satisfy the creditors, that Maggie becomes really discontented and restive. The depressing unresponsiveness of her father and Tom, the total absence of warmth and tenderness in the home, the cramping demands of family loyalty — all thwart her impulse for happiness, for emotional fulfillment and spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. When she is beset by exceptional domestic misfortunes, Maggie's alienation from her environment is highly ambiguous. As she herself recognizes, it is her own rashness and passionate self-indulgence, however misunderstood in the town, that lead to her condemnation:

Maggie, all the while, was too entirely filled with a more agonizing anxiety to spend any thought on the view that was being taken of her conduct by the world of St Ogg's. . . The idea of ever recovering happiness never glimmered in her mind for a moment. . . Life stretched before her as one act of penitence, and all she craved, as she dwelt on her future lot, was something to guarantee her from more falling: her own weakness haunted her like a vision of hideous possibilities, that made no peace conceivable except such as lay in the sense of a sure refuge.

(Book Seven, Chapter II; 492)

Because Maggie's divided self is at least a product of her environment, it is impossible to absolve the culture of St Ogg's from all responsibility for her predicament, but the main source of her distress, as the passage just quoted makes clear, is deeply personal. By tracing the development of Maggie's unhappiness, it is possible to define better the nature of her alienation and at the same time to shed some light on George Eliot's attitude toward the world of St Ogg's, on the question of social involvement in the final deaths, and the relation between plot and background.

Maggie's darkest reflections on social life occur not near the end of the book but after her father's stroke and financial ruin. Refused by Tom's harshness, Maggie feels that the "world outside of the books was not a happy one . . . it seemed to be a world where people behaved the best to those they did not pretend to love, and that did not belong to them. And if life had no love in it, what else was there for Maggie?" (Book Three, Chapter V). But this feeling does not make her hate the world: if she recoils it is only against the misery of her immediate situation. When she is aware "of conflict between the inward impulse and the outward fact, which is the lot of every imaginative and passionate

nature,” she turns inward in search of intellectual and moral defense to help her understand and bear the wretchedness so unjustly imposed on her. She perceives the escape to be useless:

She could make dream-worlds of her own — but no dream-world would satisfy her now. She wanted some explanation of this hard, real life: the unhappy-looking father, seated at the dull breakfast-table; the childish, bewildered mother; the little sordid tasks that filled the hours, or the more oppressive emptiness of weary, joyless leisure; the need of some tender, demonstrative love; the cruel sense that Tom didn’t mind what she thought or felt, and that they were no longer playfellows together; the privation of all pleasant things that had come to her more than to others: she wanted some key that would enable her to understand, and, in understanding, endure, the heavy weight that had fallen on her young heart.

(Book Four, Chapter III; 286)

It is clear that her unhappiness is caused not by an uncongenial society or a perverted morality but by the barrenness of her domestic circumstances. These circumstances are not a full reflection of the social spirit which we see in Maggie’s exhilarated response to the comparative wealth, ease, and refinement at Lucy’s house. Her resentment turns against a private and peculiar situation:

She rebelled against her lot, she fainted under its loneliness, and fits even of anger and hatred towards her father and mother, who were so unlike what she would have them be — towards Tom, who checked her, and met her thought or feeling always by some thwarting difference — would flow out over her affections and conscience. . .

(Book Four, Chapter III; 287)

Maggie finds the key to existence in the form of the doctrine of self-renunciation of Thomas à Kempis: “here was a sublime height to be reached without the help of outward things — here was insight, and strength, and conquest, to be won by means entirely within her own soul. . .” Maggie grasps this key and its promise of relief, of emotional independence and moral direction, and rises above her circumstances and the spiritual level of her society. The account of her “conversion” ends, interestingly, with one of George Eliot’s ironic apologies to the reader which develops into a somewhat labored digression about the nature of social structure and inequalities. She fears that the refined reader of good society may be puzzled by her emphasis on the hero-

ine's spiritual crisis and queer resolution of it:

But then, good society has its claret and its velvet carpets, its dinner-engagement six weeks deep, its opera and its faëry ballrooms. . . and [has] its religion [performed] by the superior clergy who are to be met in the best houses: how should it have time or need for belief and emphasis? But good society, floated on gossamer wings of light irony, is of very expensive production; requiring nothing less than a wide and arduous national life condensed in unfragrant deafening factories, cramping itself in mines, sweating at furnaces, grinding, hammering, weaving under more or less oppression of carbonic acid — or else, spread over sheepwalks, and scattered in lonely houses and huts on the clayey or chalky corn-lands, where the rainy days look dreary. This wide national life is based entirely on emphasis — the emphasis of want, which urges it into all the activities necessary for the maintenance of good society and light irony: it spends its heavy years often in a chill, uncarpeted fashion, amidst family discord unsoftened by long corridors. Under such circumstances, there are many among its myriads of souls who have absolutely needed an emphatic belief. . . Some have an emphatic belief in alcohol, and seek their *ekstasis* or outside standing-ground in gin; but the rest require something that good society calls "enthusiasm," something that will present motives in an entire absence of high prizes. . .

(Book Four, Chapter III; 291-292)

It is obvious that this long speech extends the perspective of the novel. By mocking the refined delusions of advanced, sophisticated society and viewing in a heroic light the spiritual promptings of obscure individuals, it invests "the history of unfashionable families" with dignity and wide significance. It also serves as a kind of conclusion to the analysis of St Ogg's which occurs two chapters earlier. There the author concluded the description of the moral life of Maggie's family with a rueful stress on the ineffectuality of the church as an edifying institution: "If such were the views of life on which the Dodsons and Tullivers had been reared in the praiseworthy past of Pitt and in high prices, you will infer from what you already know concerning the state of society in St Ogg's, that there had been no highly modifying influence to act on them in their mature life." (Book Four, Chapter I) Now, in justifying Maggie's "enthusiasm" and placing it in the context of general spiritual need, George Eliot can precisely define the intellectual and moral deprivations which the exceptional individual in a provincial environment has to endure. (The wryly depreciatory tone of the comments on good society implies that spiritually it has

not progressed much beyond the backward state of St Ogg's — indeed its refinements may stifle inspired appetites like Maggie's.) If we link these two passages of social analysis, we will understand clearly Maggie's need of guidance and inspiration, the genuine worth of the doctrine she clings to, and the barrenness of the moral climate that forces her into withdrawal and self-reliance. Since the society's "sin" is one of omission, Maggie is essentially struggling for a personal answer to a personal problem. Although citizens in St Ogg's are narrow, parochial, and acquisitive, they are more placid and responsible. As Mr. Deane's exposition of his firmly principled business ethic show, St Ogg's is not guided by mindless expediency. In spite of its lack of awareness, "fine old St Ogg's" is "venerable," "quaint," and "mellow" (Book One, Chapter XII). If we are to have an accurate picture of the atmosphere in which Maggie grows up, we must keep not only the deficiencies but also such saving features in mind.

III

Although it does not play a part of any importance in the first five Books (where the mill is the physical and emotional focus), Maggie's attachment to St Ogg's is assumed throughout the novel. It becomes explicit in Book six, in which Maggie, now nineteen, returns to the town after two years as an assistant in an apparently remote school. Not only does she feel no rebellious scorn, then, for the "state of society in St Ogg's", or even any urge to reform it, she positively enjoys it. Her delight, however, is not unmixed. As Lucy's cousin and guest, she can participate in the life of St Ogg's from a position of unaccustomed privilege and graciousness; at the same time she responds eagerly to the associations which the familiar surroundings awaken in her. The impact of these, combining itself with her delight in a life of ease and elegance, makes her thoughtful and suspicious:

. . . her eyes wandered to the window, where she could see the sunshine falling on the rich clumps of spring flowers and on the long hedge of laurels — and beyond, the silvery breadth of the dear old Floss, that at this distance seemed to be sleeping in a morning holiday. The sweet fresh garden-scent came through the open window, and the birds were busy flitting and alighting, gurgling and singing. Yet Maggie's eyes began to fill with tears. The sight of the old scenes had made the rush of memories so painful that even yesterday she had only been able to rejoice in her mother's restored comfort and Tom's brotherly friendliness as we rejoice in good news of friends at a distance, rather than in the

presence of a happiness which we share. Memory and imagination urged upon her a sense of privation too keen to let her taste what was offered in the transient present: her future, she thought, was likely to be worse than her past, for after her years of contented renunciation, she had slipped back into desire and longing; she found joyless days of distasteful occupation harder and harder — she found the image of the intense and varied life she yearned for, and despaired of, becoming more and more importunate.

(Book Six, Chapter II; 374)

Once again we see that Maggie's dissatisfaction springs from her private situation, from both "her burden of larger wants than others seemed to feel" (Book Four, Chapter III) and her impoverished economic and social circumstances. Here arises a crucial difficulty in the novel. For Maggie's aspirations, which had been described mainly in terms of vague grandeur, intensity, and restless idealism, are defined not with increased precision but in a different light. The comfort, luxury, and admiration that she finds at Lucy's house, together with the temptation of love and sexual passion, not only exercise a fatal attraction on Maggie but seem entirely to meet the reach of her desires.

It was not that she thought distinctly of Mr Stephen Guest, or dwelt on the indications that he looked at her with admiration; it was rather that she felt the half-remote presence of a world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry and romance she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries. Her mind glanced back once or twice to the time when she had courted privation, when she had thought all longing, all impatience was subdued; but that condition seemed irrecoverably gone, and she recoiled from the remembrance of it. No prayer, no striving now, would bring back that negative peace: the battle of her life, it seemed, was not to be decided in that short and easy way? by perfect renunciation at the very threshold of her youth.

(Book Six, Chapter III; 385)

We can see that Maggie's feeling is still confused, but the stakes of the conflict seem to have been reduced: her desires appear now not too vast but somewhat ignoble. This impression is confirmed and the resulting confusion compounded when we see her struggling with herself to renounce Stephen.

There were moments in which a cruel selfishness seemed to be getting possession of her; why should not Lucy — why should not Philip suffer? *She* had had to suffer through many years of her life; and who had renounced anything for her? And when something like

that fulness of existence — love, wealth, ease, and refinement, all that her nature craved — was brought within her reach, why was she to forego it, that another might have it — another, who perhaps needed it less?

(Book Six, Chapter XIII; 458)

She is even aware of higher claims, of moral aspirations to which she ultimately proves true, but there is no indication that her “selfish” promptings, apart from their selfishness, are unworthy of her. It appears that they would not clash with her moral idealism and the interests of others were not involved. There is a strong suggestion that only the previous claims that Lucy and Philip have on her loyalty obstruct Maggie’s complete happiness and fulfillment with Stephen:

Was that existence which tempted her the full existence she dreamed? Where, then, would be all the memories of early striving — all the deep pity for another’s pain, which had been nurtured in her through years of affection and hardship — all the divine presentiment of something higher than mere personal enjoyment, which had made the sacredness of life? She might as well hope to enjoy walking by maiming her feet, as hope to enjoy an existence in which she set out by maiming the faith and sympathy that were the best organs of her soul.

(Book Six, Chapter XIII; 458)

Later, on board the ship where she finds herself with Stephen, Maggie is startled out of her stupor by a dream in which she clearly recognizes the full meaning of her situation. We note that at this crucial moment of vision she recoils against her weakness in having yielded to Stephen’s entreaties and blames herself alone for her alienation:

. . . she was alone with her own memory and her own dread. The irrevocable wrong that must blot her life had been committed: she had brought sorrow into the lives of others — into the lives that were knit up with hers by trust and love. The feeling of a few short weeks had hurried her into the sins her nature had most recoiled from — breach of faith and cruel selfishness; she had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty, and had made herself an outlawed soul, with no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion. . . Her life with Stephen could have no sacredness: she must for ever sink and wander vaguely, driven by uncertain impulse; for she had let go the clue of life — that clue which once in the far-off years her young need had clutched so strongly.

(Book Six, Chapter XIV; 470-471)

As she finds the answer to this moral problem, Maggie's sense of personal responsibility, which does not allow her to blame anyone but herself for her predicament, forces her to leave Stephen. Firmly stating the importance of her obligations to Lucy and Philip with a new-found assurance, she makes it clear that only the existence of those ties and her sense of their inviolability keep her from going away with him:

"I cannot marry you: I cannot take a good for myself that has been wrung out of their misery. . . it would rend me away from all that my past life has made dear and holy to me. I can't set out on a fresh life, and forget that: I must go back to it, and cling to it, else I shall feel as if there were nothing firm beneath my feet."

(Book Six, Chapter XIV; 478)

Maggie clearly believes that Stephen and the life he offers her represent a genuine "good", but we are led to believe that she is really after something nobler and grander when she tells Philip much earlier of her desire for "a full life" (Book Five, Chapter I). Without any warning from the author the heroine's great expectations are suddenly transformed and diminished. It thus becomes even more difficult than it would otherwise have been to regard her as the victim of a destructively materialistic society. If the change in Maggie's aspirations is unsettling, the tragic and pathetic ending of the novel increases the confusion. For the author takes pains to present Maggie's death as a release and fulfillment: Maggie has nothing left to live for. But it is difficult to feel this. Her death does not only seem unnecessary, arbitrary, and evasive, but if we regard it as a release from an unbearably oppressive life, it inevitably undermines to a large extent the moral victory that Maggie gains when she rejects Stephen and returns to St Ogg's. The melancholy vision of an empty life that frightens her just before she becomes conscious of the flood seems to suggest that of the two alternatives between which she has had to decide it was the elopement with Stephen, not the affirmation of firm moral principles and enduring personal ties, that offered true richness and fulfillment. Philip's letter, on the other hand, as well as the reconciliation with Lucy, the reunion with Tom, and Tom's final perception of her heroic constancy, all tend to vindicate the rightness of her choice. The vindication, however, is destroyed by her death, which simply does not feel like the resolution it is obviously intended to be; instead, by the lurking suggestion that, in giving up Stephen, Maggie has lost her one chance for "a full life," her death runs counter to the visible and con-

scious impulse of the book.

When she decides to leave Stephen, we can see that Maggie is powerfully drawn to him and the sexual, emotional, and material gratifications that he represents is necessary to make her temptation genuine and her triumph agonizingly poignant. The motive force of the triumph is her individually felt moral vision. Although she arrives at her ethic without the help of her family or society, it is centered, through its emphasis on sympathy, wholeness, stability, and continuity, around personal relations, the responsibility and the holiness of the heart's affections. When she goes from Stephen she has only one thought: "Home — where her mother and brother were — Philip — Lucy — the scene of her very cares and trials — was the haven towards which her mind tended — the sanctuary where sacred relics lay — where she would be rescued from more falling." (Book Six, Chapter XIV)

When she is oppressed by a sense of personal failure and of betrayed responsibility, Maggie is at first unaware of the town's condemnation of her. Her remoteness springs from her violation of her own values rather than society's; she is penitent and bent on atonement, resigns herself to a bleak but resolute life. She is determined to spend in her native environment: "somehow or other she would maintain herself at St Ogg's" (Book Seven, Chapter II). Even after she realizes the meaning of the cool disdain and insulting familiarity with which the townspeople regard her, she is too completely involved in the inner consequence of her rashness to be greatly disturbed by their manner. Her own judgment of herself anticipates and overshadows the judgment of the town and makes her determine to remain there. But Maggie's decision to stay in St Ogg's is not only just because of her wish to be near the people she loves and has hurt and her resolve to make amends to them, to restore the ties she has broken. She also stays because she has to, because of an instinct for self-preservation: "Oh, if I could but stop here!" she exclaims to Dr Kenn. "I have no heart to begin a strange life again. I should have no stay. I should feel like a lonely wanderer — cut off from the past" (Book Seven, Chapter II). Her attachment to her social environment remains unshaken even in the face of the antagonism which she meets. When Dr Kenn takes Maggie into his home as a governess, finally bows to social pressure and offers disappointedly to find a similar position so as to recommend her to go away from St Ogg's, she can barely contain her heartbroken unhappiness.

Poor Maggie listened with a trembling lip: she could say nothing but a faint "thank you ? I shall be grateful;" and she walked back to her lodgings, through the driving rain, with a new sense of desolation. She must be a lonely wanderer; she must go out among fresh faces, that would look at her wonderingly, because the days did not seem joyful to her; she must begin a new life, in which she would have to rouse herself to receive new impressions — and she was so unspeakably, sickeningly weary! There was no home, no help for the erring: even those who pitied were constrained to hardness.

(Book Seven, Chapter V; 513)

It is clear that there is nothing in Maggie's pathetic reflections to support the notion that she is alienated from her society, in the sense of antipathy and dissatisfaction. On the contrary, to leave behind the world in which her past is lodged and her affections are rooted is a painful exile for her, and to the degree that death preserves her from the fate of estrangement and rootlessness, it comes as an escape, if not quite convincingly as a redemption. In fact, there is nothing in the account of the flood to indicate that George Eliot intends it as a foreshadowing of social destruction, a culmination of tendencies inherent in the world of St Ogg's, or a representation of righteous vengeance. But there is a great deal to show that she uses the flood as an *ex machina* device to impose on the novel an ending of tragic triumph. As Harvey says, "Maggie has to be brought into a final relationship with Philip, Lucy, Stephen, and Tom, in that order."⁷ The final relationship involves a kind of moral reinstatement of Maggie. Through the understanding, forgiveness, and reassuring admiration that Philip communicates in his letter and that Lucy expresses in her brief visit, and through her own victory over the temptation of Stephen's letter, Maggie is emphatically vindicated.

In an early essay George Eliot compared the mind of a great scholar to "some mighty river, which, in its long windings through unfrequented regions, gathers minerals and earthly treasures only more effectually to enrich and fertilize the cultivated valleys and busy cities which form the habitation of man."⁸ More than the mental development of a scholar, however, is suggested by this image, since the true expresses the evolution of culture itself, as well as that of an individual mind. The Floss represents the flow of sensation, emotion, and thought through the minds of the characters; yet it is also the physical link between St Ogg's and the commerce of Europe and so with history in broad and concrete terms. When the river sweeps Tom and Maggie

into climactic reunion and revelation, it is hard not to feel that George Eliot is allowing social and personal reconciliations to become confused, that she is trying to bind the smallest things with the greatest in a fury of illogical excitement.

In this novel, it is the flood that provides Maggie with an opportunity for the ultimate self-exoneration. For it enables her greatly to convince Tom of her abiding love and loyalty, to demonstrate to him what she has already proved to herself and the reader — that in her passionate, romantic, fitfully visionary idealism she has struggled to absorb and observe the personal integrity and responsibility that ennoble the otherwise dull moral order of the Tullivers and Dodsons. Partly arbitrariness and evasion, partly irresolution, and partly a lack of space prevent George Eliot from fully achieving her purpose, but that purpose is by now fairly clear: it is to present Maggie, a victim of circumstances and even more of her own character, triumphing over those circumstances by means of her character, and attaining in death the wholeness, unity, and heroic stature for which she has always yearned. The ending is sincere: there is no ironic or accusing side glance at St Ogg's either in the final embrace of brother and sister or in the inscription on their tomb, "In their death they were not divided." Clearly it is not reasonable to view the drowning of Maggie and Tom as a result of the destructive tendencies of their society. The rift between the inner world and the outer which is the cause of Maggie's suffering is the ultimate theme of the novel. In my opinion, not only does social circumstance play an important part in Maggie's fate, her own personal character should also be kept in mind when we read the novel.

Notes

- ¹ By this I do not mean to advocate what Harvey, in reference to *The Mill on the Floss*, criticizes as "the over-leisurely beginning" and its counterpart, "the rushed and crowded ending" (*The Art of George Eliot*, p. 126).
- ² Reva Stump, *Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels*, p. 76
- ³ The last phrase, referring, one must suppose, to London, is a direct echo of the concluding lines of Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802": "Dear God! the very houses seem asleep/And all that mighty heart is lying still!"
- ⁴ *Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels*, pp.79 – 100. On p. 98, for example, she cites what she calls an "incidental image" in the novel: "Mr. Moss who, when he married Miss Tulliver, had been regarded as the buck of

Busset, now? had the depressed, unexpectant air of a *machine-horse*" [Miss Stump's italics]. In this passage, she writes, "the partially suppressed meaning implies . . . that the men have somehow become submissively less than men and that the women have become both aggressively more and submissively less than women." But with the possible exception of Lucy Deane, no figure in *The Mill on the Floss* is less aggressive than the plaintive and good-hearted Mrs. Moss. And to regard the entire society of St Ogg's as effeminate or dominated by women is to forget that one of the novel's compelling concerns, after all, has to do with the restrictions imposed on women by provincial traditions.

⁵ Ibid., p. 115

⁶ Ibid., pp. 132 – 133.

⁷ *The Art of George Eliot*, p.125.

⁸ *Essays of George Eliot*, p.29.

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The Survival of an Injured Daughter: Esther Summerson's Narration in *Bleak House*

Harumi Matsuura

It is well known that Charles Dickens (1812-70) endured a difficult boyhood. The young Dickens dreamed of becoming “a learned and distinguished man”; yet the Dickens household suffered a decline at about that time. The boy was obliged to work at a blacking factory to help the household economy. The experience left many deep scars on young Dickens. Since the boy's parents were quite happy about his work, the boy's pride was extremely hurt. He might have thought that he was a kind of a deserted child. His anger and resentment were turned especially bitterly upon his mother — because it had been his mother who stimulated his intellectual curiosity “to be a learned and distinguished man.”¹ Even though his anger against his mother did not soften until the late 1840s, he nevertheless admired her shrewd and efficient household management. He had an ambivalent feeling towards his mother: he could not forgive her, nor could he abandon or ignore her. It may safely be assumed that her outstanding household management was reflected in the figure of Esther Summerson, the heroine of *Bleak House* (1852)².

Esther experiences a situation quite similar to Dickens' early circumstances. She lives an orphan-like childhood and is possessed by a great degree of trauma; nevertheless, she has high hopes. As an illegitimate daughter, Esther is obliged to face numerous bitter experiences in Victorian society. Yet, she leads a persevering and benevolent life. Thus we can understand how the haunting agony that made Dickens a man of great insight has also brought a similar achievement to the abandoned and orphan-like Esther.

In many of Dickens' novels the image of an “angel-in-the-house” is embodied in his heroines — as we can see in Esther. He praised women for their self-sacrifice and moral responsibility — qualities

which he might not have found in his mother. Dickens is known to have considered the significance of gender when depicting men and women in his novels; in other words, he liked to give the sexes their respective roles. Yet, at the same time, Dickens allowed a “pen” to the woman character, Esther Summerson, as a narrator, so that she could tell her own story. It was very difficult for a woman to write, read, and think independently at that time.³ Then what made Dickens, a typical mid-Victorian, allow a pen to a woman? We can be fairly certain that though the heroine seems to be modeled on an angel-in-the-house, Dickens must have aimed at making her something more.⁴

Dickens adopted both female first-person and omniscient narrations in the novel. At first the former narration was thought inferior to the latter in its workmanship, because Esther’s role was not immediately understood. For example, George Henry Lewes was wrong when he described Esther as a “monstrous failure,” because a close look at these two different types of narration will reveal that they are quite equal in function and significance. Each of them is intricately interlaced, and the twine helps the story deepen. That is to say, on the one hand the omniscient narration vents its wrath against the injustice of the time or its pent-up discontents with the reading public; on the other, Esther’s first-person plays her part to heal those cruel situations. The first-person narrative is an effective technique in expressing mental development and the interior life of human beings. This paper is intended to investigate the way Esther fulfills her hopes within the fetters of moral standards in the 19th century society.

Many scholars believe that *Jane Eyre* (1847), a novel contemporaneous with *Bleak House*, influences the character of Esther Summerson.⁵ Both women belong to the middle class in the Victorian age in Britain. People of this class, especially women, suffered from severe social restrictions. Esther and Jane are also set in the same situation as orphans who are treated badly by adults, yet they are the architects of their own fortunes. However, their characters, strategies for surviving, and self-realization seem to be almost completely different. It will be useful to compare these two women characters in order to grasp the image of Esther Summerson more clearly. Esther has been criticised for her coyness and her indecisiveness by many critics. However, Alex Zwerdling acutely observes that her complex behaviour is due to trauma. What her aunt says and does scars Esther for life. I would like to develop the idea a little further.

It is worthy of remark that Victorian writers had to indicate “pas-

sion" without risking blatant indecency. This is the state of affairs in Victorian literary discourse. Naturally, Dickens seldom referred to sexual subjects. He did not go into the details of passion in his novels, to be sure, but this strategy was derived from his conviction that a writer had to feel the social influence of, and moral responsibility for, the art. In addition, Dickens always tried to win the confidence of his readers because he wanted to maintain a strong relationship with his public. Though he had a great desire to indicate "passion" in his novels, he bridled himself.⁶ Considering the social context, Dickens was always a professional who cared to protect his dignity as a writer. Deliberation prevented him from defying the conventions. On the contrary, Charlotte Brontë adopted "passion" as one of the themes of *Jane Eyre*, a novel in which Jane achieves self-realization, and it may understandably have astonished Victorian reviewers.⁷ Besides, the novel was sensationally published — the story of the novel was not only wrapped in mystery but also offered a disturbing theme, and the reading public were curious about whether the writer was male or female. Therefore we should notice that the success of *Jane Eyre* may have made Dickens feel uneasy. In addition, Dickens may have had difficulty accepting Charlotte Brontë's provincialism, coarseness, and sombreness as well as her eponymous character's rebelliousness, obstinacy, and assertiveness.⁸ His irritation and rivalry with both Brontë and Jane may have led him to invent a woman character, one who stays within the Victorian gender limitations but also finally achieves self-realization. Thus, Dickens brilliantly projects Esther as a type of his ideal woman, with her self-sacrifice and moral responsibility, and as one who achieves self-realization.

I

Bleak House, one of Dickens' social problem novels, is advanced by means of an omniscient and a woman's first person narration. The former narration exposes and rages over injustice, falsehood, and irresponsibility, which were killer conditions in 19th century British society. The latter, Esther's, understands and relieves the people who has been suffering badly from these social organisms.

The story centres on a quarrel over an inheritance, the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case. The parties concerned row over their share of this suit to gain something at all costs. Feeling chagrin at the lingering suit and looking forward to hearing of a bare possibility, some of them tire of waiting and die poorly. They are, so to speak, victims of the institu-

tion. What's more, many neglected children appear and draw around Esther. Most of them are excluded from good fortune and happiness because of being tortured by the selfishness of their parents or the social organism. Therefore, the corruptness of the law and the rottenness of the official world and fashion as well as expediency are tilted or sometimes made the target of ironical remarks by the angry and accusing omniscient narrator. The corruption and rottenness are metaphorically depicted as fog, mud, webs, and darkness.

Esther, by contrast, speaks in a compassionate tone. As her name suggests, she lights up the gloomy and chaotic world of the novel in order to lead the oppressed people to a safe area. Where do the differences of tone in the two narrations come from? We have to grasp the roundness of Esther's character in order to understand it. The point is that Esther herself is portrayed as an oppressed person right from the start of the story. She has been distressed about her birth and origin since her aunt told that "your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers" (19). The aunt simply gives some quite irresponsible and merciless blame to little Esther and obliges her to be submissive, self-denying, and diligent. Consequently, she is unable to discover her merits and tends to belittle herself as if she were an insignificant woman. Critics would describe her hesitation causing by a loss confidence as coyness. Brontë is also contemptuous of Esther's weakness and twaddle.⁹ However, I would like to emphasise that her negative personality must be caused by a petrification which comes from her trauma. In any case, despite what her aunt says, Esther bravely takes a vow to strive to be industrious, contented, and kind-hearted, and to do some good to someone, and to win love. Esther dispenses love to the needy, because it is the very thing she needs to be given. It should be emphasized that the most important thing for her is the winning of some love, for she has been starved of maternal affection since her childhood. She confesses that "I had never heard my mama spoken of. I had never heard of my papa either, but I felt more interested about my mama" (18). Her intuitive thinking about her mother is on target, because meeting her triggers Esther's restoration to confidence. Moreover, she has longed for someone who is able to understand and accept her. It is love that Esther thirsts for.

Speaking of love, Jane Eyre has also been starved of love from early childhood. Young Jane confides to her friend Helen who sympathetically understands and accepts Jane that "if others don't love me, I would rather die than live — I cannot be to be solitary and hated,

Helen" (81). In order to gain their desires Esther and Jane struggle against the shackles of convention, which demanded very high ideals from women. The image of the ideal womanhood was formed and prevailed through the 19th century society by means of advice books. Sarah Ellis's *The Women of England* (1843), which guided the Victorian people to gender roles, was the most widely read.¹⁰ Coventry Patmore and John Ruskin made the notion of an angel-in-the-house take root in the people's mind through their books: *The Angel in the House* (1854) and "Of Queens' Garden" from *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). Though Patmore praises a woman for her love, intuition, and beauty, he considered women to have an absence of eagerness for action and ability in clear-sightedness which are the attributes of men. His apparent woman-worship means in practice the reverse of male chauvinism. Moreover we interpret Ruskin's depiction as obliging women to lead a life of self-renunciation and live simply in order to make a man's home happy. It is astonishing that women were not expected to be independent human beings. Yet Jane denies that she is an angel. She asserts that women have feelings and can act independently:

I asserted: 'and I will not be one [an angel] till I die: I will be myself. Mr. Rochester, you must neither expect nor exact anything celestial of me — for you will not get it, any more than I shall get it of you: which I do not at all anticipate.'

(292)

When Rochester, the love of her life, requests Jane to be an angel, she flatly refuses to do so. She firmly says that she is not an angel, and she has no intention of being one. She asks him not to force her and hails herself as an individual.

Esther, on the contrary, has tried to keep the vow genuinely since her childhood. She wants to be warmly received by her surroundings. In the process of growth, she is aware that she will become an image of ideal womanhood in the day when she keeps her vow. It might have been the moment to decide that she made it her strategy to survive. Taking the concept of the angel-in-the-house or self-renunciation into account, it is important whether the heroine is such an angel or not, because it does not seem to be possible for such an angel to live her own life.

Jane Eyre, a woman of proud and susceptible nature, tries to increase her possibilities from early childhood. Because her great res-

olution, insightful visions, and strong passions are always to the forefront, she is sometimes a troublemaker in relation to her surroundings. Moreover, it is very important for her to be faithful to God and herself. It is almost impossible for such a character to be in harmony with other people. When her love, which is in defiance of class, is almost achieved, she leaves Rochester, her lover, behind. He is committing the crime of bigamy. Even though it seems to be inevitable to do so, she would not allow him to behave in such a way. She meanders around pennilessly, and then lives with the people who saved her life. Shortly afterwards, they turn out to be her relatives. She understands the true nature of home, nevertheless, and finally returns to Rochester. The reason why she does this is that her cousin St. John Rivers makes a proposal to her. At first he seems to be eligible for her. However, St. John Rivers proves to be an image of the patriarchal terrors. He is in practice “the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ, when he says — ‘Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me’” (501). Accepting his proposal means the destruction of her life and all her hopes. It must be impossible for Jane to deny herself and follows the patriarch, therefore, she appreciates her own mind and she flies from St. John.

Knowing Rochester has lost his fortune, eyesight, and an arm, she determines to marry him. As Jane has struggled to discover her real place in the world, Rochester’s handicaps are not an obstacle to marriage.¹¹ In addition, Jane has received a fortune from her uncle at this point and Rochester’s legal wife is dead, so she finally marries Rochester on equal terms with him. Judging from these points, we can safely say that a motif in *Jane Eyre* is the preference for love with sexual and human equality, which involves the necessity for women to be independent both economically and personally.

Conversely, it appears that Esther leads quite a different life to Jane’s. Esther seems to be an angel, an image of ideal womanhood in the Victorian age. She does not appear to defy conventions, and live her life within social limitations. However, it does not mean she lives in peace. Her state of mind may be approximate to Snow White’s in one of the Grimm Brothers’ fairy tales. Snow White realises her powerlessness and thinks how she can cope with her problem in order to survive when a huntsman leaves her behind in a forest so as to save her life from her mother’s murderousness.¹² As Snow White resists the indignant queen, so Esther resists her austere aunt. Esther is a good girl, just as Snow White is, and this is why both girls can survive

their harsh realities. Dickens wished his heroine to be a good girl in order to survive the harshness of her life. Just as Jane does, Esther flounders to discover her real place in the world of her own way. Esther's posture towards her life should link with the conception of what Dickens thinks is a woman's proper way of living. The most important virtues of his ideal woman must have been devotion as well as sagacity and shrewdness. He therefore, wanted his heroine to have these aspects. Dickens may have intentionally adopted the form of an angel-in-the-house in *Bleak House*.

II

Esther Summerson is a somewhat dubious narrator — for she occasionally belittles herself excessively and often uses ambiguous phrases. I will investigate how she veils her emotions and opinions in the subtext of her narrative. She, however, sometimes reveals her real intentions. Also, from time to time, her behaviour varies with the criterion of her own image. I intend to let Esther throw off her disguise and approach us in her true colours.

First, I take her indecisiveness as one of the impediments to arrival at a conclusion. After her aunt's funeral, Esther without relatives is offered Mr. Jarndyce's proposal of receiving a good education at Greenleaf in order to become a governess. What Esther does first is she wraps her dear old doll, her one and only conferee, in its own shawl, and quietly lays it in the garden-earth. We can interpret the act as Esther's attempt to break with her past and make a fresh start. She gradually confirms that the resolution which she made on her birthday — to try to be industrious, contented, and truehearted, and to do some good to some one, and win some love — is sure to work well:

. . . whenever a new pupil came who was a little downcast and unhappy, she was so sure — indeed I don't know why — to make a friend of me, that all newcomers were confided to my care. . . . I never saw in any face there, thank Heaven, on my birthday, that it would have been better if I had never been born.

(26)

As Esther understands unhappy and oppressed people, they come to adore her. It seems that the joys of gaining acceptance with people lead her to appreciate herself. However, she easily loses this awareness.

Several years later, when she has been living a happy life in

Greenleaf, she is offered a position as companion to Mr. Jarndyce's wards: Ada Clare and Richard Carstone. She consents to the plan with reluctance because she has become accustomed to the life there. However, she promptly renounces her wish and considers that "I must not take tears where I was going, after all that had been done for me" (28). Is it proper for us to think that Esther should be blamed for her indecisiveness? She gradually recovers her confidence thereafter. Beyond all expectation, she finds Mr. Jarndyce, Ada, and Richard to be amiable and they lead Esther to regain confidence.

Second, Esther presses her image on us as one of gentleness, goodness, and cheerfulness in her story, but we understand that she has an essentially different nature, too. For one thing, the truth of the matter is that Lady Dedlock is the natural mother of Esther Summerson. The Lady and Esther, also the Lady and Hortense, the Lady's housemaid, resemble each other internally as well as in their appearance. Esther describes her mother's first impression: "Neither did I know the loftiness and haughtiness of Lady Dedlock's face at all, in any one" (225). The Lady and Hortense are haughty and easily inflamed women, but Esther herself has a marked tendency to behave in a way similar to the Lady and Hortense. When Mr. Guppy, a clerk of the law firm, Kenge and Carboy, proposes to Esther, she refuses and blames him. It is indeed quite an unexpected offer. The point is that he makes a guess at her background, her illegitimacy: the relation to Lady Dedlock, when he makes a proposal to her. When Mr. Guppy plays his last card "I know nothing now, certainly; but what might I not, if I had your confidence, and you set me on?" (114-115), the offer upsets her very much. He touches her on a sore point. She is irritated by his confidence in ferreting out someone's secrets and her heart aches for his estimation of her as cheap. She tries to control her anger owing to the habit of restraining her feelings. However, that night, all alone, she is not able to conclude the matter by laughing it off:

I surprised myself by beginning to laugh about it, and then surprised myself still more by beginning to cry about it. In short, I was in a flutter for a little while; and felt as if an old chord had been more coarsely touched than it ever had been since the days of the dear old doll, long buried in the garden.

(115)

We can interpret this emotion which she has always concealed. We can also understand that it is not her accustomed character, but the

Lady's. These incidents show she dwells upon her origins and suppresses her feelings in her daily life. Guppy's offer makes her realise again she is an insignificant person.

For another, it is clear that the turning point in her life is her falling ill. Having feverish dreams, she faces in her inmost thoughts many things that she has never noticed. Her philosophy of life entirely changes. Esther talks thus about her dreams:

While I was very ill, the way in which these divisions of time became confused with one another, distressed my mind exceedingly. At once a child, an elder girl, and the little woman I had been so happy as, I was not only oppressed by cares and difficulties adapted to each station, but by the great perplexity of endlessly trying to reconcile them.

(431)

Sigmund Freud analyzes in his *Interpretation of Dreams* that one's real intentions sometimes emerge at such moments. Freud interprets dreams to be a royal road to the kingdom of unconsciousness and believes that unconsciousness always influences upon consciousness. Even though Esther every day suppresses the feelings and ideas that she regards as taboo, her real intention emerges and awakes her to the fact that it is an excessive repression. Esther is trying to reach the top of an enormous staircase, which seems to be endless in her dream. She often stops ascending because of an obstruction to her progress, then strives to get to the top again. There is a close relation between her dream and her sense of an unreasonable repression in the pursuit of this strategy.

Another dream concerns a glowing circle in the darkness. She functions as a part of it, but her real intention is to get rid of this connection: "And when my only prayer was to be taken off from the rest, and when it was such inexplicable agony and misery to be a part of the dreadful thing?" (432). This shows that up to this point her roles have been a burden to her. These dreams, in short, make her notice difficulties in pursuing her strategy.

Third, Esther doesn't recognise her identity until she loses her beauty. She has not seen herself in a mirror when she talks about the following matter. Esther has not recognised her altered face; nevertheless, she has already composed herself, "How little I had lost, when the world was so full of delight for me" (443). It is surprising that she regains her composure and can manage to talk about the beauty of

nature, and can even talk about “hope” in the passage.

She wants her feelings to be mended first in preparation for meeting the harsh realities of life, and then she looks at herself in a mirror. As Gilbert and Gubar analyse it, a mirror exercises such authority. A mirror judges a person by how she looks and it is the patriarchal judgement.¹³ The voice of the looking glass and the voice of the patriarch might not admire Esther’s beauty any longer. This means that she has not measured up to being an ideal woman. She desperately tries to compose herself. Then her mother, Lady Dedlock, comes forward:

For I saw very well that I could not have been intended to die, or I should never have lived; not to say should never have been reserved for such a happy life. ... I had had experience, in the shock of that very day, that I could, even thus soon, find comforting reconcilements to the change that had fallen on me.

(454-455)

Esther is even satisfied with her alteration because she is convinced of her mother’s love. She has longed to see her mother since her childhood. Through the devotion of Esther for her mother, she even expresses a feeling of gratitude for her alteration. “... the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness...”(449). She fears the relationship between herself and Lady Dedlock will be discovered by her mother’s opponents. Her self-definition deepens and she finally recognises her identity.

Finally, most outstanding of all, Esther tries her luck:

It would still have been a great relief to me to have gone away without making myself known, but I was determined not to do so. “No, my dear, no. No, no, no!” ... I untied my bonnet, and put my veil half up...

(548)

When she sees Woodcourt, a young surgeon, after a long interval, she is afraid of his recognising her. At first she is unwilling to reveal her altered looks to him. However, she does so in order to try and renew the love affair. Her suggestive action, raising her veil to him, steers their love towards a resumption.¹⁴

When Woodcourt who has been growing to love Esther ever since they first met, and who still has the same feelings after she loses her beauty — confesses his yearning; however, Esther is already engaged to John Jarndyce, her guardian and benefactor. Though she under-

stands that Jarndyce loves her and his feeling is returned, her love for him is a daughterly love. She does want to accept Woodcourt, but she does not want to hurt Jarndyce. She takes a chance on winning her love. Consequently, she leads Woodcourt to persuade Jarndyce without a rupture. With Woodcourt, then, she uses nonverbal communication: suggestive attitudes and expressions and telling looks with some kinds of implication. Moreover, she doesn't clearly tell him her feelings; she leads him to understand what she really feels. She makes him confess his affections toward her, then she shows him her bitter sorrow:

“I should poorly show the trust that I have in the dear one who will evermore be as dear to me as now,” and the deep earnestness with which he said it, at once strengthened me and made me weep, “if, after her assurance that she is not free to think of my love, I urged it.”
(731)

It could be termed a feint. It is indeed one of her admirable skills. Consequently, everything is settled, namely success attends her efforts.

In the same fashion, Esther uses her ability to persuade Skimpole, a person who takes advantage of others' generosity to cadge money or goodwill.¹⁵ She negotiates with Skimpole in the following manner:

“... it has occurred to me to take the liberty of saying that — if you would — not — ” I was coming to the point with great difficulty, when he took me by both hands, and, with a radiant face and in the liveliest way, anticipated it. “Not go there?”
(726)

Esther considers Skimpole to be one of the causes of Richard's distress. She visits him alone to ask not to sponge off Richard for any expenditure. Skimpole is personally gentle and well-informed, but not reliable. He is a man who watches his opportunity for stealing somebody's money and evades taking responsibility in his daily life. Again, she uses nonverbal communication: making significant gestures, and adopting certain tones of voice and eye movements. They lead Skimpole to understand what she wants. It is an ability which she has cultivated: she has always tried to avoid coming into conflict with her surroundings; besides, she listens to someone very carefully and then admirably persuades them.

So far I have shown Esther in her true colours. At first, it is not possible for her to appreciate her own worth. She usually conceals her

haughtiness and a temper under her gentleness, goodness, and cheerfulness. She understands that she is not permitted to reveal such a nature if she wants to be loved. However, having feverish dreams, she realises her self-repression is quite excessive and wants to alter the situation: to play her role or be an angel-in-the-house. Her illness causes the loss of her beauty; nevertheless, she doesn't consider that it is a loss of her worth. The surroundings' attitudes account for her confidence: her friends have not changed their attitudes toward her at all. They still love her. Moreover, she even rejoices at her alteration, when it confirms her mother's love for her. Hope revives in her. "I read the letter. I clearly derived from it — and that was much then — that I had not been abandoned by my mother"(452). Likewise, as there is no resemblance between them any longer, the relation between Esther and her mother seems not to be noticed by her mother's opponents. Her philosophy of life has entirely changed and she understands what she must be. She has recognised her identity by this stage. What needs to be emphasised is that the most admirable point is her great ability as a negotiator. Esther takes the chance of seizing her happiness and manoeuvres Skimpole in the way that she wants. Her tactics, which are significant gestures and ostensible motions, touch Woodcourt and make Skimpole aware of her intention. When she accomplishes these, she still seems to be an angel in appearance.

When we look at Esther's hidden nature, we understand that Esther might have been a 'Jane Eyre' to Dickens. He intrinsically hoped a woman would be clear-sighted and independent. Over and above that, as he had ambivalent feelings about how a woman should be devoted, he could not wholly admire Jane. Therefore, he will have created his ideal woman character as clear-sighted and independent, but devoted as well.

III

So far I have demonstrated Esther's concealed nature and abilities. I have also shown her transition from a woman of self-resignation to one of self-assurance. In this section, I will show how Esther transforms herself from the image of an angel-in-the-house into a strong-minded woman. I would also like to consider Dickens' strategy in depicting Esther as a strong-minded woman.

Esther seems to be an image of the angel-in-the-house, but her character must be derived from Dickens' spirit of rivalry and also the

time's demands; in brief, it is based on his strategy. To borrow an argument from Ellen Moers, Dickens understood what Jane's "voyagings toward liberty" and "experience" were like.¹⁶

Jane flounces away from Thornfield, Rochester's house, in anger and fear. She does not regard the marriage with Rochester as suitable when he first proposes to her. We can suppose that Esther's journey to Deal overlaps with Jane's lonely one in her novel. Both heroines pass individually through difficulties during their journeys, and consequently confirm the deepest desires, and these experiences aid in the progress to their happiness. As Dickens was aware of *Jane Eyre*, he must have plotted to reject Jane's offensive elements: "the dangerous independence of spirit" (Moers, *Agitating* 22) as well as "the Byronic pride and passion" and "the refusal to submit to her social destiny" (Gilbert and Gubar 338). He must have also wanted to adopt Jane's favorable parts: clear-sightedness and independence.

What's more, when we read Susan Shatto's work, we can understand how Dickens made an effort to characterize Esther Summerson. As Shatto points out, Esther appears to be modeled on Phoebe Pyncheon in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and Queen Esther in the Bible. Phoebe is "bright, orderly, efficient and 'a nice little house wife,' and with her 'gift for practical arrangement' which gives 'a look of comfort and habitableness to any place'" (45-46). The orphaned but beautiful Jewish Esther is chosen queen from among many virgins. Queen Esther, the consort of Ahasuerus, the Persian king, tried to save the Jewish people from annihilation without regard to her own peril. She was a person of goodness, devotion, courage, and self-sacrifice. It is surprising that there are many similarities between Esther Summerson and Phoebe and Esther from the Bible. Further, as Michael Slater insists, Dickens attempted to structure the novel with great pains — confessing his efforts to a young American lady.¹⁷ We can understand Dickens' rivalry with *Jane Eyre*: the symbol of clear-sightedness and independence, as well as his admiration for Phoebe Pyncheon and Queen Esther: symbols of devotion. Aiming to combine devotion with clear-sightedness and independence, Dickens must have taken great pains and employed much scrupulous care to give Esther her character. As he recognized the changing times and the fact of "female energies," in the novel he might have presented a new woman figure, from "a different and new perspective," regarding the woman problem as "a major social theme." He treats his women characters as "more force-

ful, independent and capable”¹⁸ than in his earlier novels. He seems to have had second thoughts about a woman’s proper place and mission, and his view of women surely had changed by the time he wrote the novel.

He includes twenty women characters in the novel. Not only Mrs. Jellyby and Pardiggle but others also act against his principles: women have to stay in their appropriate spheres. However, he seems to have accepted, in a manner, each of the women’s cases except those of Mrs. Jellyby and Pardiggle. As Virginia Blain says, he “had a great many things he wanted to say about women and their social and sexual roles” (67). No matter how he accepted women’s jumping out from their proper places, it might have been out of the question to accept the cases of Mrs. Jellyby and Pardiggle. Both of them neglect humanity and this is a continuing theme for Dickens. He is not so much making a fool of them as blaming them.

We perceive that Esther works well as a real philanthropist and a woman with a mission. He succeeds in emphasising Esther’s humanity, when we compare Esther with Mrs. Jellyby and Pardiggle. As Moers describes Dickens’ aim, Esther’s function is “to try to repair the social damage” and give people “right charity and right religion.”¹⁹ Dickens makes Mrs. Jellyby and Pardiggle raise their voices, but nobody recognises the meaning. Dickens, likewise, makes Esther tone her voice down; then many of them are soothed and understand her sayings.

Esther’s hoping “to win some love” might include her need to love herself. After Esther has achieved self-definition, she gradually progresses toward being a strong-minded woman. As Gilbert and Gubar state, “self-definition necessarily precedes self-assertion: the creative ‘I AM’ cannot be uttered if the ‘I’ knows not what it is” (17). While they show appropriate attitudes, as women writers should, these can be applied to Esther’s case. Let us return to Esther Summerson. Criticism regarded her hesitation as coyness and Brontë thought it twaddle. By contrast, Jane has definitely accepted herself, and asserted her opinions and rights clearly since childhood. Esther hasn’t understood her merit and accepted herself until she loses her beauty. She establishes a sense of identity at that moment. When she reads the letter from her mother, she confirms her mother’s fast love. She writes that “I clearly derived from it — and that was much then — that I had not been abandoned by my mother” (Dickens 452). She gains confidence. Also Esther breaks new ground to perceive how her mother

tries to convey her love and apology to her, yet the act drives her into a corner. She says, "I saw very well that I could not have been intended to die, or I should never have lived . . ." (Dickens 454). When she has gained self-confidence, she reaches maturity and becomes aggressive but only by degrees. She reveals the great ability that she has concealed. It now emerges that she has become a strong-minded woman.

Michael Slater appears confused about the ending of this novel; he seems not to understand that Esther has transformed herself into a strong-minded woman with the virtue of modesty. It is Esther Summerson who achieves self-realization within the Victorian gender limitation — combining it with devotion, mildness, and benevolence. She becomes a person magnanimous and brave enough to take a chance in her hour of need. Slater's confusion about the ending of the novel emerges as follows:

Dickens seems, in fact, to be trying to make Esther function both as an unreliable and as a reliable narrator at the same time and the result is, not surprisingly, unsatisfactory. If he had followed through his conception of her character as an illustration of the damage done to individuals in the 'Chancery World' of *Bleak House* he would have ended the novel with her entering into a self-sacrificing, essentially sterile, marriage with Jarndyce. Instead, he suddenly turns Jarndyce into a sort of *deus ex machina* ('I felt as if the brightness on him must be like the brightness of the Angels', Esther tells us) who ensures that Esther is saved from herself to achieve the happiness in love that marriage with him would have denied her.

(257)

Slater is questioning why Dickens produces a *deus ex machina* in his ending. Dickens, however, wanted to depict Esther's transformation from, as Slater expresses it, "one of life's walking wounded" into a woman who, again in Slater's words, is "finally released from the psychological and emotional straitjacket into which her early experience had forced her" (256). Dickens wanted his heroine to seize happiness by the hand and also didn't want her to boast about her own exploits. Esther, therefore, mentions that it is by the grace of the Angels. We should not dismiss the idea that, as I have suggested, Dickens wanted Esther to achieve self-realization in a different way from *Jane Eyre*'s. That is, Esther does not assert herself.

In the final chapter of the story, we find that Esther belittles herself and sings her husband's praises. It seems natural that we feel an antipathy toward her theatrical expression:

The people even praise Me as the doctor's wife. The people even like Me as I go about, and make so much of me that I am quite abashed. I owe it all to him, my love, my pride! They like me for his sake, as I do everything I do in life for his sake.

(769)

As I have already mentioned, Esther experiences a situation quite similar to Dickens' early circumstances. She lives an orphan-like childhood and has an obsession about not having been loved and received by somebody. Though she has high hopes, her predicament is always with her until she seizes her identity. That is just young Dickens' state. He had been subjected to a great degree of trauma in the blacking factory period. It was not possible for him to confess his pain to anyone else for a long time. The author must have hoped his heroine was finally released from her pain. When she hears Woodcourt's admiration for her, her obsession must vanish away:

"Heaven knows, beloved of my life," said he, "that my praise is not a lover's praise, but the truth. You do not know what all around you see in Esther Summerson, how many hearts she touches and awakens, what sacred admiration and what love she wins."

(731)

She has been longing to hear such lines from someone whom she loves. At that moment, she recognises that she has become a woman in accord with her vow. When she sees 'the grace of the Angels,' she expresses her feelings of gratitude, namely she blesses her husband from the bottom of her heart. This is the first and also the final words of hers without a double meaning in her narrative. We understand, at this point, that it isn't self-denial or coyness, but rather passionate feeling.

The points of my argument have been expressed in the preceding pages. *Jane Eyre* insists on her faith, belief, and desire directly from childhood; however, Esther Summerson's case is rather more complicated for us to understand. As she has been severely psychologically damaged by a loveless childhood and has not been able to achieve self-definition. Although she seems to have been an angel-in-the-house, this is grounded in the vow which little Esther makes. Confirming her mother's fast love, the surroundings' constant support, and the beloved Woodcourt's adoration, she overcomes her natural fear that nobody will love her. She, then, gains self-confidence and reaches maturity. This progress aids her in revealing the great ability that she has concealed,

and so she finally becomes a strong-minded woman.

IV

If “Didactic literature often reinforced” the notion of an angel-in-the-house to instruct “readers in how to adhere to proper behavior” (Ayres 4), the mid-Victorian Charles Dickens might well also have urged readers to follow this notion. Nevertheless, in practice he presented another image of womanhood through the heroine of *Bleak House* even as he outwardly showed an ideal of womanhood in his day. It must have derived from his well-developed plot. The more I read about the social background of the 19th century in Britain, the more I acknowledged that women of the middle class were in quite repressive situations.

Britain was rapidly industrialized in the early 19th century. This Industrial Revolution began in the middle of 18th century and was gaining momentum by the end of the century. The Revolution produced numerous new kinds of occupation for the middle class. As a result, the nation benefited from mass production; however, capitalism had developed and the system demanded a number of sacrifices. The society rapidly changed. The Victorians evolved their own standards of worth and ideology: they were sticklers for keeping up appearances and held fast to their extremely polite ethical views.

It seems that the combination of Evangelicalism with utilitarianism produced inconsistencies, but Evangelicalism spread over the whole nation, especially into the middle class, during the Victorian age. This ‘ism’ added the force of religion and moral ideology to the theory of utilitarian politics, society, and economy. Evangelicalism offered the middle class businessmen the vehement vigour which they needed. The Victorians owed their confidence to a spiritual vitality which was borne of Evangelical self-sacrifice.

The Victorian age was thus quite complicated. The Industrial Revolution made domestic industry decline and men worked at places unconcerned with their own homes. The ideology consequently differentiated a woman's place inside of the house, from a man's in the open world. Women were only expected to be angels-in-the-house “to make a man's home happy” (Williams 24). Because of the distorted image of women, women of the middle class were severely victimized. Some literature also acted as a spur to help the nation follow this notion.

Though many of Dickens' heroines seem to have embodied the

image of an angel-in-the-house, Esther turns out not to do so. However, as Slater observes, the plot and the heroine have been misunderstood.²⁰ The plot appears to include an epochal standpoint. She achieves self-realization at last, though fate had compelled her to live a limited and hard life. From a comparative study of *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House*, it is possible to argue that Esther is not an angel-in-the-house. She is, rather, a strong-minded woman.

Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë were not acceptable to each other both personally and as writers. Brontë disliked both Dickens' ostentatious extravagance and his urbanite sophistication. Dickens had refused to depict passionate themes up until the publication of *Jane Eyre*, while Charlotte Brontë freely depicted them in a novel where Jane achieves self-realization. Dickens was irritated by both Brontë and Jane; his rivalry must have led him to produce a comparable woman character.

Esther and Jane were compared so as to clarify the similarities and differences between them and, as a result, it is made evident that their starting points and also their goals are the same; however, the ways they approach their goals are different. Further, Dickens didn't want his heroine to be an impudent, outspoken troublemaker, but demanded devotion and her being a good girl as well as both sagacious and shrewd. Dickens must have taken account of the ideal of womanhood in those days and adopted the form of an angel-in-the-house for his novel — because he must have understood his adaptation of the theme entirely answers to the time's demands, and is completely contrary to Jane Eyre's image.

In the process of showing Esther to be a strong-minded woman, Esther's sagacity and tactics through parts of her dexterous narration were explored. She usually conceals her true colours under her virtues. Although this stance is caused by her desire to be loved, she realises it is absurd to keep on playing this role that she wants to alter her situation. Her serious illness causes the loss of her beauty; nevertheless, she doesn't appear to consider that it is a loss of worth. The confirmation of her mother's fast love and her surroundings' steady support persuades her not to do so. Accordingly, she achieves self-definition and recognises her identity. She not only displays her sagacity and shrewdness but comes to display great ability as a negotiator as she makes the best use of her tactics. When she attains success, she still seems to be an angel in appearance.

I have demonstrated how Dickens made Esther a strong-minded

woman with mildness and benevolence. Esther has been severely psychologically damaged by a loveless childhood and has not achieved self-definition. However, she always tries to keep the vow little Esther made and to be a good girl. As Esther achieves self-definition, she gradually progresses toward being a strong-minded woman. Besides, by the grace of the beloved Woodcourt's adoration, she overcomes her natural fear that nobody will love her.

In concluding, I should note that what Dickens proposes as his idea of a woman's proper place must be still the home. However, he no longer insists on a woman staying inside the house or beside the hearth. Though Dickens is particular about the spheres for a man and a woman, yet he even accepts that she associates herself with social movements or works outside. With the evolution of society and the female energies of the day, his ideas must have been at odds. Dickens has depicted the women's place from a different viewpoint. His proposal for the new woman figure was not at first well received by critics; however, Dickens' plot and Esther's function came to be understood with the passage of time.

Notes

- ¹ This is the view of Michael Slater in *Dickens and Women* (California: Stanford UP, 1983), 10.
- ² Citations of novels by Charles Dickens are from *Bleak House* (New York: Norton, 1977).
- ³ This point is argued by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 8.
- ⁴ Brenda Ayres states that ". . . the text constructs Esther as an exemplar of womanhood and a female advocate for domesticity, it also struggles to convey Dickens' understanding of women, and at the same time to convey a Victorian woman's attempt to understand herself." See Brenda Ayres in *Dissenting Women in Dickens' Novels: The Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 141.
- ⁵ See, in particular, Susan Shatto in *The Companion to Bleak House* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 7.
- ⁶ For Dickens' inclination to be careful with reference to passion, see Graham Storey in *Dickens Bleak House* (London: Cambridge UP, 1987), 86-87.
- ⁷ Brontë's passion was quite new to English fiction. See Gilbert and Gubar, 338.
- ⁸ See Juliet Barker in *The Brontës* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 815.
- ⁹ See Paul Schlicke in *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 56.

- ¹⁰ Victorian social and literary discourse concerning women's roles are explained, see Ayres, 4.
- ¹¹ Jane's state is understood, see Gilbert and Gubar, 368.
- ¹² Snow White had been allowed to live because she was a good girl. Her sensibility is described, see Gilbert and Gubar, 40.
- ¹³ The authority of the mirror is analysed, see Gilbert and Gubar, 38.
- ¹⁴ See Ellen Moers in "*Bleak House: The Agitating Women*" *The Dickensian* 69 (London: The Dickens Fellowship, 1973), 20.
- ¹⁵ Inspector Bucket, a man of great insight, describes Skimpole, see Dickens, 682.
- ¹⁶ See Moers, 22.
- ¹⁷ Slater reveals that Grace Greenwood writes, over the initials 'GG,' in *The New York Daily Tribune* 5 July 1870. See Slater, 431.
- ¹⁸ See Moers, 13.
- ¹⁹ See Moers, 14.
- ²⁰ Like many critics, Slater observes that "he [Dickens] has generally been judged to have failed artistically in his rendering of Esther's self-portrait . . ." See Slater, 255.

Some Aspects of Early Spring Thoreau Appreciated

Michiko Ono

One of Thoreau's friends, H. G. O. Blake, collected excerpts from Thoreau's *Journal* and published them in four books — *Summer*, *Autumn*, *Winter*, and *Early Spring in Massachusetts*. Each contains what Thoreau wrote in each season, and the four books are much of a size. Why did Blake entitle the book on spring “Early Spring in Massachusetts,” instead of just “Spring” like the other three, which represent each season in one word? Considering the size of the four books being approximately the same, the answer seems obvious — Thoreau wrote much about the early part of the spring in his *Journal*, which implies that he perceived something significant in it. He did not think of spring as a whole, like the other seasons, but observed the characteristics of early spring predominantly and wrote about them in his *Journal*. As a result, Blake entitled the book *Early Spring in Massachusetts* when he published it in 1884, twenty-two years after Thoreau's demise.

According to Blake's selection of excerpts, “early spring” ranges from February 24 to April 11. It may sound strange that the latter part of February is included in the spring in Massachusetts, but Thoreau himself wrote in his *Journal* dated February 24, 1857: “A fine spring morning.” Moreover, in *Walden* is described an incident in spring in which on his hitting the ice with the head of his axe, “it resounded like a gong for many rods around” (*Walden* 301), and the date of the incident, “February 24, 1857,” is found there.

It is of interest, on the other hand, that in *Walden*, “Spring” is the only chapter that has the title representing one season in one word. Equally important is the fact that nearly 85% of the chapter deals with the early part of spring, the date “the 29th of April” appearing only on the eighteenth page out of twenty-one pages. This may also suggest that early spring had a special significance for Thoreau.

In *Walden*, Thoreau writes about Walden Pond: “one might suppose

that it was called originally “*Walled-in Pond*” (*Walden* 183). Incidentally, in German the word “Wald,” which somewhat reminds us of “Walden,” means “woods.” And the pond is actually surrounded by woods — Walden Woods — which is rich in both animal and vegetable life. Thoreau also explains the origin of its name as follows: According to the legend, in ancient times, while the Indians, or Native Americans, were holding a meeting on a hill which rose high into the sky, “the hill shook and suddenly sank, and only one old squaw, named Walden, escaped, and from her the pond was named” (182).

In either case, those who read this book will understand Thoreau’s love of nature and that he was, as Nathaniel Hawthorn put it, “a keen and delicate observer of nature.” However, according to McGregor, Thoreau was not such a devoted student of the natural world until 1850, and a large part of *Walden* was written after that date (McGregor 4).

Thoreau praises spring with such words as “It is a natural resurrection, an experience of immortality” (Blake 1), and claims that we should “feel the spring influence with the innocence of infancy (*J3*: 128). In his *Journal* for February 25, 1859, he compares spring and morning to “the awakening of nature” and says that how one takes them reveals the state of one’s health:

Measure your health by your sympathy with morning and spring.
If there is no response in you to the awakening of nature, if the prospect of an early morning walk does not banish sleep, if the warble of the first bluebird does not thrill you, know that the morning and spring of your life are past . . .

(Blake 6)

As “the first bluebird” in this extract, he often refers to spring birds, such as nuthatches, chickadees, partridge, song-sparrows, robins, and sheldrakes. On February 27, 1860, Thoreau saw the first bird of the spring — a sheldrake:

Thus as soon as the river breaks up, or begins to break up fairly, and the strong wind, widening the cracks, makes at length open spaces in the ice of the meadow, this hardy bird [sheldrake] appears, and is seen sailing in the first widened crack in the ice where it can come at the water. Instead of a piece of ice I find it to be the breast of the sheldrake which so reflects the light as to look larger than it is, the bird steadily sailing this way and that with its companion who is diving from time to time. They have chosen the opening farthest removed from all shores. As I look I see the ice drifting in upon them and contracting the water, till finally they have but a few

square rods left, while there are forty or fifty acres near by. This is the first bird of the spring that I have seen or heard of.

(Blake 21-22)

In the following excerpt is depicted a nuthatch as “a herald of the spring”:

I heard this morning a nuthatch in the elms on the street. I think they are heard oftener at the approach of spring, just as the pheebe note of the chickadee is, and so their *quah quah* is a herald of the spring.

(Blake 6)

On the other hand, in *Walden* we find the joy brought by the cheerful singing of such birds as a sparrow, bluebird, song sparrow, and red-wing.

The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever! The faint silvery warblings heard over the partially bare and moist fields from the bluebird, the song sparrow, and the red-wing, as if the last flakes of winter tinkled as they fell! What at such a time are histories, chronologies, traditions, and all written revelations? The brooks sing carols and glees to the spring.

(*Walden* 310)

In the next excerpt is depicted Thoreau’s anxiousness for the singing of birds, along with the chirping of the striped squirrel and the woodchuck, which told him the arrival of spring:

One attraction in coming to the woods to live was that I should have leisure and opportunity to see the Spring come in . . . I am on the alert for the first signs of spring, to hear the chance note of some arriving bird, or the striped squirrel’s chirp... or see the woodchuck venture out of his winter quarters. On the 13th of March, after I had heard the bluebird, song sparrow, and red-wing, the ice was still nearly a foot thick . . .

(302)

From these extracts we can derive that Thoreau considered the songs of birds as the first sign of the spring, delighted in their cheerfulness, and regarded them as something representing “hope.” This reminds us of the following passage from John Muir’s “The Water-Ouzel” in *The Mountains of California*:

Among all the mountain birds, none has cheered me so much in

my lonely wanderings, — none so unfailingly. For both in winter and summer he sings, sweetly, cheerily, independent alike of sunshine and of love, requiring no other inspiration than the stream on which he dwells.

(Muir 192)

It is indeed of interest that the great lovers of nature both found a special quality in the singing of birds that “cheered” them.

On the other hand, William Wordsworth, a British poet, says in the fourth stanza of “Lines Written in Early Spring” that “the least motion” of the birds expresses “a thrill of pleasure,” observing them visually. In a similar way, apart from the sound, Thoreau sensed “cheerfulness” and “sunniness” in the pitch pine in spring:

. . . and it strikes me that this pine, take the year round, is the most cheerful tree and most living to look at and have about your house, it is so sunny and full of light, in harmony with the yellow sand there and the spring sun. The deciduous trees are apparently dead, and the white pine is much darker, but the pitch pine has an ingrained sunniness and is especially valuable for imparting warmth to the landscape at this season. . . . The pitch pine shines in the spring somewhat as the osiers do.

(*Journal XIII*: 203-04)

In this citation it is noteworthy that the pitch pine, bright in the spring sun, is compared with the osier. On the second day of the same month, Thoreau calls the “brightness” of the osier the “Phenomenon” (XIII: 170-71). H. Peck, referring to this part, explicates that what Thoreau calls the “phenomena” is the “metaphysical state” of the osier and that that is why it sounds strange to the ear of the people in the twentieth century (Peck 305).

In the nineteenth century when Thoreau lived, the word phenomenon predominantly meant external appearance, influenced by “Kant’s distinction between phenomena and noumena” (305), which was deeply related to “dualism,” a theory as to the spirit and the material. However, when Thoreau repeatedly writes “phenomena” in his *Journal*, he describes “real” scenes and events in nature in a deep sense, not the outward appearance (305). The same may apply to his depiction of the pitch pine. What Thoreau saw in the pitch pine was not merely the brightness of its external appearance, but the *Idea* raised into the domain of the spiritual world by his powers of imagination.

Thus, we can say that one of the qualities Thoreau perceived in the

early part of spring is the cheerfulness of birds and pitch pines.

Now, if we look to another aspect of early spring, we realize that one of the important signs of spring in Massachusetts is the thawing of snow. In the chapter “Spring” in *Walden*, Thoreau describes the thawing on the hillside as a significant natural phenomenon:

I feel as if I were nearer to the vitals of the globe, for this sandy overflow is something such a foliaceous mass as the vitals of the animal body. You find thus in the very sands an anticipation of the vegetable leaf. No wonder that the earth expresses itself outwardly in leaves, it so labors with the idea inwardly. The atoms have already learned this law, and are pregnant by it. The overhanging leaf sees here its prototype. *Internally*, whether in the globe or animal body, it is a moist thick *lobe*, a word especially applicable to the liver and lungs and the *leaves* of fat . . . *externally*, a dry thin *leaf*, even as the *f* and *v* are a pressed and dried *b* . . .

(*Walden* 306)

Here, Thoreau perceives in the thawing and the way sand overflows a “foliaceous mass as the vitals of the animal body,” and finds “an anticipation of the vegetable leaf.” These descriptions make us aware that the vital organs of animals do assume the shape of foliage and some of them — such as the lungs, the liver, and the kidneys — display the shape of a leaf. Further he refers to the other physical phenomena which assume the shape of a leaf:

The feathers and wings of birds are still drier and thinner leaves. Thus, also you pass from the lumpish grub in the earth to the airy and fluttering butterfly. The very globe continually transcends and translates itself, and becomes winged in its orbit. Even ice begins with delicate crystal leaves, as if it had flowed into moulds which the fronds of water-plants have impressed on the watery mirror. The whole tree itself is but one leaf, and rivers are still vaster leaves whose pulp intervening earth, and towns and cities are the ova of insects in their axils.

(306-07)

Thus, Thoreau was insightful enough to perceive that the veining was the principal design or prototype that was found in most life and even in the geographical features of the earth. It is indeed a convincing argument that the whole tree, as well as the feathers and wings of birds, exhibits the shape of a leaf, and that the ice, when it begins to form, also displays the design of leaves. Further, in his *Journal* Thoreau compares the rivers to the arteries and veins of the human

body, and their waters, which are “the most living part of nature,” to the blood:

I must now walk when I can see the most water, as to the most living part of nature. This is the blood of the earth, and we see its blue arteries pulsing with new life now.

(*Journal XIII*: 163-64)

More important, observing how the sand on the hillside thaws, Thoreau writes in *Walden*:

When the sun withdraws the sand ceases to flow, but in the morning the streams will start once more and branch and branch again into a myriad of others. You here see perchance how blood-vessels are formed.

(*Walden* 307)

Such an observation implies that Thoreau observed nature with a scientist’s eye. According to Sattelmeyer, among the books Thoreau read, the number of those on zoology, including ornithology, was about fifty, on insects, fish, shellfish, and fungi combined eleven, on botany about forty-seven, and on natural history eight. Also included among them was James J. G. Wilkinson’s *The human body and its connection with man, illustrated by the principal organs* (Sattelmeyer 290). It is quite understandable that Thoreau, watching the “sandy overflow” from a scientific point of view, associated it with the blood vessels of the human or animal body. If the vein of a leaf, which is the prototype of the blood vessels and organs, symbolizes life, we may say that what Thoreau perceived in the overflow of sand was the symbol of life in lively motion.

Thoreau respected Goethe who was preeminent not only as a poet and a man of literature but as a scientist and a botanist. Thoreau was also familiar with the principle of the “metamorphosis of plants” (Dupree 43), which occurred to Goethe in a flash of inspiration while in the Public Garden of Palermo in Italy (Kawamoto 13). As for Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, Thoreau was so impressed by the book when he first read it that he immediately took notes (Harding 429). About its author he had already known eight years before through the diary of the *Voyage of the Beagle* (Peck 45).

Now, Emily Dickinson, in the first stanza of her poem “Dear March — Come in,” personifies and welcomes her anticipated March, saying: “Dear March — Come in — / How glad I am — / I hoped for

you before —” (Johnson 913). On the other hand, in his *Journal* Thoreau repeatedly refers to “russet” or “brown” in March. On March 13, 1859 he recorded how the earth presented “a glowing brown” after the rain because of “the abundant moisture” (*Journal* XII: 45-46). Still more suggestive is the following extract written on the nineteenth of the same month:

That first general exposure of the russet earth, March 16th, after the soaking rain of the day before, which washed off most of the snow and ice, is a remarkable era in an ordinary spring. The earth casting off her white mantle and appearing in her homely russet garb. This russet — including the leather-color of oak leaves — is peculiar and not like the russet of the fall and winter, for it reflects the spring light or sun, as if there were a sort of sap in it. . . . This is when the earth is, as it were, re-created, raised up to the sun, which was burried under snow and ice.

(*Journal* XII: 64-65)

This passage shows two important aspects of the significance Thoreau perceived in spring. One is the brightness of the russet of the earth caused by “the spring light or sun,” with the moisture suggestive of “sap.” A similar idea is found in his *Journal*: “I would not have believed that under the spring sun so many colors were brought out. It is not the willows only that shine Can this have to do with the sap flowing in them?” (*Journal* XII: 77)

The other aspect is evident in the last sentence in the block quotation above. What is manifested there undoubtedly implies the re-creation or re-birth of life, and the earth is the very place where life is reborn. The following extract from his *Journal* for March 23, 1859 is another example of how Thoreau praised and took delight in the russet of the earth he saw in spring:

Thus we sit on that rock, hear the first wood frog’s croak, and dream of a russet elysium. Enough for the season is the beauty thereof. Spring has a beauty of its own which we would not exchange for that of summer, and at this moment, if I imagine the fairest earth I can, it is still russet, such is the color of its blessed isles, and they are surrounded with the phenomena of spring.

(*Journal* XII: 76)

To Thoreau, who valued and repeatedly described the beauty of “terrestrial browns” in spring, the russet was truly the symbol of life or rebirth. It is noteworthy that when Thoreau praised the beauty of rus-

set, it was often after the rain and the earth contained plenty of moisture. As he attributed the brilliant colors of a tree to sap, moisture was one of the important elements which represented the characteristics of spring. It is interesting that in his *Journal* for July 24, 1853, he writes: "Spring is the reign of water; summer, of heat and dryness; winter, of cold" (*Journal* 6: 264-65).

Incidentally, Rachel Carson states in *The Sense of Wonder* about the effect of moisture on nature: "the Main woods never seem so fresh and alive as in wet weather" (Carson 36). And about the lichens in rain she uses the expression: "the magic change in their appearance wrought by the rain" (44).

Further Thoreau writes about "brown":

Brown is the color for me, the color of our coats and our daily lives, the color of the poor man's loaf. The bright tints are pies and cakes, good only for October feasts, which would make us sick if eaten every day.

(*Journal* XII: 97-98)

It is clear that the color brown symbolizes something that is essential in sustaining life —that could be a coat which keeps a person warm from the cold, or a loaf of bread for a "poor man." Above all, brown is the color of the earth, which nurtures, nourishes, and helps grow all vegetation. It seems significant that Thoreau placed much value on the color russet, rather than the color green which is indicative of young shoots that appear in spring. He regarded the earth itself as the representation of the early spring because the earth was the first sign of spring when the snow began thawing. Moreover, as Antaeus in the Greek myth received energy each time he touched the mother earth, it may be possible to think that Thoreau considered the earth as the source of energy not only for plants but for all life (*Walden* 155).

Jesse Stuart writes in his essay "If I Were Seventeen Again": "the feel of loose, warm dirt to one's feet is a good thing in one's growth" (Stuart 136). Incidentally, "winter (*fuyu*)" in Japanese means "to increase (*fuyuru*)," which signifies the increase of energy. As energy increases, it overflows (*haru / minagiru*), and that is "spring (*haru*)." The aspects of spring Thoreau observed were truly suggestive of such an overflow of energy.

Thoreau spent long hours in nature and observed it closely. In like manner, Dogen, Japanese Zen Buddhist priest who, after studying with Nyojo in China, introduced the Soto sect in 1227, loved mountains and

lived in nature, feeling affinity for its changing forms and aspects. He wrote fifteen poems on living in the mountains. One of them goes as follows:

I care for mountains, and mountains care for me.
 Rocks and stones, large or small, speak to me without rest.
 In the midst of the ever-changing white clouds and mountain trees
 I have already forgotten the troubles of secular life.

(Kagamishima 49-51, tr. Ono)

It can be well imagined that Thoreau must have had similar experiences, being a great lover of nature. As “rocks and stones” spoke to Dogen, Perhaps trees and birds and rivers spoke to Thoreau. And as Dogen observed “the ever-changing white clouds,” Thoreau observed the changing forms of sand flowing with thawing snow on the hillside.

To conclude, the three essential qualities of early spring Thoreau perceived were cheeriness, the thawing of snow, and the color brown or russet. More specifically, cheerful songs of birds and the cheeriness of pitch pines, the sand with thawing snow representing not only the veins of a leaf but of the human body, and the brown and russet of the earth that nurtures plants.

In other words, Thoreau observed early spring from three angles — sound, shape, and color. These are three conspicuous and essential elements which are found in *Walden and his Journal* — for example, various sounds in “Sounds” in *Walden*, more than seven hundred drawings of objects and phenomena of the natural world in his *Journal*, numerous descriptive and sometimes original expressions for colors in his *Journal* and “Autumnal Tints.”

Thoreau valued and appreciated the three items as the characteristics of early spring. Significantly, the three qualities are symbolic of one thing — life. The cheerful songs of birds are full of the joy of life, and the vein of a leaf symbolizes life in terms of shape. It may not be too much to say that every higher form of animal and vegetable life, in one way or another, has in itself the shape of the vein of a leaf. The russet or brown earth is not “a fossil earth” but “a living earth,” and its “great central life” (*Walden* 309) nurtures all animals and plants. In “Spring” in *Walden*, Thoreau says: “Such is the contrast between winter and spring. Walden was dead and is alive again” (311), and the incoming of spring he expresses as: “the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and the realization of the Golden Age” (313).

Spring is the season of rebirth and reawakening of life. Such char-

acteristics of spring are most remarkable in the early part of the season. Therefore, Thoreau, who always praised the state of being full of life, observed the characteristic features of the early spring, describing them in his *Journal* and in the chapter of “Spring” in *Walden*. This is precisely why Blake, who collected extracts on spring from Thoreau’s *Journal*, did not simply entitle the book “Spring” but *Early Spring in Massachusetts*.

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The Tragedy of the Author: A Perspective on the End of Hardy's Fiction-Writing

Jun Suzuki

The aim of this essay is not to discuss the particular novels and poems of Hardy in detail, but in the first place to look over the critical history of his later works especially written after the 1880s, and next to propose a new critical perspective helpful for considering a question which has not been given any convincing answer yet. The question is, "Why did Hardy abandon writing fiction after *Jude the Obscure*?" I think that this question could by no means be answered unless critics turn their eyes to quite different points from the established ones. Before starting my argument, let us examine the critical history of Hardy's later novels. Concerning this topic, Peter Widdowson divides the main categories of the critical perspectives on Hardy into three main types: "materialist," "feminist," and "poststructuralist."¹ Richard Nemesvari also remarks something similar; he argues that this development of the reception of the texts "moves beyond the texts themselves into the realm of an author's ideological construction by his audience" (Mallett 41). When we consider this "psychic process in the reception of a text" advocated by Hans Robert Jauss (Mallett 39), here, the second type of critical approach is particularly important in relation to Hardy's later novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*.

It is feminist critics who have purposefully taken up these novels. Indeed, Hardy's later novels are suitable for their social and political argument, because the protagonists are women. Since the 1980s, such critics as Penny Boumelha, Rosemarie Morgan, Patricia Ingham, Kathleen Blake, and Merryn Williams have developed their own feminist readings and contributed much to the gender issues of those days.² However, they have their defects; because putting too much emphasis on the practical interests of contemporary society, in many cases, their

discussions are contradictory and limited in the light of the contexts of Hardy's novels. For example, when she mentions Hardy's negative opinion about "the scheme for the union of the sexes," Blake herself admits the limitation of her argument and comments: "This attitude turns *Jude* into something quite different from a social-problem novel, since the problem goes deeper than society" (101). Williams remarks likewise: "Hardy sympathized with any moves which were likely to improve the status of women, but ultimately he could not believe that legal or social changes would help them, seeing that "the unalterable laws of nature are based upon a wrong"" (Page 59). In this way, the arguments of feminist critics have always seemed questionable and unconvincing, when confronted with this ultimate problem.

It is no wonder that Hardy's novels are interpreted from social viewpoints such as feminism and gender politics.³ As Rosemary Sumner remarks, "the novel in its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century form had been primarily concerned with personal and social relationships, rather than with cosmic ones" (94). But Sumner also states: "Fundamental to the change in modes of perceiving was the recognition of, or even confrontation with the unknown and unknowable. After the mid-nineteenth-century scientific discoveries which enlarged conceptions of time and space almost beyond comprehension, "the relationship between man and his circumambient universe' [. . .] necessarily becomes a focus of attention in literature and art" (94).⁴

Like Sumner, my interest lies in Hardy's recognition of the "unknown." I believe that his discovery of the unknown in his texts was made in the 1880s; because it seems to me that this period overlaps with Hardy's shift from Victorian optimism to his pessimistic ideas about the universe. As for Victorian optimism, we will deal with it later. On the other hand, as to Hardy's pessimism, it is true that many critics have argued its causes and consequences; but the arguments have been negative or evasive. For example, Harvey Curtis Webster remarks, "Only the universe can be blamed legitimately, and to do that is futile" (427). Frank R. Giordano, Jr. notes about Hardy's attitude: "Hardy knew he could do nothing with the maladjusted universe, but with the remediable ills that afflict mankind he felt less helpless" (41). In many cases, critics, in their discussions, have not immediately dealt with the philosophical problem with which Hardy was faced in the late nineteenth century, but instead have changed the subject into social ones that are more tractable and expedient for discussion. If this is the case, it is natural that studies on Hardy's pes-

simism should not develop any further.

But the point at issue is different from the precedent ones. I will directly discuss Hardy's pessimism about the universe, and finally I would like to connect it with the problem of his abandonment of fiction. Thus far, the reason why Hardy gave up writing fiction has generally been thought due either to the economic reason – a guaranteed income from his American copyrights – or to the bitterest criticism thrown on *Jude the Obscure*, as the biographies have insisted.⁵ But I think, though both of them might partly be true, they are not a real reason;⁶ rather, it seems to me that there is a more profound reason for it. It is evident from the philosophical idea which Hardy noted in his poem, "In Tenebris II": "if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst." This line must have been shocking to the Victorian intellectuals like Tennyson or Arnold, since it challenges the most significant Victorian ideology – "optimism." Generally, the social aim of Victorian optimism was to teach people not to see the worst and to behold ideals without perceiving, as Tennyson writes in *In Memoriam*:

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

(130)

Hardy also writes the same kind of things in "To Sincerity":

And youth may have foreknown it,
And riper seasons shown it,
But custom cries: 'Disown it:

'Say ye rejoice, though grieving,
Believe, while unbelieving,
Behold, without perceiving!'

(*Complete Poems* 279)

However, ironically, Hardy writes such things in order to expose the system of Victorian optimism, and teaches his readers the quite opposite thing – to "look at the worst." Interestingly, the date when the above-mentioned line in "In Tenebris II" ("if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst") was written is 1895, when Hardy published his last novel. After 1895, this kind of scepticism comes to be often repeated in his poems and the prefaces to the volumes of verses. Probably, one of the reasons for this is that Hardy himself has seen

“the worst” in writing fiction. Considering thus, it is quite possible that Hardy's abandonment of writing fiction is concerned with some relationship between Victorian optimism and fiction-writing.

I

Before contemplating the problem of Hardy's abandonment of fiction-writing in detail, we first need to examine the nature of Victorian optimism. It will also necessarily clarify what is “the worst” for Hardy. Concerning this topic, Walter E. Houghton's *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* will provide us with much useful information. This book enables us to learn about what and how the Victorian intellectuals felt and thought about the universe. The information can also apply to Hardy, since he was born in 1840. Especially, here I want to focus on the social conditions “between the 1870s and the 1880s”; probably, during this period there was great change in people's minds and attitudes as to the recognition of things. In the first place, let us look at the 1870s of England. Fundamentally, during this decade, optimism was in full bloom. According to Houghton, Victorian optimism was born after the 1850s; and “it was largely scientific theory and scientific invention that together created an atmosphere of supreme optimism about the present and the future” (33). Among many scientists and philosophers, one of the most outstanding ones was Auguste Comte first introduced into England by J. S. Mill, whose aim was to find out “the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things” (33). Another was Herbert Spencer, who insisted that progress should be “not an accident but necessity.” In *Social Statics* (1868), “adopting from Lamarck the doctrine that all animals instinctively strive to adapt themselves to their environment” (Houghton 37), Spencer argues that “the ultimate development of the ideal man is logically certain” and that “surely must the things we call evil and immorality disappear; so surely must man become perfect” (Spencer 79-80).

In this period, intellectuals like George Eliot or George Henry Lewis believed that the power of science could eliminate physical suffering and even moral evil. They had faith in human evolution and tried to expand knowledge by education. Influenced by them, in 1874, Hardy also wrote a successful pastoral novel, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, in which he described Gabriel Oak, the protagonist, as a positivistic hero. In 1878, he published his first real tragedy, *The Return of the Native*, in which Hardy looked into the mystery of the universe by using Clym Yeobright, also a positivistic hero. Unlike the preceding comic or pastoral novels, this novel seemed to go beyond social prob-

lems with which Comte's positivism dealt. But F. Manning states that it still could manage to keep social order by a happy ending through the marriage of Thomasin to Diggory Venn.⁷ Manning considers Hardy's tragedy to be "that kind of tragedy which is based upon the idea of an ultimate compensation." In a Victorian sense, this was truly "a representation of life" (Draper 64).

Why did the Victorian intellectuals in the 1870s cling to evolution or hope? The answer most possibly goes back to Darwin's great discovery about the theory of "the decent of man" in 1859. As Angelique Richardson remarks, Darwin removed agency, purpose, and teleology from the story of creation. However, one problem arose:

[. . .] while the idea of a purposive evolution was banished by his reason, it was continually readmitted through his language. Such readmissions are epidemic throughout the century, and testify to the difficulty of accepting that there might be no overall purpose to life on earth[;]

(Mallett 157)

This unwillingness of the Victorian intellectuals to accept the dark truth that there is no value or meaning in life was also shared by Hardy. He writes in his poem "Hap":

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: 'Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!'

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

(*Complete Poems* 9)

This notion of Hardy's is repeated in *The Return of the Native*: "Human beings, in their generous endeavour to construct a hypothesis that shall not degrade a First Cause, have always hesitated to conceive a dominant power of lower moral quality than their own; and, even while they sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, invent excuses for the oppression which prompts their tears" (295-6). As Houghton argues, "In the seventies men are still searching – 'amid that break-up of traditional and conventional notions respecting our life, its conduct, and its sanctions, which is undeniably befalling our age, – for

some clear light and some sure stay” (9). Literature was one of the most powerful and effective authorities for moral or religious “guidance or reassurance” (Houghton xvii). In *The English Novel*, Terry Eagleton also states that “to narrate is itself a moral act” (16). In fact, in the nineteenth century, novels usually took on “the moral and social functions” (*English Novel* 12). The public gained some consolations from the descriptions of literature by feeling that the world is made for man. The closed structure of Hardy’s early novels can mostly be explained by this – the social function of literature as moral authority.

II

However, while attempting to manipulate his stories so as to please Victorian intellectuals including himself, Hardy gradually came to turn in a direction quite opposite to their tastes.⁸ The period was around the 1880s. According to Houghton, “By the eighties ‘the disintegration of opinion is so rapid that wise men and foolish are equally ignorant where the close of this waning century will find us.’” (9). He continues: “Though the Victorians never ceased to look forward to a new period of firm convictions and established beliefs, they had to live in the meantime between two worlds, one dead or dying, one struggling but powerless to be born, in an age of doubt” (9-10). In Hardy’s case, especially, various scientific discoveries were much concerned with his disillusion from the dream of human evolution. In those days, Victorian science was generally thought to bring about a bright future for society. This optimism was supported by many scientists and thinkers such as Frederic Harrison, J. S. Mill, Herbert Spencer, and John Morley. For Spencer and Morley particularly, “the reconstruction of society on a scientific basis became an assumption of the time” (Houghton 35).

On the other hand, Hardy saw a different thing in the scientific discoveries. He focused on the dark atmosphere caused by science. Houghton points to this gloomy condition pervading in Victorian society:

What made religious doubt peculiarly painful to the Victorians was the direction toward which it pointed. As the Christian view of the universe receded, another took its place – the scientific picture of a vast mechanism of cause and effect, acting by physical laws that governed even man himself. Rationalists might hail that vision with Utopian optimism, but most Victorians felt the same horrified shock

It is Charlotte Brontë's letter that Houghton directly mentions as a suitable example to describe the anxiety of the Victorians. But this atmosphere had become almost common since the pervasion of Victorian science starting with Charles Lyell's publication of *Principles of Geology* between 1830 and 1833.⁹ Richardson states: "The discovery of geological time not only unsettled the place of humans in the cosmos but formed part of a series of scientific discoveries that, over the course of the century, would call into question what it was to be human" (Mallett 157). Actually, after Lyell and Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley also proposed a new theory that man is a human automaton. As Houghton says, Charles Kingsley was greatly shocked by it: "Are we only helpless particles, at best separate parts of the wheels of a vast machine, which will use us till it has worn us away, and ground us to powder?" (75) In 1879, *Freedom in Science and Teaching*, one of Ernst Haeckel's works, was translated into English. After that, in 1883 and 1900, Haeckel's works were successively translated and brought into England. Rutland asserts that Hardy at least would certainly have looked into Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe* (104).

In the 1880s, in this way, Hardy was made to change his philosophical stance from optimism to pessimism. It is true that Hardy's pessimism is associated with Greek tragedy, but he was also intellectually influenced by many scientists and philosophers such as Huxley, Haeckel, Hartmann, and Schopenhauer concerning this conundrum of human existence; but what is important is that for Hardy the philosophical problem arose not only from his reading many philosophical books but also from his own experiences as an artist. In fact, in the 1860s, he had already instinctively speculated the meaninglessness of existence which is played with by "Crass Casualty":

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
 And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
 – Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
 And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
 These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
 Bliss about my pilgrimage as pain.

("Hap" 9)

"Why unblooms the best hope ever sown?" The question in the early times grew greater and greater, as Hardy continued to write more

works. In 1866, Hardy developed his idea further: “A SENSELESS school, where we must give / Our lives that we may learn to live! / A dolt is he who memorizes / Lessons that leave no time for prizes” (“A Young Man’s Epigram on Existence” 299). In 1880, he remarks that the saleswoman “acts as by clockwork; she puts each cloak on herself, turns round, makes a remark, puts on the next cloak, and the next, and so on, like an automaton” (*Early Life* 184). His interest in presenting human beings as “automata” in writing fiction became strong in 1882:

Write a history of human automatism, or impulsion – viz., an account of human action in spite of human knowledge, showing how very far human conduct lags behind the knowledge that should really guide it.

(*Early Life* 197)

Furthermore, in 1884, when he was writing *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy notes:

Query: Is not the present quasi-scientific system of writing history mere charlatanism? Events and tendencies are traced as if they were rivers of voluntary activity, and courses reasoned out from the circumstances in which natures, religions, or what-not, have found themselves. But are they not in the main the outcome of *passivity* – acted upon by unconscious propensity?

(*Early Life* 219)

Probably, what Hardy had in mind here by the term “the quasi-scientific system” is Victorian optimism like Comte’s Positivism. Two years before writing this comment, Hardy had already doubted the validity of scientific theories appropriated in fiction (*Early Life* 201). And in writing *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, he felt the same anxiety again. What Hardy felt then was: “some power was working against” human beings (*The Mayor of Casterbridge* 190).

III

After publishing *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, however, Hardy definitely changed his idea about art, and commented in 1887: “The exact material fact ceases to be of importance in art – it is a student’s style – the style of a period when the mind is serene and unawakened to the tragical mysteries of life” (*Early Life* 243). It is probable that this change of Hardy’s attitude is concerned with Huxley’s idea. Rutland has cited the following part from Huxley as the “lesson” that Hardy

“learnt well and truly”:

To promote the increase of natural knowledge and to further the application of scientific methods of investigation to all the problems of life to the best of my ability, in the conviction, which has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength, that there is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is, when the garment of make-believe, by which pious hands have hidden its ugly features, is stripped off.

(Rutland 62)

Hardy writes, “A story must be exceptional enough to justify its telling” (*Later Life* 15). This tendency of his emphasizing the mystery and uncommonness in the text has often appeared after 1881: “The real, if unavowed, purpose of fiction is to give pleasure by gratifying the love of the uncommon in human experience, mental or corporeal” (*Early Life* 193). In the mid and late-1880s, the propensity became more apparent.

However, Hardy’s feeling about the encounter with the uncommon or the unknown was ambivalent, because it was unexpected for him; it was the outcome of sheer coincidence; it was the riddle of the universe for him. It is well-known that in the Victorian period, people generally longed for a sense of “harmony”; and Hardy as a Victorian likewise sought “a universal unity.” In fact, Hardy made some experimental attempts at gaining it in his novels even after the 1880s. For example, in *A Laodicean* (1881), Hardy describes a roguish man called Dare, who seeks to master “the laws of chance” for money; the man reads De Moivre’s *Doctrine of Chances*. A more remarkable example appears in *The Woodlanders* (1887), where Mrs Charmond’s mental conflict concerning the meaning or value of human existence is described: “I think sometimes I was born to live and do nothing, nothing, nothing but float about, as we fancy we do sometimes in dreams. But that cannot be really my destiny, and I must struggle against such fancies” (101). Yet, Hardy’s struggle can not be settled; in the same text, Mr Fitzpiers, a melancholy doctor, says to Grammer Oliver, “[L]et me tell you that Everything is Nothing. There’s only Me and Not Me in the whole world” and that “no man’s hands could help what they did, any more than the hands of a clock” (90). In *Jude the Obscure*, Jude’s dream (even Hardy’s) is illustrated more ironically. When in Marlott, the condition of Jude’s mind is described as follows: “It had been the yearning of his heart to find something to anchor on,

to cling to; for some place which he could call admirable; should he find that place in this city if he could get there?" (21) "This city" is Christminster, which Jude calls "a city of light" (21). But when he has actually arrived at Christminster, the narrator says about Jude: "When he passed objects out of harmony with its general expression he allowed his eyes to slip over them as if he did not see them" (79).

As Hardy wrote more novels, accordingly this ironical propensity became stronger. At last, by the time he wrote *Jude*, Hardy himself had become no longer able to allow his eyes to overlook them by covering a true condition with fictional narrative. Or rather, he had noticed the fact that literary texts are not what Houghton calls "the external authority," but mirrors which reflect a conundrum beyond human reach; and are themselves uncontrollable. According to Hardy, this phenomenon occurs due to "Nature's logic" of disharmony – "something glaring, garish, rattling" (*Jude* 13):

Events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony. As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it.

(13)

Of course, this long comment of the narrator applies to Jude, a character; but what is important is that Hardy says that this happens to everyone: "The idea was meant to run all through the novel. It is, in fact, to be discovered in *everybody's* life, though it lies less on the surface perhaps than it does in my poor puppet's" (*Later Life* 41). Though he does not include himself in the list of "puppets," Hardy the author is not the exception; he is also one of "everybody." He is not only the "pen or stylus" of the Immanent Will as Hillis Miller argues (265), but also the blank sheet on which something unexpected is put without knowing. In fact, concerning *Tess*, Hardy comments: "How strange that one may write a book without knowing what one puts into it – or rather, the reader reads into it" (*Later Life* 7). He also remarks about *Jude* in his 1912 preface: "no doubt there can be more in a book than the author consciously puts there."

IV

Virginia Woolf remarks that, in Hardy's texts, there appears "some deeper intention of which perhaps he may be unconscious" (Draper 77). It is this "tragedy of the author" that Hardy reached at the end of his career of writing fiction.¹⁰ It means the inability of the author to describe the universe in the sense of Flaubert: "the author in his work should be like God in His universe, everywhere present but nowhere visible" (D. A. Miller 24). Hillis Miller insists that Hardy is "an imaginary deity nevertheless, a God who exists only in the distance from reality maintained literature by the fact that it is made of mediate words rather than of immediate facts" (268). But Hardy is not as "safe" as Miller argues; rather, as we have observed, Hardy directly experienced the loss of authority in his own texts. D. H. Lawrence asserts that Hardy's characters act "independently" and "absurdly":

It is urged against Thomas Hardy's characters that they do unreasonable things – quite, quite unreasonable things. They are always going off unexpectedly and doing something that nobody would do. [. . .] And from such an outburst the tragedy usually develops.
(Draper 66)

Hardy cannot control his own characters who act spontaneously. What is worse, he does not even know what he is writing and will do next: "Tugged by a force above or under / Like some fantocine, much I wonder / What I shall find me doing next!" ("He Wonders Himself" 510) These lines were written in 1893, two years before Hardy published his last novel. Considered thus, it may quite be natural that for Hardy the form of fiction whose roles were to explain the universe optimistically and keep social order became no longer useful. Instead, he chose "Poetry. Perhaps I can express more fully in verse ideas and emotions which run counter to the inert crystallized opinion – hard as a rock – which the vast body of men have vested interests in supporting" (*Later Life* 57).

Notes

¹ For the materialist criticism, see such critics as Raymond Williams, Merryn Williams, Terry Eagleton, George Wotton, and Widdowson himself. In the 1970s, Hardy's "class fraction" was one of the main themes of the criticism;

- but since Eagleton has focused on the most influential concept of "ideology," "literary works could be seen to expose, and thus subvert, the ideology within which they were produced, even though they were held within it; and to be historically determined, not just by their moment of production, but also by their reproduction within the cultural and aesthetic ideology of later periods" (Widdowson 80). This version of Eagleton's "insights have been expanded upon most obviously in the work of Wotton" (Widdowson 81). Wotton analyzes the "male critics' naturalized perception of Hardy's women as sexual objects." He argues: "Whatever Hardy's intention, the innumerable acts of sight which constitute the structure of perceptions put the ideological construction of woman into contradiction by showing that the perception of her 'essential nature' is always conditional upon who is doing the seeing" (Widdowson 38). Widdowson includes Raymond Williams' and Wotton's essays in his *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, one of Macmillan's New Casebooks.
- ² Concerning *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Boumelha argues in her essay that "the narrator's erotic fantasies of penetration and engulfment enact a pursuit, violation and persecution of Tess in parallel with those she suffers at the hands of her two lovers" (47). On the other hand, Ingham discusses "the signifying framework of men's language" upon Tess and the narrator's defence of her. However, at the same time, she admits that the narrator "cannot entirely shake off the language of men even, or perhaps particularly, in his defence" (Widdowson 83). On *Jude the Obscure*, Morgan argues that Hardy, by describing a sexless, disempowered Sue, "gives one last twist . . . to the marriage-and-happy ending denouement he had always despised as false and misleading" (111).
 - ³ In addition to the publication of *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy* edited by Margaret R. Higonnet in 1993, after 2000 the gender problem has continually been taken up in Hardy criticism. In *Thomas Hardy Studies*, Phillip Mallett, its editor, writes an essay titled "Hardy and Sexuality."
 - ⁴ In the 1980s, Sumner has already focused on the problem of the absurd in Hardy's text, and has written an interesting essay on *Two on a Tower*.
 - ⁵ According to Millgate, the reviewer of *The World* said about Hardy: "None but a writer of exceptional talent indeed could have produced so gruesome and gloomy a book; but that is the mischief of it" (340). And it is well known that a Bishop burnt *Jude* because he thought it is blasphemous.
 - ⁶ Millgate also remarks, "It is by no means clear, however, that the attacks on *Jude* were the cause of his abandonment of fiction" (340).
 - ⁷ Concerning Hardy's use of literary convention, David Cecil argues that "Hardy's convention was that of an earlier age, the convention invented by Fielding" (Gindin 454). According to Cecil, Fielding and his followers "evolved a working compromise. The setting and characters of their stories were carefully realistic, but they were fitted into a framework of non-realistic plot derived from the drama, consisting of an intrigue enlivened by all sorts of sensational events – conspiracies, children changed at birth, mistakes of identity – centring round a handsome ideal hero and heroine and a sinister villain, and solved neatly in the last chapter" (Gindin 454-5).
 - ⁸ In 1876, Hardy noted: "The irritating necessity of conforming to rules which in themselves have no virtue" (*Early Life* 146).

- ⁹ Henry Night, a hero in Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), is a geologist. In the novel, Hardy describes a scene in which his interest in and knowledge of geology is vividly shown.
- ¹⁰ Sumner points out a possibility of Hardy's anticipating Surrealist ideas and even Barthe's concept of "the death of the author" (44). However, he does not deal with the problem of Hardy's abandonment of fiction-writing. On the contrary, Sumner remarks that "Hardy was interested in the possibilities of writing by chance" (46).

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誰が〈殉教〉を殺したか

—『寺院の殺人』に組み込まれた

中世劇、ギリシア悲劇と探偵小説の重層関係—

岩田 美喜

T. S. エリオット (T. S. Eliot) の演劇的な功績をひとことでいえば、20 世紀の芝居に韻文体を復活させ、クリストファー・フライ (Christopher Fry) のような詩劇作家を生み出したことであろう。しかし彼の詩劇は、ジョン・オズボーン (John Osborne) の『怒りをこめて振り返れ』 (*Look Back in Anger*, 1956) に代表されるような「怒れる若者たち」が席卷する第二次大戦後の演劇界の雰囲気とは折り合いが悪く、エリオットも『カクテル・パーティ』 (*The Cocktail Party*, 1949) や『老政治家』 (*The Elder Statesman*, 1958) といった後期の作品では、操る言葉を平明にして、市井の凡俗たる登場人物に共感のこもった眼差しを注ぐなど、観客へ歩み寄ろうとする傾向が顕著になる。こうした状況にあった 1951 年、エリオットはハーヴァード大学で行った講演「詩と演劇」 (“Poetry and Drama”) の中で、自らにとっては初めて成功した戯曲である『寺院の殺人』 (*Murder in the Cathedral*, 1935) を思い返して、現在では相当な距離を感じている作品であることを漏らしている。

本人の言に依れば、彼が感じた違和感は、特殊な事情が絡み合って産まれた戯曲である『寺院の殺人』はそれ以後の劇作のための指針となり得なかったことに起因している。この作品は 1935 年のキャンタベリー祝祭のために書かれた歴史劇で、ヘンリー二世と教会の自治権を巡って対立していたキャンタベリーの大司教トマス・ベケットが、1170 年に四人の騎士に殺害されたという歴史上の事件を取り扱ったものである。この祝祭では毎年ベケットの殉教劇を上演しており、例えば前年の 1934 年にはテニソン (Alfred, Lord Tennyson) の『ベケット』 (*Becket*, 1884) を再演していたので、詩劇にふさわしい主題を模索していたエリオットにとっては「登場人物が韻文で喋るライセンス」を棚牡丹で与え

でもらったようなものであった (*Selected Prose* 139)。こうした事情を説明した上で、続けて彼は「それに宗教的な祝祭に宗教劇をわざわざ見に来るような人たちならば、これも自分のためになるんだという気持ちから、退屈な芝居でも辛抱強く見てくれます」と言葉を継いでいる (*Selected Prose* 139)。この自嘲の混じった口調からは、1927年にイギリス国教会に改宗してからというもの、宗教的な問題に取り組み続けてきたエリオットの複雑な思いが透けて見える。16年を経過して振り返ってみると、彼にとって『寺院の殺人』の持つ宗教性は余りにもあからさまで、20世紀の宗教劇が有すべき間口の広さに欠けるように思えたのだ。

しかし、こうしたエリオットの自己分析を鵜呑みにすることはできないし、スティーヴン・スペンダー (Stephen Spender) が『寺院の殺人』はそれなりに圧倒的な成功だったが、ただし特殊な行事のための作品だった」と述べて、エリオットに完全な同意を示したのも、少々不可解な感が否めない (209-10)。こうした理屈では、この作品が21世紀に入った現在でも連綿と上演されていることの説明がつかないからである。¹ 大戦後のエリオットは、ウェスト・エンドの商業演劇と戦えるだけの新しい宗教劇を作らねばならぬという思いに駆られていたために、『寺院の殺人』を古き良き時代の落とし子のように述べているが、事實はむしろ反対で、この戯曲は一見したほどにはキリスト教を直裁に扱っている訳ではないし、いわゆる敬虔なキリスト教徒にそう適しているとも思えない。確かに作品が扱う主題はベケットの殉教であり、その構造的な骨格として中世劇を借りてはいるが、モダニズムに特徴的な技法でもって作中に織り込まれたその他の種々の要素が、キリスト教的な部分に働きかけて、作品のテーマを重層的にしているからである。そこで本論では、『寺院の殺人』に編み込まれた多種多様な文学的伝統の中から、中世劇 (特に聖者劇と道徳劇)、ギリシア悲劇、そして探偵小説の側面を取り上げて論じる。各局面は他の局面にそれぞれ否定的に働きかけていることを指摘した上で、中世劇の宗教観は取り分け探偵小説の言説によって揺るがされ、最後には揺るがされることで逆説的に再び肯定されていることを検証したい。

I

『寺院の殺人』を執筆する際に参考にした作品として、エリオットが直接題名を挙げている唯一の中世劇は『万人』 (*Everyman*, ca. 1495) である。『万人』は、通常であれば<神による救済>という喜劇的結末を有する道

徳劇の中にあつてその典型を逸脱し、人間が死に臨んで直面する深い孤独を深刻な色調で描いていることで有名な作品である。ただし、エリオットが影響を受けたと語っているのは『万人』の詩形であり、その内容ではない。彼はロマン派の詩人たちが無韻詩で作った19世紀のレーゼ・ドラマを、シェイクスピアの安易な踏襲として嫌っており、自らの詩劇においては同じ轍を踏むまいと決意したようだ。

Therefore, what I kept in mind was the versification of *Everyman*, hoping that anything unusual in the sound of it would be, on the whole, advantageous. An avoidance of too much iambic, some use of alliteration, and occasional unexpected rhyme, helped to distinguish the versification from that of the nineteenth century.

The versification of the dialogue in *Murder in the Cathedral* has therefore, in my opinion, only a *negative* merit: it succeeded in avoiding what had to be avoided, but it arrived at no positive novelty:

(*Selected Prose* 139-40)

後年のエリオットは、『寺院の殺人』に関する控えめで厳しい評価を崩さないが、これもその一例といえよう。² この引用中では「弱強格の過剰を避け、たまさか頭韻を用い、不定期に押韻する」という表現で簡潔にまとめられた『万人』の詩形というのは、主に二行連句と四行連句の組み合わせから成っている。各行の韻律数はまちまちで、かといってジョン・スケルトン (John Skelton) のごとく几帳面に韻を踏んでいるわけでもない、要するにかなり不規則なものである。これは20世紀の英詩に見られる自由律と共通する点を持つ形であり、その効果は決して「避けるべきことを避けただけ」という消極的な効能³に止まるものではない。事実、『寺院の殺人』のコロスは、時に『荒地』 (*The Waste Land*, 1922) や「虚ろな人間たち」 (“*The Hollow Men*”, 1925) など、エリオット最良の部類に属する詩が有するような緊迫感を見せるのだが、コロスの語りについてはまた後に詳しく論じる。

エリオット自身は特にそう述べているわけではないが、詩形の参考にしようとして『万人』を精読したことは、ひとり文飾のみならず、ベケットの殉教という題材を表現する様式に関しても、彼に少なからぬ影響を与えたようだ。というのもエリオットは——おそらく意識的にだが——この作品の中で中世劇のジャンルを混交させ、与えられた題材が要求する「聖者劇」という様式に、これとは異なるドラマツルギーを持つ「道徳劇」の要素を割り込ませているからである。聖者劇とは、中世に広く流布した聖者伝『黄金伝説』 (*Legenda aurea*) などを元に、聖者の生涯と彼らの起こした奇

跡を観客が追体験として見届けるといふ趣旨の芝居である。イギリスで現存するものは『聖パウロの回心』(*The Conversion of St. Paul*)や『マグダラのマリア』(*Mary Magdalene*)など、数が限られているが、その性質からいって聖者劇は『ダニエル劇』(*Danielis Ludus*)などのラテン語で書かれた12世紀の典礼劇から派生したものといて間違いなからう。一方の道徳劇は14世紀後半に起こった新しいジャンルの演劇である。聖者劇やサイクル劇とは異なり、教会劇の系譜に明確に連なるものではない。道徳劇とは寓話劇であり、「放蕩」や「慈悲」など擬人化された美德と悪徳が人間の魂を巡って争うというのがその基本構造である。前述のように、その典型的な主題は<神による救い>であって本来は喜劇的な演劇である。『万人』のようにくはかない人間が持つべき覚悟を教え、悲劇の萌芽を見せるものは珍しい。

ベケットの殉教を舞台化する試みは、上述の二分類の範囲内でいえば聖者劇になる筈である。作中で、ベケットの殺害に現れた四人の騎士が、いわゆる割りぜりふの手法でもって口々に「ダニエル、ライオンの洞穴へ降りてこい」(*Come down Daniel to the lion's den*)と呼ばわり、「ダニエル」という名前を六度繰り返すことは、『ダニエル劇』とこの戯曲の関連性を作者が十分に意識していたことを示している(80)³。しかしそれでいて、『寺院の殺人』のベケットは典礼劇の聖ダニエルとは大きく異なる描かれ方をしている。彼は、バビロニア王ネブカドネザルの夢を正しく判断するような知恵もなければ、ライオンの洞穴に放置されても神が天使を使わせて守ってくれるような祝福を受けている訳でもない。ベケットは畢竟ただの人間として作品世界に登場する。戯曲の冒頭近く、ヘンリー二世と対立してフランス王の元へ身を寄せていたベケットが七年ぶりにイギリスに帰還したという使者の言葉を聞き、キャンタベリーの僧侶はベケットの性格から判断して、帰還したところで二人の和解は難しいだろうと懸念する。

His pride always feeding upon his own virtues,
Pride drawing sustenance from generosity,
Loathing power given by temporal devolution,
Wishing subjection to God alone.
Had the King been greater, or had he been weaker
Things had perhaps been different for Thomas.

(17)

僧侶たちの噂話の中から、ベケットの性格を端的に表すものとして観客が与えられる言葉は、七つの大罪の一つ「高慢」である。ヘレン・ガードナ

ー (Helen Gardner) が指摘したように、この芝居においては、ベケットとヘンリーの背後にある「教会と王権の対立という政治的な事情は異なる主題に従属させられて」いるのだが、ガードナーのいう「異なる主題」とはもちろん宗教を指す (Hincliffe 94)。ベケットの高踏主義は高慢の罪と表裏一体であることが彼らによって繰り返し語られるので、彼は聖人としてというよりは名も無き一人の罪人として舞台の上に登場することになる。今、「名も無き」と書いたが、これはある程度まで誇張表現ではない。『寺院の殺人』における彼は、彼が歴史上名を残したところの「ベケット」という名を一度も使用しない。上の引用で僧侶が「トマスにとっても事情は変わっていたかも知れない」と呟いたように、あらゆる劇中人物——僧侶のみならず、コロスの女たちや彼を殺害する騎士に至るまで——が、彼を「トマス」という平凡なファースト・ネームで呼ぶ上に、彼のスピーチ・プリフィクスも常に「トマス」なのである。

テニソンの『ベケット』と比較してみると、『寺院の殺人』におけるベケットの無名性に秘められた意味は、分かりやすくなるかも知れない。『ベケット』の序幕では、ヘンリー王とベケットがチェスを指しながら、彼の大司教就任について話し合っている。短気なヘンリーはチェス盤をひっくり返し、遅れて登場する王妃エレノアは何が起こったのかと訝しがる。

Henry. The chart is not mine, but
Becket's: take it, Thomas.

Eleanor. Becket! O — ay — and these chessmen on the floor — the
king's crown broken! Becket hath beaten thee again — and thou hast
kicked down the board. I know thee of old.

(649)

ヘンリーの「その地図は私のものじゃない／ベケットのものだ。取れよ、トマス」という二行に明らかなように、「トマス・ベケット」という名を姓で呼ぶか名で呼ぶかという選択そのものが、ここでは彼らの人間関係を示す指標の役割を果たしている。ヘンリーのやや唐突な「トマス」という呼びかけは、彼の過剰な親しみの表現の背後には今後の二人の決裂を暗示する不穏な何かが存在することをほのめかしており、そのことはエレノアが直後に「ベケット」とファミリー・ネームを繰り返すことによって裏書きされている。つまり、『ベケット』という作品は<個人>同士の社会的な関係に立脚した芝居であり、それ故にプロタゴニストに用いられるスピーチ・プリフィクスはもちろん、彼の社会的な名前である「ベケット」になる。

これに対し、人間関係を大胆に捨象した『寺院の殺人』には、エレノアはおろかヘンリーすらも登場しない。筋は極限まで簡素化され、観客が最小限理解すべき情報は、「誰か死ぬべき定めめの男が登場して、高慢の罪を脱却してから死ぬ」という一文で足りる。「トマス」という名は12使徒の一人である聖トマスや、中世最大の神学者トマス・アクイナス (Thomas Aquinas) を連想させるかもしれないが、同時にごくありふれた名前でもある。さらには、エリオット自身の洗礼名も「トマス」であることを考慮に入れても良いだろう。『寺院の殺人』で死ぬべき定めめの男は、誰もがなりうる一種の「万人」なのだ。

かくして、聖人としての側面と万人としての側面を併せ持ったベケットは、四人の誘惑者たちから二種類の誘惑を受けることになる。四人のうち三人までは、ベケットの世俗的な欲望を刺激しようとする。彼らは、「王との友情を思い出せ」、「再び国政を執る野心はないのか」、「イングランドのためにいっそこちから王を討て」という具合に、王ヘンリーと大司教ベケットの権力の秤を漸増的に後者に傾けてゆくが、これは前掲の引用で既に「俗世から与えられる権力を厭う」と評されているベケットにとっては、事実上誘惑にはなっていない。かつて大法官を務めながら国王の右腕として活躍していた時代のことを囁かれても、彼の答えは「一人の人間の人生に／同じ時は決して戻っては来ない」(in the life of one man, never/ The same time returns) と、にべもない(25)。歴史上の彼の過去は、舞台上の現在の彼とは切り離されている。荒野のキリストにも似た毅然とした調子が、このベケットにはある。

しかし、三人の誘惑者を退けた後に、最後の誘惑者が登場すると、ベケットの語調は変化する。「お前は誰だ？ 私が予期していたのは／三人の訪問者だ。四人ではない」(Who are you? I expected/ Three visitors, not four) という言葉からは、「万人」としてのベケットにとっては、彼こそが真にして唯一の誘惑者であることが分かる(37)。この誘惑者は驚いたことに、ベケットの殉教を回避させようとした他の者たちとは反対に、殉教をしると薦める。

King is forgotten, when another shall come:
 Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb.
 Think, Thomas, think of enemies dismayed,
 Creeping in penance, frightened of a shade;
 Think of pilgrims, standing in line
 Before the glittering jeweled shrine,

From generation to generation
 Bending the knee in supplication,
 Think of the miracles, by God's grace,
 And think of your enemies, in another place.

THOMAS

I have thought of these things.

(40)

歴史的な観点から言えば、第四の誘惑者はベケットの死後に起こった史実に言及している。聖者信仰が隆盛を誇っていた14世紀には、ベケットを詣でるためにキャンタベリーを訪れる人々が引きも切らない状態であった。チョーサー (Geoffrey Chaucer) の『キャンタベリー物語』 (*The Canterbury Tales*) は、キャンタベリー詣でに向かう巡礼たちが道行きに語る物語を集めたという体裁を取っており、プロローグで「彼らはキャンタベリーへと向かった／あの聖なる至福の殉教者を求めて」 (to Canterbury they wende,/ The hooly blisful martir for to seke, 16-17) と歌われた殉教者こそがベケットであった。

だが、観客にとっては史実である事柄も、登場人物にはそうではない。殉教者の栄光とは、彼にとっては未来——即ち事実ではなく可能性——であり、それゆえベケット自身の「私もそんなことを考えたことがある」という言葉が示すように、彼の思念に働きかけるのである。ベケットは第四の誘惑者にのみは動揺を感じ、以下のような疑問を発する。

Who are you, tempting with my own desires?
 Others have come, temporal tempters,
 With pleasure and power at palpable price.
 What do you offer? what do you ask?

(42)

作者は、誘惑者たちがふるう言葉の矛先を彼が拒んだものから彼自身が望んだものへと変更することで、ベケットが第四の誘惑者と相対する場面に二つの効果を与えている。その一つは時間を超越した寓話性を強調していることで、これは中世の道徳劇に顕著な要素である。しかし、それと同時に第四の男は主人公のドッベルゲンガーとして描かれてもおり、その点では分裂した個の問題という20世紀的な意識が強く打ち出されてもいる。ここでベケットが戦わねばならないのは外形化された己自身の欲望であり、ベケットの葛藤は人間の数多の弱さの中でも取り分け執拗に障害として残るのが<自我>であることを伝えている。エリオットが初期の批評「伝統と個人の才能」 (“Tradition and the Individual Talent”, 1919) で見せた、

ロマン派が称揚した<個>に対する違和感と危機感とが、この場面にも息づいている。自らのうちにある高慢の罪を自覚したベケットは、第一部の終幕で次のように語る。

Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain:
Temptation shall not come in this kind again.
The last temptation is the greatest treason;
To do the right deed for the wrong reason.

(47)

この詩行は作品中でも珍しく、完全韻を踏んだ二行連句が続く。突然に整った文体へと変化することは、ベケットが今や「明快」かつ「平明」な心境に至ったことをそのまま模しているものといえよう。この戯曲全体を貫く論題は「誤った動機によって正しき行いをする」という詩行に要約されているが、「動機／理屈」(reason)という語が「反逆」(treason)と韻を踏んでおり、それゆえに音韻的に強い結びつきを持たされていることには注目すべきであろう。というのも、一種の悟りに到達したベケットとは対照的に、彼を殺害する四人の騎士たちは「誤った理屈に支配されて誤った行いに及ぶ」者たちであり、第二部で用いられる探偵小説の枠組みはまさしく彼らの「理屈」が誤謬だらけであることを強調するために使われているからである。このことについては後に詳しく論じる。

第一部と第二部を挟んだ幕間劇は、キャンタベリー聖堂で行われるクリスマス・ミサの体裁を取っている。説教壇の上から劇中の架空の会衆へと語りかけるベケットは、同時に直接芝居の観客へ語りかけてもおり、我々は時空を超えてベケット大司教のミサに参加することになる。大司教の説教の主題は、「クリスマスとは喜びの日でもなく悲しみの日でもなく、その両方なのだ」というものである。

Just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of our Lord: so also, in smaller figure, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs. We mourn, for the sins of the world that has martyred them; we rejoice, that another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men.

[...] A martyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. A martyrdom is never the design of man;

(52-53)

己をむなしくして全てを神に委ねなければ真の宗教者ではないと確信した大司教は、殉教とは人智を超えた神の意志であると告げる。ベケットは舞

台に初めて登場した際に「行動することは堪え忍ぶことであり／堪え忍ぶことは行動することである」(action is suffering/ And suffering is action) と不安に駆られる僧侶たちを諭したものの(22)、後に第四の誘惑者に「お前は分かっているながら分かっているのだ、行動することや堪え忍ぶことが何なのかを」(You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer) と揶揄されていた(43)。だが、この説教によって観客は今や彼が「行動し堪え忍ぶ」という逆説の秘密を理解したことを知るのだ。この幕間劇は散文で書かれてはいるが、ベケットの説教の最も重要な部分——「我々は殉教者の死を喜ぶと同時に悲しむのです」や「殉教とは決して人間の意図によるものではない」といった語句——はゆるやかに弱強格をなしており、耳に快く響く。かくして劇詩の趣を減ずることなく語られるメッセージの内容は、まさしく典型的な道徳劇のそれであり、例えば『人間』(Mankind, c. 1465-70)では、「慈悲」の忍耐強い眼差しが「悪魔」や「当世」や独りよがりの<絶望>の手から最後に「人間」を救うというのが芝居の結末になっている。驚いたことに、作者はこうした道徳劇の結論を、早くも戯曲の半ばで見せてしまっている。ベケットは第一部の終わりで既に「正しいことをする人間」から「神の御心に従って生きる人間」への止揚を果たし、第二部では完全に静的な人物として死んでゆく。つまり、道徳劇としての『寺院の殺人』はインターラードで完結してしまうのである。

II

エリオットが『寺院の殺人』に織り込んだ道徳劇の要素が幕間劇で一応の決着を見せるとすれば、第二部で観客が期待するものは、本来の聖者劇としてのドラマツルギーであろう。それは即ち、聖人が艱難をものともせず伝道する姿や殉教の果てに昇天する様子を、観客自身がその目でもって目撃し神の奇跡の顕現を追体験することである。聖人の行状を目撃することは、中世教会劇が担っていた役割の中でも非常に重要なものであった。そもそも「殉教者」(martyr)の語源はギリシャ語の「証を立てる」(martur = to witness)であり、殉教者とは「自らの血でもって神への証を立てた者」という意味であった。この語の持つ響きはやがて殉教する人間の方へ再帰的に波及して、教会によって正式に殉教者と認可されるためには「証人」(witness)が必要とされるようになった。聖者劇では、観衆がマグダラのマリヤや聖パウロの業績を眼前で<目撃>することで、彼らが起こした奇蹟はそれだけ一層真実なものとしてされ、その背後にある神の力もそれだけ強力

に感じられたのである。

ここでまた作者は、演劇のジャンルを混交させる。『寺院の殺人』においては、ベケットの死を単なる<死>ではなく<殉教>にするための目撃者は、エリオットがギリシャ劇から導入したコロスの存在なのである。この点で、コロスとして登場するキャンタベリーの女たちは、ベケットと並ぶ影の主演と言っても良い。芝居の冒頭で、コロスの女たちは<人と人を大きく超えた神との対峙>というギリシャ劇の世界観にのっとり、ベケットの死の布石となる暗い運命を予見する。

Some malady is coming upon us. We wait, we wait,
And the saints and martyrs wait, for those who shall be martyrs and saints.
Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping the still unshapen:
[.....]
For us, the poor, there is no action,
But only to wait and to witness.

(13)

彼女たちが不穏な運命の到来を感じ取って詠う「我らは待つ、我らは待つ」という言葉は、引用の最後の二行では「我ら貧しき者には、行動などありはしない／待つて、目撃するのみ」と、非人称構文の形で繰り返される。これによって「我ら」という主語の力が幾分か薄められている一方で、「待つて目撃する」という不定詞は、50行にも及ぶ彼女たちの台詞の最終行の文末にあり、観客の耳に強く残るようになっている。コロスの女たちの台詞は触媒としての働きを持っており、彼女たちは、「ただ待つて、ことの成り行きを目撃しろ」と観客に語りかけている。⁴コロスを通じ、観客がベケットの死を証しすることによって、『寺院の殺人』は聖者劇としても機能しているのである。

リチャード・バーデンハウゼン (Richard Badenhausen) は、ジェンダー批評の観点からキャンタベリーの女たちの重要性に着目し、彼女たちや『カクテル・パーティー』のシーリアは「論理／理性によるシステムを攻撃する」力を持った存在だと分析している (207)。彼の指摘は主として反論しがたいし特に反論するつもりもないが、キャンタベリーの女たちがロゴセントリズムに対して有している転覆的な力の所在を<女>だからということに帰するのは、シーリアを論じた部分ほどにはしっくりと来ない。というのも、キャンタベリーの女たちは常に女性のジェンダーを保持しているわけではなく、時に両性具有的な側面を見せるからだ。確かに「私たちは無知蒙昧の女ではない、私たちは予期すべきもの、予期すべきでないもの

をわきまえている」(We are not ignorant women, we know what we must expect and not expect) という彼女たちの知恵の背後にあるのは「私たちはビールやリンゴ酒を醸造し／冬に備えて薪を集め／炉端で話をしてきたのだ」(We have brewed beer and cider,/ Gathered wood against the winter,/ Talked at the corner of the fire) という、家政を切り盛りする者として生活の細部をつぶさに見てきたがゆえの洞察力である(45 & 19)。これら生活者としての知恵が、ベケットの超然とした神学的な知性と対照的なものとして描かれている点は否めず、ソフォクレス(Sophocles; c. 496-406 B.C.)の悲劇『エレクトラ』(*Electra*)において、ミュケーナイの若い女たちから成るコロスと王女エレクトラとの議論詩の応酬がそれぞれの価値観を対比的に披露しているのと、近似した働きを持っている。⁵

だが、『寺院の殺人』におけるコロスの女たちは、作品の緊張感が増す場面になるとその口調を変化させる。戯曲の第二部で、四人の騎士がベケットとの口論の末にいったん退場すると、コロスは来るべきキャスタロフィーを暗示する歌をうたう。

CHORUS

I have smelt them, the death-bringers, senses are quickened
 By subtle forebodings; I have heard
 Fluting in the nighttime, fluting and owls, have seen at noon
 Scaly wings slanting over, huge and ridiculous. I have tasted
 The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon. I have felt
 The heaving of earth at nightfall, restless, absurd. I have heard
 Laughter in the noises of beasts that make strange noises: jackal, jackass,
 jackdaw; the scurrying noise of mouse and jerboa; the laugh of the
 loon, the lunatic bird. I have seen
 Grey necks twisting rat tails twining, in the thick light of dawn. I have
 eaten
 Smooth creatures still living, with the strong salt taste of living things
 under sea; I have tasted
 The living lobster, the crab, the oyster, the whelk and the prawn; and they
 live and spawn in my bowels, and my bowels dissolve in the light of
 dawn. I have smelt
 Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock, sweet pea, hyacinth, primrose
 and cowslip, I have seen
 Trunk and horn, tusk and hoof, in odd places;
 I have lain on the floor of the sea and breathed with the breathing of the
 sea-anemone, swallowed with ingurgitation of the sponge. I have lain
 in the soil and criticised the worm. In the air
 Flirted with the passage of the kite. I have plunged with the kite and cow-
 ered with the wren, I have felt
 The horn of the beetle, the scale of the viper, the mobile hard insensitive

skin of the elephant, the evasive flank of the fish.

(72-73)

この引用は作中もっとも力強い詩行といっても良く、こうした台詞を与えられていることから、『寺院の殺人』におけるコロスの重要性が分かる。ただし、この詩行に現れるベルソナは「キャンタベリーの平凡な女たち」のそれを超えている。「私たち」という一人称複数ここでは「私」という単数形に変化し、しかも15行の間に14回という頻度で現れる。「私は死をもたらす者の到来を感じ取っていた」というような、凶兆を直感しその経験を言語化する詩句は、ギリシア劇のコロスにもありふれたものではあるが、「私はつりとした生物を生きたままで、海生生物の濃い塩味を味わいながら、食べたことがある」以降では、語り手である「私」の経験の質は異なったものになっている。「私」は魚介を生きたままで飲み、そのハラコを自らの腹の中で孵し、「私」は海底に沈んでイソギンチャクの呼吸に合わせて呼吸をし、「私」は土中に埋められて己を喰らう蛆虫に抗議の声を挙げ、「私」は空中にあっては鳶やミソサザイと飛び回った存在である。キリスト教的な世界観とは大きく異なる東洋的な輪廻転生の循環の中で有形にもなりまた無形にもなる「私」、水・土・空という、四元素の中では浄化を象徴する<火>のみを除いた三元素全てに遍在する「私」は、定型の実体を持たぬいわば<観照的意識>である。あらゆることを経験済みのものとして完了形で語るこの語り手は、つまり時間を越えた次元に存在しており、もはやキャンタベリーの女たちではあり得ない。

すると「私」とは一体誰なのだろうか。実体はなく、全てを経験しており、時間の枠外に存在する観照者——これにもっとも近い存在は、エリオットの『荒地』に登場する盲目の予言者ティレシアスである。

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
 Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
 At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
 Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
 The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
 Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
 Out of the window perilously spread
 Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
 On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
 I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest —
 I too awaited the expected guest.
 [.....]

(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)

(WL; 218-30 & 243-46)

『荒地』のティレシアスは、エリオット自身が附した注で「ティレシアスは単なる観察者に過ぎず、『登場人物』といえるような存在ではないのだが、しかしこの詩の中で最も重要な人物であり、他の部分を全て統合するのが彼である。[……] 実際のところ、ティレシアスが見るものが、この詩の内容なのだ」と説明されている(23)。盲目の予言者は、とある女性タイプストの陳腐な恋愛事情を心眼で眺めながら「全てお見通しだった」と述べ、古代のテーベと20世紀の都市とを一瞬にして結びつける。ここで重要なのは、彼は繰り返し自らを「萎びた乳房を持つ老人」だと描写し、またタイプストの恋人ではなく彼女自身に自己を投射することで、己の両性具有性を強調している点である。ソフォクレスの悲劇の中では『荒地』とは違って、ギリシア神話におけるティレシアスの挿話——両性を経験した上で女の性の喜びをより大きなものと述べたためヘラの怒りを買って盲目となったが、ゼウスによって代わりに予言の力を与えられたというもの——は、捨象されて前景化することはなく、『オイディプス王』(*Oedipus Rex*)や『アンティゴネー』(*Antigone*)といった作品に登場する彼のジェンダーは常に<男>なのである。

だが詩人の想像力は、ティレシアスの予言の力は彼が両性を経験したことに由来することを大変重要なものと捉えた。⁶ 再びエリオットの自注を引けば、「二つの性がティレシアスの内部で出会う」ことが、彼を作中の最重要人物にしているのだ(23)。また先の引用中にある「盲目ではあるが」という語句からは、ティレシアスの予知能力は彼が肉眼を失ったことに対する神の補償であったことをも、詩人が重要視していたことがうかがえる。『荒地』という詩を統合する視点は、雌雄の別もなく肉体すらも持っていない、<観照的意識>としての眼なのだ。不毛で断片化された「非現実的な都市」(Unreal city)である現代の世界を描くため、エリオットはそれらを一つの作品としてまとめる包括的な力を古代の予言者の非身体的な眼から借りている。

これと似たような働きを、『寺院の殺人』におけるコロスは果たしている。彼女たちは冒頭で「貧しいキャンタベリーの女たち」として登場し、終幕では自分たちを「平凡な人間の典型」(type of the common man)と呼ぶ

(94)。しかし上述のように、彼女たちはその最も強力な言葉を詠い上げるときには既に女でもなく、平凡な人間でもない。森羅万象をあまねく経験してきた「私」の声が民草たるコロスの声にとって代わるとき、その声は予言者の声であり、人知を超えたギリシア的な神々の意図を知ってしまう恐怖を知った声である。『オイディプス王』と『寺院の殺人』を比較してみれば、両者の差違は自ずと明らかであろう。前者においては、コロスの役割と予言者のそれとは明確に区別されている。先王ライオス殺害の犯人は誰かとオイディプス王から尋ねられた予言者ティレシアスは、「いいや、あなた方は、みんな、何も知らないからだ。おれは、あなたの禍いを言うまいために、おれのもけっして明かしはせぬ」という言葉で真実を知ることに対する恐怖感を露わにする(高津訳 318)。一方、彼から殺人者は他ならぬオイディプスだと聞かされたコロスはお、*「まことにゼウスとアポロンはさとく、人の世のことを／知りたまえど、人の子なる予言者がわれらにまさる智をもつとは、／何の確かなきめ手もない」と*、半信半疑の体である(高津訳 325-26)。それに対し『寺院の殺人』では、コロスと予言者の機能は混乱している。テキストによって「コロス」と呼ばれているキャンタベリー的女たちは、実際には時に「予言者」へとすり替わり、しかもその変貌はコロスの合唱が是非とも必要な時に限って起こってしまうのである。

作品中でコロスが最も必要とされる瞬間とは、いうまでもなくベケット大司教が殺害される瞬間である。『寺院の殺人』が聖者劇として成立するためには、コロスと観客とがベケットの死を「目撃する」ことによって、彼の死は「殉教」へと認定されることが欠かせないからである。しかし、先に引用した四人の騎士がベケットと口論をする場に引き続き、芝居の大詰めである大司教殺害の場面でも、コロスの一人称には複数形に混じって包括的な単数形の「私」が忍び込む。

While the KNIGHTS kill him[THOMAS], *we hear the CHORUS*

Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind! take stone from stone and wash them.

The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood.

A rain of blood has blinded my eyes. Where is England? where is Kent? where is Canterbury?

O far far far far in the past; and I wander in a land of barren boughs: if I break them, they bleed; I wander in a land dry stones: if I touch them they bleed.

[.....]

Every horror had its definition,

Every sorrow had a kind of end:
 In life there is not time to grieve long.
 But this, this is out of life, this is out of time,
 An instant eternity of evil and wrong.

(82-83)

寺院の中で流された血によって語り手が盲目になると同時に、「イングラ
 ンドのケント州にあるキャンタベリー」という具体的な〈場〉の感覚は消
 失する。「私」が存在するのは枯渇した木石しか存在しない荒れ果てた空
 間であり、そこでは触れるもの全てが血を流している。「私」の見えない
 目は、ベケットの死を目撃などしていない。語り手が見ているのはその向
 こうにある、「生命と時間の枠を超えた」、「永遠の邪悪と不正」なのであ
 る。彼の死から「私」が引き出す結論は、世界が今や末期にありもはや回
 復は望めないという絶望であり、これは『荒地』や「うつろな人間たち」
 でエリオットが詠った、現代に生きる我々は過去の死者たちほどには真の
 意味で生きてはいない、という主題に通じるものである。

こうした語り手の世界観は、幕間のクリスマス・ミサでベケットが観客
 に語りかけた「殉教を生み出した世界を嘆くと同時に、神の栄光と人間の
 救済のために新たな魂が列聖されたことを喜びましょう」という宗教的意
 識とはその本質を異にするものである。予言者めいた「私」の語りキャン
 タベリーの女たちというコロスの語りに割り込むことによって、『寺院
 の殺人』は、ベケットが第一部の終幕で到達したキリスト教的な悟りを無
 力化し、また彼の死を聖人の殉教として証しすることを拒むのだ。中世
 劇としては道徳劇と聖者劇の要素を混交した作者は、それと似た手口でギ
 リシア悲劇における「コロス」と「予言者」という二種の役割を混交さ
 せ、その結果キリスト教劇としての自らの構造を解体してしまっているの
 である。

III

『寺院の殺人』の自己解体の動きは、しかしこれに止まるものではない。
 作者は芝居の最後にさらに異なるジャンルの文学を混入させ、これまで積
 み上げてきた言説を決定的に転覆させている。ここで用いられるのは探偵
 小説の語りなのだが、これは前節までのところで論じてきた中世劇とギリ
 シア悲劇の違いなどとは比較にならぬほど大きく異なる類のものであるた
 め、その違和感も群を抜いており、不条理演劇の匂いを感じさせるほどで
 ある。大司教殺害を遂行すると、四人の騎士はコロスの嘆きの歌を無視し
 て舞台の前面へ進み出て行き、詩劇のディコーラムは何処へやら、ごく散

文的な口調でもって観客に直接話しかけるので、場は一瞬にして現代的なメタドラマへと変貌する。

We beg you to give us your attention for a few moments. We know that you may be disposed to judge unfavourably of our action. You are Englishmen, and therefore you believe in fair play: and when you see one man being set upon by four, then your sympathies are all with the under dog. I respect such feelings, I share them. Nevertheless, I appeal to your sense of honour. You are Englishmen, and therefore will not judge anybody without hearing both sides of the case. That is in accordance with our long-established principle of Trial by Jury.

(84)

物語の最後の場面でこれまで起こってきた出来事を新しい視点から再構成する、という技法は探偵小説に特徴的なものであり、これをエリオットは G. K. チェスタトン (G. K. Chesterton) やアガサ・クリスティー (Agatha Christie) から思いついたようだ。とりわけチェスタトンはカソリック作家ということもあって、改宗後のエリオットにとっては重要な作家であった。エリオットは『寺院の殺人』と同じ1935年が初出の「宗教と文学」(“Religion and Literature”)の中で、<神>の意識が薄れ切った現代の文学は宗教的テーマをいかにして伝えるべきかという問題を論じながら、チェスタトンに触れている。⁷ 探偵小説の根本的な構成とは、シェイクスピア (William Shakespeare) の『ジョン王』(King John, c. 1596) 三幕四場の「人生とは二度語られる物語のように退屈だ」(life is as tedious as a twice-told tale) という台詞を裏返しにしたものである。探偵が事物を語り直してくれることによって、他の登場人物ないし読者にはこれまで見えなかった側面に光が当てられ、同じ事柄が深い意味を持つようになるのだ。

ただし『寺院の殺人』においては、たった今舞台の上で殺人を犯した犯人が自ら探偵役を買って出て、手前勝手な謎解きを始めるのだから、探偵小説の言説はさらに反転され、皮肉に扱われている。「一對四で掛かったとあれば、あなた方の同情は負け犬の方に向くでしょう。その気持ちは尊重します。私だって同じことを思います」という言葉は、聞き手がどの程度自分の語りに着いてきているかを随時確認しながら話を進めるエルキュール・ポワロ流の語りを真似ているのだが、騎士の語りの場合には口調だけを真似たものであり、その内容は探偵小説とは逆に、明らかな事柄を歪曲するための不正な謎解きである。彼らは口々に、自分たちの行為は私利私欲とは無縁のもので、大司教を殺害したのはひとえに大義のためであるということを主張する。しかし、例えば第二の騎士が「これまでの点は同意して

いただけたようですね。皆さんの表情で分かります」(So far, I know that I have your approval: I read it in your faces)と観客に語りかけるとき、舞台を支配するのは謎解きの緊迫感などではない。そこに照射されるのは戯画化された人間の独善性であり、いわば道化芝居の面白みなのである(88)。⁸

四人の騎士の語りが探偵のそれであること自体は、ヒュー・ケナー(Hugh Kenner)によってつとに指摘されてもいるし、作品の名が『寺院の殺人』に決定する以前、エリオットは『大司教殺人事件』(*The Archbishop Murder Case*)という題を付けるつもりでいたことから、今さら細かな議論の必要はなさそうだ。だが、いんちき探偵が唐突に登場することによってこの芝居の結末はどのように書き換えられてしまったのか、という問題についてはよく考えなければならない。ケナーは、『寺院の殺人』という作品の主題を、「[ベケットの死という] 同じ行為の中で」、「分析的な頭の良さ」と神の知恵とを区別する」こととし、そのために使われたのが探偵小説の技法なのだと考えた(Hinchcliffe 104)。この基底の解釈には何らの異論を差し挟む余地はないが、しかし彼が人知と神知とは共にベケットの側にあると論ずる段になると、四人の騎士の語りとその他の語りとの関係がぎこちないものになってしまう。

ケナーの主張を要約すると、以下ようになる。ベケットは、今なお中世然とした者から見れば大司教本人が主張する通り神知に属する殉教者になるが、20世紀的な観点から見れば畢竟思想的テロ事件のあわれな犠牲者に過ぎない。騎士の語りは、ベケット自身が幻想化した<殉教>を現実的なく殺人>として再提示してくれるものであり、それゆえこの戯曲の魅力は終幕の強力なアンチクライマックスにある。かくしてケナーは、この急落法の効力を減ずる要素——ベケットの決意やコロスの語りなど——を、作品の統一を乱すものとして惜しんでいる。「残念なことに、三つのことが一緒になって、この非常に見込みのある趣向を脱線させている[⋯]。一つにはベケットの人的な力であり[⋯] 第二には[騎士たちの] 楽観主義である。三つ目のものはコロスの用いる言語である」(Hinchcliffe 105)。ケナーによれば、ベケットを大きな人物として描くことはその後登場する騎士を単にくだらぬ人間に見せることになってしまうし、彼ら自身のオプティミズムもその傾向に拍車をかける上、コロスの詩的な言語は戯曲全体の色調とは根本的に相容れないものなのだ。こうしたそれなりに魅力的な論に従えば、『寺院の殺人』の主題はエリオットが国教会に改宗する1927年以前に執筆していた最初期の戯曲『闘技士スウィ

ーニー』と多かれ少なかれ共通するものになるだろう。しかし、ミルトン (John Milton) の『闘技士サムソン』 (*Samson Agonistes*, 1671) においては英雄だった存在も、20世紀にあつては切り裂きジャック同然の殺人者に過ぎないという醒めたアイロニーが、『寺院の殺人』の根幹にまでつながつているといえるだろうか。また、ベケット、コロス、騎士の銘々が、互いの言説の力をそぐように配置されていることは、作品の欠点に過ぎないのだろうか。

戯曲というよりは、特にその詩作品で十全に発揮されていることではあるが、エリオットはコラージュ技法の名手である。この作品においても、三者三様の語りを相殺させる形で提示していることには、作者の何らかの意図が働いているとは考えられないだろうか。三人の騎士が順繰りに言いたいことを喋り散らした後で、第四の騎士が口にする台詞には、探偵小説の言説と先に論じてきた中世劇・ギリシア悲劇的な語りとの関係をほのめかす語句が見られる。

What I have to say may be put in the form of a question: *Who killed the Archbishop?* As you have been eye-witness of this lamentable scene, you may feel some surprise at my putting it in this way. But consider the course of events.

(89)

いうまでもなく、「誰が大司教を殺したか」という疑問文はクリスティーを模倣して伝承童謡の一説をもじったもので、探偵小説のトラヴェステイは連綿として続いているのだが、これに続く「あなたがたはこの嘆かわしい場面の目撃者であったのですから」という言葉は、観客に「殺人事件の目撃者」と「殉教を認定する証人」の二通りの意味付けをする働きを持っている。「ことの次第をきちんと考えてくださいよ」と訴える騎士の言葉によって、観客は今や、舞台の上で起こった出来事に何らかの判断を下すことを要求される。言語の表層的なレベルでいえば、第四の騎士が導き出そうとする解答は、大司教が自ら死を招いたのであって自分たちに責任はない、というものである。だが、こうした彼らの自分勝手な理屈の背後で、作者は明らかに観客に向かって、騎士らに反発しその理屈を否認するように促している。ここで、ケナーが作品の欠点だとした要素は、『寺院の殺人』を宗教劇として考える場合にプラスの要因となる。即ち、死ぬ前にベケットが到達した宗教的な高みは、茶番めかした模擬裁判の被告たる騎士の答弁に対して、観客が今一度ベケットの死を<殉教>として証しするべく働きかけているのである。

ここにおいて、『寺院の殺人』は手の込んだ二重扉を仕掛けておくことがわかってくる。ベケット大司教の死という歴史的事件を戯曲化するにあたって、20世紀の西洋ではもはや殉教などという宗教的な死を表象することは不可能ではないかという作者の不安と懸念は、ギリシア悲劇的な装置であるコロスに預言者としての働きを混入させて、キリスト教的宗教劇の構造を解体することになった。しかし、作者はそれに加えて四人の騎士を誤謬だらけの探偵に仕立てあげ、キャンタベリー的女たちが精緻な詩行を操って揺さぶったものを、乱暴な屁理屈でさらに踏みつぶさせている。彼らの荒々しい追撃こそは、実際は逆説的に機能しており、さきに懐疑的な眼を投げ掛けられた<殉教>に対する信頼を回復する契機になっているのだ。<殉教>という死に様は、四人の騎士の弁論によって粉々に抹殺されたがゆえに舞台の上に微かながら蘇る。これを受けてか、女たちが戯曲の最後で詠う詩行は、彼女たちがさきの場面でベケットの死をキリスト教的な殉教としては無力化したことに対する自省を含んでいる。

Forgive us, O Lord, we acknowledge ourselves as type of the common
man,
[.....]
Who fear the blessing of God, the loneliness of the night of God, the sur-
render required, the deprivation inflicted;
Who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God;

(94)

彼女たちは終幕には「平凡な人間の典型」たるコロスに戻っており、あたかも神が存在することを確認し自分に納得させるかのように、「主よ」という呼びかけも含め引用中に四度神の名を口にしていく。「私たちは神の祝福を畏れるのです」といった祈りの数々は、神の前に人間の理解力が足りないことを悲しみ、それに対する許しと救いをこいねがうもので、事実上彼女たちは、自分たちがベケットの死の意味を誤って伝えていた可能性を観客に示している。コロスの語りに紛れ込んだ「私」が絶望のうちに叫んだ孤独や喪失感、最後の最後に至って「これも神の業である」として、語り直されるのだ。

エリオットが自ら述べたように、確かにその執筆の契機において、『寺院の殺人』は「特殊な事情」の産物かも知れない。だが、異なるジャンルの文体をつなぐモダニズム的な手法が見事な効力を発揮して、この作品は「自分のためになるからと辛抱して退屈な芝居を見てくれる」敬虔なキリスト教徒のみならず、もっとずっと多くの人々を惹きつける視野の広さを

獲得している。本論の冒頭でも言及したように、20世紀という時代における宗教と文学の関係を追求し続けたエリオットは、戦後になってからウェスト・エンドの観客に歩み寄った比較的娯楽性の強い宗教劇を何本か書き、その苦悩のうちに『寺院の殺人』に対して自ら距離を置くようになった。しかし、1972年のロイヤル・シェイクスピア・カンパニーによる上演を含め、エリオット劇の中でも息の長い人気と多数の上演記録を誇っているのは、今なおやはり『寺院の殺人』なのである。

注

- 1 2001年以降のイギリス国内での上演の記録には、2001年3月にノリッジ大聖堂で行われたロビン・ハドソン (Robin Hudson) 演出によるものや、ロンドンのサザーク大聖堂でのナショナル・ユース・シアターによる2003年9月の上演などが挙げられる。但し、2003年9月3日付けの『ガーディアン』紙 (*The Guardian*) で、サザーク聖堂での上演を評したリン・ガードナー (Lyn Gardner) は「全体にあって、若い俳優陣の方が[...] 劇作家よりも上等である。[...] 詩劇は復活の機運にあるのかも知れないが、宗教詩劇の命運はとっくに尽きている」と述べ、『寺院の殺人』を21世紀に上演することに対する懐疑の念をあからさまにしている。
- 2 エリオットより一世代前に上演を度外視して詠った書斎劇を拒み、舞台の上で語るに適した詩を模索したのは、W. B. イェイツ (W. B. Yeats) であったが、イェイツの場合はエズラ・パウンド (Ezra Pound) を通じて知った日本の能楽に惹かれ、詩と舞踊を組み合わせるという手法に可能性を見た。クリストファー・イネス (Christopher Innes) は、エリオットが『闘技者スウィーニー』 (*Sweeney Agonistes*, 1927) の演出家ハリー・フラナガン (Hallie Flanagan) に「エズラ・パウンドの本とイェイツが能劇につけた序文を見てくれ」と語ったと伝えており、エリオット自身も能には少なからぬ興味を抱いていたことが分かる。Innes 476 参照。
- 3 本論中における『寺院の殺人』からの引用は全て、T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (London: Faber, 1935; 1968) に拠っており、括弧内にはページ番号を付す。また、『荒地』からの引用は、Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ed. by Michael North (New York: Norton, 2001)、その他のエリオットの詩と詩劇からの引用は全て、Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, 1952) に拠る。
- 4 キャンタベリーの女たちが口にする、「人は運命には逆らえないので諦観するよりほかない」という観客への呼びかけには、J. M. シング (J. M. Synge) の『海に騎り行くものたち』 (*Riders to the Sea*, 1904) に登場する老女モーリヤを思わせるところがある。20世紀初頭のイギリス・アイルランド演劇とギリシャ古典劇の関係は、<老女>という表象を通してもっとも良く現れているようだ。
- 5 2003年9月に東京のシアターコクーンで、蛭川幸雄の演出によって上演された『エレクトラ』では、大竹しのぶ演じるエレクトラが白っぽいドレスを身につけ、一方コロスの女たちは全員が全く同じ漆黒のドレスを纏っていた。これはコロスの集団性を表すと同時に、彼らの考え方が王女のそれとは違うことを、カラー・シンボリズムで舞台上に視覚化する働きを持っていた。

- 6 エリオットはおそらく、プラトーン (Plato; c. 427-327 B.C.) の『饗宴』 (*Symposium*) に見える、太古の人間は男と女の他に男女というもう一つの性を有しており、その強大な力を畏れた神が人間を現在の形に切り裂いたという有名なアリストファネスの弁論を念頭においている。両性具有の豊さは、エリオットが『荒地』執筆の際に幾度となく言及している J. L. ウェストン (J. L. Weston) の『祭礼からロマンスへ』 (*From Ritual to Romance*) に見られる漁夫王の神話と対照を成している。漁夫王の神話では、王の性的不能が世界の枯渇と同一視されている。Weston 107-29 参照。
- 7 この小論におけるエリオットのチェスタトン観は複雑なものであり、チェスタトンの問題というよりはエリオット自身のジレンマを感じさせる。ここで彼は宗教学を四つの範疇に分け、その中の一例としてチェスタトンを挙げている。[[第三の宗教学は] 宗教的大義を心から推進したいと望んでいるものであり、プロパガンダと呼べるかもしれない。もちろん私が考えているのはチェスタトン氏の『木曜の男』や『ブラウン神父』のような楽しい小説である。私ほどこれからの小説を賞賛し楽しんでいてもいる男はいないのだが、しかし私はただ、チェスタトン氏ほどの才能に恵まれぬ宗教的熱意に溢れた人物が同じ効果を狙った場合、その否定的な面が現れるだろうと言いたいだけなのだ』 (*Selected Prose* 99-100)。
- 8 1952 年出版の Harcourt 版では、この台詞は第二の騎士ではなく第三の騎士に割り当てられている。このことから、エリオットにとっては四人の騎士の個人的な差違は重要ではなく、彼らは探偵小説の言説を導入するための一種の<機能>として考えられていたことが伺える。

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編集後記

『川内レビュー』第4号をお届けいたします。先の号に続いて、今号も発行がだいぶ遅れてしまいました。心から深くお詫び申し上げます。

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