

Ordinary Evil in William Trevor's *The Children of Dynmouth*

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William Trevor (1928-) is undoubtedly one of the most acclaimed writers writing in English language today. His reputation especially rests on short stories, but his novels are also powerful evocations of human weakness, solitude, resignation, and their relations to modern society. What follows is an attempt to examine his eighth novel, *The Children of Dynmouth*. Published as early as in 1976, this novel, the winner of the Whitbread award, seems to be a bit obscured by the author's later novels perhaps because of his long career¹. Nevertheless it was selected as one of the books for the Penguin Decade series in 2010 for its apt reflection of the British society in the 1970s, although there are no “power cuts and strikes”, or “[f]eminism”, “prog rock, punk and disco”² in the novel. It is about a quiet seaside town, a modest resort, where nothing extraordinary seems to happen and its respectable inhabitants know each other.

From the landscape of this coastal town, a form of ordinary evil in the figure of the ominous protagonist, Timothy Gedge, arises. He is an eccentric, fifteen-year-old boy, who keeps spying on people in Dynmouth and finds out their secrets, and when he decides to win a contest as a stand-up comedian, he begins to blackmail them simply (so he insists) to get the props on the stage from them. It is “by turns horribly funny and unbearably sad” (Foster vii). In the end, Timothy gives up his plan, and people seem to retrieve everyday life. Summed up like this, it might appear to be a small row in a small town. Reading the novel, however, is a more devastating experience: Many are hurt, and the lives of some are forever changed

under the smooth surface. Timothy remains intact or impervious, and we cannot stop wondering what lies beneath this strange boy. In this paper, we will investigate the nature of evil in Timothy and Dynmouth, and try to probe into the question whether its origin can be identified or any solution can be found, paying attention to Trevor's use of the omniscient narrator, who sometimes gives us a panoramic view and sometimes the voices of characters.

I. The Children of Dynmouth and the Evil Boy

The omniscient narrator opens the novel, by showing us an overview of Dynmouth, in a deliberately plain way, which resembles a guidebook or a documentary.

Dynmouth nestles on the Dorset Coast, gathered about what was once the single source of its prosperity, a small fishing harbour.... Where sheep had grazed on sloping downs a sandpaper factory stood now.... Plastic lampshades were scheduled to be manufactured soon... and there were rumours—denied by the town council—that the Singer Sewing Machine organization had recently looked the town over with a view to developing a plant there. There were three banks in Dynmouth, Lloyd's, Barclay's and the National Westminster. There were municipal tennis-courts beside the Youth Centre, and a Baptist chapel and a Methodist chapel, the Church of England's St Simon and St Jude, the Catholic Queen of Heaven. There were nine hotels and nineteen boarding-houses, eleven public houses and one fish and chip shop, Phyl's Phries,....

A pattern, familiar elsewhere, prevailed in Dynmouth. The houses of the well-to-do, solitary and set in generous gardens, were followed in order of such esteem by semi-detached villas.... dwellings that had a look of economy.... council flats... terraced houses of cramped proportions.... the cottages of Boughs lane, which people said were a disgrace....

Of the town's 4,139 inhabitants half were children....

The children of Dynmouth were as children anywhere. They led double

lives; more regularly than their elders they travelled without moving from a room. They saw a different world; the sun looked different to them, and so did Dynmouth's trees and grass and sand. (1-3)

The narrator continues the depiction of the town for two pages, supplying the reader with the lists of facilities, and with its various effects the passage is remarkable: The narrator takes a panoramic, bird's-eye viewpoint here, keeping the distance from Dynmouth and thus enabling the reader to be an observer, to assume an objective position. At the same time, words like a "pattern, familiar elsewhere", and the "children of Dynmouth were as children anywhere"(3) assures that the story waiting ahead will be something familiar for the reader. The listing with details serves to enhance the realistic atmosphere in the tradition of Robinson Crusoe. In these rather flat descriptions, we can see that Dynmouth is slowly changing from a comfortable small resort into a provincial town with factories. It is a microcosm of British rural society at the time, and it is divided into classes which can be easily discerned by the inhabitants' residences. The panoramic view is repeated several times in the novel, usually to describe the night scene in which each character is alone with his or her concern before or during sleep. The panorama creates one big mood of both inclusion and diversity of a society, in which some are satisfied and others are not.

Toward the end of the quotation above, the narrator departs from the matter-of-fact way of telling to a more literary discourse, musing on the nature of being children. The rate of children in the population is a bit "odd", as Dolores MacKenna mentions (159)³. The definition of child for the narrator is leading "double lives" and seeing a "different world", and while some people grow up and find various jobs in the town, some "couldn't stand the town and dreamed, while still children, of being other people in other places" (3). It is arguable whether all the people who "couldn't stand the town" can be called children, but many characters in Dynmouth have various troubles and some of them have consoling fantasies to avoid them. The Dasses are ashamed of the fact that their only son left home because of their doting love, Commander Abigail hides his tendency of homosexuality, his wife tries to think of herself as a happy woman while enduring him, Miss

Lavant wastes her youth because of an unrequited love for a married man, and Plant the pub owner has affairs with many women including Timothy's mother. Those people surely lead a sort of "double lives", having fear, frustration, and desire, which must be kept secret, and as in the cases of the Abigails, they sometimes hide the secret even from themselves, pretending they have none. To those people, Timothy approaches and makes them confront not only him but their own secret.

As critics have pointed out, evil is a great and recurrent theme for Trevor. MacKenna neatly observes:

Evil fascinates William Trevor. He is particularly interested in its ordinariness, the way in which its perpetrators are largely indistinguishable from the rest of mankind until the moment when they are responsible for some heinous act.... It is not the dramatic events which attract him [Trevor], instead it is the process by which the ordinary becomes extraordinary that claims his attention. (159)

I will borrow MacKenna's expression that Timothy's evil is "ordinary", in the sense that it is common and inconspicuous at first sight, not that it is trivial. I will not, however, use the word in the same way as Hannah Arendt did in speculating on the banality of evil, to point to the thoughtless obedience to an established system or public opinion, which she noted at the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann was expected to have an ability of moral judgment (and he did not exercise it) while Timothy apparently lacks it. Still, Arendt's discussion with Jaspers when she launched out into the examination of evil gives us an interesting clue. Jaspers warned her not to give the perpetrators of evil deeds a "satanic greatness" but "total banality" (Bernstein 214-15), and this seems to feature the evil in today's world.

Timothy annoys people whose secret is derived from dissatisfaction with their lives, but he himself, as a child in Dymmouth, is caught by a dream of becoming another person. He was bored in school with no friends, until a student teacher came with his cannabis and encouraged the pupils with his idealistic view which

strongly reflects the 60s: "Everyone was good at something, he said, nobody was without talent: it was a question of discovering yourself"⁴ (18-19). This teacher, Brehon O'Hennessey, ignites Timothy's ambition, and it is ironical that the teacher seems not to notice Timothy at all before he quickly vanishes from the novel, and pupils other than Timothy do not take him seriously. This suggests the mood of the 70s when the zeal of the 60s still lingered but was beginning to decline. In any case, Timothy decides to win Spot the Talent competition with his bizarre show. The ordinariness of Timothy shows in his dream that he would be a television star, for everyday "as soon as he walked into the empty flat on his return from school he turned on the television and was always pleased to watch whatever there was" (17). As Foster points out, this is an early manifestation of today's "'celebrity culture' and its effect on the marginalized, the disaffected, the disenfranchised" (viii), which shows Trevor's acuteness in reading his time. On the other hand, the contents of his "comedy", to reenact the deeds of a historically famous murderer who killed his three wives, is not ordinary and no one finds it funny or wishes to watch it.

It is another irony that the "boy's real strength lies in the fact that there is a large element of truth in the discreditable stories he threatens to reveal" (MacKenna 160). Not all of Timothy's stories are true, as in the case of the alleged murder of Stephen's mother by her husband. Even in that case, however, there is some sort of truth in what Timothy says, as critics emphasize. Accused by Kate, Timothy "said he only told the truth" (153). Thus people are in their dreams when Timothy comes to shatter their self-deception, while Timothy himself cannot escape from illusion.

II. A Mock Lucifer

The mastery of Trevor is that he makes Timothy both the object of the reader's horror and pity, and thus gives complexity to the novel. Let us examine the horrible side first. The first appearance of Timothy is described through the point of view of Quentin Featherston, the clergyman. Timothy is "a boy with a sharp-boned face and wide, thin shoulders, whose short hair was almost white. His eyes

seemed hungry, giving him a predatory look; his cheeks had a hollowness about them. He was always dressed in the same clothes: pale yellow jeans and a yellow jacket with a zip, and a T-shirt that more often than not was yellow also” (7-8). Although Quentin is a conscientious man, he admits “unfortunately, the boy was increasingly becoming a nuisance to people, endlessly friendly and smiling, keen for conversation” (9), and the clergyman “felt inadequate and for some reason guilty”(79) in front of Timothy. He is later to realize the reason of his guilty feeling: “of all the people of Dynmouth.... [h]e could feel no Christian love for him” (103).

Among Timothy’s targets, the case of the Abigails is impressive. Commander Abigail is a complacent bully, who enjoys embarrassing his wife, whereas Mrs Abigail is an affectionate woman who tries to convince herself that she is happy in her resignation “that marriage was all defeat and victory, and worked better when women were the defeated ones since men apparently could not bear to be and had no philosophy for that condition” (59). Timothy helps them to earn pocket money, and is invited to supper in Chapter 3. Getting drunk on the beer given by the Commander, and after ranting about many despicable scenes he has seen in Dynmouth, Timothy discloses before the couple that the Commander is a homosexual going after cub scouts, and the evening becomes a total mess. The next day, during a most tense discussion in which the wife declares divorce, Timothy comes and rings the doorbell to ask for the Commander’s tweed suit to wear on stage. The Commander shouts at Timothy who smiles and says, “We’ll keep the secret”(112).

‘You bloody young pup!’ screamed the Commander.

There was silence then. A door opened in a bungalow across the avenue. A figure stood in the rectangle light, attracted by the noise. The Commander was quietly weeping.

‘It’s all right, Gordon,’ she said in a flat, emotionless voice. ‘It’s all right, dear.’

She tried to close the door but he was grasping the edge of it, supporting himself against it. He moaned and sobbed, clinging to the door. He said he thought he would commit suicide.

The boy didn't go away. She couldn't understand why he didn't turn and go
 'I was wondering about the cash that was owing,' the boy said. 'I was passing and I looked in. I was wondering if you'd agree to loan me a suit.' He smiled at her, and then he mentioned the money and suit again She banged the door After a moment the bell rang again, but this time neither of them answered it.

He didn't mind. It wasn't polite of them not to answer the door, knowing that he was standing there, but it didn't really matter. Tomorrow or the next day he'd call in again (112-13)

The last part of the citation is told in free indirect discourse of Timothy, and it is shockingly cold, lacking understanding or human feeling. Timothy knows that disclosure of homosexuality is not only a great shame for the Commander, but also a great tribulation for Mrs Abigail, but he does not care. Trevor takes many characters' viewpoints, but seldom Timothy's. In these rare occasions, his feelings and emotions are hardly described, as we see in the example above. We just find his plan and his determination to carry it out.

Timothy's all-pale-yellow looks are strange indeed, and Kristin Morrison, who points out the image of the garden as paradise (which is often lost) in Trevor's works, does not fail to notice the Christian connotation and argues that Timothy is "the wily Lucifer, angel of light" (Morrison 149), in the scene where he pesters twelve-year-old Stephen and Kate in the garden of Sea House, the "handsomest dwelling in Dynmouth, . . . famous for the azaleas of its garden"(2)⁵.

Although Morrison only picks up this most conspicuous scene, this image of the devil and the garden is carefully prepared from the earlier part of the novel. In Chapter 1, we are told about Timothy's miserable upbringing, which is fairly depressing. Then the atmosphere dramatically changes in Chapter 2, whose focus is no longer Timothy, but Stephen and Kate on the train. They have been friends, and now his father and her mother are newly married. For romantic Kate who "believed, privately, that she loved Stephen"(30), it is "an idyll" (39), a beginning of complete happiness. The two children in the nice uniforms of their boarding schools, having tea with delicate sweets, are clearly well-off. Chapter 2 ends when

the children arrive home, Sea House, after the narrator's describing the beauty and peace of its garden for two pages. Kate's idyllic house with its big gardens makes a striking contrast to Timothy's choking flat. The children of Sea House are set forward as the opposite of Timothy.

At the end of Chapter 3, Mr Blakey, the quiet and reliable gardener of Sea House, awakes in a stormy night and checks the house to see whether windows and doors are all right. From the dark drawing-room, he tries to look into the garden:

He strained his eyes, peering into the dark for the familiar shapes of trees and shrubs, wondering what damage was being wrought. But when a shaft of moonlight unexpectedly flashed it wasn't damage to his garden that startled his attention. A figure moved beneath the monkey-puzzle. A child's face smiled at the house. (68)

In this scene, Timothy (although the chapter ends here and the reader is suspended and not assured that it is him until forty pages later, the typical smile makes the reader guess) looks eerily bizarre, as if he were a supernatural thing ready to invade the garden⁶. He is even reduced to a face, a terrible cherub, without a visible body. This is the first time Timothy is associated with Sea House and its residents, and it seems an altogether unexpected combination.

When Timothy talks with children in the garden, in order to borrow the wedding dress of Stephen's dead mother, it is seen by the caring housekeeper, Mrs Blakey, and thus the clearly demonic image reaches its culmination, as we see in the following passage.

He was so very familiar on the streets of the town, with that zipped yellow jacket and his jeans, yet he looked like something from another world in the garden. He didn't belong in the gardens, any more than he belonged in the company of two small children [Stephen and Kate]. His presence puzzled her beyond measure.

"A person has temptations. You could argue that, Stephen."

It seemed to them that he said anything that came into his head. (121)

III. A Victim of Modern Society

Changing perspective, we can see Timothy in a realistic light, rather than a symbolical one. Being “a latch-key child” (9), Timothy is completely forsaken by his family: His father left home soon after he was born, his mother and sister always neglect him, and he knows if his parents had “taken precautions” (56), he would not have existed in the first place. As I have observed above, however, we are not given Timothy’s feelings but just the situation as it is, as in a hardboiled narrative.

As Gregory A. Schirmer has noticed, all of Timothy’s targets belong to a higher social class than himself, and his act speaks of “his need, conscious or otherwise, to exact some kind of revenge on the [class] system that has crippled him”, for he is “locked in a fixed grid that points with deadening certainty to a life-time of working-class drudgery” (Schirmer 65). At “eleven or twelve” Timothy thinks that finding a job at the sandpaper factory is “the best bet” (18) for him, before he meets the teacher, O’Hennessey.

For Mrs Abigail, Timothy used to be not what he is. When she first knew him, he was surely “different from other children”, but “Mrs Abigail found him a delightful little boy, and in the transformation that had since taken place it sometimes seemed to her that a person had been lost”(42-43). So Mrs Abigail has a hope that Timothy might be a good boy again, which she abandons after his terrible disclosure about her husband. Unknown to her, however, Timothy likes her scent, for it “was a lovely smell, like a rose garden”, and “for a moment he thought she was maybe going to kiss him” (45), although she did not. This is one of the rare occasions where Timothy’s loneliness becomes tangible, and we can find again the image of the garden from which he is expelled. Appropriately enough, his sister who always ignores him is named Rose Ann. Considering his miseries, we are inclined to see Timothy more sympathetically. But then his lack of feeling toward Mrs Abigail on the day following his disclosure is all the more shocking. The reason she decides to shut him out is this callousness rather than the disclosure itself.

Another object of Timothy’s subtle attachment is Miss Lavant, who once gave

him some sweets on the street. When drunk at the Abigail's house, he insists that Mrs Abigail and Miss Lavant should be sisters, which suggests that both women have special meaning to him as mother figures. At the end of the novel Timothy cherishes a new illusion, a Freudian family romance, that he is an illegitimate child of Miss Lavant, in place of the dream of becoming a TV star.

The only people who like Timothy's idea of acting out a murder are the twin girls at the rectory, too small to understand its meaning. But their laughter pleases Timothy, who imagines the applause from the crowd, showing the twins "the most marvelous smile they'd ever seen, the biggest in the world" (106). When Quentin comes to his dim flat, however, to confront him and persuade him to stop harassing people, Timothy agrees and gives his spoils back to their owners. "To his [Quentin's] surprise he saw Timothy nodding at him through the dimness" (176). Timothy is full of resignation then, saying that when he got the wedding dress of Stephen's mother at last, he thought his stage performance "had been a load of rubbish" (177). He adds: "Opportunity won't knock, sir. I'll get work in the sand-paper factory" (177). Typically, this scene is told from the point of view of Quentin, and we are not told about Timothy's interior feeling.

Timothy seems to be a sociopath, and that is why his feelings are not described even when the narrative is told from his viewpoint. Still, as in the odd scene of his sniffing of Mrs Abigail, Timothy's mind is sometimes communicated to the reader in an oblique way. During the novel there are many scenes of confrontation between Timothy and other characters. Toward the climax of the novel, one with Kate, who is furious at him, is of interest here. Kate tells him that "he was possessed by devils". (153)

'Devils?' he said.

'You don't know what you're doing. You don't know the unhappiness you cause.'

He shook his head, he didn't smile, as she'd expected he might. He said he only told the truth.... He said:

'At half past eleven on a Thursday morning I had the idea in Tussaud's.'

He was talking nonsense. He was mocking and pretending, even though he

wasn't grinning any more. His act with the brides [murdered] in the bath was an excuse. His wanting the wedding-dress was an excuse for saying all the things he'd said. Nothing was as it appeared to be with him.

'Devils?' he said again, 'D'you think I have devils, Kate?'

She didn't reply....

'Devils,' he murmured, as if the sound of the word pleased him. He'd thought he'd die himself, he said when they came to the white iron gate, he'd thought he'd die when he'd heard the woman's [Stephen's mother's] scream, sharp as a blade above the whine of the wind and rain. Kids should be protected from stuff like that, he said. You read it in the papers: it could ruin you for life, witnessing a murder. (153-154)

For Kate, whose anger is expressed in FID here, Timothy's explanation that he had got the idea of stand-up comedy while in Madame Tussaud's is "nonsense" and has nothing to do with her current accusations about him, but Timothy in fact traces his own thought: The memory of witnessing Stephen's mother's fall from the cliff, revived by his visit to Tussaud's, incites him to choose the subject, the murder of a wife by the husband. Although it turns out later that Stephen's father was on the train and not in Dymmouth when his wife died, it is true that she was troubled by his infidelity (and Timothy saw their quarrel), so that her death might be a suicide rather than an accident. To Quentin Timothy insists "I'd call it a murder, Mr Feather. If the man was on two thousand trains I'd call it murder" (175).

Besides, Timothy does not listen to Kate and seems as if absorbed in his own thought, repeating the word "the devil", which Kate used only once in the beginning of their talk. Timothy's last words above refer not to the damage done to Stephen's mother but that done to himself. He says nothing sympathetic for the woman in this scene nor in the later scene where he takes up this matter again with Quentin. He just reports what he saw, but the pain, sorrow, and indignation are unmistakably there. It is as if Timothy's loneliness is projected to the woman and merged into hers. "She was crying and moaning, sir.... with nobody giving a blue damn about her.... They [Stephen's father and Kate's mother] pushed her,

Mr. Feather. D'you get what I mean? She was fed up with the carry-on" (175). This sounds as if Timothy is talking about himself, only his plight is too deep to be released directly as his own. When he says "Kids should be protected", it should not be from witnessing a murder, but from the cold world; that "could ruin you for life".

IV. "A Pattern of Greys"

As we have seen, Timothy's evil is complex; he is distorted by his environments, such as the lack of affection and the restriction of social class. In that sense he is a victim. In turn, his incomprehension and lack of consideration even for those who care for him are monstrous.

One of the wicked effects Timothy causes is a chain of malice and hatred. Mrs Abigail, who has been so kind to people around her, calls slow Miss Poraway "a fool" (101) during their charity work and makes her cry. Similarly Stephen, told by Timothy that his father killed his mother in order to remarry Kate's mother, becomes upset and suspicious. He shuts himself away, avoiding everyone, and says many cruel things to Kate, including "I don't like you" and "You're ugly . . . unattractive" (150-151). Even when his father's alibi is proved, as both Kate and Quentin know, the children "would never see their parents in quite the same way again" (181).

Above all, Timothy's effect on Kate is striking. Rejected by Stephen, Kate's dream of an "idyll" is destroyed. "If he were possessed by devils, Kate thought, it would be a simple explanation" (133). After brooding about it for some time, she is convinced that God Himself tells her "she was right" (163), and comes to Quentin to ask for an exorcism, saying "I promised God" (169). Of course Quentin rejects the idea of bargaining with God, but he cannot save Kate and feels himself quite powerless. Kate screams at him, "He [Timothy] shouldn't be alive", and when stopped by Quentin, replies; "I'm telling you the truth" (171). Kate's insistence on truth grotesquely mirrors Timothy's. From her first appearance in the novel, it is stressed that Kate is an imaginative child. A teacher writes about her that "Kate's imagination can be fired" (29). We can compare the expression which

alludes to Timothy's fantasy about his stage performance, which appears just two pages earlier: "The applause and the laughter gave off warmth, like a fire" (27). The fire image predicts their resemblance, and Kate is not so different from Timothy in her obstinate fanaticism.

Quentin's problem is twofold: First, he cannot explain Timothy's existence. Second, he cannot save Timothy, even though during his last confrontation with Timothy he sincerely comes to want to help him. He tries to persuade Kate, saying that "there was a pattern of greys, half-tones and shadows" (171) and there is no true hero or villain.

The high drama of casting out devils would establish Timothy Gedge as a monster, which would be nice for everyone because monsters were a species on their own. But Timothy Gedge couldn't be dismissed as easily as that.... Timothy Gedge was as ordinary as anyone else, but the ill fortune of circumstances or nature made ordinary people eccentric and lent them colour in greyness. (171)

Kate, however, does not like the idea and "he saw everything he'd said being summarily dismissed" (172) as the gibberish of a useless clergyman. Thinking about Timothy on his own, Quentin realizes that the existence of Timothy is the most horrible thing in Dynmouth, "a small-scale catastrophe, quite ordinary although it seemed not to be", because it is "just bad luck", and "God permits chance" (184). The reader, along with Kate, is tempted to consider Timothy a devil, and the impression is supported by the imagery in the novel as we have seen, which makes the novel artistically richer. But Trevor at the same time warns the reader through Quentin not to stop there and regard him simply as a different "species on their own".

While Quentin cannot see the way out, his wife, Lavinia Featherston, takes a different view. Discussing Timothy with her husband, she does not argue against him, but when alone, she thinks it over and then "was certain he was wrong, certain that it was not just bad luck in a chancy world" (186). "Lavinia saw a spark in the gloom. It was she, not Quentin, who might somehow blow hope

into hopelessness. It was she who one day, in the rectory or the garden, might penetrate the shell” (192) of Timothy. Critics have given much attention to her hope, while they are not optimistic about Timothy, who is trapped in a new fantasy of being an adopted child. Schirmer argues that Lavinia can see “the responsibility of people, not God” while Quentin “cannot see it because of his religious beliefs” (71). His argument is convincing in emphasizing the social factors of Timothy’s situation, but I would not underestimate the significance of Quentin’s struggle, because he is not determined in his “beliefs” and continues thinking. His vision about Timothy’s future is bleak, but his seriousness to help Timothy is as sincere as his wife’s. He himself offers a ‘greyness’ between Kate’s fixation and Lavinia’s hope.

Quentin’s uncertainty is also interesting when we examine the novel’s narrator. Formally the narrator is omniscient, sometimes taking the panoramic view. But unlike the God-like narrators in the nineteenth century, the narrator of this novel does not give us the important feelings of his “children” or explain them in detail. Timothy’s interior world is mostly unknown, and similarly we cannot know what exactly Commander Abigail did beyond acceptable exchanges with young boys when he looks back on his past, because of his staunch repression (94). The narrator may be omniscient, but the reader is in no position to be sure, as in the relationship between God and Quentin.

At the end of the first section of this paper, I have observed that Timothy discloses the truth which middle-class people hide under their mask of respectability. Now the text invites us to examine the nature of truth of Timothy more closely. It is true that his existence as a whole is an accusation against the hypocrisy and helplessness of the society, but what about his words? Critics, along with Quentin, agree to accept the claim that Stephen’s father killed his wife in some sense, but Timothy does not discriminate between a criminal murder and moral sin. The fact that we tend to consider the latter as grave as the former (or even graver) makes us take a harsh view toward Stephen’s father. But we have to remember, however morally responsible, he did not physically push his wife off the cliff. This is a subtle

but important difference. Moreover, the shock afflicted on him when his wife died, which is described through his son's (then innocent) viewpoint and the fact that he secretly keeps her wedding-dress in a trunk and brings it to Sea House shows that he has his remorse, his greyness. Timothy, like Kate, fails to see the greyness and ruthlessly discloses the bare "truth" without half-tones and shadows.

Timothy's last fantasy about his birth makes a new turn: it is not true at all. The dream of becoming a TV star is similarly implausible, but at least it is concerned with a future, while the family romance is something which never happened in the unchangeable past⁷. In this way, Timothy makes a new dangerous step toward "the father of lies". But as we have seen in the earlier part of this paper, evil today lacks demonic grandeur. Timothy is monstrous, but pitiful too, ordinary in our society. He fails to grow up, and will keep seeing "a different world". Unable to get out, he will remain one of the children of his town, like many others around the globalized world today.

Notes

- 1 Symptomatically, a recent anthology of criticisms, *William Trevor: Revaluations*, rarely mentions *The Children of Dynmouth* and focuses mainly on the later novels and stories.
- 2 Attributes characterizing the 1970s which are listed on the back cover of the Penguin Decade edition of *The Children of Dynmouth*.
- 3 MacKenna says this "might alert the reader to expect a similar peculiarity or unbalance" in *Dynmouth*. According to the census, the national average of rate of people under eighteen in the UK in 1976 is 29.0%.
- 4 In his introduction to the Penguin edition, Roy Foster notes Trevor's "Irish sensibility"(vi) in that O'Hennessey is the only Irish character in the novel.
- 5 Yellow is also an offensive colour in the Christian tradition, and often used to paint Judas' garment. See Tokui.
- 6 This scene also reminds us of a scene in *Frankenstein*, where the creature is looking into the house, grinning to his creator's disgust.
- 7 There is a possibility that Timothy gets this idea of being a son of Miss Lavant as a result of an adultrous but romantic love from his clandestine viewing of Stephen's father and Kate's mother, since other affairs Timothy had seen before lack a serious and romantic aspect.

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