Center for Global Studies on Culture and Society

Working Paper Series

CGS No.2021-01

Literary Mobility in 19th-Century Europe

平成30年度グローバル社会文化研究センター
研究プロジェクトＡ　研究成果報告

研究期間：平成30年4月1日 ～ 令和2年3月31日

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March, 2022

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CONTENTS

1. Samuel Rogers's *Italy* as Travel Literature in the Early Nineteenth Century

Manami TAMURA ….. 1

2. Doubles and Doppelgängers in Andersen's "The Mermaid," Poe's "William Wilson," and Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*

Akemi YOSHIDA ….. 17

3. Secrets Veiled and Unveiled: Wilde's *Femme Fatale* Images and Their French Sources

Anna SUGIMOTO, Chiharu TANAKA, and Akemi YOSHIDA ….. 34

Samuel Rogers's *Italy* as Travel Literature in the Early Nineteenth Century

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In 1830, Samuel Rogers (1763-1855) published a collection of poems and short stories titled *Italy*.[2] The book was richly illustrated with engravings, more than half of which were designed by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851). The book was an instant success and popular throughout the nineteenth century.

Many travelogues on Italy were published in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and as travelling modes and travellers' interests were changing rapidly, only a few could retain enduring public attention. The popularity of Rogers's *Italy* is therefore worth considering. Did it owe its success mainly to its illustrations as many have claimed? This study examines and re-evaluates Samuel Rogers's *Italy* in the early nineteenth-century British interest in Italy.

1. British travellers to Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Italy was one of the most popular destinations among British travellers during the age of the Grand Tour. Young men of the ruling classes travelled to Italy as the finishing part of their classical education. They went there to see historic sites, art works and architecture, enjoy opera, and buy antiquities for their collections (Black 22). As Italy and things Italian became fashionable among the upper classes, not only aristocratic men but also women, and then the middle classes began to visit Italy.[3]

From the invasion of Rome by Napoleon's France in 1798 to the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, Italy was temporarily inaccessible to the British. However, during this period, many Italian pictures in France were brought to Britain to keep them safe from the revolutionary turmoil, which resulted in a rare opportunity for most British people to see Italian art firsthand for the first time (Brand 138). Moreover, travel books about Italy continued to be published, and, with Mme de Staël's international bestseller *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807), aroused people's interest in Italy.[4]

In 1815, when the Italian travel was resumed for British citizens, well-to-do tourists

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[2] *Italy* was first published in 1822 without illustrations but did not attract much attention. A detailed account of publishing *Italy* is presented later herein.

[3] According to Brand, "By the 1790's [sic] the fashion for things Italian was a recognized feature of English social life" (2).

[4] The English translation of *Corinne* was also published in 1807.

and artists began to rush to the country. Romantic poets such as George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) also headed there, as well as Samuel Rogers.[5] By 1840, travelling to Italy lost its fashionable appeal to the upper classes because it became too "common." In fact, some tourist spots were so crowded with British tourists that writers of travel books often complained about it.[6]

As Italian travel became popular among the middle classes, travelling styles also changed. While the Grand Tourist went to Italy for a year or more, nineteenth-century tourists in many cases travelled for several months. Knowledge of history and classical literature was still regarded as preferable, but not essential. Many tourists were rather influenced by Romantic literature and sought the scenes depicted in *Corinne* or Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV (1818). Furthermore, publishing the pioneering travel guidebook series began in the 1830s, and foreign travel became more accessible to the public.

The first of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers* series was published in 1836. It contained all the detailed information travellers would need before and during their journey, and was entirely different from previous travel books, which were mainly personal travel memoirs. In addition, Murray's *Handbook* was compact in size and easy to carry around; this especially appealed to middle-class travellers, who were not attended by many servants and had to take care of their own luggage. Murray published handbooks for many different destinations and frequently updated their information. "By 1848 Murray was offering over sixty 'Works for Travellers'" (Buzard 72), and they became a must-have for nineteenth-century travellers. Some tourists even looked at the picturesque sceneries, historic sites, architecture, and artistic objects only to make sure that they were true to the descriptions in Murray's *Handbooks,* not the other way around (Buzard 76). Murray often quotes poets in his descriptions of places, and Byron was found to be the most popular. Samuel Rogers is among other poets quoted in Murray.

2. Rogers's travel

Samuel Rogers travelled to Italy for the first time in 1814-15. He was one of the first Englishmen to travel there after the Napoleonic War. In fact, it seemed to be too early

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[5] Although Rogers is not usually classified as a Romantic poet, he shared the view towards Italy among his contemporaries under the influence of Romantic movement, as highlighted below.

[6] Charles Dickens mentioned "a great crowd of people (three-fourths of them English) gathered at the ceremony of Easter in the Sistine Chapel, Rome" (*Pictures* 153). Frances Trollope bitterly criticised bad behaviour of her compatriots and attributed it to their lower social status (2: 272).

because he had to hurriedly return home when he heard the news of Napoleon's fleeing from Elba and arrival at Cannes in March 1815 (Hale 58).

At the time of this trip, Rogers was known as a "banker poet," which was both pejorative and not accurate. He was from a dissenting middle-class family. At the age of 17, he began working at his father's bank, and soon came to run the bank with his brother. While working there, he launched a literary career and his first successful work of poetry, *The Pleasures of Memory* was published in 1792. In 1795, he more or less retired from his job as a banker while still in his thirties. Therefore, when he first went to Italy, he was no longer a banker. Thus, Rogers established himself as a poet, and settled himself in a house at St. James's Place, London in 1803. By that time, he was wealthy enough to lead a dilettante life. His house was a kind of salon where he entertained celebrity guests. He was also famous for his art collection, which was recommended in a guidebook of the London's private art collections, together with those of Royal and aristocratic families.[7] He had visited Paris twice before his first trip to Italy and had seen masterpieces by Italian painters at the Louvre. Hence, his principal purpose was to see Italian artworks, as well as landscapes that had been painted by Italian and British artists.[8] He bought some pieces of art for his collection, just as the Grand Tourist of the eighteenth century did. Unlike the higher classes, he did not receive classical education, but educated himself and read widely on Italian literature, history, and art. In this respect, he was similar to the tourists in the preceding century. Considering Rogers was in his fifties at the time of his first Italian trip, as Hale aptly describes, "he was anxious to make up for the long delay in making his Grand Tour" (51).

However, Rogers was also influenced by the Italian fad of the early nineteenth century. His interest in Italian literature was not limited to classical literature. Like many of his contemporaries, he was fascinated by Dante (1265-1321), Petrarch (1304-74), Ariosto (1474-1533), and Tasso (1544-95). Interest in these poets and their works among the British was aroused in the second half of the eighteenth century by Italian scholars who came to Britain as political exiles (Brand 50). For the tourists in the late eighteenth and

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[7] The guidebook is *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London* (1844) by Anna Jameson. Other collections introduced in this *Companion* are the Gallery of Her Majesty the Queen, the Bridgewater Gallery, the Sutherland Gallery, the Grosvenor Gallery, the Collection of the Marquess of Lansdowne, and the Collection of Sir Robert Peel. All the collections except for Rogers's were owned by upper-class families.

[8] He had also read Giorgio Vasari's influential book on Italian art, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (1550). Its English translation did not appear until 1850, so Rogers read it in Italian.

early nineteenth centuries, the knowledge of these poets was regarded as important as classical literature. In *Italy*, Rogers refers to these poets far more frequently than classical poets, such as Homer, Virgil, or Horace. He even mentions his contemporary writers such as Count Alfieri (1749-1803) and Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873).

Rogers's itinerary also reflects the influence of the Italian fashion of the early nineteenth century. His travel route itself was basically the same as that of the Grand Tour, although it was a much shorter trip, especially because he had to cut it short due to the political unrest. He left his home in late August and crossed the Channel to France. Leaving Britain in early autumn (in many cases, September) was common among nineteenth-century tourists to Italy to avoid the summer heat. Since the days of the Grand Tour, most travellers had preferred to travel to France by sea and then from France to Italy by land, instead of sailing directly to Italy (Black 6). Rogers followed the examples of most other tourists and went from Paris to Italy through Switzerland. He entered Italy via the Simplon Pass. He visited major tourist destinations in Italy and stayed in Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples longer than in other cities, just as other British tourists. The highlight of his Italian journey was Rome, but Rogers also stayed in Naples for more than a month. Southern Italy suddenly became a place of historical interest after the discovery and excavations of Pompeii and Paestum in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He also visited the small town of Arqua, which is where Petrarch lived for his final years and, for this reason, suddenly attracted tourists' attention in the late eighteenth century.

Rogers kept a journal during his first Italian tour, which tells us much about his travel. He went to Italy for the second time in 1821-22 and travelled around more or less the same route. However, he did not leave any detailed record of this second journey. Moreover, he had already finished writing the first draft of *Italy* before his second Italian trip (Hale 108). The events of the second trip, most notably the meeting with Byron in Bologna, would be included in the later editions.[9]

3. Writing and publishing *Italy*

As mentioned above, Rogers kept a journal while he was travelling from 1814 to 1815. He did not write most of his poems in *Italy* on site, but they were later composed in England from the notes in this journal. According to Hale, Rogers did not have a plan to write a collection of poems on Italy when he was travelling (107). He was working on another book of poetry around this time (published as *Human Life* in 1819), and the

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[9] Rogers met Byron in Bologna in October 1821, and they travelled to Florence together. Rogers mentions this encounter for the first time in the 1824 edition of *Italy*. He met Byron again in Spring, 1822 (Blockside 232-33).

journal was intended just as a commonplace book. However, a couple of poems on the Italian journey appeared in his collections published before 1820. The first one is “Written at Meillerie, September 30, 1814” (hereafter referred to as “Written at Meillerie”) published in *Poems by Samuel Rogers* in 1816. Another poem titled “Lines Written at Pæstum: March 4, 1815” (“Written at Pæstum”) appeared with *Human Life* in the same volume. Both poems were to be retitled “Meillerie” and “Pæstum” respectively, and included in *Italy*.

These titles indicate that they were composed on site on the designated dates, but there is doubt as to whether this was the case. As for the poem “Written at Meillerie”, a rough draft is certainly found in the journal (Hale 307-11). However, the date in the title, September 30, is the day he left Meillerie, and he first arrived there on the 15th. Moreover, looking into the journal, almost the same words and expressions as used in the poem are found in the entries from the 14th to 30th September. This means that the poem was not improvised on site as its title may suggest, but was composed with careful thinking, referring to his travel journal.

“Written at Meillerie” had undergone many revisions before it was published again in *Italy*. On the other hand, “Written at Pæstum” was included in *Italy* as “Pæstum” with only a few alterations. This is not usual for Rogers since he was known for repeatedly revising his poems. This means that the poem was already thoroughly polished when it was first published in 1819. Therefore, “Written at Pæstum” is also the work of detailed (probably later) consideration, not improvisation. Again, he must have referred to his travel journal during the process of composing the poem since the ideas and words can easily be detected in the journal. For example, both in the poem and in the journal, he writes that the ruins of Paestum stand “between the mountains and the sea” and describes the columns bathed in bright sunshine as “iron-brown” relieved with “brightest verdure.” He even quoted some phrases from the journal. “How many centuries did the sun go round / From Mount Alburnus to the Tyrrhene sea” in “Written at Pæstum” comes from “How many suns have risen from behind the mountains, & set in the Tyrrhene” in the journal. In addition, “The air is sweet with violets” in “Written at Pæstum” was “the air sweet with violets” in the journal. Thus, it is most probable that he wrote poems on Italy after the journey from his memory with the aid of the journal.

Rogers continued to write poems on Italian travel and finally, in 1822, *Italy, a Poem, Part the First* was published by Longman. As the title suggests, this edition covers only a part of his travel: Switzerland and Northern Italy (see Appendix 1). It did not attract much attention partly because it was published anonymously. In 1823, the second edition was published by another publisher, John Murray. This time, Rogers’s name appeared on

the title page, but the book still did not sell. Rogers edited the work repeatedly, and the third and fourth editions appeared in 1824. *Italy, a Poem, Part the Second*, which covers Southern Italy, was published in 1828, but was again a failure in terms of sales. Rogers bought the unsold stock and destroyed it (Hale 110).

Before publishing *Part the Second*, Rogers had already planned to put parts one and two together to make a one-volume illustrated edition. Illustrated books were not something special at the time. Collections of poems and short stories called "annuals" or "keepsakes" often included illustrations, which made them ideal for gifts and collections, and their readers were mainly women.[10] Rogers himself had his book *Poems* published with numerous engravings in 1816. These engravings were designed by Thomas Stothard (1755-1834), who was renowned for his book illustrations. Rogers again asked Stothard to draw illustrations for *Italy*. He also commissioned Turner, who had offered illustrations for annuals and keepsakes (Rawlinson xlvi). The designs offered by Turner, Stothard, and others were engraved on steel and printed "under the constant supervisions of Rogers himself" (Hale 111). Altogether the book would contain as many as 55 illustrations. It was costly to produce a book with so many fine engravings, but Rogers owed all the publishing costs. Cecilia Powell explained the publishing process in her book, *Italy in the Age of Turner*:

> [Rogers] commissioned twenty-five landscapes from Turner and nineteen scenes from Stothard, a long-established illustrator of literature and famous for his graceful figures. He employed a team of thirteen engravers. He designed the book so that readers could have the rare luxury of savouring both words and steel-engraved vignettes on the same page; this was fiendishly expensive since each illustrated page needed two separate printing processes and had to pass through the press twice. By such means, and laying out £7335 in publishing just 10,000 copies, Rogers ensured both the instant success and the widespread fame of his *Italy* (96-97) .

As shown in the above quotation, when it was finally published in 1830, the book immediately attracted people's attention, and 4,000 copies were sold by the end of the year. By May 1832 it had sold 7,000 copies, but still did not pay for the publishing costs. Rogers did not stop editing *Italy*, and a new edition was published in 1839 with autobiographical notes added to the final poem "A Farewell." According to Hale, *Italy* became an institution, and "[for] two generations it remained the ideal present for those

[10] Maureen McCue argues that Rogers were well aware of this fashion and deliberately made his book suit the taste of the readers (112) .

about to leave for Italy or who had just come back" (Hale 111).

4. Evaluation and influence

The 1830 edition of *Italy* was not only successful in sales, but also favourably accepted by reviewers. *The London Literary Gazette* reviewed the work in the issue of August 28, 1830. In fact, there were two reviews of the book in the same issue: one for the text (561-63), and one for the engravings (564-65). The engravings were heartily applauded: "We are really unacquainted with any volume of a similar size and character, on which so much expense has been liberally and tastefully bestowed in the way of illustrations" (564). The text was also praised, but in a more reserved way. The review in the *Athenaeum* (21 August 1830) is short but enthusiastic. It commends the book as a whole: "Poetry, wealth, taste, are here blended beautifully" (526). However, there is no doubt that its enthusiasm was mainly for the illustrations.

> It may be a little ungrateful to Mr. Rogers, but we cannot attend to him now—we remember indeed his sweet poetry and his pleasant tales, and shall read them again and again with infinite delight, but with this unpublished volume in our hands, it is impossible to do anything but turn from picture to picture, from jewel to jewel, and recall the scenes brought to our remembrance. (526)

The reviewer of the *New Monthly Magazine* (1 November 1830) is more ironical and implies that Rogers secured a success by spending enormous amounts of money to embellish his book (454). Views on Rogers's poetry and the illustrations of *Italy* have not changed much since then. In 1980, Kenneth Churchill wrote, "it was a success which came less from the poetry than from the illustrations" (50), and Rogers's poetry "is attractive and readable" though "it lacks the stature of the work of Byron or Shelley" (51). Twenty years later, Cecilia Powell acknowledged the poetry's enduring popularity in its own right, but implied that *Italy* could rival *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV in Italian travelogues solely because Rogers could afford to publish the luxurious book (96). In 2013, Martin Blocksidge published a new biography of Rogers in which he attempts to re-evaluate *Italy*'s literary value:

> In purely literary terms, and despite its initially unenthusiastic reviews, the second part of *Italy* is in no way inferior to the first. Rogers is more confident in his handling of blank verse, and the inherent fragmentariness of the poem is now more consciously a means to greater variety: there is a mixture of longer and shorter pieces; a mixture of

> description, narrative and anecdote; a more subtle movement between the past and the present. There are also dramatic monologues, and, most innovatory of all, sustained sections in prose. . . . The most obviously successful parts of the poem remain those which describe scenes and places, where once more Rogers' receptive eye shows its power. (272)

Blocksidge's defence is mostly based on the harmony and finished style of the work. However, the last sentence of the above quotation is intriguing because Rogers's description of scenes and places is exactly where the illustrations are most helpful. Look at the extract below of the poem "Como" and its illustration based on Turner's vignette (fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Illustration for "Como." Internet Archive / the University of California. https://victorianweb.org/painting/turner/graphics/13.html.

> So I sit still,
> And let the boatman shift his little sail,

His sail so forked and so swallow-like,
Well-pleased with all that comes. The morning-air
Plays on my cheek how gently, flinging round
A silvery gleam: and now the purple mists
Rise like a curtain; now the sun looks out,
Filling, o'erflowing with his glorious light
This noble amphitheatre of hills;
And now appear as on a phosphor-sea
Numberless barks, from MILAN, from PAVÌA;
Some sailing up, some down, and some at rest,
Lading, unlading at that small port-town
Under the promontory—its tall tower
And long flat roofs, just such as GASPAR drew,
Caught by a sun-beam slanting through a cloud;
A quay-like scene, glittering and full of life,
And doubled by reflection. (33)

The poet first reflects on the history related to the Lake Como, and then, as seen in the quotation, sitting in a boat, looks around him. He describes the scene referring not only to the surrounding hills, boats and boatmen, and glittering surface of the water, but also to the sunlight, fresh air, vapour, and the reflections on the water. This is already a picturesque description. It is also something Turner is famous for depicting, and Turner's touch is not at all lost in the engraving. Even if it is printed in black and white, the glorious morning light and cheerfulness of the working people can be felt. The text and the illustration are perfectly harmonious here, enhancing each other's impression.

However, the illustrations do not always match the poems. The most obvious case is the illustration for "Pæstum," again designed by Turner (fig. 2). This illustration is one of the most impressive and instantly catches readers' eyes. While the engraving is impressive in its dramatic nature, the poem as a whole is pensive and static. It is true that the poet mentions thunder, but he does so to explain the long history through which the ruins of Paestum survived:

But what are These still standing in the midst?
The Earth has rocked beneath; the Thunder-stone
Passed thro' and thro', and left its traces there;
Yet still they stand as by some Unknown Charter! (211)

Fig. 2. Illustration for "Pæstum." Internet Archive / the University of California. https://victorianweb.org/painting/turner/graphics/8.html.

"Pæstum" is one of the best poems in the book. The site is legendary and magical, so the poet's mind moves naturally between the past and the present, nature and human activities, the peace and the past warfare and destruction. Thus, in this case, the poem itself stands as a masterpiece without the help of the illustration. Turner did make a watercolour study for "Temples of Pæstum" that is closer to the poem's impression, more static and peaceful.[11] Meredith Gamer argues that the fact Turner prepared two different designs for a poem clearly indicates his close attention and respect for Rogers's text.

It is true that the success of *Italy* owed much to its illustrations. John Ruskin (1819-1900) first came across Turner's work when he was given *Italy* on his thirteenth birthday.[12] In his autobiographical work, *Praeterita*, he wrote that he was enthusiastic

[11] See the watercolour study in Gamer. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-study-for-temples-of-paestum-rogerss-italy-r1133326.
[12] In *Praeterita*, Ruskin actually wrote "on my thirteenth (?) birthday" (79).

about the engravings in *Italy* but did not have "equally vivid interest in the composition of the poems themselves" (93). Ruskin's words are sometimes quoted as if they were a proof that the value of the illustrations surpasses the poems. Rogers's poems are surely no match for Byron's; they are not innovative, and Rogers did not dare to be provocative. However, his ability to describe scenes and the ambience of places is worthy of notice. It makes *Italy* an ideal travelogue, arousing expectations for or evoking memories of readers' Italian trips.

5. Conclusion

Rogers travelled to Italy when such travel became popular among British middle classes in the early nineteenth century. He followed the steps of the Grand Tourist of the eighteenth century, but he also shared his interest in Italy with his contemporaries under the influence of the Romantic movement. These attitudes are evident in *Italy*. Thus, the work is on one hand firmly in the tradition of travel memoirs from the previous century, and, on the other, it had an appeal of the times.

The illustrated 1830 edition was readily accepted by the public, who enjoyed the trend of annuals or keepsakes, although *Italy* is rather exceptional. No other work could boast the luxury of so many carefully prepared illustrations of quality because it cost so much money and time. When preparing to publish *Pictures from Italy* in 1846, Charles Dickens wanted his book to be like Rogers's *Italy*. However, considering the difficulty of reproducing images in wood engravings, which were less expensive than steel engravings, and the publisher's wish to keep the publishing costs lower, he gave up the initial plan, and *Pictures from Italy* was published with only four wood engravings (*Letters of Dickens* 521, 624). The trouble Rogers took was rewarding. A great number of travel books on Italy were published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but most are no longer readable and have only historical value. Although Rogers's *Italy* is no longer in print either, it still has its appeal, that is, the harmony of words and images, which rouses the reader's curiosity and makes them aware of their yearning for the faraway.

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Appendix 1: Contents of each edition

1822 *Italy, a Poem. Part the First*	1823 edition	1824 edition	1828 *Italy, a Poem. Part the Second*	1830 *Italy* (with illustrations)	1839 edition
The Lake of Geneva	The Lake of Geneva	The Lake of Geneva		The Lake of Geneva	The Lake of Geneva
				Meillerie	Meillerie
				St. Maurice	St. Maurice
The Great St. Bernard	The Great St. Bernard	The Great St. Bernard		The Great St. Bernard	The Great St. Bernard
The Descent	The Descent	The Descent		The Descent	The Descent
Jorasse	Jorasse	Jorasse		Jorasse	Jorasse
Margaret De Tours	Marguerite De Tours	Marguerite de Tours		Marguerite de Tours	Marguerite de Tours
The Alps	The Alps	The Alps		The Alps	The Alps
Como	Como	Como		Como	Como
Bergamo	Bergamo	Bergamo		Bergamo	Bergamo
Italy	Italy	Italy		Italy	Italy
	Coll’alto	Coll’alto		Coll’alto	Coll’alto
Venice	Venice	Venice		Venice	Venice
Luigi	Luigi	Luigi		Luigi	Luigi
St. Mark’s Place	St. Mark’s Place	St. Mark’s Place		St. Mark’s Place	St. Mark’s Place
	The Gondola	The Gondola		The Gondola	The Gondola
The Brides of Venice	The Brides of Venice	The Brides of Venice		The Brides of Venice	The Brides of Venice
Foscari	Foscari	Foscari		Foscari	Foscari
				Marcolini	Marcolini

Appendix 1: Contents of each edition

Arquà	Arquà	Arquà		Arquà	Arquà
Ginevra	Ginevra	Ginevra		Ginevra	Ginevra
		Bologna		Bologna	Bologna
Florence	Florence	Florence		Florence	Florence
Don Garzìa	Don Garzìa	Don Garzìa		Don Garzìa	Don Garzìa
	The Campagna of Florence	The Campagna of Florence		The Campagna of Florence	The Campagna of Florence
			The Pilgrim	The Pilgrim	The Pilgrim
			An Interview	An Interview	An Interview
			Rome	Rome	Rome
			A Funeral	A Funeral	A Funeral
			National Prejudices	National Prejudices	National Prejudices
			The Campagna of Rome	The Campagna of Rome	The Campagna of Rome
			The Roman Pontiffs	The Roman Pontiffs	The Roman Pontiffs
			Caius Cestius	Caius Cestius	Caius Cestius
			The Nun	The Nun	The Nun
			The Fire-Fly	The Fire-Fly	The Fire-Fly
			Foreign Travel	Foreign Travel	Foreign Travel
			The Fountain	The Fountain	The Fountain
			Banditti	Banditti	Banditti
			An Adventure	An Adventure	An Adventure
			Naples	Naples	Naples
			The Bag of Gold	The Bag of Gold	The Bag of Gold

Appendix 1: Contents of each edition

			A Character	A Character	A Character
			Sorrento. Amalfi.		
			Pæstum	Pæstum	Pæstum
				Amalfi	Amalfi
			Monte Cassino	Monte Cassino	Monte Cassino
			The Harper	The Harper	The Harper
			The Feluca	The Feluca	The Feluca
			Andrea Doria		
				Genoa	Genoa
				Marco Griffoni	Marco Griffoni
			A Farewell	A Farewell	A Farewell (addition)
Notes	Notes and illustrations		Notes and illustrations	Notes	Notes

Doubles and Doppelgängers in Andersen's "The Mermaid[1]," Poe's "William Wilson," and Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*[2]

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In his Introduction to the Penguin Edition (2002) of *A Tale of Two Cities*, Richard Maxwell points out that even though this novel, employing a spectacular historical panorama as its setting and also a high number of characters, has succeeded in producing and giving the illusive or illusory impression as if it were a large-scale work, it actually is not:

> There are occasions in *A Tale* when hundreds, even thousands, of people do appear. The novel describes several scenes from the French Revolution which would call (and every so often have called) on the full resources of a major Hollywood studio [. . .] Nonetheless, it remains basically a small-scale work that somehow succeeds in giving a larger-than-life impression of itself. (Maxwell, "Introduction" ix; underline mine)

As Maxwell says, the plot construction of *A Tale of Two Cities* is rather compact, developing around the relationships among very limited few central characters, which has succeeded in presenting the plot as clearly traceable without becoming too complicated.

Part of the secret that has enabled this unusually successful combination of the compactness of the core plot and the magnificent settings on which Dickens develops could be traced back to some possible sources of inspiration that helped Dickens conceive his own novel. This paper, drawing upon some notable similarities in narrative devices and the plot pattern, considers the possibility of the thematic framework being based on prose works by Dickens's contemporaries: Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Mermaid" and "William Wilson," a short story by Edgar Allan Poe, specifically. The theme of physiognomical twins, or Doppelgänger, is commonly employed in these works as a device to effectively run the plot.

That Dickens and Poe fondly read and highly appreciated each other's works is a supposition on which some further new light was shed at the Annual Symposium of Dickens Fellowship Japan Branch in 2019. Episodes from the mutual literary exchange and personal friendship between Andersen and Dickens also are famously known. Louis James, drawing upon their common experience of being deprived of their childhood at quite an early age, explains the literary affinities between these writers:

> For both, childhood came to an abrupt end. When Andersen was eleven, his father died, and he was sent to work in the local paper mill. [. . .] For Dickens, sent to work in Warren's Blacking Factory at the age of twelve, the shock of immersion in an alien culture was even greater. The trauma placed the recovery of childhood innocence at the heart of Dickens's vision as it did of Andersen's.
>
> Aligned to a child's view of the world, Dickens's and Andersen's writing took on a quality more commonly associated with poetry than prose—the animation of the material world. (James 226)

Both Andersen and Dickens retained a tendency to romanticize childhood, aligning themselves with the innocent vision of idealized child characters. Though their friendship collapsed when Andersen's stay with Dickens, on his second visit to Britain in 1857, extended as long as five weeks so that the Dickens family came to feel wearied, there is no denying the significance of the influence Andersen exerted upon Dickens's creative imagination. Some elements Dickens seems to have borrowed from "The Mermaid" to be used in his novel *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), written just before this disastrous second visit of Andersen, have been detected by Louis James, who has found a parallel between Little Dorrit inquiring about the world outside the prison and the mermaid heroine asking her grandmother what the humans and their lives on land are like. Similarities between *A Tale of Two Cities* and "The Mermaid," on the other hand, do not seem to have hitherto drawn any critical attention. By comparatively observing the human relations among chief characters, however, some intriguing parallels could capture our attention.

From "The Mermaid" through *The Frozen Deep* to *A Tale of Two Cities*

Shortly before Andersen's second visit to Britain, Dickens is known to have been deeply and ardently involved in the theatrical performance of *The Frozen Deep*, a play whose nominal author is Wilkie Collins but to which Dickens himself also is believed to have much contributed toward its completion (Saijo 167). Dickens had an affair with Ellen Ternan, an actress performing in this play with him. As discussed by Saijo, *The Frozen Deep* played a great role in helping Dickens conceive of ideas for his *A Tale of Two Cities*. No copy of its original scenario version unfortunately exists, but the revised novel version published in 1866 is easily accessible through the Internet. We can see the germ of some

main elements constituting *A Tale of Two Cities*, for example, in the triangular relationship involving the young main characters of both sexes. It could also be pointed out, however, that even in *The Frozen Deep* already, some indebtedness to Andersen's "The Mermaid" seems detectable.

Richard Wardour, the male protagonist of *The Frozen Deep*, ends up in tragically sacrificing his life by rescuing his rival who is loved by Clara, the object of Richard's desperate love for the sake of the welfare of his beloved. There seems to exist a lineage, then, that is traceable from the little mermaid through Richard Wardour to Sydney Carton—a hypothesis which I hope could be demonstrated through comparing some scenes and episodes sharing notable resemblances.

The Frozen Deep, as its title suggests, has its main stage set on a sea voyage to the North Pole. Richard, having been rejected by Clara, to whom he had devoted his one-sided love for long, volunteers to go on board to relieve the pang, with an oath in his mind that he would surely kill the unseen rival who has won Clara's heart during his absence for military service, should he encounter him. Frank Alderley, his rival, coincidentally, participates in another yet similar Arctic expedition at the same time. Though initially they have launched on separate ships, Richard on "Wanderer" and Frank on "Sea Mew," respectively, Fate is to converge their courses as Clara, with a vein of clairvoyance in her, has feared: these two ships undergo wreck amid icebergs at the identical spot, so that crews from both expeditions join to cooperate together for survival. Richard then comes to identify Frank as his enemy to be revenged on and destroyed, on detecting the initials of Clara and Frank, inscribed by the latter on his bed, which are exposed when this bed is dismantled to be used as firewood. We could hear certain resonance of this scene in *A Tale of Two Cities*, in the episode of the discovery of the initials of Alexandre Manette on the wall of the cell after the demolition of the Bastille, which ironically leads Charles to be rearrested and to be brought on the verge of being executed.

The influence of Andersen's "The Mermaid" on *The Frozen Deep* would be demonstrated through some comparison of notably similar episodes in both works, including the depiction of the moment where the protagonists are driven by their murderous impulse nearly to satisfy it, but finally come to reconsider. Just as Charles in *A Tale of Two Cities*, would have surely been executed if it were not for Sydney's self-sacrificial help and wit, Frank in *The Frozen Deep*, too, being mentally gay but of delicate physical composition, falls into a crisis out of which he could never have survived on his own, without Richard's altruistic support and devotion.

It having become clear that there would be no prospect of their being discovered and rescued if they just remained camping on the same untrodden spot, half of the members

chosen by the throw of the dice set off from the hut to seek out their chances. Both of the rivals, Richard and Frank, are among those thus dispatched, but Frank, having become too weak to catch up with others, is left by the rest of the company on an iceberg under the care of Richard. All alone with Frank, who is so helplessly and defenselessly asleep, laying his head on his knee, Richard feels the life of his enemy to be completely within his power and at his mercy. Without any witness being present, he could now quite easily do away with Frank even without actively committing murder; only a small bit of negligence, or *dolus eventualis*, would suffice:

> Leave him neglected where he lies; and his death is a question of hours, perhaps minutes—who knows?
>
> Frank is dreaming, and murmuring in his dream. A woman's name passes his lips. Frank is in England again—at the ball—whispering to Clara the confession of his love.
>
> Over Richard Wardour's face there passes the shadow of a deadly thought. . . . The sleeper on the iceberg is the man who has robbed him of Clara—who has wrecked the hope and the happiness of his life. Leave the man in his sleep, and let him die!
>
> So the tempter whispers. (Collins 84-5)

It seems highly probable that this above episode was created, based on the scene in "The Mermaid" where the mermaid heroine is driven to mad fury on hearing her beloved prince murmur out his human bride's name in his sleep. This happens on the very night of the wedding of these human royalties which the mermaid had much feared.

After a storm attacked the ship where festive events celebrating his birthday were taking place and threw him into the sea, it was this mermaid who exerted her power to swim among the wreckage and raging water to safely bring back the fainted, unconscious prince to the seashore and laid him gently there to be easily exposed to people's view. However, having been deprived of her tongue and speech in exchange for the magical drug to turn her fishtail into human legs, she can never convey that fact to the prince, who, meanwhile, has been longing to be reunited with the human princess as the very saver of his life, though, in fact, this latter had only been enabled to find him thanks to the mermaid's kind arrangement. Their marriage meant the expiration of the mermaid's life on this world, and moreover, even without the prospect of any afterlife, for, an imperishable soul was to be given to her only on the occasion of the human prince's truly

loving her and taking her as his wife. To evade this fate, her sisters bring a knife to murder the prince with, so that, according to the witch's prescription, she can retrieve her mermaid body and life which could last for three hundred years:

> The little mermaid drew aside the purple hangings of the tent, and beheld the prince sleeping on the bosom of his beautiful bride; and she bent over them, and kissed his broad forehead, and looked again towards the east where the dawn grew brighter every instant. Then the prince's lips moved in his sleep and he spoke the name of his bride,--she only was in his thoughts,--and in frantic despair the mermaid raised the knife. (390)

On peering into the tent, where the newly-weds are resting, the mermaid first imprints upon the prince's forehead a kiss of farewell, a gesture of pathetic love and resignation. This gesture of kissing the loved one without being known, while the love object is unconscious, whether asleep or in a faint, is a recurrent one in "The Mermaid," where the heroine kissed the prince before the scene cited above, on rescuing him from the shipwreck, when the latter swooned away after being thrown into the sea. It also finds its resonance in *A Tale of Two Cities* where Sydney Carton, who is about to set out for the Conciergerie to replace Charles to be executed instead of him, expresses his desire to kiss the unconscious Lucie who has fainted (345), for whom he is to sacrifice his life. The reason the mermaid is "look[ing]" "towards the east" is she is keenly aware how the time remaining to her is limited; for at sunrise, her body is doomed to melt away into sea bubbles. The prince's act of murmuring his bride's name in a dream shows how fully and solely his mind is occupied with the thoughts of his newly-wed wife, never appreciating the true value of the self-sacrificial love dedicated to him by the little mermaid nor realizing how much he owes his life to her, this mermaid princess whom he has hitherto playfully and guiltlessly petted and trifled with. Has all her mute patience and devotion been in vain? Has he been worth the sacrifice at all? – These might be questions that cross her mind. "[F]rantic," she almost is driven to murder him. Nevertheless, at the next instant, rethinking, she bravely decides to give priority to the life of the one whom she "love[s] better than her own soul."

Likewise, Richard in *The Frozen Deep*, the role Dickens played in the dramatic performance, though repeatedly exposed to strong temptations to put an end to the life of his enemy and rival Frank, as he later confesses to Crayford, his superior and confidant, finally succeeds in suppressing that egotistic, murderous impulse; and, only for the sake of the happiness of his beloved Clara, he protects and keeps him alive, by always sharing

with him what little food and drink he could obtain. For this sacrifice, Richard himself in turn has become exhausted and enfeebled by the time he finally manages to hand over Frank to Clara, who has come over from England to America, seeking their tidings, when he flaunts a little his heroism: "'Saved, Clara!' he cried, 'Saved for you!' He released the man, and placed him in Clara's arms" (Collins 131). An echo of this cry by Richard could be heard in *A Tale of Two Cities*, when Sydney, having determined upon sacrificing his own life by being executed in Charles's place, murmurs: "A life you love" (Dickens 349); these words, though unheard, are dearly addressed to Lucie. Richard's cry also remains unheeded and unheard, for Clara is too rapt at this unexpected reunion with her lover, whom she has almost given up for dead after more than two years' absence and silence:

> She never answered; she clung to Frank in speechless ecstasy. She never even looked at the man who had preserved him—in the first absorbing joy of seeing her lover alive. Step by step, slower and slower, Richard Wardour drew back and left them by themselves. (*The Frozen Deep* 131)

Richard certainly resembles the little mermaid in that his strife and exertion to safely bring another body over the sea is never to be duly recognized, rewarded or appreciated by the beloved one. His posture of withdrawal, retreating from the foreground, as if to give up any hope of his own happiness while witnessing the others realize the very joy and happiness which he has dreamed and craved for, would remind the reader of the image of Sydney Carton depicted in the frontispiece to the first edition of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Hablot Knight Browne (fig.1). Sydney Carton, retreated in the background in shadow and melancholy, is observing the others who are carelessly courting, conversing and socializing. The source of such an image could be traced, via *The Frozen Deep*, further back to the little mermaid at the Prince's wedding, where she is compelled to celebrate the young couple, serving as a bridesmaid:

> The little mermaid stood behind the princess clothed in silk and gold, and held up the train of her bridal dress. But neither did her ear hear the solemn music, nor her eye see the holy ceremony; —she was thinking of her death, and of the hopes of love and the world to come which she had lost for ever. ("The Mermaid" 389)

"[Richard's] noble-mindedness allowing him to throw away his life for the woman he loves must have been generated out of Dickens's pursuit of a new hero unbound by existing moral values. It goes without saying that this was to be the theme of his next

novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*," Takao Saijo says (167). The setting of the play and the novel *The Frozen Deep* is said to have been modelled on an actual historical incident, a shipwreck during a polar expedition, "the ill-fated 1845 Franklin expedition to discover the Northwest Passage" (Gasson) and the subsequent cannibalism that occurred. Should there be any way for humans to remain humane and not degenerate into sheer egotism and brutality under such an extreme situation? Contemplating upon and exploring such a question in his mind, Dickens might have found a great clue in the notion of altruistic love that can overcome any murderous and egotistic impulse, or even instincts of self-preservation, as presented in Andersen's mermaid.

Fig. 1. "Frontispiece" to the first edition of *A Tale of Two Cities*. Project Gutenberg. www.gutenberg.org/files/98/98-h/98-h.htm

Sydney/the Mermaid Rescuing Charles/ the Prince over a Raging Sea

Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*, like the little mermaid and Richard Wardour, is a protagonist who dies a self-sacrificial death so as to ensure happiness for the object of his unrequited love. The recurrent metaphor, or motif, or his struggle against the harsh, raging sea, supported by the power and strength of his love, also is inherited from "The Mermaid" and *The Frozen Deep*. While in both "The Mermaid" and *The Frozen Deep*, two contrastive stages, the land and the sea, have been employed, so that events are unfolded and develop in separate ways, following their respective, distinct logics, in *A Tale of Two Cities* two capitals--the steadily unchanging London, and the radically metamorphosing Paris at the commencement of the Revolution, in which existing social and moral values are at once subverted, thrown down and nullified--are quite consciously confronted. It seems highly likely that such a clearly dualistic construction of *A Tale of Two Cities* owes much to the land vs. sea opposition in "The Mermaid."

The social and political turbulence under the Revolution constantly is described through metaphors of a stormy and raging sea, "a great storm in France with a dreadful sea rising" (221) whose echo reaches the then peaceful household of the Darnays in London, where the little Lucie, the daughter of Lucie and Charles, is being soundly nurtured and raised. Then, in the next chapter entitled "The Sea Still Rises," the mob crowding toward the Bastille forms and constitutes a great wave in Paris: "[T]he living sea rose wave on wave, depth on depth, and overflowed the city to that point. Alarm-bells ringing, drums beating, the sea raging and thundering on its new beach, the attack begun" (223-4). Charles's deadly adventure into this turbulence is doomed to shipwreck, just like the two Polar expeditions in *The Frozen Deep*. Like the prince in "The Mermaid," who, but for the little mermaid's unseen and unrecognized exertion, would certainly have drowned, or Frank in *The Frozen Deep* who, without Richard's self-devotion, would have perished in the midst of the frozen ocean, Charles could never return alive from the voyage he has launched himself upon without the sacrificial deed of Sydney Carton.

Seeing that he is seriously in danger, Sydney, who had once made a prophetic oath to Lucie; "For you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything. If my career were of that better kind that there was any opportunity or capacity of sacrifice in it, I would embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you" (107-8). He sets out to Paris to save Charles at the cost of his own life, thus proving true to his words. On confronting for the first time with, and hearing the terrifying words of, Madame Defarge, the lethal enemy of the Darnays and the embodiment of vengeful spirit with her heart set upon eliminating all the family members of the St. Evrémondes, including Charles and even

his little daughter Lucie, Sydney Carton reflects that “it might be a good deed to seize [her] arm, lift it, and stab under it sharp and deep” (354), but decides to leave and release her intact. This episode could be read as homage and allusion to the little mermaid who, though once having wielded her knife on the verge of stabbing the prince to death, on second thoughts, decides to sacrifice her own life to let him live on.

The heroic and sacrificial acts of Sydney, like those of the little mermaid, remain unseen and unrecognized, his unconditional love likewise unreturned and unrequited. Though the lawyer Mr. Stryver is recognized, regarded and applauded as the benefactor of Charles who successfully rescued his life through his performance in court, it has actually been Sydney Carton who has diligently prepared for the brilliant performance of Stryver and come upon the decisively clever idea of pointing to the amazing physiognomical resemblance between Charles and himself. While Charles shows his gratitude towards Stryver, saying: “You have laid me under an obligation to you for life—in two senses” (83); that is, he owes his “life” to Stryver and would feel obliged to him as long as he lives, no thankful words are to be poured upon Sydney Carton: “Nobody had made any acknowledgement of Mr. Carton’s part in the day’s proceedings; nobody had known of it” (85). Sydney, employed under Stryver, somehow seems compelled to be in a muted, hidden and ghost-like position to secretly support him, which might be comparable to Dickens’s position in the composition of the play *The Frozen Deep*, whose authorship ostensibly was ascribed to Wilkie Collins while Dickens remained a ghost-writer: “The Frozen Deep was written by Collins during 1856, although conceived, cast and revised by Dickens” (Gasson). This muted obscurity, too, links Sydney to the little mermaid, who has been deprived of her voice and words to convey that it is she who has played the chief role in saving the prince’s life even at the risk of her own.

Later, Charles, who has once retrieved his freedom thanks to Sydney’s wit and effort, is arrested again to be imprisoned in the Conciergerie, as the document Dr Manette had hid embedded into the wall of the Bastille is taken out to be used as evidence against him. There, on the night before his planned execution, Charles writes farewell letters to his wife, his father-in-law, and Mr. Lorry, a devoted friend of the family, but “never even [thinks]” of Mr Sydney Carton:

> He wrote a long letter to Lucie. To her father, he wrote in the same strain; but, he told her father that he expressly confided his wife and child to his care. To Mr Lorry, he commended them all, and explained his worldly affairs. That done, with many added sentences and grateful friendship and warm attachment, all was done. <u>He never thought of Carton. His mind was so full of the others that he never once</u>

thought of him. (361-2; emphasis mine)

Intriguingly, the narrative here seems to be intentionally putting emphasis upon the fact that Sydney's presence is completely obliterated from Charles's mind, there being no room left for him. We can find a parallel between him and the mermaid, whose presence is totally obliterated, on the fatal night when her life is to expire, from the prince's mind totally occupied with the thoughts of his bride.

Having seen off her husband taken to the Conciergerie, Lucie swoons; then, Sydney, having hitherto concealed himself in a dark corner, instantly runs towards her to support her, but insists upon quitting the spot before she recovers herself to see he is there. At the same time, however, he expresses his desire to be allowed to kiss the forehead of the unconscious Lucie, as if to trace faithfully the life course of Andersen's mermaid:

> "Before I go," he said, and paused—"I may kiss her?"
>
> It was remembered afterwards that when he bent down and touched her face with his lips, he murmured some words. The child, who was nearest to him, told them afterwards, and told her grandchildren when she was a handsome old lady, that she heard him say, "A life you love." (349)

Just as the little mermaid feels "rejoiced" (389) to hear the prince, whom she has saved, being highly spoken of by peasants, Carton, too, shows a "flush of pride" (349) in the above scene, both physically supporting Lucie from the fall and also having determined upon sacrificing himself for her.

Physiognomical Twins

Let us hereafter turn our eyes to one intriguingly conspicuous element, or device, which has made Sydney resemble Andersen's little mermaid closer than Richard in *The Frozen Deep*: the protagonist possesses an outward appearance almost identical to that of his rival in love. In *The Frozen Deep*, while the heartbroken Richard is of a rough type, called the "Bear of the Expedition" (53), the triumphant Frank is such "a young officer," a "bright, handsome, gentlemanlike lad" (24) that Mrs. Crayford, Clara's confidante, understands him as "just the person to seriously complicate the difficulty with Richard Wardour" (24). Then in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens brings a new setting by which Charles and Sydney, two rivals over the love of Lucie, are formed to resemble each other in appearance so much that they can be indistinguishable at times. This, of course, functions as a necessary condition for Sydney to devise tricks to miraculously save Charles's life twice; first, in

the first court scene, by subverting the credibility of the witness's testimony that he is "quite sure" that the person he has seen is nobody other than Charles (76), and then secondly and lastly, by dissimulating his identity to replace Charles to get executed. At the same time, however, it is worth noting that this motif of physiognomic twins is highly likely to have been borrowed from Andersen's "The Mermaid."

The human prince, though living with the little mermaid under the same roof, is never hit by the idea that this maid of unknown identity could be his benefactress he should feel grateful to, and yearns for the maiden inhabiting a convent whom he believes to be the saver of his life:

> "[. . .] I was once on board a ship, which was wrecked in a sudden storm, and the waves washed me on shore near a convent wherein many maidens lead a religious life; and the youngest amongst these maidens found me lying senseless on the shore, and she saved my life. I saw her but once, and yet her image is ever before me, and she is the only woman whom I can ever love. But thou art strangely like her, -- so like that at times thy image effaces her from my soul; and she whom I love belongs to God alone, but thou wert sent by fate to comfort me, and never will I part from thee!" ("The Mermaid" 387)

Thus, the prince cruelly declares that he cannot love the mermaid since she does not deserve it--he feels he owes her nothing, but that she remains his favourite just because of her resemblance to the one he really longs to reencounter, as a kind of a surrogate. On hearing this, the poor mermaid sorely laments in desperation:

> "Woe is me! he knows not that I it was who saved him!" thought the mermaiden, with a heavy sigh. "I bore him through the angry waves to the grove wherein the convent stands; I hid myself behind the rocks, and watched until some one should come to help him; and, alas! I saw the beautiful maiden approach, whom he loves more than me!" ("The Mermaid" 387)

Her act of helping the loved one unite with her rival also underlines her resemblance to Sydney.

It would be appropriate to consider what significance lies in one's bearing a very similar physical appearance to that of one's rival. In the period when Dickens lived and was active, that did not just simply mean that the person possesses a similar degree of physical or sexual attraction, but would imply there being similarities also inside, even

under the visible surface. The science of physiognomy schematized and systematized the correspondence between the outward and inward qualities of human beings, based on the firm belief that the former should always faithfully reflect the latter. Johann Kaspar Lavater, a Swiss clergyman regarded as the authority on this branch of science who remained influential throughout the nineteenth century, stated:

> The moral life of man, particularly, reveals itself in the lines, marks, and transitions of the countenance. His moral powers and desires, his irritability, sympathy, and antipathy; his facility of attracting or repelling the objects that surround him; these are all summed up in, and painted upon, his countenance when at rest. (Lavater 8-9)

That Dickens held a strong interest in this science of physiognomy is evident from the fact that he focused on the topic of the "physiognomy of door-knockers" in an essay entitled "Our Next-Door Neighbour," collected in *Boz's Sketches*:

> For instance, there is one description of knocker that used to be common enough, but which is fast passing away—a large round one, with the jolly face of a convivial lion smiling blandly at you, as you twist the sides of your hair into a curl or pull up our shirt-collar while you are waiting for the door to be opened; we never saw that knocker on the door of a churlish man—so far as our experience is concerned, it invariably bespoke hospitality and another bottle. (Dickens, "Our next-door neighbour" 23)

Though, in the above quotation, he might appear to be employing his physiognomic knowledge rather playfully and jokingly, that does not necessarily mean that Dickens found this branch of science an object of jest, for, as Taylor M. Scanlon discusses, his character descriptions in *A Tale of Two Cities* are largely based on the physiognomical theory of the school of Lavater:

> As I have suggested thus far, the role of physiognomy in *A Tale of Two Cities* is to reduce the ostensibly terrifying collective of the crowds to the recognizable singularities, thus homogenizing potentially threatening masses to legible—and therefore knowable—individuals. (Scanlon 19)

Scanlon argues that the employment of physiognomy in this novel functions to simplify and reduce the "collective of the crowds" to legible signs, with a special focus on the

analysis of facial descriptions of Marquis St. Evrémonde and Madame Defarge, while, curiously, never even touching on the issue of the physical resemblance between Charles and Sydney. Nevertheless, if, as Scanlon claims, the outward appearances of characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* function as legible signs that faithfully reflect their inward natures, should their almost identical outward forms not mean they also share almost identical inward qualities and personalities?

When Stryver asks Sydney how the latter could come up with the idea of bringing out the issue of "identification" at court to save Charles, Sydney answers: "I thought he was rather a handsome fellow, and I thought I should have been much the same sort of fellow, if I had had any luck" (91). These words should not be thrown aside as just a vain or groundless remark: if the same physignomical features mean the presence of the same inherent potential, then what Sydney puts in the subjunctive mood; "I should have been much the same sort of fellow" could sound quite plausible: there might be a significant truth in it. It is indicated that though much was expected of him in his youth ("Long ago, when he had been famous among his earliest competitors as a youth of great promise" [325]), he came to be obscured by outward circumstances including Stryver's presence, to be what he is now. Charles is described and defined as "a young man of about five-and-twenty, well-grown and well-looking, with a sunburnt cheek and a dark eye": "His condition was that of a young gentleman" (65). A surprising resemblance lurks between him and Sydney, whom the narrator endearingly calls "my learned friend": "[A]llowing for my learned friend's appearance being careless and slovenly, they were sufficiently like each other to surprise, not only the witness, but everybody present, when they were thus brought into comparison" (77). Inherently endowed with identical qualities to those of Charles, though, Sydney has differentiated himself through acquired habits, attitudes and feelings:

> Something especially reckless in his demeanour, not only gave him a disreputable look, but so diminished the strong resemblance he undoubtedly bore to the prisoner (which his momentary earnestness, when they were compared together, had strengthened), that many of the lookers-on, taking note of him now, said to one another they would hardly have thought the two were so alike. (79)

A vicious cycle seems to have formed as his frustration in life leads to dependence on and addiction to alcohol and thus to further dilapidation. The way Sydney deploringly talks to his image in the mirror could remind the reader of Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray facing his dilapidated self in the fatal portrait:

> ‘Do you particularly like the man?’ he muttered, at his own image; ‘why should you particularly like a man who resembles you? There is nothing in you to like; you know that. Ah, confound you! What a change you have made in yourself! A good reason for taking to a man, that he shows you what you have fallen away from and what you might have been! Change places with him, and would you have been looked at by those blue eyes as he was, and commiserated by that agitated face as he was? Come on, and have it out in plain words! You hate the fellow.’ He resorted to his pint of wine for consolation [. . .]   (*A Tale of Two Cities* 89)

Indeed, for Sydney, Charles is what he “should have been” or could have been, if he “had had any luck” (91).

Sydney’s words in the above quotation could also remind the reader of the little mermaid’s lament on the discovery the human princess is taking the place where she herself should have been: “Woe is me! he knows not that I it was who saved him!” This mermaid heroine is endowed with a beautiful appearance similar to the bride and supposedly with similar inward qualities accompanying it as well. Moreover, since the decisive factor in the prince’s choice of his bride has been who saved him from the stormy sea, the mermaid would have been much more highly qualified than the human princess, had she not been deprived of speech.

Why has Dickens created and so sympathetically depicted such a hero sorely suffering from a hopeless love, and ever powerless to express himself? Perhaps one could detect a resonance of his own unrequited love for Maria Beadnell, to whom he devoted four years’ passion in vain; or the frustration he had undergone still earlier in life, when he had to quit school due to his family debt and penury, while his sister Fanny was still allowed to pursue her musical training and succeed, applauded and admired on all sides:

> Fanny received one of the prizes given to the pupils of the Royal Academy of Music. “I could not bear to think of myself—beyond the reach of all such honorable emulation and success. The tears ran down my face. I felt as if my heart were rent. I prayed, when I went to bed that night, to be lifted out of the humiliation and neglect in which I was. I never had suffered so much before. There was no envy in this.” (Forster Vol. I, 66)

The young Charles, who had hitherto been a pupil no less brilliant than his sister and naturally expected to pursue his studies up to a higher level, was abruptly deprived of that

prospect and Sydney, who is haunted by the ghost of "what should have been" might represent part of Dickens's own self.

Adding to these biographical speculations, I would like to mention still another possible literary sourced from which Dickens seems likely to have drawn inspiration: "William Wilson" by Edgar Allan Poe. This short story of mysterious and monstrous touch is known to have had influence upon Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as well. The first-person narrator, who calls himself by the pseudonym "William Wilson," is annoyed by a boy pupil having the same name as and very similar appearance to his, first in the boys' boarding school. Though Wilson, the narrator, strives to be on top of others, the other Wilson seems able to attain the same level with ease, quite without effort, and preferring to remain in obscurity so that the narrator can be recognizable as outstanding and conspicuous. The narrator is tormented by the doubt that the real winner should be the other Wilson, not himself. Even after leaving the boarding school, at Eton and Oxford also, whenever the narrator is on the verge of committing some deed that could irretrievably incur his degradation or perdition, the other Wilson appears from nowhere to intrude and intercept. This almost supernatural character of the other Wilson has hitherto been interpreted as the super ego or the conscience of the narrator, but when we picture these two Wilsons quite literally as two distinct individuals bearing identical qualities both internal and external, then their relationship can be overlapped with that between Charles and Sydney. For Sydney, Charles is an invincible rival who has attained the ideal happiness which remains forever unattainable to him despite much devotion, effort and identical physiognomic features; and for Charles, Sydney is an almost supernatural agent appearing from nowhere to intervene in his life at decisive moments. The narrator's confession; "I could not bring myself to hate him altogether. [. . .] Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companion" (Poe, "William Wilson" 221) finds an echo in Sydney's soliloquy; "[W]hy should you particularly like a man who resembles you? There is nothing in you to like; you know that. Ah, confound you! What a change you have made in yourself! [. . .] Come on, and have it out in plain words! You hate the fellow" (*A Tale of Two Cities* 89).

Thus, as we have seen, one clue to the secret of the compactness of the scale of *A Tale of Two Cities* might arguably be traced back to the compactness of some literary sources like "The Mermaid" and "William Wilson," with whose protagonists Dickens could identify himself, and in whose frameworks he found receptacles to give vent to his hidden emotions, upon which his novel came to be modelled.

Notes

1 This title, under which Andersen's fairy tale appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany*, is adopted in this paper for referring to it, though "The Little Mermaid" is the English title now more commonly used and also faithful to the original Danish title "Den Lille Havfrue."

2 This is an English version of a paper orally presented at the Dickens Fellowship Japan Branch Annual Meeting on 3rd October, 2020, entitled "Doppelgängers and Doubles in Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," and Poe's "William Wilson" (「*A Tale of Two Cities*, アンデルセン『人魚姫』、ポー"William Wilson"におけるドッペルゲンガーのテーマ」).

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Secrets Veiled and Unveiled: Wilde's *Femme Fatale* Images and Their French Sources

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Introduction

Even though Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* and Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations to it are now regarded as an inseparably entwined set, to constitute the epitome of the decadent culture and atmosphere of the British *fin-de-siècle*, it is equally a well-known fact that Wilde, though admitting the younger artist's talent and appreciative insights, showed repugnance towards the illustrations actually executed. Critics have hitherto speculated on the reason why Wilde exhibited such a negative response—some argue that Wilde was upset by Beardsley's act of caricaturing the playwright himself on three of the plates, most famously the "frontispiece drawing 'The Woman in the Moon'" (Owens 12). However, the chief factor must have resided in the clash between their respective artistic visions towards this dramatic piece; Wilde could not approve of Beardsley's interpretation and the general tone of his execution, which, to Wilde's eyes, seemed to greatly misrepresent what he had conceived as the essence of the play and the heroine as an ideal *femme fatale*, and his philosophy of art to be represented through them. While Beardsley, daringly challenging the Victorian taboos and conventions, boldly exposed sexual and erotic elements in crudely and comically obscene ways, Wilde had aimed to wrap and embrace his moonlit dramatic space and decadent princess in misty, mystique and mystifying veils, not in farce and obscenity, and thereby to represent through them much of his philosophy

of art, love and life. Influences of French artists, especially Gustave Moreau, admittedly much contributed to the formation of such an emblematic *femme fatale* figure.

This thesis aims to analyze how Wilde has been fascinated with the trope of the "fatal women," how he has exploited the existing stereotypes while differentiating his own creation from them, and what he has intended to convey through his employment of such tropes. Though well aware that the *femme fatale* images created and presented by Wilde and their French connections have already been the subject of much study and discussion, it still attempts, by exploring specifically how Moreau's sphinx and Salome images inspired Wilde in combination, to shed further lights upon the symbolical significance such female prototypes have been intended to bear. The first chapter focusses on a much underread and undervalued short tale "The Sphinx without a Secret," as an excellent example that shows the notion held by the author as to what it is to be a *femme fatale*, an awareness of the fatal curse incurred upon those who try to exert mysterious allure upon others—an awareness or insight which might arguably have been gained through the author's getting in contact with Moreau's painting *Oedipus and Sphinx* (1864) and which would also resonate his later work *Salome*. To be considered together with this story is the poem *The Sphinx*, which presents the ideal prototype of the *femme fatale* conceived by Wilde, endowed with a legendary and supernatural capacity to transform herself illimitably in multifarious forms. This mystique figure, by creating and recreating ever renewed aura of indecipherable mystery, succeeds in escaping any ultimate or definite identification. Then the second chapter is devoted to an analysis of the characterization of the heroine Salome, to reveal how she is constructed to embody her author's artistic principles. Despite the warning Wilde has given to the reader in his own "Preface" to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; "All art is at once surface and symbol./ Those who go beneath

the surface do so at their peril" (*Dorian Gray* 4), the temptation of biographical interpretation might not be so totally resisted.

Chapter One

A Portrait of an Artist as a Sphinx

"The Sphinx without a Secret" literally can be read as a story of a woman who, feeling compelled to live up to an ideal of a mysterious *femme fatale*, succeeds in enveloping herself in a mysterious and secretive aura and thus attracting a "Lord Murchinson" in a maddening way. In *The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale in British Literature, 1790-1910*, Heather Braun casually touches on this story and then dismisses it only within the following few lines:

> Wilde's short story "The Sphinx without a Secret" begins to break down the imposing image of the "Sphinx" and the bewildering conclusion of *Salomé*. In this story, Wilde's narrator falls for a familiar woman of mystery, "a Gioconda in sables," and does all he can to learn more about her. "Lady Alroy was simply a woman with a mania for mystery. She took these rooms for the pleasure of going there with her veil down, and imagining she was a heroine. She had a passion for secrecy, but she herself was merely a Sphinx without a secret" (Wilde, "Sphinx" l.3). What his detective skills uncover is her fondness for anonymity and secrets. (Braun 122-3)

The above reading by Braun, shallow as well as inaccurate, leaves much to be criticized. Firstly, the male character who "falls for" the heroine is not "Wilde's narrator" but the

narrator's old friend from university days. Moreover, it does not seem very appropriate to put aside the essence of this heroine simply as "her fondness for anonymity and secrecy," just unquestioningly accepting the narrator's words which might have been put to relieve his friend's chagrin, even though the speaker did not believe in his own words. A careful and close reading would bring to light many motifs and images that are shared between "The Sphinx without a Secret" and *Salomé*, indicating that in the former work Wilde already had struck an undertone that would convey his philosophy of art and life, and resonate through many works into the later play *Salome*. It could be suggested, therefore, that though tending to be deemed as rather slight, this short piece deserves more serious consideration, and it might owe much to Gustave Moreau for its main concept.

The heroine Lady Alroy is introduced into the narrative when the unnamed narrator happens to "come across" (215) Lord Gerald Murchinson, his old friend from Oxford days, unexpectedly at a café in Paris. Detecting "anxious and puzzled" (215) expression on the latter's face, the narrator asks him to tell him about the "mystery in [his] life" (215); and in response to it, a "photograph of a woman" (215) is produced from his pocket: "She was tall and slight, and strangely picturesque with her large vague eyes and loosened hair. She looked like a *clairvoyante*" (215). Thus is the first impression the narrator receives from her appearance, which already is characterized with mystic and esoteric inscrutability. Asked to put his opinions about this face, the narrator further "examine[s] it carefully," which only strengthens the impressions of and associations with some undefinable secrecy: "It seemed to me the face of someone who had a secret, but whether that secret was good or evil I could not say. Its beauty was a beauty moulded out of many mysteries—the beauty, in fact, which is psychological, not plastic" (215-6). Thus, this unknown woman's chief attraction is composed of "many mysteries," or more exactly, a

suggestion of there being many mysteries. Then narrator's subsequent words of judgement from the reading of this face are: "She is the Gioconda in sables" (216). This reference to "Gioconda," of course, could be associated not only with the famous portrait by Leonardo da Vinci, but also with the laudatory description made of her by Walter Pater in *The Renaissance*:

> She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. (Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* 118-9)

What is presented here in rich and bountiful vocabulary far exceeds the stature of any life-sized image of a single human female being: the Gioconda is conceived rather as a vast container as profound and inscrutable as the universe, an exhaustible resource of multiple and multiplex images of all that are great, mythical, and female. What, then, thus characterizes this female image in this specific painting with such inscrutability and enables her to freely assume an unlimited range of roles and identities could be ascribed, partly at least, to the vagueness and the illegibility of her expression. Her indefinable, enigmatic smile invites and encourages limitless readings and interpretation. What the

Victorian critic Edward Dowden has pointed out about Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; "Shakspeare [sic] created it [=*Hamlet*] a mystery, and therefore it is forever suggestive, and never wholly explicable" (Dowden 126) could also hold true to the Gioconda, and is the very effect Lady Alroy, the heroine of Wilde's story, aims to produce and assume.

The impression Lord Murchinson receives of Lady Alroy on their second encounter at Madame de Rastail's dinner party is told in association with the "moonbeam" and "gray lace," which would remind the reader of the combination of the "moon" and the "veils," motifs employed in *Salome* in conspicuous ways: "She came in very slowly, looking like a moonbeam in grey lace" (216). Moreover, when, on heading to his uncle's place, he unexpectedly witnesses her in an unlikely place, one of the "lot of shabby little streets" (217), she is wearing a "veil": "Suddenly I saw in front of me Lady Alroy, deeply veiled and walking very fast" (217). Both the moon and the veil hinder any full and ultimate revelation of identities, controlling the degree of being exposed, as we will consider more fully in the next chapter on *Salome*. Lady Alroy then is further compared to "one of those strange crystals that one sees in museums, which are at one moment clear, and at another clouded" (217), again strengthening the impression of the tantalizing illegibility, of a always partly concealed identity never to be fully exposed or detected.

On seeing her entering one of the houses on the above mentioned "shabby" street, Lord Murchinson, now seriously in love with her, is tormented with suspicions and keeps asking her whom she has been meeting there, but her answer simply is that "[she] went to meet no one" (218) and that is the whole and only truth. An interview with her landlady after the sudden death also seems to support the truth of her enunciation. Lord Murchinson, though craving for the truth, has paradoxically been attracted by the mysterious invisibility of the whole truth about her: "I was infatuated with her: In spite of the mystery,

I though then—in consequent of it, I see now" (217).

What is worth noting is that Lady Alroy, though sometimes lying and dissimulating, does not seem to be enjoying the secrecy light-heartedly or triflingly but does seem to be quite seriously and engaged in it. In danger of detection, she "[grows] very pale" (206), again underlining the parallel between herself and Salome. She is aware her chief attraction lies in the power of mystery with which she has successfully enveloped herself—for her, "self-fashioning" is a life-and-death matter. Here, we can be reminded of the cynical epigram put by Lord Henry in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "Knowledge would be fatal. It is the uncertainty that charms one. A mist makes things wonderful" (196) and "All ways end at the same point" (196), that is "disillusion" (197). In her attempt to evade the fate of Sibyl Vane, who loses her attraction on parting with illusions and performativity, Lady Alroy ends up finding herself in an impasse. Such image of hers could be possibly overlapped with that of the author Wilde himself, who was suspected of "posing as a sodomite" (Counter 349) as a fashion, and much of the attraction of whose social comedies depended upon the hidden, secret identities of the characters, a device effectively employed, for example, in *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Lady Alroy could be regarded as a representative of the artists who are trapped within the difficult space between truth and performance, artistic ideals and commercial success. She is an artist who makes her life an art.

Why, then, is this heroine to be called "The Sphinx without a Secret"? To consider this, we should review the image of the "Sphinx" conceived by Wilde as the prototype of a *femme fatale*, as is presented rather playfully in his long poem titled *The Sphinx*, which John Stokes calls "Wilde's most Baudelairean poem" (65), referring to "Baudelaire's domestic cat" (Stokes 65). This poem is addressed to a "sphinx," who, though not

elucidated, seems to a domesticated member of the feline tribe: "In a dim corner of my room for longer than my fancy thinks/ A beautiful and silent Sphinx has watched me through the shifting gloom" (Wilde, *The Sphinx* 833). Though apparently tractable at a glance, her contour soon dims with the overflow of magnificently multiplex images:

> A thousand weary centuries are thine while I have hardly seen
> Some twenty summers cast their green for Autumn's gaudy liveries,
>
> But you can read the Hieroglyphs on the great sand-stone obelisks,
> And you have talked with Basilisks, and you have looked on Hippogriffs.
>
> O tell me, were you standing by when Isi to Osiris knelt? (833-4)

This Sphinx, as the narrator pictures, might have survived, making love with various godheads of different religious sects. While Baudelairean influence and Egyptological passion are observed here in evident forms, the image of Pater's "Gioconda" also can be overlapped with this sphinx image with its vast historical scale, in whose creation Wilde must have quite consciously exploited the stereotype of *femme fatale*. Free of any ultimate definition or identification, such is the ideal *femme fatale* Lady Alroy has aspired to be.

Adding to the sources already mentioned above, it should be also pointed out that Wilde might have received much of the inspiration for the character Lady Alroy from paintings by Gustave Moreau, notably *Oedipus and Sphinx* (1864; Fig.1).

Fig. 1. Gustave Moreau, *Oedipus and Sphinx*. 1864.

www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437153

What impresses the viewer of this painting could be the feelings of tension. For the Sphinx depicted here as well as for Lady Alroy, the riddle, or the mystery, is no trifling matter but a serious issue of life-and-death, for the solution and revelation of it means she should perish therewith. Therefore, the expression on the face of the Sphinx, of a rather helplessly

small size, is that of nervous tension and seriousness.

Lady Alroy, likewise, makes her best to allure by the power of her mysterious attraction, which she tactfully and earnestly produces and assumes, until her tacts of mystery-making are exhausted and she thereby expires. If she prefigures the tough destiny that would await her author, then so does Salome, as we would look closely in the next chapter. While it has been recorded that Wilde had seen Moreau's *The Apparition* in London, which certainly much contributed to the creation of the play *Salome* (Kawamura 22), it is also quite tempting to speculate on the possibility that Wilde's sphinx images, too, might have received substantial influence from those by Moreau.

Chapter Two

The Re-velation of Salome

This chapter will discuss Wilde's figuration of Salome as a *femme fatale*, comparatively analyzing it with representations by Moreau and Beardsley. As I mentioned in the introduction, it is well known that Wilde did not care for Beardsley's illustrations. Wilde engaged Beardsley to illustrate his Salome, expecting a "Byzantine style like Gustave Moreau's" (Ellmann 355). It is well known that he did not care for the end product. As Richard Ellmann notes, he lamented: "My Herod is like the Herod of Gustave Moreau, wrapped in his jewels and sorrows. My Salome is a mystic, the sister of Salammbo, a Saint Theresa who worshipped the moon " (Ellmann 355). Her dance is supposed to be "more metaphysical than physical" (Ellmann 355).

Wilde's idea of Salome can be explained by analyzing his philosophy of art, depicted in his essay *The Decay of Lying*. Wilde was also a great admirer of Flaubert's

Herodias (Maya 45), and his *Salome* was very much influenced by the work. However, a careful comparison of the two works reveals that there are, of course, differences between them. By analyzing these differences, some characteristics of Wilde's version of Salome will be explained, and that she is an embodiment of his artistic vision will be suggested. As a prerequisite before my theory, I would give a brief how Salome came into being, along with the universality of the theme of *femme fatale*.

The legend of Salome originates from an episode about St. John, described in the New Testament in the third and fourteenth chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, the first and sixth chapters of the Gospel of Mark and the third chapter of the Gospel of Luke. In the description in the Bible, after performing "a peculiar dance which is not considered in Syria to be suitable for a noble woman" (Shintani 50; my translation), Herodias orders her daughter to ask for Jokanaan's head. At this point, she is not given the name Salome. Later, a young girl at her mother's beck and call, was gradually transformed into a representative of the *femme fatale*. In order to grind accurately the meaning of *femme fatale* in reading this paper, I will borrow the words of Mr. Ono and Mario Praz to describe it. "*Femme fatale* means 'woman of destiny' in French and often appears as a motif in literature and painting" (Ono). According to the *Larousse Encyclopaedia*, "a *femme fatale* is a woman whose charms seem to have been sent by fate to ruin the man she has fallen in love with" (quoted in Ono). Furthermore, "as a reminder that the type was produced so frequently, even in classical antiquity, that it became almost an obsession. [. . .] their lecherous loves which spread ruin and perdition among men" (Praz 199-200).

It was Gustave Moreau, a leading figure in French symbolism, who contributed greatly to Salome's being called a representative of the *femme fatale*. "In the nineteenth

century, Salomé was transformed into a bewitching young woman whose sensuality and sinful scent dazzled men. Moreau was the artist who made the greatest contribution to this transformation" (Forest 57; my translation). Needless to say, his paintings would go on to influence the artists that followed. "Moreau's paintings *Salome Dancing before Herod* and 'The Apparition' influenced Huysmans' sensual and concrete depiction of them in *A rebours* and Gustave Flaubert's *Herodias*" (Maya 48; my translation). Wilde, who was "at home in French literature" (Ellmann 202), wrote *Salome* first in French, and three years later published an English translation.

The play *Salome* was not just generated out of Wilde's originality only, but was schemed and constructed as a consciously intertextual project, incorporating sources and influences from many different people. When one looks into the intertextuality of *Salome*, one realizes that Wilde must have consciously recognized and taken into account the existence of the artistic and literary lineage that had created the *femme fatale* stereotype, and tried to break new ground. With this in mind, I will try to analyze, from my own point of view, what Wilde was trying to tell us through *Salome.*

Beardsley drew the cover and ten illustrations for Wilde's English translation of *Salome*, published in 1894. Reportedly, Wilde was discontent about Beardsley's illustrations, saying that his designs were " like the naughty scribbles a precocious schoolboy makes on the margins of his copybooks " (quoted in Donohue 122). The difference in the way Wilde and Beardsley perceive the nature of the *femme fatale* has already been discussed, but I will examine the argument anew from a different perspective than Donohue, who says "Salome has become the victim of an embattled patriarchal society's remorseless revenge" (Donohue 135). Wilde criticized Beardsley's illustrations not simply because of the "naughtiness" but because the latter's satirical

illustrations seemed to intentionally distort and misrepresent Wilde's ideals and passion for the *femme fatale*. Beardsley's *Salome* is not a visualization of Wilde's play *Salome*, but a completely new and free version of his fantasy.

Admittedly, Wilde called Beardsley "the only artist who, besides myself, knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance" (Donohue 123). If so, Beardsley should have understood the nature of *femme fatale* Wilde wanted to represent. Instead, by following and pursuing his own principles, he totally neglected Wilde's authorial intention, sneaking mischief and fun into his illustrations. For example, he put a caricature of Wilde's face on the Moon, and he painted sexual objects on it. Wilde was disgusted with the way in which that Beardsley expressed secrets of his sexuality.

The heroine Salome became a battleground between Wilde and Beardsley, in terms of artistic aesthetics. Wilde valued a veiled opacity, rather than clear depiction of the visible. In fact, it would have been much better if Wilde had engaged Moreau for the illustrations of his *Salome*, his image of Salome being much closer to that of Beardsley's. As Marie-Cecile Forest writes, Moreau's "sketches are meticulously rendered with delicate brushstrokes, but the drawing of Salome in the veil (cat. 57) is particularly fine in its soft, transparent veil" (Forest 72; my translation). She goes on to argue that "Moreau's attention to detail in the depiction of Salome's costume and jewellery is evident" (Forest 84: my translation). Compared to Beardsley's version, Moreau's image of Salome proves to be much subtler, more elegant and multilayered, which is the way Wilde wanted his Salome to be.

In *The Decay of Lying,* which probably is the work that most faithfully represents Wilde's theory of art, it is stated: "Art finds her own perfection within, and

not outside of, herself. She is a veil, rather than a mirror" (Wilde 15). It can be inferred, then, that Wilde was in pursuit of a mode of expression which could produce that kind of ambiguity which enwraps what is being expressed in a mystic, secret veil—a mode quite contrary to what Beardsley conducted in his illustration to *Salome*, by nudely and rudely drawing and exposing all in clear, bold lines. Rather than depicting everything that can be seen, Wilde believed that it is only by making things opaque, as if a veil has been pulled down, that they leave a strong impression on the viewer and become unforgettable (Braun 121).

As specific examples, I will discuss the importance of the "Dance of the Seven Veils" in *Salome* together with the symbolism of the moon in it. The dance constitutes one of the most important features in Wilde's *Salome*. Meanwhile, Wilde gave the Moon an important role comparable to that of the dance. Wilde has incorporated the mystique into his own work with focusing on the Moon, which heralds Salome's dance. I believe that by linking the moon with the dance of the seven veils, Wilde was enabled to express the ideal essence of the *femme fatale* as he conceived. In Wilde's *Salome*, there is an extremely short stage direction: "Salome dances the dance of the seven veils" (Wilde 54) . That is evocative of Salome's body as she removes her veil one by one during the dance, gradually revealing more and more of her body. I found in this scene a similar structure to the "Moon" used as a symbolic image of Salome. The fact that Salome is identified with the Moon in the play has already been studied, but I will explain it borrowing Shimahara's words because I find them helpful for understanding my argument.

> At the beginning of the work, the page of Herodias personifies the "Moon" as a woman: "She is like a woman rising from a tomb," "She is like a dead woman." On the other hand, the young Syrian's description of Salome as "a little princess who wears a yellow veil" and "dancing with silver feet" are also reminiscent of the "Moon" hiding between the clouds. Salome sees in the Moon the characteristics of "chasteness" and "virginity," and in the scene where she speaks to Jokanaan's head after his beheading, Salome herself says "I was a virgin. [. . .] I was chaste." All these attributes are Salome's attributes, as is clear from the line "I was a virgin". Salome reflects herself in a mirror and projects herself onto the object "the Moon" as if looking into it, and identifies the projected self with the object.（Shimahara 11; my translation)

The Moon changes its appearance from day to day, depending on the time and place where it is viewed, not to mention the fact that the Moon itself is not missing. We cannot help but be fascinated and mystified by its dizzying changes. Sometimes it is hidden behind clouds, sometimes the whole surface of the Moon appears to glow in a perfect circle. It is also true that the Moon never shows its other side. A similar structure can be seen in the "Dance of the Seven Veils." This sensual dance brings the audience a different appearance and a new expectation with each removal of the veil. The sensuality of the dance makes it impossible for the audience to take their eyes off it. But, just as the Moon does not show its backside, Salome does not show all of herself. The dance itself, which conceals Wilde's artistic philosophy, is also closely linked to the Moon.

Now, let us have a look at some other features which make Wilde's *Salome* uniquely original. Wilde meant something important by giving birth to two original scenes, "Salome actively desiring the head of Jokanaan herself" and "Salome being arrested to be executed by the command of Herod," which would not appear in Flaubert's *Herodias* which is said to have influenced him in writing *Salome*.

The scenario that "Salome has an ego and desires the head of Jokanaan herself" is not found in Flaubert's *Herodias* or in the New Testament. The decisive difference is that Flaubert's Salome is portrayed and staged in such a way that she becomes an object of sexual attraction for men. She is passive, in keeping with the image of a childlike innocence at her mother's beck and call, that is, a woman who is easily dominated by men. Wilde's Salome, however, is more attuned to women's desires and subjectivity, with her intense dislike of men, especially Herod, and her open and direct anguish. It is clear that she is quite disgusted with Herod and the crowd, as she complains about them from the first word, as in the following quotes:

> "I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that." (Wilde 9)

> "How sweet the air is here! I can breathe here! within there are Jews from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink and drink, and spill their wine on the pavement, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzy hair curled in twisted coils, and silent, subtle Egyptians, with

> long nails of jade and russett cloaks, and Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon, Ah! how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords." (Wilde 10)

It would be natural for a girl who had been looked at lustfully by her stepfather to be disgusted with the male gaze sexually exploiting and preying on her. As a result, she cannot help but feel extreme disgust for all men who look at her in a sexually distasteful way, as can be inferred from the above quote. Forced to dance, Salome again makes this statement: "I have no desire to dance, Tetrarch"; "I will not dance, Tetrarch" (Wilde 45). By repeating the same lines over and over again, Salome's strong will of resistance is emphatically expressed.

In *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dijkstra prejudicially says about Wilde's view of women: "—After all, as we have already seen, Wilde was quite certain that women love to be dominated" (Dijkstra 121). But even though he might have made some of his characters put such remarks, it is a mistake to thus generalize as if Wilde himself was of the idea that "women want to be dominated"; this clearly is not the case with Salome. Wilde's Salome is extremely reluctant to be ruled by King Herod (although she does eventually obey him because of her own desires), and she even wants to have her own way with Jokanaan. She follows her own desires and shows her desire to dominate men.

While Flaubert describes Salome from a male point of view, the above Salome's dialogues reveals that Wilde depicts her female nature, so to speak, from a woman's point of view. It is as if he were projecting his androgynous self to her.

Hereafter, we would consider the second of the original scenes above mentioned, where Wilde gets Salome arrested to be executed, under Herod's command. This last scene has already been discussed by Suzuki. However, her dualistic argument that "Salome did not take the path of the saints, but remained in sin and pleasure" (Suzuki 91; my translation) is simplistic and differs from mine. First of all, I will show Suzuki's argument about the execution scene.

> The image of Salome, which deviates from Wilde's aesthetic sensibility, underpinned by his own moral values, seems to illustrate the problem of Wilde's sense of crisis. [. . .] Salome's innocence of soul and her inextricable cruelty have soaked everything in pleasure and she does not even recognise sin. Wilde seemed to have erased his own sense of insecurity. (Suzuki 91; my translation).

There may be a point to be made, but I do not think we can explain Wilde's cherished "veil" if we simply summarise it in this way: Salome was punished for her sin and deviation. Wilde's killing of Salome was not out of misogynous anxiety or a sense of danger, but by creating an unpleasant ending, the film sparks the audience's creativity and gives them something to think about even after the screening. While Wilde has certainly made it possible for the viewer to be content with a simplistic and moralistic interpretation, the last scene also could be seen to be bravely foreshadowing or foretelling the author's own destiny, according to which the revelation of the veiled secret could fatally lead to destruction. Like the Dance of the Seven Veils, it was a final device to make the story multifaceted and multilayered, so that it would not fit into any one reading. By not exposing all the essence of Salome, various interpretations can be

made by the reader, which has led to research and consideration by some literary researchers as well as Suzuki. There is never one answer to the interpretation of the execution scene. I think this was Wilde's aim. Like the Moon, which changes its shape according to the viewer, Wilde closed the play with Salome's execution so that the work itself could be examined in different ways by different viewers.

There are two important original ideas of Wilde's: that Salome wants Jokanaan's head by her own will, and that she is executed. We can see now that these two scenes are crucial to represent Wilde's artistic intentions.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed how Wilde has been fascinated by the figure of the *femme fatale,* how he has used existing stereotypes to distinguish his creations from them, and what he has tried to convey. I discussed some of Wilde's works to see how Moreau's images of the "Sphinx" and "Salome" were connected to and influenced Wilde, and found further significance in the symbolic meaning intended by these female prototypes. By taking up the short story "The Sphinx without a Secret," I showed Wilde's awareness of the fatal curse suffered by those who try to give men a mystical charm. Furthermore, I examined Wilde's idea of what a *femme fatale* is from a new perspective by referring to Moreau's painting *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (1864). The second chapter analyzed the character of the heroine Salome, and clarified how Salome is constructed to embody Wilde's artistic philosophy, by focusing on the importance of the veil, which has not been clarified in previous studies, and examined *Salome* from a

unique perspective. As a result, the artistic philosophy that the virtue of not clarifying the essence that Wilde wanted to express through *Salome* became clearer than previous studies. Oscar Wilde has been the subject of many studies even now, more than 120 years after his death, because of his excellent artistic sense. However, like Salome dancing the Dance of the Seven Veils, the art he created is shrouded in veils, multifaceted and serpentine, which would yet to inspire inxhaustibly rich and various views and interpretations.

Notes

1 A Fourth-year undergraduate student at Kindai University, Osaka, Japan. This paper is a revised version of Sugimoto's graduate dissertation written under the co-supervision of Tanaka and Yoshida, and submitted to the Faculty of Literature, Arts, and Cultural Studies, Kindai University on 17 December 2021.

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日本大学経済学部グローバル社会文化研究センター
ワーキング・ペーパー・シリーズ　　No.2021-01

2022年3月1日　発行
発行元　日本大学経済学部グローバル社会文化研究センター
〒101-8360　東京都千代田区神田三崎町1-3-2
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URL：https://www.eco.nihon-u.ac.jp/research/cgs/