

A Stylistic Study of D.H. Lawrence

— “Auditory Hallucinations” in *The Rocking-Horse Winner* —

Masako SHIMIZU

*Department of Medical Social Work,
Faculty of Medical Welfare
Kawasaki University of Medical Welfare
Kurashiki, 701-01, Japan
(Accepted October 30, 1995)*

Key words : repetition, auditory hallucination, money, reality

Abstract

D.H. Lawrence's *The Rocking-Horse Winner*(RHW) is a parapsychological story focusing on the relationship between a mother who has always had a grinding sense of a shortage of money, and her son who made 80,000 pounds by betting on horse races, but who, in the end, died insane. Young Paul becomes crazy about betting to stop repeated unspoken voices, saying “There must be more money”, echoing in the house. This phrase may be regarded as an effective stylistic index ‘repetition’, because it describes the mother’s inner desire for money. In this thesis, we discuss the unspoken phrases which are a clue to Paul’s psychological state as a stylistic feature. As the first part of the story implies, the mother’s grudge was caused by a loveless relationship with her husband that turned to an endless lust for money. We conclude that the striking stylistic feature of repetition represents an obsessional effect on Paul by his mother’s inner vacancy to produce in him a kind of ‘auditory hallucinations’. We also indicate that RHW is worthy of being called a modern parable since Lawrence generalizes the pathological nature of the mammonism of this modern world beyond 1926 when this story was written.

Introduction

*The Rocking-Horse Winner*¹⁾ (1926) was originally a ‘supernatural’ story D.H. Lawrence submitted instead of *Glad Ghost* as a story for *Ghost Book* in collaboration with Lady Cynthia Asquith because she criticized the latter story.²⁾

G. Hough considered RHW as not an entirely Laurentian story, noting that the

supernatural element is boldly and properly left unexplained, and is not made the substitute for a psychological reality that could be presented without it.³⁾ Most critics, however, as F.R. Leavis observed, have rated this story highly as one of the major creative achievements of literature.⁴⁾ Either way, this very symbolic short story may have a parapsychological aspect in the unfolding of plots as follows. Young Paul makes a lot of money

at the horse races by urging on his rocking horse in his own room alone and getting the winning horses' names like one revelation after another. Although he could made 80,000 pounds, in the end, he died in madness.

Needless to say, such a large amount of money was not necessary for young Paul, a ten-year-old boy. He made money to satisfy his mother's endless lust for money that substituted for her inner lack of love. The supernatural nature of this story becomes stronger when Paul experiences the auditory hallucination of hearing "There must be more money" in the house. This repeated phrase may be the key to the story as a stylistic feature that indicates the mother's influence on Paul.

1. The background of the relationship between Paul and his mother

The structure of RHW is clearly divided into two parts — a beginning part and a developmental part — by the appearance of the sentence "There must be more money". In parallel with the structural division, we can distinguish two stylistic features before and after this sentence appears in the story. The beginning part, which is written in narrative style, has a precise and detached stylistic effect, while in the developmental part, an active and concrete conversational way of writing is used. These two differences may coincide with the past and present situations of Paul and his mother. Here we quote the first paragraph, which provides us with some background and contributes to our understanding of why the unspoken phrase acted as an auditory hallucination for Paul.

There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had **no luck**. She married for love, and the love **turned to dust**. She had

bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could **not love** them. They looked at her **coldly**, as if they were finding **fault** with her: And hurriedly she felt she must **cover up** some fault in herself. Yet what it was that she must **cover up** she **never knew**. Nevertheless, when her children were present, she always felt the center of her heart **go hard**. This troubled her, and in her manner she was all the more gentle and anxious for her children, as if she loved them very much. Only she herself knew at the centre of her heart was **a hard little place that could not love, no not for anybody**. Everybody else said of her: 'She is such a good mother. She adores children.' Only she herself, and her children themselves, knew it was not so. They read it in each other's eyes.⁵⁾

Thus RHW begins to unfold its plot in a particular narrative manner, "There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. . . .". In this narrative form of telling, we notice that the central character, a woman, has no name. Though it seems somehow unfair that all the characters except the woman are given names, Hester, her name, is concealed until the end of the story. This is Lawrence's intention in order to endow her with a general and omnipresent nature we find everywhere and all the time. In the description of the first two sentences that conveys almost everything of the woman's background, that is to say, that she was luckless and loveless, her relation to her children is described by using the negative form and words with negative meaning. (We have put these words in Gothic in the sentences quoted above.) As a result, the superficial relations and living style of Paul's family corresponds well with the vacancy and

anxiety in the deepest centre of their hearts. Now that we are aware of this point in the introductory part, we are ready to discuss the repetition of the phrase, "There must be more money" in the developmental part of the story.

2. The repeated unspoken phrase functions as an auditory hallucination for Paul.

Repetition is one of the stylistic strategies Lawrence often used in many works — sometimes repetition of words, sometimes repetition of sentences, and sometimes even themes. The repetition in RHW is one of the best examples of his repetition, and it endows the work with exceptional impact and rhythm in connection with the theme. Before considering RHW more closely, we would like to define what repetition is. According to the grammatical definition⁶⁾, repetition is a general term for repeating the same or similar sounds or words and phrases and is an important tool employed in rhetoric. It is often used as an ornamental function of language to give a sense of balance to sentences and to set the tone. Beyond this grammatical definition, repetition also has a stylistic effect, which is to reveal the inner world of the characters. The following explanation by Leech should be helpful to clarify the function of the repetition in RHW.

It (repetition) may further suggest a suppressed intensity of feeling — an imprisoned feeling, as it were, for which there is no outlet but a repeated hammering at the confining walls of language. In a way, saying the same thing over and over is a reflection on the inadequacy of language to express what you have to express 'in one go'.⁷⁾

(1) The first and second repetition of, "There must be more money" in the form of 'represented speech'

It is noticeable that the first and second appearances of the sentence, "There must be more money" occur in the form of so-called represented speech, or indirect speech in other words, as follows.

At last the mother said, 'I will see if I can't make something.' But she did not know where to begin.... The failure made deep lines come into her face. Her children were growing up, they would have to go to school. There must be more money, there must be more money And so the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: There must be more money! There must be more money!⁸⁾

"Represented speech" in Jespersen's words⁹⁾ plays an effective stylistic role to express a character's inner psychological state. In the case of the plot above, the sentences in represented speech represent the mother's inner voice in which her burning desire for money has led to the anxiety of the whole family. As we have already mentioned, the anxiety consequent on her lust for money came from her loveless and then, luckless state. The repetition of "There must be more money" four times is a step toward the next appearance of the repetition in direct speech. With these unspoken phrases in represented speech, we, the readers, can feel the anxiety filling the house vividly and can comprehend the mother's inner consciousness. At the same time, we expect these phrases to become an obsession especially for Paul, who is approaching the age of adolescence.

(2) The third, fourth and fifth repetitions of “There must be more money” in the form of direct speech

The repetitions following the represented speech take the form of direct speech as quoted below.

They heard it at Christmas, when the expensive and splendid toys filled the nursery. Behind the shining modern rocking-horse, behind the smart doll’s house, a voice would start whispering: ‘There must be more money! There must be more money!’ The foolish puppy he was looking so extraordinarily foolish for no other reason but that he heard the secret whisper all over the house: ‘There must be more money! There must be more money!’¹⁰⁾

When ‘the phrase’ in the form of direct speech appears, the plot begins to be occupied with conversations between Paul and other characters. This developmental part consisting mainly of conversations contrasts with the abstract and speedy descriptions in the narrative style in the introductory part and results in active and concrete stylistic effects on the plot, of which theme is also money.

Here we must not neglect the point that, the more expensive and splendid were the toys that filled the nursery, the more the voices in secret whispers could be heard by the children but not by their mother or other adults. It seems natural for Paul who was at the door of adolescence to be obsessed with the repeated voices and to question if the voices were caused by his family’s economical condition. Though he couldn’t understand his mother’s explanation, “Luck is what causes you to have money,” he could sense his mother’s unhappy situation with his father instinctively. In addition, his mother’s laugh-

ing away his persistent questions and her disregard and neglect of him as a mere child caused him to make the decision to get money in his own way.

(3) The sixth and seventh repetition by the story teller.

Astonished by the fact that Paul could prophesy winning horses and had actually made a lot of money, his uncle Oscar, who was a horse race fan, joined Paul and Basset, the family gardner and Paul’s secret horse racing friend. Oscar joined them only because he was interested in making money. From the irresponsible and teasing tone in his comments such as “You might stop it (= the house whispers)”, “You Young Nat Gould”, it is clear that he was not concerned about Paul’s agony even though he knew Paul was scared by the unspoken phrases in the house. Even Basset, who was Paul’s obedient servant, regarded him as a god, maybe a god of money, which was far from sympathizing with him. Oscar and Basset had much in common with Paul’s mother with regard to their concern and interest, not for a young, scared, exhausted child but for money, only money.

The evidence of such a loveless relationship can be seen in Paul’s mother’s reaction when he presents her with 5,000 pounds for her birthday concealing his own name as the gift giver.

Under such conditions, the repetition of whispers is inserted by the story teller:

The house had been ‘whispering’ worse than ever lately, and even in spite of his luck, Paul could not bear up against it.¹¹⁾

This form of sentence told by the story teller seems to be more natural and effective than the direct speech in the many conversations

in the plot.

(4) The last repetition of "There must be more money" in the form of direct speech like a scream

The voice in the house suddenly went mad. . . . And yet the voices in the house behind the sprays of mimosa and almond-blossom, and from under the piles of iridescent cushions, simply trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy: 'There must be more money! There must be more money! Oh, now, now-w! now-w-w — there must be more — more than ever! More than ever!'¹²⁾

The superficial mother who never had any question as to why and from whom she was receiving such a large amount of money, started to use it in her own way. Flowers, new furniture, a fur coat and luxurious goods filled the house. She hired a tutor to prepare Paul for entrance to the famous private school, Eton. Unlike Uncle Oscar and Basset, she did feel anxious about Paul's abnormal 'imaginary' horse races, the glaring of his rather close-set blue eyes and his exhausted look, but she never imagined that Paul would go mad and die. From only the repeated unspoken phrase we cannot judge whether or not Paul was suffering from the onset of schizophrenia of which a common symptom is often perceptual problems, especially auditory ones hearing voices¹³⁾. Here we need some information regarding this matter; that is, auditory hallucination. The psychic definition of hallucinations is as follows.

An apparent perception of an external object when no such object is present. Such perceptions may be heard, seen or felt. Hallucinations occur mainly in confusional states and in psychoses espe-

cially schizophrenia. People who are mentally handicapped can have difficulty in describing hallucinatory experiences.¹⁴⁾

It's apparent that the increasing repetition of the unspoken phrase may be considered at least an auditory hallucination, a pattern of hallucinations, or a false sensory perception, namely, that Paul may be suffering from delusions.¹⁵⁾

So far we have clarified the significant double meaning of the repetition. First, the sound volume of the unspoken phrase becomes stronger and stronger from soundless inner voices, then to whispers and then to the fortissimo scream, in proportion to the increasing sum of money as well as the increasingly luxurious goods in the house. Second, the unspoken phrase functions as an obsession to produce an auditory hallucination in Paul caused by his mother's endless desire for money as a substitute for her vacancy or lack of fulfillment. These stylistic features circulate around the money. Therefore, let's examine the value of 80,000 pounds in 1926, at the time when the story takes place.

3 . The value of 80,000 pounds

Paul began to bet 5 shillings on a horse-race. In the end, he had made 80,000 pounds but died. To understand the relation between the repeated phrase and the money, the fastest way is probably to determine the value of currency in those days. At that time, 80,000 pounds in England had the same value as 1,600,000 yen in Japan based on data in *The Complete Showa National Survey*¹⁶⁾. However, these amounts are so abstract for us that a comparison of 80,000 pounds and the average wages in both England and Japan is more practical to determine the value. According

to the data presented in *The Modern History of England*,¹⁷⁾ the average wage in England in 1926 was 5 shillings a week in 1926. In Japan, the initial salary of an ultra-elite major banker with an university education was 80 yen a month, according to data in *The Hundred Years' Price Phase*.¹⁸⁾ It is clear that 80,000 pounds (1,600,000 yen in Japan) was a sum far beyond an ordinary citizen's income. As symbolized in the phrase, "Poverty in the Affluent Society" to describe the economic state of England after World War I, the average of the growth rate of GDP reached 1.9 % during 1920 and 1929 and working hours were shortened. Although the numbers of persons in the upper income bracket who could enjoy leisure time increased, the unemployment rate grew to over 10 % with the deepening depression after World War I. In such a situation, it is clear that 80,000 pounds was an astronomic amount both for young Paul and for his mother. Paul's present of 5,000 pounds to his mother on her birthday which she spent on luxurious goods was also a large amount compared with the average wage of 5 shillings at that time in England. As a consequence of making more money, solitary Paul became insane and died saying, "Over eighty thousand pounds! I call that lucky, don't you mother? Over eighty thousand pounds! I knew, didn't I know I knew?" However, Paul's mother, sitting like a stone, never recognized the true meaning of her son's death.

Here, we should point out that 80,000 pounds can be said to have equaled the value of Paul's life but it had no reality for Paul. He didn't care whether the amount of money he made was 80,000 pounds or 5 shillings. What he wished was only to stop the sound of the voice in the house. Eighty thousand pounds had no reality for his mother, either, because her desire for money was so endless that she

would never be satisfied even if she received more than 80,000.

4. Conclusion — What is the real thing?

It goes without saying that the person who put Paul into a corner was his mother whose inner voice saying "There must be more money" was sensed as an auditory hallucination by him. Furthermore, we can see that his hallucination symbolizes the neurotic aspect of money itself, from his mother's never-ending desire for money. The unspoken but increasingly repeated phrase showed the psychological aspect of money for her—the more money she got, the more money she wanted. Everyone knows money is essential for our lives, but on the other hand, money has an psychological aspect that people have been fascinated with from ancient times. Lindgren's *Psychology of Money*¹⁹⁾ provides us with a good explanation concerning the nature of money. It says money has the same physical aspect of neurosis as the desire for money is too great. People captivated by money tend to experience an anxiety, which leads to a state of neurosis because their satisfaction is never attained by moderation. Lawrence's intention in using the repetition of an unspoken phrase was to symbolize such neurotic people in his days. Furthermore, from the fact that the mother is given no name until the end of the story together with the narrative form of writing in the introductory part, we notice that Lawrence could generalize beyond his time the type of people who have an endless lust for money as a substitute for what is missing from the hollow interior of their hearts. In this respect, RHW can be a modern fable, describing the pathological aspect of our money-centred age. Lawrence relates more precisely why people pursue money in his essay "The Real Thing"

as quoted below.

.... And their (man's and woman's) life is "one round of pleasure," to use the old banality: until the nerves collapse. Everything is counterfeit: counterfeit complexion, counterfeit jewels, counterfeit elegance,counterfeit ecstasies and under all, a hard, hard realization that we live by money, and money alone: and a terrible lurking fear of nervous collapse, collapse.²⁰⁾

Lawrence thought that the loss of real feeling in a man and a woman and so in a mother and children results in a repetition of pleasure that leads to everything being counterfeit. As a result, people turn to money alone. This is the situation of Hester and her son, Paul. Paul is the victim of his mother, and the mother is a symbolic being in this age of

mammonism. Then how did Lawrence think people can get reality in their feelings? We find his definite but suggestive answer at the end of this essay as follows.

And the answer will be difficult. Some trick with glands or secretions, or raw food, or drugs won't do it. Neither will some wonderful revelation or message. It is not a question of knowing something, but of doing something. It is a question of getting into contact again with the living center of the cosmos. And how are we to do it?²¹⁾

Not only *The Rocking-Horse Winner* but all his works may be regarded as part of his process of finding the reality in man and woman and therefore in the relationship between men and women.

Notes

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