

〈研究ノート〉

古英詩 *The Ruin* における感覚的表現のリアリズム

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Realism of Sensuous Description in *The Ruin*

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要 旨 古英詩の中の哀詩「廃墟」は、タイトルが示すとおり、破壊された建造物が廃墟となり、観察者はその年月を想い、過ぎ去った栄光の時代を懐かしむというものである。約40行という小篇であることから、残念ながらこの詩は研究論文も少なく、その文学的評価はあまり問題にされていないことが現状である。しかしながら、その文体には近代文学にも通じる洗練された手法により、詩作におけるリアリズムの追求が見られる。詩の構造の中で、風景を描写する最初の手法は「視覚」のみを使い、詩の中盤では視覚に加え「聴覚」による描写が続き、終盤では、人にとってより近い感覚として「触覚」を用いて表現している。聞き手の想像力を高めるために、最初は目に入った廃墟の静かな描写を、そして次第に生きている人間の声や動きのある描写に変わり、さらに手で触れれば熱さが伝わる浴室の描写となっている。その手法が、マーク・トウェイン作『トム・ソーヤーの冒険』の、かの有名なジャクソン島で主人公が目覚めた時の自然描写と類似していることは、古英詩の時代にも詩作においてリアリズムの試みがなされているという仮説に対して論拠の一つとなる。

キーワード Realism Anglo-Saxon elegies Sensuous description

There have not been many major literary studies on *The Ruin*, probably on account of the poem usually being regarded as one of the minor poems in Anglo-Saxon literature. The venue referred to in the poem seems essentially the primary subject of controversy.¹ However, its elegiac strains and retrospect for the transient glory of the past should not be disregarded as a work that clearly features Anglo-Saxon culture. This poem, especially with respect to poetic technique, ought not to be set aside as a template for any other elegy, such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, the primary sources of which are also based upon the transient glory of the past.

This paper attempts to shed light on a novel technique of producing visionary scenes of the past in desolate places, which allows the poem to acquire a dash of realism. The key to this is the poet's transitional aspect of the senses. In order to gradually visualise an imaginative scene of a ruined hall, the poet effectively weaves together the aspects of the sense of sight, hearing, and touch. Observing the abandoned place, he sets out to describe what he physically sees before him, followed by a vision of ancient warriors roaring, slaughtered, and falling on the floor. The first

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static description of the ruins is evidently directed toward movements of mankind attended with imaginary voices and sounds. At the end of the poem, which unfortunately is fragmentary, the observer has a vision of a hot spring splashing from walls. Here appears the sense of touch, as a way of clarifying the vision with a more distinctive feeling of physical contact, that of heat.

The supposition stated above might bring to mind a passage in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, written by Mark Twain: the well-known description of nature on Jackson's Island. When Tom Sawyer wakes up in the morning on the island, he first sees a silent morning. Then he starts describing details of movements, such as the sounds of birds and insects. The author also utilises the aspect of the senses to render some poetic patterns in pursuing realism. On a long enough timeline, from the eighth to the nineteenth century, these two writers may have something in common: they are observers of nature.² The technique of viewing an imaginary landscape, arranging the aspects of sight, hearing, and touch in a row, attains a kind of virtual reality in the eyes of audience.

In the first half of the poem, which unfortunately ends with damaged text, the author of *The Ruin* remains in static lamentation for the deserted scenery. Describing the ruins as they are, only with his sense of sight, he passes an overview of visual objects on to the audience.

Arctic is þes wealstan! Wyrde gebræcon;
 burgstede burston, broснаð enta geweorc;
 hrofas sind gehrorene, hreorge torras,
hringeat berofen, hrim on lime; (MS hrim geat torras berofen)
 scearde scurbeorge, scorene, gedrorene,
 ældo undereotone. Eorðgrap hafað
 waldendwyrhtan, forweorone, geleorene,
 heard gripe hrusan, oþ hund cnea
 werþeoda gewitan. Oft þæs wag gebad,
 ræghar ond readfah, rice æfter oþrum,
 oftstonden under stormum. Stea[p], geap gedreas. (ll.1-11)³

Wondrous is the masonry! Fates broke;
 buildings fell apart, handiwork of giants decayed;
 roofs are fallen, towers are ruinous,
 a barred gate is destroyed, frost on cement;
 protections from storms are gaping, rent, collapsed,
 undermined through age. A grip of earth has
 perished master builders who passed away,

a fierce grasp of earth, until a hundred of generations
of people departed. Often this wall of a building experienced,
grey with lichen and stained with red, a kingdom after another,
remained standing beneath storms. High, curved, collapsed.

Silence, decay, and death prevail all over the ruins. A static image is intentionally pointed with the building-related terms, such as 'wealstan (masonry)', 'burgstede (buildings)', 'brosnað (handiwork)', 'hrofas (roofs)', 'torras (towers)', 'hringeat (a barred gate)', 'lime (cement)', 'scurbeorge (protections)', and 'wag (wall)'. While some verbs, like 'gebræcon (broke)', 'burston (fell apart)', 'geweorc (decayed)', 'gehrorene (fallen)', 'berofen (destroyed)', 'scorene (rent)', 'gedrorene (collapsed)', 'undereotone (undermined)', and 'gedreas (collapsed)', are associated with the image of decay and death, as well as the usage of adjectives like 'hreorge (ruinous)' and 'scearde (gaping)'. The people who used to inhabit the region are also depicted as mortal and out of existence, such as with the words 'forweorone (perished)', 'geleorene (passed away)', and 'gewitan (departed)'.

The lines above are easily associated with the passage in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* that describe nature in the morning on Jackson's Island. This passage is well known in American literature for its magnificent description of nature. When Tom spends a night on the island to seek an adventure, he experiences a crispy morning, observing nature first with the sense of sight.

When Tom awake in the morning, he wondered where he was. He sat up and rubbed his eyes and looked around. Then he comprehended. It was the cool gray dawn, and there was a delicious sense of repose and peace in the deep pervading calm and silence of the woods. Not a leaf stirred; not a sound obtruded upon great Nature's meditation. Beaded dewdrops stood upon the leaves and grasses. A white layer of ashes covered the fire, and a thin blue breath of smoke rose straight into the air. Joe and Huck still slept. (ll.1-8, p.76)⁴

Compared with the citation from *The Ruin*, 'a delicious sense of repose and peace' seems a common feature running through the beginnings of the two pieces. The sense of sight is first adapted to a technique of depicting nature; as Tom says, 'Not a leaf stirred; not a sound obtruded upon great Nature's meditation.' When no sound is heard at the beginning of the dawn, only his eyes seem to verify an awakening of nature. It may be noted, however, that there may be a difference in theme between *The Ruin* and *Tom Sawyer*. While the former laments a place forlorn of glory, the latter rejoices over the beauty of nature. Nevertheless, what this poetic technique eventually achieves successfully appears in embodying a virtual landscape as if the audience or the reader was actually observing it.

Then, what physical sense is proposed next by Twain in order to represent another aspect of

nature? The following passage reveals his attempt to focus on the ‘sounds’ surrounding Tom Sawyer. After the morning silence on the island is mentioned, the noise of birds and insects draw his attention.

Now, far away in the woods a bird called; another answered; presently the hammering of a wood pecker was heard. Gradually the cool dim gray of the morning whitened, and as gradually sounds multiplied and life manifested itself. The marvel of Nature shaking off sleep and going to work unfolded itself to the musing boy. A little green worm came crawling over a dewy leaf, lifting two-thirds of his body into the air from time to time and “sniffing around,” then proceeding again — (ll.9-15, p.76)

The static state of the morning is followed by the movements of living creatures. First, birds are singing without being seen, and then, Tom can hear the sounds of life. The author sets to producing active verbs from the beginning of this passage, such as ‘whitened’, ‘multiplied’, ‘manifested’, ‘shaking off’, ‘unfolded’, ‘crawling over’, ‘lifting’, ‘sniffing’, and ‘proceeding’. Hereafter, Tom describes movements of several kinds of insects and birds, and eventually of animals such as a squirrel and a fox. At the end of this splendid representation of nature, Tom is rejoiced to say, ‘All Nature was wide awake and stirring, now.’⁵ The passage above is filled with actions and movements of living creatures, admiring their lives.

Likewise, the poet of *The Ruin* seems to adapt the same technique of utilising verbs and the sense of hearing in order to visualise a lost hall where many warriors enjoyed themselves drinking and talking, and perished in battles thereafter. After he mentions the torn-down buildings, the poet starts focusing on living things: human beings. The verbs related with actions heighten the dynamism of reality after the silence and decay of stone buildings is focused on the beginning of the poem. It is likely that the poet is attempting to pursue realism on purpose.

Wu[n]að giet s[e] ——— ——— [n]um geheapen. (MS wo-að)
Felon [i] ————— [e]
grimme gegrunde[n] —————
————— r[e] scan heo —————
————— g orþonc ærsceaft ———
————— g— lamrindum beag.
Mod mo[n]ade m]yneswiftne gebrægd;
hwætred in hringas hygerof gebond
weall walanwirum wundrum togædre.
Beorht wæron burgræced, burnsele monige,

heah horngestreon, heresweg micel,
 meodoheall monig, mondreama full; (MS II dreama)
 oþþæt þæt onwende wyrd seo swiþe.
 Crungon walo wide; cwoman woldagas.
 Swyft eall fornóm *secgrofra* wera. (MS secg rof)
 Wurdon hyra wigsteal westenstapolas.
 Brosnade burgsteall, betend crungon,
 hergas to hrusan. Forþon þas hofu dreorgiað,
 ond þæs teaforgeapa tigelum sceadeð,
hrostbeames rof. Hryre wong gecrong, (MS hrost beages)
 gebrocen to beorgum, þær iu beorn monig,
 glædmod ond goldbeorht, gleoma *gefrætweð*, (MS gefrætweð)
 wlonc ond wingal, wighyrstum scan;
 seah on sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas,
 on ead, on æht, on eorcanstan,
 on þas beorhtan burg Bradan rices. (ll.12-37)

That still moulders — — gashed.
 Penetrated ——— ———
 Fiercely sharpened ———
 ——— shone ———
 ——— monument of skill ancient work ———
 ——— bent by crusts of mud.
 Mind instigated stimulated a swift purpose;
 ingenious into circles bound resolute
 foundations by metal rods wonderfully together.
 Bright were city halls, many bathing halls,
 abundance of gables high, great martial noise,
 many mead-hall, filled with revelry of men;
 until that fate changed that mighty one.
 Slaughtered men fell far and wide; days of pestilence came.
 Death took away all of valiant men.
 Their bastions became deserted places.
 A city decayed, rebuilders fell,
 armies to the earth. Therefore these buildings grow desolate,
 and this red curved parts by tiles,

a roof of circle formed by inner roofwork. Ruin fell down to the ground,
shattered by mounds of stone, where formerly many warrior,
joyous and bright with gold, adorned with splendour,
proud and flushed with wine, shined with war trappings;
looked on treasure, on silver, on precious stones,
on wealth, on property, on jewellery,
on this bright city of the broad kingdom.

After the first six lines, which are accidentally damaged, the following lines create an effect of turning the observer's viewpoint from the first static landscape to a vibrant reconstruction of the lost society of warriors. The poet suddenly proposes a series of verbs like 'mo[nade (instigated)' and 'm]yneswiftne (stimulated)', shortly followed by the expressions of the sense of hearing, 'heresweg micel (great martial noise)' and 'mondreama (revelry of men)'. Unlike the verbs 'burston (fell apart)' and 'geweorc (decayed)', which appeared at the beginning, chosen here are terms that suggest a joy of living for human beings: 'gebond . . . wundrum togædre (bound . . . wonderfully together)', 'beorht (bright)', 'monige (many)', 'heah horngestreon (abundance of gables high)', 'micel (great)', and 'mondreama full (filled with revelry of men)'. It seems clear that the poet intends to draw a contrast between active lives of human beings in the past through the description of warriors, and the present static state of death through the images of ruined buildings. This can be proven by the poet's resuming the description of the ruins in the following lines. He gives us the reason that it was the death of people that caused this place to be abandoned. People died in battles (l.25a). Death took away the glorious warriors (l.26a). In the poet's view, it is more preferable for the city to be outlasted by human beings than establishment of high and magnificent buildings themselves. This phrase may reveal to us the Anglo-Saxon philosophy that there is nothing more valuable than comradeship, and relationships among people.

The contrast between the active expression of people and the static state of the ruins comes in turns. The phrase examined above is followed by a lamentation for the ruins. There appears again the familiar terminology in this poem, 'westenstaþolas (deserted place)', 'brosnade (decayed)', 'crungon (fell)', 'dreorgiað (grew desolate)', 'hryre wong gecrong (ruin fell down to the ground)', and 'gebrocen (shattered)'. The warriors again draw the attention of the audience (l.33b) within a typical description of a mead-hall. A reality is pursued in the following words: 'glædmod ond goldbeorht (joyous and bright with gold)', 'gleoma *gefrætweð* (adorned with splendour)', 'wlonc ond wingal (proud and flushed with wine)', 'wighyrstum scan (shined with war trappings)', 'seah on sinc (looked on treasure)', 'on sylfor (on silver)', 'on searogimmas (on precious stones)', 'on ead (on wealth)', 'on æht (on property)', and 'on eorcanstan (on jewellery)'. These words have the effect of rendering in the audience's imagination images of people walking around in the hall, talking,

clattering their shining war equipments, boasting their martial deeds, drinking wine, and being surrounded by the tributes of jewellery and property. To enhance the scene's realism, the sense of hearing is effectively manipulated in order to induce the audience to imagine human voices and other sounds in the hall.

Lastly, but most interestingly, the poet's successful technique of establishing reality in poetry is the sense of touch. The frequent use of 'hate (hot)' has an impact on the audience's imagination, since the feeling of touch describes a type of physical contact, unlike the other two. Watching and hearing are actions people can usually do while dreaming. On the contrary, the sensation of heat is meant to be much closer to reality. In the end of the poem, as we ought to say unless it remains intact, a series of 'hot stream' meaning hot baths, suggests that daily life of people would have been maintained at the deserted hall in the past.

Stanhofu stodaŋ; stream hate wearp,
 widaŋ wylme. Weal eall befeng
 beorhtan bosme, þær þa baþu wæ[r]on,
 hat on hreþre. Ðæt wæs hyðelic.
 Leton þonne geotan [l] —————
 ofer h[arn]e stan hate streamas,
 un[d] ————— —————
 [o]þæt hringmere hate —————
 ————— þær þa baþu wæron.
 Þonne is —————
 ————— re þæt is cynelic þing
 hu se ————— ——— burg ——— (ll.38-49)

Stone buildings stood; stream gushed by heat,
 by broad surge. A wall enclosed all
 by bright bosom, there were those baths,
 hot by heat. That was convenient.
 allowed then pour
 across over grey stone hot streams,
 — —
 until circular pool hot —
 — where those baths were.
 Then —
 — that is noble thing

Repeated afterwards are phrases referring hot baths: 'stream hate wearp (stream gushed by heat)', 'widan wylme (broad surge)', 'baþu (baths)', 'hat on hreþre (hot by heat)', 'hate streamas (hot streams)', and 'hate (hot)'. The poet applies not only the sense of touch but also an association with motion to his idea of realistic depiction. A sequence of 'stream (stream)', 'wylme (surge)', 'geotan (pour)', and 'hringmere (circular pool)' has the effect on producing a locomotive image at the scene. Listening to this segment of poem, the audience can actually fancy a bath filled with copious hot water gushing from the walls. These words produce an active environment in the latter part of the poem, in which the poet's goal seems to be centred on describing a hall vibrant with life.

Thus, the contrast developed by the poet between the revelry of people and the silence of ruins is explicitly shown. His way of observing the ruins is based upon a distinguished style of composition: shifting the poetic environment from a static state to an active one. The key to producing this style are the senses of sight, hearing, and touch. The poet of *The Ruin* attempts to establish realism in the poem in order to introduce the audience to the world of a virtual experience in which the audience can see the ruins, hear the revelry of people, and feel the heat of hot baths. Although it is likely that Mark Twain, writing in the nineteenth century, to apply realism to his works, it may hardly be credible that such a short and ancient poem as *The Ruin* had the gradient step of developing these poetic sentiments. The compositional skills present in *The Ruin* should be studied more thoroughly, as well as the poem itself, which may have more controversial propositions.

What this paper has left unanswered is the question of whether or not this compositional technique might be a universal style in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Is this style applied to any other elegy, such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, or is it exclusive to *The Ruin*? If it is a particular style of composition for *The Ruin*, it seems preferable to propose the distinctiveness of the poet's talent. This task will no doubt be challenged in the future.

Notes

- 1 Is this ruin regarded as 'Bath' or 'Babylon'? The debate has captured the interests of many scholars who have been engaged in research with the poem. See 'The Ruin: Bath or Babylon?' written by Anne Thompson Lee, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, LXXIV (1973), 443-55.
- 2 See *Three Old English Elegies*, p.36.
- 3 All citations of *The Ruin* hereafter come from *The Old English Elegies*, 1992.
- 4 All citations of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* hereafter lie in *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer*, 1998.
- 5 *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 1998, p.77.

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