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The Role of Women in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*

Lu Dai

I. Introduction

Tennyson's attitudes to women in *Idylls of the King* have attracted much critical interest. Mark Girouard argues in his book *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, that 'The only women on pedestals in the *Idylls of the King* are there as warnings, not for admiration, and they do not stay on them' (Girouard 199). Holding a different view, Dino Franco Felluga notes in *Tennyson's Idylls, Pure Poetry, and the Market* that, "woman" served both a "positive" and "negative" role in both Victorian cultural discourse and Tennyson's *Idylls*, adding that 'In certain obvious ways, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* both legitimates and makes conspicuous criticism's tendency to present "woman" as the master signifier of, at one and the same time, purity and putrescence' (Felluga 791–792).

I share these critics' opinion that Tennyson was drawn to the problem of women's role in society because of the important roles the idea of 'woman' played in Victorian culture. As we are all products of our own time, when I first worked on Tennyson, I thought Girouard and Felluga might be right in their criticism of how Tennyson viewed women. But with closer acquaintance with Tennyson's work, I have doubts. My new understanding has come from reading of original materials, including some seemingly insignificant facts of Tennyson's biography, his letters, his personal writings, early poems and the reminiscences that his friends left behind, and some important works dealing with women from his contemporaries. Therefore I can venture some reasoned views about Tennyson's true attitudes to woman hidden in his *Idylls of the King*.

The surroundings the poet lived among are extremely important. In this paper, firstly I will investigate some powerful influences that helped shaped his ideas on woman's nature and her role: his

family, his time studying at Cambridge, his wide reading of other writers and poets, and his marriage, as well as his awareness of the scientific discoveries of his time. Secondly based on the explorations of Tennyson's surroundings, I will analyze the major female characters in the *Idylls*: Guinevere, Enid, Elaine and Vivien. In the end, my conclusion is drawn that Tennyson's view of women is more complex than critics have previously acknowledged.

II-1. Tennyson's Childhood

Alfred Lord Tennyson's father was a rector, suffered from depression and was notoriously absentminded. Being the elder of the two sons, the unfortunate Reverend was disinherited at an early age by his father, who favoured his younger son Charles. Accordingly the Reverend and his family bore a grudge towards his father and brother. The poet's father was perpetually short of money, drank heavily and became mentally unstable while his mother was a gentle creature, and, with twelve children, a very busy one.

Tennyson's father sent him to the Grammar school when he was seven. There Tennyson had unpleasant memories of the other boys he knew. 'He remembered to his dying day sitting on the stone steps of the school on a cold winter's morning, and crying bitterly after a big lad had brutally cuffed him on the head because he was a new boy', Tennyson's biographer Matthew Bevis in his book *Lives of Victorian Figures: Alfred Lord Tennyson*, further says that a boy as he was, 'he preferred clubbing with his Mother and some Sisters, to live unpromoted and write poems' (Bevis 9). This experience was somewhat unusual for a boy. It must have laid his early foundation for his different views toward men and women.

In young Tennyson's mind, his mother was a mode for admiration, while the father was not. When the Rector's moods were at their worst, Alfred would run through the night to the churchyard and throw himself prostrate among the graves, wishing that he were dead. During the summer of 1827 the poet's father had been drinking heavily and had begun threatening physical violence to his family. A friend of their family, William Chaplin said that the Rector might murder one of the family: 'he is as deranged as madness can be described[...]. The children are alarmed at him & the wife is in the greatest fright both in day & night, & I may in truth say in daily danger of her life...', Chaplin continued to say that Mrs Tennyson had unsuccessfully tried

to get the children away from the Rectory, she would not leave them alone with her husband: 'She [the poet's mother] has spent a most dreadful life for some years—Georges [the poet's father] violence is well known in all the adjoining villages & his horrid language is heard everywhere he goes.'¹ In 1830, Tennyson published a poem named *Isabel*, in which 'the poet's mother was more or less described; the character of T's father is also touched on...'²

The stately flower of female fortitude,
Of perfect wifehood and pure lowlihead.

...

A courage to endure and to obey;
A hate of gossip parlance, and of sway,
Crowned Isabel, through all her placid life,
The queen of marriage, a most perfect wife.

...

The mellowed reflex of a winter moon;
A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,

(Isabel 11-12, 25-30)

Tennyson compared the union of his mother with his father as 'a clear stream flowing with a muddy one'. When the poet was young, he loved his mother, feared his father, and hated his grandfather and uncle because the accumulated rancor within the family had brought his childhood much suffering. Tennyson's own genuine affection for his mother is alluded to in his letters. On March 10, 1833, he wrote a letter to his aunt Elizabeth Russell, saying: 'My mother — who, as you know, is one of the most angelick natures on God's earth, always doing good as it were by a sort of intuition — continues in tolerable health, though occasionally subject to sick headaches and somewhat harassed with the cares incident to so large a family' (*The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson* Volume I 90). Tennyson's mother must have influenced him greatly and helped to shape his admiration for devotion and self-sacrifice in women.

II-2. Tennyson's Tutor at Cambridge: William Whewell

Besides his family, from 1827, Tennyson was influenced by another person, when he left home to study at Trinity College, Cambridge. This person was William Whewell (1794-1866), the great nineteenth-century scientist, philosopher, and natural theologian. He was

Tennyson's tutor at Cambridge (1828-1831). Whewell held that women's maternal affection is similar to that of female animals by raising the question that 'who that reads the touching instances of maternal affection, related so often of the women of all nations, and of the females of all animals, can doubt that the principle of action is the same in the two cases?' (*Bridgewater Treatise* 263) Evidence show that Tennyson owned *Whewell's history of the Inductive Sciences from the Earliest to the Present Times* (1837).³ Therefore Whewell must have played important role in Tennyson's opinion on woman's maternal love.

II-3. Gothic Writer Ann Radcliffe's Influence on Tennyson

Both at home and when studying at Cambridge, young Tennyson was a reader with wide interests. As a student, Tennyson encountered the novels by Ann Radcliffe (July 1764- 1823), who was an English author, a pioneer of the gothic novel. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is a quintessential Gothic romance, and Emily St. Aubert is the novel's protagonist, who is unusually beautiful and gentle with a slight and graceful figure. As for her character, she is virtuous, firm, sensitive, and self-reliant. In vol.IV of the novel, women's sexual desire is dealt with:

You have passions in your heart-scorpions; they sleep now-
beware how you awaken them! They will sting you even to
death! (574)

Tennyson must have been interested in Radcliffe's works and her heroines for he commented her on a magazine and imitated her by writing a poem dealing with a similar theme: that of women's sexuality. Tennyson referred to her in a note on *On Sublimity* (I 129) in 1827: Epigraph: Ann Radcliffe's novel (1794).⁴ Impressed by Radcliffe's words on women's desire, wishing to interpret such passions above in the form of poem, in the same year the poet created *The Passions* :

Beware, beware, ere thou takest
The draught of misery!
Beware, beware, ere thou wakest
The scorpions that sleep in thee!

The woes which thou canst not number,
As yet are wrapt in sleep;
Yet oh! yet they slumber
But their slumbers are not deep.
...
Yet oh! yet while the blossom
Of hope is blooming fair,
While the beam of bliss lights thy bosom—
O! rouse not the serpent there!

Ann Radcliffe's gentle, unusual, graceful woman heroine in a gloomy and mysterious castle attracted Tennyson. Naturally Tennyson's famous women characters bear features of those of Radcliffe's, like *The Lady of Shallot*, *Mariana*, and Elaine in *Idylls of the King*. These women with strong passion wait for their lovers as if bewitched by a spell. Their fate is doomed for unrequited love.

A woman's strong passion fascinated Tennyson. One of his early poems on Guinevere is an example. In 1830, he wrote *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, in which Guinevere is an unconventionally lovely woman, full of vitality:

She seemed a part of joyous Spring:
A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
Buckled with golden clasps before;
A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
Closed in a golden ring.
(23-27)

As fast she fled through sun and shade,
The happy winds upon her played,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid:
She looked so lovely, as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger-tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips.
(37-45)

The keynote of the poem is obvious: romantic love, in particular, Guinevere's sensual charm. The appealing appearance of Guinevere in the poem actually predicts Tennyson's purpose of her in his future

Idylls: she is a lovely woman, but also a sensual figure.

II-4. Tennyson's Relation with Rosa Baring and Emily Sellwood

Tennyson wrote about unusual lovely women and their romantic stories, but his own love experience was far from merely romantic. On the contrary, it was full of discouragement. From the facts of his experience of his love with Rosa Baring and frustrated marriage with Emily Sellwood, how Tennyson viewed woman in marriage can also be detected. Tennyson's love story involved his concerns with marital problems. The idea of marriage caused him restlessness, for he was somewhat afraid in considering women's sexuality. His contact with Rosa Baring and Emily can shed light on this point.

According to Robert Bernard Martin, Rosa Baring was 'conventionally good-looking with bright blue eyes, a high colour, and a well-rounded, decidedly feminine figure' (Martin 215). Martin notes that Rosa inspired Tennyson of his poem with eroticism, 'Tennyson may have had her in mind when creating the eponymous character Rose in 'The Gardener's Daughter', adding that 'eroticism of the poem "has a keener edge and a greater directness" than in any previous poem of Tennyson's' (Martin 215). But this fact is often neglected when people try to explain why Tennyson and Rosa's love had no result. Many critics think that that Rosa was wealthy and beautiful, beyond Tennyson's reach, as can be proved by his another poem:

A rosy-coloured jewel, fit to make
An emperor's signet-ring...

But yet a jewel only make to shine,
And icy-cold although 'tis rosy-clear —

...ah! 'tis far too costly to be mine
(‘I lingered yet awhile to bend my way’)

These lines demonstrate that to Tennyson Rosa was 'too costly' to marry. In fact there were other reasons lying behind their financial difference. What is apparently the last of the poems that Tennyson wrote to Rosa in 1836 describes the vacuity beneath her beauty:

An angel's form — a waiting-woman's heart;
A perfect-featured face, expressionless,

Insipid, as the Queen upon a card.
(‘How thought you that this thing could captivate?’)

It can be concluded from this poem that, as Martin says, 'Tennyson finally realized he had been mistaken in loving her, since she was important to him only in a sensual way' (Martin 217). To Tennyson, a woman with angel's form is not enough, but heart and expression are more important. Rosa lacks the latter. There is another reason. That Rosa attracted Tennyson 'in a sensual way', at the same time caused the poet's anxieties. The poet was concerned about his future marital duty: he was afraid of marriage because of his health problem. Actually the Tennysons suffered from a hereditary disease: epilepsy. Besides his father and uncle, among Alfred Tennyson's ten brothers and sisters, some had attacks that resembled epilepsy. Martin records that Alfred either had the disease while young and recovered from it in later life, or, mistakenly feared as a young man that he had inherited a tendency to it.⁵ In nineteenth century, epilepsy was shameful, since many doctors believed that it was sexual in origin. Incontinence in males and continence in females were both thought to cause predispositions to the disease. Sexual feelings were thought to be strong in epileptics. To rid their minds of sexual thoughts was the traditional Victorian recommendation to adolescents for the alleviation of epilepsy. Water treatment such as taking cold bath was a usual remedy. Tennyson received water treatment many times from his youth. It is necessary for him to get rid of sexual feelings. Therefore his thoughts about marriage were complex. It is his health problem that determined his idea that Rosa, a woman with passion, was 'too costly' to be his wife. Woman's desire seems horrible to the poet. Then a woman qualified to be his wife must own an 'angel's heart' and show no sensual signs at all. His love story with his wife Emily can further prove this.

In 1836 Tennyson fell in love with Emily Sellwood. In Martin's opinion, 'Emily was quite different from Rosa: she was shy, unworldly, an invalid from a bad back ever since childhood, wanly pretty, and deeply religious' (Martin 215). The next year the poet's engagement to Emily Sellwood was recognized by both families. But in 1840 Tennyson suggested breaking the engagement, which put Emily in a painful situation. In the same year, October, the poet wrote to Emily, saying 'A good woman is a wondrous creature, cleaving to the right and the good in all change; lovely in her youthful comeliness, lovely all her life long in comeliness of heart' (*The Letters* I 185). It was not

until ten years later, that is, in 1850, they married.

Tennyson's delayed marriage has reasonable explanations. Martin observes that Tennyson was in bad health in 1840 and his mental balance was in a precarious state, 'his own lack of physical ardour may have influenced his decision, and perhaps an inarticulate but understandable desire simply to escape the ties of marriage' (Martin 248). Tennyson received water treatment these years. Bevis, describes how, 'During the '40s Tennyson was in and out of hydropathic hospitals, wandering restlessly from one friend's house to another, and agonizing over the state of life, his work and his health' (Bevis 60). For his physical reasons, Tennyson was afraid of marriage.

After years of treatment, Tennyson's physical condition improved. In 1848 his last water treatment was finished, after which he seemed to have regarded himself as cured. His doctor told him that his illness was not inherited epilepsy, but gout. However, marriage was possible, for he need not worry about sexuality leading to his illness or passing on the family epilepsy to his children.

To the poet, a woman is made to love and to sacrifice for those she loves, and Emily surely was such a person. Tennyson, informing his news to marry by writing on 10 July 1850 to Ludovic Colquhoun, says, 'I am not going to be but am married to a lady only four years younger than myself, one who has loved me for 14 years without variableness [or any shadow of turning]. She has the most beautiful nature I have met with among women.' (*The Letters* I 329)

After marriage, Emily devoted herself to the family and their union was considered as a successful one. Their acquaintance Aubrey De Vere mentioned in a letter that he observed 'a great improvement in Alfred' and how the poet loved his wife by saying that 'He has an unbounded respect for his wife, as well as a strong affection, which has been growing stronger ever since his marriage... That marriage was obviously, equally creditable to his judgment and his heart...' (*The Letters* II 339-340) Emily was surely a blessing to her husband. Tennyson admitted that 'The peace of God came into my life before the altar when I wedded her' (Gwynn 11). As wife and mother, she was highly praised by Aubrey de Vere in a letter to Isabella Fenwick on September 24, 1854 that, 'She [Emily] would, I have no doubt, make any imaginable sacrifice of her happiness to promote the real and interior good of her husband, and not of her happiness only, but of his also' and 'In same way she looks on her two beautiful children, with an affection so deeply human and religious, that there seems in

it nothing of the alloy that so often sophisticates the most sacred ties, causing them rather to lead from God than to Him' (*The Letters* II 97).

Because of Emily's unselfish sacrifice in performing her duties as wife and mother, she won respect from her husband. Inevitably Tennyson's ideas about women were affected by his wife. Outside of his family, Tennyson's living milieu relating to the new discoveries of the nature of woman is worth investigating too.

II-5. Scientific Discussions of Woman's Nature — The Ideas of Darwin and Cooke

Tennyson started to write the *Idylls* since 1833 and published the last part in 1888. This period of more than fifty years witnessed great changes in society caused by the development of science. Scientific investigations of feminine behavior patterns had gotten under way in the 1860s, and by 1870, Nicholas Francis Cooke (1829-1885), a physician, published his cautionary handbook on human sexuality, *Satan in Society*. In the book, he mainly deals with feminine sexuality. Cooke notes that 'a woman capable of bearing children is also capable of the sexual instinct' (Cooke 143). He further argues that sexuality is dangerous, 'Among the most dangerous and inevitable is the sexual instinct, which implanted by the Creator for the wisest purposes, is, perhaps, the most potent of all evils when not properly restrained, retarded, and directed' (Cooke 53).

Cooke studied women's sexuality from the medical perspective, while the naturalist Charles Darwin, examined it from the perspective of how women's maternal nature determines their certain qualities. Darwin, one of the most influential figures of nineteenth century, was born in the same year as Tennyson did and later became a great naturalist. Tennyson and Darwin were near contemporaries at Cambridge. The theory of evolution was known in the Cambridge when Tennyson studied there though it was not until 1859 that Darwin's theory was finally published. Once Darwin visited Tennyson, and they talked about the theory of Evolution and Christianity.⁶ In 1871 Darwin's book *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* was published in which the difference of man and woman was dealt with. In the book Darwin stated clearly that he agreed with German scientist Karl Vogt (1817-1895), in the proclamation that the female assumes certain distinct characters because the formation of her skull is intermediate between the child and the men.⁷

According to Darwin, 'woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness' (Darwin 857). He concludes that 'owing to woman's maternal instincts, she displays these qualities towards her infants in an eminent degree and therefore it is likely that she would often extend them towards her fellowcreatures' (Darwin 857). To put Darwin's claims in other words, woman's maternity defines her role to be solely for selfless love because her brain is relatively small and she lacks the ability to reason. In contrast with woman, Darwin explained the difference of man, 'man is the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness' (Darwin 858).

Tennyson's *Idylls* reveals in a literal way the poet's realization of the difference of such nature of man and woman as discovered by his contemporaries like Darwin. What makes up the *Idylls* is a repeated pattern in which the knights aim to win glory in jousts while women spare no pains to love their men. In other words, men compete while women love. After all, Tennyson was not immune to his time.

III-1. Queen Guinevere

Queen Guinevere is the most prominent female character in *Idylls of the King*. Instead of loving her husband King Arthur, she loves the knight Lancelot. Their guilty love is discovered and Lancelot flees to his castle while Guinevere to a nunnery to repent her shameful affair.

Among the story of marriage failure of Arthur and Guinevere, Tennyson's complex thoughts on Guinevere will be found if the *Idylls* is put in the context of Victorian thinking of marriage and sexual morality.

Let's first look at why Guinevere does not love Arthur. She tells Lancelot frankly how she despises her husband:

She broke into a little scornful laugh:
 'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,
 That passionate perfection, my good lord —
 But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
 ('Lancelot and Elaine' 120-123)

Arthur is compared by Guinevere to a remote sun. It is shining, splendid, but beyond reach:

He never spake word of reproach to me;
 He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
 He cares not for me: only here today
 There gleamed a vague suspicion in his eyes:
 Some meddling rogue has tampered with him — else
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
 And swearing men to vows impossible,
 To make them like himself: but friend, to me
 He is all fault who hath no fault at all:
 For who loves me must have a touch of earth;
 ('Lancelot and Elaine' 124-133)

Guinevere's complaints contain deeper meaning: if Arthur does not worship her as virtue, but treats her as a physical woman, she will love him. Guinevere speaks out a serious problem Tennyson considered: women's sexuality and men's continence. The poet actually suggested that Guinevere is a victim of unconsummated marriage. What Guinevere wants is to serve her husband, instead of being served and worshipped. Guinevere's problem is not her own, but a social one caused by chivalry, Girouard notes, that it [chivalry] could make people totally out of touch with reality: gentlemen are 'revering women who did not want to be revered, serving others, who would have preferred to serve themselves' (Girouard 270). Bram Dijkstra, in his book *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* proclaims that women's desire to serve has hidden motivations, adding that for Tennyson 'it was clear that the sacrificial impulse in woman was [...] "sex-impulse"' (Dijkstra 37). 'A touch of earth' and the 'low sun' may imply Guinevere's longing for consummated marriage which not only involves spiritual love, but also sex.

However, in Victorian age, the ideal of continence was seen as the mark of a man of superior breeding and culture. In addition, limited physiology level at that time may suggest more complex intention of man's self-restraint than apparent pursuit of high ideal. The physician Cooke elucidated the essence of reproduction, saying that, 'Nature has decreed that the act of reproduction shall be expensive to the individual, so she surrounds it, in all cases, with something more or less of danger', he illustrated with the example that, 'In most vegetable, and in certain animal organizations, the accomplishment of this act if followed, more or less speedily, by death', adding with the shocking information that 'In certain instances the male expires in

the embrace' (Cooke 202). After these statements, Cooke summarized man's dilemma toward sexuality: 'As though apprehensive that the intelligence of man would inform him of the danger, and lead him to refrain from the duty imposed on him, Nature has hidden its perils under the most alluring attractions' (Cooke 202).

It is necessary for man to avoid such 'perils'. Then Cooke's proclamations that 'Let no one contend that continence is incompatible with health or longevity' (Cooke 202) were accepted by some Victorians. Man's continence, in fact, derives its motives from the selfish nature of men. However, under Tennyson's pen, women, regardless of loss, insist on pursuing their love. To preserve man's health, as Cooke concludes that woman is thus required to refrain from desire too: 'A strongly passionate woman may well nigh ruin a man of feebler sexual organization than her own, and so it is important that the woman also should be familiarized with the "physiology of matrimony," sufficiently, at least, to refrain from too exacting or frequent demands' (Cooke 149).

The background investigated above sheds light on the condition of Guinevere and Arthur's marriage. The conflict between Guinevere's 'demands' and Arthur's restraint obsessed Tennyson. Arthur's selfishness while Guinevere's selfless passion fascinated the poet.

Not satisfied with her marriage, Guinevere turns to the knight Lancelot to seek 'color' from 'low sun': 'I am yours [Lancelot's] / Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond' ('Lancelot and Elaine' 134-135). The dating scene of Guinevere and Lancelot before they 'kissed, and parted weeping' ('Guinevere' 124) shows that their intimacy is different from the relationship of Guinevere and Arthur:

Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
A madness of farewells.
(*'Guinevere'* 99-102)

Guinevere commits adultery. She is compared to a dangerous 'disease' and 'devil' by Arthur because she has pursued sexual pleasure:

She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse

With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
(*'Guinevere'* 515-519)

In the *Idylls*, Arthur attributes the sin of others and the fall of Camelot to Guinevere's desire for Lancelot. The king even believes that Guinevere's female sin is contagious:

Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinned also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all through thee!
(*'Guinevere'* 484-490)

Arthur's words reveal the worries of the poet's contemporaries: 'the nineteenth-century middle-class male's rediscovery of feminine sexuality, as well as his discovery of the apparently fearful fact that women could actually "awaken" sexual feelings in each other, was, to a large extent, a metaphoric expression of the late nineteenth-century male's unstated awareness that only by dividing women, by keeping them from working together, they could be kept in a state of economic and social submission' (Dijkstra 68). Dijkstra elucidates the situation of that age. Keeping this situation in mind, one need not doubt why Geraint asks the King's permission and takes his wife to his own land after hearing Guinevere's affair with Lancelot for he fears that 'his gentle wife...should suffer any taint' ('The Marriage of Geraint' 29, 31). Therefore Guinevere and Enid should not be allowed to stay together for the Queen is believed to have a 'contagious disease'.

Guinevere prostrates herself on the ground, listening to King Arthur's blame. Prostrated or women lying on the ground suggest the culture feature of late nineteenth century. What lies behind this prostrated image of Guinevere, is that such women 'seem in desperate need of sexual fulfillment' and they 'call to us like animals waiting to be fed', Dijkstra further explains that, 'she, her companions, and all the other endlessly repeated images of prostrated women who were seemingly unable to stand up straight catered to a latent fantasy of aggression' and these women are 'doomed to wait helplessly yet more eagerly for man as her body tensed further with every minute of unfulfillment [...] by her behavior she seemed forever to be pleading to be taken by

force' (Dijkstra 100). Against such a cultural background, Tennyson's intention of Guinevere is clear: she yearns for love.

Guinevere's sexuality is closely connected with her maternity. In the *Idylls*, she is portrayed as a mother by Tennyson, though this role does not occupy much importance. Arthur and Lancelot find a baby in a tree and ask Guinevere to raise it:

A maiden babe; which Arthur pitying took,
Then gave it to his Queen to rear: the Queen
But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms
Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling; so forgot herself
A moment, and her cares; till that young life
Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal cold
Past from her.
(*The Last Tournament*' 21-28)

Guinevere loves the child and forgets herself when she nurses the baby, though it is not born from her. Maternity is woman's nature. A mother is admirable for her unselfish love. This paper has already discussed the poet's mother's devotedness. In addition, Tennyson expressed his genuine affection for his wife when she became a mother. On 1852, August 11, the poet wrote a letter to John Forester, telling him of the birth of his son: 'I have seen beautiful things in my life, but I never saw anything more beautiful than the mother's face as she lay by the young child an hour or two after, or heard anything sweeter than the little lamblike bleat of the young one.' (*The Letters* II 37) In Tennyson's mind, a woman becomes more beautiful when she plays her new role as a mother. Undoubtedly a mother's task is to love and protect her child. The role is determined by her woman's nature. The Cracroft Diary of 1849 November records such a story about Tennyson:

The poet, Alfred Tennyson, started a hypothetical subject at dessert which divided opinion. It was borrowed from a Russian story. In the wilds of Russia and in the depth of winter a Lady was driving a sledge with 3 of her children towards a log hut where there were three younger ones all alone. She was banished there. She found herself pursued by a pack of wolves which were fast gaining on her. She sacrificed her 3 children successively in order to preserve the others who were alone and helpless in the hut, and so reached her home in safety. Was she right in what she did, or ought she to have died with her children

and left the other 3 in the hut to the care of the Almighty?

Mrs Rawnsley and Willie unhesitatingly declared that she should have died there and then. The poet sided with them.

(*The Letters* II 312)

In Tennyson's opinion, a mother should be the first to sacrifice when facing danger or even death. A mother, owing to her maternity, will fearlessly protect her children as female animals do instead of reasoning or measuring the gain or loss. On this point, Tennyson shared Charles Darwin's opinions, whose explanation of woman's nature at the same time can help us understand Tennyson, 'a young and timid mother urged by the maternal instinct will, without a moment's hesitation, run the greatest danger for her own infant' (Darwin 168).

According to Darwin, woman, owing to her maternal instincts, displays 'greater tenderness and less selfishness' to her fellow creatures (see page 12). This is suggested in the *Idylls* in the relationship between Guinevere and Lancelot, Elaine and Lancelot, Enid and Geraint. Tennyson believed that woman lives for love and her destined role is to serve man.

Similar opinion is found in Cooke, who studied women's nature from the perspective of physiology. Cooke says that "a word shows the enormous difference between that of woman and that of man. The one says, 'I am yours;' the other, 'she is mine'", adding that "there is all the differences between giving and receiving" (Cooke 299). Tennyson agreed to this point: Guinevere says to Lancelot that 'I am yours/ Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond' (*Lancelot and Elaine*' 134-135), while Arthur says to Guinevere that 'I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine/ But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's' (*Guinevere*' 348-49). These dialogues may imply that Guinevere as a woman who is made to give, while Lancelot and Arthur as men are to receive love.

After their guilty love is disclosed, Guinevere and Lancelot's reactions are different. Lancelot asks Guinevere that 'fly to my strong castle overseas/ There will I hide thee with my life against the world.' (*Guinevere*' 111-114). But Guinevere would rather retreat to a nunnery to repent her wrong doings in stead of running away with him:

'Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,

For I will draw me into sanctuary,
And bide my doom.'
(*'Guinevere'* 118-121)

Lancelot escapes to his castle for safety while Guinevere to a nunnery, to atone for her fault, to wait and face penalty. Even there she still prays for God's redemption of Lancelot from eternal fire. She herself would rather bear any punishment. Compared with Lancelot, Guinevere's tenderness and unselfishness are easily seen.

III-2. Enid

Guinevere is a loving woman, though she is not a faithful wife. Enid, in the *Idylls*, is depicted as both loving and faithful. Her affection for her husband is unshakable.

After marriage, Geraint indulges excessively in his love for Enid and forgets his oath. Enid proposes her husband stopping passing days in indolence. She is willing to support Geraint to pursue high aims, saying:

'...and yet I hate that he should linger here;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mightful hand striking great blows
At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world...'
(*'Marriage of Geraint'* 91-96)

Enid, presented as a good woman by Tennyson, is able to guide and encourage. She disciplines her own desire and encourages her husband to pursue his ambition. The critic Ward Hellstrom is right in his comments that 'Enid quite obviously wishes to encourage the social responsibility of warring for the good' and 'the poet is dealing not only with the redemption of the individual, but also with the role which women play in encouraging social responsibility simply by being good women' (Hellstrom 113).

Enid is an example of good woman for she owns the virtues required by Victorian society, in particular, high morality and self-sacrifice. Sally Mitchell notes the Victorian idea that, 'women were superior to men — in moral and spiritual qualities [...] she learns to love him by making sacrifice of her own independent personality' (Mitchell 41).

Wendell Stacy Johnson also claims about women's sacrifice: 'The familiar nineteenth-century belief that women are inferior to men in strength and intellect but superior in moral character — that they are at best Christlike by virtue of self-sacrifice' (Johnson 25). The following words of Enid emphasize her resolution of obediently serving her husband, even at the cost of her life:

'...I needs must disobey him for his good;
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and though he kill me for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine'.
(*'Geraint and Enid'* 135-138)

Enid considers nothing but her husband's safety. In doing so, she has prepared to sacrifice herself. Geraint and Enid have gone through many dangers together. During their adventure, Enid tolerates Geraint's rough manners. She is obedient to her husband, however rudely he treats her. After fighting against Limours, Geraint is heavily wounded. He falls from his horse. Enid does what she can to save her husband:

Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,
And swathed the hurt that drained her dear lord's life.
(*'Geraint and Enid'* 510-516)

Geraint faints. Enid is weeping beside him. When Earl Doorm and his men come, Enid begs them to 'take him [Geraint] up and bear him hence out of this cruel sun' (*'Geraint and Enid'* 543,544). After Geraint is carried to Doorm's hall, 'for long hours sat Enid by her lord/ There in the naked hall, propping his head/ And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him' (*'Geraint and Enid'* 579-581). Enid tends her husband. Struck by Enid's beauty, Earl Doorm fawns on her with sweet words: 'ye shall share my earldom with me, girl/ And we will live like two birds in one nest/ And I will fetch you forage from all fields' (*'Geraint and Enid'* 625-627). His persuasion has no effects on Enid. Enid does not obey his order to eat or drink. Doorm 'suddenly seized on her/ And bare her by main violence to the board/ And thrust the dish before her,

crying "Eat". Enid's firm words demonstrate a woman's unyielding resolution:

'by Heaven, I will not drink
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me; and if he rise no more,
I will not look at wine until I die.'
(*'Geraint and Enid'* 663-666)

Fragile as she is, Enid is courageous. Such woman is worth admiration. The courage of women was noted by Cooke, who described how, 'Kneeling upon the scaffold, mangled by wild beasts, bathed in blood, they [women] seemed, in their sublime courage, in their ineffable sweetness, like veritable angels from heaven' (Cooke p243). That Enid disobeys Doorm irritates him and he 'unknightly with flat hand [...] smote her on the cheek' (*'Geraint and Enid'* 716-717). Then Enid, 'in her utter helplessness', 'sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry' (*'Geraint and Enid'* 718,721).

Out of love, Enid can endure her husband's rude manners and clings to him faithfully. In face of whatever trials, be it either temptation or torture, Enid never yields. Tennyson's description of Enid accords with his contemporary Cooke's view of woman:

She would sacrifice her life for him she loves. She is terrible in vengeance. By turns gentle and imperious, timid and apprehensive from a sense of her own weakness, she is capable of superhuman courage. Man is more brave, woman more courageous. Moved by a resolute will, man comprehends danger, measures, and faces it. Woman calculates nothing; she sees the end, and will attain it at any price. If she be unskillfully thwarted in her imperious desires, her fickleness is changed to obstinacy; you shall crush her sooner than reduce her. (Cooke 281)

Enid sadly stays with Geraint, fearlessly refusing Earl Doorm's any order. She is the stereotype of woman as described by Cooke, 'Woman has a perfect horror of conviction; that she is easily persuaded to give that which no force can extort from her' (Cooke 391). Enid loves her husband. Based on the affection, she stands firmly with him, rising superior to any tests.

III-3. Elaine

That Enid is willing to sacrifice herself for her husband is understandable, but on some occasions a woman may die for a man who does not love her. Elaine is such a woman. Elaine falls in love with Lancelot. When Lancelot is wounded, he retreats to a cave in an isolated place. Elaine then takes great pains to look after him:

Then rose Elaine and glided through the fields,
And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin;
There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and past
Down through the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave: so day by day she past
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night:
(*'Lancelot and Elaine'* 838-846)

Lancelot is in a dangerous state: 'at times/ Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem/ Uncourteous' (*'Lancelot and Elaine'* 848-850). However, Elaine comforts him and heals him:

...but the meek maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never women yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her; till the hermit, skilled in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
(*'Lancelot and Elaine'* 850-858)

Elaine tends Lancelot carefully. Her love produces a miracle and Lancelot is saved. Cooke argues from the aspect of woman's nature how love is transformed into healing power in a woman: 'It is the qualities of *heart* which render these frail creatures such marvelous nurses. A woman prolongs her watches by the bedside through several successive nights, while the most robust man, exhausted by a night of unrest, falls asleep by the very couch of death. It is from their depth of heart that woman draw that sublime tenderness and delicacy that man

can never imitate' (Cooke 301).

Elaine saves Lancelot's life. But unfortunately Lancelot loves the Queen instead of her. Elaine thus is captivated by unrequited love. Everyday she thinks of nothing but Lancelot. Cooke explains such passion of woman with Byron's words from Don Juan, "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart...(it)T is woman's whole existence", (Canto I Stanza cxciv) adding that 'Love, in fact, takes root so deeply in the heart of woman that it fills her entire being' (Cooke 300). When Elaine's father says that: 'He [Lancelot] loves the Queen, and in an open shame/ And she returns his love in open shame' ('Lancelot and Elaine' 1075-1076), Enid opposes him with words that 'These are slanders' ('Lancelot and Elaine' 1080). Enid insists that Lancelot is a noble man:

My father, howsoever I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, though my love had no return:
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
Thanks, but you work against your own desire;
For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner; wherefore cease,
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die.'
(*Lancelot and Elaine*' 1085-1093)

Elaine becomes sick after isolating herself in the castle, thinking and waiting for her Lancelot. This character under Tennyson's pen accords exactly with Cooke's analysis of a woman who is in love:

What passes in the heart of a young girl who loves? She is entirely absorbed in her passion. Every thing else vanishes — friends, parents, even God Himself is obliterated. The loved object alone has any attraction for her. She thinks of him all day, and dreams of him all night. She worships and adores, her entire being is fused in her love. She can imagine no other felicity than to be near him, and in his absence she thinks only of his return. In the midst of social gayeties and festivities she only sees him, only hears his voice. At first so timid and fearful in his presence that a look causes her to blush and tremble, a word magnetizes her from head to foot, she soon feels at ease only by his side. All other companions are displeasing to her. Then, in proportion to the innocence and purity of her nature, she yields herself to the most delightful intimacy

— the most absolute confidence. She says whatever she thinks, whatever she feels; or; whatever she does not dare to say, she looks. It is her very innocence which constitutes her danger. (Cooke 402)

Elaine's danger is unavoidable. Till her death, she does not doubt whether Lancelot is worth her love or not. Her blind love leads to her doom, which is the tragedy of many women, as Cooke observes: 'The object of all this blind passion may be a graceless puppet, a stupid ignoramus, a worthless scoundrel — or, worse than all, a libertine' (Cooke 402). Elaine's woman's nature determines her to love, though this love involves willful blindness.

III-4. Vivien

In contrast with Elaine's blind love, Vivien believes that 'woman wakes to love' ('Merlin and Vivien' 458). One of Tennyson's letters to the Duchess of Argyll in June 1857 revealed that his purpose of Vivien was to form contrast with Enid, saying that, 'truth and purity of the wife in the first poem might well have served as antidote to the untruth of the woman in the second'. (*The Letters* II 179)

Vivien was created as a negative character. Tennyson foresaw that 'I never expect women to like it.' (*The Letters* II 267). In the poem, Vivien hates all men and does not want to marry at all. She tells Merlin how she despises the knights of Camelot:

'How dare the full-fed liars say of me?
They ride abroad redressing human wrongs!
They sit with knife in meat and wine in horn!
They bound to holy vows of chastity!
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.
But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explained for shame.
Not one of all the drove should touch me: swine!
(*Merlin and Vivien*' 690-697)

Vivien hates not only knights, but also those women who appear charming to men. When Merlin tells her the story how 'two cities in a thousand boats/ All fighting for a woman on the sea' ('Merlin and Vivien' 559-560), Vivien's fierce jealousy and hostility to the woman flares out:

'The lady never made *unwilling* war
 With those fine eyes: she had her pleasure in it,
 And made her good man jealous with good cause.
 And lived there neither dame or damsel then
 Wroth at a lover's loss? Were all tame,
 I mean, as noble, as the Queen was fair?
 Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,
 Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
 Or make her paler with a poisoned rose?'
 ('Merlin and Vivien' 601-609)

Vivien's words reveal her character: she will 'pinch a murderous dust' or 'flirt a venom' to the woman or 'poison' her. This character diverts far away from the women living for love. Different from other women, Vivien has a clever mind and great ambition for power, the features commonly considered to belong to men. In the story of *Vivien and Merlin*, Vivien's aggressiveness is highlighted, when, for example, she pursues Merlin unasked, irritates him, seduces him, until in the end she destroys him. In particular, Vivien asserts for herself in pursuing her value directly in the world. She does not want to conform to the conventional life pattern ordained for a woman who can realize her value through being an obedient wife and devoted mother. Further more, Vivien is unconcerned about retaining her own chastity. Her young woman's flesh is used by her as a powerful weapon to obtain her goal.

Through Vivien, Tennyson's concern about women's role and the sexual morality of his age is revealed. The poet is not alone in worrying about it. E. Royston Pike, in his book *Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age* deals with the changing position of women in Victorian age: "They [Victorian men] foresaw a time when chivalry would be abandoned, when women would claim equality with men in all walks of life including the most prestigious occupations, and when women would no longer be willing to marry and raise families. Given the Victorian convention that sex drives were felt only by men (and abnormal women), such a possibility threatened to leave men without sexual partners' (Pike 155). Pike believes that most Victorians think only men and abnormal women have sexual drives, but Tennyson held that women have desire too. The poet worried that if women were unwilling to marry, their sexual drives would lead to debauchery and the result is perilous. Such consequence is worse than Pike's

prediction. Vivien threatens and shakes the Victorian belief of woman's image. People dislike Vivien for many reasons: she is licentious, ambitious, resentful, gossipy, crafty and self-admiring. The essence of these features is that she lacks maternity and does not love.

IV. Conclusion

Tennyson's surroundings contributed to his idea that women's maternity determines that they are made to love, that love involves sex. Guinevere, Enid, Elaine and Vivien are the main woman characters in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. The story of each woman points to the poet's belief that women have desire to serve men unselfishly. Accordingly a woman is admirable for her maternity for maternity drives her to sacrifice; at the same time, a woman is scornful for her maternity for maternity draws forth her sexual drives. Tennyson also believed that woman's desire is dangerous if it is not disciplined. In short, Tennyson's attitude to woman is contradictory, as was recorded in a letter of 1845 January 31, by Jane Welsh Carlyle to Helen Welsh that 'Alfred is dreadfully embarrassed with women alone — for he entertains at one and the same moment a feeling of almost adoration for them and an ineffable contempt!' (*The Letters* I 233) In writing *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson gives us two contrasting views, the first being his personal understanding of chivalrous women and the second our glimpse of Victorian society through the eyes of Tennyson.

Notes

- ¹ Martin writes in *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* that the poet's father was threatening to his wife and children after drinking. p48-49.
- ² See page 201, *The Poems of Tennyson*. Ed. Christopher Ricks.
- ³ Information found at http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/victorian_poetry/v041/41.1henchman.pdf, accessed on July 26th, 2007.
- ⁴ See page 150, *The Poems of Tennyson*. Ed. Christopher Ricks.
- ⁵ Martin records in *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* that: "The family letters show that both young George and Charles suffered from time to time with some form of illness, that one of Charles's sons was a victim, and that perhaps old George himself had attacks of less severity than those of his descendants. One of Tennyson's brothers was totally insane most of his life, another suffered from some form of mental illness nearly as incapacitating, a third was an opium

addict, a fourth was severely alcoholic, and of the rest of the large family each had at least one bad mental breakdown in a long life. If there are any detailed records extant of what precisely ailed them all, I have been unable to find them, and it is impossible to say whether any of young George's children actually suffered from a form of epilepsy. What is most probable is that among Alfred Tennyson's ten brothers and sisters, some had attacks that resembled epilepsy, and that Alfred either had the disease while young and recovered from it in later life, or, more probably, mistakenly feared as a young man that he had inherited a tendency to it that he might transmit to any offspring of his own". P10.

⁶ Alfred Lyall says in *Tennyson* that Tennyson had variety of visitors. There are following words on p128:

Mr Darwin—to whom Tennyson said, "Your theory of Evolution does not make against Christianity?" and Darwin answered, "No, certainly not" —may be mentioned to exemplify the variety of his [Tennyson] visitors.

⁷ Vogt, 'Lectures on Man,' cited in Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, p848.

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『ドンビー父子』

—ドンビーの虐待の実態と原因—

斉藤 えい

「ドンビー父子商会」の若い社員ウォルターは、初出勤の日、家に帰ると、社内の噂を語る。「社長はお嬢さんがお嫌いで、そっぽを向いたきり、召使たちに預けっぱなしなんだって。頭の中は、息子さんに商会を継がせることで一杯なもんだから。」(58) 果たして、ドンビーは、娘フローレンスには拒絶を、息子ポールには溺愛(109)をと、正反対のパラバラな態度を取ったのであろうか。この論では、この疑問を出発点として、子供たちに対する父ドンビーの態度に注目してみたい

現実の問題として、同じ母親から生まれた子供たちの中で、授乳や食事を摂らせるのが常に困難な子供がいる場合、母親は、その子が自分を拒絶しているのだと感じて愛情を持たず、折檻するという例は、心理学関係の専門書に数多く見られる。このようなケースでは、父親は概してその母子関係に無関心なことが多い。ドンビーは、フローレンスが生まれたときから彼女を拒絶する一方、「商会」の十年にわたる期待の跡継ぎ、ポールには、誕生のときから愛情を注いでいる。商会の繁栄への期待だけが、二人の子供に対して、彼に正反対の態度を取らせたのであろうか。ポールがプリンパー学舎に連れて行かれたとき、彼が「このまんま(子供)の方がいい」と言って泣いた場面について、F.R.リーヴィスは次のように述べている。「ポールは、きっぱりと心にしみるような答えをする。が、ポールが運命付けられていることをよく知っている我々には、その答えは身を刺すように感じられる。父ドンビーの自信にあふれた計画には、自然に沿って成長してゆくための自発性を受け入れる場所がないのだ。」(19-20・15)

ドンビーはフローレンスに対してだけでなく、ポールに対しても、人間性を無視した残酷な行為、言い換えるなら、虐待を与えていたことが伺われる。そこで、ドンビーの心、態度に注目して、彼にそのような行動をとらせた原因はどこにあるのかを探り、かつディケンズがこの作品を通して、

自分の時代に何を訴えようとしたのかを論じていきたい

虐待は身体的なものや情緒的なものに分けられるが、ドンビーの場合には情緒的な虐待と言えるだろう。ドロタ・イワニエクは、情緒的な虐待を次のように定義している。「親の敵意ある、あるいは冷淡な行為によって、子供の自尊心が傷付けられ、達成感が奪われること。また健康的で活気あふれた子供の発達が阻まれ、子供の満足のいく状態、あるいは子供の幸福、福祉が奪われることである。」(39) 親が子供に対してこのような態度を取る場合、一般には、親の生活水準が低く、親が社会的に孤立していることが考えられる。夫婦間の不仲や暴力、あるいは子供に対する教育、関心、援助が非常に貧弱である等、親自身がよい環境に恵まれていないことが考えられる。しかし、「学歴も、社会的地位も高く、裕福な生活をしているにもかかわらず、子供を情緒的に虐待する親もいる」(36) とイワニエクは言う。これらの親たちは子供に満足しておらず、子供がよいことをしても認めてあげない。身体的な接触を拒むとせず、子供が愛情を求めても無視する。このような冷たい、緊張した雰囲気の中で育った子供は、身長も体重も増加せず、感染症にかかりやすい等の症状を示すことが多いようだ。子供たちへのドンビーの接し方、あるいは彼らの外的な様子にこれらのことが表れていないだろうか、テキストから見ていこう。ここで、イワニエクに従って、情緒的虐待の加害者である親に目を向けるとどうなるか

Seldom spoken to in an easy way; not acknowledged or reinforced in any good behaviour or positive action; not noticed or disregarded in any attempts to please care-givers; ignored and discouraged when attempting to attract attention or affection; (14)

あるいは、視線を合わせないこと(46)もあり、ドンビーの姿と重なり合う部分がかかなり多いといえる。一つ例を挙げてみよう。洗礼式に出かける前に泣き出したポールの機嫌を直すため、フローレンスは、手をたたいたり、いないいないばあをして、一生懸命彼をなだめた。そのとき父ドンビーがフローレンスに対して取った態度はどうであったか

Was Mr.Dombey pleased to see this? He testified no pleasure by the relaxation of a nerve; He looked on so fixedly and coldly, that the warm light vanished even from the laughing eyes of little Florence, when, at last, they happened to meet his. (69)

このように、イワニエクの論は、非常によくドンビーに当てはまるので、フローレンスとポールについても彼女の論に従ってみてゆくことにしたい

1

まず、フローレンスに焦点を当ててみよう。外国貿易を営むロンドンの大商人ドンビーにとって、跡取り息子の誕生は、彼が絶対的な価値を置く「商会」の発展と繁栄を象徴するものである。それで娘フローレンスには生まれたときから、否定的な感情を持っていた。といっても、彼女を嫌悪していたわけではない。彼女には時間や温情をかける価値さえなかったのである(42)。ポールの墓碑銘として彼が準備したのが、「最愛の一人子」であった程、その存在を認めていない。フローレンスの子守役、スーザンは、彼の、娘に対する態度を、ポールの乳母になったリチャーズに、次のように伝えている。「その(母親の葬儀)前からだって何ヶ月も、何ヶ月もお目さえかけてくれてらっしゃらないんですからね。」あるいは、「お嬢ちゃまはてんでお気に入りじゃなかったんですからね。」(38) 母親の臨終の際に、その胸元にすがりつく娘の態度を、彼が「思慮のない、熱に浮かされた行為」(13)と冷たく批判するのも無理はない。しかし、彼女は眼中になかったのにもかかわらず、「悲しみの共有者としてではなく、完全に爪弾きにされた」(42) この行為が忘れられず、この後の父娘関係は、無視から、ただならぬ不安へと変化してゆく。その不安は、いつの日かこの子を嫌うようになるのではないかという不安である。幼い娘に自分の存在を無視され、プライドを逆なでされたと感じ、それを根に持つ父親。そこには幼い子供を包み込む、親としての温かさに欠けた、自己中心のドンビーの姿が見られる。彼は誰かが自分とポールの間に割り込んでくることを許さなかった。ライバル、疑念、嫉妬などの言葉(61)には、ポールは自分のものだと言う強い意識が感じられる。ポールの健全な成長のためにという、リチャーズの勧めで、ポールはフローレンスと一緒に育てられるようになる。二人が仲良くなっていくと、ドンビーは彼女の中に、自分とポールの間に入ってくる侵入者を意識し、彼女を撥ね付ける。拒絶された子供として、彼女は、軽んじられた子供時代の唯一の友、話し相手だったポールの死を悼む。イワニエクは「強烈に拒否された子供は、愛情を表現する方法を学ぶ機会を失う。」(66)と記しているが、フローレンスの憧れ、しかもいつも心を占める憧れは、父に自分の愛情を理解してもらうことであった。父の愛を求めて、夜ごと、彼女は堅く閉ざされた父の部屋の戸口を訪れていた。ある夜、少し開いていた戸口から父の部屋に入ったフローレンスに、

彼は「何故ここに来たんだ、私は望んでもいないのに」と冷たく問う。彼女に向けられた父の顔は、彼女の心に燃えている愛を凍らせ、立ちすくませるほどに彼女を恐れさせる

There was not one touch of tenderness or pity in it. There was not one gleam of interest, parental recognition, or relenting in it. ---the old indifference, and cold constraint had given place to something: what, she never thought and did not think,---Did he see before him the successful rival of his son, in health and life? Did he look upon his own successful rival in that son's affection? Did a mad jealousy and withered pride, poison sweet remembrances? (284-5)

このようにフローレンスに対する無視は不安へ、そして狂おしい嫉妬へと成長し、ドンビーの胸の中に彼女への怒りの気持ちが生じてくる。

しかし、彼が新婚旅行から帰ってきた晩、ここまでドンビーの中で育ててきた反フローレンスの感情に少し変化が生じた。彼女が子供から美しい女性に成長していたのを知ったからである。部屋の隅で、顔をハンカチで覆い、寝たふりをしながら彼女を見つめているドンビーは、心が安らぎ、「フローレンス、ここにおいで」と優しく呼びかけたい気になる。しかし、突然現れたイーディスの手前、面子を保とうという心がこの気持ちを押しつぶし、この優しい心は永久に彼から離れてしまった。一方、フローレンスは、父と二人っきりで同じ部屋にいられることに新鮮な喜びを覚える。

Florence entered, and sat down at a distant little table with her work: finding herself for the first time in her life---for the very first time within her memory from her infancy to that hour---alone with her father, as his companion. She, his natural companion, his only child, who in her lonely life and grief had known the suffering of a breaking heart; who, in her rejected love, had never breathed his name to God at night, but with a tearful blessing, heavier on him than a curse; ---who had, all though, repaid the agony of slight and coldness, and dislike, with patient unexacting love, excusing him, and pleading for him, like his better angel! (546)

しかし、ここまで和んだドンビーの心は、イーディスと本当の母娘のように仲良く話し、振舞えるフローレンスに、再び、いや、前にもまして「あのテコでも動かぬ女を手なずけ、親父の面目を丸つぶしにしようとしている」(549)と感じ、彼女を憎むようになる。

Who? Who was it who could win his wife as she won his boy! Who was it who had shown him new victory, as he sat in the dark corner! --Who was it who, unaided by his love, regard, or notice, thrived and grew beautiful when those so aided died! Who could it be, but the same child at whom he had often glanced uneasily in her motherless infancy, with a kind of dread, lest he might come to hate her; and of whom his foreboding was fulfilled, for he DID hate her in his heart.

(609)

イーデイスがカーカーと失踪したことが分かったとき、フローレンスは過去の父の不正な仕打ちを忘れて、窮地に陥った父を慰めようと彼の部屋に向かう。丁度そのとき部屋から出てきたドンビーは、妻の失踪の共謀者として、フローレンスを殴打する。彼女はその行為の中に、父の残忍さ、自分に対する無視、嫌悪の情の高まりを見、それが自分の身体に刻み付けられたことを知る。そこで彼女は、いつしか幻のように慕っていた父というものは存在しなくなったことを認め、家を出る。フローレンスに対するドンビーの、エスカレートしていく憎悪の心を、私たちはテキストに沿って追ってきた。では次に、息子ポールに対するドンビーの心情を考えてみよう。

2

ダイケنزの作品には、『ドンビー父子』の他にも、虐待を受ける子供の姿が、しばしば描かれている。初期の作、『オリヴァー・トゥイスト』では、孤児であるオリヴァーが、養育院でも救貧院でも、たたかれたり、ひどい空腹を味わわされたり、教区吏バンプルを通して虐待を受ける。「(おかゆを) もう一杯ください」という訴えは、弱い者いじめをする人々、制度へのか弱い反抗といえる。1850年に書かれた『デイヴィッド・コパーフィールド』の主人公デイヴィッドは、父なし子として生まれるが、母と乳母ベグティエの愛を受けて幸せに成長する。しかし、母の死後、継父マードストーンとその姉からは、気の休まる間もない緊張の日々を一人放置されるといふ虐待を受ける。後期の作、『大いなる遺産』のピップは、両親を早く亡くしている。母親代わりの、年の離れた実姉と彼女の夫の叔父バンプルチェクは、一緒になって彼をなぶりものにし、彼はピップという名前も呼んでもらえない。ピップは姉から身体的、情緒的虐待を受けている。

Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual conflict with injustice. I had known, from the time when I could speak, that my

sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me. I had cherished a profound conviction that her bringing me up by hand, gave her no right to bring me up by jerks. Through all my punishments, disgraces, fasts and vigils, and other penitential performances, I had nursed this assurance;--- (48)

さらに、サチス荘に召されてからは、エステラから「労働者の子」と徹底的にさげすまれる。ミス・ハヴィシヤムからも、その愛が実らないのが分かっているにもかかわらず、エステラを「愛して、愛して、愛しておやり」とそそのかされる。

ポールは父ドンビーから彼が必要とする健康面での配慮を受け、夕食後には暖炉の前にいすを並べて話をしている。積極的に新しい活動や、学ぶ機会も与えてもらっているから、オリヴァーやデイヴィッドと比べると、雲泥の差がある。母親を早く失ってはいるが、何も虐待に当てはまらないように見える。しかし、少し長くなるが、テキストの次の文章を読んでみよう。

Mr. Dombey's young child was, from the beginning, so distinctly important to him as a part of his own greatness or (which is the same thing) of the greatness of Dombey and Son, that there's no doubt his parental affection might have been easily traced (like many a goodly superstructure of fair fame) to a low foundation. But he loved his son with all the love he had. If there was a warm place in his frosty heart, his son occupied it; if its very hard surface could receive the impression of any image, the image of that son was there; though no so much as an infant or a boy, but as a grown-man—the'Son'of the Firm. Therefore he was impatient to advance into the future, and to hurry over the intervening passages of his history. Therefore he had little or any anxious about them, in spite of his love; feeling as if the boy had a charmed life, and must become a man with whom he held such constant communication in his thoughts, and for whom he planned and project, as for an existing reality, every day.

(108-109)

十年ぶりに名実共に「ドンビー父子商会」になった、その大きな喜びと期待から、彼のポールに対する愛は、あくまでも、彼自身の偉大さと商会の「跡取り息子」に対する愛であった。このためにはポールの役に立つことなら何でもしてあげるといふ姿勢である。ドンビーにはそれがポールを愛

することであった。つまり、表面的には、彼の健康のためにブライトンに転地させ、ピプチン女史の下で学ばせ、さらに、上級の教育を施すためにプリンバー学舎に入れる。それはポールのために最上の心配りをしているように見えるが、実際には、全ては、ポールのことより自分と商会の発展への大きな期待からである。「このままの方がいいや」という弱々しいが、自分の望みをはっきり表しているポールのこの一言が、ポールにとっては全てが過酷な虐待であることを証明している。子供には、子供の心がある。その成長を見守って、成長段階を経て大人になっていくのに、6歳になったばかりのポールに「一人前の大人」(166)にする教育を押し付けるドンビーには、ポールへの本当の愛は感じられない。幼いときからの至れり尽くせりの世話にもかかわらず、「ポールは自分の父親に殺された」(ウォトキンズ7)のである。商会への期待を打ち破られ、心痛から顔つきまで変わってしまったドンビーは、臨終の息子のベッドの足元にうずくまる。ポールがその父を「もの」で表しているのは、「僕はお父さんから、理解してくれる心を望んでいたが、商会の発展という期待だけを与えられたんだ」とでも言っているようである。ポールが会いたいと言ったので、ドンビーは、低い身分ゆえに退けた、ポリーやウォルターに会わせる。彼に、人の親としての温かい心が感じられるのは、息子ポールが、商会から切り離されたときであった。

ところで、ポールには興味深い態度がある。父親や大人に対する態度と、フローレンスに対する態度との違いである。ポールは「お金って何」と質問して父を驚かせるが、その時代の価値観をまともに受け止めているドンビーは、「お金にはな、ポール、何だってできるんだ」(120)と答える。しかし、では、何故母を救い、自分の弱い体を救えないのかという質問、まさにドンビーがその上に立っている価値観を揺るがす質問には答えることができない。ポールは子供としての自分の立場を理解してくれない父に、真の意味の愛と共感を求めていたのだ。しかしそれは父や大人からは得られず、彼らの期待に応えようとすればするほど“old-fashioned”な子供になる。これは、無意識に、一生懸命に父や大人たちが情緒的な虐待を与えてくることへの、ポールの精一杯の抵抗の表れであったと言えないであろうか。しかし、自分をありのままに受け入れてくれるフローレンスからは、愛と共感を得ることができるので、彼女の前では、年相応の子供らしい態度でいることが出来る。彼女に抱かれ、歌を歌ってもらいながら寝室に行くポール。転地先の海辺で彼女に付き添ってもらって過ごすひと時。プリンバー先生の課す難しい勉強を手伝ってくれ、寄宿舎の窓の外に姿を見せ

て孤独を慰めてくれるフローレンス。そして死の床で片時も離れず見守ってくれる姉。ポールは父親や大人たちに虐待された心の傷を、同じく虐待されている姉によって、共感によって癒されたといえる。形は違っても虐待されている二人——一人は溺愛されたために生きることができず、もう一人は無視されたがために無垢な心と愛を成長させることができたというのはなんとも皮肉な結果である。

ここまで私たちはフローレンス、ポールという虐げられた子供たちの状態を見てきた。ところで、ポールの死後、この小説の大部分を占めるドンビーとイーデイスとの関係はどうだろうか。

3

妻として、母としてのイーデイスの姿を見ていこう。まず、妻としてのイーデイス。商会の期待をかけてポールを愛したドンビーは、自分にはない貴族の血筋と、商会の跡継ぎを、さらには彼女の美しさと傲慢が、自分のプライドを高揚してくれることを期待して彼女と結婚した。お金に任せた豪華な衣装や装身具で、ドンビー夫人、社長夫人として恥ずかしくない装いを身に付けさせた。また空席になっていた「家庭の天使」の座を埋めてくれることも期待した。しかし、イーデイスの思いは違っていた。彼女には自分は「金で買われた」(ノーリス 204)という意識があった。結婚の前夜、母スクートン夫人に彼女は次のように心を打ち明ける。

“You know he has bought me,” she resumed, “Or he will, to-morrow. He has considered of his bargain; he has shown it to his friend; he is even rather proud of it; he thinks that it will suit him, and may be had sufficiently cheap; and he will buy to-morrow. God, that I have lived for this, and that I feel it!” Compress into one handsome face the conscious self-abasement, and the burning indignation of a hundred women, strong in passion and in pride; and there it hid itself with two white shuddering arms. (431)

豪華な衣装や装身具は、愛の代償であり、夜毎に外出しなければ息もつけないほど、自分の意思を押し付けてくる夫に、イーデイスは嫌悪と憤怒しか感じていない。そんなわけで、彼女はお歴々のお客様がいらした新居の披露パーティーでも、主婦としての勤めを果たさなかった。自分が見世物にされることを嫌ったからである。自分の思い通りにならない彼女に、ドンビーは商会の支配人カーカーを通して抗議や忠告を伝えてくるが、これがまた彼女には我慢ならない。我を張り通す二人——妻として主婦として

イーディスには確かに非難される点が多々あったが、ドンビーにも問題があった。お互いのプライドの繰り返される衝突によって、二人の仲は相容れなくなり、ついにイーディスは家を飛び出すことになる。

一方、母としてのイーディスはどうか。彼女にもポールと同じように、フローレンスに対するとき、夫ドンビーとの間には見られない態度の変化がみられる。彼女は夫に対しては、傲慢と軽蔑を持って徹底的に反抗した。が、父親から無視され、拒絶されているフローレンスに対しては、彼女を愛し慰め、本当の母娘のように仲むつまじくすることができた。彼女の中に夫から抑圧されている自分の姿を見て共感できたからである。一方のフローレンスも、父親に満たしてもらえない愛と慰めをイーディスから得て、二人は意気投合し、これがまた、ドンビーの怒りを買う。虐待されるポールにとってフローレンスが慰め手であったように、イーディスにとっても彼女は慰め手であった。同時に、フローレンスにとっては、イーディスは肌の触れ合いと優しい言葉で愛と慰めを与え、自分をかばってくれる虐待からの解放者である。このフローレンスと親しくすることを禁じられたことも、イーディスが家出に応じた原因の一つになったであろう。ドンビー自身の自己中心的なプライドから生じる虐待が、子供たちとイーディスとを苦しめる同じ根となっていたといえるのではないか。

では、ドンビーがこのように身内の者を虐待した原因はどこにあるのだろうか。「この小説は、ある意味で、『悪徳の大家』ドンビーの研究である。彼の自己愛の中にあるプライドが、イーディス・グレンジャーの自己を傷付けられたプライドに逆らって、戦いを挑んだのだ」(123)というのがモイナハンの考えである。ドンビーのこのプライドは、妻イーディスに対してだけでなく、むしろ無防備な子供たちにまともに虐待の形を取って表れたはずである。F. R. リーヴィスも、人生に敵対し、必然的に自滅してゆく彼のプライドについて述べている。(5) これに対し、キャサリーン・ティロットスは、鉄道の制度が、人間の「速さ」と「動き」の概念を、人間が生きてゆく伝統的なリズムを、変えてしまったと分析する。すなわち、ドンビーに虐待を振るわせた心の根にあったものは、「当時の社会の周辺に浸透する不安」であると言って、ドンビー自身の性格より、彼が置かれた時代に注目している。ステイヴン・マーカスも「ディケンズは自分の中にドンビーをいだいていた」(324) といっている。ドンビー=ディケンズは、社会の進歩、動き、そこから生じる不安に心理的についていけずに不安定になり、虐待と言う形で、身内のものに当たったのではないだろうか。このように見てくると、フローレンスとポールに対するドンビー

の態度に統一が見えてくる。ドンビーは女の子だから、男の子だからと二人の子供にバラバラな接し方をしたのではなく——彼の考えによれば確かに女の子は商会の役に立たないかもしれないが——、情緒的な虐待のさまざまな表れ方の中で、一人を疎んじ、一人を溺愛したといえるだろう。

19世紀後半のブルジョアジーが、政治経済の両面で華々しい勝利を収めた時期は、同時に「不安」の時期でもあった。この不安は、今までに人類が経験したことのないスピード、どこに向かっていくのか見当もつかないため、人々を狼狽させる、スピードという変化がもたらしたものであった。ピーター・ゲイはこの不安について次のように書いている。「一般的な不安の、最も顕著な兆候は、漂い、うろたえるような感覚、あまりにも豊かで多様な刺激によって、圧倒されているという感じである。」(58) これは納得のいく考えである。このような心の不安定感「クリスマス哲学」を生きようとするディケンズの繊細な心に、大きな軋轢と葛藤をもたらしたであろうことは疑いない。『辛い世』のグラッドグラインドは、目に見えるもの、手で触れるもの、統計に表れるものにしか価値を認めない実用主義によって、二人の子供の教育を誤った。ドンビーやスクルージは不安な心の拠り所を、目に見える金銭、金もうけ、商会の繁栄に求めた。いうなれば、彼らはスピードのもたらす不安の犠牲者になってしまったということではないだろうか。ドンビーによる子供たちやイーディスへの虐待も、この葛藤の表れの一つと言えるだろう。ディケンズ自身が長時間、散歩や乗馬をしたり、家族や友人とたびたび国外旅行をしたのは、この不安のはけ口を模索したからに違いない。ナイトリー夫人の言葉としてピーター・ゲイは以下のように記述している。「現代の人たちには、休息や安らぎなどありません。娯楽であれ、仕事であれ、皆せわしなく動き回っています。」(61) このことは休息を知らずに活動し続けたディケンズの生き方そのものを示しているようである。ドンビーはフローレンスの「忍耐、優しさ、若さ、献身的愛情、そして愛」(313) を拒絶し、商会の繁栄と発展のために役立つことのみを追い求め、そこに自信と誇りを置いた。それは「役に立つものが、美しいものにとって代わることになる」(ゲイ 62) というアンリ・F. アミエルの言葉そのままである。ドンビーは「急行列車の時代」(ゲイ 63) といわれるこのスピードの時代の犠牲者の一人であり、彼の犠牲になったのが、フローレンス、ポールそしてイーディスだったといえよう。しかし、ディケンズが物語の主人公たちをそのままに終わらせずに、愛に目覚めさせ、愛に生きるようにさせたところに、彼の「クリスマス哲学」が、時代を超えるものであることを示している。ディケ

ンズは、『クリスマス・カロール』の、現在の精霊の裾から、「無知」と「欠乏」という人間の子供を生み出させる。それは、いまや、功利主義と不安定な時代だからこそ、互いに助け合う寛大さに無知になったり、欠乏したりするなという呼びかけである。いいかえれば、貧しい人、困っている人々に手を差し伸べるキリストの愛への呼びかけである。そして、彼自身も時代の速い流れに足をすくわれながらも、このままで行けば、人の心も人類も破滅に導かれるぞ、と警告しているのだと考えられよう。

4

この時代の不安定感と功利主義は『キリストの生涯』で、彼自身が子供たちに勧めている「愛」を危うくさせるものである。カザミアンが「クリスマスの哲学」と呼んでいるディンズの愛とは何を意味しているのかをここで考えてみたい。私達の生きる社会の中で、愛は、人類愛、友愛、男女の愛、夫婦の愛、親子の愛、家族愛、師弟愛、愛国心、自分の職業、仕事への愛、神と人への愛などさまざまな言葉で表現されている。ところで、新約聖書は「神は愛である」(1ヨハネ4:8)と定義して、この愛はキリストの生き方によって示された(ヨハネ5章)ことを私たちに教えている。それはアガペーといわれるキリストの愛で、他者の善を求め、他者への関心と配慮のために自分を捧げ、赦し、進んで犠牲を払おうとする心である。これこそさまざまな表現を持つ愛の基礎になっているものといえよう。福音記者たちはこの愛を「善いサマリア人のたとえ」(ルカ10:25-37)や「放蕩息子のたとえ」(ルカ15:11-32)、そして何よりも、イエス自身の十字架の死を記して私たちに教えている。マタイによる福音書は、これをもっと具体的に、私達の生活に密着した形で示してくれている。それは、私達の周りにいる、飢えている人、のどが渇いている人、旅人、裸の人、病気の人、牢に入っている人に行ったことは、目に見えない神に対して行ったのと同じである(25:38-40)というのである。教皇ベネディクト16世も「神への愛と、隣人愛は別々のものではなく一つなのだ」(33)と書いている。ディケンズ自身は当時のイギリス社会の中で、キリスト教の特定の宗派に属し、日曜日ごとに教会に行くということはしなかったようである。しかし、福音書のイエスの行為およびその生き方を尊重し、自分の生きる方向性としてそれを取り入れる。そして家長として家族の者にもそのように生きることを願って、『キリストの生涯』を書き残している。その中で彼が繰り返しているのは、全ての人は隣人であり、兄弟なのだから、全ての人に憐れみ深くあれ、ということである。次の文は、ディケンズがキリストの教え

をどのように捉えていたかをよく示している。

Remember!—It is Christianity TO DO GOOD, always—even to those who do evil to us. —It is Christianity to be gentle, merciful and forgiving, and to keep those qualities quiet in our hearts,— (122)

これによって私たちはディケンズが切に望んでいた生き方を知ることになる。カザミアンは「功利主義は、ヴィクトリア朝時代の人々の心に、精神生活の無味乾燥とうぬぼれを引き起こしたが、ディケンズはこの二つの危機に反抗し、あらゆる人が愛と切り離せない慈善行為を実践すべきであると言っている」(162)と述べて、彼自身が社会福祉の仕事に従事したことを伝えている。すなわち、スラムの一掃、貧民学校、身を持ち崩した女性たちのための厚生施設といった事業計画にミセス・バーデット・クーツと共に取り組んだことである。ディケンズの愛が「クリスマスの哲学」といわれるのは、『クリスマス・カロール』の中で、スクルージの甥フレッドが、「神がその一人子をお与えになったことを祝うクリスマスこそ、弱い立場の人々のことを思い出し、愛を実践するのにふさわしいときだから」といっている(36)ことに由来する。『ドンビー父子』では、父親から無視され続け、拳銃の果てにイーディス出奔の共謀者として殴打されたフローレンスが、彼を恨まないばかりか、心身ともに弱りきった彼を愛し続けた姿に『キリストの生涯』の実践があり、ドンビーは彼女の優しい、寛大な心によって「人間を愛する」という価値の転換を行うことが出来たのである。ところで、『ドンビー父子』の中で、ディケンズは始めから「ドンビーと娘」を意図していたことが、警句的文章(ティロットソン 45)の繰り返しによって示されている。一度目は、迷子になった幼いフローレンスを、無事、家まで送り届けたウォルターが、『『ドンビー父子』—『商会』—と、お嬢さん』に(67)乾杯するときである。社長のドンビーが、娘は商会に役に立たないと拒絶しているのに反して、社長と跡取り息子に並んで「娘」を上げていることに注目したい。二番目は、ボールが亡くなった夜、ミス・トックスが言った言葉である。『『ドンビー父子商会』が、しよせん、『娘』だったなんて!』(274)息子は亡くなったから、社名の実態は娘であるというのであろうか。フローレンスが衰弱しきった父ドンビーを自分の家に連れ帰った夜、ミス・トックスが言ったのが、三番目の言葉である。『『ドンビー父子商会』ってというのは、いつぞやわたし、ご不幸の際にも申し上げたとおり、—「何といっても、ね、娘さんなんですね」(449)ドンビーは本当に娘フローレンスに救われ、彼女なしには生きていけなくなった。そし

で最後に、スーザンが言う。「なんてったって、嬢さまから、またドンビー父子商会が頂点を極めてくんですから」(486) フローレンスの息子ポールによって、ドンビー父子商会は再興されるだろうという予言的な内容である。『『ドンビー父子商会』はしばしば皮革(ハイド)を商ってきたが、心(ハート)だけは商ったためしがなかった』(16) という文章は、節目、節目における上記の警句的文章の反復によって、商会が没落していく様を表している。が、それと反比例して、娘フローレンスの商会との関わりが強まっていくことも暗示している。ディケンズはドンビーに欠けていた「愛の心」の大切さを、ウォルター、ミス・トックスやスーザンの口を通して強調している。彼らは共にドンビーとは世界を全く異にする人間だが、フローレンスと商会には大きな関心を持っていた。ドンビーの、フローレンスや彼らに対する「無視、無関心」は愛のない心を表しているが、「関心」は愛の心から出てくるものである。人生における愛の大切さを知ったドンビーは、トゥドルが、家族を誇り、いつも一緒にいたように、フローレンスとウォルターを誇りにし、自分の部屋に閉じこもるのではなく、いつも彼らと一緒にいる。財貨と威信を誇っていたドンビーにとって、これは大きな価値の転換である。中心は、人間性を無視し、自己中心的なうぬぼれに生きたドンビーではなく、愛と優しさと広い心を持ったフローレンスである。名実ともに「結局、娘」に「変わった」。ディケンズは善が悪に打ち勝つものだと疑わなかった(カザミアン 124) から、「彼自身の偉大さの奴隷」(680) であったドンビーを「変えさせた」のである。ディケンズは『ドンビー父子』に、トゥツという、頭は弱い、優しく思いやり深い心を持つ青年を登場させている。G. K. チェスタートンの次の言葉は、この作品全体をよく表しているといえよう。「彼(トゥツ)はむしろ、強さよりも善良さを好む。ディケンズが本当に彼の物語の全体を見通すのは、トゥツのような登場人物の目を通してである。」(128) ここで述べられている善、善良さは、前述の愛と置き換えてもよいだろう。

どんなに社会が「変わって」も、そこに生きているのが人間である限り、人間同士がお互いを大切にしよう心、これは「変わらない」大切な生き方であることを、ディケンズはこの作品でも伝えてくれていると思われる。

注

1 本論中における『ドンビー父子 上・下』からの引用は、全て、田辺洋子訳(こ

びあん書房、2000年)に拠っており、カッコ内にはページ番号を付す。

2 old-fashioned 老け込んだ

3 「ディケンズにとって社会問題はそのまま道德問題であった。その教えを要約すると、良い人になって人を愛しようということに尽きるのではないか。心に愛を持つことが本当の喜びなのである。あらゆる境遇、あらゆる着物、あらゆる年齢の中に、優しい魂を持った人々がいる。何かいいことをしてあげよう。また何かいいことをしてもらって、それを思い出して泣こう。そういう人間こそ本当に生きた人間というべきなのである。カザミアンはディケンズのこうした人生観を「クリスマスの哲学」という呼び名で一まとめにした。」島田謹二『ルイ・カザミアンの英国研究』白水社、1990年。

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What Lies at the Heart of "Count Gismond"?

Kurt Scheibner

"Adela, now that my hubby is off with the boys, let me tell you a story," and Countess Gismond does just that. She tells Adela a story; a remarkable, passionate, fascinating story — rich with chivalry, deceit, defense of honor, jealousy and faith, so far so good. But as the story develops, we discover intolerable absolute extremes including the execution of evil, the triumph of good and an ultimate happy ending where uncompromising virtue and bigger-than-life heroic romance bloom into spontaneous marital bliss inspired by God. The Countess tells Adela her story; a fairy tale story that Browning would find nothing less than repulsive. Unless . . . well, that is what this paper hopes to show. Everyone knows and acknowledges Browning as a master storyteller; Oscar Wilde wrote: Browning "will be remembered as a writer of fiction, as the most supreme writer of fiction, it may be, that we have ever had . . ." (Gridley 151). "Count Gismond" is, of course, a story indeed; a story narrated from first to last by the Countess. The argument presented in this paper is exactly that the story is, in fact, a story. It is all one long exaggerated prevarication until the last three lines of the poem when Count Gismond joins his wife and Adela. And even the last three lines of the poem are a direct lie to her husband. The only verifiably truthful words spoken in the poem are found near the end: "Gismond here? / And have you brought my tercel back?" (123–24). On a first reading, before we are aware that the Countess's story is suspect, we may have been surprised to hear the Countess say this clear untruth. But since we quickly catch on that deception is her middle name, she has no trouble lying to her husband. Clyde Ryals makes a similar point "in a story whose focus is on falsehood and the supposed vindication of truth, this, even if a white lie, necessarily jars on us and casts doubt as to the reliability of the truth of her tale" (158). The Countess reveals a very important side of her character which becomes only too clear when we go back through the poem and discover the extent to which she is skilled in prefabrication. She may have told this story, or versions of it, to other people over the years, each time to a greater and

greater enlightenment of her own virtues to attain the utmost sympathy, respect and awe from her listener. The fault, of course, is that the story is so slanted to reveal the Countess's merits that the exaggerations themselves negate much of what they are intended to do — much the same with the Duke of Ferrara.

Interpretations of "Count Gismond"

Once the reader accepts the possibility that the whole monologue is one big lie, the result is nothing less than pure enjoyment. Unfortunately, at least to my knowledge, the poem has rarely been interpreted this way, therefore it has earned, along with its creator, a much maligned and misunderstood reputation since it was first published in 1842. "Browning has suffered from a cause common among subtle poets: he expected a little too much from the reader" (Tilton and Tuttle 95). That readers are still falling short of Browning's expectations as recently as 2002 is evidenced by Stephan Hawlin who writes that "Count Gismond" when compared to "My Last Duchess" "is simply intended as a study of virtue and true marriage. . . . This is a poem of 'love at first sight' and the very bloody defense of good against evil" (76). Back in the 1960s, a small flurry of excitement concerning this poem found its way into academic journals; later to be categorized as "new readings." The catalyst of this flurry was an article by John Hagopian titled "The Mask of Browning's Countess Gismond." His article, along with the other "new readings" called for a suspension of the traditional views of the poem. In the article, Hagopian writes: "This 'sweetness and light' reading, typical of the Browning Society, seems to have . . . become established as definitive" (154). All four of the articles from this flurry make a similar note that as the companion poem to "My Last Duchess," a "new reader" would do well to ignore, forget, erase what prior critics had to say concerning the poem and to see it in a fresh light. Expecting to find this new light in the articles, I discovered a few enlightening sparks, but nothing definitive in terms of setting "Count Gismond" on a parallel pedestal where "My Last Duchess" stands firm. The first three articles¹ combined, raise "Count Gismond" up a notch or two, but not nearly as high as "My Last Duchess." The fourth article: "Ah, Did You Ever See Browning Plain?" by Michael Timko rattles the cage of the "new readings" and when the dust settles, so does "Count Gismond" where he concludes: "'Count Gismond' must

remain one of Browning's fallings off" (741). Unfortunately, all the excitement of reading this poem differently seems to have fallen flat. Many writers after the "new readings" have continued to interpret the poem in the traditional way. When it comes to interpreting Browning's genius of subtlety, humor and human psychology in poems such as "My Last Duchess," "Bishop Blougram's Apology," "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," "Fra Lippo Lippi," and dozens more, there seems to be a fairly united acceptance that Browning characters are highly developed people; coming to an understanding of their underlying complex psychology is tremendously rewarding for the reader. I simply can not understand why "Count Gismond" has not been given similar scrutiny; or if it has, why the intended meaning of the poem has never been discussed. It is disconcerting to think that other writers have not seen the pure joy and humor of this poem as I do.

Browning, always keen to worm his way into the intricate, complicated, often abnormal psyche of a character, does nothing less here with "Count Gismond." Everyone acknowledges that Browning's dramatic monologues revolve around characters who struggle to convince their auditors of facts which we, the readers, are permitted to see through and find flaws and faults at the heart of the argument. In this poem, the Countess's speech is meant to inform only Adela; sadly ironic but true, the Countess is so convincing that most readers buy the whole preposterous series of events at face value. No one, from Browning's contemporary critics to the present has ever, to my knowledge, seen through the Countess's story and discovered her purpose the way I think Browning intended. "The fault," writes Michael Timko, "was not with the poet, but with the readers, who had misjudged the characters, misinterpreted motives and ideas, and, as a result, had failed to see exactly what Browning was doing" (732). Though the "new readings" of the 60s arrive at differing degrees of translucence, a kind of fog remains, obscuring what is, at least the way I interpret the poem, obvious.

If we are to see the poem as Browning expected us to, there are a few common sense tenets that we will need to agree upon. First, Browning would never be satisfied by writing a mediocre dramatic monologue. Second, this poem was meant to be a companion poem to "My Last Duchess," not a weak filler standing in its shadow. Should a reader carefully re-examine "Count Gismond," it "emerges as a highly complex and subtle psychological study worthy to be paired with 'My Last Duchess'" (Tilton and Tuttle 84). Third, Browning ex-

pected his readers to be alert throughout thereby reaping the rewards – complete satisfaction and pleasure in discovering what he wanted us to find. Browning "insisted that the reading of poetry demands rigorous intellectual application" (Tilton and Tuttle 94). Finally, as in most of Browning's dramatic monologues where an auditor is present, the speaker wants something from the listener. This poem becomes much easier to understand once we realize just what the Countess wants from Adela.

A Companion poem to "My Last Duchess"

"Count Gismond" is truly a companion poem to "My Last Duchess;" readers "can now see that this poem is as penetrating a psychological study and as intellectually stimulating a dramatic poem as 'My Last Duchess'" (Tilton and Tuttle 93). Perhaps a first step towards the appreciation of "Count Gismond" would be to list the parallels between the two companion poems. "In 'Count Gismond,' our initial acceptance of the story told by the narrator is later undercut in the same way that the Duke's story is in 'My Last Duchess'" (Everett par. 1). Additionally, as Harrod points out: "In the Duke and the Countess the poet has depicted a villain-hero and a villain-heroine, both titled aristocrats who damn themselves while casting suspicion upon others . . . Both Duke and Countess are shrewd manipulators of other people's actions" (48). The Duke, most agree, is a powerful character; proud, arrogant, vain and confident. The title of the poem, ironically, is about the Duchess but the poem is really about the Duke. "Count Gismond" is no more about the Count than "My Last Duchess" is about the Duchess. It is all about the Countess. Holloway argues the entire poem is about the Count. She writes: "in every respect [the Count] is a true brother to the Duke of Ferrara" (549). She makes an interesting argument but, as Timko points out, her theory depends too much on assumption (735). I might add that Holloway completely misreads the Countess's character and worse, she accepts the Countess's story hook, line and sinker. She writes that the Countess is "a victim in [Count Gismond's] power, a victim who suffers more intensely from the nature of his cruelty than the Duke of Ferrara's lady ever suffered from his" (549). Perhaps her point would carry more weight if the Count were telling the story – but he is not allowed one peep throughout the monologue.

The parallel characters in both poems are the speakers, the Duke

and the Countess. The Countess admits her affair with as much élan as the Duke admits the murder of his wife. They both boast of their deeds to their listeners. As the "problem" is resolved, they both set about finding a better replacement. Both the Duke and the Countess had the same problem: insult to their honor. The Duke keeps a reminder of his former wife, the painting, "as if she were alive." The Countess has an even better souvenir from her lover, a son, at least she would have us believe. She reveals the vanity of her character by proudly pointing out the differences of her sons' appearances and the fact that she has been "loved" by two Counts. Both the Duke and the Countess are strong, manipulating, controlling figures; they both use their acute intelligence to get what they want, they are power mongers and both reveal their faults through their monologues. No one can miss the Duke's flaws; but when it comes to seeing through the Countess's faults; her vanity, her need for control, her manipulation and condescension of others – many readers simply accept what she says as the truth; never a good idea when reading Browning. When looked at carefully, her many fantastic leaps of logic should serve the reader as alarms. The details she feeds Adela just do not make sense. It is truly astounding that the built-in alarms have not awoken the majority of readers; illogic, exaggeration and fantasy smolder throughout her narration. Surrounding the Countess's story is a kind of smoke screen, but many readers seem to say: "What smoke screen?" This paper hopes to show the beauty and genius of "Count Gismond" first through a detailed examination of the incongruities and flaws found within the Countess's monologue and to show that these were intentional signs which Browning expected the readers to discover. Through this process, we will become increasingly aware that this poem is far from simple. Harrold comments: "The majority of critics agree that 'My Last Duchess' is a dramatic monologue of the highest order, but many fail to see that 'Count Gismond' is also a fascinating, complex and humorous monologue" (37). Finally, I hope to show that both the Duke and the Countess achieve the same end. The ironic genius of these companion poems is that the Duke achieves his purpose through truth while the Countess does the same through lies.

The Unbelievable Story (Revealed Through Inconsistencies, Gaps and Incongruities)

Many readers, it seems, soak up the Countess's story verbatim. One

modern critic, Robert Pearsall, argues for the traditional, face-value interpretation of the poem. He writes: "Of course, [the Countess] is chaste to a fault; moreover, she is orphaned, slight of stature, and oppressed by large and envious cousins—a pat object of our compassion. Her deliverer is Count Gismond, who steps out of the crowd of knights, slaughters the recreant Gauthier, and carries the wronged virgin off to be his bride" (52). That is, unfortunately, exactly the kind of interpretation that this poem has suffered with since its creation; and there is no fun at all reading it that way. Surely Browning must have had something different in mind. Even with a first reading of the poem, but surely after a second or third, it is tremendously clear that there are many large and small inconsistencies, gaps of logic and clashing incongruities flickering throughout. Browning writes them into the Countess's script for us; the cumulative effect of distortion, illogical explanations and error-ridden descriptions of action, from beginning to end, can be considered nothing short of fantasy, in fact, a fairy tale. "If we gradually lose faith in the countess's story, that growing doubt is set up by the very suspension of disbelief into which Browning lulls us by drawing us into his narrative frame work. The story appears to be a straightforward romance, with marked similarities to fairy tales; and this, of course, is the version of the story which the countess would want to propagate" (Everett par. 2). This section of the paper is in pursuit of pointing out the many inconsistencies, gaps and incongruities which, if each is looked at carefully, sound alarms, some small, some large, some false, most real – words and descriptions meant to give us pause. Ryals puts it succinctly: "at least we know that, in all likelihood, things did not occur in the way the monologist says" (159). If readers can agree to the presence of these alarms and accept that Browning intentionally scattered them throughout the poem, then we are sure to be in a position to understand the story behind the story in a refreshingly enjoyable way.

The initial incongruity appears in the first two words of the poem: "Christ God". What does she mean by that? In Christianity, Christ and God are two entities in the trinity, along with the third "Holy Ghost," or "Holy Spirit." Christian phrases such as "Christ, our Lord," "Christ, the son of God," "Our Lord and savior Jesus Christ," are common throughout Christendom. Has anyone ever heard the twining of Jesus Christ and the God of heaven abbreviated into a single title: "Christ God"? (Perhaps it is meant humorously as an expletive?) Whatever its purpose, I think it is safe to say the combination of these two words

in this way is unusual and is Browning's first signal to the reader that things will not always be what they seem. By the end of the second line, we are presented with another oddity. The opening lines are a kind of invocation to God where the Countess asks God to save her husband, Count Gismond. We wonder, save him from what? Since no real or immediate threat presents itself, the sentence seems strange. The answer to the question: "Save him from what?" becomes clear once we understand why the Countess tells Adela this story. The next alarm occurs three words after her prayer to God (and probably said in the same breath). The Countess introduces another man, Count Gauthier, and wastes no time letting us know what a thoroughly evil beast he is ". . . when he struck at length / My honour, 'twas with all his strength" (5-6). Everyone agrees that this poem is about the defense of her honor – but in a typical Browning twist, the real threat to her honor comes from an unexpected source. The sudden shift from imploring God's help to save her husband then letting her hatred of Gauthier pour forth is humorously incongruent. In the second stanza we learn of "That miserable morning" (9), when she was not happy: "Few half so happy as I seemed," (10) and another alarm sounds. Was she happy or not? One would expect her to have been all aflutter with excitement and exhilaration, but her words "I seemed" "happy" gives us pause to wonder. Knowing what she knows now about "That miserable morning", her happiness would, of course, have been compromised. But to suggest to Adela that she was not happy before the humiliation occurred is incongruous. The Countess, according to Tilton and Tuttle, plays various roles, her "happy role" expertly timed in correlation to her miserable role. She "tells Adela of her 'misery' only to gain Adela's sympathy and to portray herself as the helpless orphaned innocent" (Tilton and Tuttle 88). Many commentators have made this same point, but few have tried to explain why the Countess does it.

In the third stanza we learn that her cousins are against her as well. At this point, the Countess makes a statement which is more than a little trill; it is more like a deafening fire alarm accompanied with sirens which should cause any reader to sit up and seriously begin to doubt the Countess's story. Paraphrasing her sentence, she says, rather matter-of-factly: "It's not my fault that I'm so much more beautiful than my cousins. God makes our faces." The dual thoughts: "My cousins don't like me," and "I'm more beautiful" should alert the reader that the Countess is manipulating her listener while revealing her vanity. What possible reason would the Countess have for mentioning her

superior beauty to Adela? Some commentators argue that her beauty was a source of jealousy between the Countess and her cousins and that this jealousy, in combination with Count Gauthier's dislike of the Countess, becomes a natural breeding ground for a well-planned conspiracy to dishonor the tournament queen. The Countess drops hints in the poem suggesting such a conspiracy: "I thought they loved me" (13), the cousins glance "sideways with still head" (24) and just before she was to place the crown on the victor's head, her cousins cast their eyes down. She says of her cousins: "they let me laugh, and sing" (25), "they . . . let me take my state" (37) and after the accusation, she says: "they spring / Some monstrous torture-engine's whole / Strength on [me]" (64-66). Nothing more is ever said about her shaky relationship with her cousins nor are we provided with any clues as to why the cousins (and Gauthier) "schemed" against her; a large gap. Then again, nothing more needs to be said since it never really happened.

The Countess repeats her beauty a second time in the fourth stanza: "They too, so beauteous!" (19). The word "too" includes the Countess. Is it normal for a Countess to boast so unashamedly of her beauty? Another alarm rings in lines 21-22: "Not needing to be crowned, I mean, / As I do." Why the shift to present tense with "I do"? Is it a slip – she needs attention now as well as then? Soon after confessing her need to be crowned, another blaring alarm goes off. Was the tourney queen a member of the royal family or not? The Countess also makes it clear to Adela that once dressed "in queen's array" she prepares to greet the revelers outside, walking arm in arm with her cousins on either side and together they "descend the castle-stairs" (30). One wonders why they were in the castle in the first place. Do they live there? Are the Countess and her cousins royalty? Hawlin asserts that the tourney queen "was a young lady at the French court . . ." (77). This point is never mentioned again either; it is a major inconsistency in the Countess's story. If she really is royalty, the sudden elopement at the end of the poem with Count Gismond, on the same day, to southern France would be truly remarkable if not impossible (not to mention against court protocol). But, if she is not in the Royal family, what is she doing in the castle? Perhaps it is as simple as one of the perks given to tourney queens; they can get dressed up in the castle as if they were royalty themselves. The point is that the tournament queen would seem not to be a daughter of the elite; would a real princess be selected as the tourney queen? Whatever her station in society, the Countess wants Adela to think she represents royalty.

The word "morning" in the second and sixth stanzas is an enormous inconsistency triggering the loudest alarm so far in the poem. We are told that on this day, there is to be a tournament; this would probably include various forms of competition among the gathered knights and other participants: sword fighting, horseback riding, jousting, archery and, as with any large tournament of this kind, one would expect a great deal of other activities to be part of the festivities including music, dancing, arts, food, etc. As Hawlin puts it, this "poem exists in a world of high chivalric romance, a world urgently brought to life with properties like the tournament, ladies in flower-garlands, armour, penance-sheets, torture-engines, and falconry" (165). It seems highly unlikely that anyone would be presenting "The victor's crown" so early in the day. One would expect the tournament to continue well into the evening (or even flow over to the next day or days) before anyone could be crowned victor. (Perhaps only a few knights entered the competition?) It is entirely nonsensical to assume that the large tournament with a "multitude" of participants and festival seekers would draw to an end so early in the day.

Up to this point, the reader should be increasingly aware of a gathering body of inconsistencies, gaps and incongruities; surely her story can not be true. And the real crux of the story has yet to be introduced. The Countess tips her hand again in the seventh stanza when she sits upon the "foolish throne amid applause" (38). The Countess feigns humility (or is she condescending?) by calling the throne (and by association) her duties on that day as "foolish" but in the same breath, she wants Adela to know just how popular she was "amid applause" and earlier "Of merry friends who kissed my cheek, / And called me queen" (32-33). The faux pas comes in lines 39-40 when she says: "Of all come there to celebrate / My queen's day". The way she words it, she would have Adela think that everyone in attendance at the tournament, in fact, the whole purpose of the tournament, was to celebrate her.

Looking on her duties objectively, she was chosen to be the tourney queen and her main responsibility was to "present / The victor's crown" (45-6). Somehow, this rather small obligation has become exaggerated so that "all come there to celebrate / My queen's day". In the same stanza, a second time she feigns humility when she explains "no crowd / Makes up for parents in their shroud!" (41-2). The first time she tells Adela that the throne (and tournament) was silly, but she was hugely popular. The second time she explains that no matter how pop-

ular she was, and no matter the size of the crowd, she is nothing more than a pitiable orphan. "Apparently the only reason for this remark is to impress upon her listener that she was a poor little orphan girl utterly defenseless against the world" (Ryals 157). These mixed signals should further alert the reader to be suspicious; as we proceed through the poem, we should be growing more and more wary of the Countess's narration.

Once again, emphasizing her importance on that day, the Countess tells Adela that "all eyes were bent / Upon me" (43-4). No feigned humility here. What happens in the remainder of the eighth stanza should leave no doubt that this story is a complete fabrication. She tells Adela that when all eyes were on her (other than the nasty cousins') the time came to "present / The victor's crown". Suddenly, the Countess pauses and commences the worst acting job of all theater, a very humorous scene if one believes the whole story is a lie. Tears come to her eyes and she tells Adela that the pain of recalling that horrible morning is as fresh today as when it happened: "the old mist again / Blinds me as then it did." The Countess is an actor as Harrold points out: She "can turn on her 'mist' of tears while announcing how long they will last, indicating experience from rehearsal" (50). Ryals also picks up upon the Countess's acting: "In speaking of the incident, the countess constantly refers to it as though it took place not in real life but on the stage. The 'time and place and company' was a tournament where she was to play the role of queen. Her cousins dress her up 'in Queen's array' (11) for 'the play' (18)" (156). While the reader is anticipating the outcome of this tale, having been put on pause as it were, the Countess then tells Adela to look "at the gate" where her husband is "in talk / With his two boys: I can proceed" (49-50). The reader wonders why the Countess would not have been able to proceed if Count Gismond were within hearing distance. According to the story she tells Adela, the reader would expect the Count to welcome this story of his heroics and would be pleased to hear it again. This pause, sniffing back of tears and visual check of the husband's whereabouts is another hint Browning gives us. The reason she "can proceed" is because the whole story is completely untrue, so with no one to contradict her, the Countess "can proceed" along her merry way.

Now that we have arrived nearly halfway through the story, having had our suspicions raised as to the truth (or lack thereof) of this narrative, (and with her husband and sons safely out of hearing range), the Countess begins to relate the climax of her story, beginning with

the line: "Well, at that moment, who should stalk / Forth boldly - to my face, indeed - / But Gauthier?" (51-53). He commands everyone to "Stay!" Then, according to the Countess, everyone freezes while Count Gauthier thunders: "Bring no crowns, I say!" Instead of crowns, Count Gauthier demands that torches be brought to burn the harlot. He then (or rather, in the Countess's version) says something incredulous: "Shall she, whose body I embraced / A night long, queen it in the day? For honour's sake, no crown, I say!" (58-60). Much has been written about these lines, but little has been said of the inherent incongruities. A closer look at the syntax, once the relative clause has been removed, results in the following amazing sentence: "Shall she queen it in the day?" The "it" is clearly her body and queen is the verb. Count Gauthier asks if she should be crowned and for the second time he repeats "no crowns, I say!" This is another major stumbling block in the Countess's monologue. There is some confusion about the crowning; up to this point we have been told that the tourney queen would "give our tourney prize away" (12), but Count Gauthier demands that the tourney queen herself should not be crowned.

Another multi-layered incongruity of the Countess's version of this accusation is why in the world would Count Gauthier possibly say it at all, in front of the crowd, directly into the queen's face? There is no logical (or even emotional) reason for him to do so. He is as culpable as she, he might as well have ordered the two of them to be burned for their sin. There would be more logic involved if he had demanded a double execution - at least the lovers would pay for their crime together. His statement, on the other hand, is nothing short of extreme hypocrisy and/or insanity if we are to believe it. Other writers have noticed this improbability. Count Gauthier's "entire action was preposterous if his charge against her was false" (Tilton and Tuttle 89). If, in fact, he had spent "A night long" embracing her body (ten points for stamina!), it is most unlikely that he hates her; one could safely assume that he must have some affection for her. Lee Erickson agrees: "Even if he had embraced the Countess during the previous night, it seems unlikely that he would be jealous of her being queen of the tourney or that he would reveal their clandestine love at his cost as well as hers" (87). What reason does he have to publicly accuse her of fornication and to demand her death? Some writers argue that the cousins, in their jealousy, put him up to it. No matter what rewards he may have gained from the beautiful, full-figured cousins - would it really be worth risking his life? Whether he was offered a bribe of money or some

physical exchange with the cousins, "Gauthier would have been a fool indeed to chance death" for this reward (Tilton and Tuttle 90). Hopefully, the reader at this point should be able to explain his contradictory behavior and understand why he said this outrageously illogical claim: he did not say it! Every word is in the Countess's version; since her only listener is Adela, the Countess is determined that she makes each point clear. Browning, however, expects readers to be more insightful than the gullible Adela. We are back to the main question: "Why does the Countess tell Adela this story?"

Browning causes the Countess to pause between Count Gauthier's last words "no crowns, I say!" and the Countess's next words. During the dramatic pause, the Countess lures Adela deeper into the story while taking the opportunity to assess how effective her story is being received up to this point. Thoroughly absorbed in this fabulous tale, Adela apparently asks: "So what did you do? What did you say?" Precisely timing her reply, the Countess, with more bad acting says: "I? What answered I? As I live, I never fancied such a thing / As answer possible to give" (61-3). Browning is having a little fun here with the words "I never fancied"; the whole story is a creation of her fancy. Much like the Duke saying: "Even had you skill / In speech - (which I have not) - to make your will / Quite clear to such an one" (MLD 35-7). To candidly state that she "never fancied such a thing" is ironically humorous. She tells Adela that she was too stunned to speak (but she does not deny the accusation!). What happens next in the Countess's story, if looked at objectively, thrusts the rest of her tale into comic overdrive. She says: "Till out strode Gismond; then I knew / That I was saved" (67-8). The humor of this line is in knowing the dichotomy of what the Countess tells Adela as truth and that we know it is all untrue. Chivalry, as a traditional reading of this poem would suggest, could never explain Count Gismond's actions; he is a foreigner, a stranger from the south of France, he has never met Count Gauthier nor the lady before and he is probably at the tournament as a participant (with his knightly accoutrement and armourer). How could he possibly know (or even care!) if Count Gauthier's accusation were true or not? The whole ordeal is none of his business. Nevertheless, he strides forth in the damsel's defense. It would be highly unusual for an outsider to confront a local among his peers while being totally ignorant of the facts in the case. His illogical behavior is further reinforced in the next line: "I never met / His face before" (68-9). One can believe that a chivalrous knight would willingly save a damsel in distress, but

a knight is also a man of honor. Why would Count Gismond accept the silence of an unknown woman over the words of a fellow honorable knight? And what propelled him to decide so quickly that the tourney queen was being falsely accused? Neither the actions of Count Gauthier nor Count Gismond make any sense when studied objectively. The reason none of their actions makes any sense is because it never happened the way the Countess tells the story.

The Countess is clever enough to always paint herself in the most favorable light; up to this point in her story, she has informed Adela that she was the innocent victim of a scheming monster, that she was appointed to the enviable position of queen of the tournament, that she was more beautiful than either of her extremely beautiful cousins, (and by extension – perhaps the most beautiful woman in the kingdom), that the crowd assembled to celebrate her queen's day (also her birthday), that "the morning troop / Of merry friends who kissed [her] cheek, / And called [her] queen" (31–33) proves her enormous popularity, that even surrounded by adoring admirers she needs to be pitied since she lost her parents, that the powerful Count Gauthier singled her out as his companion in a night long embrace of passion and, as we are about to learn, God is her protector as well. Adela must be terribly impressed by now, but the coup d'état is just beginning. The Countess pulls divine reinforcements into her tale: "I felt quite sure that God had set / Himself to Satan" (70–71). There it is: perfect black and white; good versus evil, God versus Satan, villain versus hero, Gismond versus Gauthier. In a letter to Isa Blagden, Browning once wrote: "it seems ordained that if you believe in heroes you will be sorry for it, sooner or later" (Armstrong 150). Browning detested absolute good versus evil characterizations; obviously, the Countess has no such qualms. Later the Countess says even more directly that Count Gismond was commissioned by God to fulfill his holy mission: "God took that on him" (83).

God not only inspires and protects Count Gismond, but He offers divine assistance to the Countess herself by directing her to watch Count Gismond prepare for the duel: "I was bid / Watch Gismond for my part" (83–4). The two words "my part" makes it look as if the Countess will play some active role in the battle of the Counts which is, of course, misleading as well as ridiculous. She watches him nevertheless (since God commanded her to) as Count Gismond's armourer helps him into his armor. She tells Adela how clear the memory remains. What she explains next is so unbelievable that it is laughable. The two Counts, now prepared for the duel, take their positions on the field and

a trumpeter blasts out the signal to begin. She says: "And e'en before the trumpet's sound / Was finished, prone lay the false knight" (91–2). Browning must have chuckled when writing this line because of the puns on "trumpet," and "prone lay the false knight" / night. Eager beaver Count Gismond sure was swift on his toes (or perhaps the trumpeter played a long fanfare?). Before the signal had finished, Count Gismond finished off Count Gauthier. Once again, looking objectively at the way the Countess describes things, it is helpful to imagine the scene. The huge crowd, one must assume, would have gathered into a large circle around the duelists. Count Gauthier would have been supported by the majority of the onlookers (many of them manly knights themselves) since he was a local. Count Gismond on the other hand, was without a large group of supporters – perhaps only his armourer. In that age of chivalry, gentlemanly conduct would be required from both of these honorable Counts. Sprinting across the distance and stabbing one's opponent before the signal had ended would probably be considered unsportsmanlike conduct, especially by Count Gauthier's supporters. Even if the rules of engagement allowed for the first move to be made at the outset of the trumpet's blast, Count Gismond was either terrifically skilled or lucky to pierce Count Gauthier through the chest in a matter of seconds. This would not be as surprising if Count Gismond were dueling an unarmed schoolboy – but that was not the case. Count Gauthier was a trained, armed knight; one would expect at least a little resistance. (One would also expect to see a little resistance from Count Gauthier's supporters before, during and/or after the duel.) Surely Browning never meant for us to take this ludicrous image of the one-sided duel at face value. It is "the Countess, who hopes and expects that the listener, her friend Adela, will put faith in that ridiculous method [the duel] of establishing truth . . ." (Hagopian 155). Not only does the Count dispatch his foe quickly, "Gismond flew at him" (94), but he does it with "no slight / O' the sword" (94–5). He just held out his sword like a lance and charged full speed ahead "cleaving till out the truth he clove" (96). Gismond does not even try to dodge the sword (too tired from the long night's embrace?). Clearly, the Countess tells her story in such a way as to make her savior appear to be the most heroic of heroes possible. The problem here is that the duel was not heroic in the least; it was a comically pathetic display of swordsmanship by both duelists; another ringing gap in logic Browning plants for us.

The Countess also errs with the description of the knight being "open-breasted". It is not clear which of the duelists was "open-breast-

ed"; the text would seem to indicate Count Gismond who is named as the subject of the sentence. How brave of him to enter into a sword fight with his breast exposed. For us, however, it would not only be foolhardy, but against dueling tradition (and why spend so much time bracing "his greaves," riveting "his hauberk" and pulling on "his ringing gauntlets" while leaving his torso "open-breasted"?). The strange thing is that Count Gauthier is stabbed in the chest where, apparently, he was not wearing any armor. It is illogical for either of them to duel "open breasted". Neither Adela nor the Countess are swordfighters (nor am I, nor, I assume, are most readers of this poem), but we have the advantage of seeing the words objectively whereby the Countess's account of the duel is simply unbelievable.

As fabulous as the story is up to this point, what the Countess relates hereon out can only be described as extraordinary. Count Gauthier, having been stabbed in the chest now lies prone on the ground – but still (conveniently for the Countess's version of the story) alive. Count Gismond grabs a hold of the dying Count Gauthier and drags him to the feet of the tournament queen. What perfection! Slay the evil enemy and deliver the breathing corpse to the very feet of the falsely accused virtuous maiden. Count Gismond then, according to the Countess, says:

Here die, but end thy breath
 In full confession, lest thou fleet
 From my first, to God's second death!
 Say, hast thou lied?

(98–101)

In reply, Count Gauthier says, in his dying breath: "I have lied / To God and her" (101–02). Gallons of ink have been used by commentators to explain Count Gauthier's sudden and astonishing reversal. Unfortunately, all explanations have been drawn from the events of the story as we are told by the Countess as if the duel had actually happened. The public accusation, the resulting duel, the reverse confession all occur in the Countess's story – and none of it ever happened the way we are told. The Countess's besmirched honor has been gallantly restored: "The lie was dead, / And damned, and truth stood-up instead" (77–78). The Countess "associates words with power," Ryals writes, "her monologue focusing on repeated use of the word 'lie'" (155). Her divinely inspired hero, Count Gismond, has come to the rescue,

stabbed the evil knight and managed to elicit a death-bed confession. "But," writes John Hagopian, "to accept the results of such a trial as valid and to take the lady at her word would do injustice to the subtlety of Browning's method" (155).

The way the Countess relates this incredible tale, it is as if the whole crowd disappeared during the duel because not a single soul, not a friend, a comrade, a relative, a servant of the slain Count Gauthier, not even his own loyal (now unemployed) armorer objected to the stabbing and disrespectful dragging of the knight to the feet of the queen. And no one even bothers to check to see if he is really dead! Surely someone would have protested or tried to prevent Count Gismond from doing it, especially since he is an outsider. Then, with the corpse laid out prone at the feet of the tourney queen, Count Gismond kneels at her feet as well (his knee on Count Gauthier's breast?): "Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked / –What safe my heart holds" (103–4). This is a remarkable sentence – more so for what is not said. The Countess breaks off the sentence with the word "asked." We are never told what he asked her (not that it matters since he never knelt at her feet and asked her anything), but to play along with the Countess's version, and to imagine what Adela is thinking, one naturally wonders if he asked her if the accusation were really true. Or perhaps he asked her for a post-tournament date. Or he may have asked for her hand in marriage (we have already seen how fast the Count can move when inspired).

The Countess uncharacteristically decides to clam up at this point. She merely tells Adela that her heart is a safe and that no matter how hard she tried: "no word / Could I repeat now" (104–05); the choice word "could" carries the double meaning of "I could but I won't" as well as "It's impossible, I just couldn't say." She ends this thought, that she could not tell her secrets "to a third / Dear even as you are" (106–7). She is not about to tell Adela her real secrets, obviously. Instead, she continues with: "Pass the rest / Until I sank upon his breast" (107–8). If Count Gismond is still kneeling, her sinking upon his breast would have been awkward indeed, especially with the still warm body of Count Gauthier lying at her feet. We learn shortly later that Count Gismond's sword is swinging and dripping blood all over her dress, so we must assume that he is no longer kneeling. She says: "Over my head his arm he flung / Against the world" (109–10). The crowd finally appears in her narration; "Against the world". This could mean a gesture of defiance "Against the world" in general, but more aptly, it is an act of defiance against the assembled crowd, Count Gauthier's comrades and

friends daring one and all to a challenge. Who, one must ask, would ever do such a blatantly foolish thing?

To re-cap, here is what we have according to the Countess's version of the story: Count Gismond is surrounded on all sides by the enemy, (surely the multitude would not be pleased to see a comrade fall, especially by the hand of an outsider). Many of these newly gained foes are armed and armored knights, they have just witnessed one of their own slain, the killer has claimed their selected tournament queen as his own (before she has had a chance to crown the victor!) and boldly thrusts his arm in the air in defiance of them all. Could he possibly go unscathed? One would expect at least a few (if not the whole frenzied crowd) to pounce on Count Gismond in a collective act of brotherhood's revenge. But in the Countess's version, Count Gismond not only does everything she says he does, but he adamantly insults the crowd by flinging his arm in the air against them all adding insult to injury. Adela may be terrifically impressed with the Count's heroics – but readers should be terrifically impressed with the ridiculousness of this tale. Browning could not help but have a little fun in the next line. While Count Gismond is standing with his arm flung in the air over the Countess's head, we are told: "scarce I felt / His sword (that dripped by me and swung) / A little shifted in his belt" (110–12). The phallic symbolism, "mixing and accepting connections between virility and controlled violence" (Hawlin 77), is humorous, especially since his bloodied sword has just taken the life of the man who claimed to have embraced the queen a long night through (and more puns on "night," "knight" and "long"). The Countess makes two implausible errors in this statement. The first incongruity is found in her line "scarce I felt / His sword". We learned in line 11 that she was "dressed in queen's array". My image of queenly dress during the age of chivalry in France would be multi-pleated pantaloons; be that as it may, she was surely not wearing form-fitting trousers and surely her legs would not have been exposed. In all probability, it would have been impossible for her to "feel / His sword", not even scarcely. "Feel" is unmistakably used in the physical sense, not in the mental sense of being aware. The second problem is the bizarre image of the swinging, bloodied, dripping sword rubbing against her queenly array. While this image may fit within a fairy tale, can anyone believe that a tournament queen would allow a bloodied sword to actually touch none-the-less drip blood on her dress? It would seem to go against all queenly instinct to permit mud or blood to spoil her gown. Earlier in the poem she was careful while getting

dressed to "adjust / The last rose in my garland. Fling / A last look on the mirror" (26–28). And now, while the sword is smearing blood on her dress, the Countess continues the sentence: "he began to say the while / How South our home lay many a mile" (113–4). Surely every reader must recognize the impossibility of that line. The conveniently orphaned tourney queen, free to go as she pleases, "single and with no thought of marriage" (Hawlin 77), is told that she will move to and live in her new home in southern France with this brave, honorable, royal Count. This is stretching it even for a fairy tale. These two do not know each other at all; they may not even know each others' names. Other than in the cheapest of Harlequin romances, where could a scene like this be found? Like many of the events already described in the Countess's monologue, this too defies all belief. Count Gismond's astonishing presumptuousness is only surpassed by the queen's blind faith in her hero. Without a moment's hesitation, she gives up all she has known all her life – friends, relatives, residence (not to mention clothes, jewelry, keepsakes, etc.) – all, for a man she has met in the last few minutes. All that pure romanticism is tailor made for her listener, Adela. For the rest of us, it is as transparent as glass; a fairy tale devoid of logic, reality or consistency.

The Countess is not finished yet (neither are her errors). After telling Adela about her knight in shining armor announcing her future with him, she says something else quite incredible: "So, 'mid the shouting multitude / We two walked forth to never more / Return" (115–17). Three parts of that statement are specious. First, the crowd is "shouting," but are the people "shouting" in adoration or in anger? One would assume they are shouting in anger. The problem is that it is unfathomable that the whole angry and riotous multitude can not stop the two of them from walking forth. No one even tries to prevent them from leaving. How believable is that? Since when does an ugly mob not get uglier, especially when provoked? The other possible interpretation of "the shouting multitude" would lead to an even more incredible conclusion: the crowd is cheering for this perfect union of the bold, honorable foreigner and their very own beauty queen. (Perhaps everyone really hated Count Gauthier and were happy to have him killed.) Clearly the crowd was not cheering for the Countess and Count; they were shouting against them.

The second problem is with their mode of transportation. The Countess says: "We two walked forth". That is a mighty long walk to get to their home which lay "many a mile" away. What about the

poor armourer (who is left to carry the necessary knightly equipment) and what self-respecting knight would be horseless at a tournament! How did Count Gismond arrive in the first place? OK – maybe the horses are standing somewhere nearby (are there three horses?). And, of course, Count Gismond is rich, so he can buy a horse or two on the way. But why does Browning have the Countess use the phrase "We two walked forth" when he could have easily inserted a less concrete word for "walked" such as "went" forth, "ventured," "left behind," etc.? His word choice remains consistent throughout this dual (duel?) story; one for the sake of her fairy tale, the other for us to see through. The third problem with their walking "forth to never more / Return" is the stuff of a classic fairy tale and as far removed from the cold realities of life as possible. Who can believe that the future Countess would not want to pack a few things (or trunks of things) for her new life? Perhaps the armorer keeps a spare pair of lady's bloomers in his kit? Is it conceivable that she would not want to stop by the old homestead to say goodbye to friends, family, neighbors and acquaintances? She has already told us how popular she is with everyone. And back to the nagging royalty question; if the Countess were in the royal court, surely she would need to receive permission from her guardian; perhaps an aunt or uncle. Also, one would expect her young highness to employ a dutiful attendant or two to accompany the lady on the long journey. None of this is mentioned – further evidence that the tourney queen was not royalty. Finally, are we supposed to believe that she is willing to travel the long distance in her "queen's array", now bloodied? One would think her choice of traveling attire would be rather uncomfortable and inconvenient if not a bit gauche for the long and dusty road to Aix in Provence.

As in every good fairy tale, there is the prerequisite happy ending. Near the poem's finale, the Countess tells Adela that her cousins "have pursued / Their life, untroubled as before / I vexed them" (117–19). Why does she slip into a forgiving tone? All cunning schemes and conspiracies by the jealous cousins in the early part of her monologue have suddenly been turned around; where once she explained they vexed her, now she says she "vexed them." The obvious contradiction does not bother the Countess in the least. She not only forgives them, but humbly decides to accept the blame, another feather in her hat for the listening Adela. The Countess also has parting words for Count Gauthier; she says: "Gauthier's dwelling-place / God lighten!" (119–20). His "dwelling-place" may refer to his grave, but since there

was never a duel, nor death of Count Gauthier, possibly never a Count Gauthier at all (the clever Countess would be foolish to use his real name) the "dwelling-place" could literally mean "dwelling-place;" his place of residence. Perhaps her first lover was a simple, poor farmer or a common laborer. Having snared the attentions (along with wealth and power) of Count Gismond, she no longer needed him (but may still have some residual affection for her first son's father). If so, "Gauthier's dwelling-place / God lighten!" takes on a whole new meaning, "lighten" interpreted as in "less severe" or "less poor." More likely, however, the real "dwelling-place" is in her own mind where she makes up the whole story.

Her last words of benediction to Count Gauthier are: "May his soul find grace!" (120). It is important for Adela to understand that this magnanimous Countess, so thoroughly besmirched by the evil Count many years ago, is now able to find room in her heart to give him her blessings; to offer a full forgiveness and to ask God to assist so that his vicious soul may "find grace". In her final forgiveness of both her cousins and Count Gauthier, the Countess ices the cake. For the naïve Adela, the Countess has deftly revealed that as the tourney queen, she was a) beautiful, b) popular, c) loved, d) plotted against by her cousins, e) a poor little helpless orphan, f) an innocent victim of the devil incarnate, Count Gauthier, and his cruel accusation, g) a strong believer in God, h) a woman miraculously saved by the brave, valiant knight from the south of France, i) the woman vindicated through the accuser's confession and now, above all else, j) she is large-hearted enough to forgive those who had sought to destroy her honor (but only after the death of the accuser).

At the end of the monologue, the Countess surprisingly points out the physical differences between the two sons: "Our elder boy has got the clear / Great brow, though when his brother's black / Full eye shows scorn, it . . ." (121–23), and she abruptly stops herself with the arrival of her husband. One wonders why the Countess would not-so-subtly incriminate herself (identical to Gauthier's self-incriminating accusation) by drawing attention to the elder son's resemblance to the northern folk with his "clear / Great brow". She as much as admits that her first born is not her husband's child (a result of a night long embrace years ago). She brags the fact to Adela; how many women can claim to have had a child from two different Counts?

How Much Does the Count Count?

An often overlooked but critical point about the Countess's story is connected to the nature and character of her husband, Count Gismond. If her early promiscuity is true, are we to believe that Count Gismond is so blind as to not notice the difference in his sons' appearances? Is he so dense as not to wonder about their parentage? I sincerely doubt that he is either that blind or dense. If not, then it would seem clear that he is aware of the difference. But this conclusion is also awry; would a rich count with a long line of ancestors willingly accept an illegitimate son as his first born? Perhaps he just has a terribly weak personality; he may be so intimidated by his powerful, silvery-tongued wife that he simply accepts the fact as it is. He could be afraid to challenge his wife about the elder son's progeny. His son is clear, daily evidence of his wife's duplicity; an unspeakable dishonor for a count. Since he remains the dutiful and accepting husband of the Countess, he must be either incredibly dense, weak or both. A stronger or crueler man, like the Duke, would have "given commands" (or not have married her) long ago. Neither seem likely. On this point, as well as the other elements of the Countess's story, it would be a mistake to accept the two-father suggestion as the truth. Though one might argue that the Count is a miserably dull or weak individual, it makes more sense to simply discount the whole of the story; why should we accept her description of the sons' differences? Siblings usually have differences in appearance; the Countess merely picks up on one of these. Accepting the fact that the Countess is still married to the Count, the more logical conclusion to draw here is that there is nothing amiss; Count Gismond is the father of both boys and his wife has a penchant for story telling.

Another fundamental point about the Count's character is found in the contradiction of Count Gismond's defense of his wife's honor at the tournament. There, he quickly challenges Count Gauthier to a duel, we are told, because the young woman's honor was "struck at length". Count Gismond killed Count Gauthier without a denial, not even a word from the offended tourney queen. He was quick, determined and inspired by God to protect her honor. He killed a man at the mere suggestion of impropriety. Why, then, didn't he do the same thing once he realized his eldest son was, in fact, not his? Why didn't he challenge his wife to demand an annulment or a divorce (better yet, a duel)? And what about defending his own honor? In the same situation, the Duke would not bat an eye to dispose of his lying wife. Count Gismond, on

the other hand, simply shrugs it off and accepts the dishonor. If he had actually killed Count Gauthier in the name of honor, surely he would not remain married to the woman whose silence caused him to kill an innocent man (where is the honor in that?).

With all of the inherent (and comical) flaws in the Countess's story, the laughable duel scene, the ridiculous defiant challenge to the agitated crowd, the walking forth without a single goodbye; it is obvious that the whole monologue never happened. Clyde Ryals writes: "In the last analysis we cannot accept the lady's story as true" (158).

The Purpose Behind the Story

Up to this point, I have been concerned with describing the many inconsistencies, gaps and incongruities in the Countess's narration; the sheer number of them should, hopefully, lead to the conclusion that the story simply is not true (though, as in any good lie, there may be bits and pieces of the truth which the Countess has sewn into a wholly different story). Now it is time to take a look at the huge question that remains to be answered; if the whole hero-saves-the-innocent-damsel-and-kills-the-evil-accuser-then-escapes-happily-to-the-exotic-foreign-land-fairy-tale story is a lie, what possible reason could she have for telling Adela the whole thing? The answer can be found from two sources. One from "My Last Duchess" and the other from the symbolic imagery found in "Count Gismond." If one were to ask the same question of the Duke in "My Last Duchess," "Why does he tell the whole story to the servant?" the answer could be that he is interested in obtaining two results, a greater dowry for one and to send a message that the servant will pass along to the Duke's soon-to-be new Duchess. The important point is that the Duke wants something from his auditor; his whole monologue is a warning; he demands that his honor be respected with the dignity it deserves – something his last Duchess was too innocent or naïve to realize. Ralph Rader explains that the Duke's purpose of the monologue was "a means of indicating to the envoy that he should warn the prospective duchess to act in a way befitting the wife of the Duke of Ferrara" (Ryals 150).² The Duke felt his honor was tarnished when his wife "was too soon made glad," and did not treat him with the respect that comes with "a nine-hundred-years-old name." He could have pointed out the proper way to honor him, but that would have been "stooping" and he, proud, arrogant and vain, explains: "I

choose / Never to stoop." The Countess uses her story as a warning, too. But rather than warn a third-party intermediary as the Duke does, the Countess, not afraid of stooping, makes a more direct approach and tells the offender directly.

The second source of information concerning the answer to the question is more subtle, but prevalent. Browning offers us sufficient hints through the symbolic falconry imagery to help us understand the Countess's real motive behind the story. In the very last lines of the poem, the Countess tells Adela a blatant lie:

Gismond here?

And have you brought my tercel back?

I was just telling Adela

How many birds it struck since May. (123–26)

Browning ends the poem with the mention of a tercel or falcon. Reading through the poem a second time, one can not help but notice the prevailing presence of words borrowed from the sport of falconry intentionally scattered throughout the poem. Tilton and Tuttle have done an excellent job of drawing parallels between the Countess's character and the sport of falconry. "Her comparison of men to falcons has demonstrated that she judges human actions by the values of nature, animal nature in which the strong, the quick, the clever win the rewards" (91–92). Evidence of the falconry terms found in the poem "are too numerous to be coincidental or meaningless: *struck, post, stoop, canopy, points, flew at him . . . open-breasted, ringing gauntlets, foot, great brow, black / Full eye* – all of these are the diction of a woman we know to be an avid falconer" (Tilton and Tuttle 85). From the same article, "A New Reading of 'Count Gismond,'" the authors further develop the Countess's aggressive character: "she is capable of stooping or attacking to get what she wants, just as she has grasped the unmerited honor of queenship in order to fulfill her needs. All her actions and traits considered, her love of falconry emerges as a projection of her own nature" (87).

Tilton and Tutton argue convincingly that the Countess sees her husband and sons as birds of prey; "she conceives of her sons as powerful falcons like their father, for both the great brow and the large, dark eye are characteristic of the tercel" (92). Surprisingly, with all these concrete examples of falconry that Tilton and Tuttle have found in the poem, they reach an entirely different conclusion in regards to the gen-

eral interpretation of the poem. This, of course, is because they accept what the Countess says as the truth. Had they doubted the Countess's story a bit more and taken their own argument to its logical conclusion, I am sure they would have arrived at an identical or similar conclusion as I have. I argue that Browning intertwined the falconry imagery with the Countess's story so that we, the readers, understand that she is not so much a symbol of a falcon herself but a person who controls the falcons. She wants Adela to think of her as the falconer, the master of both birds and men; she uses people to get what she wants – through intimidation and threats – to terrify weaker animals for her pleasure and purpose, just as she is doing now with Adela. The slightest threat to her person results in the sending aloft of her defenders. "In her mind," Harrold explains, "both Gismond and Gauthier, as well as sons (all males in the poem), are tercel" (43). Anyone caught up in a sport involving animals (including humans) is always on the lookout for a stronger, faster, better animal with which to compete. One of her first falcons may have been the man behind the Count Gauthier figure, her first lover. He was discarded once she was able to capture the attention of the much richer Count Gismond (money being the ultimate source of power and strength for the Countess). Over the years, she has been able to completely train her husband, to usurp not only his wealth, name and possessions (just the very things the Duke of Ferrara so viciously protected). The sight of blood thrills her; the Countess shows no sympathy when Count Gauthier is slain, in fact, "her pleasure in seeing the bloody Gauthier dragged to her feet was hardly the pleasure of the innocent seeing the righteous servant of God destroy the wicked maligner" (Tilton and Tuttle 87). Still, she prefers to let others do the dirty work. She is the falconer and uses her power to train her birds in the required fields of discipline and obedience. On the other hand, that is what she wants Adela to think.

To answer the question, then, as to who is being warned we only need to look at the obvious – who is the Countess talking to and why does she decide to tell her this story? Except for the last three lines of the poem, she is talking to Adela. What in the world is Adela being warned about? The answer lies in the opening line: "Christ God who savest man, save most / Of men Count Gismond". The whole monologue answers the previously asked question: "Save Count Gismond from what?" I think the Countess (with God's assistance) is saving her husband from Adela; her story is a warning to Adela to stay away from her husband. The Countess is protecting her turf. The Duke does the

same thing by warning (threatening) the servant of the Count whose daughter is soon to become the new Duchess. The warning given to both the servant and Adela (a new servant in the employ of the Countess?) is as clear as a bell. Both the Duke and the Countess reveal the depths of their vanity, pride and determination to protect what is theirs. Control is equally important to both of them; at the end of "My Last Duchess," the Duke points out his "statue of Neptune taming a sea-horse—a sadistic imposition of will by force, characteristic of the Duke himself, so here the Countess makes a reference to the carefully trained fighter who strikes down innocent birds for her . . ." (Hagopian 155). The Duke and the Countess relay the same warning: any infringement on their honor will have significant consequences—not without precedence.

So, just in case Adela should have any designs on Count Gismond, now or in the future, if she values her life, she would do well to stamp out such thoughts. The whole convoluted story that the Countess tells Adela is for one purpose only, to let Adela understand that the Count is off limits. Through the story, the Countess has also made it crystal clear that any attempt to lure the Count's affections would be a waste of time. The Count's heart, as the Countess informs Adela during the course of her narration, has been captured: the Count is so much in love with his wife, so brave, loyal, honorable, pure and innocent that all his love, his whole reason for existence is to serve his wife, a duty ordained by God. If the Countess has been successful with her story, Adela will realize that even the slightest attention to the Count would not only be futile (because of his unabated love of the Countess and his time-honored chivalry) but that it would also be a serious affront to the Countess's honor; not a good thing to do. The Countess was sure to include in her tale, that should the Count sense any kind of insult to his wife's honor, even the slightest hint of dishonor, he will kill the offender without a moment's hesitation (as he did Count Gauthier). The speakers in both "Count Gismond" and "My Last Duchess" are intent on sending a clear warning to their listeners; "Do not smudge my honor! The consequences are fatal."

A final irony in the poem lies in the amount and degree of belief Adela has in the Countess's story. I have repeated a number of times that Adela must surely be naïve and gullible to believe the Countess's cockamamie story. If Adela actually buys the whole story at face value, she will certainly keep a safe distance from Count Gismond having been told of the consequences of anyone disrespecting her honor. If,

however, Adela suspects or doubts the truth of the story as she logically should, she will keep an even safer distance from Count Gismond. The greater irony is that should Adela be able to see through the fairy tale story, she will clearly understand the lengths to which the Countess is willing to go to make sure her honor (and her husband) remains untouched. What is important is that Adela understands the warning; the Countess is so sure of herself that it makes little difference to her if Adela believes the story or not.

Notes

- ¹ John V. Hagopian, "The Mask Of Browning's Countess Gismond." *Philological Quarterly*, 40 (1961): 153-54. John Tilton and R. Dale Tuttle, "A New Reading of 'Count Gismond.'" *Studies In Philology* 59 (1962): 83-95. Marcella Holloway, "A Further Reading of 'Count Gismond.'" *Studies in Philology* 60 (1963): 549-53.
- ² Originally from Ralph W. Rader, "The Dramatic Monologue and Related Lyric Form." *Critical Inquiry* 3 (1976): 131-51.

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 Timko, Michael. "Ah, Did You Ever See Browning Plain?" *Studies in English Literature* 64 Autumn (1966): 731–42.

**Count Gismond
 Aix in Provence**

Robert Browning (1842)

I

Christ God who savest man, save most
 Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
 Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
 Chose time and place and company
 To suit it; when he struck at length 5
 My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

II

And doubtlessly, ere he could draw
 All points to one, he must have schemed!
 That miserable morning saw
 Few half so happy as I seemed, 10
 While being dressed in queen's array
 To give our tourney prize away.

III

I thought they loved me, did me grace
 To please themselves; 'twas all their deed;
 God makes, or fair or foul, our face; 15
 If showing mine so caused to bleed
 My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
 A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen
 By virtue of her brow and breast; 20
 Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
 As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
 Had either of them spoke, instead
 Of glancing sideways with still head!

V

But no: they let me laugh, and sing 25
 My birthday song quite through, adjust
 The last rose in my garland, fling
 A last look on the mirror, trust
 My arms to each an arm of theirs,
 And so descend the castle-stairs- 30

VI

And come out on the morning troop
 Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
 And called me queen, and made me stoop
 Under the canopy – (a streak
 That pierced it, of the outside sun, 35
 Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun) –

VII

And they could let me take my state
 And foolish throne amid applause
 Of all come there to celebrate
 My queen's-day – Oh I think the cause 40
 Of much was, they forgot no crowd
 Makes up for parents in their shroud!

VIII

However that be, all eyes were bent
 Upon me, when my cousins cast
 Theirs down; 'twas time I should present 45
 The victor's crown, but ... there, 'twill last
 No long time ... the old mist again
 Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
 With his two boys: I can proceed. 50
 Well, at that moment, who should stalk
 Forth boldly-to my face, indeed –
 But Gauthier? and he thundered "Stay!"
 And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

X

Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet 55
 About her! Let her shun the chaste,

Or lay herself before their feet!
 Shall she, whose body I embraced
 A night long, queen it in the day?
 For honour's sake no crowns, I say!" 60

XI

I? What I answered? As I live,
 I never fancied such a thing
 As answer possible to give.
 What says the body when they spring
 Some monstrous torture-engine's whole 65
 Strength on it? No more says the soul.

XII

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
 That I was saved. I never met
 His face before, but, at first view,
 I felt quite sure that God had set 70
 Himself to Satan; would who spend
 A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
 Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
 With one back-handed blow that wrote 75
 In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
 East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
 And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
 The heart of the joy, with my content 80
 In watching Gismond unalloyed
 By any doubt of the event:
 God took that on him -- I was bid
 Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

XV

Did I not watch him while he let 85
 His armourer just brace his greaves,
 Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
 The while! His foot ... my memory leaves
 No least stamp out nor how anon

He pulled his ringing gauntlets on. 90

XVI

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
 Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
 Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
 Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
 O' the sword, but open-breasted drove, 95
 Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
 And said, "Here die, but end thy breath
 In full confession, lest thou fleet
 From my first, to God's second death! 100
 Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied
 To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
 -- What safe my heart holds, though no word
 Could I repeat now, if I tasked 105
 My powers for ever, to a third
 Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
 Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX

Over my head his arm he flung
 Against the world; and scarce I felt 110
 His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
 A little shifted in its belt:
 For he began to say the while
 How South our home lay many a mile.

XX

So, 'mid the shouting multitude 115
 We two walked forth to never more
 Return. My cousins have pursued
 Their life, untroubled as before
 I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
 God lighten! May his soul find grace! 120

XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear
 Great brow, though when his brother's black
 Full eye shows scorn, it ... Gismond here?
 And have you brought my tercel back?
 I was just telling Adela
 How many birds it struck since May.

125

英語教師の「教科書マニュアル依存」による 学生への弊害

—中学・高校の英語授業や定期テストにおける
 「教師の視点」の育成の重要性について—

鈴木 淳

1. 問題提起

近頃、高専や大学で英語の授業を行って感じるのは、学生たちがテキストで取り上げられている英語の文章で「何が大事なポイントか」が分かっていないことである。それは当然、定期テスト、さらには TOEIC や英検などの外部テストの際にも、「その出題された問題のどこに注目すればよいのか」が分からないということになる。私は、おそらくこのような大学生が多いのは中学や高校で英語教師たちが単なる教科書の「内容確認のための授業や定期テスト」を行っていたからではないかと推察する。たしかに、中学や高校の授業の目的は「教科書内容の理解」であり、また定期テストの目的はその教科書を用いた「授業についてのテスト」であり、それにより成績がつけられ、さらには、それが大学の推薦入試などとも関わってくる。だが、推薦ではない、いわゆる大学入試では、必ずしも学校の定期テストの成績がよい者が高得点を取れるわけではない。そして、推薦入試で大学に入学した者は、むしろ英語を苦手科目としている場合が多い。このようなことは一体どうして起こるのだろうか。

それは、中学・高校で「教科書内容中心」の英語の授業を受け、推薦入試で大学に入学してきた学生たちは、教科書を離れたときに必要とされる重要な能力が十分に育成されていないからだと思われる。だが、その事実が気が付いていない英語教師も多いのではないだろうか。本論では、私自身の高校や高専での英語教育経験を踏まえながら、「定期試験のための授業」ではなく、中学・高校の英語教師は教科書を用いながら常に「教

科書内容理解を超えた授業と定期テスト」をすべきであるということを提示したい。それは、大学一般受験だけでなく、推薦入試を考えている学生にも、いずれ大学に入学したときに役立つものである。最終的に、私が言いたいのは、定期テストというものは、授業で教えられた教科書内容の理解の確認に止まるものではなく、むしろテストを作成する「教師の視点」を学生たちの中に養うためのものであるべきだということである。

2. 高校の定期テストと大学入試問題は別物か

従来、「英語力を測るための」大学入試とは異なり、高校の定期テストは教科書の内容理解の確認とされ、せいぜい教師が2、3問の応用問題を出すことで、学生間の点数差を産み出していた。そのため、私の場合も、定期試験が近くなると、同一授業を担当する教師たちが会議を開き、そのうちの一人によって作成された試験問題について、「間違いがないか」、そしてその「難易度」について議論する。時にはスペルミスや選択肢の適切不適切などで若干のミスがあることもある。その点では、この英語教師間のテスト前の話し合いは有益だと思われる。だが、問題は、その難易度についての注文である。というのも、一般的に見ても、その多くは、「自分のクラスではそこまで教えていない」とか、「入試ではないのだから難しすぎる」というものだからである。このような英語教師たちの発言を見たり聞いたりすると、そもそもなぜ授業をするのだろうかということを考えさせられる。もちろん、学生には学力の個人差があり、応用問題はどうせ一部の学生しか解けないから定期テストには必要ないということを考えての発言なのだろうが、私は、理由は本当にそれだけだろうかと疑問に思うときがある。というのも、中学・高校の英語教師の中には、教師用の教科書マニュアルに頼りすぎ、それ以上のことを教えるという考え自体が最初から欠落している者も多いからだ。そのマニュアルへの過度の信頼は、最悪の場合、その解説の間違いにも気が付かないという自体にもなる。そもそも、英語教師のための英語の教科書マニュアルとは何なのか。その役割は、たしかに新米教師には一定水準の授業を行うための指針にはなるだろう。だが、それは、逆から言えば、それだけを教えればよいという勘違いを生みはしないだろうか。さらには、英語教師の指導内容を枠にはめ込み、結果的には、教師自身の英語力の発展を妨げ、いわゆる「学力・指導力不足教師」を生み出しはしないだろうか。実際、現在、中学・高校英語教師たちが学力不足のために予備校や大学に通うという話は少なくない。おそ

らく、その一因は、教師たちがこの教科書マニュアルに依存しすぎた結果ではないだろうか。

では、英語教師の学力不足は、学生にとってどのような悪影響があるだろうか。もちろん、第一に、学生からの質問に十分に対処できないことが挙げられるだろう。だが、実はそれだけではない。よりひどいのは、それにより、学生の中に本来学ぶべき重要な能力が全くといってよいほど育たないということなのだ。それをここでは、私は「教師の視点」と呼ぶことにする。では、その「教師の視点」とは何か。それは、定期テストを例に取れば、単なる教科書の内容理解ではなく、それを超えた「なぜ教師がそれを問題にするのか」ということの意味能力のことである。つまり、私が思うに、おそらく定期テストで点が取れる学生というのは、少なくとも二種類いて、「暗記」だけで取る者と、その一方では、「教師がどこを出してくるか、そしてどう出してくるか」まで理解している者のどちらかなのである。¹無論、前者がいわゆる「付け焼刃」であり、その記憶が定期テスト期間終了と同時に終了することは言うまでもない。一方で、後者のタイプの学生は、その問題の重要性の理解に基づく記憶のため、その効果は持続する。それは、いずれ他の問題とも関連することで応用力となっていく。

面白いことは、実は、この二つのタイプの学生の定期テストへの接し方と、マニュアルに「依存する」教師と「しない」教師の授業への取り組み方がパラレルになっていることである。というのも、マニュアルを過度に使用する教師は、あたかも「自分自身で授業を組み立て、自分で大事な文法やイディオムの説明をしている」と思っているかもしれないが、実際には、それは単なるマニュアルの「暗記」であり、それは、定期試験のためにただ教科書を暗記する学生と変わらないのだ。つまり、そのような教師は、授業を終えると内容を忘れ、さらにはどこが大事なポイントなのかについても分からない。その結果、学生からの質問にも満足に答えられず、教科書を超える問題については最初から正答できるはずもない。その結果、いわゆる「学力不足」の教師となる。一方、マニュアルに頼らない教師は、授業準備の段階で一から教科書そのものに向かい、辞書や必要ならば参考書を用いながら、メモを取り、時間をかけて一つの英語の文章からどれほどの情報を引き出せるかということに意識を集中する。つまり、このような教師には、最初から教科書マニュアルによる制限がないために、頼れるのはそれまで培ってきた自分の知識と学力だけなのだ。そこには、若干のプレッシャーもあるかもしれないが、それに勝るだけの授業準備について

の達成感と責任感も生まれるだろう。それはまた、日々の自分自身の学力の進歩や学生への指導方法の改善とも関わってくるに違いない。つまり、マニュアルに頼らない教師というのは、常に学び続ける教師であり、そして学ぶ喜びを知っている教師なのだ。そのような教師は、自然と授業の中で、学生たちに「学ぶ内容」だけでなく「学び方」や「なぜ学ぶのか」という指導理由まで教授することとなる。その結果、そのような教師が作成する「定期テスト」は、単なるマニュアルや教科書付属の問題の写しではなく、もはや教科書を越えた、「英語力を測る」大学入試と同等のものとなるのである。

3. 教科書マニュアル依存教師の授業・定期テストによる弊害

静哲氏は、『英語教育』（2006年10月号）の「どんなテストを作っていますか」という特集において、論文「テストの種類とその目的」の中で、定期テストと大学入試を別物と捉え、その理由を、前者は「力をつけるため」のテスト、後者を「力を測るため」のテストとしている。² だが、前セクションで見たように、単純にそれだけでは二つのテストの区別は不可能である。というのも、定期テストがマニュアル依存症の教師によって作成されている場合、そこにはなんら工夫のない教科書内容の暗記中心の問題が並び、「力をつける」要素が全くないものとなるからである。つまり、そのテストに対する学生の試験勉強は、教科書とその教師が行った授業内容のノートに暗記するだけである。それでは、たとえ点数は取れても学生の本物の力がつかないことは歴然としている。

さらに、私は、本来「定期テスト」と「大学入試」を別物として考えること自体が意味のない、むしろ悪影響をもたらすものではないかと思っている。というのも、この二つを最初から別物とすることにより、とくに定期テストではわけの分からない問題が作成されるからだ。それは、出題された英文を読まなくても解ける内容真偽の問題や、さらにはその出された文章の前のパートを学生が知っているからこそ解けるが、文章の論理からすると絶対に解答不可能な問題などである。たしかに、それは、授業内容の確認と呼べるかもしれない。だが、逆から言えば、それは単なる記憶の確認であり、そのような問題に全て正解することがその学生の勉強方法の誤りを露呈しているとさえ言えるだろう。実際、教科書の一部を抜き出し、いくつか空欄を設け、接続詞や単語を選択肢として挙げ、「空所補充問題」としたとき、教科書内容を知っている学生は苦もなく解けるかも

しれない。だが、その際、実際に学生がその文章を読み、きちんと文章の前後の論理展開を考えた上でその空欄を埋めているかについては疑問が沸く。というのも、それは単なる内容の暗記であり、たとえ一つの空欄に正答以外に入りうる幾つもの選択肢があったとしても、その事実は何の考慮もなく見逃されるからだ。

おそらくこのことは、問題を作成した英語教師にも当てはまる。つまり、教師の頭の中にも、問題作成の際に前提として教科書の前後の内容があり、普通に見た場合の論理展開の適切さまで意識が十分に及んでいないのだ。静氏は英文素材としての定期テストの性質を「既習」とし、大学入試を「初見」としているが、我々英語教師は、定期テスト作成の際に、そもそもこの「既習」としての定期テストという意識を消さなければならないのではないだろうか。それによる利点は二つある。一つは、先に触れた通り、それにより、定期テストにおいて、「意味のない、わけの分からない」問題がなくなることである。その結果、英語教師は、今までのテスト問題よりも良質の問題を「自分の頭で」考えなければならなくなる。つまり、必然的にそれは普段の授業においても教科書内容以上のことを教える必要が出てくることとなり、授業自体が教師の英語の力量が試される場と変わる。それは、普段「教科書マニュアル」に依存している教師では対応できないものとなる。さらには、定期テストにおいて既習という意識がなくなれば、問題作成をする側だけでなく、試験を受ける学生側も従来の教科書暗記型の勉強法では効かなくなり、その結果、学生たちはあらゆる問題の可能性を予想するしかなくなる。

だが、この「問題を予想する能力」こそは、私の言う「教師の視点」なのである。そして、この予想の目を養うためにも、教師は普段から教科書の内容だけでなく、「どうしてその箇所が重要であり、どう形を変えて試験問題となり得るか」ということまで教えることが重要である。確かに、そのやり方では、実際の定期テストにおいて得点のばらつきがなく、皆高得点となるかもしれない。だが、静氏も言うように、「定期テストでは得点をばらつかせる必要はまったくない」（10）。とにかく本物の「力がつけばそれでよい」のだ。実際に、それで取った点数は、先に見た教科書やノートの丸暗記だけによる点数とは意味が全く異なる。³

4. 英文を「最後まで読まなければ解けない」問題と定期テスト問題からさらに「学ぶ」ことの重要性

では、どのような定期テストを作成すれば、実際に学生に英語力をつけることができるのだろうか。この問題について、静氏は、次のように言う。

定期テストに出題する文章はすでに授業で扱ったものである。よって初見の素材に用いる問題形式をそのまま用いても多くの場合ナンセンスだ。

たとえば授業で扱った英文をそのまま掲載してその「内容」を問うのはあまり意味がない。特に内容に関して日本語で問うて日本語で答えさせたりするのは意味がないに止まらず、往々にして英語学習の方向を見誤らせる。(11)

たしかに、この意見には一理あるだろう。もちろん、定期試験なので英語が苦手な学生に対して自信をつけさせるための若干のサービス問題もあるべきだと思うが、選択式の「内容把握」問題などが先に見た暗記による即答になる可能性は高い。だが、初見の素材に用いる問題形式が合わないというのはどうだろうか。それは、むしろ問題を作成する英語教師たちの工夫に拠るのではないだろうか。さらに、既習の文章だからこそ、その中で大学入試や英検などに見る「初見の問題形式」を解く訓練が効率よくできるのではないだろうか。しかも、その問題自体のレベルは、教科書を越えた知識でも一向に構わない。私が最も重要だと思うのは、いかに既習の範囲の定期試験を用いて新たなものをそこから学ぶかということである。そして、その際には、必ず既習の英文を「最後まで読む」ことでしか解けない問題も入れておきたい。そうすることで、学生たちは単に教科書の内容の問題ではなく、文章構成能力や論理展開という英語の構造上の問題について、既習の文章から学ぶことができるからである。さらに、問題を作る際に、教師は、ある中心的テーマを自分の中に設けて問題作成をするべきだろう。たとえば、一つの英文素材では「不定詞」だとか、次の文章では「前置詞」だとか、文法項目で統一してもよいかもしれない。というのも、一つの文章素材で色々やるよりも、定期テストの場合、後の授業内での解説や復習を考えた場合、テーマでまとめた問題の方が学生にとっては分かりやすく、さらにその文章の中で「どこが一番重要なのか」という「瞬時の判断能力の育成」ともなるからだ。それが、私がこの論文で再三強調してきている「教師の視点」の育成なのである。

日本人にとって外国語である英語学習における「教科書の内容を教える」という教師の役割は、たしかに大きいかもしれない。しかし、学習の最終的な行為者は、やはり学生たちである。それに、いつまでも教師の言う教

科書の内容をそのまま暗記し、一見すると英語力をつけたかのように見えるだけで、実際には教科書を離れると何も解けない大学生にならないためにも、中学・高校の英語教師は、学生たちに単に教科書内容だけに止まるのではなく、教科書を用いて「この素材からどう学ぶべきか」ということを教えなければならないのである。

5. では、「教師の視点」を学生の中に養うためにはどうすべきか

では、「教師の視点」を学生の中に養うためには、どうすべきなのか。この問題については、面白い提案がある。それは、「その気にさせる授業マネージメント——テストの活用 Before & After——」(『英語教育』2006年10月号)で中嶋洋一氏が述べるように、「生徒たちにテストを作らせる」というものである。この画期的な意見は、各学生が「定期テストの前にライバルを選び、予想問題を作る」というものである。その際、配点や採点まで生徒がするというところが面白い。さらには、学生たちが互いの出来や不出来にコメントを付け加えるという。これにより、「振り返りの時間」が取れ、しかも、様々な視点が養える。中嶋氏は、最終的には、「慣れてくると、入試などの出題者の意図が読み取れるようになる」(32)と言う。

たしかに、上記のやり方は大きな効果があると思われる。実際に、私も授業では、問題の答えよりも、その問題の出題者の意図を考えるように指導しているし、その考え方は大学入試だけでなく、大学入学後も様々な資格試験で役に立つ能力の育成方法として正しいと思われる。ただ、そのやり方を行う際には、学生たちが一定以上の学力と、何よりも「やる気」を持っていることが前提になるだろう。というのも、おそらく、一定以上の学力を持たない、やる気のあまりない学生は、ただ教科書の本文に線を引き、「下線部を訳しなさい」という問題しか作成できない、または「しようとしなさい」からだ。また、その下線部に関しても、ただ適当に引いただけで、全く大事な文法事項も、重要イディオムも入っていないものとなる可能性が高い。というのも、学生は、後で自分が採点するためには、自分が訳せる程度の文章でなければならないからである。となると、学生たちが誰をライバルとし、誰と組むかが思った以上に重要な問題となるだろう。もしかしたら、互いに自分たちが何をやっているのか、自分の作成した問題の答えが正解なのかどうなのかについても判断できないペアも出てくるかもしれない。そうすると、この画期的なアイデアも単に時間の無駄となる。そ

のため、中嶋氏は、教師が学生の作成した問題を回収して、優れているものを取り上げ、教科通信で紹介し、あるいは実際の定期テストで使用することで学生のやる気を高めると言うが、その際、優れた問題を作成したペアだけではなく、そうではないペアについても丁寧に改善点を指導すべきだろう。

さらには、私は、学生同士だけでなく、「教師に対して挑戦するための問題を作る」というやり方も提案したい。これは、学生にとってやりがいがあるだけでなく、英語教師にとってもよい緊張感となるだろう。つまり、先ほどから私が言っているマニュアル依存症の英語教師ではますます自分の授業にも対応できなくなり、その結果、そのような教師も教科書内容を超えて勉強せざるを得なくなる。すると、中学・高校の英語教師たちの中には、「教科書内容」から解放された学生たちの日々の学力の進歩に驚く者もいるかもしれない。また、その際に、学生たちが作成してくる問題が適切かどうかについて、つまり「教師の視点」を養うことがうまくいっているかどうかを教師が直接確認できる点でも、このやり方は学生と教師の双方にとって意味があると思われる。

6. まとめと英語教師の課題

中嶋氏は、論文の最後で、教師が「カウンセラー」のように学習者の心理を生かした「のせ上手」「させ上手」であることが重要であると述べている。しかし、現在「学力不足」と言われる中学・高校の英語教師の多くが「教科書マニュアル」に大きく依存し、それ以外の勉強をせず、授業ではマニュアルに載っている日本語訳を読むだけ、そして定期テストでは教科書の内容確認だけを行っているという事実は、むしろ教師側が学生たちの学力の伸びを妨げていると言えるだろう。しかも、おそらくそのような教師によって教えられて大学に入学してきた大学生の多くは、これまで述べてきた「教師の視点」が全くもって育っておらず、大学の定期試験においても、テキストそのままの暗記は得意でも、問題形式を少しでも変えられると途端に対応できなくなる場合が多い。⁴ この大学生における「教師の視点」という重要な能力の欠落は、TOEICや他の資格試験においても同様に悪影響を及ぼしていると思われる。さらには、将来的に教職を目指している大学生にとっては、その与えられた英文において「どこが大事なポイントか」を見極める能力が多少なりとも育成されていないことはもはや致命的であるとさえ言えるだろう。

以上、本論では、私自身の高校、高専、そして大学での英語教育経験を通して感じたことから、現在増えていると言われる学力不足教師という深刻な問題の原因の一つを教師が教科書マニュアルに依存した結果にあるという仮説のもとに論じてきた。もちろん、現在社会で問題となっているほどの学力不足教師はテレビなどで見るほんの一部にすぎず、学ぶ努力を常に怠らない教師がそれとは比較にならないほど多くいるということは紛れもない事実であろう。だが、たとえ少数であっても、教科書マニュアルに過度に依存した英語教師の授業による弊害は、教師個人の学力不足という問題に止まらない。その直接的な被害者はそのような教師に教えられる学生たちであり、その結果としての弊害は中学・高校時代だけでなく、大学、さらには教育実習まで続いていくかもしれない。⁵ このようなことを常に意識しながら、我々英語教師、とくに中学や高校で英語教育に関わる教師は、毎日の授業や定期テストを、単に教師用マニュアルに沿った教科書内容や答えを「教える」だけでなく、その「学び方」や、さらには将来的に見ればその「教え方」までも学生たちに教えるものとして捉え直し、最終的には学生たちの中にあらゆる場面で応用の効く「教師の視点」を育成するよう努めるべきではないだろうか。

注

- ¹ 実際、私自身が高校で教壇に立っていたときも、同じぐらいの点数でも教科書内容を暗記することに集中する学生と、むしろ「どこをどう出題してくるか」を分析している学生の二種類がいた。
- ² 静氏は、論の中で、この他の視点からも定期テストと入試テストの基本的な違いをいくつもの項目に分けて分析している。さらに、本論では触れないが、筆記テストだけでなくリスニング・テストの作成方法についても有意義な提案をしている。
- ³ 実際に、高専の定期テストにおいて、私が年間を通して意識的に「問題の出題形式の傾向」を踏まえながら授業を行った結果、高得点を取る学生が多数いた。その中で、最後に学期末テストを返却する際、一人の女子学生が、私に、関係代名詞の what の空欄補充を「この部分が問題になるだろうと予想していた」と自信たっぷりに言ってくれた。その学生は、そのテストではそれまでの点数よりも20点近く伸びていた。つまり、おそらくその学生はその他の問題についても「どこが問題として問われるか」という視点を身に付けるようになっていたのだと思われる。それが今後も、自信を生み、力となっていこうと思われる。
- ⁴ 定期テストに関する質問で、「テキストの問題の出題形式が変わるのかどうか」を聞いてくる大学生が多いが、この質問は、逆に言えば、定期テストの勉強を

テキストの答えの暗記だと思っている学生が多いことを示している。これは、本論で指摘したように、それまでの中学・高校のテストにおける教科書内容の暗記中心の勉強にまで遡ることができるだろう。

- 5 教育実習の実習校における担当教師がどのような教え方をするかという問題は、教育実習生の「評価」に直接関わってくるという意味で重要である。

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本誌は英文学研究室の助手が実務を担当しています。藤田真知子氏の後任で研究助手となった南部彰子氏はイギリスに留学のため退任し、博士課程後期の三枝和彦氏が2008年4月から研究助手となります。なお、三枝氏は同年6月に正規の助手となる予定です。

(E. H.)

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