THE EVIL FLOOD WELLING UP FROM THE CORE OF ASIA: *ST. MAWR* AND ANXIETY OF EMPIRE

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Reflecting on D. H. Lawrence's *St. Mawr* (1925) from a postcolonial perspective, Mark Kinkead-Weekes says: 'Strikingly, all the main characters in *St. Mawr* are mentally either "colonials" or "colonised", and displaced' (77). His argument is at once right and insufficient; for the focus of the text is less on the fixed colonising-colonised relationship than on the uneasiness about the collapse of the hierarchy. It is a horse named St. Mawr bought by Lou for her husband Rico, an Australian baronet's son, that functions as the agent of the symbolic subversion of the hierarchy. The relationship between Lou and Rico in Westminster is a 'Platonic' one without sex (24); Lou even calls him 'the symbol of futility' (51). At first sight, she is fascinated by the horse with 'a dark, invisible fire'. But she finds that 'somewhere deep in his animal consciousness' lives 'a dangerous, half-revealed resentment' (28). The horse has actually inflicted a serious wound upon its former owners. This sense of subterranean unrest culminates in the most shocking scene of the text: St. Mawr, shying at the sight of a dead snake, rears up and falls on top of Rico, who has struggled on its back to rein it back, but in vain. At that moment Lou suddenly sees a 'vision of evil':

> There was no relief. The whole world was enveloped in one great flood. All the nations, the white, the brown, the black, the yellow, all were immersed in the strange tide of evil that was subtly, irresistibly rising. . . .

* This paper is a revised and extended version of the paper I read at the 75th Conference of the English Literary Society of Japan held at Seikei University on 25 May 2003. I would like to express my gratitude to Katsuaki Watanabe, Masayuki Kishi, Noriyuki Hattori and Ian C. Stirk for their useful and encouraging comments and suggestions. I would also like to give particular thanks to Hiroshi Muto, Takayoshi Ishiwari and the members of the Study Circle of D. H. Lawrence for making helpful comments in the early stages of this paper. I am grateful to Hidenaga Arai and Makoto Kinoshita too for their help.

> . . . She felt that from the core of Asia the evil welled up, as from some strange pole, and slowly was drowning earth. (78)

What is curious about this vision is an abrupt reference to Asia as the source of the evil flood. While this vision has drawn critics' attention, little light has been cast upon the significance of the reference to Asia. This critical neglect seems to stem from the transatlantic plot of the story that induces readers to interpretations based on the binary opposition of civilised and exhausted England (represented by Rico) and wild America (to which St. Mawr leads Lou).[1] It is only Howard J. Booth who shows some interest in the derivation of Asia in *St. Mawr*, but his argument is far fiom a satisfying one when he disposes of the question only by saying that Lawrence is perhaps associating the 'core of Asia' with 'his Ceylon experiences and fantasies' (216). This paper attempts to seek out the origin of the eerie image of Asia in *St. Mawr*; a critical reconsideration of the entire text from a global perspective will reveal how deeply the threat of Asia, which has received little critical attention, obsesses this transatlantic story.[2]

I

A first probable source, as Booth argues, is Lawrence's experience in Ceylon, by way of which he sailed to America unlike characters in *St. Mawr* who choose a transatlantic voyage. In March 1922, Lawrence and his wife arrived in Ceylon. During their stay there, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) visited the country and a grand festival called Perahera was held for him. The festival consisting of a parade of more than one hundred elephants, dancers, drummers and pipers must have made a magnificent spectacle. But the reality was something different as Lawrence wrote in a letter: 'The Prince of Wales seemed sad and forlorn. He

[1] Many critics have interpreted the sudden revolt of the horse and the evil vision in terms of the rebellion of wild life against the incompetent Rico — in a Leavisian phrase, the 'representative of modem civilised "life"' (Leavis 237) — keeping reticence on the meaning of Asia (Leavis 249–53; Hough 183; Cavitch 156–59; Sagar 155).

[2] It happened that Hidenaga Arai made a presentation on 'the core of evil' in *St. Mawr* at the 9th International D. H. Lawrence Conference (held about one month after the conference at which I read an earlier draft of this paper) and discussed the issue of Asia from a different perspective from mine.

seemed to be almost the butt of everybody, white and black alike. They all secretly hate him for being a Prince, and make a Princely butt of him — and he knows it. My sympathy was with him' (*Letters* 4: 218). His uneasiness grew with the passage of time. In a letter in April — 'the hottest month in Ceylon' — he described everything in Ceylon negatively: 'The east, the bit I've seen, seems silly. . . . I don't like the silly dark people or their swarming billions or their hideous little Buddha temples, like decked up pigsties — nor anything' (221). Although Lawrence was just one of the spectators at the Perahera, he gradually identified with the Prince of Wales exposed to the hostile stares of the mob: 'I find all dark people have a fixed desire to jeer at us: these people here. They jeer behind your back' (225). This letter expands his personal anxiety at the Perahera into a general problem of 'us', the British. The following letter shows his most imperialist and racist view of his Ceylon days: 'Those natives are *back* of us — in the living sense *lower* than we are. But they're going to swarm over us and suffocate us. We are, have been for five centuries, the growing tip. Now we're going to fall' (234).[3]

David Ellis observes that we should avoid placing 'too much emphasis on any one statement in his letters when his attitudes were always so highly volatile and full of contradictions' (18). But one must not draw a hasty conclusion that Lawrence's extreme statements should be ascribed exclusively to his unstable mind; rather we must place *sufficient* emphasis on every detail of his extreme statements and diagnose it as a 'symptom' of deeper desire and anxiety not only of the author but also of the Empire because his jaundiced remarks in his letters are clearly born of crucially colonial situations. His fear should be taken as what a critic has termed the anxiety of 'reverse colonisation', or the conquest of the metropolitan centre by the colonised.[4]

The Prince of Wales functions as a key figure to connect Lawrence's Ceylon experience to *St. Mawr*: 'And with a great contempt she [Mrs Witt (Lou's mother)] despised the world that had come into place . . . the

[3] Lawrence depicts the pale and dejected Prince of Wales at Perahera in his poem 'Elephant', in which the narrator's nostalgia for Empire culminates in his 'imagi-nation' in which he replaces the Prince of Wales as imperial ruler.

[4] The phrase 'reverse colonisation' is originally presented in Stephen Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiery of Reverse Colonisation', *Victorian Studies*, 33 (1990): 621–45. I take the phrase from Rod Edmond's paper in which it is cited (51).

world of Rico and Flora Manby, the world represented, to her, by the Prince of Wales' (101). The juxtaposition of Rico and the Prince of Wales indicates their parallel relationship, which prompts us to an allegorical reading of the scene where Rico is seriously wounded by his horse. '*Reversed*, and purely evil' (78; emphasis added) — this sentence describing the horse upturned with its hoofs in the air implies the anxiety of '*reverse* colonisation'. Watching the horrible sight, Lou broods:

> She saw the same in people. They were thrown backwards, and writhing with evil. And the rider, crushed, was still reining them down.
>
> What did it mean? Evil, evil, and a rapid return to the sordid chaos. Which was wrong, the horse or the rider? Or both?
>
> She thought with horror of St. Mawr, and of the look on his face. But she thought with horror, a colder horror, of Rico's face as he snarled *Fool*! His fear, his impotence as a master, as a rider, his presumption. And she thought with horror of those other people, so glib, so glibly evil. (78–79)

The impotent 'master'/'rider' who will not give up the 'reins' (in both senses of the word) — the incompetent Rico thrown off the horse is precisely an allegorical version of the nervous and over-tired Prince of Wales on the elephant exposed to the hostile stares of the mob. Thus the sudden revolt of the horse and the following vision of the evil flood from Asia are intricately related to the sense of extreme anxiety about imperial sovereignty Lawrence experienced in Ceylon.

2

But here arises one question: Ceylon is the island to the south of India, which Lawrence calls in a letter the 'corner of the east' (*Letters* 4: 227), not 'the core of Asia'. This geographical gap suggests that Ceylon is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the image of Asia in *St. Mawr*. We need to move on to a second probable source. Look at the following letter Lawrence wrote from Germany on 19 February 1924:

> That *Men Beasts and Gods* [*Beasts, Men and Gods*] seems to me a good deal faked. Anyhow that oriental stuff is a fraud. The middle of Asia there is the old evil destructive centre, now about to rouse again and work on us — particularly Europe. (*Letters* 4: 586)

Here is a striking resemblance to the image of Asia in *St. Mawr*. Taking into account the fact that the letter's date is only some months earlier than the period when Lawrence was at work on *St. Mawr*, we can deduce that Lawrence held the same image of Asia in his mind when writing the letter and the novella. What deserves attention here is the book titled *Beasts, Men and Gods* referred to at the beginning of the above quotation. Although Lawrence calls it 'faked' and 'a fraud', this book seems to give him the suspicion that the 'middle of Asia' is 'the old evil destructive centre'.

Beasts, Men and Gods was published in New York in 1922 and translated into other languages, selling surprisingly well all over Europe. Its author is a Polish scientist named Ferdinand Antoni Ossendowski, who, escaping from Russia's political turmoil, travelled in Central Asia. *Beasts, Men and Gods* is the memoir of this adventure. He describes 'the heart of Asia' as follows: 'In the heart of Asia lies the enormous, mysterious and rich country of Mongolia. . . . The cradle of peoples, histories and legends; the native land of bloody conquerors . . . ' (69). 'The heart of Asia' is filled not only with mystery but also with various diseases such as 'pests', 'anthrax' and 'smallpox'; moreover, it is inhabited by 'demons' (69). The author then reflects on the history of the tracts: 'The land . . . where are dying out the people who formerly conquered China, Siam, Northern India and Russia and broke their chests against the iron lances of the Polish knights, defending then all the Christian world against the invasion of wild and wandering Asia: that is Mongolia' (70). The author's Eurocentric description is constructing and constructed by a few dichotomous contrasts between the two worlds with Poland as the dividing line: the Christian world/Asia; civilised/wild; settled/wandering. He ahistoricises these contrasts when he says that 'every violation of the ancient order of life of the wandering nomad tribes is transformed into streams of red blood and horror' (70). It may be almost natural that this fixed and ahistoricised vision of Asia aroused anxiety about the possible re-invasion of Europe by the 'wild and wandering' Asian tribes who had once failed in the conquest of the Christian world. It is therefore possible to suggest that 'the old destructive centre' in Lawrence's letter might be 'the heart of Asia', Mongolia, which, according to Ossendowski, has various diseases and devils, and whose people were and still are 'wild and wandering', scheming to invade and assault Europe *again*. Recall Lawrence's

letter which says that 'the old evil destructive centre' might arise 'again'. This 'again' seems to imply the historical memory of the Mongolian Empire, which conquered wide areas that ranged from the Korean Peninsula to East Europe.

The last part of *Beasts, Men and Gods* titled 'Mystery of Mysteries' records so numinous an episode about the legend of a subterranean kingdom called 'Agharti', about which, the author says, some lamas have told him. According to them, somewhere in Asia exists a subterranean kingdom under the rule of 'the King of the World', who possesses almighty knowledge and power. Ossendowski closes his memoir with a reference to an apocalyptic prophecy 'the King of the World' left to lamas in 1890:

> The greatest sin and corruption will reign on the earth. . . . There will be a terrible battle among all the peoples. . . hunger, disease, crimes unknown to the law, never before seen in the world. . . . From ten thousand men one shall remain. . . . All the earth will be emptied. (225)

'Then', the King continues, 'the peoples of Agharti will come up from their subterranean caverns to the surface of the earth' (225). The prophecy gives Ossendowski a fright: 'And what if . . . ? What if whole peoples of different colors, faiths and tribes should begin their migration toward the West?' (225). What if? — of course it will be the end of the West if the subterranean peoples with great power besiege the West. It is quite likely that 'the old evil destructive centre' in Lawrence's letter is based on this mysterious episode to some extent. The geographical focalisation in his letter ('particularly Europe') implies the extent to which he is influenced by Ossendowski, who is also worried over unknown peoples' migration 'toward the West'.

What is at issue for our discussion is not the authenticity of Ossendowski's work but the image of Asia depicted and constructed in it. The reason why Lawrence could not help feeling a lurking fear about Asia in spite of his incredulous stance on Ossendowski's work is perhaps that he had the same image of Asia as in it: that is, wild, evil, mysterious Asia that had once invaded and threatened Europe (the Mongolian Empire) and might assault Europe 'again' someday; furthermore, even if the apocalyptic prophecy of 'the King of the World' did not have much verisimilitude, it must have struck contemporary people who experienced

an end-of-the-world incident: World War I.[5]

Another letter written from the same country perhaps on the same date as the above one suggests that Lawrence stretches his imagination beyond the content of *Beasts, Men and Gods*:

> The strange vortex of Tartary has become the positive centre again, the positivity of western Europe is broken. . . . The influences that come, come invisibly out of Tartary. So that all Germany reads *Beasts, Men and Gods* with a kind of fascination. Returning again to the fascination of the destructive East, that produced Attila. ('A Letter from Germany' 108)

The reference to Attila the Hun (who does not appear in Ossendowski's work) shows that Lawrence's imagination goes as far back as the years of the Romans. It follows that 'the old evil destructive centre' in his imagination is much more obscure temporarily and geographically than 'the heart of Asia' in *Beasts, Men and Gods*. It also suggests that our source investigation must not be finished with *Beasts, Men and Gods* because Lawrence had written on the horror of the Huns in a work before he read Ossendowski: *Movements in European History*.

3

Lawrence wrote *Movements in European History* mainly from 1918 to 1919 and published it in 1920 as a school-book for junior forms of grammar school. In the chapter on the fall of the Roman Empire, he writes: 'The great flood of Germanic barbarians that broke over Europe in the decline of the Roman Empire changed for ever the disposition of Europe . . . ' (64). Along with the Germans, he continues, there was another 'barbarian race whose name rang terror through the whole ancient world': the Huns.

> Beyond the Volga lie the vast tracts of Middle Asia, still hardly known to us. In Roman days this enormous region was one dim shadow, whose fringes alone were known. Out of this enormous unknown, from time to time there issued black clouds of human beings, savage and horrible. . . .

[5] E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, which Lawrence read after Ossendowski's work, deepened his sense of anxiety about the end of the white world. In a letter to Forster, Lawrence writes: 'The day of our white dominance is over, and no new day can come till this of ours has passed into night' (*Letters* 5: 77).

> And every time the black swarm broke out of the east, the white clouds of German and Slavonic barbarians came rolling over Europe to the south. And thus we say the Huns destroyed the Roman world, by displacing the German and Slavonic races and impelling them southwards. (65)

The 'ugly' and '[b]ow-legged' Huns were as savage as 'animals' and as avaricious as 'demons': 'The Christian Romans said that the Huns were not human. They were born of evil spirits who mated with witches in the dreary deserts of Asia' (67).

Lawrence's representation of the Huns is overtly a Eurocentric one which, drawing a line of demarcation between self and other along the Volga, confines the farside of the river into a series of negative images (unknown, darkness, savage, evil). It seems certain that this ideological image of Asia mainly derives from Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, on which Lawrence's *Movements* is modelled to a high degree. Gibbon describes the Huns as 'the animals who walk very awkwardly on two legs' and says that '[t]hey were distinguished from the rest of the human species by their broad shoulders, flat noses, and small black eyes, deeply buried in the head . . . ' (3: 30). He goes on to introduce a fabulous legend that the Huns were the offspring of the 'execrable conjunction' between 'witches of Scythia' and 'infernal spirits' (3: 30).[6]

Lawrence reproduces Gibbon's Eurocentric image of Asia without any critical consideration and even with exaggeration. As might be already clear, in Lawrence's depiction of the fall of the Roman Empire in his *Movements* lie some keywords relating to the evil vision in *St. Mawr*: 'the great flood of Germanic barbarians'; the Huns, children of 'evil spirits' in 'Middle Asia'; and 'black clouds of human beings, savage and horrible' that assault Europe. The way of understanding that the similarity between the two texts is no coincidence is to pay attention to the fundamental structure underlying *St. Mawr*. It is the analogism of the two empires that connects the two texts.[7] Little attention has been given to this analogical

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[6] Roy Porter, examining Gibbon's Eurocentrtc stance, argues that to him, who stresses 'the discontinuities between the primitive and the polite states', the fall of the Roman Empire means not only a military defeat but also a 'turning-back' in 'the course of human society' (142). (Remember the sentence in the evil vision in *St. Mawr*: 'Evil, evil, and *a rapid return to the sordid chaos*' [79; emphasis added].)

[7] For the historical significance of the analogism of the two empires, see Rod Edmond (40) and Robert Young (*Postcolonialism* 33).

structure of *St. Mawr* since it hardly comes to the surface of the text — except one symptomatic place where Mrs Witt, despising the younger generation without virility, compares her to Cleopatra without the 'tough Caesar' and the 'gorgeous Antony' (102). To regard this abrupt and momentary appearance of the ancient figures simply as a deviation from the course of the narrative plot is to miss the crucial, underlying structure of the text. The analogy between the two empires functions strongly in the evil vision where the image of the decline and fall of the British Empire is superimposed upon the tragic memory of the ancient empire that was destroyed by 'the great flood' of 'barbarians'. This analogy is made possible only by confining Asia in an ahistorically savage darkness. When Lawrence says that Asia is 'still hardly known' to Europeans, Asia remains as savage as in the years of the Romans in his imaginative map.

4

The fall of the Roman Empire is in fact only one of the examples for a historical interpretation of the evil flood in *St. Mawr*. Look at the following passage from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, which Lawrence read in his youth:

> He [Raskolinikov] had dreamt in his illness that the whole world was condemned to fall victim to a terrible, unknown pestilence which was moving on Europe out of the depths of Asia. All were destined to perish, except a chosen few, a very few. There had appeared a new strain of trichinae, microscopic creatures parasitic in men's bodies. But these creatures were endowed with intelligence and will. People who were infected immediately became like men possessed and out of their minds. . . . [T]hey thrust and cut, they killed and ate one another. . . . All things and all men were perishing. (461–62)

Susan Sontag's assertion that the model of the 'terrible, unknown pestilence' is 'Asiatic cholera' is probably right (138). Cholera, originally endemic in India, grew pandemic throughout wide areas of Eurasia with five outbreaks during the nineteenth century (1817–24, 1829–37, 1840–60, 1863–75, 1881–96). *Crime and Punishment* was serialised in 1866, the very middle of the fourth pandemia. Although there is no reference to cholera in *Crime and Punishment*, we find references to that disease in some of his letters of this period (e.g. *Letters* 113) and in his later novel, *Demons* (e.g.

343, 347).

A critical comparison of the passages from *Crime and Punishment* and *St. Mawr* reveals close similarities between them. First, both are historically decontextualised either as a 'vision' or as a 'dream'. Secondly, disaster originates in Asia. Lastly, the end of the world. How can we explain those similarities between the two texts written in different countries in different periods? One might be tempted to discern some influence of Dostoevsky upon Lawrence.[8] This influence study is indeed attractive because Lawrence had deep interest in Dostoevsky, an 'evil thinker' in his phrase ('*The Grand Inquisitor*' 283), whose influence upon him has been examined by some critics.[9]

But it is naïve and myopic to compress their intertextual relationship into an oedipal one; rather it will make our discussion much more fruitful to grasp their intertextuality in a more complex manner, following Jonathan Culler's illuminating statement that intertextuality is 'less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture' (114). Therefore my original project of the 'source' pursuit must be reshaped here into a more sophisticated and comprehensive project to explicate a discursive and cultural ground which produces and circulates certain images of Asia intertextually.

More important than to draw an inference from the superficial similarities between the two texts is to focus on their attitudes adherent to the 'geographical' context that urges the reference to Asia as the origin of disaster (whether the disease or the flood) in spite of its irrelevance to their narrative plots and in marked contrast to their tendency to obscure the 'historical' context. These textual attitudes should be taken as a symptom of some cultural codes both of them presuppose consciously or unconsciously. Sontag's argument is instructive in this respect: 'Part of the centuries-old conception of Europe as a privileged cultural entity is that it is a place which is colonized by lethal diseases coming from

[8] Whether or not Lawrence read the 'terrible, unknown pestilence' in *Crime and Punishment* as cholera, he knew the horror and symbolism of the disease through his reading and writing an essay ('German Books' 308–13) on Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, which describes 'Indian cholera' as a 'specter' wandering towards Europe (354).

[9] For Dostoevsky's influence upon Lawrence, see Panichas and Kaye although neither of them discusses the vision of the evil flood in *St. Mawr*.

elsewhere' (138) — this remark on the fear of Asian cholera can be expanded into more general issues of Eurocentricism and xenophobia that tend to connect any calamity to a mysterious, dark and horrible 'elsewhere'. This is the cultural ground that produced the two texts, and this is the unconscious process of drawing Asia as a metonymy for a non-European 'elsewhere' into the textual margins to foment apocalyptic horror. It is an insignificant and even fruitless effort to discern an umbilical link between the two texts here; the point is how deeply both of them are infiltrated with a common Eurocentric and xenophobic ideology. The two texts are, as it were, two separate stems nourished by the same soil.[10]

To return to the above passage from *Crime and Punishment*, I want to focus on the word 'parasitic'. This term designates 'trichinae', a kind of parasite whose biology was hardly known then and which caused a widespread disease. In Russia, between 1865 and 1866, many pamphlets on that parasite were issued. Dostoevsky utilises the latest information of his days in his novel, endowing the parasites with 'intelligence and will'. A Biblical implication of the parasites is the devils that haunt creatures: 'Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked' (Luke 8.33).[11] Dostoevsky substitutes the 'trichinae' that *parasitise* creatures in place of the devils that *haunt* them.

The term 'parasite' also appears in the evil vision in *St. Mawr*:

> Creation destroys as it goes, throws down one tree for the rise of another. But ideal mankind would abolish death, multiply itself million upon million, rear up city upon city, save every parasite alive, until the accumulation of mere existence is swollen to a horror. (80)

This passage belongs to the social Darwinism paradigm that warned people of the paradox of civilisation that its progress would stop the function of natural selection and foster the increase of the unfit and the weak which would lead the nation to degeneration. While the parasite in

[10] Edward Said suggests that many of the prominent features of modernist culture — 'self-consciousness, discontinuity, self-referentiality, and corrosive irony' — should be understood not only as products of 'purely internal dynamics in Western society and culture' but also as responses to 'the external pressures on culture from the *imperium*' (188).

[11] Luke 8.32–36 is quoted as an epigraph to Dostoevsky's *Demons*.

Crime and Punishment specifically designates the trichina, the referent of the parasite in *St. Mawr* is not specified. Makoto Kinoshita points out that in eugenic discourses of that time, 'parasite' indicated not only the lower classes but also the upper and aristocratic classes which were considered to leech others' wealth without any competence for production for themselves ('*St. Mawr* and Eugenics' 214–34; see also Pick 121). In this discursive context, the episode of Rico's fall from the horse, 'one of the kings of creation in the order below man' (83), can be read as a class allegory with a double meaning: it implies the subversion of class hierarchy by the revolt of the lower classes; at the same time, however, it is Rico himself who is a parasitic aristocrat to cause the degeneration of the nation. 'Which was wrong, the horse or the rider? Or both?' (79) — Lou's extremely ambivalent feeling demonstrates the multidimensionality of the episode. In the next chapter, I will discuss the 'parasite' from a different perspective by shifting the focus from the parasitic 'class' to the parasitic 'race'.

5

One of the serious problems of Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the large-scale immigration of Eastern Jews that took place from the 1880s to the 1910s mainly due to strictly anti-Semitic measures, including pogroms, in Czarist Russia. The anti-Semite Arnold White warned in his *The Modern Jew* (1899) that Jewish 'parasitism' would lead to the 'Jewish imperium inside the English Empire' (14, xii). Goldwin Smith, in his article 'The Jewish Question' (1881), expressed the problem in a more figurative way: 'There is no reason why any people should endure it, at all events if the number and influence of the intruders are such as to constitute a serious danger to the nation, and the parasite seems likely to injure the growth of the tree' (Englander 256). His tree rhetoric obviously consists of the same discursive stuff of the above passage from *St. Mawr*, which says that the stagnation of the natural process of life and death of trees will proliferate 'every parasite'. Following the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (originally published in Russia in 1903 and translated into English in 1920), *The Cause of World Unrest* (1920) warned people of the 'Jewish Peril' (Gwynne 31): 'there has been for centuries a hidden conspiracy, chiefly Jewish, whose objects

have been and are to produce revolution, communism, and anarchy' (9). Moreover, *The British Guardian* (1924) insisted on a 'fundamental necessity for the British Race . . . to keep itself pure by casting out from its councils and counsels this asiatic race' (qtd. in Holmes 158). Asia was assumed to be parasitising and proliferating in the body politic of Britain.

It goes without saying that the term 'Jewish peril' is associated with the 'yellow peril'. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an increasing number of Asian migrants spreading across the world and the military and industrial development of Asian nations aroused in the West much fear about the military and economic conquest by yellow races that exceeded white races in number. Lawrence, who travelled around the world, visited Australia and America, where exclusionist movements were particularly intense. In his Australian novel *Kangaroo* (1923), Jack Callcott talks about his fear about Japanese invasion and their 'coloured labour' who might 'swallow' the Australians (90). In another place of the novel, Richard Somers thinks of Australia as the 'land that invites parasites' which 'breed like nightmares' (307). Another novel, *Aaron's Rod* (1922), also presents a very stereotypical image of Asian races when Rawdon Lilly says: 'I can't do with folk who teem by the billion, like Chinese and Japs and orientals altogether. Only vermin teem by the billion. Higher types breed slower' (97). This is precisely a carbon copy of the Spencerian theory of biosociology which measures racial differences in terms of the 'excess of fertility' of the primitive over the civilised races and which produced 'the widespread cultural fantasy of the numberless, swarming, dehumanised populations of Asia' (Young, *Colonial Desire* 97–98).

In *St. Mawr*, Japanese and Chinese figures do not appear, but there is one place where Jews appear momentarily. When Mrs Witt rides a horse in the Hyde Park, Jews enter her view: 'And her eyes became dagger-like as she watched the clipped, shorn, mincing young Englishmen. She refused to look at the prosperous Jews' (26). One is wrong to undervalue the Jews' textual marginality; for the very fact that they *appear in the text only to be excluded* implies their parasitism. Although Jewish figures never appear in other places of the text, we find Jewishness in 'figurative' forms. Lou calls Flora Manby, an upper-class friend of Rico who is going to buy St. Mawr from him and castrate it, 'Shylock' (113). 'Shylock' is the name frequently used to criticise the 'capitalistic', 'greedy' and 'parasitic' Jews. Needless to say, Flora Manby, who attempts to emasculate St.

Mawr, the symbol of wild natural vitality, is one of the proliferating parasites that would lead the nation to degeneration. Flora Manby is an intersectant point of the discourses of parasitic 'race' and parasitic 'class'.

Then, look at the following passage from the evil vision:

> Mankind, like a horse, ridden by a stranger, smooth-faced, evil rider. Evil himself, smooth-faced and pseudo-handsome, riding mankind past the dead snake, to the last break.
>
> Mankind no longer its own master. Ridden by this pseudo-handsome ghoul of outward loyalty, inward treachery, in a game of betrayal, betrayal, betrayal. The last of the gods of our era, Judas supreme! (79)

Here humankind is compared to a horse that is controlled by an 'evil rider' whose identity is not clear. But we must not overlook 'Judas', the Jew of 'outward loyalty' and 'inward treachery' who betrayed Christ in the end. The sense of anxiety over the secret control by an unknown rider reminds us of the passage from *The Cause of World Unrest*, in which the author maintains the existence of 'a hidden conspiracy, chiefly Jewish'. But I shall hastily add that we should not jump to too simplistic a conclusion that the above passage is about the Jewish peril itself; what I want to stress is not the direct connectedness between *St. Mawr* and other anti-Semitic texts but the fact that they cohabit in the same discursive space that, regardless of the authors' intentions, makes similar discursive effects on them. The above passage about vague anxiety is deeply soaked with the anti-Semitic ideology of the period to the extent that *St. Mawr* is incorporated into and reinforced by anti-Semitic discourse and *vice versa.*

Asia as the source of the evil flood and Jewish 'figures' scattered throughout the text are deeply associated with each other. It follows that the evil flood from Asia is the symbolic expression of anxiety about the rising power of Asian and Jewish races. In the process of symbolisation of the yellow and Jewish peril, that image seems to have absorbed various elements interdiscursively and interhistorically ranging from the author's Ceylon experience all the way to the various historical memories of the Huns, the Mongolian Empire and cholera. The Asia in *St. Mawr* is such an extremely overdetermined symbolic construct.

6

From what has been discussed above, it becomes clear how deeply *St.*

Mawr is obsessed by the fear of Asia despite its textual marginality. It also alerts us to the necessity to deconstruct conventional interpretations grounded on the binary configuration of civilised England and wild America from a global perspective. The narrative plot proceeds from England to America, where Lou and others take St. Mawr with them to save it from castration. The story ends with Lou's decision to purchase a ranch in the depths of the Southwest at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, which have been interpreted by critics as the symbol of 'life' contrastive to civilised and sterile England.

This kind of dichotomous reading tends to miss the strong resemblance of the image of the wild Southwest to that of the evil flood from Asia. Just as the evil flood wells up from the core of Asia and drowns all the nations, in the depths of America exists 'the animosity of the spirit of place' — 'the grey, rat-like spirit' — that is 'crude' and 'half-created', 'forever attacking man, in a hatred of man's onward-struggle towards further creation', to the extent that it takes 'all the pith of manhood' from individuals (143, 147, 150). Also, as the evil tide is 'imperceptible' and 'invisible' (78), a 'strange invisible influence' comes out of the bowels of the 'uncreated Rocky Mountains', 'preying upon the will of man' and 'slowly wearing down his resistance, his onward pushing spirit' (143). 'There was no relief' both from the evil flood and from the animosity of wild America (78, 150). Furthermore, compare the two passages: first, from the vision of the evil flood: 'Man must destroy as he goes, as trees fall for trees to rise. The accumulation of life and things means rottenness' (80); then, from the depiction of the Southwest: 'And all the time, man has to rouse himself afresh, to cleanse the new accumulations of refuse' (151).

Conventional readings focusing only on the contrast between civilised England and wild America have invariably admired the latter without noticing its strong resemblance to the eerie image of the evil flood. A reconfigurative reading, however, shows that the relationship between England and America should be grasped not only as a civilisation-nature dichotomy but also as a displaced and distorted expression of the relationship between England and Asia. Having disclosed the unconscious geopolitical configuration of the text, we need to practice a double reading of the ostensibly apolitical depiction of the vast wilderness of the Southwest: 'So it was! The alfalfa field was one raging, seething conflict

of plants trying to get hold. . . . A battle, a battle, with banners of bright scarlet and yellow' (148). A mimetic reading might be content to regard this depiction of the landscape filled with plants of various colours as a beautiful representation of wild 'life'. But if the image of the Southwest is a displaced and distorted copy of the evil flood from Asia, we must remember the following sentence which also stresses the colours of nations: 'All the nations, the white, the brown, the black, the yellow, all were immersed in the strange tide of evil that was subtly, irresistibly rising' (78). It does not seem so farfetched to suggest that these colours of nations are not irrelevant to those of the wild plants. 'A battle, a battle, with banners of bright scarlet and yellow' — the double signification of the term 'banner' (botanical and military) obviously urges us towards an allegorical reading of the battle of the wild plants: that is, the image of the plants of various colours that struggle with each other is a transfigured expression of racial struggle.

Allegorically read, the text reveals its unconscious structure: the fear of Asia, after its momentary eruption and immediate repression (not exclusion), reappears in the scenery of the vast wilderness of the Southwest, where various 'lower', 'savage' creatures swarm. In the battle of nature every creature and plant asserts its own 'life', exempt from any ethical judgment of right and wrong. Once we recognise the unconscious adjacency between the core of Asia and the depths of America, we find the intrinsic ambivalence of the text that is at once frightened of and unconsciously fascinated by savage Asia. 'This was life, intense, bristling life, full of energy, but also, with an undertone of savage sordidness' (148) — this ambivalent remark addressed to the wild Southwest is unconsciously directed towards Asia as well. The flood from Asia that causes racial anarchy is indeed full of sordid and abject energy, but it is not impossible to say that Asia is just asserting it's 'life' and that if the British regime has lost its power to the extent that it becomes a feeble parasite, it must be washed from the surface of the earth by that flood.

Critics who read *St. Mawr* following the flow of Lou's sexual desire that proceeds along the transatlantic course of its plot reduce it to the story of hopeless England and wild America, excluding Asia from its textual world. The crucial point such readings fail to notice is the fact that Lou's *sexual* desire is a disguised 'figure' of *political* desire and anxiety of the Empire that are flowing, at the sub-/unconscious levels of the

text, in a direction diametrically opposite to the westward storyline. It is possible and even imperative for us to argue that the terminus of the narrative plot is, as it were, the 'double exposure' of the depths of America and the core of Asia. Therefore, Lou's infatuation with the wild spirit of the depths of America, where she finally decides to remain, must be read in relation to anxiety and desire of the Empire concerning Asia: in *St. Mawr*, *political* anxiety of the Empire incompetent to square up to racial struggle is unconsciously but tactfully dispersed through the textual manipulation by which it is transmuted into Lou's *sexual* desire to plunge into the unforgiving wilderness of the Southwest, where every creature and plant asserts its own 'life' in the fierce struggle for existence; in other words, the text desires to conquer Asia symbolically by urging Lou to possess the imaginary place in which the eastern and western peripheries are inseparably (con-)fused. *St. Mawr* is unconsciously an escapist fantasy to dispel anxiety of the Empire.

Osaka University of Foreign Studies Received August 29, 2003

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