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コンラッド作品の「マレーもの」に関する共通要素について

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コンラッド (Joseph Conrad, 1857-1924) の初期の物語の中に、マレー地方を舞台とした一連の作品群「マレーもの」がある。処女作の長編『オルメイヤーの阿房宮』(Almayer's Folly, 1895)をはじめ第二作『島の流れ者』(An Outcast of the Islands, 1896)、それに続く短編「カレイン」("Karain: A Memory", 1897)や「潟」("The Lagoon", 1897)もこの地域が舞台となっている。そして名作『ロード・ジム』(Lord Jim, 1900)に至って、構成・内容ともにその頂点に達したといえる。処女作がある程度評価されたことは、作家が当時37歳でポーランド出身であったことを考慮すると、幸運なスタートであった。すでにこの作品においても部分的には「マレーもの」としての完成された特色が備わっている。本発表では、上記各作品を比較することで、「マレーもの」に共通する特色を明らかにし、さらに作品のプロトタイプと考えられる要素について考察する。

「マレーもの」の主な作品

長編

『オルメイヤーの阿房宮』(Almayer's Folly, 1895)

『島の流れ者』(『文化果つるところ』) (An Outcast of the Islands, 1896)

『ロード・ジム』(Lord Jim, 1900)

『救助』(The Rescue, 1920)

短編

「カレイン」("Karain: A Memory", 1897)

「潟」("The Lagoon", 1897)

1.

Of the five stories in this volume The Lagoon, the last in order, is the earliest in date. It is the first short story I ever wrote and marks in a manner of speaking, the end of my first phase, the Malayan phase with its special subject and its verbal suggestions. Conceived in the same mood which produced "Almayer's Folly" and "An Outcast of the Islands," it is told in the same breath (with what was left of it, that is, after the end of An Outcast), seen with the same vision, rendered in the same method—if such a thing as method did exist then in my conscious relation to this new adventure of writing for print. (Author's Note to Tales of Unrest, v 下線筆者)

2.

The forests, sombre and dull, stood motionless and silent on each side of the broad stream.

At the foot of big, towering trees, trunkless nipa palms rose from the mud of the bank, in bunches of leaves enormous and heavy, that hung unstirring over the brown swirl of eddies. In the stillness of the air every tree, every leaf, every bough, every tendril of creeper and every petal of minute blossoms seemed to have been bewitched into an immobility perfect and final. ("Lagoon" 187)

3.

Arguably, Conrad's Eastern fiction is his means of imagining a world into being, and, in so doing, establishing its boundaries. This imaginary world, ostensibly Malay, is effectively a fictional intervention in the accumulative Western construction of the East and the proliferation of meanings attached to it. The East that Conrad writes about is not only the product of its strategic location at the confluence of major civilizations and the crossroads of early modern globalization but also the result of vast political, economic, and social changes in the region itself in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. (Yeow 47)

4.

Before considering Conrad's fiction, we should look briefly at some contemporary thoughts on civilization. We now use the word with an irony hardly less consistent than Conrad's, having become ever more skeptical about the degree of civilization which we may have attained and about "our" right or ability to civilize anyone else—if we accept a somewhat patronizing dictionary definition of "civilize" as "to reclaim from barbarism." What is barbarism? For that matter, what is civilization? Are we civilized? Despite uncertainties, we do tend to cling to some positive sense of civilized values, reflecting perhaps a more idealistic definition: "to instruct in arts and refinements." (Mclauchen 58 下線筆者)

5.

Against the turbulence, overcrowding, noise, ugliness, confusion and squalor associated with the city, Karain's picturesquely tropical world with its archaic values (simple heroism and leadership, passionate actions and betrayals, superstitious credulities) seems "more real" aesthetically, ontologically and morally better. (Watt 22)

6.

Lord Jim perhaps best illustrates the shift in imperial imaginings I have been tracing through Conrad's Malay fictions, a shift from the dominant nineteenth-century European discourses of Orientalism to the twentieth-century idea of the West. There is, one might say, a powerful connection between the decline of the British Empire and the rise of the West. With the failure to consolidate a coherent ideology of the British Empire, the idea of "the West" emerged to replace and resituate a range of assumptions about race, nation, class, and gender. (GoGwilt 88)

7.

"Karain" considers the theme of betrayal and the relationship between the Western and non-Western worlds. Also like "The Lagoon," "Karain" is one of Conrad's earliest frame narratives, albeit a more sophisticated one that anticipates Conrad's later important frame narratives. (Peters 49)

8.

And that's the end. He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic. Not in the wildest days of his boyish visions could he have seen the alluring shape of such an extraordinary success! For it may very well be that in the short moment of his last proud and unflinching glance, he had beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side. (*Lord Jim* 416 下線筆者)

(結論)

コンラッドの「マレーもの」の作品群においては、場面の孤立性、異文化の問題と土着性、秩序と混乱、秩序と混乱、裏切りと許し、の問題について検討してきた。しかし、一人の作家が書いている限りにおいて、コンラッド作品には、「アフリカもの」や他の作品も含め、多かれ少なかれ、以上のような要素は含まれているとも言える。しかし、マレーを舞台とした作品群にいえることは、西洋と現地との文化的な交わりが強いという点である。おそらくコンラッドが船員時代に世界を巡った時に、最も多文化の混ざり合った地域だったといえるであろう。古くから西欧との交流があり、アラブやインドの商人、華僑の人々の文化が入り乱れ、植民地主義の時代はポルトガルやオランダ、イギリスという西欧の列強の支配を受ける時代を経験している地域である。そうした意味で、作家が、最も文化の多様性と軋轢を感じた地域と言える。これにより、先ほどの特色、場面の孤立性、異文化の問題と土着性、秩序と混乱、秩序と混乱、裏切りと許し、の問題がより鮮明に表れているということは確かである。

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