

**A Fascination with the ‘Uncanny’: From *The Book of Judith*
to *Player Piano***
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1 Introduction¹

In the introduction to his essay “The ‘Uncanny,’” Freud suggests that the German word, “Heimlich” actually has two opposite meanings: Heimlich and Unheimlich, or the familiar and the uncanny. This is, he states, because the “uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old—established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression” (Freud, 1919/2003, pp. 12-13). Thus, the familiar and the uncanny, intimacy and alienation are actually not opposites, but are in fact, closely related as Freud states.

Over the years, the idea of the uncanny has led to the creation of a diversity of monstrosities. This paper will discuss a number of such monstrous manifestations of the uncanny, including women, monsters, human beings, and technology.

I will begin with *The Book of Judith*.

2 Monsters

2.1 *The Book of Judith*

Along with Salome, the figure of Judith has long haunted the western imagination. In *The Book of Judith*, Judith murders Holofernes using her sexual charms. To the Jewish people, she is a pious warrior, who saved her homeland; however, to her enemies she is a femme fatale, or an awful witch.

The Book of Judith is not included in the canonical books of the Bible, but rather is a part of the deuterocanonical apocrypha. In the apocrypha, Judith is clearly described as “a widow,” and did not have sex with Holofernes. However, male writers of fiction and psychiatry transformed her into a virgin and let her have sexual relations with Holofernes. In this way, she was transformed into a

sexual symbol. Midori Wakakuwa rightly points out that these transformations are projections of male subversive sexuality upon women.

In fact, Judith is both the personification of the Jewish people, and also the savior of her people. She is, therefore, pictured in two different ways: not only as an erotic woman, but also as a female hero. (Wakakuwa, 2000a, pp. 420-421)

As for the latter, Mary Garrard considers the paintings of Judith by the 17th century Baroque woman artist, Artemisia Gentileschi, to be the best representation of Judith as female hero (Garrard, 1989).

The other interesting point about *The Book of Judith* is its chiasmic or nesting structure,² or "Ireko" in Japanese. Helen Efthimiadis-Keith points out that the image of Judith is that of duality: the 'juxtaposition and combination of godliness vs. carnality, chastity vs. 'immorality', truth vs. deception, strength vs. weakness, masculinity vs. femininity' (Garrard, 1989, p. 28). She also argues that:

[t] he assimilation of this archetype constitutes a vital step in the individuation process of any male psyche. ...one aspect of the Judithic dream warns that the nation, which is typically male, will never achieve inner peace or transcend its current level of individuation unless it permits the integrated anima free reign in its current state. (Garrard, 1989, p. 32)

This nesting structure can be interpreted as a demand that Jewish society of that time mature by accepting a heroine with a complex anima image full of contradictions.³

In this way, throughout history woman, or the femme fatale, has been men's first encounter with the uncanny as monster.⁴

Now, to move on to the next monster, Dracula.

2.2 Dracula

Dracula is often regarded as the most representative figure of the monstrous. However, is Dracula truly the most hideous of monsters?

The OED presents several different definitions of the word “monster.” The most appropriate one in the case of Dracula is “something inhumanly cruel.” First of all, that begs the question: What does it mean to be human?

When asked this question, most of the students of my Dracula classes answer “kind, sympathetic, intelligent.” Then, gradually, they realize that human beings are not always quite so nice or peaceful. On the contrary, humans can be unkind, unsympathetic, and lacking in intelligence.

We human beings usually regard ourselves as superior to other living things such as insects, fish, birds, and animals. It is true that animals of the same species kill each other, but it is only we human beings who create or manufacture weapons to murder others. People often use the word “bestiality” in connection with “abnormal” sexual desire, but beasts are decent enough to have limited mating seasons, and again, it is we human beings who do not. What is it to be human, and inhuman, then? It turns out that it is not so easy to clearly describe or define these terms.

Let us now briefly introduce Dracula and his story.

Dracula is a vampire; there is a long history of this species in the world, particularly in Europe. Premature burials also contributed to strengthen the tradition of vampires. The concept of the vampire arose primarily from the fear of death, and from a belief in the power of blood. Fear of death does not need any explanation, so let us focus on the latter, a belief in the power of blood.

In the old days, people did not understand the concept of blood circulation nor the essential mechanisms of the body. However, from experience, they knew blood was essential for life.

Bram Stoker wove the tradition of vampires into a novel, and published it in 1897. The story strongly reflects many aspects of thought of the time, especially a concern about the decline of the British Empire. The story also encompasses a

variety of themes: fears about degeneration, homosexuality, invasion, colonization, pandemics, and it also reveals ambivalence towards women. The book also leads to a consideration of issues related to the modern nature of life: bioethics, transplantation, clones, iPS, and infectious diseases.

A brief synopsis of the novel is this: Count Dracula from Transylvania wishes to be the conqueror of the entire world, and so comes to UK to begin his quest. However, a band of men from the UK, the Netherlands and the USA defeat him. As a result, Dracula is forced to return to his homeland. When he is about to enter his castle, he is caught up by men, attacked and disappears.

As you can see, Dracula was not very cruel, nor did he kill many people. The book *Dracula* has been made into numerous movies, and the story has been translated into many languages. Why such popularity? Why are the images of Dracula and vampires so mesmerizing? The answer lies in the fact that the vampire is an archetype of the dark side of human nature. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the vampire is that it reveals a desire to survive based on the sacrifice of others' lives.

Now let's return to the definition of monster. It is, "something inhumanly cruel." Ironically, this leads to the conclusion that the human being is actually the ultimate monster. In consequence, then, the definition of monster here shifts to the monstrous realization that it is humans who wish to live comfortably on the sacrifice of others.

So far, modern civilization is the cruelest on earth, and has caused pollution, unleashed radioactive contamination, and produced weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear ones. Kyoji Watanabe (2005) points out, in *Yukishi Yono Omokage* (The Image of the World Passed Away), that at the end of the Edo period and the beginning of the Meiji Era, many tourists from abroad reported that Japanese people were poor but not despairing, and in fact were rather contented. In that sense, they were different from the poor of that time in Europe. Watanabe says this did not mean that Japanese were great, but that Europeans had been also in a similar condition in the Middle Ages. Watanabe

avers that Capitalism and materialism have made this change, and modern culture itself has been inherently violent, from its beginnings.

Watanabe is also a famous critic of *Kugai Jodo*, to which we now shift our attention.

2.3 *Kugai Jodo*

Mercury poisoning disease was recognized 60 years ago in Japan, and the memorial ceremony was held not in May but in October 2016 because of the earthquake in Kumamoto.

Michiko Ishimure's *Kugai Jodo* (Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow) (1972/1990) is often regarded primarily as a documentary of Minamata Disease and its trials. The worth of the novel however goes far beyond this. As Watanabe correctly notes, it is quite appropriate to label Ishimure's novel as an example of universal literature. Universal literature is writing which can help readers understand essential features of the world and humanity. Thus, Ikezawa included *Kugai Jodo* as the only Japanese novel in his collection of world literature published by Kawade Shobo Shinsha.

However, it is not surprising that Ishimure's novel has been criticized as “mere reporting,” as her style is far outside the orthodoxy of modern Japanese intellectual literature. What must be recognized, however, is the result of her effort to represent the reality of the inner world of “primitive people” in modern Japan, brought her close to the achievements of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Ishimure describes the beauty of the lost sea and mountains where people lived in harmony with animals. We can see this as well in *Tsubaki-no Umi no Ki* (Story of the Sea of Camellias) (1976). Ishimure's grandmother Omoka-sama always whispered to her, “Since the fruits in the mountains belong to the mountain creatures, you are not supposed to take them without permission. They belong to the female crows, rabbits and foxes, so if you want them, you must try to take a moderate amount of them” (p. 17). Little Michiko obediently

followed her advice.

In *Kugai Jodo*, one of fishermen tells Ishimure, "Sister, fish are gift from heaven. We fishermen take only what we need from this abundant heavenly gift, without excess or waste. Tell me, where in this world can you find a more splendid and blessed way of life?"⁵ (1990, p. 207)

Even an octopus, when caught, becomes a family member.

" 'Now that you are on our boat, you have become a member of our family, so stay in there and sit still.' Then it would sulk like a child trying to wheedle a favor out of his parents... "

"We had to sell our boat."⁶ (1990, pp. 145-146)

After we have learned of and experienced the peaceful beauty of the fishermen's modest but happy life, the last line, "We had to sell our boat," pierces us.

Fishermen tell us how beautiful their lives were before Chisso destroyed the sea, and in that way, Ishimure shows us how precious was this lost world. It was a world where people, animals, fish, the sea and the spirits were living together, although not always in harmony.

Secondly, Ishimure represents what you would feel and see if you were one of the patients. It was an encounter with a patient that prompted and enabled Ishimure to do so. When Ishimure met Kama Tsurumatsu, the elderly fisherman at his deathbed for instance, she writes:

On the day I saw Tsurumatsu, above all else, I despised myself unbearably for being a part of the despicable human race. From the day forward, the image of his pathetic, blind body lying there like a piece of deadwood, and his restless, unforgiving spirit took up residence somewhere deep inside me. (1990, p. 139)

However, once Kama's spirit takes up residence within Ishimure, she becomes possessed by him, or rather she possesses him. She captures his sorrow, wounded pride, regret, grudges and pain in words: what it is to be him. Although it is often misunderstood, but it is not documentary. It is a narrative by someone not in the superior position. It is called “Michiko-dialect” as it is different from the dialect of Minamata, and is used freely to tell what is in the patients' mind. It sounds bold and not probable, but it was possible because she had shared in the world in which Tsurumatsu lived, as well as in the perceptions he, and others, had.

It sounds strange, but Ikezawa (2013) says Minamata disease is a ‘property’, and continues:

The pain of Minamata disease is, in a sense, precious property for people of all the world. To make it real property, someone should write it down, not only as accusation, nor deplore but also the whole lives of the people concerned, to make it something meaningful. It is only literature that can do it after all. (pp. 29-30)

His point is quite clear, and he is not alone in this belief, for Nakamasa Iwaoka (2004) shares the same belief of literature. He rightly analyzes Ishimure's writing as follows:

Ishimure's unique intelligence and the way of expression make her work reach to the depth or the height to which any work of social science nor any academic field cannot reach. “Academism” always analyzes the objects objectively and makes intellectual theories. However, Ishimure doesn't do this. There, her power and attractiveness exist. (p. 215)

Iwaoka (2004) insists that, as a result, Ishimure's work is much superior to social science.

The Lost World was beautiful, Chisso is evil and fishermen are good. If this, in essence, was all that Ishimure wrote, *Kugai Jodo* could not have been such a great book, but her writing went much deeper.

Iwaoka notes that Ishimure achieved six important discoveries as a modern thinker. They are, (1) the power of sympathy to transcend the self, (2) the sensibility to keep a distance from patients, (3) the sense of physicality, (4) the imagination to poeticize time and space, (5) the power of narrative and myth, and (6) the power of ethics and moral sensibility. The last point is analogous to the ethics of ancient times. Iwaoka (2016) says, "It reaches such a point where [one of the patients] Ogata Masato declares, 'I as Chisso,' identifying with the offender and accepting the guilt as his own" (p. 98).

Critics note that an analysis of Ishimure's work reveals that she goes beyond ordinary modern values (Iwaoka, Ikezawa). Watanabe (2005) explains the perception upon which this ethics is based as follows:

It is only an illusion of modern people, whose perception has become standardized and has lost the tactile perception for the "other," to believe that everyone sees the world in the same way...

[This kind of perception has been] ignored and abandoned in modern Japan, ...but there is also a solid collective basis that supports her perception. (p. 17)

This world, the world in which a pre-modern sense of nature and conscience are united, ...is the world to which she has belonged ever since she was born. In other words, this world is what she is. Kama Tsurumatsu was able to move into her, because they shared the same "sense of presence" and sensuality.

Ishimure's seemingly arrogant conviction, "If I was to put into words what she[a female patient] is saying in her heart, it had to turn out to be like that" has its roots here....She can become the people with whom she

speaks. This is because they share the same roots of this solid collective perception. (p. 18)

The world before the disaster is presented as sublimely beautiful and idyllic, but it is also full of gossip, hatred, jealousy, and evil spirits. It is the world Ishimure knew as a child, while taking care of her deranged grandmother, Omoka-sama. Watanabe points out that

When she laments, as she does in her writings, she must be seeing a vague image of the primordial world where there could be no rapture...
“My body was too small to carry all of my grandmother’s feelings—so I felt sorry that the rest of her feelings had to overflow into the cold snow.”
This sense of original sin explains the heart of Ishimure’s works. (p. 22)

Thus, even while very young, Ishimure experienced a kind of original sin, because she could not accept all of Omoka-sama’s sorrow because her body was just too small.

The reason the lives before Chisso are presented as so beautiful is because the whole is a fantasy dreamt by those falling away from this world. Watanabe explains:

Why don’t people notice that the description of life at the sea...are extremely fantastic? This kind of beauty is not a beauty that exists in real life, but a beauty which people who are rejected from the real life inevitably fantasize. ...What governs *Kugai Jodo* is the ecstatic sense of falling; a downfall into the destruction and ruin of the ones who are expelled from the world. (p. 25)

As previously mentioned, one of the patients, Ogata Masato, declared, ‘I as Chisso,’ thus identifying with the offender and accepting the guilt as his own.

This can also be seen as an example of the fact that regardless of which side you belong, the offender or the offended, the uncanny is within you.

The unique, poetic beauty and appealing power of *Kugai Jodo* comes partly from the knowledge of the dark lurking behind or under the beautiful idyll.

2.4 Player Piano

What is most uncanny in modern times is technology, which includes computers and robots. Ambivalence towards the machine and automation is as old as history. Humanity has always been fascinated by machine, and yet at the same time, has detested it. The machine can help people, but it can steal jobs from them; it can make work simple and easy, but work then becomes monotonous and less challenging. As for the robot or automaton, there is the interesting idea of “the valley of uncanny.” When a robot becomes too much like a real living human being, at a certain point, people suddenly think it uncanny.

Although published in 1951, *Player Piano* by Kurt Vonnegut remains of interest in the 21st century, in part, I would argue, because it skillfully reveals the human being’s ambivalence towards the machine. The dystopian world depicted in the novel reminds you of modern Japan and USA, where many people are suffering from lay-offs, the lack of safety nets, and the loss of human dignity.

Very often, we welcome computers, SNS, and machines to make our lives more convenient and comfortable, even though this will also lead to lost jobs, and then to an extremely unstable society. In fact, the other important feature of this novel is its skillful depiction of people’s simultaneous love and hatred of the machine. How should we live in a computer-oriented society? Where is our dignity? What is the merit for human beings in being such fragile organisms? What is a human? –They are some of the questions the hero, Paul Proteus invites us to consider.

In medical science, on the stock market, in architecture, in driving cars, in manufacturing at factories, procuring drink and food, enjoying games, sometimes even choosing where to go and what to wear to be attractive to one’s

date—we very much rely upon automation. Although automation greatly helps us in almost all the fields of our lives, there are also many drawbacks, and we have been seriously changed by automation.

The biggest, most serious alteration we are undergoing is a weakening of skills and abilities of various kinds. Pilots of passenger jets cannot manually navigate, because they are too used to automatic pilot. Inuit tribes cannot travel on the frozen ground without GPS nowadays. Medical doctors ask medical support applications for diagnoses and do not pay enough attention to the patients right in front of them.

These are a few of many examples mentioned in *Glass Cage*, by Nicholas Carr (2014). Weakening skills are caused by a decrease in physical action and less involvement with the world surrounding us. In the past, pilots could directly experience flying the body of the airplane by physically manipulating the control stick in reaction to stimuli from the atmosphere. When one worked directly with the surrounding world, one accepted the needed response. The response, in turn, produced “a generation effect” by enhancing the brain, feelings, and skills. However, when planes began to be flown via autopilot, pilots lost that generation effect. Such degeneration is occurring rapidly in many fields, and we remain unaware. Carr argues that

To achieve mastery, you need to develop tacit knowledge, and that comes only through real experience—by rehearsing a skill, over and over again. The more you practice, the less you have to think about what you’re doing. Responsibility for the work shifts from your conscious mind, which tends to be slow and halting, to your unconscious mind, which is quick and fluid. As that happens, you free your conscious mind to focus on the more subtle aspects of the skill, and when those, too, become automatic, you proceed up to the next level...and ultimately, ...you’re rewarded with expertise.

This skill-building process...[called] automatization involves deep

and widespread adaptations in the brain. Certain brain cells, or neurons, become fine-tuned for the task at hand, and they work in concert through the electrochemical connections provided by synapses....

...the brain develops automaticity, a capacity for rapid, unconscious perception, and action that allows mind and body to recognize patterns and respond to changing circumstances instantly. (p.81, Emphasis added)

Carr continues;

"To really know shoelaces, you have to tie shoes." That's a simple illustration of a deep truth Crawford explores in his 2009 book *Shop Class as Soulcraft*: "If thinking is bound up with action, then the task of getting an adequate grasp on the world, intellectually, depends on our doing stuff in it." Crawford draws on the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who argued that the deepest form of understanding available to us "is not mere perceptual cognition, but, rather, a handling, using, and taking care of things, which has its own kind of 'knowledge.'" (pp. 147-148, Emphasis added)

Carr also reminds us of the concept of "embodied cognition."

...One of the most interesting and illuminating areas of study in contemporary psychology and neuroscience involves what's called embodied cognition. Today's scientists and scholars are confirming John Dewey's insight of a century ago: Not only are brain and body composed of the same matter, but their workings are interwoven to a degree far beyond what we assume. The biological process that constitute "thinking" emerge not just from neural computations in the skull but from the actions and sensory perceptions of the entire body. (p. 149, Emphasis added)

We tend to grant software domination over our lives, not only in our work but also in our leisure. Our lives may become easier through the use of the computer. Nonetheless, our sense of happiness and contentment is closely connected to the performance of skilled work in the real world. Consequently, paying too much attention to computer screens leads us to feel disengaged and discontented. Furthermore, we are missing something essential, and the end result is degeneration.

Still, we remain fascinated by machines and computers. Accidents caused by self-driving cars, a victory of computers over champions in games such as chess and shogi,⁷ the amiable dinosaur receptionist and the weird humanoid one—computers and machines show us what it means to be human as well as uncanniness of ourselves. At the same time, machines retain the irresistible appeal they have held over human beings through history.

Creativity and originality are formed out of, and exist, in the midst of chaos and ambiguity. It is in this quite nebulous, free-floating place that human beings can be superior to computers. According to Gen Ohi (2014), we are generally aware of only one-millionth of the data we accept, and yet, machines, computers, and software have all been created out of this infinitesimal amount of data. Of course, the machines and computers have their own form of attraction and the uncanny. Nonetheless, it is logical, and natural, that all work by these uncanny, but human-created machines falls within the range of our expectations. Their results can be both apprehended and foreseen by humans. It seems, therefore, that the key to our survival is our ability to think, create, and exist within ambiguity, albeit with the uncanny help of technology and computers.

3 The ‘Uncanny’ and neuroscience: *Phantoms in the Brain*

Ishimure’s expression of time and space is not that of the time-space continuum, but instead, one of circulation, inter-section and polymerization. In that, she is very near the technique of “experimental” writers such as Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Marquez as mentioned earlier.

However, this type of awareness concerning time and space, a perception of reality or the real world surrounding us is not just the novelist's privilege. In fact, it is THE way we experience ordinary, daily life, each day. What hinders us from realizing this is "common sense", which tells us that "time keeps constantly flowing forward and the space is homogeneous everywhere." The presumption that we perceive the world in this way, is precisely what hinders us from an accurate awareness of our own senses.

In regard to the mechanism of cognition, Stephen Kosslyn, a cognitive neuroscientist, explains that we regard what we see, hear, and feel about what is outside us as constituting "reality." However, the truth is, the brain makes up the perception itself based on previous experience. The neurologist Michael Posner explains that perception is influenced by expectation—this is a primary assumption basic to the study of cognitive science (Ohi, 2008, p. 96). The mental system representing 'I' does not work by responding to outside stimuli, but by repeatedly processing perceptions which are produced from within. What makes us deny our perception of a multidimensional, polymerizing, complicated world and what forces us to see the world in front of us as occurring along the time-space continuum is our common sense and traditional biases or preconceptions.

To understand the mechanism of awareness, Figure 1, of a Necker Cube, will be of great help. First, if you pay attention to point A, and think of it as protruding, then you will think you are looking at the cube from above. However, if you look at point B, and think that B is nearest to you, you will think that you are looking at the cube from below, through something akin to a transparent glass board. Ramachandran (2005) explains;

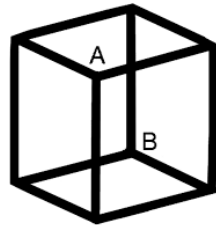


Figure 1. Necker Cube

You can see it pointing up and down, depending on how your brain interprets

the image, even though the image remains constant on your retina, not changing at all. Thus, every act of perception, even something as viewing a drawing of a cube, involves an act of judgement by the brain. (p. 67)

Even though the image itself remains unchanged, it appears different according to the way in which you look at, or perceive, it. This is because even such a simple act as this involves judgment by the brain.

Figure 2 is designed to find your blind spot. Following the rubrics below, you will find the blind spot in your left eye. Then, looking at Figure 3, when the gray square on the left comes within the blind spot of your left eye, what happens? Although part of the bar is missing, most people will perceive the bar as straight, with no missing part. Again, this is because of the work of the brain. Your brain completes the image of the bar based on common sense or rather, based on previous perceptions.



Figure 2. Blind Spot Demonstration

With your left eye, look at the elephant on the right, keeping your right eye shut. Move the paper slowly toward you, starting about one and a half feet away. At a certain distance, the cross on the left will disappear completely because it becomes totally within your blind spot. However, if you continue moving the paper closer still, the cross will reappear. You may need to look for the blind spot by moving the paper to and fro for several times until the cross disappears.

Pay attention. Note that when the cross disappears you do not see a hole or dark void there. Instead, the place is seen as part of the back-ground. This phenomenon is generally referred to as “filling in.”

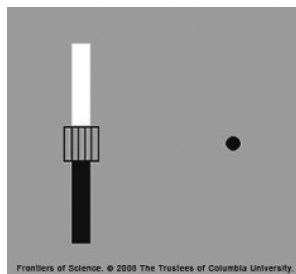


Figure 3.

Look at the small black dot on right with you left eye, keeping your right eye shut. Move the paper to and fro until the gray square on the left disappears.

What happens to the bar? Although part of the bar is missing, you will perceive the bar as straight, with no missing part. Again, this is because of the work of the brain. Your brain completes the black bar based on common sense.

Ramachandran says about thirty distinct, specialized areas in the brain cooperate and create a visual image from “the fragmentary and evanescent images dancing in the eyeballs” (Ramachandran, p. 88). Each of these thirty areas has some highly specialized function to create our visual images.

Most people are probably familiar with Figure 4 and 5, known as the Penfield brain maps, and with Figure 6, its three-dimensional model, homunculus. The Penfield map shows which part of brain is in charge of the hands, legs, face, and fingers, for example. Part B, next to part A, influences the perception of A. The phenomenon of phantom limbs—to have the feeling of, and even pain in, non-existent limbs—could thus be explained by the working processes of the brain.

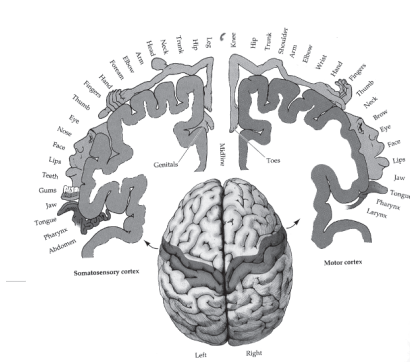


Figure 4. Pen Field Brain Map-1

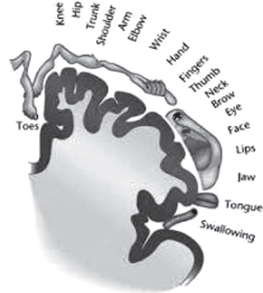


Figure 5. Penfield Brain Map-2

It is also important to realize that the brain is always trying to sort new information in order to preserve its pride as functioning at as high a level as possible. To accomplish this, the brain distorts and sometimes even totally ignores unacceptable pieces



Figure 6. Three-dimensional model, Homunculus (Little Man)

of information. To my great joy as someone who loves English literature, Ramachandran recommends that we read Shakespeare and Jane Austen to see examples of these self-deceptions.

In this way, contrary to the general assumption, consciousness is, to some extent, an illusion.

...the corollary notion that the human sense of “being in charge” is illusory...everything we do in life is governed by cauldron of unconscious emotions, drives...and motives and that what we call consciousness is just the tip of the iceberg, an elaborate post hoc rationalization of all our actions. (Ramachandran, 2005, p. 156)

Thus, we are aware of only one millionth of what we truly perceive. The rest goes into the dark abyss of the unconscious. We very often, therefore, make decisions based upon our own impressions, feelings and emotions, and then proceed to rationalize them as something more universal and as “reality.” Sight itself is something constructive and will never be something totally objective, fair or impartial. We see only what we would like to see, or what we think we are seeing. As a result, objective recognition is extraordinarily difficult to achieve. Likewise, so is self-awareness. We are surrounded by the ‘Uncanny,’ both without and within. In other words, the uncanny, the monsters, and the liminal are, in fact, everywhere and ubiquitous. Thus, there is only one thing which could be said as absolute truth: it is only art and literature that can allow us to approach them, and begin to apprehend them.

Tonight, before you fall asleep, please go down into the depths of your soul. In the dark, you may see the figure of Dracula. If you are lucky enough, you might even see glittering of his famous canine tooth. As you know, it originally came from the author, Bram Stoker, himself.

Footnotes

- ¹ This is based on the paper I read as the key note address for “The Symposium: Liminal Existences in Art and Literature” held on 12 November 2016 at ICU.
- ² Chiastic or nesting structure of The Book of Judith:
 - Section I. (From 2: 14) A—B—C—C’—B’—A’
 - Section II. Aa—Bb—Cc—D—Cc’—Bb’—Aa’
 (Efthimiadis-Keith 25-26)
- ³ According to Prof. Pamela Lee Novick (personal communication, July 20, 2017), it seems that during the period of the Hebrew Judges, there were a number of strong, forceful women in the Judaic religion – as in the formation days of many religious traditions, strong women there in the early days, are erased, or redefined by later interpreters, as a religion/nation normalizes male control.
- ⁴ Catherine, in *Wuthering Heights* is also a witch-like figure, with Nelly as her shadow. She haunts Heathcliff and Edgar after her death. I discuss this in the first and the fourth articles in my bibliography, if you are interested in learning more, although they are written in Japanese.
- ⁵ Translated by Monnet.
- ⁶ Quoted from ‘The World of Kugai jōdo’ by Watanabe. Here, “some changes added” to Monnet’s translation to make it faithful to the original.
- ⁷ It seems that Shogi software is becoming yet another black box of the uncanny. An NHK television program broadcast on 25 June, entitled *IT: Is it an Angel or the Devil?* raised this possibility. According to the creator of “Ponanza,” the unbeatable Shogi software can learn by itself, and can practice demonstration games extremely quickly. As the result, in a short time, it analyzed and completed 50,000 games which had been conducted by professional shogi players in the past twenty years. Human beings would have taken 2000 years to accomplish the same. Furthermore, the programmer of the software himself does not know how it learns, only that it is becoming a kind of black box. Thus, AI such as Ponanza, has come to have its own liminal existence.

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「不吉なもの」の魅惑—『ユディット書』から『プレイヤー・ピアノ』まで 榎本真理子

歴史を通じて「不吉なもの」は女、怪物、人間、機械と様々な姿をとってきた。

その第一は女である。『ユディット書』のユディットは祖国を救った英雄だが、ファム・ファタールに変貌させられている。ユディットは事実多くの相反する要素を備えている。だが、入れ子構造であることから『ユディット書』は当時のユダヤ人の男たちに「矛盾に満ちた女性像を受け入れて成熟せよ」と呼び掛けていると考えられるのである。

『ドラキュラ』は出版当時のイギリス人の様々な恐怖症のみならず、文明への疑問、臓器移植、アイデンティティの問題をも内包する書物である。モンスターの定義は「非人間的なまでに残酷なもの」であるが、実はドラキュラは人間ほど残酷ではない。

その人間の残酷さを描いた『苦海浄土』は、世界文学としての価値を持つ。『苦海浄土』には水俣病に見られるエゴイズムのみならず、根源的な人間の残酷さが描かれているのである。

現代の不吉なものはPCも含む機械である。人間は古来機械に対しアンビバレントであった。現代では人は機械やITに頼ることなしに生きることはできない。しかしコンピュータの予測は過去のデータによるに過ぎない。創造性や独創性は混沌や曖昧さの中からこそ生まれるのであり、人間がコンピュータに勝れるのはまさにそこにおいてなのである。

我々は受け取る情報の100万分の1しか認識できず、印象や感情に基づいて判断し、あとで理屈付けをする。視覚すら脳によって作り出されているのであり、我々は「見たい」、乃至「見えている」と思うものだけを見ているのである。我々は身の外のみならず内部にも「不吉なもの」を抱えていることになる。というわけで、そのような怪しい存在に我々が近づき、理解の糸口をつかむ手立ては芸術や文学においてほかにはないのである。

Keywords:

不吉なもの、ユディット、ドラキュラ、『苦海浄土』、機械