

THE THEME OF FATE IN *MACBETH*

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「マクベス」における宿命のテーマ

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序 文

既に *Othello* と *Hamlet* を扱い、それらの悲劇を構成する外的要因について研究を試みた。*Othello* に於いては、気紛れで冷酷で、何の理由もなく人間を不幸に陥れてしまう Fortune (運命の女神) の化身のような存在である Iago が悲劇の強力な外的要因であり、それが、主人公 *Othello* 自身の「忍耐力の欠如」という内的要因と絡み合っている。また *Hamlet* に於いては、主人公の意志とは全く無関係に、次々と展開される偶然——これは Fortune の特質そのものである——と超自然的な存在である Ghost が外的要因であり、それらが主人公 *Hamlet* の「理性の欠如」と、徐々にではあるが複雑に絡み合い、あの Shakespeare 独自の悲劇を造り上げている。

さて *Macbeth* にも *Othello* や *Hamlet* と同様に明確な悲劇の外的要因が存在する。Witches (魔女) がその外的要因であるが、主人公に与える彼女たちの影響力は、他の二つの悲劇の外的要因には見られないような毒々しさと強烈さを具している。また Iago, 偶然、そして Ghost の力は一方的に加えられる力であったが、Witches と *Macbeth* にはそれ以上のものが存在する。多くの研究者が指摘するように彼らが初めて遭遇する以前にもうすでに何か宿命的な関係が彼らの間に成立していたように思われる。Witches が劇中、自らを Weird Sisters と称しているが、この Weird Sisters が宿命の女神である三姉妹 (Fates) のことを指すことを考慮に入れると、この推

論は説得力のあるものとなるだろう。実際、劇中の Witches は予言をしたり、神慮を展開したりする Fates の機能を備えている。また劇中頻繁に繰り返される「衣服」に関する直接的、あるいは間接的言及は Fates の織る布を思い起こさせるに充分である。また古代ギリシャの哲学者 Proclus は、人間が一度、「見せ掛けのみの善」を思惟すると「感覚」と「宿命」の支配下に落ちると述べているが、まさにこの「真の善」と「見せ掛けのみの善」の問題が *Macbeth* 全体に流れる大きなテーマなのである。一度「見せ掛けのみの善」を思惟した *Macbeth* は霧と闇に包まれた「感覚」の世界を手探りで動き回ることになる。そしてこの闇の中では不確かさが充満し、恐怖のみが増大する結果となる。*Macbeth* はこの不確かな闇の中で狂人のように恐怖を払い除けようとし、最終的にはそれに押しつぶされ破滅してしまう宿命であったようである。

ギリシャ悲劇や、イギリスに於ける中世の悲劇では神の力は絶対で、主人公やその他の登場人物の意志とは全く無関係に事件が展開され、ただ神の偉大な力の前では人間は何もする術がないことを思い知らされるばかりであった。しかしルネッサンス期の人間探究という志向に合わせるように徐々に悲劇も人間自身の意志や性格を絡めた複雑なものに変化してきた。この *Macbeth* もその時代に生きた Shakespeare が伝統的な Fates の力と *Macbeth* 自身の意志や性格を絡めて作成したものと考えてよからう。

In the study on the pagan goddess Fortune it has been pointed out that her influence, invisible but powerful, get intertwined with the protagonists' various characters. The former has been treated as 'outer cause' of tragedy, and the latter as 'inner cause'.¹

Iago, cruel and playful as Goddess Fortune, serves as the strong outer cause of the tragedy of *Othello* in place of the goddess herself. The outer cause interacts with the inner cause of Othello's impatience. In *Hamlet* accidents, happening one after another independently of the protagonist's will, which alludes Fortune's characteristics of chance, and the Ghost a super-natural being are the powerful outer causes of the tragedy.

In *Macbeth* as well as in *Othello* and in *Hamlet* can be found the outer cause of tragedy, which is much more intensive and impressive than those in the other two plays. The Witches are the outer cause, and even a certain chain of dependence seems to have been established between the Witches and Macbeth before they meet on the heath for the first time, as a lot of critics have pointed out referring to the 'fair is foul' speech made by both of them in different conditions. That suggests to us the Fates, not Fortune, which are identified with the Weird Sisters as the Witches call themselves in the play. It is in this point that *Macbeth* is different from the other two tragedies. In this paper will be discussed the theme of the Fates whose characteristics also belong to the Witches who serve as the outer cause of the tragedy of *Macbeth*.

As to the Witches, there are lots of views reflecting the complexity of the age. Some critics, from a Freudian view-point, regard the Witches only as a hallucination or a delusion framed by the protagonist who has turned into ambition itself.² Some regard them as 'the incarnation of evil in the universe'.³ And others from a historical view-point regard them as real beings and the important characters of the play involving in the plot. The last view is strongly supported by West. He describes his opinion in *Shakespeare & the Outer Mystery* as:

They are as "real" as Horatio and Banquo. The much-admired vividness or livingness of the Ghost and Witches indicates their ontological standing in the play.⁴ The Ghost and Witches are neither machinery nor bare symbols, for they are distinct, forceful, and familiar to the Jacobean mind as of both world and stage.⁵

Thus he emphasizes the real existence of witches. We can also know the fact that the people in those days believed in witches and their power through the detail study on historical sources of H. Paul. It is impossible to affirm that Shakespeare believed in the existence of witches, but it is at least natural to guess that he treated the Witches as such, for he himself lived among those people who believed in witches.

Here in this paper the Witches are regarded as real existences, and their influence on Macbeth and their role in the play will be discussed.

In Act I scene iii the Witches call themselves "the Weird Sisters". The word 'Weird' originally stands for Parcae in Roman mythology which means 'the Fates'. And Alexander Schmidt defines it as "subservient to Destiny". Without these facts we immediately associate the three Witches with the three sisters of fate (the Fates). Some critics have pointed it out. For example W. Knight regards the Weird Sisters as three Parcae, or the Fates, foretelling Macbeth's future.⁶ It may be too extreme to identify the Witches with the Fates, but it's true that the former reflects the characteristics of the latter.

In English literature a lot of literary men such as Chaucer, Spenser and Gower treated the Fates as ministers of God to work out Providence. The Fates were, as mentioned before, originally identified with pagan goddesses Parcae, but gradually came to have Christianity, which is the same case with Fortune. The Witches reflecting the characteristics of the Fates also seem to have Christianity. H. Paul mentions it in his study, writing:

James I followed the Presbyterian doctrine of the country (Scotland), which taught that evil spirits who master witches are permitted by God to do evil in this world as part of the divine decree, according to which such means are used to punish evildoers or try the patience of the faithful.⁷

Here Paul guesses that Shakespeare knew the fact written above and reflected the opinion in the play which was to be performed before King James I. And H. B. Charlton points out the theme of Providence prevailing through the play of *Macbeth* and writes thus:

Behind the play is the shadow of a divinity who is the one God, but a God who is as yet but dimly realized. He is remotely the all-mighty,⁸

Paul's historical study and Charlton's individual opinion make it possible to regard the Witches in *Macbeth* as ministers of God to work out Providence. Thus we have good reason to treat the Witches connecting with the Fates not only by the identification of name but also by the faculty.

The detail study of the play will prove many other similarities between the Witches and the Fates. According to H. Paul the notion that evil spirits mastered witches prevailed in Scotland those days, and Professor Kurose also writes that the Fates were under the control of Demogorgon in hell, citing a line "Demogorgon, ruler of the fates" from Robert Green's *Orlando*.⁹ Reflecting the relation between the Fates and Demogorgon, in *Macbeth* the Witches are ruled by Hecate, the Greek goddess who rules over heaven and hell and presides over witchcraft.

Besides the intimate relation between the Fates and Demogorgon and the Witches and the Hecate, they have the same faculty of foretelling the future.

In Act I the Witches foretell the future of Macbeth and Banquo, saying:

(2Witch) All hail, Macbeth ! hail to thee, thane of
Cawdor!

(3Witch) All hail, Macbeth ! that shalt be king
hereafter.

(1Witch) Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

(2Witch) Not so happy, yet much happier.

(3Witch) Thou shalt get kings, though thou be
none:

The first prophecy that Macbeth shall be the thane of Cawdor comes true to pass immediately. And soon the second, though in a forcing and brutal way, comes true. The prophecy that Banquo's offspring shall be kings does not come true in the play, but the audience know it proves to be true as a historical fact, for King James I was a offspring of Banquo. In Act IV scene i the apparitions rising from the caudron by the witchcraft of the Witches foretell thus:

; for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth, (IV, i, 80 - 81)
Macbeth shall never vanquished be until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him. (IV, i, 92 - 94)

These prophecies come true in a tricky way, cynically to crush Macbeth's desperate valour. Men are all borne by women, there-

fore the Witches' prophecy means in the literal sense that nobody in the world shall harm Macbeth. But at the last moment the words "Macduff was from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripped" echoes in Macbeth's ears, substituted for the words "Macduff, not of woman born, shall harm Macbeth", and at the same time Macbeth loses what little valour he has had. Thus the equivocal prophecy which seems to be unrealizable comes true. It is the same with the Birnam Woods. It is impossible for the woods to move, and then it is quite natural that Macbeth shall be never vanquished. But the prophecy comes true when every soldier marches on with a bough before him to shadow the number of the troops, and the Birnam Woods does move outwardly.

In Act I scene iii Banquo calls to the Witches saying:

*If you look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and
which will not
Speak then to me,*
(I, iii, 58 - 61)

The words "the seeds of time", synonymous with "Nature's germens" in Act IV scene i line 59, tell the fact that Shakespeare associated the idea of "seeds of matter" with the power of the demons to know the causes of things following the Augustinian tradition.¹⁰ The Witches in *Macbeth* have the traditional power of predicting which grain will grow and which will not.

This faculty of prophecy also belongs to the Fates. Accordingly to Professor Kurose's study the Fates have the power to preside over the life, death of man and all the events in his life. The Fates finish weaving the threads of all the events in man's life into cloth before his birth. Chaucer refers it in *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, writing as follows:

*Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe, careful herte,
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.*
(1564 - 1566)

*"O fatal sustren, which, er any cloth
Me shapen was, my destine me sponne,
So helpeth to this werk that is bygonne!"*
(III, 733ff)

It is natural that the Fates who weave cloth

threaded with all events in man's life beforehand can foretell his future with ease. For them the future of man is the past. Spenser also refers the power of the Fates to foretell the future in *Faerie Queen*, which is striking similar to the scene where Macbeth goes to the Witches to ask them to foretell his own future. In *Faerie Queen* Fay, worrying about her three sons' future, visits the Fates. The dwelling of the Fates is 'farre vnder ground from tract of living went,/Downe in the bot-tome of the deepe Abygge', where Demogorgon is the ruler. Arriving at the dwelling, 'There she them found, all sitting round about/ The direful distaffe standing in the mid'. The dwelling of the Witches which Macbeth visits can be presumed dark Hell as that of the Fates by the words of Hecate "And at the pit of Acheron/ Meet me i' th' morning (III, v, 15)", though the stage directions say only "a cavern". There Macbeth finds a cauldron in the middle instead of a distaffe, and the Witches around it instead of the Fates. Fay asks the Fates about her sons' future sometimes with boldness and sometimes with a plea, which closely resembles Macbeth asking the Witches about his own future. It is quite natural to think that Shakespeare knew about Spenser's *Faerie Queen* when he wrote *Macbeth* in 1606, for *Faerie Queen* was written between 1590 and 1596.

The Fates, as mentioned before, weave the threads of all the events in man's life into cloth and finish the work before he is born. And interestingly enough the words or the expressions as to cloth, or rather clothes, are used so often in *Macbeth*, which helps to emphasize the shadow theme of the Fates. In Act I scene iii when Macbeth is informed by Ross that he has been given the title of the thane of Cawdor, he cries in spite of himself:

*The thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me
In borrowed robes?*

(I, iii, 108 - 109)

Macbeth uses the expression of "borrowed robes" because he does not know that the thane of Cawdor was executed on the charge of his treason against King Duncan. The robes which the thane of Cawdor wore are threaded with all his life where he was a gentleman on whom Duncan had built an absolute trust, but at last was to be executed on the charge of his treason against the king. It is cynical that Macbeth wearing the robes borrowed from the thane of Cawdor is to live the same life. A similar expression is given

by Banquo soon after that. He says:

*New honours come upon him,
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their
mould
But with the aid of use.*

(I, iii, 145 - 147)

Here Banquo, seeing Macbeth stupefied by the realization of the Witches' prophecy, expresses the new honours just given to Macbeth using the imagery of strange garments. These garments of honours are not made for Macbeth, and therefore however hard he may try to fit them on himself, he never succeeds. The figure of Macbeth who wears loose garments does Caithness express in such a skillful way as:

*Now does he feel his title
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.*

(V, ii, 20 - 23)

And in Act I scene vii Macbeth compares the new honours given to himself to bought garments and says:

*He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.*

(I, vii, 32 - 34)

To such infirm Macbeth Lady Macbeth responds with the imagery of garments as well. She says:

*Was the hope drunk,
Wherein you dress'd yourself?*

(I, vii, 35 - 36)

Thus Macbeth, whipped by Lady Macbeth, commits the brutality of killing the king. When the murder is revealed and there arises strong possibility that Macbeth will be a successor to the throne, Macduff says to Ross like this:

*Well, may you see things well done there:
adieu!*

Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

(II, iv, 37 - 38)

Macduff means the deceased king Duncan by old robes, and Macbeth by new robes.

Besides these concrete words 'robes' or 'garments', many other allusions to them can be found throughout the play, and they redouble the image of clothes. When we remember

According to Professor Kurose, H. R. Patch, referring to Proclus' idea, describes as follows:

The problem of 'a real good' and 'a seeming good' is the very theme of the play *Macbeth*. In fact there are many references to it in the play.

(Macbeth) Into the air; and what seemed corporal,
melted
As breath into the wind. Would they had stayed!
(I, iii, 79 - 82)

*There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face.
(I, iv, 11 - 12)*

*To show an unfelt sorrow is an office
Which the false man does easy.*
(II, iii, 136 - 137)

*Unsafe the while, that we
must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
Disguising what they are.*

(III, ii, 32 - 35)

According to Proclus' idea, whether man moves upward into Reason or downward into the control of the senses and Fate depends entirely upon whether he chooses 'a real good' or 'a seeming good'. And the choice is entirely upon his will. It seems to contradict the theory that the Fates weaving the threads of all the events in man's life into cloth before his birth, but it only shows a transition from the thought centering around God in the mediaeval ages to the thought of searching for man in the early modern ages. The plays also went through this transition, and the simple and formal tragedies as the Greek ones in which oracles came true one after another independently of man's will gradually changed into the complex tragedies intertwined with man's character and will. Shakespeare, living in this transition period, naturally wrote his works mixing both.

Shakespeare employed another skillful means to express the world of senses. He used sounds with great effect. The knocks on the door echoing through the darkness and the stillness after the murder of Duncan are especially effective to express the tense senses of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The hoot of an owl, the chirp of a cricket, the hoof-

beats, and the cries in the darkness are all able aids to make up the world of senses. Macbeth has to feel his way in this dark world of senses full of uncertainty, where only fear grows, as mentioned by Spurgeon¹³ and Wilson Knight.¹⁴ Macbeth tries to get rid of fear in a frantic way, and accordingly he grows more and more brutal, till he is crushed by monstrous fear which he himself has made up.

NOTE

1. Takenaka, Shizuko: *Iago and the Goddess Fortune*, 1975, *Hamlet in the Hands of Fortune*, Memories of Seitoku Junior College of Nutrition, 1982
2. Wilson, John Dover: *The New Shakespeare Macbeth*, Introduction p.xxi
3. Paul, Henry N.: *The Royal Play of Macbeth*
4. West, Robert H.: *Shakespeare & the Outer Mystery*, p43
5. Ibid; p48
6. Knight, G. Wilson: *The Wheel of Fire*, p155
7. Paul, Henry N.: *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, p255 pp256
8. Charlton, H. B.: *Shakespearian Tragedy*, p145
9. 黒瀬 保: 「運命の女神」 p203
10. Curry, Walter Clyde: *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns*, chapter II.
11. Spenser, Edmund: *Faerie Queen*, IV, ii, 48
12. 黒瀬 保: 「運命の女神」 p206
13. Spurgeon, Caroline: *Shakespeare's Imagery*
14. Knight, G. Wilson: *The Wheel of Fire*, p155 pp156

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