Malcontents in Heaven : Towards a Theory of Tudor Drive

Miki Nakamura

The Tudor government, to further its absolutist project, produced a lot of theories of order. These theories propound the necessity of obedience, and demand people that they should be both static and contented to realize an ordered society. There is no room for change and desire for any individual.

In this paper I aim to contextualize the subjects of absolutism in a psychoanalytic framework in order to reveal their hitherto unnoticed agency. First, I will survey several governmental discourses to see the way of constitution of self. These discourses, by introducing the idea of order and obedience, instruct people to be static and contented. As a result, people are forced to give up their desire, and experience loss. They thus become the subjected beings, or the subjects with lack. Next, I will consider the relation between the subjects and the absolute subject, a king. The latter comes into being by absorbing all the potential of the former. The government propagandists, however, rearrange the causality so that an absolute king turns into the origin of all beings. Through this process the absolutist power relation is established. The problem of the law, accountability, and of a tyrant as a desiring subject will also be discussed. Finally, I will observe the state of the subjects of absolutism microscopically to delineate their peculiar style of survival. Owing to the foregoing loss, they become the subject of drive that is doomed to move endlessly without completion. The very doom, I will conclude, is for them a moment of agency that guarantees a possibility

of transformation as well as of motion. This will be proved, surprisingly, by the career of an ex-rebel who was one of Tudor propagandists.

The idea of order is most concretely elucidated in "An Exhortation concerning Good Ordre and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates" in *Certain Sermons or Homilies* (1547). The homily begins with affirmation of divine order: "Almightie God hath created and appointed all thinges in heaven, yearth, and waters in a moste excellent and perfect ordre" (Bond 161). God has created "ordre", so it is a natural and necessary state, which people must not doubt. In "ordre" everything is allotted its place and duty, which is explained in terms of "degree" :

> Every degre of people, in their vocacion, callyng and office, hath appoynted to them their duetie and ordre. Some are in high degre, some in lowe, some kynges and princes, some inferiors and subjectes . . . husbandes and wifes, riche and poore. . . . (ibid.)

The idea of degree, fixing each individual on his/her position, brings about a system of difference which subsumes power/gender/economic relations. People have meaning only in this system, since there are no positive terms: "every one have nede of other" (ibid.) to be oneself. It is the difference that makes people meaningful. What is more, differential relation is reproduced in every level so that everyone can be sure of correspondence. The intra-inter connections, vertical as well as horizontal, make up a finite space of plenitude and harmony, that is, the order as the 'signifying' chain of being.

In this picture of society, an individual is required to observe "degre" and "duetie" so as to maintain an ideal state, order. "Body politic," a familiar concept of the period, best illustrates a role of a part in the whole. Ægremont Ratcliffe, in the dedication to *Politique Discourses, Treating of the Differences and Inequalities of Vocations, as well Publique as Private* (1578), a translation of an anonymous French

political tract, writes :

> [God] hath created him [man] a seelie member, of the huge and mightie bodie of humane societie, & appointed him his distinct charge, not to be exercised to his own particular, but to the reliefe, & common maintenance of the universall bodie. . . . (Aiii)

A man or woman is just a part in a "universall" body, the country. And he/she should play a given role, as a hand, or a foot, in differential and interdependent manner for the maintenance of the body: "each member of mans bodie trauel in his degre, for the sustentation, and continuance of the whole" (ibid.) The metaphor of body inputs a sense of the difference, corporation, and belonging in people's mind.

As a network of interrelation, a unit could affect the whole. If people do not take heed of this, what follows is the total collapse, or anarchy. It is at this point that propagandists advocate obedience. In *An Homelie against Disobedience and Wylfull Rebellion* (1570) two different pictures of society are presented:

> [S]o is that realme happy where most obedience of subjectes doth appeare, being the very figure of heaven; and contrarywyse, where most rebellions and rebels be, ther is the expresse similitude of hell. (Bond 229)

The homily, as Catherine Belsey points out, restricts the imaginable possibilities to two: heaven/hell, order/chaos (94). And it always emphasizes the fear of right hand of difference: "for where there is no right ordre, there reigneth all abuse, carnall libertie, enormitie, syn and babilonicall confusion" (161). People, frightened accordingly, are led to believe that obedience is the only choice. There is no freedom of selection.

The difference between order and chaos is often told from a diachronic perspective. Tudor pamphleteers share one historical narrative that tells development of the state from anarchy to order. According to a story by Thomas Starkey, originally men "wanderyd abrode in the wyld feldys and wodys," and was "lad and drawen without reason and rule by frayle fantasy and inordinate affectys." Then, under the instruction of "men of gret wytt" they began to "forsake that rudnes and vncomly lyfe, and so to folow some ordur and cyuylyte." (52) The world without rule has been replaced by order. The sense of history is undoubtedly progressive, and it actually implies the impossibility of return. For who would choose to live in woods like "brute bestys" (ibid.), again? Selection is compulsory, still. We have good reason to question the story, wondering if history is as he says. These historians, one can say, install in people's mind a fictional memory of past to make them be grateful for order.

Thus, with the help of various discourses the Tudor government aims to control people's consciousness to make them an order-minded, obedient subject. We find a common aspect of these theories: the style of narration. They presuppose the existence of the audience and take a form of direct calling to it. Actually, homilies were preached to people by priests in church. The live-talking style, I stress, characterizes the way of subject-formation in the period. I would like to take one instance, which describes a very scene of calling. Note a passage in *An Harborovve for Faithfvl and Trevv Svbiectes*, by John Aylmer: "Do you not heare how lametably your natural mother your countrey of Englad, calleth vpon you for obedience saying. Oh, remeber remeber my dear children . . .". The final refrain would have reminded readers or hearers of their 'natural' duty as the children of the mother country. What is especially relevant here is Althusser's formulation on interpellation. An addressed individual, recognizing that it was really him/her who was called, that he/she really does occupy the place it designates for him/her, becomes a "subject" (Althusser 163). People in Tudor England, having heard the call and recognized that they should be obedient as children, turn into the subjects, or the subjected beings.

It should not be neglected here that subject-formation, or the subjection is practised at the cost of private interest. As I said before, it is the public purpose, the realization of order, that is valued above all else. The government pamphleteers are consistent in criticizing private desire and propagating the necessity of being contented. For example, Richard Morison states:

> A comon welthe is then welthy and worthy his name, when euery one is content with his degree . . . gladder to do that, whiche he seeth shal be for the quietnes of the realme, all be it his private profite biddeth hym doo the contrary. (Aiv)

An emphasis is on public welfare, not on "private profite." All should be done for the commonwealth. As Stephen L. Collins says, "man's actions and his purpose for acting were totally 'other-oriented'" (21). We must not miss, however, the fact that Morison is aware of possible and ominous friction between a public motivation and private one, the result of which we will discuss later. Ratcliffe, mentioned before, writes in similar vein:

> There is nothing more decent, commendable, or yet more beneficiall to man, then to be contented, and constantly stande to his calling: without coueting . . . to be other then he is, by changing of his manner of living. (Ai)

The regulation of self and desire is surprisingly strict. People should remain what they are, repressing desire which impels them to change, "to be other." There is no chance of transformation. And an individual in order is needed to be fixed, not flexible, "without starting or of his own motion." (Aiii-Aiv)

The subjects of absolutism are forced to give up their desire in entering order.

With this primal repression they experience loss, which is an essential condition for a subject. The remark of Jacques Lacan supports our argument: "The subject is the introduction of a loss in reality" (*Of Structure* 193). The subjects in the symbolic order of absolutism, having been called, subjected, and experienced loss, become a barred subject, $\not{S}$ (*Feminine* 160) — a subject with lack.

The existence of multitudinous $\not{S}$ is a necessary condition for the appearance of the absolute subject, a king. The latter, absorbing all the potential of the former, comes into being. Lack in one place induces surplus in the other, and the subjection of all gives rise to supremacy as well as sovereignty of the one. So an absolutist king is no other than a by-product of the formation of the barred subjects. From now on I will call them S1 and S2 respectively, imitating Lacan's style (Feminine 160). [1]

S2 precedes S1, and S1 is indebted to S2 for its existence. It is this causality, or indebtedness, that troubles propagandists most, and we can see a peculiar logic of absolutism in their following rearrangement of causality. The argument of Jean Bodin who wrote on the absolutist state in France, and whose theory deeply affected the contemporary English political thinkers, is a good example. He considers the relation between subjects and the prince in terms of contract: subjects give or lend power to a certain person, who becomes the prince (Pinciss and Lockyer 124). At this point Bodin seems to approve that a king is just a temporal holder of power nominated by people, just a debtor. He, however, tries to alter the situation by adding that the contract is "perpetual" (ibid.), not temporal by any means, that people have no right to recall that power. Thus "a borrowed power" (ibid.) proves to be a gift, "the true donation" (125), with the result that ownership itself is transferred to a king. The tables have been turned. A king, once given power, turns into a natural keeper of it. I would like to call this process the absolutist turn.

What accomplishes the absolutist turn is a restructuring of the relation between S1 and S2 by means of the law. In the absolutist scheme the law functions as a powerful device that differentiates S1 from S2. To quote from Bodin again, the prince has power

to "give laws unto all and every one of the subjects, and to receive none from them," and is "acquitted from the power of the laws" (ibid.). In terms of the law, the giver is a king. While, subjects are those who are subject to the law (ibid.), the receiver. It is the law that establishes the power relation between S1 and S2.

Actually, the Tudor political tracts often describe a king's power with regard to the law, or his words. On the similarity between king's words and the law, Thomas Smith states: "his [the king's] worde is a law" (85). This reminds us of Lacan's symbolic Father, whose words are synonymous with the law itself (*SXI* 281-82). As a coercive father, an absolutist king gives the words / the law to his children, subjects. Power of a king is illocutionary, and his words take on an irresistible nature: "the word of prince ought to be as an oracle" (Bodin 127). As the word-giver, the origin of all meanings, S1 stands over S2 and structures all the signification. Thus S1 finally emerges as the 'source' of all beings: "the prince is the life, the head and the authority of all things" (Smith 85). Here we see the total inversion of causality, and the absolutist turn has been completed.

As the origin of all, S1 always occupies the place of sender in communication. On the other hand, S2 remains the receiver, the addressed. We have seen the situation with regard to the law. To grasp the point more fully, we need to pay attention to the problem of accountability that must not be dismissed to understand the core of the absolutist rule. The Tudor kings consistently state that they are free from accountability, that is, the responsibility of making response to an interrogation of subjects. For subjects, this means that they are not entitled to question their king, expecting his answer. Pamphleteers emphasize the point. For example, Richard Crompton argues that it is not "lawfull for the Subiect, to enter into the examinations of causes or matters appertayning to y Prince and soveraigne Governor" (Bii). In principle, S2 cannot interrogate or judge S1, and S1 remains untouchable.

Thus, it is clear that the absolutist system is no other than an inverse relation between S1 and S2. S2, being forced to give up desire, robbed of its

potential, and subjected to the law, has to be silent as well as obedient. In contrast, S1 gains an absolute power by exploiting a surplus potential in a monopolistic way. Absolute, unquestioning obedience makes the absolutist rule possible.

If this is the case, it is necessary for us to reconsider the rule of tyrants that is often described as misgovernment. What characterizes tyrants is the extremity in terms of desire: "A tyrant is counted he who seeketh . . . to satisfie his vicious and cruell appetite" (Smith 55). Tyrants freely desire what they want, without restriction, at the cost of people's welfare. In this sense, tyrants' rule approximates to the perfect state of absolutism in which one person monopolizes desire. It is not an accidental but an ideal case. The argument of homilies supports my opinion. According to it, what matters concerning tyrants is how to cope with them. Whether they are suited to be a ruler is never asked. The final answer of homilies to people is to "paciently suffre all wronges and injuries" (Bond 167) of any tyrant. Approving of the existence of tyrants in the first place, homily tries to forbid the resistance toward them beforehand. We might say that homilies are not anxious about but rather anxious for the emergence of tyrants as a model of an absolutist king. To the four requirements for the subjects of absolutism —— obedience, stasis, content, and silence —— should be added one more: patience.

We have seen the Tudor government's scheme to fashion an obedient subject. And its idealistic nature cannot be denied. I emphasize that absolutism is not a given, not substantial by any means, but always-already an ongoing process of formation. There must be noises as well as trouble in the process. Although Althusser pays little attention to a failure in interpellation, it is probable that there are subjects who would not "work by themselves" (Althusser 169). Interpellation is just an attempt, and we must explore the ifs. Judith Butler acutely points out this and argues that "there is always the risk of a certain *misrecognition*" (95: emphasis Butler) of the call. So we have to examine the condition of S2 more closely.

To our surprise, one of the propagandists gives us a clue for further analysis.

Ratcliffe, in the aforesaid dedicatory remarks, which was offered to Principal Secretary, Francis Walshingham, states as follows:

> [W]ho euer sawe so many discontented persons: so many yrked with their owne degrees: so fewe contented with their own calling: and such a number desirous, & greedie of change, & nouelties? (Aiv)

That the words are originally confidential, addressed to one important person of the government, testifies to their importance. Furthermore, if we take into consideration the fact that the addresse is the arch spy master of the period, we can see the forbidden nature of Ratcliffe's testimony. [2] What is disclosed here is a serious trouble in subject-formation. People are well aware that their duties are compulsory, "contrarie to" their "naturall instinct" (Aiii) : their (mis)recognition is evident. Ratcliffe fully grasps the friction noted by Morison before. Besides, desire, though repressed, is not diminished at all, but still urging people to be free from degree, to change. Uncovering a mask of official narrator once for all, Ratcliffe shows us an alternative vision: a multitude of noisy, desiring, "yrked," barred subjects hoping for transformation. They are not 'contented' /contained.

Thus we are facing an unexpected eruption of the forbidden in the official discourse. The Tudor government, as mentioned before, promised that an ordered society would have a quality of heaven. Ratcliffe, however, betrays that in an alleged heaven there would be many malcontents. The realization of order necessarily entails the mass production of malcontents.

Now we are ready to observe microscopically the way malcontents in heaven live. On the one hand, they usually hear a voice from above which tells them to "constantly stande" to their calling and give up desire. On the other hand, they cannot miss a noise beneath, constant craving of "naturall instinct". The subjects of absolutism, to borrow Freud's phrase, live out the continuing conflict between the

prohibition and instinct (*Totem* 38). If, as Freud states, the mutual inhibition of the two conflicting forces produces a need for discharge (39), we need to follow the trajectory of once repressed desire that looks for a way of abrupt eruption.

An individual experiences loss with a primal repression of desire. This, as I said before, is a fundamental condition for a subject: a subject is always based on a loss. The problem of desire concerns with a loss, with the way of coping with it.

It would be a mistake to consider the relation between a subject and a loss in terms of final recovery, or to make a nostalgic narrative that promises the reintegration of self with a lost object. Assuming in these ways, we would fall into an idealistic formation of complete individual *before* absolutism. Rather, admitting in the first place that a subject continues to be barred, that it is perennially, essentially incomplete, we should consider how a subject, accepting loss and the irreversibility, develops afterwards.

The argument of Lacan is pertinent to our project. For he sees the potential of the barred subjects in their very incompleteness, in their not being contented : "They [the patients] are not content with their state, but all the same, being in a state that gives so little content, they are content" (*SXI* 166) A real satisfaction, he indicates, lies in not being satisfied. Lacan elucidates the paradoxical nature of satisfaction by referring to the drive. In the drive, the goal, or its object has no importance. What matters concerning the drive is its 'process' (Rose 34). Žižek gives us a good summary of the nature of the drive: "the drive's ultimate aim is simply to reproduce itself as drive . . . to continue its path to and from the goal. The real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit" (5).

If these are the case, it is possible for us to throw a new light on "discontented persons" in Tudor England. Having experienced loss, they are entitled to enter an alternative circuit of living, the course of drive. Thus, they become the subject of drive. The subject of drive will never be fixed, staying in a same place. Without any aim, it moves endlessly, appropriating all the possible positions. Also, the subject

of drive is characterized by plasticity, since "the drive lies at the margins of wholeness, sameness, and completion" (Soto-Crespo 444). The attempt at identification would fail concerning it. The subjects of absolutism, having encountered loss, emerge as a 'process' itself, subjected to mutability and contingency, as "the wild variables" (Bateson 42) which resist fixation. Loss is actually the preliminary stage for transformation.

Then, how shall we appreciate this always-becoming, restless quality of the barred subjects in the symbolic order of absolutism? Is it doom, or the agency? I say, it is a doom that begets the agency. To prove this singular aspect, I must hasten to consider a question not yet answered. That is, why did Ratcliffe dare to write the passage quoted above? And, if any, what was his message for discontented S2?

As a beginning, we have to check a position, political as well as geographical, of Ratcliffe in the latter half of sixteenth century. He was one of the rebels who participated in the North rebellion of 1569. As the coup failed, he ran away from England and lived a life of fugitive in Scotland, Antwerp, Madrid, and Calais. He worked under several foreign masters as a stateless undercover agent, impersonating many figures. Eventually, he came back to London in 1575, only to be imprisoned in the Tower (Stephen and Lee 566). As a prisoner and ex-rebel, Ratcliffe wrote the dedication.

Naturally, writing the propaganda was for him one of the ways to obtain pardon: he had a good reason to argue for obedience. We cannot, however, conclude by saying that his act is just a familiar example of conversion. It demands a different interpretation, which will drive my argument further.

The career of Ratcliffe after the rebellion can also be analyzed in terms of loss: in his case, a loss of the mother country. An expatriate as he was, he never gave up hope of returning to England. He often wrote letters to the English government to show his repentance (ibid.). As negotiation at one place did not succeed, he moved to another and began the contact again: he had continued to approach his country as if

to regain, though in vain, the lost (supposed) unity. His movement reminds us of Freud's following passage in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle:*

> [I]t is the difference in amount between the pleasure of satisfaction which is *demanded* and that which is actually *achieved* that provides the driving factor which will permit of no halting at any position attained. . . .
>
> (emphasis Freud : 51)

It was the difference, or distance, or lack, which kept him moving. Ratcliffe was "energized by lack" (Dollimore 382), and his repetitive movement itself illustrates the course of drive we discussed before. Driven forward, but always-already missing the goal, Ratcliffe as a subject of drive was doomed to move.

Finally in the Tower, in a claustrophobic condition that guarantees no movement, and only promises a last stasis, he would have recollected the past movement and change enabled by loss. Although the life of exile and impersonation, as a subject with lack, was for him a wretched fate, he must have noticed in it his agency. He must have found that lack had been for him "the driving factor," the source of energy. Loss opens the possibility of motion and transformation: it was such cryptic message for discontented S2 that Ratcliffe encoded in the dedication as though to test the censorship of the English spy master in a challenging way. [3]

Having started with the discussion of order, we close with words on the drive. The shift in my thesis is inevitable, since, as we have seen, the realization of order necessarily entails an awakening of the drive in subjects. It is in the interaction between order and the drive where we should position the subjects of absolutism. So, what we need now is not only a theory of order but that of Tudor drive if we intend to grasp fully the radical "children" in Tudor England.

Notes

1 In Lacan's usage, S1 means "the signifier as such," S2 "the signifying chain" (*Feminine* 160).

2 See Haynes for a full account of Walshingham and the secret service in Elizabethan England.

3 In 1578 Ratcliffe was secretly released from prison, which was very likely the result of a deal with Walshingham. Then he went to Flanders as a secret agent of the English government, and was executed there for his espionage (Haynes 98). Ratcliffe was doomed to move as an agent, even to his death.

Works Cited

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. NY: NLB, 1971.

Aylmer, John. *An Harborovve for Faithfvl and Trevve Svbiectes*. London, 1559. Amsterdam : Theatum Orbis Terrarum, 1972.

Bateson, Gregory. *Mind and Nature: a Necessary Unity*. NY: Bantam, 1979.

Belsey, Catherine. *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance drama*. London: Routledge, 1985.

Bond, Ronald B. *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1571)*. Tronto: U of Tronto P, 1987.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

Collins, Stephen L. *From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State: an Intellectual History of Consciousness and the Idea of Order in Renaissance England*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.

Crompton, Richard. *A Short Declaration of the End of Traytors*. London, 1587. STC.

Dollimore, Jonathan. "Desire is Death." *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*. Eds. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass. NY : Cambridge UP, 1996. 369-86.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey. NY: Norton, 1961.

---. *Totem and Taboo : Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. Trans. James Strachey. NY: Norton, 1950.

Haynes, Alan. *The Elizabethan Secret Services*. Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2000.

Lacan, Jacques. "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever." *The Structuralist Controversy : the Language of Criticism and the Science of*

Man. Ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1970. 186-200.

---. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI : the Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. (*SXI*) Trans. Alan Sheridan. NY: Norton, 1981.

Lacan, Jacques and the École Freudienne. *Feminine Sexuality*. Ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose. Trans. Jacqueline Rose. London: Macmillan, 1982.

Morison, Richard. *A Remedy for Sedition*. London, 1536. STC.

Pinciss, Gerald M. and Roger Lockyer. *Shakespeare's World : Background Readings in the English Renaissance*. NY: The Continuum, 1988.

Ratcliffe, Ægremont. *Politique Discourses, Treating of the Difference and Inequalities of Vocations, as well Publique as Private*. London, 1578. STC.

Rose, Jacqueline. Introduction-Ⅱ. *Feminine Sexuality*. By Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne. Ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose. Trans. Jacqueline Rose. London: Macmillan, 1982. 27-57.

Smith, Thomas. *De Republica Anglorum*. Ed. Mary Dewar. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

Soto-Crespo, Ramón E. " 'Scars of Separation' : Psychoanalysis, Marxism, and the Praxis of Loss." *Textual Practice* 14 (2000) : 439-56.

Starkey, Thomas. *England in the Reign of King Henry the Eighth : Life and Letters and a Dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Lupset*. Ed. Sidney J. Herrtage. NY: Kraus Reprint, 1981.

Stephen, Leslie and Sir Sidney Lee eds. *The Dictionary of National Biography*. 22 volumes. Vol. 16. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1917.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Looking Awry : an Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. Cambridge: the Mit P., 1992.