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Resurrection in *A Tale of Two Cities*

Yui Takashima

Introduction

A Tale of Two Cities is a story of "resurrection." Before everything, the story begins with the resurrection of Doctor Manette who was confined in the Bastille as a political prisoner for eighteen years. Starting with this revival of the doctor, we can see several types of resurrection in this eventful story, as Andrew Sanders writes: "*A Tale of Two Cities* is centered on the reiterated idea of resurrection" (Sanders 168). However, when the notion of resurrection in the story is dealt with, it seems to be conventional to focus on Sydney Carton. This might be because his way of dying is suggestive of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. When he decides to sacrifice himself to help Charles Darnay, he whispers the words from the Gospels according to St. John like this: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die" (325), and finally, at the end of the story, he dies leaving some words that are prophetic of his resurrection. Kenneth Sroka writes, "[t]he echoes of John's gospel in *A Tale of Two Cities* [. . .] go well beyond Sydney Carton's climatic self-sacrifice and beyond the more obvious instances of the resurrection theme" (Sroka 145). Like this, his resurrection is lucid and impressive, but, as I said, there are some other types of resurrection in the story, and taking notice on resurrection as a keyword, we can find that every instance of resurrection has its own important

meaning, and will notice that the idea of resurrection is a significant theme carried out through the story. Many of the instances are not described by using the word "resurrection" like Carton's, and the things that are resurrected are not restricted to people; however, the idea that something that has disappeared is brought back is common to all of them. Especially, if we focus on the image of "excavation," that is to say, if we pay attention to some things which are lost because they have been "buried" and are brought back by "digging up," whether they are figurative "buried" and "digging up" or not, three types of resurrection will come to front; that is, resurrection in case of Doctor Manette, the manuscript of Doctor Manette and Jerry Cruncher. And by considering the meaning of the things that are lost and excavated, a peculiarity common to the three types of resurrection becomes clear.

1. Resurrection in Case of Doctor Manette

Doctor Manette is a doctor from Beauvais in France and was confined in the Bastille as a political prisoner for eighteen years. Considering the fact that two of various alternative titles that Dickens conceived before he settled on the final title were *Buried Alive* and *The Doctor of Beauvais* (Norman Page 208), it is reasonable that Manette's story was proposed as one of the subjects of the story. First of all, as I mentioned, the story begins with the scene of his release from confinement. So this revival is certainly the origin of the story, and it is filled with a mysterious atmosphere in which something buried is being dug out. Below is the passage discribing a nightmare of Mr Jarvis Lorry who is a bank clerk and Dr Manette's old acquaintance in England and goes to France to meet Dr Manette to hear the news of his liberation:

> A hundred times the dozing passenger [Mr Lorry] inquired of this spectre:

'Buried how long?'
The answer is always the same: 'Almost eighteen years.'
'You [Dr Manette] had abandoned all hope of being dug out?'
'Long ago.'
'You know you are recalled to life?'
'They tell me so.'
'I hope you care to live?'
'I can't say.' [...].
After such imaginary discourse, the passenger in his fancy would dig, and dig, dig—now, with a spade, now with a great key, now with his hands—to dig this wretched creature [Dr Manette] out. (17-18)

In this scene, as we see, Dr Manette's confinement is described with the image of being entombed by using the words "bury" and "dug out," and his recovering is expressed as "recalled to life." Dr Manette is dealt as if he was dead, and in short, figuratively, Dr Manette is resurrected from his tomb, and Mr Lorry takes a part like a resurrection man, that is, digs up and resurrects him. During his journey to France to meet Dr Manette, the banker is disturbed by the eerie nightmare all the way. And the scene where he meets the doctor at the garret of Monsieur Defarge who was the old servant of the doctor in Paris, is also filled with a strange and ominous atmosphere. Mr Lorry finds that Doctor Manette has been completely changed. He has lost almost all the memories before the confinement and is obsessed with shoemaking insanely. It seems as if the time had been stopped since he was arrested, and as if he was a living corpse who had been buried alive for eighteen years. So in the carriage back to England with the doctor, Mr Lorry is prepossessed with the image of the strange nightmare again:

> [...] they once more whispered in the ears of Mr Jarvis Lorry—sitting opposite the buried man who had been dug out [...] —the old inquiry:
> 'I [Mr Lorry] hope you care to be recalled to life.'
> And the old answer:
> 'I can't say.' (53)

Like this, the story begins with the resurrection of Dr Manette that is wrapped in the mysterious and ominous mood. And the uncanny resurrection is not only the release of the Bastille prisoner but unlocking of a mystery that is the origin of this stormy story. And as Ruth Glancy indicates, saying that "Doctor Manette is the heart of the novel from the start, occupying a central position in the plot that culminates in his testimony at the climax of the novel" (Glancy 68), the doctor's revival opens the story, his absurd attitude like shoemaking is impressive, and more than anything else, his mysterious past is essential to the following suspenseful story. Almost all the past events about the doctor remain shrouded in mystery until "the climax of the novel." He is described as enigmatic through the story, and then when the manuscript that he wrote and concealed in the Bastille is disclosed as testimony at the trial of Charles Darnay, his mysterious past and even unexpected relationship among characters become clear, and so that his reason for existence and role in the story assume importance. That is to say, by revealing his inscrutable past, it becomes clear that his past before he was confined in the Bastille is the key to the whole story. So as I mentioned, his resurrection at the beginning of the novel is not digging up a prisoner in the Bastille who is buried alive, but unlocking 'a mystery' that is the root of the intricate story and runs throughout it.

2. Resurrection in Case of the Manuscript of Doctor Manette

In addition to Doctor Manette himself, his manuscript is also something that is buried and dug up in the story. The fact that Doctor Manette wrote a script in the Bastille to record what happened to him when he was arrested is not professed until the climax. His past, rather, has been wrapped in mystery, and he seems to be almost insane and absorbed in making shoes and to forget even his own name when he is released at the garret of Monsieur Defarge:

> 'Did you [Monsieur Defarge] ask me [Dr Manette] for my name?'
> 'Assuredly I did.
> 'One Hundred and Five, North Tower.'
> 'Is that all?'
> 'One Hundred and Five, North Tower.'
> With a weary sound that was not a sigh, nor a groan, he bent to work [shoemaking] again [. . .]. (44)

In such a deranged mental condition, the doctor goes back to England with Mr Lorry and the doctor's daughter, Lucie Manette, and starts again as a doctor. Their new life goes almost all right, and the mental condition of Dr Manette seems to be sane except sudden shoemaking; however, one day, when Charles Darnay visits Manette's house and has a chat with them, the doctor is thrown into confusion to hear a story about the Tower of London that Darnay listened to when he was arrested there:

> 'In making some alteration, the workmen came upon an old dungeon [. . .]. Every stone of its inner wall was covered with inscriptions which had been covered by prisoners [. . .]. Upon a corner stone in an angle of wall, one prisoner who seemed to have gone to execution, had cut, as his last work, three letters. [. . .]. At first, they were read as D. I. C.; but,

> on being more carefully examined, the last letter was found to be G. [. . .]. At length, it was suggested that the letters were [. . .] the complete word, DIG. The floor was examined very carefully under the inscription, and, in the earth beneath a stone, or tile, or some fragment of paving, were found the ashes of a paper, mingled with the ashes of a small leathern case or bag. What the unknown prisoner had written will never be read, but he had written something, and hidden it away to keep it from the gaoler.'
> 'My father!' exclaimed Lucie, 'you are ill!'
> He [Dr Manette] had suddenly started up, with his hand to his head. His manner and his look quite terrified them all. (105)

The dismay of Dr Manette like above is clearly strange. Since the story is not about the Bastille where the doctor was imprisoned but the Tower of London, the prisoner in the story seems to have no relationship with the doctor. However, his dismay is too deep to vanish and this attitude implies the relation between the story and Dr Manette in some way. And the reason for his embarrassment becomes clear when his manuscript is disclosed at the climax of the novel. The thing to which the doctor reacts to is neither the Tower of London nor the prisoner who has gone to execution, but "the ashes of paper" that is buried and dug out. The person who digs up the manuscript of Dr Manette is Monsieur Defarge. He and his wife are enthusiastic revolutionists, and they hunt for it to utilize it as a testimony at the trial of Charles Darnay. And finally at the fall of the Bastille, Monsieur Defarge finds it at "one hundred and five, North Tower" (44) of the Bastille. In the confusion at the scene of the fall, he breaks into the Bastille, and forces a gaoler to guide to a cell of one hundred and five in the North Tower:

> The turnkey stopped at a law door [. . .]:
> 'One hundred and five, North Tower!' [. . .].
> 'Pass that torch slowly along these walls, that I may see them,' said Defarge to the turnkey.
> The man obeyed, and Defarge followed the light closely with his eyes.
> 'Stop!—Look here, Jaques!'
> 'A.M.!' croaked Jacques Three, as he read greedily.
> 'Alexandre Manette,' said Defarge in his ear [. . .]. (227-28)

And then, they search the cell for the manuscript of Dr Manette, find it and give it to the court as a testimony. Below is a part of the scene of the testimony of Monsieur Defarge at the trial of Charles Darnay:

> 'I knew,' said Defarge, [. . .] 'I knew that this prisoner [Dr Manette], of whom I speak, had been confined in a cell known as One Hundred and Five, North Tower. I knew it from himself. He knew himself by no other name than One Hundred and Five, North Tower, when he made shoes under my care. [. . .]. I resolve, when the place shall fall, to examine that cell. It falls. [. . .]. I examine it, very closely. In a hole in the chimney, where a stone has been worked out and replaced, I find a written paper. This is that written paper. [. . .]. This is the writing of Doctor Manette. I confide this paper [. . .] to the hands of the President.' (330)

Like "the ashes of a paper" (105) at the Tower of London, the manuscript of Dr Manette was also buried to keep it away from gaolers, and finally is dug out by Monsieur Defarge. Dr Manette declares how and why he wrote the manuscript at the beginning of it like this:

> 'I, Alexandre Manette [. . .] write this melancholy paper in

> my doleful cell in the Bastille [. . .]. [. . .]. I design to secrete it in the wall of the chimney, where I have slowly and laboriously made a place of concealment for it. [. . .]. [. . .] I write the truth as I shall answer for these my last recorded words [. . .] at the Eternal Judgment-seat. [. . .].' (331)

Here, it is clear that the doctor writes the script to register the horrible fact that he has suffered and intends to conceal it until the appropriate time. So he buried it in the wall of the chimney. Now the reason why he was dismayed when he heard the story of the ashes of a paper that was dug up is obvious. He confused it with the story of the prisoner who did almost the same thing that he did in the Bastille. A big difference between them is that whereas the script of the prisoner at the Tower of London could not be read because it fell to pieces as ashes, the manuscript of Dr Manette is read at the trial as testimony. And then, as mentioned above, Manette's writing unlocks the mystery that is a root of the story and kept secret until the script is found. That is to say, the manuscript enshrines untold incidents and unexpected facts that are not referred to throughout the story, so burying the script means to croak the fact as a mystery and digging it up signifies to uncover the mystery. So the resurrection of the manuscript of Dr Manette is indisputably to excavate "a secret" that is a root of the mysterious part of the story.

The Resurrection in Case of Jerry Cruncher

As Sanders insists, Jerry Cruncher "lead[s] double lives" (Sanders 169): his official face is an errand for Mr Jarvis Lorry of Tellson's Bank, and unofficially, he is a resurrection man, that is to say, a corpse-stealer who exhumes and steals bodies in order to sell them. In both faces, he performs an important part as a resurrectionist. At the first sight, he seems to be just a supporting role of a poor man in the plot; however, his activities as

resurrectionist are incredibly important factors that bring complexity and a more profound meaning to the plot of the story.

From that point of view, I would like to consider how Jerry's unofficial face as a resurrection man works in the plot. The fact that Jerry Cruncher has another job outside of his official one is implied in every description about him. The depiction of his formal job, "a honest tradesman" (61) as he calls himself repeatedly, like "a small part of his income was derived from the pilotage [. . .]" (160), casts doubt on us whether he has a side job and where the rest large part of his income comes from; and furthermore, his "rusty hands" (169) that is urgently repeated and description about his extraordinary interest and persistence in a funeral such as "[f]unreal had at all times a remarkable attraction for Mr Cruncher; he always pricked up his senses, and became excited, when a funeral passed Tellson's" (161) also intensify our suspicion. And then, from the reference like that, we might predict, ironically enough, that his side job must be something dishonest despite his obstinate assertion that he is a honest tradesman. His highly doubtful behavior is found in every description about him; however, precise words such as a resurrectionist or a corpse stealer are not easily produced. And then, the very person who hunts the truth that Jerry Cruncher is a grave robber is Young Jerry who is Jerry's son. One day, in Fleetstrees, Jerry Cruncher and his son come across the funeral of Roger Cly who was one of the two bogus witnesses at Charles Darnay's first trial, and when Jerry Cruncher sees the funeral he shows an abnormal interest in it. On the very night of the day they saw the funeral, Jerry Cruncher is behaving suspiciously and shows signs of going out at the night. He swears at his wife who says her prayer, and insists that he is going out as a honest tradesman again at that time, but he stubbornly refuses Young Jerry's wish to go out with father:

'You are going to-night?' asked his (Jerry's) decent wife, when he took another bite.
'Yes, I am.'
'May I go with you, father?' asked his son, briskly.
'No, you mayn't. I'm a going—as your mother knows—a fishing. That's where I'm going to. Going a fishing.'
'Your fishing-rod gets raythe rusty; don't it, father?'
'Never you mind.' (165)

From Young Jerry's words "fishing-rod gets raythe rusty," it is easy to imagine that "fishing-rod" is something with which to rob a grave and that Jerry Cruncher is in a habit of body snatching by linking the word "the rusty fishing-rod" to "Jerry's rusty hand." Although his father does not admit him to go out with him, Young Jerry follows after Jerry Cruncher by stealth, and then witnesses the scene where his father and other companions are digging a grave. Then, Young Jerry realizes what "a fishing" really means. The following is the extract of the conversation between Jerry Cruncher and his son which is held on their way to Tellson's as errands in the very next morning of the night when Jerry went out:

'Father,' said Young Jerry, as they walked along: [...] 'what's a Resurrection-man?' [...]
'Hem! Well,' returned Mr Cruncher [...], 'he's a tradesman.'
'What's his goods, father?' asked the brisk Young Jerry.
'His goods,' said Mr Cruncher, after turning it over in his mind, 'is a branch of Scientific goods.'
'Person's bodies, ain't it, father?' asked the lively boy.
'I believe it is somethink of that sort,' said Mr Cruncher. (170)

At this point, Jerry Cruncher still tries to dodge the fact that he is a body snatcher by explaining to Young Jerry "a Resurrection-

man" as "tradesman," or evasively replying that merchandise of "a Resurrection-men" is a kind of scientific things. Thus, Jerry Cruncher never admits or announces that he is a grave stealer by himself; however, Young Jerry reveals the fact that his father's informal face is a resurrection man.

According to Albert Hutter, "[d]uring the course of the eighteenth century, medical schools had begun to place more value on knowledge of practical anatomy, on dissection" but "[o]n the Continent the supply of the bodies was generally more adequate than in the British Isles because British governmental and public attitudes combined to make it difficult or impossible for corpses to be turned over legally to surgeons or bought by private anatomists from various public sources—prison, workhouse, hospital, morgue" (Hutter 2). In addition to such public sources, there was another way to gain corpses for dissection, and that is to buy dead bodies from a resurrection man like Jerry Cruncher. Namely, body snatchers dig up corpses to sell them for dissection that tries to unravel the mystery of the human body. From this point of view, corpses shroud the mystery of the human body, and body snatchers who excavate corpses and who "were universally despised" (Hutter 5) because of the ominousness and immorality of their work do not dig up only dead bodies but also "the mystery of human body." So we can say that Jerry's unofficial job is to dig up the buried mystery of human bodies.

And then, now, let us think about what Jerry actually digs up in the plot. When he comes from fishing, that is to say body snatching, on the night cited above, it seems that "[s]omething had gone wrong with him" (169). He blames his wife for hindering his job. The reason for this questionable attitude is uncovered later. In the latter part of the story, Sydney Carton meets John Barsad who was a partner of Roger Cly as a false witness and this time he is a jailer at the Conciergerie where Charles

Darnay is interned. Sydney Carton tries to trade with John Barsad to take advantage of his weakness. Carton says that he saw Roger Cly, but John Barsad denies saying that Cly is dead. Then Jerry interferes in them and insists that Cly is not dead because his coffin was empty when Jerry tried to snatch his body.

> 'So *you* [Barsad] put him in his coffin?'
> 'I did.'
> 'Who took him out of it?'
> Barsad leaned back in his chair, and stammered, 'What do you mean?'
> 'I mean,' said Mr Cruncher, 'that he warn't never in it. No! Not he! I'll have my head took off, if he was ever in it. (315)

When Sydney Carton hears this argument,, an idea flashes into him and says:

> 'Humph! I see one thing,' said Carton. 'I hold another card, Mr Barsad. [...] you are in communication with another aristocratic spy of the same antecedents as yourself, who, moreover, has the mystery about him of having feigned death and come life again! [...].' (316)

Here "another aristocratic spy" is Roger Cly, and owing to Jerry's evidence, Sydney Carton can succeed in the secret dealing to go into Conciergerie secretly. Like this, Jerry Cruncer's unofficial work as a resurrectionist, namely a body snatcher, resurrects the buried fact that Roger Cly who is dead in name is not dead actually. In this way, Jerry digs up the secret that Roger Cly is actually alive. The coffin that Jerry resurrected and in which he believed there must be the dead body of Cly was not literally empty; that is to say, there was the mystery about the death of Roger Cly. So it is not too much to say that Jerry Cruncher

excavates the mystery that is buried in the coffin of Roger Cly.

Conclusion

As I have mentioned, *A Tale of Two Cities* is a story of "resurrection." There are several kinds of resurrection in the story. Here, in this thesis, I have particularly paid attention to the image of "excavation," namely things that are "buried" and "dug up," and have focused on three types of resurrection: the resurrection in case of Doctor Manette, the manuscript of Doctor Manette and Jerry Cruncher. Each of them has its own peculiarity, but which is in common is that, in these three types of resurrection, things that are buried and dug out are "a mystery" or "a secret," in other words, "information that is suppressed." And moreover, all of the information is important and even essential. Every resurrection causes a new development to the story: because of the release of Manette, the story opens, because of the excavation of Manette's writing, the mysterious part of the novel becomes clear and because of the resurrection of "a mystery about the death of Roger Cly" by Jerry, the story progresses to the ending with the self-sacrificing death of Sydney Corton. Like this whenever resurrection occurs it plays an important role in the story, and especially, they are essential to create a mysterious and ominous atmosphere that prevails in the whole story. So, "resurrection" is an essential factor to the story. It even has some varieties, and again we can say that *A Tale of Two Cities* is a story of "resurrection."

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