

SYNOPSSES

“TEXTUEEL” AND “SENTENCE”

— How to Study Medieval Literature —

Isamu Saito

Host, in *The Canterbury Tales*, asks Parson to tell “a fable.” Parson however says he would not. He is going to tell a tale which contains “moralitee and vertuouse mateere” and, in telling it, he says he would not be “textueel” but “take but the sentence.” His aim is not to offer a superficial and literal (textueel) meaning, but to give a hidden but religiously higher meaning (sentence). Chaucer likens the “textueel” meaning to “chaf,” and “sentence” to “fruyt.” This simile, applied to poetic theory, was very popular in the Middle Ages.

The earliest example of this simile is found in Augustine’s *De doctrina Christiana*. Augustine gave it in terms of “husk” and “kernel,” and throughout the Middle Ages this mode of simile was observed. Sometimes it was interpreted as the three levels of reading books. First, a work is read in terms of its grammatical structure or syntax (*littera*). Then, it is studied in terms of its obvious meaning (*sensus*). Finally the higher meaning, the doctrinal content (*sententia*), frequently hidden to casual readers, is to be interpreted. The first two levels are preliminaries to the third, and the importance of any work lies in its *sententia*. Medieval writers deliberately composed their works in order to present *sententia* under cover of the figurative speech. In reading we have to be careful not to take the figurative as literal, but to find out and reveal the *sententia* underlying it, for in the Middle Ages true aesthetic pleasure was considered to be derived from the understanding of God’s truth, or true underlying meaning. To medieval man, the

Bible, works of the Fathers, and all sober literature had to be seen through their exegeses. Because of this general attitude, poets had to make a kind of commentary on the quotations from the Bible and yet make unity between the commentary and the rest of the poem.

This method of interpreting literary works in terms of patristic exegeses was applied about ten years ago by D. W. Robertson, Jr. and B. F. Huppè, and has become an established mode of criticism of medieval literature. Indeed it would be dangerous to ignore the influence of the patristic tradition on medieval poetry, but it would be worse to say, like Robertson and Huppè, that patristic exegesis is the only way to find out the meaning of medieval poetry. Even when applying exegesis, it is most important, as E. T. Donaldson says, not to miss the intrinsic meaning of the poem. Study in these two aspects will yield an ultimate meaning.

CHARACTERIZATION IN *1 HENRY VI*

Arata Yoshimoto

1 Henry VI is often called the 'Talbot play,' which is another way of saying that all the other *dramatis personae* are given only very ineffective characterization. Meantime the pattern of this play is sometimes embedded in a picture of the ideological background with the central hero Talbot representing 'order.' Talbot dominates the play so overtly and it seems to be stupid to defy those accepted readings of the play.

Hall's chronicle, however, calls attention to the dramatist who rather took pains to provide each character with a specific dramatic role. It is true that characterization is meagre in this play. But when we remember the role of each character, and if we are allowed to take hints of characterization not only in this play but also in the other plays of the tetralogy and the source, we can find for the actors more room for fuller portrayal of each character.

As the interest in the other characters increases, the unity of the play, which centers on the hero Talbot, is disturbed. The alternatives, therefore, are either to make all the characters subject to Talbot so as to preserve the unity of the play *or* to secure a full portrayal of each character, making each episode actable and theatrically exciting.

KING LEAR IN OUR TIME

— Jan Kott on *King Lear* —

Fuku Ikawa

Jan Kott, a Polish critic and a poet, whose book, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, has influenced directors both in Britain and on the Continent, sees in *King Lear* the cruelty and absurdity of the human situation when the great age of Renaissance was nearing its end. As *King Lear* is too cruel and absurd, Mr. Kott proposes, it should be presented as *the grotesque* rather than *tragedy*. By *the grotesque* he means the form of theatre seen in the Theatre of the Absurd. *The grotesque* deals with the same theme as that of *tragedy*. Both are concerned with human fate or the meaning of the existence, and both the tragic hero and the grotesque actor must be defeated. But the downfall of the tragic hero means the confirmation of the Absolute, while the downfall of the grotesque actor is the mockery and ridicule of the Absolute. *The grotesque*, which is sometimes more cruel than *tragedy*, does not bring the *catharsis*, nor any consolation whatever.

Deprived of the king's authority and its "additions," Lear goes down the ladder of history step by step, only to find he is nothing but "the natural fool of fortune." He is no longer a personification of the great passion of fury as he used to be in the romantic era. He is just a foolish old man driven to madness as the result of terrible alienation. Gloucester is also a ridiculous old man clinging to the Medieval eschatology. His imaginary fall from the Dover cliff symbolizes man's fall into the abyss of the human fate. To present the cliff which is existent and non-existent, this scene must be played in mime. Gloucester's attempt of suicide is tragic but becomes grotesque when played in mime.

The theme of the play is the decay and fall of the world, and it is played on the two stages, the Macbeth's stage and the Job's stage. Macbeth's stage is where the crime is committed and blood is shed, while on the Job's stage, four people, deprived of their social positions and reduced to the state of 'nothing,' carry on the mad conversation about the world that has gone mad. The Fool is the centre of this buffoonery, and Mr. Kott finds here a close relationship of the Lear-universe with the Theatre of the Absurd.

Mr. Kott throws light upon what he thinks the core of the play, that is, the cruelty of human sufferings, and he rejects all the sentimentalizing which *King Lear* has suffered during its long stage history. He grasps the problem which is relevant for the moderns, and reveals it in a fresh, unique way of his own. But a question will be raised: whether it is Shakespeare's *King Lear*, or Kott's *Lear*. Here is an interesting problem in representing a classic: how far can one be said creative and where is he blamed of distortion?

The second part of this study will be about *King Lear* in the modern time viewed from the standpoint of a *tragedy*.

ON CERTAIN FRICATIVES AND AFFRICATES

Tae Okada

In most dialects of Japanese today, neutralization of certain fricatives and affricates is slightly different from what it was described by Troubetzkoy. Patterns of common neutralization today are shown in the tables 1 and 2. The forms in the parentheses in these tables are frequently employed today. The same neutralization patterns are given in a different form in (1) through (5) (pp. 67-69).

Degrees of difficulty to the Japanese speaker in establishing the differentiations of these neutralized consonants vary considerably from pair to pair. Of the six pairs tabulated in p. 67, (1) and (6) are by far the more difficult. Part of the explanation of this difficulty may be sought in the fact, as shown in the tables 4 through 7, that /s/ and /ʃ/ have two varieties of voiced counterparts each, while the rest of the voiceless consonants in question have only one.

Viewed from the English side, ten distinct consonants or consonant clusters are interpreted in the Japanese phonology as seven units of phonemic value. The amount of regularity with which they are so interpreted can be seen in our table 8, where items 9 through 10 are seen to be interpreted in three different ways depending on the vowel that follows.

A review of English cases of neutralization as described by Trnka, Chomsky and others quickly reveals that English has considerably different patterns of neutralization.