

AN ACTE GRATUIT

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The academic study of literature, as the late Edward Said among others has suggested, began as a set of commentaries *upon* sacred texts by scholarly *disciples*: Talmud, Koran, Old and New Testaments and in the East, the works of Confucius and the collections of koans and sutras. The emendations and commentaries on so-called master narratives have spawned an unending genre, literary criticism, which has, since earliest times, found itself studied as a subject within institutional settings. Had early universities not been monasteries with libraries, one wonders if literary criticism would have become a *discipline*? Presumably, someone had to stand between sacred texts and the public reader of limited literacy in order to elucidate them. Thus, logic dictates that it is in the critic's interest to 1) reveal hidden meanings within the sacred while 2) keeping the sacred, sacred by *not* revealing all of the meanings. Any pretension to a totalizing explanation would desecralize a Sacred which depends on mystery.

Although dwelling in the secondary, the best criticism rarely may even displace the master text in such a way as to rival it. One instance might be Harold Bloom's notorious criticism of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* read as a study in the psychopathology of a serial killer as a man of intellectual curiosity rather than belief. Were he really a believer, so Bloom's argument goes, Macbeth would not have felt the need to kill, but rather passively await the fulfillment of the determining prophecies of the supernatural sorority of witches. With reference to the historical mass killer Jeffrey Dahmer, Bloom audaciously suggests that Macbeth suffers from a loss of confidence in the supernatural (both Holy Ghosts and witches), an urge to become an autonomous human being who can move history along on his own and Lady Macbeth's best ambitious efforts instead of a *disciple* of witchcraft. Gratuitous killing is the symptom of an Elizabethan crisis of faith in this counter-intuitive reading.

In this instance and rarely elsewhere, the supplementary nature of the critical enterprise strikes us as dealing not with *nokorimono* (the left overs of sacred and historically privileged texts), but an experience as refreshing as *reishu* or champagne—to be sampled slowly for its own sake. Most literary criticism remains derivative in one of several incarnations: a mere plot summary or plagiarism (a radical form of discipleship) of the work of other critics. It becomes a mere license to reproduce an original product, so as to potentially “add value” by enlarging the range of potential consumers of literature. The literary critic is merely another distributor, a productive hand in a mass market dedicated to understanding, a merchant of cultural appreciation. Although initially the province of textual scholars in monasteries—another incarnation of “illuminating” manuscripts—at some point, literary criticism, like the Cycle Plays of late medieval Britain, became a commentary too far. Growing too large for the Church's confines, these presentations to accompany feast days entered general circulation as a rather portable performative genre. If this model of *commentary* were applied—admittedly a logical

leap—then literary criticism became too large for the likes of those who make up the commentaries of the *Patrologia Latina* and its successors, and became one of the so-called Liberal Arts. Some practice confined to a highly specialized and secluded environment and set of academic practices, became a requirement for a B.A. degree! One could not be regarded as an educated member of society without a rudimentary knowledge of the Great Books of the culture. How did this elevation of secular narrative become, if not sacred, a qualification of educational entitlement?

One problem would have surely presented itself early on: whose Great Books? The canon would constantly change, depending upon new markets (Post-Colonial Literature, “Chick Lit,” African-American Literature). Previously sacred texts, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “Hiawatha”, would become . . . what? The notion of an *apocryphal text*, which would have still been a repository of cultural value for the medieval scholar, does not seem applicable once what was previously sacred becomes merely fashionable. All of this is to suggest that the literary canon is profoundly, perhaps too profoundly, impacted by political interests, fashion, personal experience, mediacy, and the productive process itself (how quickly can a new genre be brought to market so as to sustain interest?). Given this hypersensitivity to often temporary tastes and public responses to tastes, a study of, to borrow from Matthew Arnold, “the best that has been thought and said,” would have no more bearing on one’s intelligence or educational achievement, than would say, a knowledge of shoe design or a knowledge of the parameters of the “play-list” on any Top 40 Radio Station?

How did the belief that the critical appreciation of a literary text would produce better citizens or more patriotic citizens arise, given the lack of obvious practical application? These questions are of course best raised by specialists in the development of pedagogic models in the early twentieth century in America and perhaps a bit earlier in Great Britain? With the knowledge that the effective literacy rate at the beginning of Dickens’ career was barely 10% of the population, sophisticated literary criticism would seem to have been a fool’s errand. And yet Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* not only exists, but merits repeated re-readings.

Masao Shimura, rather uniquely among his colleagues, always had a questioning, even skeptical view of the activity to which he dedicated his life as a literary critic, translator, and Professor of Literature for over three decades at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. The line between critical questioning and cynicism being often obscured, he never accepted the various justifications for the moral and educational value of what we do, so often used during the post-war years of educational expansion in Japan, as justification. For Shimura, the teaching of literature was always a fool’s errand, usually in economic depression, and of little long-lasting social or moral benefit to those who attend upon it. The phrase he used for our shared intellectual

practice was an “acte gratuit.” The French concept combines the notion of an undetermined “gesture” and “gift”—a gratuity, that should never rise to the level of a pedagogical *giri* (obligation).

Perhaps a pause is in order here to try to get at the educational implications of an *acte gratuit*. In my youth as a bachelor, I once dated a lovely woman of considerable charm and a sympathetic intelligence. Like many lovers, unable to forget her even while in a distant city for an academic congress, I passed by a jewelry store and seeing an unforgettable pair of gold earrings, walked in and bought them. On taking her to dinner again after returning home, I gave her the wrapped package, saying only, “I thought of you while away.” She replied, “but it’s not my birthday; why the gift?” An occasion would have provided an explanation, and what I had desired was a spontaneous gift that remained *aneconomic*: that is to say, outside of any and all contracts, obligations or exchange systems that might discount its value as a potentially indeterminate, timeless affection. The relationship ended shortly thereafter.

Masao Shimura’s lectures were much like that. In one memorable instance, an attempt to compare President George H.W. Bush’s strange use of the particle “the” with its circulation in Twain’s “Huckleberry Finn,” as indicating something about an American need to tie down the noun, in narratives of political and geographic drift. Although the cultural reflection does intrigue (perhaps especially so given the absence of the use of the definite article and vague deployment of indexicals in Japanese) it would be difficult to define an application to everyday life, even among grammarians. If one were a university provost planning the next year’s faculty salary budget, would you want to hire a new faculty member with that interest? As an *apercu*, it seems a kind of throwaway idea, easily passed over as merely incidental or “one-off,” as the British might say. And yet, incidental learning, like Wittgenstein’s aphorisms in the *Tractatus*, surely operate in precisely that way. One never knew quite where Shimura was “going” with an idea until he returned to the beginning at the end of the lecture.

There are ways of course to subsidize the *acte gratuit*. Watching me struggling with translating Japanese into French for a commercial art catalogue, Shimura Sensei suggested that the best translators often free themselves up with alcohol, so as to make the elisions more spontaneous, thereby avoiding translating word for word. Use would thereby be liberated from the rules of usage. As the Japanese translator of several novels of John Barth and portions of the work of Robert Coover, and having spent time with both authors—the former as a colleague and occasional tennis partner in Buffalo—I can vouch for a shared affinity for the “sauce” among all of us. Phrases appear in new combinations with enhanced potential for grammatical and ideational consumption, some accidental or to borrow from the name of a journal he both financially and emotionally supported at Tokyo Gaigokokudaigaku, *Random* association.

Whatever this kind of thinking represents, it is surely thinking “outside the box,” and is replete with threats to both practitioner and its host institution. If too liberally applied or perceived as an intellectual *modus operandi*, it would be potentially always in excess.

In regimes without state-sponsored, formalized educational institutions—a rather late birth attributed to the needs of the Industrial Revolution with its demand for the mass instruction in especially- trained skills, education—as Rousseau’s *Émile* reminds us—was entrusted to a tutor who had to decide when to intercede and when to allow the child to learn directly from *natural law*. Given the absence of dedicated institutions with a published, accessible curriculum, a “master” (“sensei,” literally “one who sees ahead” in Japanese) took in apprentices for a specific term to whom he provided sustenance (meagre board and room) in return for unremunerated labor and the acquisition of a certificate. This was in every sense an economic exchange system. The “mastery” of a specific skill was handed down after a prolonged period of apprenticeship during which the student, through continuous testing, rose through various ranks of achievement until he too became a *sensei*. In Japan, an especially prestigious master became so famous and respected that he began his own “school” of disciple-believers whose acolytes pursued a recognizably- branded aesthetic.

In Japan this is particularly evident in certain acquired skills like *ikebana* (flower arranging) whose disciples exhibit their work each year for appraisal and certification/grading by a recognized master. Often, these apprenticeships are of long duration before one becomes a master at a trade. *Sushi* might be an excellent example. The *itamae* is both an artist and a craftsman. Typically, he starts in a sushi kitchen largely confined to menial tasks like washing and scrubbing down surfaces. The apprentice then graduates to say, preparing the rice for the sushi. The critical ingredient must be perfect—in consistency, flavor and color—with skills perfected daily under the watchful eyes of the *itamae*. Having progressed to a required level of achievement, you become a *wakiita*, literally, “near the cutting board.” At this stage, you are allowed to use your own knife or *hocho* and maintain it as a critical part of the tool kit. The years of apprenticeship combined with years spent as a *wakiita*, may come to somewhere near 6-8 years until consideration as an *itamae*, rivalling the time spent after the typical B.A. to become a Phd. in many academic disciplines! Unlike post-graduate education, however, there is some guarantee of what we might term “quality control.” The disciple never deviates too far from the skills of the master who has taken responsibility for his apprentice’s education. There exists a continuous reciprocity that may go a considerable way in explaining the attention to quality and finish in Japanese auto production.

Once a system of universal tertiary education was established in post-Meiji Japan, expanded

into private universities and colleges after World War II, the *sempai/kohei* (master/disciple) system migrated into advanced education. The Professor in a given university discipline took control of his disciples in a shared allegiance. He became responsible for the employment of his charges after graduation and they remained loyal to his “line” of thought, propagating it for future acceptance. In short, a “school of thought” is created in which quality control is bought at the price of making new connections, which in combination, privileges a status quo: *mo kimatte imasu* (“it has already been decided”) is an oft-heard mantra in Japan. The relationship of master and disciple tends to remain (in most cases) strong, with the master often consulted when (and to whom) the apprentice married. Neither strayed very far from the other’s interests which extended beyond formal training. If there is an “anxiety of influence,” to borrow again from Harold Bloom, it is seldom elicited, much less shared. Or, maybe historical “influence” assumes the role of “natural law,” not to be contested (until it inevitably is).

This lengthy digression might foreground what first drew my attention to Masao Shimura. He had, as I did, what a mutual friend called a “dirty vita.” Coming from a highly-respected banking family, he had spent six years in the United States (teaching at Columbia and the University of Indiana), married a younger American wife with whom he returned to Japan, and had taught at a variety of universities in Japan while pursuing a pastime as an accomplished painter and a student of Zen Buddhism. Albeit what we might call a “metropolitan intellectual,” in America, so far as I could determine, he had no disciples spreading a carefully rehearsed line of thought. Although he had colleagues and those who respected his work and consulted him on appointments, the university was not his only life interest. He had once mentioned to me that his first teacher of the English language in Niigata, Japan had been someone whose specialty was some obscure branch of agriculture. The disciplines seemed as far apart as my own experience of a middle -school teacher who taught driver’s education and sex education. He replied, “well those two disciplines are connected: you have to start the car and let it warm up.” For Masao Shimura, imaginative connections across activities and disciplines were at the core of teaching.

Idle reflection on comparative differences in the historical models of higher education, West and East, would remain merely a casual observation of limited interest unless it actually impacted what we teach. Stated in another way, an interest should be aroused in the way pedagogical practices and the institutional practices they inform, become a legitimate *subject* of the literary narratives which we study. The conditions under which *learning* is produced and consumed (as with any other product) enters into the literature we teach and how we teach it. The best professors are ones who can change their minds, interrupting our narrative of how knowledge is acquired: 1) as an inheritance from a master (like estates or titles) to be managed, improved

(while retaining its historical value) and passed on, like genetic material, for future disciples or 2) through some struggle with concepts of inherited or learned authority itself. How do we escape the determinative features of our education? How do we come not to pass along a “Word” as do disciples of faiths, but create our own apocrypha—with all the attendant risks of drawing believers to take faith in a dubious *supplement*. This would perhaps lend a casual interest in comparative educational models for those of us caught up in them as crucial to *incidental learning*. The intellectual side-effect (*fukusayou*), like those examined by pharmacologists, are often mysterious, have no rational explanation, and are revealed only over time. Also qualifying as the unforeseeable, might be the so-called “off label” use. An unforeseeable and unexpected application for which a given drug was never designed or tested, emerges. In short, an unstudied benefit, a later revelation, might qualify as a kind of pharmacological *acte gratuit*, the unforeseeable “freebie.”

As a student of 19th century literature and books about its productive cultural environment, the recurrent presence of the orphan or semi-orphan figure with no antecedents has always intrigued. The Emma’s, Heathcliff’s, Pip’s, Dorothea Brook’s, Jude’s and Dorian Gray’s suggest that the orphan crosses class, political, and even (if we notice Heathcliff’s dark complexion) color lines. The orphan, insofar as an interest is shared by all, is the most democratic presence in the Victorian novel, touching all he or she comes in contact with. Nor is the list of the child lacking one or both parents (or in children’s literature, raised by witches, animals, fairy godmother or similar parental facsimile) confined to literature in English. If “Where Have All the Children Gone?” was a folk refrain for the flower children of the late 60’s, then the unexplained disappearance of the parent is a consistent theme in Balzac, Zola, and even Dostoevsky. If, as historical research suggests, there were no more orphans as a percentage of the population in Victorian England (and surely less, given the higher number of divorces and broken homes now), then the insecure waif must be a metaphor, signifying some other form of detachment from historical lineage.

During my own post-graduate education, the narrative “line” of my master was that the “orphan-as-metaphor” was one representation of various incarnations of discontinuity from a discernible ontological “Beginning” replicated in other aspects of the history of ideas in nineteenth-century Europe. The absence of God induced by Darwin’s notion that creation was an on-going process (abetted by J. Hillis Miller’s *The Disappearance of God*), suggested a radical discontinuity from traditional models of transcendence. No longer was existence generated by a singular act in time. Politically, the dilution of a foundational political patriarchy by three Reform Bills that progressively empowered what had been the subaltern classes; and the declining role of ancestry in determining a monopoly on social privilege all contributed, so that argument went, to

the perception of an interruption from Origins. Even John Murray's *Oxford English Dictionary* project—designed to trace the origins and permutations of each word in the English language over temporal increments—was recruited to serve the notion of a linguistic discontinuity from some obscure origin that was re-petitioned in the *OED*. The fascination of the Oxford Movement with the interruption in the apostolic succession embraced in Cardinal Newman's betrayal of the Church of England, subsidized the metaphor of a culture orphaned by abandonment from some privileged author or historical authority. Even such an innocuous text as Dodgson's *Alice in Wonderland* was read as the child on a picnic escaping the terrors of a book without illustrations and a call to come home to follow a rabbit underground on strange adventures that turn the traditional authority of time, space, and grammatical logic upside down.

The effort to find traces of the metaphoric in the history of ideas has always been a questionable enterprise. It assumes the history of ideas is a kind of inescapable ether pervading every corner of cultural production, without being able to discuss how our metaphors are physically *made*. If this sounds like sympathy with the ideas of the so-called “New Materialist” critics, so be it. When we examine the evolution of the formal dimensions of a work of art, we are or should be attentive to how the formalities are constructed and out of what materials. An example might suffice. The invention of the lithographic pencil in the mid-nineteenth century vastly increased the number of copies that could be produced without the fear of wearing down a copper plate with repeated impressions. The enhanced multiplicity in production increased accessibility to a middle class with limited access to art appreciation. It also enabled genuine artists (i.e., Toulouse-Lautrec) to find a more widespread potential consumer and enhanced income stream through a kind of licensing agreement. His matchbox cover designed for an Ohio manufacturer widened exposure to a larger market than available to his posters and pastels of the Parisian demi-monde. Andy Warhol's ubiquitous “Campbell Soup Can” (in multiple multiples), was an icon signaling a narrowing differential between art and advertising: an early instance of “streaming” both in a sponsored “conjunction,” on occasion now inseparable on computer screens.

As I reflected on the habits of my Japanese post-graduate and research students, gleaned from a culture that privileges seniority and diligent senpei/kohei learning practices, I began to reflect anew upon education as one kind of apprenticeship albeit potentially mutually violent to both apprentice and master, available to those with neither the time nor the funds for mass institutional instruction in the absence of publicly-financed state assistance. When educated in a trade and the skills necessary to its practice—as opposed to the so-called liberal arts that lacked a

financially or socially redemptive purpose—the Victorian child was in effect “apprenticed” to a master for a determinate period, contractually enforced by a written bond, its provisions enforceable by law. We often forget that tertiary education (Oxford and Cambridge) had as a requirement for admission, subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church, hence until late in the nineteenth-century, the Establishment had a virtual monopoly on higher education that did not invariably include merit in its qualifications for admission. Old school ties (what was termed “public school” but were really private institutions dependent upon fees paid by well-off parents) were “feeder” institutions.

Even if the so-called working classes had an interest in advanced education, it would never have enabled them to become even part of the civil service until exams (as opposed to recommendations from an “old boy” network like the Barnacles of *Little Dorrit*), became a channel for entry detailed in Anthony Trollope’s novel, *The Three Clerks*. This relative illiteracy of the working classes enabled ironic vocations. One social critic of the period, with abundant evidence, has suggested that fully 20% of adolescents in London in the mid-1850’s were employed as apprentices in copying documents for distribution in judicial proceedings. As most could not read, they copied quite literally what was put before them in an age before carbon paper and xerox machines! The inky smudges which fill the pages of *Bleak House* (including Esther Summerson’s diary blotted with tears) dedicated to the proceedings of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce*, surely owes something to this metaphysics of the *copy*.

The apprentice existed officially as a *statu pupillari* and was not entitled to set up house or traffic in his own property though allowed to trade on his master’s behalf. Both master and apprentice had responsibilities to each other that were contractually prescribed. From the records apprenticeship was less exploitive than other forms of child labor in Victorian England. After 1814, upon repeal of the Statute of Artificers, apprentices were to serve a fixed term, ending when they turned 21. What each owed to each was laid out as an indenture. Apprentices would work for a defined period of time during which they would live in the house of the employer or master (increasing the potential for violence disguised as domestic discipline) in return for training in a particular craft. As well as their labor, the apprentice was also liable for a fee known as a *premium* which was actually taxed, hence the rather complete records of the arrangement. The length of the apprenticeship and the requirement to “live in” with meagre room and board, meant that the “training” offered, went beyond the mere transfer of skills, but extended to a broader ranger of knowledge and behavior including moral behavior and religious instruction. Various dissenting eleemosynary and charity institutions, with a self-serving interest in moral uplift of the population, often paid the apprenticeship premium in order to get fugitive waifs off the streets and as a conversion subsidy. The pontific Honeythunder sponsors the Landless

children in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and the puritanical hypocrite, Mrs. Clennam, “sponsors” Amy Dorrit by apprenticing her as a seamstress in *Little Dorrit*.

Enter apprenticeship, the reproduction of mastery, then, as a relatively neglected aspect of the human condition in Dickens’ work, with perhaps wider implications in Japanese education. Perhaps we should begin at the ending. Dickens’ last, unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, begins with a couple, Edwin Drood and Rosa Bud, whose fathers, as a condition of some unstated mutual obligation, have pre-arranged the marriage of their respective offspring when they come into maturity. They couple are, then, in some sense, engaged not as a function of their own choice, but as a function of their widower fathers’ choices, before their birth. When we first encounter them, they are pupils of respectively, a drug-addicted choirmaster attached to Cloisterham Cathedral, John Jasper, and at Miss Twinkleton’s Seminary for Young Women, euphuistically known as the Nun’s House. Their situatedness is metaphysically described by Rosa Bud, early on a reluctant partner in the willed relationship, as an anomaly: “The whole thing is. It *is* so absurd to be an engaged orphan” (*ED* 54). They are bound by the bonds of deceased single parents, engaged to each other from the grave, as it were, by a last will and testament. And in fact, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is filled with visits to an underground mausoleum in Cloisterham, accompanied by Stony Durdles. Jasper appears bound by an extraordinary, unnatural affection for his nephew- pupil fixed in a gaze while asleep. In fact, the homoerotic attachment is revealed as a mask for a compulsive heterosexual attraction to Rosa Bud whom he stalks, the ambivalent sexuality enhanced by his addiction to opium. Apprenticeship is one way of describing a term- attachment which can be neither escaped nor precisely defined.

This relationship is rivaled by another group of bound twins, initially guarded by an evil stepfather (another kind of master), from whom Neville Landless and his sister had tried to escape numerous times—once when Neville’s sister, cuts her hair short and disguises herself as a boy. The darkly-complected twins, born in Ceylon, are wards of an evangelical mission which similarly binds them to its ideology. Social uplift became an ideology disguising violence, and self-mutilation.

Both couples, albeit ostensibly in education, are in reality serving apprenticeships, *masked* as education in their segregated classrooms in preparation for marriage. This *masking* is part of a larger sexual dissimulation. One escapes that to which he has been assigned or bound in one of three ways: by disguise of one’s purpose or identity; by redemption by another criminal master masked as a father (Pip of *Great Expectations*); or by disappearance or a near-death experience which may or may not hold the possibility of a rebirth from the bonds of a relationship that functions like the terminality of a bound apprenticeship (Eugene Wrayburn in *Our Mutual*

Friend, and perhaps the “disappeared” Edwin Drood).

If the television program that propelled its host to the Presidency of the United States were not enough, the Walt Disney Corporation announced in July of 2022 that its “fairy godmothers” who frequently dress visiting children at theme parks as princesses and knights, will henceforth be known as “apprentices” in order to be more gender-inclusive, including, presumably those identifying as Pans and “trans.” Sexual inclusiveness, however, in Dickens, often includes revenge. A victim of sexual (made equivalent to social) betrayal redirects the betrayal outward while watching as a spectator rather than a victim. A victim of betrayal or childhood violence, exteriorizes their plight by manipulating another. The shared “interest” is often initially disguised as affection or attachment, but contains an element of voyeurism: “I see myself in you,” seeking approval.

In *Great Expectations*, Pip has been apprenticed to the simple Joe Gargery as a future iron monger at his master’s forge. Using an instrument of his trade (a file) to free an escaped prisoner, Magwitch, from his bonds, the former apprentice, later tears up his bond after discovering himself to be a beneficiary of gratuitous largesse from an unidentified source. Brought into the orbit of a tormenting fairy godmother, Miss Havisham, he is compelled to become (nearly) another of Dickens’ “engaged orphans”—in this case to the cruel Estella, revealed as another orphan (the daughter of Magwitch, Pip’s benefactor). Using Estella as an apprentice/disciple of her own abandoned heart (“Does she hurt you, Pip?”), Miss Havisham becomes a voyeuristic spectator to her charge’s torment of Pip, a mirror of her own suffering, redirected. Many of Dickens’ ostensible fairy godmothers, the tormented Miss Wade of *Little Dorrit* comes to mind, seek revenge for some previous sexual betrayal as does Miss Havisham beside her decaying wedding cake. The manipulation of the affections of an apprentice-as-engaged-orphan involves the dynamics of what might be called “mimetic hatred.”

Eugene Wrayburn, an indifferent student of the law, has been virtually apprenticed by his father, designated as “M.R.F.” as a junior partner to Mortimer Lightwood in a modest law practice, as a substitute for a life of drift and boredom:

‘M.R.F., having always in the clearest manner provided (as he calls it) for his children by pre-arranging from the hour of the birth of each, and sometimes from an earlier period, what the devoted little victim’s calling and course in life should be, M.R.F. pre-arranged for myself that I should be the barrister I am (with the slight addition of an enormous practice which has not accrued), and also the married man I am not.’

(*OMF* 146)

Until alerted to a crime, he spends his days in a law office with his feet atop a fender, bored into total inertia by unfulfilling choices made before he came into the world, as if the choice itself

functions as an inescapable social class.

A foreshortened explanatory digression is in order. René Girard in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* and *Feodor Dostoevsky (Studies in Violence, Mimesis and Culture)* among other formats has advanced the notion of “mimetic desire.” For Girard, the object of desire or consumption becomes simultaneously an object and a mediator. We are attracted because it withdraws itself from immediate access by us. The woman who withdraws from our affections to go out with another man in fact increases desire, by in effect *modelling* to him *what he should want*. We come to desire not the authentic Other, but rather what the Other desires, so that desire has a derivative, second-order component: “someday, you too will drive a Mercedes-Benz.” There can be no such *modelling* in Dickens’ world because there can never be individual desire, already determined.

Given such pre-determined evacuation of individual desire, the dynamics of an inversion might take the following form. I have experienced emotional or physical abandonment by lover or parents or over-determination—symbolically orphaned—and am thus thrust back upon myself for material sustenance and purpose, lacking “future time” for fulfillment. There is no *modelling* possible in which desire might be re-kindled as a derivative, as in our imaginary Mercedes-Benz advertisement. Mastery can only be restored, not by another desired object, but by turning my abjection inside out, as it were, and becoming the artist of my own abjection, thereby multiplying it: an inverted “doubling” or *copy*.

The potential for mutually inflicted violence is unlimited, as occurred at the University of Hiroshima years back when a lowly *jooshu* (an apprentice instructor tasked only with a teaching assistant’s duties), applying for either promotion to a career grade or a letter of recommendation from his professor/master to seek employment at a different university—both unsuccessfully—murdered the Professor in his office. The respect of the slave for the master can never be fulfilled in the master’s eyes, because the slave remains a slave, in a mutually re-enforcing bondage, to apply Alexandre Kojève’s *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*.

The abject, abandoned object (Dickens as a child apprenticed at Warren’s Blacking Factory while his father was in jail for indebtedness), in serving a similar undefined *sentence* with no time limits, must in some sense become an author-voyeur, reproducing his experience of abject dependency in another (character) which Dickens, the author, might control. There could be no better example than Miss Havisham empowering Estella as a surrogate to cruelly taunt Pip with what he can never have (because they share the same biological/financial father, Magwitch, and hence are symbolic siblings).

The trope of the terminally “engaged orphan” would displace Girard’s *modelling* by

something akin to *masking*: a strong affection for a “boy” disguised as stewardship, care-taking, maintenance in a troubled world or raising the social status of the adoptee. Attorney Jaggers (the name, a euphuism for a “nightwatchman” in colonial India) has dinner parties for his “boys” as they vie, along with Startup, his apparent favorite, for his affections, even as he maintains a closet which remains locked at all times but arouses curiosity: a closeted desire. In both *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and *Our Mutual Friend*, a school teacher of ambivalent attachments—Jasper for his relative Edwin Drood or Bradley Headstone for his pet student, Charley Hexam—masks (as a disguise) a compulsive affection for, respectively Rosa Bud and Lizzie Hexam, both of whom are stalked. Pretending to share the desire of Lizzie Hexam to raise her brother’s social status through education, Charley Hexam is apprenticed to Bradley Headstone, a school master, who uses an abnormal fondness for the youth as a cover, for his obsessive desire for his sister, Lizzie, in the same way that John Jasper uses his nephew, Edwin Drood, to mask his stalking of Rosa Bud. An overly-affectionate homoerotic apprenticeship/discipleship, becomes the *cover* for a repressed, near-compulsive desire that, in the case of Bradley Headstone, surfaces as nosebleeds. In both cases a putative acolyte (Edwin Drood and Charley Hexam) is deployed as a mediator for a repressed desire that can be expressed in no other way except as a homoerotic attachment. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are confused in both novels, establishing mixed rivalries and motives for the riverine violence which ensues in both novels.

Whatever, the “engaged orphan” seems to be in high demand in Dickens’ *oeuvre*. The rich Meagles’ in *Little Dorrit*, having lost a child, seeks a substitute from an orphanage as a companion for their spoiled daughter Pet, much as the Boffins, once into the money, seek to adopt a child much as they might acquire any other material object for satisfaction or enhanced public opinion. The Meagles’ go to an orphanage and adopt a child, given the name of impossibly, Harriet Beadle, to indicate the absence of knowledgeable paternity. The adopting parents then, like the Pip, who impossibly names himself by looking at the shape of the inscribed letters on a parental tombstone, rename the child after the institution:

‘The name of Beadle being out of the question, and the originator of the Institution for these poor foundlings, having been a blessed creature of the name of Coram, we gave the name [Tattycoram] to Pet’s little maid.’

(LD 57)

She becomes another of Dickens’ diminutive (like “Pip” and *Little* (Amy) Dorrit) “engaged orphans,” a maid to a spoiled brat of the rich, before, suffering abuse, she flees to become a “companion” of the masochistic Miss Wade, like Miss Havisham, abandoned by a former lover:

‘You seem to come like my own anger, my own malice, my own—whatever it is—I don’t know what it is, but I am ill-used, I am ill-used.’

(LD 65)

Old traumas and resentments are played out over and over, replicating mutual dependency.

Is it possible that these involuntarily “engaged orphans” are really apprentices, ostensibly learning a trade (one of which is a household maid) in exchange for providing low cost, if not free, service under conditions where the threat of physical or psychological abuse is disguised as discipline, a “training wage”? What they actually acquire is an alternation, reflected in an ambiguous sexuality, between hapless dependency and an urge to escape a bond. This is then reproduced in the culture at large as the ever-present threat of bondage/love at the hands of some surrogate parent-figure, away from home. The “engaged orphan” figure became a universal insofar as it crosses class lines. Whether compelled to work in the streets as do Fagin’s “boys” and the crossing sweeper, Joe, in *Bleak House*) as part of an illiterate underclass; sent away to a boarding school as fags for upper classmen, or to the “wurkus” as forced labor—all come under the rubric of an oppressive apprenticeship, slavery disguised as a learning experience.

The setting for this, just as the setting for all apprenticeships, is a literal or metaphoric school room or analogous space that mimes its potential for mutual abuse, as early as *David Copperfield* in Dickens’ career. The most obvious would be the school for thieves run by the misogynist, Fagin, in *Oliver Twist*. His “engaged orphans” are pupils, taught a trade in return for service. They nimbly filch the sexually-coded object of gentlemen’s silk handkerchiefs in public daylight, even though they are never allowed out of Fagin or his trustees’ sight for long, frozen in apprenticeship. The “Collegians” of the Marchalsea in *Little Dorrit* pay allegiance to the symbolic Rector, William Dorrit, imprisoned for debt, but assuming the mask of a schoolmaster demanding the feigned, ceremonial respect of his fellow-inmates. His daughter, Amy, though born in the prison, has free ingress and egress as a curiously “engaged [social] orphan.” Informally apprenticed as a seamstress to Arthur Clennam’s ideologically rigid mother in the hopes of keeping a family secret, secret, Amy Dorrit has a “thoroughfare” to both imprisonment and a conditional, semi-bonded freedom: a pawn open to perpetual summons by an inside parental prison/schoolroom or outside as a seamstress bound to domestic production.

Schoolroom and prison as symbolically interchangeable venues for the “engaged orphan” as a restless, misanthropic apprentice seems recurrent once we are made aware of the pattern. Occasionally, the apprentice, actually does the work of the more well-known master while lacking both public recognition and self-respect. The wastrel alcoholic, Sydney Carton, of *A Tale of Two Cities*, though unlicensed, actually prepares the legal work and briefs for his former Paris schoolmate, the bombastic attorney, Stryver, as long as he can be kept sober to assist in the preparation of arguments. One way or another, the apprentice seems to end his career in some emotional or real prison, as does the Carton who exchanges places with a British spy whom he resembles as a twin, in an act of self-sacrifice. In *Hard Times*, Cecelia (Sissy) is abandoned by

her father for a better life than his own as an aging acrobat in Sleary's Circus, given over to education. Reluctantly deposited in Gradgrind's notorious school, she becomes friends with Tom and Louisa Gradgrind, the schoolmaster's children. Like the industrial Coketown in which the novel is set, the children are educated within a Benthamite pedagogy which emphasizes the rote learning of facts, statistics, memorized definitions, and efficiencies of scale. The repetitive tasks mandated to maximize profit have become a pedagogical system, equally imprisoning. Gradgrind similarly maritally "orphans" his daughter, Louisa, to the boastful magnate, Bounderby, more than double her age, cementing the ties between factory schoolroom and Industrial Revolution, in much the same way that noble, landholding families frequently "arranged" marriages to combine estates. The surrender of control and the maintenance of parental control are not entirely in opposition.

Like the Landless twins in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Tom and Louisa have a close relationship until the arrival in Coketown of the chronically-bored Harthouse who has drifted in and out of roles in the foreign service, untouched by strong convictions about anything. Seduced by alcohol and a very strong "oriental tobacco" (reminiscent of Jasper's drug addiction) during a strange evening on a divan, Tom reveals the secret of Louisa's unhappy, forced marriage to Bounderby, leaving her open to Harthouse's seductive attempt to whisk her away. The erotically-ambiguous Harthouse, like Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend*, becomes intimate with Tom Gradgrind as a cover for an attempted seduction of his sister from a loveless marriage between (read allegorically) educational production and industrial production in a shared, bleak social and industrial landscape.

If reality is the recognition of sexual (erotic) and generational (temporal) difference, then it is obscured when parents, teachers, or their surrogates reproduce their own desires in the loves and hates of the next generation, often represented in Dickens' work as the "engaged orphan" or "dedicated apprentice," lacking self-determination. The control of paternity over the child from the grave—a theme common to the lives of the child in *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*, *Hard Times*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* through a distorted period of apprenticeship—is really a metaphor for an *occupation* (in two senses) that transfers paternal power to the state, as a kind of invisible algorithm, like those used on social media today. Paternity would then come to exist in two registers: 1) the maintenance of temporal control by disciplined surveillance and 2) the lack of certainty surrounding the temporal occasion of conception/intrusion. This may account for the over-determined role of stopped watches and clocks and messages left within them or clues to a past time in *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. There would be doubt about finding

my paternity in the child, once that paternity is made invisible by institutionalization.

In Masao Shimura's lectures, the attendant was never sure where he was going until the last five minutes or so, when a sudden elucidation occurred. In that spirit, here goes. At one of the faculty meetings which I rarely attended, I once asked a colleague why Shimura Sensei had never been considered for a high-level administrative job within the university, and was told, "Shimura Sensei has no kohei's and no disciples." And I might add, never displayed any ill will, much less contempt by word or deed, for his colleagues. Perhaps that absence had some relationship with the "dirty vita" (the academic life's timepiece) which both of us share. If the scholar is unable to move elsewhere (and Shimura did even after retirement, from Tokyo Gaikokugo Daigaku), one could ask the question, "why is he good enough for here?" Perhaps he was too busy learning in a variety of international academic environments to cultivate acolytes, with the unstated mutual obligations that may continue for the lifetime—frozen time in Dickens—of both "engaged orphans" and their masters. In fact, I once saw him return a gift offered by a hopeful ryugakusei (foreign research student), seeking to do research under his direction. Shimura Sensei eschewed the tokens of *giri* that often define academic relationships in Japan, yet was spontaneously generous with his time and money, a combination some of his colleagues attributed to academic *hauteur*. Even in his translations, he desired to keep any explanatory Japanese footnotes—the secondary *dependents* of his narrative—to the bare minimum, the better to engage the reader.

His dedication was to American culture and her literature. For all we know, this interest may have been implanted by another historical *acte gratuit*. For the country was created, impossibly, *sui generis*—out of itself, as a quasi-verbal Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident. . . ." There was no paternity and hence no discipleship. Of course, no truths are ever self-evident. We need search for no paternal authority or conceptual moment that would legitimately ground this enunciation/cry of an orphan country, an outburst of a fledgling from nowhere. Unlike Rousseau's appeal to natural law in *Émile* and elsewhere, there is no antecedent *modelling* in America's foundational "barbaric yawp" (to borrow from Walt Whitman). It is independent of what can be conferred, endowed, commanded, or developed. It is tantamount to an a priori investment of a singularity in each individual, and thus profoundly anti-social. No Establishment could either confer or revoke, the rights being inalienable. And hence there exists the possibility of these rights always being in excess.

The United States of America, Professor Shimura's intellectual and marital interest, has historically, then, been a child without a master, and these days, with a diminished group of historical disciples or apprentices willing to bind themselves to an idea or engage in "strategic alliances." Historically, pagan Gods and those of the Abrahamic faiths (and perhaps especially

nations presumably founded “under God” with “In God We Trust” on its currency) initially have no disciples. Those quarrelsome *kohei*'s and apprentices who strive for a reluctant approval come later. Shimura Sensei was a singular voice who *lived* his interests: an *acte gratuit*. There is no reproductive mold for either the country or the professor who taught its narratives.

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