# THE EAST AND THE WEST HARMONIOUSLY COEXISTING AS JACOB'S DESCENDANTS UNDER THE CARE OF MARY OF THE EAST AND THE WEST: DAVID MITCHELL'S *THE THOUSAND AUTUMNS OF JACOB DE ZOET*

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*Abstract: David Mitchell's* The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet *is generally read as a historical novel whose theme is the reconciliation of the East and the West as well as other dichotomies in today's global society. The novel rather promotes the harmonious coexistence of the East and the West and the unity of science and the humanities beyond the gaps caused by their differences. The protagonists, Jacob (West) and Orito (East), love each other, not in the having mode but in the giving mode, and they deliver a new being without sleeping with each other, like Joseph and Mary, in a world full of the desire to have material goods and people as property. This is like Dejima and Enomoto's shrine, which can be likened to the literary tradition of dystopian literature. Orito's face resembles the bombed Virgin Mary in Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki and in Guernica Cathedral. An excellent midwife and medical scientist, Orito loves human beings and saves their lives in the role of the bombed Virgin Mary.* [1]

## Introduction

*The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010) is set in Dejima, a small artificial island in Nagasaki harbor built in 1634 to confine the Portuguese first and then the Dutch. The novel is set between 1799 and 1817, mainly from 1799 to 1801, which is within the period of Japanese national isolation (1633–1858). Mitchell is a contemporary writer and had before this published novels set in international or

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[1] All Chinese and Japanese names, including the author's one, are written in the order of "family name, first name," according to the system of writing Chinese and Japanese names.

globalized cities, such as *number9dream* (2001) and *Cloud Atlas* (2004). Why did he focus on Dejima at the turn of the 19th century? Can the historical island of Dejima be suitable for the description of phenomena related to a globalized society? If it can, how is it suitable? Writing Dejima is in a sense writing the world. Officially only the Dutch lived on Dejima, but in reality, other Westerners, such Germans, Swedes, and Americans were also present there. The Westerners had slaves, boys of dark skin from Batavia, Malaya, and so on. There were also Japanese on Dejima, though only those of certain limited ranks and occupations were allowed. In the novel, as well, people of various nationalities stay on Dejima: American, Dutch, Prussian, Irishman, Belgium, African, and so on. Reading the story about Dejima society in Mitchell's novel is like watching Dejima superimposed onto a world map with a similar shape, such as one by Ptolemy (AD 2). As long as those on Dejima are human beings, they have affinities because they are all humankind, and as long as there are affinities, people on Dejima of the past are translatable across the gaps of the differences of the times, to those in the world of today on a conceptual and philosophical level. At this point, writing Dejima is writing the world in the global era.

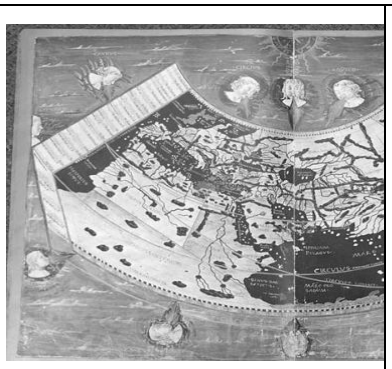

Figure 1. Ptolemy's map of the world (AD 2)

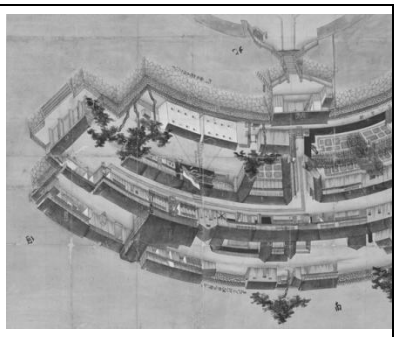

Figure 2. Dejima

Among the various human dramas, friendship and arguments, mutual understanding and misunderstandings, supporting and cheating, and cooperation and collusion between the West and the East in Dejima, and amidst the economic and political confusion of this period, is set the main story of *The Thousand Autumns*. This love story between the protagonist Jacob de Zoet, a VOC clerk, and Aibagawa Orito, a midwife, which underlies the novel. How do they love

each other? The answer could signify how the West and the East love each other. It is "to share, to give, to sacrifice." The prelude for coexistence through love is found in the first chapter of the novel; the novel begins with denial of superiority and privilege of either the East or the West.

## I. Midwifery East and West and the Denial of the Superiority and Privilege

*The Thousand Autumns* begins with a scene of the marvelous practice of midwifery by the Japanese birthing assistant Aibagawa Orito. The reader who reads to the end of this novel might regard the scene as foreshadowing the reason why Orito was taken by Enomoto; he thinks that her skills could contribute to his sisters in their deliverance of infants at his shrine in Mount Shiranui. Some readers may imagine the superiority of Western medical science. In the novel, Orito's father marries a widow, whose son was "to be induced into Dutch medicine and carry on the Aibagawa practices" (Mitchell, 2011, 126).

Regardless, readers who begin the first chapter and know the history of Japanese medical science well will respond to the text in a different way; they will read a denial of the stereotypical discourse of superiority and privilege of the West, especially in the field of science. Mitchell composed the novel on the foundation of elaborate study. Just as Jacob de Zoet is modeled on Hendrik Doeff, the genuine midwife Orito has several models. She might be in part modeled on Kusumoto Ine (1827–1903), the first female midwife in Japan and a daughter of Philip Franz von Seabold, the distinguished German scholar of medical science, with Taki, a prostitute in Maruyama, Nagasaki. Orito, however, can be more readily identified with Kagawa Shigen, (or Gen'etsu) (1700–1777), a male midwife well known for his skills. It is easy to identify Orito and Kagawa when we compare the description of Orito's achievements in the novel and the records of Kagawa's achievements, for instance, in *Fude no Susabi* (*As an Ink Blush Dictates*, 1827?–1856) by Kan Chazan (1748–1827), *Yūsō Iwa* (*Tales about Medical Phases*, 1864) by Mori Tatsuyui (1807–1885), and a biography of Kagawa *Shōgun to Machii* (*The Shōgun and a Town Doctor*) that Morisue Arata published in 1978.

Kagawa Shigen made great contributions to midwifery not only in Japan but also throughout the world. One of his contributions was to discover the normal position of the fetus before this was learned of in the rest of the world. Before Kagawa, it was thought that fetuses turned their heads downward right before the

time of birth, but Kagawa realized that the fetus is already in this position in the second trimester of a pregnancy. His discovery took place at a similar time to a presentation in 1754 of the normal fetal position by William Smellie. Kagawa also invented iron forceps to support delivery at a critical moment. In the novel, for Kawasemi, who is suffering from difficult delivery, Orito, like Kagawa, uses forceps, which were state-of-the-art, and the procedure using the tool was so rapid that Kawasemi's handmaids are frightened of it. In addition, he was very good at realizing the month, position, and condition of a fetus, with his fingers inserted into the ostium of the uterus, and he could even change a breech position into a normal one using his fingers. With his genius and technique, Kagawa produced easy delivery and pregnancy, and under his care, infants that were thought dead often came to life again. Another part of Kagawa's life that is related to the novel in practice, Kagawa also saved a debilitated pregnant woman who suffered from a difficult delivery and from whose birth canal the arm of her fetus was protruding, as seen in an illustration to the first chapter of the novel (Ibid. 6).

Kagawa was responsible for "Sanron," or "Article on Obstetrics," published in 1769, but did not write it. A Japanese Confucian Minagawa Kien (1735–1807) took Kagawa's dictation in the style of the Chinese classics. Later, Mima Junzō (1795–1825), a doctor practicing Western medicine, translated Kagawa's book into Dutch. After having arrived at Nagasaki and read the translated work, Seabold was surprised at Kagawa's discussion on midwifery. Seabold submitted an article on Kagawa's midwife(ology) to a journal of *Batavia Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* in 1825, just one year after he arrived in Japan.

They say that the development of Japan is owed to the Western learning that arrived at Nagasaki. Western medical science had, and has, a great impact on the world. This is true. However, we can see by Kagawa's example that it is wrong to hold that the West was and is always superior, always more civilized, and always the one to civilize non-Western people. The novel begins with Orito's excellent achievements in midwifery, modeled on Kagawa, and hence with a denial of the superiority and privilege of the West. In this sense, *The Thousand Autumns* is a novel of East-West studies, rather than the historical fiction that many reviewers think they have found in it (cf. O'Donnell, 2015, 124). The denial of the superiority and privilege of the West means, in a sense, denial of those of Japan as well. In the texts written by many Western visitors to Japan in the periods of Edo and its aftermath, or the beginning of Meiji, we see many passages stereotypically emphasizing that compared to Westerners, the Japanese are honest, friendly, kind,

clean, harmonious. Examples of such authors are Pompe van Meeerdervoort, James Curtis Hepburn, Samuel Robbins Brown, and so on.[2] Positive images of Japan and Japanese prevailed in the West through their books. The pioneer here was *The History of Japan* (1777–79) by Engelbert Kaempfer, a German doctor who stayed on Dejima from 1690 to 1692. As a matter of fact, Mitchell mentions to the book in the Acknowledgements to the novel.

However, just as Mitchell's *number9dream*, as Posada notes, takes on and criticizes stereotypical Western images of Japan and Tokyo (Posada, 2011, 80), *The Thousand Autumns* denies the stereotypical admiration of Japan and the Japanese. This starts in the second chapter. The novel shows Japanese as greedy and violent as the Westerners on Dejima are, clinging to power, high position, and glory, and trying to cheat others for their own gain and self-protection, as the Westerners do. Japan is not characterized by honesty, friendliness, kindness, cleanness, harmony, peace, and happiness, which find expression in What Shiroyama states (cf. Mitchell, 2011, 480-81).

In such a disharmony, there is no difference between the East and the West. The people on Dejima are tied to each other by gain and power, but not by sympathy or love. They create gain using of half measures and illegal methods, watching each other. They do not trust each other or understand each other. This relation can be seen, as Patrick O'Donnell points out, in the title of part 1, "The Bride for Whom We Dance." Copper is the bride for whom the Dutch have danced in Nagasaki (O'Donnell, 2015, 134). The true profit for the Westerners and Japanese, however, lied in the private trade, the so-called *kambang* trade (Remmelink, 2004, xxv). In the novel, Chief Volstenbosch arrives at Nagasaki with the idea of reconstructing the fortunes of the declining Company. Later his ideals weaken and he finally cheats Jacob and the company to illegally obtain his own gain. Caught in his trick by Jacob, Volstenbosch withdraws his proposal for a new higher-ranking position for Jacob, designating another man for the position.

In short, the Japanese and the Westerners were tied to each other by *having*. They did not care about regulations, laws, or even other people, but they just each thought of his or her own gain. That is why they do not feel comfortable around Jacob and are hard on the clerk who has been checking the account ledgers. Grote says to Jacob, "Cause this an' everythin' else you're snufflin' up? Cause this is how Dejima works. Stop all these little *perquisites*, eh, an' yer stop Dejima itself"

[2] For more detail, see Watanabe Kyōji and Cryns.

(Mitchell, 2011, 117). In greed, gain, and sordidness, there are affinities between the East and the West, and they interact with each other, but they fail in mutual understanding.

## II. The Two Cultures: Science/Humanities and Rationalism/Faith, or the West and the East

The novel describes failures of mutual understanding under various aspects and not only between the East and the West. The phrase "The Two Cultures" in the title of this section, of course, is a reference from C. P. Snow's famous lecture "The Two Cultures" that he gave in 1959 (Snow, 1959, 1-22). He cautioned the world about the danger of failure in communication between scientists and literary intellectuals, which would break the world into two completely separate spheres and disadvantage human beings. It is generally said that in all sciences, the West was superior to the East and was the teacher of the East, thus cultivating and civilizing it. On this view, there is a belief that science, and thus Western thought, including its rationalism and valuation of reason, is the truth and makes a contribution to human beings. Mitchell's novel, however, makes odds even and bridges the rift between various gaps between science and literary intelligence as well as the West and the East.

In Shirandō Academy, a private association of scholars, Lucas Marinus, a physician, emphasizes science, the rational mind, and technology. He says, "Science, like a general, is identifying its enemies: received wisdom and untested assumption; superstition and quackery; the tyrants' fear of educated commoners; and most pernicious of all, man's fondness for fooling himself." Marinus continues "the days are coming when science shall transform what it is to be a human being" (Mitchell, 2011, 226). Marinus purely believes in and emphasizes the value of science. Some Japanese have had a similar thought. Ogawa Uzaemon states that "scholars disdain magic and superstition"[3] (Ibid. 306) and "I am Adam Smith's translator, I don't believe the omens" (Ibid. 311). Orito recognizes that her duty is to dispel myths and superstition using her rational mind and science. She says, *meishin*, or superstition, is the "enemy of reason" and "I wish to build bridge *from* ignoration," her tapering hands form the bridge, "to knowledge" (Ibid.

[3] Errors of English (or the Dutch) in Japanese people's and interpreters' speech are intentionally written in the novel.

71-72).[4]

We should note here that in spite of their pure belief in science, the rational mind, and technique, some scientists, in the end, may finally come to rely on gods in their crisis. Orito relies on the salvation of the Goddess when she faces a predicament. In the House of Sisters, she desperately prays to the Goddess to keep her from being chosen as the sex partner of a priest. Marinus also expects God's salvation as a way out of his quagmire when the *Phoebus* comes to Nagasaki and fires on Dejima. When Jacob asks Marinus "You have no objection if I say the Twenty-third Psalm, Doctor?" Marinus, who said before that "[I] *don't* believe in" it (Mitchell, 2011, 470), answers "Provided you have no objection if I join, Jacob" (Ibid. 472). In the attack of an earthquake's before the attack by the *Phoebus*, Marinus said, "I find a certain comfort in humanity's helplessness," though Jacob could not agree (Ibid. 157). However, Marinus as well as Orito rely on gods and the Psalter but not on science books or knowledge on the brink of crisis.

Throughout the novel, people pray and are helped and saved miraculously or accidentally, or beyond the powers of rational mind and scientific knowledge. After Jacob and Marinus start reading the Psalter, the *Phoebus* suddenly leaves. After Orito starts praying to the Goddess, she is saved. Additionally, Otane, an herbalist in Kurozane village, prays to God and Maria for the safety of Orito in Shiranui Shrine, and just afterwards, Jiritsu, a priest at the shrine, ran away from there goes to Otane with a paper where he has written the *Twelve Creeds of Shiranui Shrine* in order to expose the reality of the shrine and let someone know of it. Jiritsu's action saves Orito and the other women and causes Enomoto to meet his end. Faith, prayer, and the Psalter also save human life, like science, the rational mind, and technology. Furthermore, we should remember the remark of Lieutenant Hovell on the *Phoebus* that in spite of the fact that the Tokugawa shogunate had prohibited Christianity in order to protect Japan, it was Christianity itself that protected Japan from attack by other countries. Taking the suggestion of Mr. Snitker, Hovell conveys to Captain Penhaligon the reason why it is hard for other countries, especially Western ones, to invade Japan, saying, "He says, sir,

[4] What Orito says might bring to mind the memory of the opposite view, of Rutherford Alcock's contrast between the aspiration of Asian people for divine inspiration with the secularism of Western people and Lin Yutang's contrast between Western people's aspiration to divine inspiration with the secularism of Asian people.

that the company's captains never provoked … never provoked the authorities so blatantly, sir, because Hidden—Hidden Christians still live there, so all comings and goings … are watched by government spies, but no bumboats shall approach us lest the crew he executed as smugglers, along with their families" (Ibid., 153). This protection and salvation that occur through Christianity happen in the Japanese religion, as well. We should note the day when Shiroyama sacrificed himself to kill Enomoto in the Room of the Last Chrysanthemum. It was the ninth day of the ninth month, according to the old lunar calendar. It is the day of the Chōyō Festival, or the Chrysanthemum Festival, and the Nagasaki Kunchi Festival as well. The Kunchi Festival began in 1634 and was originally held on the seventh day of the ninth month and the Chrysanthemum Festival. The Kunchi Festival is for the celebration of autumn harvests and appreciating the God of Suwa Shrine. The festival is very important for Nagasaki. It is identified with holy rituals for the residents in Nagasaki, because it was provided in 1634 that the God of Suwa Shrine is the guardian God for all Nagasaki, and all the residents of Nagasaki are parishioners of this shrine. In short, in his mind, Shiroyama abolished evil, or Enomoto, with the help of God.

Over the course of the development of the novel, certain scientists in the East and the West, like Uzaemon and Marinus, gradually change their beliefs that science and the rational mind are versatile enough and come to realize a mono-dimensional view cannot save people or bring about peace in the world. For instance, in the House of Sisters, Orito realizes how important tales or literature are for people to support their lives, concluding that people need not only the rational mind and science but also faith and humanities, depending on their problems (cf. ibid. 261). For human life, faith and literature are also essential.

All this, however, should not go to deny the values of science and the rational mind. Marinus and Orito use science and their rational mind to save human life as their most basic objective. The problem that the scientists had was that they simply believed that only science and a rational mind were versatile. This belief is like the blind worship of religion that scientists, including Marinus, criticize. As Hans-Georg Gadamer shows, science has defeated humanities using the assumption that it is more elaborate and less ambiguous than humanities (Gadamer, 1975, 1-7).[5] Though later, to develop the argument, I refer to Erich

[5] Also, see Gadamer, 1983, Kamuf, 1997, 75-99.

Fromm, a social psychologist influenced by Karl Marx who expanded the horizon of terms such as alienation and fetishism, he demonstrated consequences and the human tragedy of a purely scientific, alienated intellect. In an original misunderstanding of the pure believers in science and technique, they believe, as Fromm explains, that they have it "made into a god," because they have "acquired the technical capacity for a 'second creation' of the world, replacing the first creation by the God of traditional religion." Pure believers in science and technique, hence, tend to make little of God and faith. It is, however, that "human beings, in the state of their greatest real *impotence*, *imagine* themselves in connection with science and technique to be *omnipotent*." The absolutization of science and technique is, thus, a "new religion" (Fromm, 1976, 153). To this "new religion," a banal but important caution must be given. Science and technique can threaten one's life due to human isolation, as was the case of the *Phoebus*. Yoshida Hayato, a Japanese scholar, also supports imperialism's reliance on science and technique and unconsciously exposes the fact that such a view stems not from science but is just a "belief" (Mitchell, 2011, 218-19).

On the other hand, religious thinking and humanities can also threaten life. As Orito points out, "*To implant belief*" is "*to dominate the believers*" (Mitchell, 2011, 264). She says this as part of her criticism of Enomoto and her lamentation of the sisters' belief in him. Further, it is true that different faiths and beliefs, from those in a national form to those concerned with an individual way of life, force failure in mutual understanding and coexistence as well as conflict and wars when differences among people are emphasized too much, whether it be among individuals in the East, among those in the West, or between the East and the West, without affinities on a conceptual or philosophical level, as we can confirm in the discussion of the political system among people on Dejima (Ibid., 53) and in Jacob's lamentation over faiths of people on Dejima (Ibid., 118-19, 470).[6]

[6] Ironically, however, people can understand each other in ordinary, profane things. As mentioned earlier, the people of the East and the West on Dejima continue their relations with only to promote each one's own gain. As an example of something coarse, regarding love, a Japanese man tells Jacob, "Marriage is different: marriage is matter of head … rank … business … bloodline. Holland families are not same?" Recalling Anna's father, Jacob answers, "We are exactly the same alas" (Mitchell, 2011, 90-91). The affinity can be seen in the differences in political system, as well. As mentioned earlier, Goto denies the greatness of American democracy, while Lacy explains how excellent it is, because the

Nevertheless, Jacob also had a problem at first, like Marinus, in exaggerating universal faith, believing his own faith absolutely and denying the Japanese beliefs. In chapter 7 "Tall House, Dejima," where differences in beliefs are emphasized, Jacob stands up what he believes is right. When he hears about "O-bon," the Japanese traditional ceremony for souls, from Ogawa Mimasaku, he could not come to an understanding with him, saying that "*mine is the true faith*. Jacob pities Ogawa. *Whilst yours is idolatry*" (Ibid. 89). Jacob was a representative of a pure believer in a specified faith and hence brings about disharmony in the human world.

However, like Marinus and Orito, Jacob later changes. For instance, he cooperates with the Japanese, like Shiroyama and Ogawa Uzaemon, over the gaps of the differences between them to protect people against evil powers. Jacob also forgives his enemy. After the *Phoebus* leaves Nagasaki, Jacob is asked by a Japanese chamberlain whether the corpse of a sailor from the *Phoebus* should be buried in the cemetery for foreigners or thrown in ditch like trash. Jacob generously orders the Japanese to bury his body in the cemetery with a coin in his grave (Ibid. 475). Patrick O'Donnell ascribes Jacob's decision to the Japanese's mistranslation of the sailor's identity, as either "European" or "Negro" into either "English" or "not-English" and points out an avoidable tragedy of untranslatability (O'Donnell, 2015, 147). If so, however, it means that Jacob treated the sailor without any prejudice as to his identity. Jacob tells the Japanese that the sailor's identity is English. He criticized the British at first, saying that they always lied and nobody could trust them. Jacob, therefore, forgives his enemy: Jacob treats all equally as human beings. Some Japanese, such as Magistrate Shiroyama, also change. While at first there was no interaction between the East and the West, they then cooperate with each other to create a better society. In addition, Shiroyama makes Enomoto meet the end by the sacrifice of his own life and his contribution to his own family and "Orito, Ogawa

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social position is determined by bloodline in Japanese political system, while the president is chosen by American people who are not "slave[s]" or "the oxen, or women," to use Lacy's words. Van Cleef also supports slavery (Ibid., 146-47). The "one-drop rule" in the United States showed that the recognition of someone as African American depended not on the color of the skin but on blood, but the political systems of the United States, the Netherlands, and Japan, do not show large differences in the choice of social position by bloodline.

and De Zoet" (Mitchell, 2011, 488).

As we have seen, the thought that science and the rational mind are versatile, itself is a belief or a blind faith like that of the religions that scientists themselves criticize. They sometimes create something dangerous for human life. Additionally, science and the rational mind are sometimes impotent in crises of life and in unendurable circumstances. On the other hand, the thought that faith and humanities are versatile is also dangerous. They cannot cure disease. They can be a driving force to attack others. The bridge between the two cultures is important. Of course, bridges among cultures are important for others' lives.

## III. Dystopia, Shiranui Shrine

Along this line of thinking, it is interesting to note the character of Enomoto. He is an expert in science, humanities, politics, and trade, the person of the greatest balance in knowledge and belief among the characters in the novel, though he is, to borrow Weh's words, a "ban *kwaio*" (Ibid. 346), in fact. Enomoto's opinion in his argument with Orito over his project of the House of Sisters sounds rational. Enomoto collects disfigured women in the House of Sisters at Shiranui Shrine because they "would die, miserably and early, in brothels and freak show" (Ibid. 318). Enomoto feeds and protects the disfigured women, who tend to be discriminated against and hence cannot survive in society, and the women also appreciate him, because their life in the House of Sisters is easier and more comfortable than their lives in society. Furthermore, when Orito asks him "How can an academician—a translator of Isaac Newton—speak lie a superstitious peasant?" Enomoto gives a very (facially) rational opinion; "Enlightenment can blind one, Orito. Apply all the empirical methodology you desire to time, gravity, life: their genesis and purposes are, at root, unknowable. It is not superstition but a rational mind that concludes the realm of knowledge is finite and that the brain and the soul are discrete entities" (Ibid. 318). Whether this is far-fetched or not, it is true that Enomoto never blindly believes in science and reason. He knows their advantages and disadvantages and the limits of science, as well as something relating to the soul.

Enomoto's opinion sounds good, and besides Shiranui Shrine, which he established, even sounds like a utopia. An innate human desire to have a better life make people seek an ideal society and build a utopia, as Ruth Levitas notes: "The essential element in utopia is not hope, but desire—the desire for a better

way of being" (Levitas, 1990, 191). A utopia is a society built up only by human power, not by a divine one (Zhang, 2005, 169). Utopia is, thus, a political criticism and the measure of an actual society and is conditioned on secularism (Ibid. 165-66, 170-71). In this sense, "utopia as a concept is translatable across the gaps of cultural differences between the East and the West," as Zhang Longxi points out in contradiction to or rather based on Krishan Kumar's insistence that utopia can be seen only in the West (Ibid. 173). Shiranui Shrine certainly relates to the gods. But Enomoto is also a politician and a scientist. As long as disfigured women appreciate their lives there, Enomoto is a kind of new Messiah for them. Truly, the sisters intone the Sutra of Gratitude in chorus every morning which begins with "To Abbot Enomoto-*no-kami*, our spiritual guide… whose sagacity guides the shrine of Mount Shiranui" (Mitchell, 2011, 208).

Shiranui Shrine is a utopia in its construction as well. Following Shuzai's and Uzaemon's descriptions of the route from Nagasaki to Shiranui Shrine, it is clear that the shrine is modeled on Kinsenji Temple in Nagasaki. Above Kinsenji Temple is found Kyōgadake peak, the highest place in Mount Taradake, which seems to model Kyōga Domain. According to the real geography of Nagasaki and the fictional one as well, Shiranui Shrine is isolated from the rest of the world by mountains, water, forests, walls, and a dry moat, and one reaches it only after going through a narrow passage. The shrine does not sell luck charms, and hence no one visits the shrine. The residents of the shrine, the sisters as well as the priests, never leave it and thus do not know the outside world. They live isolated. Further, the sisters appreciate Enomoto as the guide of their soul and sagacity. Further, Shiranui Shrine is also a phantom, as the name signifies, Tao Yuanming's Peach Blossom Spring, which disappears. The word *shiranui* signifies the mysterious lights seen on the Ariake Sea in the evening around on the last day in the seventh month by the lunar calendar. It is regarded as marine bioluminescence now from the scientific viewpoint. "Shiranui," or mysterious lights, can be seen on the Ariake Sea by Isahaya, on the east side of Mount Taradake. The novel's Shiranui Shrine, hence, might be set on Mount Taradake.

The sisters' lifestyle also has elements of utopia. They live communally. In the morning they wake up at the same time, intone the Sutra of Gratitude in chorus, and eat breakfast together. During the day, they collaborate. In the evening, they are asked about the condition of their bodies and eat dinner together. After dinner, they enjoy their favorite things. The sisters act together collectively, but they enjoy their lives as individuals in leisure and entertainment.

Enomoto, however, is not a Messiah or a sage. He uses his excellent perspective and knowledge for his own gain. In particular, he satisfies his and his priests' sexual gratification and his desire for his own survival. The shrine is under guard. As Shuzai describes it, Shiranui Shrine's structure precisely matches a *panopticon* jail (Ibid. 294). Within the building, Enomoto forces the sisters to get pregnant so that he can drink the blood of newborn infants to ensure his immortality and longevity, and he finally inters the corpses of the disfigured women in the backyard of the Harubayashi Inn, as if they were trash. The sisters are just Enomoto's private property for his sexual desire and his own survival. This can find expression in the sisters' names. Though the 10 sisters' names are from the names of the chapters in *The Tale of Genji*, the tale has to do with a prostitute as well. A "Genji-mei," or Genji name, means an assumed name that Japanese night club hostesses and women working in the sex industry give themselves to hide their true identity, and the name of the chapters in *The Tale of Genji* are often used for such names.

Shiranui Shrine is a dystopia ruled by the insane dictator Enomoto. Enomoto finally confesses, "Those disfigured whores were fated from birth to die in gutters" (Ibid. 491), just before he dies. Utopia tends to turn into dystopia on the spot when it was built up. The actual historical failure of utopia lies, as Zhang Longxi points out, in "more than waiting for a Messiah that turned out to be false," and "the intertwining of the language of religion—incarnation, awaiting the fulfillment of promises or the coming of a Messiah—with the secular concepts of utopia and its degeneration into dictatorship" (Zhang, 2015, 120). Enomoto is such a dictator-Messiah. His characters stem from his pure belief. Shiroyama characterizes Enomoto, thinking "*The purest believers* […] *are the truest monsters*" (Mitchell, 2011, 491). Scientists and humanists, if they are the purest believers, can also be the truest monsters. The obsession with possession and the fear of losing, together with pure beliefs without reflection, causes one to think little of others and to break human harmony due to one's own egoism.

## IV. Owing and Disharmonious Society

*The Thousand Autumns* is set at a time when the West was increasing its territory and prosperity. In other words, the paradigm of the times drove people to live life in the mode of "to have," although this life pertains to a consumer society. Erich Fromm's work *To Have or To Be?* is suggestive regarding the desire for

possession and society.[7] This book is also valuable in its various examples, such as knowledge, love, and people, as well as the fact that he refers to similar issues surrounding possession to those that the slave Weh considers. Further, Fromm notes and takes the Psalter as a guide to a human life and future, and the Psalter, which is Jacob's talisman, explains the development of the plot of the novel and his own life. Fromm analyzes human life into two ways, to have and to be, and criticizes the "to have" mode in society that "rests on private property, profit, and power as the pillars of its existence" (Fromm, 1976, 69). According to Fromm, the "theory that the aim of life is the fulfillment of every human desire was clearly voiced, for the first time since Aristippus, by philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth century." Since that time, people and society has changed: "I want everything for myself; that possessing, not sharing, gives me pleasure" (Ibid. 6). This egoistic desire can find expression in society in *The Thousand Autumns*, as cheating, collision, and collusion between the East and the West and among people. We remember what the slave Weh points out about white men.

> The word "my" brings pleasure. The word "my" brings pain. These are true words for masters as well as slaves. When they are drunk, we become invisible to them. Their talk turns to owning, or to profit, or loss, or buying, or selling, or stealing, or hiring, or renting, or swindling. For white men, to live is to own, or to try to own more, or to die trying to own more. Their appetites are astonishing! They own wardrobes, slaves, carriages, houses, warehouses, and ships. They own ports, cities, plantations, valleys, mountains, chains of islands. They own this world, its jungles, its skies, and its seas. (Mitchell, 2011, 345)

Property like those "may be called private property (from Latin *privare*, 'to deprive of'), because the person or persons who own it are its sole matters, with full power to deprive others of its use or enjoyment" (Fromm, 1976, 69). He continues, "The norms by which society functions also mold the characters of its members ('social character'). In an industrial society these are: the wish to

[7] For reference, Patrick O'Donnell refers to Freud with a little hesitation in his book by use of the word of "anachronistic" (p. n.203), but a great book continues being read beyond times and areas and become a canon. Such a book, hence, is not anachronistic but holds today.

acquire property, to keep it, and to increase it, i.e., to make a profit, and those who own property are admired and envied as superior beings" (Ibid. 70). Fromm points out that the biggest problem in such a society is to desire to own people (Ibid. 71).

Fromm's argument reminds us of the suppression of race (slavery), ethnic groups (imperialism), and the sisters in the Shiranui Shrine, or various people owned by others without freedom in various societies, such as Dejima and Japan itself, in the novel. Regarding this matter, Weh's words are clarifying. Once, when Weh, a black slave, made a fine spoon from a bone, Master Grote saw it and took it. Masters have always taken everything fine from him, saying "Slaves do not own. Slaves are owned" (Mitchell, 2011, 343). From these experiences Weh reaches the thought that "a slave cannot even say, 'These are my fingers,' or 'This is my skin.' We do not own our families." He thinks that he is another person's property: "Once, I thought this question: *Do I own my name?*" "Sometimes another thought comes to me: *Do I own my memories?*" "Once, I thought this thought: *Do I own this thought?*" Weh answers these questions in the negative. He even considers that his own mind has been taken by his masters" (Ibid. 344-45). Weh is doubly a victim of a society of egoism, where property values are supreme: he is owned by others, and being others' property, he feels himself originally as his own property. According to Fromm, "our ego is the most important object of our property feeling, for it comprises many things: our body, our name, our social status, our possessions (including our knowledge), the image we have of ourselves and the image we want others to have of us." The essential point is "not so much what the ego's content is, but that the ego is felt as a thing we each possess, and that this 'thing' is the basis of our sense of identity" (Fromm, 1976, 71). In order to improve this human and a social condition, Fromm insists on the "to be" mode of existence.

> The having mode of existence, the attitude centered on property and profit, necessarily produces the desire—indeed the need—for power. To control other living human beings we need to use power to break their resistance. To maintain control over private property we use power to break their resistance. To maintain control over private property we need to use power to protect it from those who would take it from us because they, like us, can never have enough; the desire to have private property produces the desire to use violence in order to rob others in overt or covert ways. In the having mode, one's

> happiness lies in one's superiority over others, in one's power, and in the last analysis, in one's capacity to conquer, rob, kill. In the being mode it lies in loving, sharing, giving. (Ibid. 81)

In his book *To Have or To Be?* Fromm takes various examples of having and being in daily experience, such as knowing, learning, conversing, reading, and loving. Fromm gives examples from the Western society of the 20th century, but this also finds expressions in *The Thousand Autumns*. People in the having mode, whether they are scientists or humanists, *have* knowledge, a rational mind, and faith as private property but do not live *in* them and are alienated from them. As long as these things are private property, their possessors, people in having mode, bring people in an area as well as throughout areas, and themselves, to disharmony.

To leave such a history behind, Fromm proposes a life in being mode, that is, "to give, share and love." For the heroes in mythology and religion of the East and the West are those "with the courage to leave what they have—their land, their family, their property—and move out, not without fear, but without succumbing to their fear." In the Buddhist tradition, "the Buddha is the hero who leaves all possessions, all certainty contained in Hindu theology—his rank, his family—moves on to a life of nonattachment." Similarly, Abraham and Moses are "heroes in the Jewish tradition" (Ibid. 109). And the Christian hero is Jesus because of the reason why he had nothing but loved all human beings. Fromm emphasizes, noting of the great thinkers in the East and the West, that "the only meaningful way of life is activity of giving and caring for fellow creatures" (Ibid. 163). What we should notice is that Fromm believes the human potentialities of life in being mode, "to share, to give, to sacrifice" (Ibid. 106). That is why Fromm insists that "the frequency and intensity of the desire to share, to give, and to sacrifice are not surprising if we consider the conditions of existence of the human species" and "what is surprising is that this need could be so repressed as to make acts of selfishness the rule in industrial (and many other) societies and acts of solidarity the exception" (Ibid., 106). This belief in humane potentiality is an important element of *The Thousand Autumns*. The comical story in the novel of an ape described like a human, named William Pitt after the British prime minister, is a satire of human beings who are obsessed with owing. Once Pitt steals a human leg, and he keeps it, although people including Jacob try to have the ape return it; he does so only when given a cigarette, a thing that he likes

much more the human leg. Creatures that only acquire one favorite thing after another are apes. On the contrary side, Captain Penhaligon identified Jacob with his own son and could not continue to attack Dejima, in spite of his recognition that he would lose his position as the captain of the *Phoebus* and receive punishment (Mitchell, 2011, 465).[8] Some of purest believers also change their way of thinking and accept what they heretofore did not believe. They abandon what they keep not for another more favorite property but for human life. *The Thousand Autumns*, hence, does not just criticize egoistic people living in the having mode, such as the imperialists, stubborn believers in their faith and knowledge who think little of others, or even a society and a human world full of them. The belief in the potentiality of humankind underlies the novel.

## V. Giving and Loving: Jacob's Life as the Psalter and Orito as bombed Virgin Mary

Life in the being mode, "to share, to give, to sacrifice," must be based on love. According to Fromm, however, love also has two modes: "to have" and "to be." Fromm denies love as a noun, or in having mode, and insists that love is a verb, or in being mode. "In reality," Fromm says, "there exists only the *act of loving*. To love is a productive activity." "It means bringing to life, increasing his/her/its aliveness. It is a process, self-renewing and self-increasing." On the other hand, when love is experienced in the mode of having, "it implies confining, imprisoning, or controlling the object one love" (Fromm, 1976, 44). The partner becomes property. Fromm's discussion of love reminds us of several episodes in *The Thousand Autumns*. For instance, we remember Marinus' recognition of a human being, "The soul is verb" but "not a noun" (Mitchell, 2011, 155). A living human being is, hence, not property to be expressed as a noun and owned. For this reason, Marinus is against the system of owning people, or slavery.

As a basic fact, love between Jacob and Orito underlies *The Thousand Autumns*. They, however, were not able to marry, because they put other's being first. Jacob, realizing he loves Orito, hears Marinus' caution "If you do love her, express your devotion by avoiding her." Jacob thinks "*He's right*" (Ibid. 127).

[8] This is related to the ethics discussed in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and cross-cultural and comparative studies argued in Zhang Longxi's *From Comparison to World Literature*. See Zhang, 2015, 11-29.

Even though Jacob and Orito love each other, Jacob has to return to his home country someday and she cannot accompany him due to Japanese law. Marinus thus suggests that Jacob abandon her, and Jacob agrees. Nevertheless, Jacob always remembers her, and hence he chooses to love her not by having her but by letting her free. As for Orito, she wanted once to be his lover when she was in Shiranui Shrine, thinking that "better a Dejima wife" "protected by a foreigner's money" (Ibid. 212). The midwife almost was able to escape from the shrine; she could have come to Jacob. Orito, however, returns to Shiranui Shrine. She decides to contribute to saving the life of the sisters and their babies when she hears the sound announcing that a pregnant sister has gone into labor. Her sacrifice of herself for her fellows is loving others. Orito does not forget Jacob but continues to remember him. She, however, "wished neither to encourage him nor would his feeling" (Ibid. 216). Orito tries to keep her distance from Jacob, because she loves him, but they must separate sooner or later, due to Japanese law. Love in "to be mode" can be seen in various cases in the novel. For instance, when Jacob asks Ogawa Uzaemon to give a Dutch–Japanese dictionary to Orito, Ogawa asks him "Book is… Love gift?" Jacob answers "Yes, perhaps one could call it a love gift, but if Miss Aibagawa cares nothing for me, it doesn't matter" (Ibid. 151). It is certainly a love gift in Jacob's mind, because he loves her. It is, however, a gift not for him to own her but to help her, or to contribute to her study of medical science in reading books in the Dutch. At the point in contributing to her, it is really a love gift, because "love" originally means "to take care of somebody" and "to please," or deeds that one can do by "giving." Also, in the aspect of giving knowledge, Jacob's action is love. He says, "'Knowledge exists only when it is given …' *Like love*" (Ibid. 499). Jacob's love is a productive activity, or love in "to be" mode; Fromm writes that "Since loving is a productive activity, one can only *stand* in love or *walk* in love; one cannot 'fall' in love, for falling denotes passivity" (Fromm, 1976, 44).

Jacob *stands* in love or *walks* in love. This may be why Jacob leaves Japan in the bracing salt air and passes peacefully away. If Fromm's discussion about "to have" and "to be" can explain *The Thousand Autumns* to some degree, Jacob's life synchronizes with the Psalter, poems that he keeps as a talisman, in Fromm's interpretation. Fromm sees the Psalter that represents a person's change as a result of life in the "to be" mode: "The book of Psalms ends with the group of fifteen psalms that are one great hymn of joy, and the dynamic psalms begin in fear and sadness and end in joy and gladness" (Fromm, 1976, 118). Fromm states that the

psalm "shows the inner struggle within the poet to rid himself of despair and to arrive at hope." A psalm, hence:

> …starts in some despair, changes to some hope, then returns to deeper despair and reacts with more hope; eventually it arrives at the very deepest despair and only at this point is the despair really overcome. The mood has definitely changed, and in the following verses of the psalm there is no experience of despair, except as a receding memory. (Ibid. 163-64).

Certainly, the Psalter synchronizes with Jacob's life in Japan and with the order of the psalms Jacob read.[9] Jacob returns to deeper despair and reacts with more hope. Saying that his life on Dejima "more closely resembled that of a strict boarding school that it did a prison island" (Mitchell, 2011, 506), with memories of his stay in Japan. After his arrival home, he spends a happy life, dying while thinking Orito, as if seeing her as she stands by him dying. There is no experience of despair, except as a receding memory in his life, as the last psalms. Orito also *stands* in love or *walks* in love. Given that she knew that she could not remain with Jacob forever due to Japanese law and she did love him, she acted to separate herself, because she "wished neither to encourage him nor would his feeling" (Ibid. 216). In addition, she devotes herself to save the lives of all sorts of people, even sacrificing herself. Finally, she, in Jacob's mind, stands by him dying. Orito's love of human beings and her activities conjure up images of Virgin Mary. While among Orito's several models is the distinguished midwife Kagawa Shigen, she is surely also modeled on the bombed Virgin Mary in Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki (Figure 3). The figure of the Virgin Mary in the small holy shrine has a black mark of a burn wound on its right cheek due to the

[9] For reference, the episode of Jacob's sleeping with Tsukinami may have a historical source and intertwines with the episode of Jacob in the Netherlands. The text is *Masaki no Katsura* (真佐喜のかつら), 3 volumes of collection of essays written in the Edo period (See *Masaki no Katsura*, National Diet Library Digital Collections, http://www.dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2607679). In one of these essays, a Dutch man on Dejima, who is named Teruyū, loved Ofumi, a prostitute in a prostitute house in Maruyama, Nagasaki, and paid his addresses to her. Ofumi accepted Teruyū's proposal, and secretly went out of Japan to the Netherlands with him: 16 years later, a letter from Ofumi arrived at Japan. The letter said that she had lived in comfort and had a seven-year-old son, but longed for her home town. Ofumi attached her own hair to the letter. The letter ended with her Dutch name, Anna. Anna is the name of Jacob's sweetheart whom he left in the Netherlands. Tsukinami, the prostitute with whom Jacob had a son in Japan, "asked to snip off a lock of his [Jacob's] hair to remember him by" (Mitchell, 2011, 369). *Masaki no Katsura* has intertextuality with *The Thousand Autumns*, with some episodes intertwined.

atomic bomb (Figure 4). In the shrine next to the figure, there is a figure of Virgin Mary without any burn marks (Figure 5). Both figures resemble pictures of Orito's faces and expressions that Jacob draws and are reproduced in the novel (Figure 6) (Ibid., 337), and the pictures of her face show a black burn wound on the exactly same place as that on the figure of atom-bombed Virgin Mary. The Japanese traditional cowl Orito wears is probably the wimple of the figure of Mary.

Figure 3


Figure 4

Figure 5

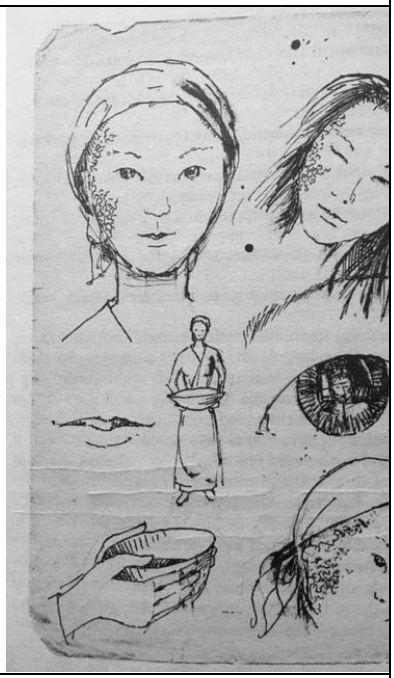

Figure 6

The identification of Orito and the atomic-bombed Virgin Mary tells us important things about Orito, the contents of the novel, and Nagasaki as setting of the novel. First, in the history of Christianity, Japan was dedicated to the Virgin Mary by Francis Xavier, when he arrived in Japan on August 15th, 1549, or the day of Assumption of Mary, to begin the first Christian mission there, he dedicated Japan to Virgin Mary, asking that the Japanese people would have a happy life under Mary's care. It was in this expectation, in the phrase of Luke, that "The Lord God will give him [Jesus] the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1: 32–33). Second, Nagasaki, where there were many Christians and which was once even ceded to the Society of Jesus, was destroyed by the atomic bomb by another Christian country, the U.S. The figure of Virgin Mary in Urakami Cathedral was located only 500 meters from the center of the explosion. Though *The Thousand Autumns* includes many scientists and imperialists who insist on the necessity of war, using science and technology, one of the worst tragedies of science has been the annihilation unleashed by atomic bomb. Orito, whose face is similar to the atom-bombed Virgin Mary, devotes herself to life of others without prejudice of rank or class (remember that Japan of the Edo period put a high value on blood line and had a class system, encompassing warriors, farmers, artisans, and tradesmen), with not only scientific knowledge, rational mind, and technology, but with acceptance of the significance of faith and intelligence of literature. Nagasaki is called the "Prayer of Nagasaki," in distinction from the "Anger of Hiroshima." Orito loves human being, works as an excellent midwife and medical scientist, and as the atomic-bombed Virgin Mary, is an important message to human beings from the past to the present and from the present to the past, a message about the importance of the unity of science and faith and coexistence through love from the Japanese Virgin Mary.

The Virgin Mary's or Orito's love of human life is, of course, not only for the peace of Japan but also for the world, the East and the West. The figure of Virgin Mary without any burn marks is, as a matter of fact, a replica of the bombed Virgin Mary in Guernica Cathedral (Figures 3 and 5). The figure was bombed in the indiscriminant air strike at Guernica in the Spanish Civil War. The figure met the atom-bombed Virgin Mary in 2010, which the fathers and the sisters of Urakami Cathedral brought in the pilgrim to Italy and Spain. Bombed Virgin Mary in the West and the East, the atom-bombed Virgin Mary and the air-struck Virgin Mary, pray for the realization of peace in Guernica and in Nagasaki, and

abreast in Nagasaki.[10] Both the faces of the figures came together as Orito's face. Orito embodies Virgin Mary in the East and the West. At the end of the novel, Orito stands by Jacob dying, puts her palm on his forehead and kisses him between his eyebrows. He is also, in a sense, Jacob in the East and the West; the narrator says about Jacob just before he leaves Japan, "*He is too Japanese to leave*, Jacob knows, *but not Japanese enough to belong*" (Mitchell, 2011, 508). This surely conveys us a wish for peace and a message of the coexistence of human beings, as in the words of Luke that "The Lord God will give him [Jesus] the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

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## Figures

1. *Earth: A Changing Now*. http://www.mrvanduyne.com/change/change.html.
2. "Nagasaki Oranda Yashiki En." 長崎和蘭陀屋舗圖 ["The Place of the Dutch House in Nagasaki"]. Online. (http://www.ris.ac.jp/library/kichou/lime/h047.html).
3-5. The photos were taken by the author in Urakami Cathedral.
6. Mitchell, 2011, 337.

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[10] The two figures have been enshrined abreast in Urakami Cathedral since 2015. It means that Mitchell did not see the figures in the Cathedral when he wrote the novel. Considering the resemblance of the their faces to Orito's one, as mentioned earlier, and the fact that the figure of Virgin Mary in Guernica is famous in the world, we cannot deny the possibilities that Mitchell created Orito, bearing the both figures of Virgin Mary in his mind.

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