Families and Northern Ireland Represented in Deirdre Madden's Novels: The Role of Images, Metaphors and Symbols

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【要 旨】

本稿では、現代北アイルランドを代表する小説家のひとりであるディアドレ・マドゥンの4つの作品を取り上げ、作品の中に用いられた「イメージ」「隠喩」「シンボル」という技法が作者のメッセージをさらに明確に伝えるうえでどのような役割を果たしているかを論じる。『隠れた症状』(1986年)ではバイエルン晴雨計が、『暗闇の中にひとりひとり』(1996年)では大空に例えられた北アイルランドがイメージ、隠喩として用いられている。『モリー・フォックスの誕生日』(2008年)ではモリー・フォックスの誕生日、北アイルランドとフランスで起きたテロ事件等がシンボルとして、『現在の時、過去の時』(2013年)では家族写真や百年以上前のリンゴの写真等がイメージ、シンボルとしての役割を果たしている。マドゥンがもっとも強く伝えるメッセージは、家族は葛藤、苦痛、悲しみ、災難等の問題に遭遇するよう運命づけられているが、絆を保ち続け、過去、現在、未来を生き続ける義務があるということだと思われる。それは、一見厳しいメッセージに思えるが、それ以上に勇気を与えてくれるメッセージである。

【キーワード】

北アイルランド小説 北アイルランド紛争 家族の絆 過去・現在・未来 イメージ 隠喩 シンボル

[Abstract]

This paper purports to discuss four novels by Deirdre Madden, one of the leading contemporary Northern Irish novelists, and to reveal what role those literary techniques such as "images", "metaphors" and "symbols" fulfill in conveying Madden's messages more clearly. A Bavarian barometer in *Hidden Symptoms* (1986), and Northern Ireland compared to a huge sky in *One by One in the Darkness* (1996) function as images and metaphors. In *Molly Fox's Birthday* (2008), several symbols appear such as Molly's

birthday, and the terrorists'attacks in Northern Ireland and France. In *Time Present and Time Past* (2013), family photographs, and a photograph of an apple taken more than one hundred years ago serve as images and symbols. The strongest message Madden tries to convey seems to be that, although families are destined to face a variety of problems, such as conflict, pain, grief and disaster, they must maintain their solid bonds and try to survive throughout time; the past, the present and the future. Madden's message sounds harsh, but it is more encouraging than harsh.

[Keywords]

Northern Irish novels The Troubles in Northern Ireland Family bonds The past, the present and the future Images Metaphors Symbols

Introduction

Deirdre Madden is one of the leading contemporary Northern Irish novelists. Among the ten novels she has published, *Hidden Symptoms* (1986) was awarded the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, *The Birds of the Innocent Wood* (1988) won the Somerset Maugham Prize, and both *One by One in the Darkness* (1996) and *Molly Fox's Birthday* (2008) were shortlisted for the Orange Prize.

In her interview with The Guardian on 14, June, 2013, Madden said that one thing that strikes her is how the Troubles [in Northern Ireland] are almost always in her work in some way, at some level.²⁾ Most of Madden's novels deal with family problems, which are intricately interwoven with the Troubles. This paper purports to discuss how families and Northern Ireland are represented in Madden's novels, Hidden Symptoms (1986), One by One in the Darkness, Molly Fox's Birthday and Time Present and Time Past (2013), to explore what messages Madden tries to convey from them, and to reveal how images, metaphors, and symbols fulfill the role in conveying her messages more clearly.

David Lodge mentions that, if a metaphor

or simile consists of liking A to B, a literary symbol is a B that suggests an A, or a number of As.¹⁾ This paper follows Lodge's definition and distinguishes between metaphors and symbols in these novels.

Hidden Symptoms: A Bavarian barometer as a metaphor

Hidden Symptoms, Madden's first novel and written in the heyday of the Troubles, is a story of a female university student, Theresa Cassidy, whose twin brother, Francis, is killed in a terrorist attack. Throughout the novel, Theresa vomits out her desperate emotions, the description of which is so powerful as to make the reader share her acute pain and grief and realize the greatest victims of terrorism and war are innocent citizens.

In his insightful article on Madden's novels, Michael Parker points out their merits, citing Patricia Waugh and mentioning that Madden's novels have exhibited many of the features of metafiction, "an extreme self-consciousness about language, literary form and the act of writing fiction." As an example of Madden's self-consciousness about them, Parker picks up the opening lines of *Hidden Symp*-

toms:

When Theresa was small, she thought that the saddest thing she had ever seen was a Bavarian barometer with a little weather man and a little weather woman. It was so sad that always when Hans was out Heidi was in and vice versa: never together, always alone, so near, so far, so lonely.⁴⁾

In Parker's observation, the "enforced separation" of Hans and Heidi fill the role of a metaphor for Theresa's life destined to face incessant separations caused by her father's premature death, the murder of her twin brother, her disbelief in God and her distrust of art, as well as a metaphor for Northern Ireland which is sharply divided by sectarianism and polarization.⁵⁾

Then, one wet day, when Theresa tries to winkle out Heidi to make her join Hans, the barometer breaks and it is to be thrown away later. The fate of the machine seems to metaphorically indicate the agony and despair Theresa is to undergo later and the irretrievable gap lying between the two communities in Northern Ireland.

Denis Donoghue argues that the point of the metaphor is to bring different associations, more dramatic connotations, into the reader's mind and that the force of a good metaphor is to give something a different life, a new life. (6) The description of the Bavarian barometer is, as Parker remarks, "deceptively simple" and given with "child-like vocabulary." (7) What it connotes becomes more dramatic thereby, and gives the barometer a different life, a new life. It can be said that the episode of the barometer as a metaphor helps to convey more clearly Madden's message that the greatest victims of terrorism and war are innocent citizens.

One by One in the Darkness: Northern Ireland compared to a huge sky

Meanwhile, Madden's fifth novel, *One by One in the Darkness*, written in the wane of the Troubles, has a less emotional and calmer touch than *Hidden Symptoms* does. The protagonists are three sisters from a Catholic family in Derry, the Quinns; Helen practicing law in Belfast, Cate working as a journalist for a fashion magazine in London, and Sally being a teacher at a local school. The novel recounts with a tranquil and reserved tone how their family has been involved in the Troubles since the late 1960s.

This novel also begins with metaphorical lines:

Home was a huge sky; it was flat fields of poor land fringed with hawthorn and alder. It was birds in flight; it was columns of midges like smoke in a summer dusk. It was grey water; it was a mad wind; it was a solid stone house where the silence was uncanny.⁸⁾

While the barometer in *Hidden Symptoms* has only negative connotations, home or Northern Ireland in this novel, which is compared to a huge sky and to other landscapes, is considered to have both negative and positive connotations.

Regarding negative connotations, while landscapes with "flat fields of poor land", "columns of midges" and "grey water", represent Northern Ireland truthfully, their bleak and dreary image metaphorically indicates incessant hardships which the Quinn family undergoes; Protestants' discrimination against Catholics, riots always erupting and the terrorists' murder of the three sisters' father. It seems as if these incidents were caused by "a mad wind".

Furthermore, the three sisters give their

mother Emily constant concerns. Helen is "completely dismissive of the idea of marriage." ⁹⁾ In her teens, Cate comes home late in a car driven by a boy whom she has met in a dance. Emily always fears that she gets pregnant, and quarrels with her. Sally is weak and frail from her birth. Although these family problems look to outsiders as trivial as "columns of midges," they are so grave and dark to the Quinns themselves that the family seems to be floating in "grey water."

Cate and Sally, who desperately long to leave Northern Ireland, look like "birds in flight." Cate flees home for London, whereas Sally stays home or in "grey water," suppressing her longing.

Meanwhile, both lines, "Home was a huge sky" and "it was a solid stone house where the silence was uncanny" have positive connotations as well. At the end of the novel, the three sisters and their mother Emily are having a talk at night. Emily, reflecting on the past week in which Cate is home from London and talks about her secret baby, mentions that she hopes it's a long time before they have to go through another week like this. But Sally defies Emily's words and says, looking back on the Troubles, "We've been through worse than this before now, far worse." 10) Emily agrees and glances shyly at Cate, who blushes and looks away. Sally regards Cate's baby as "the only good thing about what happened" and is optimistic of the future of Northern Ireland, saying, "No matter what ever arises in the future, nothing can ever be so bad again." 11) When Emily says that it will be strange having a baby again and that she can hardly imagine it, the three sisters do not say anything in response. But their silence is "eloquent", the implication of which is that, although they can not imagine it either, they harbor a hope for the baby.

When the others go to sleep and Helen is left alone, a childhood memory revives in her mind in which her teacher sheds a torch light on a toy globe and shows her students how the world rotates in the light of the sun, how day and night happen. She looks at Japan, China, and then Northern Ireland, which delights her most of all. Then landscapes, people and events she has been familiar with reappear in her mind in succession, until at last she remembers the brutal murder of her father.

And at this point, in an abrupt reversal of the gentle descent of her childhood, Helen's vision swung violently away, and now she was aware of the cold light of dead stars; the graceless immensity of a dark universe. Now her image of her father's death was infinitely small, infinitely tender: the searing grief came from the tension between that smallness and the enormity of infinite time and space. No pity, no forgiveness, no justification: maybe if she could have conceived of a consciousness where every unique horror in the history of humanity was known and grieved for, it would have given her some comfort.¹²⁾

Her mind is being flooded with conflicting emotions, and the representation of which verifies Michael Parker's view that "it is in her detailing of the succession of conflicting emotions her grieving characters pass through that Madden's writing is often at its most convincing and powerful." ¹³⁾

It seems to Helen that her father's death is so trivial in the immensity of the universe that it deserves little pity, which grieves her searingly. Nevertheless, the murder of her father must not be forgiven and justified. Still, she is trying to be tolerant of the murder and comfort herself, wishing that every horror would be known and grieved for by everyone on the earth.

Thus, home, compared to a huge sky as well as to the solid stone house with uncanny silence, has both negative and positive connotations. The comparison shows that Northern Ireland is part of an immense universe. It indicates that, although the horror in Northern Ireland is trivial in an immense universe, it also evokes other horrors in the world, and reveals the fact that the greatest victims of those horrors are innocent citizens, as is exactly revealed in Hidden Symptoms. At the same time. Northern Ireland being part of the universe delights Helen when she looks at it on a toy globe, and makes her try to be tolerant to the murder of her father. Moreover, "uncanny silence" in the "solid stone house" seems to also indicate metaphorically the three sisters' unspoken determination to reconcile themselves to the reality and to live in their own ways.

In accordance with the peace process, the late 1990s witnesses the emergence of new types of Northern Irish novels which describe less violence and more human affairs such as family problems, love, and women's independence. Among these novels are One by One in the Darkness, Robert McLiam Wilson's Eureka Street (1996) and Bernard MacLaverty's Grace Notes (1997). These novels might have been a prelude to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. However, these novels seem to endorse Neil Alexander's words, "if it can be said with at least some certainty that the war is finally over, then it is equally certain that Northern Ireland's troubles are not." 12) These novels seem to demonstrate the paradoxical fact that, while Northern Ireland offers a lot to write about even without the Troubles, she can never be free from the effects of the Troubles.

Molly Fox's Birthday: On stage and out of stage

Regarding characteristics of Madden's novels, Michael Parker also mentions:

In their uncertainty about how to find 'images and symbols adequate to our predicament', writers have often turned to other writers for confirmation and direction. As a result, one frequently encounters in Madden's work self-reflexive references, allusions to writing and other kinds of texts – photographs, films, memories, landscapes, domestic and public spaces.¹⁴⁾

The Barvarian barometer in *Hidden Symptoms* and landscapes and a toy globe in *One by One in the Darkness* can be considered to be the images which function as the metaphors adequate to convey the characters' predicaments.

In her latest two novels, *Molly Fox's Birth-day* and *Time Present and Time Past*, Madden makes as effective use of images and symbols as in *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness*, and succeeds in conveying her messages more clearly.

There are three main characters in *Molly Fox's Birthday*; the narrator who is a playwright from a large Catholic family in Northern Ireland, Andrew who is an art critic from a Protestant working-class family in Belfast, and Molly Fox who is a stage actress from Dublin who prefers being called "actor". Although they have successful careers, they have family problems and undergo conflict, pain, grief and disaster.

The narrator writes a play titled *Summer* with Lucy, and it achieves great success due to Molly Fox's outstanding performance. In her private life, the narrator feels estranged

from the other members of her family. She reads English at Trinity College Dublin while the other family members live and work in Northern Ireland. Since she was sixteen years old, the narrator has been dating a man, whom her family members are very fond of and expect her to marry. However, after the narrator begins to study at Trinity College, she dumps him suddenly because she shrinks from the prospect of returning to the North and living there permanently. She then regards herself as "something of a misfit in the family." ¹⁵⁾

Andrew's elder brother, Billy, joins a Loyalist paramilitary organization and is murdered in a feud. Andrew himself graduates from Trinity College Dublin with a first-class honours degree and acquires a scholarship to study for a PhD at Cambridge University. He meets a woman called Nicole while they are both postgraduate students in Cambridge and they marry soon after finishing their studies. Although they have a son named Tony, their marriage crumbles by the time Tony is five years old. When Andrew goes to Paris for an art project, he gets involved in a disastrous incident and is severely wounded.

Very ironical and paradoxical descriptions are given to the murder of Andrew's brother and to Andrew's own disaster in Paris.

When the narrator hears the news of Billy's death, she expresses her emotion:

I'm ashamed to say that this murder had barely registered with me when I'd heard it on the radio, for such events were a common place in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and '80s. One became numb to them and only became aware of the full creeping horror when, as now, there was a personal connection. ¹⁶⁾

Meanwhile, Andrew, recalling his disaster in

Paris, says to the narrator:

My whole life had been a kind of flight from the north and everything that happened there. I'd studied hard so that I could become what I knew I needed to be. Life had brought me at last after so many years here to Paris, to look at some drawings, and I'd almost been killed in a bomb blast as a result, in a dispute that had nothing to do with me.¹⁷⁾

These two ironical and paradoxical remarks have a double effect on emphasizing Madden's messages that terrorism and war can happen anywhere in the world today and that the greatest victims of terrorism and war are innocent citizens. These two incidents are symbolic of the present-day global crisis.

Nevertheless, his disaster in Paris leads Andrew to recover the solid bonds with his family. His father gives Billy a gold ring at his eighteenth birthday. Billy seems to be wearing the ring when he is murdered. Then his father gives the ring to Andrew as a keepsake when he leaves Belfast for Dublin. Andrew has always been thinking that his parents love Billy more than him. It is the reason why Andrew is disappointed when he finds that his room in Cambridge has been burgled but the gold ring has not been stolen. However, when he is severely wounded in Paris, Andrew remembers Billy and the ring. The ring gives him some sort of comfort, and also makes him meditate on what Billy's life would be like if he were alive. Then Andrew decides to keep the ring with him forever. Thus, the ring functions as the symbol of the solid bonds of Andrew's family.

Molly Fox's mother disappears on her seventh birthday. At present, Molly lives with her younger brother, Fergus, who has depression and is locked into the spare room. The seri-

ousness of his disease is most acutely represented in the narrator's recollection of her first visit to Molly's house: "He [Fergus] was closed away in the spare room and he didn't appear at all for the duration of my visit, but there wasn't a moment throughout that day that we weren't aware of him." The narrator likens this situation to stage performances, pointing out that murder or torture which is not acted upon can sometimes be more disturbing than that which is acted upon.

The Molly Fox on stage and the Molly Fox out of stage present such a sharp contrast that they look like totally different persons. While she always performs so brilliantly on stage as to be called "electrifying", she is often grief-stricken and desperate out of stage, mainly due to her family problems.

The narrator summarizes her own job and Molly's at the beginning of the novel, which seems to be symbolically linked with an old woman's visit to Molly's house at the end: "For me, the play is the final destination. For Molly, it is the point of departure." ¹⁹⁾ At the end, an old woman who is a fan of Molly Fox visits her house on her birthday with herbs for her birthday present. Molly is absent, while the narrator is there. The woman tells the narrator that she had been leading a dull family life for years and that, when she saw Molly's latest play, it touched her like nothing she'd ever experienced before.

That the narrator hands over a written play to Molly and Molly performs it overlaps the event in which the narrator receives the old woman's message and present and gives them to Molly. They seem to symbolically suggest that the narrator is Molly's indispensable friend and that, with her help, Molly will cope with her family problems, to overcome her conflict, pain and grief, and to continue to perform brilliantly on stage.

Time Present and Time Past: Photographs as images and symbols

Meanwhile, *Time Present and Time Past* is a story of a wealthy family in Dublin and their relatives. Fintan Terence Buckley is a successful legal advisor. His wife, Colette, is a housewife. They are forty-seven years old, and have been married for twenty-four years. Their first son, Rob, goes to University College Dublin, and their second son, Niall, to Trinity College Dublin. They also have a seven-year-old daughter Lucy. Although the family looks peaceful and uneventful, Fintan is "in the grip of a deep anxiety".

As the story progresses, the history of Fintan's family and conflict, pain, grief and disaster which they undergo are uncovered. Fintan's paternal grandparents are from a rural village in Armagh, Northern Ireland. Their son, Fintan's father, goes down to the South to become a priest. But he fails to and, as his mother never forgives him, he can not return home. He stays in the South, becomes a schoolteacher, and gets married to Joan. Joan suffers from frustration because her father does not allow her to study at university and has to quit her civil servant job when she marries. Her husband dies of a heart attack in his prime, and she has to rear her two children, Martina and Fintan. Joan regards Martina as lazy and Fintan as too soft-hearted to be a lawyer.

Because of his soft-heartedness, Fintan is often distressed by his other family members. He hopes that both his sons will leave the house as soon as possible. He detests Rob's girlfriend, Mags, and is baffled by Niall being always cynical and critical of him. Fintan's wife, Colette, sometimes surprises and worries him with her dry views of marriage. Fintan's mother, Joan, who lives alone, enjoying her

widowhood, drains his energy.

Fintan's maternal family members also undergo conflict, pain, grief and disaster. Fintan's mother, Joan, has a younger sister, Beth. Their mother has been bullied by her husband. Consequently Joan becomes militant and Beth, fearful of men.

Martina, Joan's daughter and Fintan's elder sister, goes to London to work in the fashion trade. She comes home to Dublin in her thirties and starts her own boutique. Martina is a mysteriously beautiful woman, and Fintan feels that "there can be something unsettling and cool about her, particularly towards men." ²⁰⁾ It is attributed to the incident she experiences in London, which is as disastrous as that Andrew experiences in Paris in *Molly Fox's Birthday*.

In *Time Present and Time Past*, photographs appear every now and then as images, which serve to be symbols of solid family bonds and those of what links time; the past, the present and the future.

One of them is a photograph of Martina, Fintan, their cousin Edward and their grand-mother taken on a farm in Northern Ireland. Everyone in the photograph is laughing wholeheartedly.

Another photograph which symbolizes continuity of time is that of a red apple sitting on a mirror taken in 1907. Fintan cannot believe that it is such an old photograph because it exactly looks like something he might buy and eat with his lunch. Apples always remind him of his childhood in the North, where his grandmother had a little orchard. However, apples revive in him, not only sweet memories, but also abominable memories of the Troubles.

It seems that these photographs make Fintan and Martina determined to visit their cousin Edward in the North whom they have not met for a long while. They show Edward

the photograph of themselves, Edward and their grandmother on the farm, and feel that solid bonds of friendship and family have been established among them and Edward's family.

As mentioned before, in her reply to The Guardian interview on 14, June, 2013, Madden says that one thing that strikes her is how the Troubles are almost always in her own work in some way, at some level. The Troubles appear in Molly Fox's Birthday and Time Present and Time Past, too. The Guardian comment is correct that the Troubles are most visible in Hidden Symptoms, but there is a sense of them in the background of nearly all her books, even though most aren't set in the North. However, the following comment is incorrect: "Time Present and Time Past is quite different in feel to her other novels. It's lighter, and at times funny. It is, in fact, more like the charming children's books she has started writing."

Time Present and Time Past is as serious as Madden's other novels. Although the main characters are wealthy and look peaceful, they suffer from various problems.

Fintan's family may have more problems in the future. In Time Present and Time Past, the author, or Fintan, foresees the problems that his family will face. As Ireland experiences a spectacular economic crash, Rob will be unable to find work in Ireland and will find a job in Australia. Consequently he will separate from his girlfriend, Mags, which will deeply sadden Colette. Niall will finish a Ph D in London, but the idea of Niall with a job becomes unimaginable to Fintan. Lucy will struggle more than her two brothers because she will discover that the love of a man is not always unconditional. Martina will have endless struggles to keep her shop open in the harsh new economic climate. But Madden, or Fintan, is still positive, saying that "the Buckleys will certainly have their problems in the future, but they will have much luck and happiness, too." ²¹⁾

Conclusion

As mentioned before, according to Denis Donoghue, the point of the metaphor is to bring different associations, more dramatic connotations, into the reader's mind and that the force of a good metaphor is to give something a different life, a new life. And, as discussed so far, the Bavarian barometer in *Hidden Symptoms* and Northern Ireland compared to a huge sky and to trivial landscapes in *One by One in the Darkness* have dramatic connotations as metaphors.

What Donoghue argues about the metaphor is also true of the image and the symbol. Regarding *Molly Fox's Birthday*, the reader may wonder why the novel's title is as such and what it connotes. That Molly's birthday falls on the summer solstice, the longest day in a year, seems to symbolize her unfailing power and brilliance. It seems to suggest that, although Molly often sinks into depression due to her family problems out of stage, she is always capable of overcoming it and shining with great brilliance on stage. Thus "Molly Fox's Birthday" is likely to give different associations and more dramatic connotations to the reader's mind.

In *Time Present and Time Past*, photographs are presented, not only as the reminder of the past, but also as the important images and symbols to link the past, the present and the future, and to solidify family bonds. It can be said that, photographs are given a different life or a new life, constituting the essential component of this novel.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland occupies the whole part of *Hidden Symptoms* and a large part of *One by One in the Darkness*, whereas *Molly Fox's Birthday* and *Time Present and Time Past* mainly describe family problems, with which the Troubles are interwoven intricately. Madden's wish for their settlement is symbolically represented at the end of *Time Present and Time Past*, in which, on their way home from the meeting with Edward and his wife, Fintan and Martina drop in at a country pub somewhere between Armagh and Dublin, and have a chat with a barman.

Metaphors, images and symbols fulfill an effective role in conveying Madden's messages more clearly. Among them, Madden's first message seems to be that, although families are destined to face a variety of problems, such as conflict, pain, grief and disaster, they must maintain their solid bonds and try to survive throughout time, the past; the present and the future. Madden's message sounds harsh, but it is more encouraging than harsh.

Notes

- David Lodge, The Art of Fiction (1992; rpt., London: Vintage, 2011), p. 139.
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- 5) Parker, pp. 85-86.
- 6) Denis Donoghue, *Metaphor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 2.
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- 16) Ibid., p. 41.
- 17) Ibid., p. 186.
- 18) Ibid., p. 62.
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