

TAYAMA KATAI AND THEODORE DREISER : Naturalism and Its Metamorphosis

Kenshiro Homma

The works by Tayama Katai¹ (d. 1930) are roughly divided into two groups : one group is centered on him and his family, and the other is composed of biographies of third persons. The first group includes his early works and *Futon* (The Quilts, 1907), *Sei* (Life, 1908), *Tsuma* (The Wife, 1909) and *En* (Relation, 1910). *Jûemon no Saigo* (The Death of Jûemon, 1902), *Inaka Kyôshi* (The Country Schoolteacher, 1909) and *Ippeisotsu no Jûsatsu* (A Soldier Shot to Death, 1917) belong to the second group. Most of his early works are sentimental and for this reason Katai was called a romantic poet. In *Jûemon no Saigo* he attempted to change his romantic style, which foretold the birth of his literature of naturalism. However, he failed in his attempt—sentimentality and emotionalism strongly remained, and his ambitious intention collapsed before it was fully realized. This sentimentality and emotionalism never disappeared and even his monumental work, *Futon*, which was written on the principle of disclosing himself realistically and objectively, was still maudlin. It revealed the weakness of the author's self-consciousness as a modern man because sexual desire was the only outlet for his pent-up energy, and was so shallow and so small in scale that it inadvertently betrayed a middle-aged

man in hysterics.

Futon produced *watakushi-shōsetsu* (the "I" story), and set the course for the literature of Japanese naturalism to follow. This was worthy of evaluation, but it cannot be denied that *watakushi-shōsetsu* no doubt produced the narrowness and sentimentality of the literature of Japanese naturalism. The narrowness and sentimentality of this sort were seen even particularly in *Sei*, and to a lesser degree in *Tsuma* and *En*.

Sei, however, produced a sense of resignation and gave rise to a bird's-eye view of human life. *Tsuma* and *En* were written on the same line. The bird's-eye view of life, i. e. an exploration of the tendency of human life, became the established trend of Katai's literature, and it was a matter of special attention.

This tendency followed two directions: passionate works and religious works. The author had thought since youth that the most fundamental and immutable issue was that of men and women and their conflicting souls, i. e. the artist should try to pursue with utmost devotion the psychological development of men and women and their passion. He believed that in comparison with this problem of soul, an ideological or social problem was just secondary in importance. For example, in order to show the truth of his statement, Katai says in one of his essays *Kindai no Shōsetsu* (The Modern Novel, 1923): "What penetrates into the bottom of a man's mind, what inspires a man's soul and what is unchangeable regardless of time, in other words, stories in connection with men and women and their psychology transcend an age and do not become out of date as time goes on. Therefore, a writer has to keep in mind what is primary and what goes beyond an age in which he lives. If he is bound by actual society, or is interested in that which happens super-

ficially and phenomenally, it is certain that he won't be able to become a first-rate writer,"² and under this belief Katai conducted investigations into psychology centering on passion. He loved a woman besides his wife, to whom he made a frantic effort to understand for 20 years. He suffered, worried and struggled for the woman whose love toward him changed often when occasion demanded. During these long years he wrote scores of long or short stories, including *Kami* (Hair, 1911), *Uzumaki* (A Whirlpool, 1912), *Harusame* (Spring Rain, 1914) and *Nokoru Hana* (A Lingering Flower, 1914). The major theme of these four *demimonde* novels was women and their vicissitudes of life. The writer, whose attention was turned to the conflict between flesh and spirit, tried to pursue the relationships of men and women through fate and characterization, and reached the climax of his literary career when he wrote *Momoyo* (One Hundred Nights, 1927), in which he attained an ultimate state and thereby he could share both the corporeal and spiritual joy with his woman.

The subject matter of *Momoyo* is the achievement of love. Katai sang about love and its eulogy. It is a transcendental work of love by an ascetic. It is also a work of a happy, quiet mental state—the work of accomplishment of men's and women's souls regarding love and passion. The author himself thought that man's business or honor would surely vanish like snow or mist, but love and passion would linger much longer: this way of thinking never changed before he died.

Momoyo has no plot worth mentioning. The story evolves around an old man and his middle-aged woman who was formerly a geisha. Although they have had turns and twists during the past years, the couple is now at peace and are reflecting upon what has happened to them. Their

relationship is stable and solid. "Man and woman are bound to part from each other. No matter how deeply he may love her, it is impossible for them to be together for ever ... Love and death—these two things have troubled Shimada (the hero's name) since he was young ... When he was young, he thought love and death were two different things. However, the older he grew, the closer love and death came. Now they become one and the same, and appear in front of him."³ "...In those days he did not want to obey nature—he resisted it very often, but all of his attempts failed. He realized he had no alternative but to be obedient to it."⁴ Shimada gradually began to reconcile himself with nature, which brought him to his current situation and nature has made him keenly aware that this is how life stands. "...Ten years ago death was a vision, or fancy and a metaphysical thought, but now it is no longer far away—it has become part of his mind: a reality."⁵ *Momoyo* is the adaptation of a classical story, in which a court nobleman paid visits to Ono no Komachi,⁶ a beautiful court lady, every night for 99 nights and was said to have been frozen to death. *Momoyo* was the triumph of a love story toward a woman Katai loved sincerely for twenty-long years while going through hardships, and finally he acquired the rights of winning the woman, proudly saying that he began to know every inch of the woman. He had written voluminous works after his middle-age and through more violent whirlpools or torrential currents did he finally reach a state of peaceful mind—this was the epitome of *Momoyo*. And Shimada and his woman, O-gin, "walked away along the long corridor side by side as if they were bound by a strong tie until they died."⁷ O-gin was for a time dissatisfied with the situation in which she was placed as an illegal wife, yet she came to share the joy and sorrow of what happened

to Shimada and his family.

Momoyo is a kind of lyrical poem, which was filled with a quiet joy of Shimada, the victory of his love.⁸ In *Momoyo* there is the quiet joy of his building up a permanent love toward his loved one. His was not a state of resignation, but that of affirmation of what he had accomplished after a maximum of difficulty. Katai himself is said to have reached a peaceful mental state before he began to write this story, which showed that *Momoyo* was the work of a natural consequence after his religious pilgrimage. From his attitude one can see his sincerity and devotion to his religious experiences which should be granted to the man who has experienced the ordeal of love and its agony. And naturally he sublimated love into a religious sentiment.

Among the religious works the most important is *Zansetsu* (Lingering Snow, 1917). A sense of resignation which was witnessed in *Sei* was visible in *Toki wa Sugiyuku* (Time passes on, 1916) and *Futatabi Kusa no No ni* (Again on the Grassy Field, 1919). *Toki wa Sugiyuku* developed centering on the author's actual uncle, but the real hero of the story was "time," around which a man's life was portrayed. In *Futatabi Kusa no No ni*, man was dismissed from a seat as hero, and was replaced by "space" and "time," a device that was designed to investigate the tendency of human life again. *Zansetsu* was based on a sense of resignation and linked with *Sanso ni Hitori Ite* (I Am Alone in a Mountain Cottage, 1916) and *Aru Sō no Kiseki* (The Miracle of a Certain Priest, 1917) in terms of religion. These works presented love and its purification from a religious point of view, and this was the major point Katai was interested in at that time. He read Joris-Karl Huysmans (d. 1907), a French writer, who began his career as a naturalist and later became

a Catholic mystic, and it was Huysmans' works that influenced him a great deal—*En Route*, written in 1895, in particular. Katai sought religious revolt against love, carnal desire and decadence. In this connection, *Zansetsu* was a composite work of his religious confession, as well as his spiritual rebirth.

Zansetsu is an autobiographical novel dealing with a man's escape from violent love and secular affairs, and his spiritual salvation. The protagonist realizes that his salvation lies in *makoto*, the pureness of heart, or sincerity, and from this awakening he is able to perceive the goal of spiritual peace which he has for many years struggled to achieve. The entire work is characterized by subjective thinking and to that extent it is a kind of mental state novel. Katai, influenced by the individualism and liberalism of Western culture, began as a naturalist, revolted against feudalism and social conventions and asserted self-dependence, but, simultaneously, prompted by a Buddhist sense of mutability and the vicissitudes of life, reached a religious state of mind after World War I when the individualistic view of the world declined. This process that Katai followed was symbolic of the course of naturalism in this country.

The hero in *Zansetsu*, Sugiyama Tetsuta, the exact reflection of the author himself, worried by passion and decadence, tries to reach enlightenment, and the story concerns the process of his emancipation and freedom. Accordingly, this novel, although it was originally written for a newspaper, took the form of an ideological or thought novel. The work was devoid of sensational incidents and intricate plots. It instead inclined toward subjective introspection with an emotional stream overflowing. The hero's anguish and detachment strongly appealed to the reader's mind because they embraced those of the whole of humanity wholehearted-

ly, although it centered around a common man. *Zansetsu*, a religious reproduction of *Toki wa Sugiyuku* and *Futatabi Kusa no No ni*, is a work in which the protagonist resists both society and himself, goes through a life of decadence, realizes the supreme law lying at the bottom of universe and achieves a state of religious ecstasy.

The story is divided into four parts. In the first part Tetsuta goes to an old temple where the woman he loved before used to live, in a local town on the plains where snow still lingers here. He witnesses the temple ruins, realizing the emptiness of the life he has lived and recalls the teachings of old Buddhist saints. He tries to save himself from destruction by resolving the problem of death and life into Buddhism and by uniting his body and soul closely. Considering the home life and the society against which he lives, he finds it hard to discover the dawn of his mind. It was not the first time that he is seized with such an idea as this and he recalls the past several years, which is the major portion of the second part.

Determined to start all over again, Tetsuta visits a far-away mountain village on a snowy day or extends his legs to a district where one can hear the rough waves of a northern sea, but things go wrong. He cannot, after all, enter into honest life and therefore he tries to forget his agony by playing with a prostitute and then goes on wandering from place to place without realizing what he is doing. Everywhere he goes, he craves the chance to turn over a new leaf. Although he is yearning for the emancipation from Durtal's solitude described by Huysmans, there still is a great distance between the two : at least ten years, it seems to him, is necessary to reach Durtal's mental state and he is far from being in such a state of spiritual salvation. "During the past long years

he thinks he has wasted his body and mind although he endeavored to discover something like a pearl which is most likely to shine at the bottom of a deep gulf."⁹

The third part deals with the hero when he comes to love a woman while leading a fast way of living. She is a geisha, a type of woman who has not degraded her soul. Through her does he secure help from decadence, but, standing between his wife and this woman, he experiences a great deal of trouble. "He was just like a Don Juan who was loaded with the burden of love."¹⁰ Amid this type of anguish, he is forced to resign from the publishing company he has long been working for and hits against a dark wall of his soul. He is thrown into confusion again as to how to live and has to wander around the dark streets as if having lost everything. He is in an awkward dilemma and faces the problem of "innocence" and "desire." For the first time in his life does he feel strongly the true significance of Christ's suffering or Buddha's penance, and finally the door of selflessness is open for him. The woman commits suicide, however, because of a trouble with a third person, but Tetsuta takes care of her sincerely and honestly. In the last part the woman is convinced of his devotion. Feeling triumphant over his final love, he visits a temple priest, a childhood friend, reads the complete collection of Buddhist Sutras, Laws and Treaties, and exults to find himself solving his problems one by one while recalling the past days with repentance. "Thus, his mind was filled with light and comfort. He no longer curses the city where he is about to return. He does not complain of the vacuity of his work or the vanity of his fame either,"¹¹ and the story ends with religious joy and freedom.

Here one can see the figure of Tetsuta who suffers from human agony.

That is to say, he realizes that his is not his agony alone, in which lies his greatness as a man of resurrection. Katai, as a naturalist, thought that his experiences would represent those of the whole of humanity and even though his works were overshadowed with sentimentalism, he was bold enough to reveal the shunned portion of his daily life. According to him, a man's mind is common to all; his individuality is universal. In other words, he disclosed the secret to the public, with the strong determination of a martyr. In fact, Tetsuta believed that his spiritual discipline was not anything but those of others, and discovered that he could not stand idle, with arms folded, as he had stood before. Pulling through great difficulties, he achieved an "adamant will" and felt a great joy, and was tempted to tell his hard-to-find experiences to the people who lived in a corrupt age. Katai no longer satisfied himself with a naturalistic method of representing a fact and conveying its significance. Going a step further, he mustered his courage to positively save mankind from actual suffering—he felt convinced that art was too weak for such a task. Tetsuta believed, "Art might save man from suffering of bondage, but the fundamental principle of art is less evocative than the Buddhist scripture ... Art, no matter how great, fails to move people's minds."¹²

A great road of religion was difficult for him to reach and often made him feel resigned. However, the hero launched upon the world of an immortal soul on the realization that "skepticism, jealousy or treachery—these are unworthy of serious consideration ... I've lived as sincerely as can be. I've not lost sincerity. I've passed through the forest where swords and spears stand close together ... Both sincerity and honesty have saved my soul, which is none other than an immortal soul and 'adamant

will.' Buddha has taught us this most emphatically, hasn't he?"¹³ Here is why Katai, with *Zansetsu* as a turning point, came to share a religious view of life.

Katai, standing on a mountain pass where snow still remains, turned back upon the whole course of his life with deep emotion and, with the new realization of an immortal soul, descended to the mundane world. The path was harzadous, but the scenery surrounding him looked bright—more or less, and he could see a ray of hope ahead. The path was a descent. He could feel buoyant and enjoy the view as best as he could; he could relax and walked down with great strides leisurely. The subject matter dealt with after the publication of *Zansetsu* was concerned with the problems lying between men and women, but there was a fresh wind blowing although it was beset with harsh conflicts. Ten years after the work when he was 57, Katai wrote *Momoyo* and put a period to what he had intended after *Zansetsu*.

Momoyo opens with the scene in which O-gin, who has had joys and sorrows during the past many years, together with her man, Shimada, recalls her life while complaining that she has discovered a shadow of old age on her body reflected in a mirror. She is penniless following the Kanto Great Earthquake which struck Tokyo in 1923, and Shimada saves her. Renting a small house in a suburban area, she lives with her parents and there Shimada goes to see her secretly. The story portrays Shimada and his psychology toward a woman although he has a wife and children. *Momoyo* is not an ordinary love story, but is the story of consumption of both the hero's and heroine's love affair, in which the latter loses her beauty as a result of a breakout of freckles and wrinkles due to approaching age, and the former, whose hair has turned gray, gradually

becomes an old man. As the story develops, one can see the hero's philosophy of love or human life endorsed with truth and sincerity. Shimada reflects as follows : "I can't but think that my love affair will certainly come to a final end against my will some day. This is not only true in old history but also in my case. Here and there I can find the traces of love ... No matter how much one loves the other, and no matter how much one's love is bound by affection, it is destined to a ruin. I wonder if love is possible only when it reaches its climax."¹⁴ Behind the traces of love there is the idea of the "traces of literature," the major theme of *Toki wa Sugiyuku* and *Futatabi Kusa no No ni*. To Katai love was not a mere love at all—it had to be founded on philosophy of life. Shimada and O-gin are bound by deep love, which Shimada understands with reason, but he finds himself sometimes seized with such an anxiety that his true love will not be able to be achieved unless he knows everything in connection with his woman. He tries to control himself each time with hopes that he has only to believe her.

The woman betrays Shimada many times, however. She refuses to respond to his sincerity, but he does not dare sever relations with her out of despair, and finally he reaches the problem of love and death—that man, after all, is lonely. No matter how much he loves a woman, he cannot do so indefinitely. Thinking that this is absolutely true, he visualizes the pit of death into which man is doomed to fall. Love and death—this problem becomes more important for him than anything else. It continually haunts him. When he was young, however, love and death were thought to be separate—love was one thing and death quite another. However, as he has advanced in age, the distance between them came much closer, and now they become closely associated with each other.

Here one can witness the vast change of the hero's philosophy of life. Shimada took a step forward, i. e. he went beyond the idea that love is ugly and sexual, which is quite naturalistic, and lifted his love from the sordid aspect of animalism to the level of a religious state, which signaled a symbol of glorious triumph of his life-attitude.

Money is another important problem to Shimada. He does not usually look upon money as merely money; on the contrary, he believes that money symbolizes a mind—an affection man can demonstrate toward women.¹⁵ He does not deny the existence of money, but it is also obvious that he cannot carry it to the graveyard where he is going to be buried. And he says emphatically: "During my fifty-year-long life love has been more important than anything else. To make money, to make my own name known to the world—these things also have attracted my attention because she has been beside me. If she had not appeared in front of me in my life, I could not have felt so strong a vitality as I have had."¹⁶ This is neither an old man's nonsense, nor love foolery. It is the statement of joy of Shimada who has finally managed to grasp his woman's soul.

It was Katai's belief that the fundamental significance of human existence was the complete understanding of a woman's body and soul, and he has devoted himself to a full realization of his ideal. *Momoyo*, although it was on an extension of his other stories of passion, did not end merely as a work of nonsense but became a book of emancipation of love, which was partly attributed to the purity of his adoration of an "eternal woman" and partly to religious ecstasy. Katai, who appealed to people's minds by claiming that the literature of naturalism be based on carnal desire and the exposure of its abnormality, went back to the starting point of

human life and, transcending decadence and nihilism, he sought salvation in the religious world and produced *Momoyo*. Thus, his literature of naturalism was transformed into religious literature.

Dividing Katai's works from 1907 to 1917 according to material and method, one can find four groups. This classification covers the whole of his early works. The first group describes nature and then human life, including almost all of his early works. The best-known work is *Futatabi Kusa no No ni*, which shows "traces" of nature. The works portraying in a monographic way without adding color to a monotonous life comprise the second group and produced best-known works of the literature of naturalism. *Inaka Kyōshi* and *Toki wa Sugiyuku* are typical. According to the author, the hero of these works is "time" and they are close to the works of the first group as "literature of traces" of man who stands before "space" and "time." The works of the second group are characterized by the scarcity of a social background and its implications. The third consists of *Jūemon no Saigo*, *Shojobyō* (The Girl Admirer, 1907), *Futon* and many others, all of which are concerned with the problem of passion or instinct and their action. To Katai sexual desire was sacred as well as beastly, a simple but important concept. In this connection, it meant to him the central part of human life, a symbol of human nature. *Ippeisotsu no Jsūsatsu* is representative of this group. The last group deals with the anguish, loneliness, the despair of human psychology, various phases of nihilism which is born out of a lonely soul. Well-known are *Sanzo ni Hitori Ite* and *Zansetsu*. From *Zansetsu* is seen a sense of resignation, which is the major motif of *Aru Sō no Kiseki*.

As he was slow-witted, short-tempered and talentless, Katai himself confessed that he hated leaving things half-done. He lacked imagination and the power of observation which was necessary to approach cause and effect in a naturalistic fashion.¹⁷ He also said once : "I think it much more worthwhile to understand the mind of a fair sex than to do anything good for the sake of other people and society," which was most probably his real voice.¹⁸ His view and interest were quite narrow. Throughout his literary career the material he was interested in was that which portrayed the passions of an average man. As a youth he was romantic and sentimental ; when he was middle-aged, he became realistic and serious ; and in old age he was calm and leisurely. One thing ran through the whole of his works—most especially after his middle-aged period—the delineation of a woman from various angles.

Katai was deeply concerned with sexual desire, but refrained from its erotic description. He thought seriously about sex, not regarding it as a plaything. His knowledge that sexual desire is important to human life broke with the conventional ethics, which was instrumental in bringing into focus the idea of being true to nature. However, to place too much emphasis on sex, or, in other words, to be too dependent on it was open to question. Human passion, in a wider sense, must be a manifestation of a natural agent which is irresistible, but every living creature does not find happiness in the satisfaction of instinct. Katai's idea is therefore to be criticized as one-sided because there is something important which has nothing to do with passion, but has a lot to do with human life. If instinct rules man and his way of living, it follows that man cannot escape from its control but does nothing but obey it in fear and trembling, and such a view of life leads to the fatal idea that man's ex-

istence is mechanical. This also restricts the freedom which is inherent in man and produces the mechanical or materialistic interpretation of life.

In order to be free from this world of disillusion, Katai tried to seek solace by finding the tendency of human life which exists permanently as a background of life. His objective was to find the rules of nature in the descriptions of an average man and his mental activities which are usually monotonous. To face nature with a humble and modest attitude and to create a mental state which is similar to nature was his method. By describing impressive traces which are left behind in the passage of time rather than yearning for ideological support in life, he wanted to contemplate the true aspect of life, which created his view of life. Here one can find a sense of resignation which is based on the pessimism that man is forced to live in the world of despair without showing any kind of resistance or denial.

This resignation that the author attained came through the Buddhist scriptures. "Thinking that even a tree or grass is far from his possession"¹⁹ and feeling the impossibility of conquering a third party, he came to understand that to love without asking for reward was true love. This gratuitous love was the one offered toward Buddha when one kneels in prayer. Finding himself in this situation, Katai finally seemed to have reached the state of Nirvana as a pilgrim to passion, which forms the nucleus of *Momoyo*, where, although the appetites of the flesh still linger here and there, the ultimate situation of the one who has achieved religious exultation is sonorously sung. A quiet joy of having discovered an "adamant will" is also found, the joy which is not merely a sense of resignation but the affirmation of having gone through destruction. This is the state in which Katai as an individual eventually achieved.

Katai, groping for a method with which to escape from nihilism, attained religious tranquility. According to his own words, nihilism implies the state in which one faces a door lying between the individual and whole universe, and moving forward through it, the door of Nirvana will be opened. Standing still in the vacuity of eternity, Katai discovered a kind of fatalistic resignation from which, no matter how hard he tried to struggle, he failed to transcend his own ego. Then came the final outcome of his Buddhist view of life, which was none other than a thoroughgoing indifferent attitude, the attitude through which one could see the nature of man and the law of his raison d'être. Thus, unlike his early years when he was bent on carving his way to complicated actualities while fighting with his own body, he sat back and watched life's phenomena as "traces" with emotion, entering into a mental state which was close to an Oriental sense of mutability. He obtained an unmovable resignation, but was removed from actual society and gave up a determination to further explore human life vigorously.

This Oriental sense of mutability was also the path along which Theodore Dreiser, an American naturalist, went. Dreiser's naturalism accepted the principle of "the survival of the fittest" and was aimed at describing the justice and beauty of the strong and along this line was written *A Trilogy of Desire* (1912-47). Dreiser, however, underwent a radical change of this thought—from individualism to communism, and although communism was his physical and mental support then, he could not reject the adoration of spiritualism. In the last pages of *The Stoic* (1947), for example, the hero was seen wandering toward Oriental mysticism and *The Bulwark* (1946) envisioned pantheistic religion. This was the situation Dreiser, a naturalistic materialist, ultimately faced after his seventy-

four-year-long career of life, which is a matter of interest. Here is a big metamorphosis of the respective literature of naturalism of both Katai and Dreiser.

Central to Dreiser's literature of naturalism is the idea that man is essentially an animal. Man is ruled by animal desire and cannot control himself. The iron rule underlying the animal kingdom is that there are the strong and the weak—not the good and the bad. In other words, the strong emerge victorious and the weak become vanquished ; the powerful skillfully adapt themselves to their environments—this is the state of natural selection. This theory of determinism formed Dreiser's literary principle and, with this as a foothold, he published *Sister Carrie* (1900) and many other works.

Dreiser maintained that man, whether he be a powerful businessman or a brilliant artist, was no exception to the theory of determinism. However, the literature of naturalism originally supported by fatal pessimism produced a strong sense of pity, and inclined toward humanism. Dreiser and his literature was also caught by this fatal pessimism, and here one can see traces of transition in the progression of his literary theory.

The theme of *Sister Carrie* is "desire." Whenever she sees girls of the same age, Carrie, the heroine of the work, worries seriously about her poor appearance. She is seized with the desire of trying to dress up one way or the other. In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser is trying to tell us that "desire" is the primary factor of man—it goes beyond conscious control, and drives him to act externally. The writer, in the end of the book, cautiously leaves Carrie, who has attained that which in the beginning

seems life's object but who cannot be content with things as they are, in a state of loneliness.

Carrie's "desire" is replaced by "ambition" and a man who craves it is Cowperwood, the hero of *The Financier* (1912), the first work of *A Trilogy of Desire*. "Ambition" is also an inborn impulse in man, and as long as he has ambition, man cannot be completely free. Cowperwood was possessed of technique and volition adequate enough to show neat adaptability to his circumstances. Besides, he was favored with unparalleled action and it urged him to more adventures. None the less, Cowperwood, despite his established fame and name, is restless.

Dreiser tried to build up the image of a strong man in American society in his *Trilogy of Desire*. The same thing happened to a genius painter, Eugene Witra, the hero of *The "Genius"* (1915), the keynote of which was the same as that of the above novel. The financier was the model of a strong man; so was the artist. Proclaiming the agnostic fatalism that life is quite mysterious and that there is no telling what may come about, Witra enters into a network of complicated human relations. At the same time, he is interested in fortunetelling and astrology, but he is disposed to be skeptical of the so-called naturalistic school of philosophers and scientists and their scientific predictions. His wife is seriously ill at a hospital and his health is also failing. A disastrous end is just drawing to a close, when his skepticism toward life grows deeper and deeper. By coming into contact with a couple of celebrated psychic healers, he tries to find out by an inductive, naturalistic method just what life is like and, following his sister's suggestion, goes and sees a Christian Science practitioner. He receives no tangible answer, however. He is still wavering between doubt and belief.

This type of incredibility reached its climax when Dreiser wrote *An American Tragedy* (1925), the story about Clyde Griffiths. Clyde's father is a poor preacher without any practical sense whatever, and his mother, although of a firmer texture, has scarcely any true or practical insight into anything. Essentially pagan in nature, Clyde even at an early age rebels instinctively from the mission environment. His humiliation deepens each time he is dragged through the street to sing and lecture with his parents. He is poor, yet vain and proud and is seized with the idea of rising in the world more than anything else. Before he can earn any money at all, he indulges in the daydreaming of fine clothes, good shoes and other luxuries. Here is a hidden pitfall for the victim so helplessly blinded. Although he commits murder and faces a death sentence, he is far from showing repentance and cannot admit his sin innocently. Just before his execution, he still remains skeptical. The transition toward a new outlook on religion is one of the major subjects of this story.

Four-fifths of the whole book is about his arrest and trial, and in the rest the movement of his psychology until the day of execution is minutely described. The last scene has the most dynamic overtones, with the theme of the story developing to a successful conclusion. The pity of an average man who has committed an unexpectedly serious crime and the problem of religion in conjunction with a deep consciousness of sin appeal strongly.

Clyde's uncle runs a company of shirt and collar manufacturing in a small country town in New York. He is an object of envy and glory to Clyde who has spent his dreary youth as the son of a poor street preacher. While living in Chicago alone for three years with much difficulty, Clyde comes to the conclusion that on himself alone depends his future. His family can do nothing for him—they are too impractical and too poor.

He then finds a job in his uncle's company and comes to know Roberta, which is fatal for both of them. She is also a woman who has seen little but poverty from her youth and says that things are none too satisfactory with her, so that their chance meeting is quite symbolic.

When he responds with the bewitching smile of Sondra Finchly who is friendly with the Griffiths, Clyde, although he has succeeded in giving his uncle the impressions that he is gentlemanlike and intellectual, has already been deeply involved with Roberta. Learning that the woman is going to have a baby, he is upset and insists on an abortion. By reading a newspaper article which told about a woman who drowned while her boyfriend was missing after a canoe was overturned on a lake, Clyde begins to harbor an idea of killing his sweetheart. He is seized with a sense of fear at first, but is involved in working out plans with cool and deliberate composure. He takes her to a lake. In a boat on the lake, suddenly noticing the strangeness of her lover's attitude, Roberta rises and approaches him. Then confusion follows, and the boat capsizes and they are thrown into the water. She sinks. At the court he denies his intention of murder and testifies to his innocence, which is attributed to his cowardice but simultaneously speaks the depth of his self-egotism.

Diplomacy ensues between the prosecution and the defense counsel. The final verdict, taking a turn favorable to the prosecution, is reached and the accused is declared guilty of murder in the first degree. Hearing of this, his mother plans to open lecture meetings to vindicate her son and tries to appeal to a higher court. Then she introduces the Rev. MacMillan, a young evangelist. Caught up by the minister's personal attractiveness and honest ardor, Clyde begins his quest for spiritual peace.

In the face of his great danger, Clyde does what every other human in related circumstances invariably does—seeking the presence of existence at least of some superhuman or supernatural personality or power that could and would aid him in some way. Still he wavers. Reading a letter from Sondra, tender but final, however, he finally realizes that his last hope has vanished. At last, for him, a final blow to the American Dream which has not relinquished its hold on him to this point. Religion survives as his one possible solace²⁰ and he confesses that Roberta stood in his way toward ease and luxury.

At this, the Rev. MacMillan concludes that the youth has committed murder in intention if not in fact because he took Roberta out with the plot of killing her and even if he was not a killer himself, he did not go to her rescue when he might have. The judgment by MacMillan that the young man should obey the law deals him a heavy blow. Although he is aware of the seriousness of the crime he has committed he cannot find full convictions that he is the sinner that society says he is. The final day comes, and he tells his mother that he will die resigned and contented, and that God has given him strength and peace. But he still adds to himself, "Has he?"²¹ Even in his final parting with his mother, he does not truly possess peace of mind—his doubts persist. One sees him torn, held and suspended in skepticism. Seated in the electric chair, it is to MacMillan that Clyde turns seeking the courage of beliefs that he has not been able to achieve. In the final crisis, MacMillan's strength is not communicated to Clyde—Clyde's doubts are communicated to MacMillan. There is more than bewilderment and confusion on Clyde's part, and he never is certain exactly whether he is a murderer or a victim of circumstance, or both. Clyde is forced by MacMillan to

face the truth that he has fled from responsibility and self. But even now, as he tries to accept the self, he cannot be sure of who or what he is.

An American Tragedy traces the process of the hero's formative period as a man, with emphasis on the naturalistic idea that man is influenced by his environment. Dreiser conducts an inquiry into moods and opinions underlying American life. Clyde is described as a victim of his home, society and his fate, which was the author's central idea, and blinded by a desire of rising in the world, he commits murder. At the very last moment in the book Clyde does not "will" to strike Roberta—then her death is an accident. So he believes. Even when placed in an extreme situation of the death penalty he shuts himself up in a hard shell. He denies himself to God and denounces a sense of morality by refusing to kneel before Him. The problem of salvation of a soul has nothing to do with the young criminal who did not recognize such values. Clyde's "tragedy" is that of namelessness, and this is one aspect of its being an American tragedy, the story of the individual without identity, whose responsible self has been absorbed by the great machine of modern industrial secularized society.²²

The Bulwark is, among Dreiser's many works, unusually unique. The hero, Solon Barns, is born as the son of a pious Quaker who is a tradesman as well as a farmer. He believes in God through the religious discipline of his parents, and, obeying the Inner Light, he grows up to be a man of righteousness. Later he becomes acquainted with Benecia, daughter of a rich banker, and works for the bank as he is found to be a man of both integrity and practical commercial sense. Finally they marry. "Here was the dream of his schooldays come true: a good posi-

tion, a handsome home, a beautiful young wife, powerful friends and relatives, health and strength."²³ The faith that reward has its own virtue is a supreme law in his world and he is able to reach a high position by virtue of sobriety and industry. He is unaware of the effect, however, social and environmental pressures have in shaping a man's behavior. Despite his good intentions, his marriage draws him into a fateful commitment to materialism.

Solon marries the lady and in so doing expects to and indeed does obtain a prestigious social status. With the coming into being of his five children, he is very happy in his home life. His life is thus secured and, in the meantime, he is kind, honest and is regarded as one of the most ideal men ever seen, and people call him a "bulwark of his country." However, his children, as they grow up, become more and more of a problem, for each one in turn cannot help being confronted by the marked contrast between the spirit of the Barns' home and that of the world at large. They also notice a sense of disparity with respect to their religion which is distinctly at variance with the changes of the times. The religion believed by Solon and his wife no longer is their spiritual support.

Etta, the youngest daughter, for example, shows her revolt vehemently against her parents. Etta is a dreamer; she is in pursuit of an individual self which she vaguely feels can be realized through the artistic life. As she grows older, she knows that her parents love her, but somehow they cannot understand or respond to her inner needs. Becoming friends with a progressive girl who gives her parents bad impressions, she runs away from home. Then they go to Greenwich Village, where Etta is drawn to a painter and eventually finds herself involved in a physical relationship with him. She is a girl who has made Solon

feel sorrow. She protests against Solon and his religious pretension of justifying his new affluence as a kind of stewardship. In fact, however, she resists openly, but the other children do so in a more elusive way, which is quite a surprise to Solon.

Stewart, the youngest son, is bad at school although tall and handsome, and is concerned with an overwhelming hunger for physical sex gratification. He feels something tender hidden in his father, but has a strong ill feeling toward the religious atmosphere of his own home. Stewart, a sensualist, soon becomes delinquent. He invites a girlfriend for a ride, lets her take a certain kind of medicine and thereby enables her to develop toxic symptoms. Feeling panic-stricken, he and his friends escape, abandoning her in a car. The girl, whose heart is weak, dies, and Stewart and his friends are arrested by the police. Stricken with a sense of repentance and thinking that he can never escape the jury of his own mind, or his father's mind—the judgment of the Inner Light, he commits suicide. Dreiser implies here, with characteristic irony, that Solon has lost Stewart to his stewardship.²⁴

Solon's grief is so great that it becomes almost unbearable and his mind flutters like a frightened bird. The world has defeated him, broken his hopes and laid waste his plans. Incomprehensibly, his endeavor to tread unscathed the perilous line between God and Mammon, in which until now he had been so buoyed with assurance, has failed.²⁵ All that he is able to do is to simply pray to God and, concluding that the excessive accumulation of wealth may have caused disaster, he decides to retire from the bank. Then he keeps himself indoors most of the time, his health gradually failing. Benecia also is confined to her bed. Isobel, the eldest daughter, sends for Etta who lives alone after separating from the paint-

er, and both of them begin to take care of their parents. Benecia dies soon after Etta's return home. Solon cannot conceal his sorrow although he has the assurance that she has passed into the keeping of God Himself, where she will find that consolation and joy which he can no longer give her. Yet he decides to endure by praying : "Not my will but Thine" ²⁶ Now tragedy has descended upon him and still he has faith, and will have.

Isobel and Etta marvel at the resignation that has gradually seemed to come over their father, and they reach the conclusion that something akin to a profound peace is possessing him. They also feel, as they have never felt before, that the Inner Light is truly a reality and is within him, releasing him from the profound misery which has engulfed him. Indeed, his mind has already been directed toward God's Will ; he has been awakened to many things that he has not seen before, when his remaining days are few. Many people come to see him, but Isobel and Etta are the only ones close to and sympathetic with him. Etta, in particular, is subjected to the weight of spiritual beauty which is the embodiment of love—universal love. Now she feels it moving through her, too, and she is ready to receive it.

The Bulwark was different from any other previous story written by Dreiser. The work did not have his usual documentation, his thorough if heavy immersion in material details.²⁷ It took him the longest years to finish because it was the work—of a long time dawning—that had to undergo a deep consciousness. For religion Dreiser generally had little to say in his fiction, preferring to dismiss the subject with a derisive phrase whenever possible. Whenever he recalled his father who was an enthusiastic Catholic, he realized that religion, no matter how wonderful,

no longer was compatible with the realities of life, and that since it oppressed the instincts of nature, it would lead to the misery of the human being. Based upon this way of thinking, Dreiser wrote *The Bulwark* to emphasize that religion was quite null and void, but as time passed on, he could not be satisfied with materialism or scientific philosophy. He instead sought a spiritual value and when he published the story, it turned out, contrary to his first intention, to be a book of religion. And it became apparent that Dreiser was offering a final estimate of his own father.

Solon is one of the many victims described by Dreiser. The hero's unhappiness stemmed from the fact that he lived in the age when the education he had received during the past long years could not be an index to the current problems of a new society. His children were not so much bound by the past education and religion as he was, and Solon alone became most unfortunate. His unhappiness reflected most of the experiences of the author who lived during the same period—the "Gilded Age" when one's sense of value might have undergone a vast change. It was an entirely new age, which was well demonstrated by Solon when he said to the directors of the bank from which he vowed to resign: "Perhaps there is little that one individual can do."²⁸ Time will not stand still; one cannot stop or turn back the clock. After all, he withdrew from his social activities. Solon, who was the "bulwark" of the past,²⁹ did not function well in actual society. Instead of so doing, he remained obscure in a corner of society as the "bulwark" of the Book of Discipline and came to accept what time brought him. The work seems to be the record of a misfit who failed to comply with the changes of the times one way or the other. On the day of Solon's funeral, Etta cries,

sobbing: "Oh, I am not crying for myself, or for Father—I am crying for *life*."³⁰ The theme of time and change is an essential one in the story.³¹ Conversely, Solon refused to go along the times consciously. Retirement was a matter of his own choice, and it is not justifiable to call him merely a victim or a failure.

The conflict between a love of faith and a love of money—a new conflict in Dreiser's thinking—is an integral part of *The Bulwark*. Solon is constantly disturbed by "where lay the dividing line between ambition and irreligious greed, between the desire for power and a due respect for Quaker precepts."³² He tries to solve the various contradictions of human life according to his point of view. His easy compromise, however, is broken by his children one by one—Etta, feeling repulsive against her father's hypocritical attitude, deserts him and Stewart, stimulated by pleasure for sexual desire in his way of living, kills himself—these two incidents radically affect his philosophy of life. He gradually hates to work because the bank business has made him feel the uncertainty of his religious faith, i. e. the pursuit of profits runs counter to his conscience and has caused him to corrupt from a moral point of view. And finally he takes action in accordance with the dictates of his conscience.

After his wife's death, Solon turns to God's Will. It is the manifestation of love directed toward all created things; it is the revelation of one's will to search for a larger self, i. e. an "essential self." It also comes from a sense of resignation, the act of leaving things to Providence, a kind of transcendentalism, which is the state of peace attained by overcoming philosophical mechanism—the state of Holy Calm compounded by pure faith and universal love. Solon and Dreiser thus rediscover Nature together.

Fundamentally, *The Bulwark* portrays the conflict between faith and materialism; it ends in an affirmation of the superiority of Nature, approached through Christian love. Accordingly, the work stands out as a notable landmark in the process of Dreiser's spiritual adjustment. The end of the story returning to Solon's inner life is the same structure as seen in *The "Genius"* and *The Stoic*. However, in *The Bulwark* there are neither signs of skepticism nor indifference which appear at the end of *The "Genius,"* nor additional episodes in relation to the spiritual conversion of Fleming Berenice, Cowperwood's sweetheart, who is, after all, secondary in importance in *The Stoic*.

The Bulwark deals with a man whose devotion to God is complete. He tries to live with the belief that men are the stewards of God by turning in a kind of religious awe and wonder whenever he observes mysterious things and by transcending skepticism and claiming that "surely there must be a creative Divinity, and so a purpose, behind all of this variety and beauty and tragedy of life."³³ Witra sought comfort in religion and then concluded it was merely a haven to retreat to in times of adversity. Clyde, even at the last, could not rid himself of spiritual misgivings. Solon, alone among Dreiser's protagonists, is fortified by faith when death comes.

This kind of ideological end can also be seen in *The Stoic*, the third part of *A Trilogy of Desire*. *A Trilogy of Desire* was originally written with the intention of emphasizing the so-called life-attitude of "the survival of the fittest" by Cowperwood and eulogizing a strong man. However, as seen in *The Titan* (1914), Cowperwood's business and love collapse and even he feels how weak he is even though he is a social giant, and a sense of calm resignation seizes him.³⁴ Therefore, interest is turn-

ed to how this sense of resignation will be presented in *The Stoic*.

Dreiser ended his trilogy of "desire" on a far different note from that on which he began it. In *The Stoic* one can find Cowperwood being caught with the charitable idea of building an art gallery and a hospital, or being moved by the lovely double tomb of Abélard and Héloïse he comes upon in Paris. This change of mind, as stated above, is the eventual conclusion of the development of Dreiser's mind. Cowperwood's sexual longings and dilettantish appreciation of fine arts are gone and change into a serious search for the Divine design beyond all forms.

The problem is, however, that Dreiser sends Berenice to India after Cowperwood's death and makes her study Hindu philosophy and listen to the teachings of yogi. If the conclusion of this work had been completed in the 1910's when *The Titan* came out, it would have been vastly different. If the story had ended as originally expected, it would have been most suitable for a naturalist such as Dreiser. The portrayal of Berenice as a woman of spiritual rebirth is, however, really superfluous although one admits that Dreiser was in earnest pursuit of his new direction. Here Dreiser made a fatal—but probably unavoidable—mistake in shifting the emphasis to her.³⁵ *The Stoic* was his most ambitious attempt to find in romantic idealism the means to negate Cowperwood's savage motives.

One of the reasons why Berenice turned over a new leaf as a spiritualist was that in the 1940's Dreiser, at that time a Communist, gave up his project of completing *The Stoic*, but while going with communism, he was anxious to finish it by all means because he was very favorably inclined toward spiritualism. Although he knew the advent of his impending death, he could not bear the state of emptiness he would feel

by concluding Cowperwood's death as a materialist and borrowed Berenice to work for her own self-fulfillment. Through the questing, metaphysical spirit of Berenice, Cowperwood was drawn steadily into deeper involvement with the aesthetic and the spiritual.

Dreiser even expounded the idea of predestination that "death is but an aspect of life, and the destruction of one material form is but a prelude to the building up of another."³⁶ Berenice was really awakened and found peace and a release from material desire. "Set aside this apparent, illusive world, and by seeing God in everything one can find real happiness ... Posses nothing. Love God in all. Working thus you will find the way which corresponds to the Christian tenet: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'³⁷ In a most direct sense, therefore, the adventures of Berenice form an integral part of *The Stoic*, which must have been envisaged by Dreiser from the time the plan for writing it first took shape in his mind. Accordingly, the conclusion one sees today seems to be natural because her presence is needed to break the pattern set in the first volume and built up through much of the second.³⁸ If one reassesses the conclusion of pantheistic religion, a mental state Dreiser has reached, one will find in *The Stoic* that Cowperwood's death should draw from Berenice some exceptional response to justify his conviction that she held the key to questions which he himself was unable to answer. Solon rejects materialism and religious formalism to uphold unity in all Nature under the guidance of the Creative Divinity. Berenice sees it as union with Brahman, but it is the same.^{39*}

Dreiser's change of mind is not sudden but has been accumulated, a proof being evident both in the works of *The Financier* and *The Titan*. Cowperwood does not really change in character in *The Stoic*—nor does

his world differ radically from that of *The Financier* and *The Titan*.⁴⁰ Cowperwood's skeptical spirit vanishes with his death and it is succeeded by Berenice and is revived in the form of detachment. Berenice goes to India to find fulfillment and creates a transcendental world, the world of supreme happiness : an essential part of Oriental resignation. Then she travels over a good part of India and is shocked by the social evil she discovers and, after returning to America, she realizes that she must live for something that will tend to answer the needs of the many, and decides to found a hospital for the poor and the sick.

Wandering in a chaos of pure materialistic flux, Dreiser allows his heroine in these closing chapters to leap to pure spirit, to Brahma, and to the contemplation and realization of Divine Love. And Dreiser too seems to make the leap, because it appears beyond any question that Berenice carries his thoughts and convictions. She is the most sensitive and intelligent of his characters ; she is the only one who makes significant discoveries about the folly and selfishness of even the most cultivated materialistic life ; her four years of study with a Guru in India are presented with utter seriousness.⁴¹

Notes

- 1 Tayama Katai's name is given in the Japanese order of surname first. When his name is mentioned again, I have used only the pen name, i. e. Katai.
- 2 Tayama Katai, *The Modern Novel* (Tokyo : Kadokawa-shoten, 1953), p. 22.
- 3 Tayama Katai (*A Complete Collection of Modern Japanese Literature*, Vol. 20) (Tokyo : Chikuma-shobo, 1967). p. 314.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 314-5.

- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 315.
- 6 One of the six Master Poets in the early part of the Heian period (794-1192).
Cf. Donald Keene, *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1956), pp. 264-70.
- 7 *Tayama Katai, op. cit.*, p. 390.
- 8 Yoshida Seiichi, *A study of Naturalism*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Tokyo-do, 1964), p. 643.
- 9 *Tayama Katai (A Complete Collection of Modern Japanese Literature*, Vol. 21), p. 222.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 284.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 279.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 283.
- 14 *Tayama Katai*, Vol. 20, p. 286.
- 15 Ino Kenji, *A Study of the History of Modern Japanese Literature* (Tokyo: Mirai-sha, 1964), p. 140.
- 16 *Tayama Katai*, Vol. 20, pp. 319-20.
- 17 Yoshida Seiichi, *A History of the Meiji and Taisho Literature* (Tokyo: Shubunkan, 1941), p. 171.
- 18 Tayama Katai, *Koi no Dendo* (A Palace of Love) (*A Complete Collection of Tayama Katai's Works*, Vol. 13) (Tokyo: Naigai-shoseki Company Inc., 1936), p. 678.
- 19 *Tayama Katai*, Vol. 21, p. 203.
- 20 John J. McAleer, *Theodore Dreiser* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 144.
- 21 Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy* (New York: The New American Library, 1964), p. 809.
- 22 Robert Penn Warren, *An American Tragedy in Dreiser: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. by John Lydenberg (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971), p. 140.
- 23 Theodore Dreiser, *The Bulwark* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1946), p. 104.
- 24 John J. McAleer, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
- 25 Philip L. Gerber, *Theodore Dreiser* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1964), p. 169.
- 26 *The Bulwark*, p. 315.
- 27 F. O. Matthiessen, *Theodore Dreiser* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1951), p. 242.

176 Tayama Katai and Theodore Dreiser: Naturalism and Its Metamorphosis

28 *The Bulwark*, p. 304.

29 Richard Lehan, *Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 229.

30 *The Bulwark*, p. 337.

31 Richard Lehan, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

33 *The Bulwark*, p. 317.

34 Kenshiro Homma, *Tayama Katai and Theodore Dreiser: Naturalism and Its Implications in Doshisha Studies in English*, No. 8, p. 143.

35 Philip L. Gerber, *op. Cit.*, p. 109.

36 Theodore Dreiser, *The Stoic* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1947), p. 296.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 299.

38 John J. McAleer, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

* Viewed in artistic terms, however, Dreiser's conclusion of *The Stoic* must be considered grotesque. Berenice is too utterly brilliant and dazzling to be quite real. Her love of fine things, her absorption with herself, her whimsical intelligence, and her courageous defiance of convention in becoming Cowperwood's mistress—these are too many traits to fuse into a convincing personality. (Charles Child Walcutt, *Theodore Dreiser and the Divided Stream* in *Dreiser: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. by John Lydenberg, p. 124.)

40 Richard Lehan, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

41 Charles C. Walcutt, *op. cit.*, p. 123.