

SYNOPSIS

PROCESS OF TRANSITION OF EMILY DICKINSON'S IDEA

—FROM "DEATH" TO "IMMORTALITY"—

by *Tajiro Iwayama*

Death is a major theme in Emily Dickinson's poetry. Throughout her life she wrote many "death poems," the first of which was written in 1858 when she was twenty-eight, and the last in 1886, the year of her death. The intention of this article is to discuss her concept of death in the process of its change toward the idea of "immortality."

Dickinson divided the spiritual, not physical, ages of woman into three: 1) childhood, 2) the age of the renunciation of the fleshly and worldly components of love, and 3) the age of immortality. In her earliest period as a poet Dickinson lives in dread and thinks "death" something "Anguish strung," but when she is able to look at herself and to recall her experience and to record her sensations in passing through the crisis of suffering, she feels the illusion of death and the sensation of nonexistence in chaos. So, "death" is almost despair. When she can acquire a sort of spiritual and religious discipline to defend herself against dread of death, she can reach the third age of woman, the most important of the three, and has the concept that "death" is the entrance to "immortality." This is the idea of "life-in-death." "Death" replaces God and transcends the boundaries between man and nature, the soul and body, and the spiritual and the material values. Poems become the manifestation of her triumph over fear. To account for the nature of this final stage three words which gain peculiar meaning in her poems are discussed: "grace," "ecstasy," and "noon."

EDWARD TAYLOR'S POETRY :

AN INTRODUCTION

by *Ken Akiyama*

My purpose in this essay is two-fold : to show how Edward Taylor was "discovered" and evaluated ; and to propose a tentative reading which, I think, is suitable for the kind of poetry Taylor wrote. Edward Taylor [1642 ?-1729] wrote numerous devotional poems during his Congregational ministry at Westfield, Mass., but not until two hundred years after his death were his poems first brought to the attention of the literary public. Thomas Johnson first printed some of his poems called *Preparatory Meditations* in *The New England Quarterly* in 1937 and two years later published selected poems, which encouraged those who had perceived serious misapprehensions held by others concerning the literature of the Colonial Period. In 1960, Donald Stanford made a more complete edition of the poet's works. In 1962 Norman Grabo published an edition of the *Christographia*, a collection of 14 sermons, to provide richer materials for the study of the poet.

Austin Warren wrote, in 1941, "Edward Taylor's Poetry : Colonial Baroque," a most sensitive and significant appreciation of Taylor's poetry, which indeed drew the due attention of critics and scholars to this newly-discovered ecclesiastical poet. Warren relates Taylor to Anglo-European baroque poets.

I have chosen Meditation 91 (Second Series) to show my reading of Edward Taylor's poetry. The theme of this poem is the coming of the Son of Man, from Matthew 24:27. A characteristic of his poetry is that a volume of theological commentary lies behind each line with copious Biblical allusions, to which I refer as I go

through stanza by stanza. In this poem Taylor meditates on the idea of *Παρουσία* by using various metaphors and images, which often show baroque conceits. He concludes that the final Coming [*Παρουσία*] can be experienced wherever Christ is present [*Παρουσία*].

We are now provided with abundant materials for the due evaluation of the poet. In ten years, Taylor will resume the place which he really deserves in the history of American literature.

“SUPERNATURAL SONGS” OF W. B. YEATS

by *Manji Kobayashi*

“Supernatural Songs” were written at a time when the poet was recovering from a state of barrenness which lasted for nearly two years. The circumstances of their creation partly account for their comparative unpopularity. Quite possibly Yeats himself might not have been entirely satisfied with them.

The series as a whole, however, though obscure and seemingly abstract, is still among the most important of his works. As a culmination of more than fifty years of creative activities, these poems embody the most essential as well as the most personal of Yeats’s thoughts.

The central figure Ribh, borrowed from the Druidic past of Ireland to be Yeats’s mouthpiece, links the series to the Irish tradition in which most of Yeats’s final convictions are rooted. But to unravel the meanings of these complex poems, the reader must often make a wide reference both to his prose writings and to poetry for their background.

The basis for the series is the poet’s belief that the natural and supernatural are knit together, that to escape the dangerous fanaticism of mechanical objectivity we must establish a new science. It is a faith in the organic wholeness of life, the ‘Unity of Being’ as Yeats puts it, as an ideal state of human existence for which we must strive. The symbol of marriage of angels as a conflagration of the whole being in the opening poem introduces the reader to the world of Yeats’s vision.

THE TRADITION OF THE IMAGINATION
THEORY IN ENGLISH LITERARY
CRITICISM (2)

by *Masao Okamoto*

In the preceding chapters we came to the conclusion that the theory of Imagination had a long history to grow up and was firmly established in the writings of S. T. Coleridge. It was an achievement of the poet, who had at once a speculative and intuitive mind, but it was also one of the results of the awakening of self-consciousness in the literary minds of the Romantic period. Therefore we can trace almost the same idea among the poets and critics of the Romantic age. In the following chapters we at first closely examined the theory of Imagination in the writings of William Wordsworth, Charles Lamb, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt, who are the contemporaries of S. T. Coleridge. Of these writers, Wordsworth is most worthy of notice and his theory is systematized as firmly as that of Coleridge's. When minutely examined, each theory of the above mentioned authors has some specific features in details, but each theory is based on the same idea that literary works are the products of the creative imagination of genius, which is a peculiar power of association and coalescence. They are also in the same lines in the point that they distinguish Imagination from Fancy as a creative faculty. It is one of the distinctive features in the Imagination theory in England.

In the next, we took up the literary theories of John Ruskin and Walter Pater, both of whom, half a century later than Coleridge, extended the theory of Imagination to somewhat peculiar direction. Ruskin divided both Imagination and Fancy into four kinds and

distinguished the characteristics of the divided ones. Pater, on the other hand, combined Imagination with Reason and called it 'Imaginative reason.' But these distinctions and combination had not any favourable result in the sphere of literary criticism and their theories are thought to be only a special variation of the Romantic theory. The Imagination theory seems to have had its climax in the Romantic criticism.