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ダニエル・エヴァンズの “The Office of Historical Corrections” に見る歴史の修正

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抄録

アフリカ系アメリカ人作家はこれまで、官製の歴史を創作の中で加筆・修正してきたが、新進作家ダニエル・エヴァンズ(Danielle Evans)は短編 “The Office of Historical Corrections” (2020)の中で、ふたりの歴史家にある事件の真相を掘り起こさせ、記念碑を修正させている。その真相は、「ワン・ドロップ・ルール」の実情を問うことになり、その結果致命的な反応を招くことになる。

『1619 プロジェクト』(*The 1619 Project*, 2019)は、アフリカ人が奴隷化された1619年にアメリカの建国が始まったとして歴史を修正し、学会やジャーナリズムを巻き込む大論争を引き起こした。この現象をふまえ、本発表では、歴史の修正を分断された現代アメリカの表象として位置づけ、創作を超えて現実社会で行われた修正がどこへ向かうのかを、エヴァンズの作品の結末に注目して論じる。

アウトライン

I. 背景—歴史の修正にあたる事例

II. エヴァンズの修正の特徴

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引用

① “But monuments must change and they’re changing, and it’s taken a creative approach to do it, but I think now the season is ripe and ready to change the narrative using art.” (“Michelle Browder, Mothers of Gynecology”)

② There is no place you or I can go, to think about or not think about, to summon the presences of, or recollect the absences of slaves; nothing that reminds us of the ones who made the journey and of those who did not make it. There is no suitable memorial or plaque or wreath or wall or park or skyscraper lobby. There’s no 300-foot tower. There’s no small bench by the road. There is not even a tree scored, an initial that I can visit or you can visit in Charleston or Savannah or New York or Providence, or better still, on the banks of the Mississippi. And because such a place doesn’t exist (that I know of), the book had to. (“A Bench by the Road”)

③-1. The year [of 1619] white Virginians first purchased enslaved Africans, the start of American slavery, and institution so influential and corrosive that it both helped create the nation and nearly



led to its demise, is indisputably a foundational historical date. And yet I'd never heard of it before. (*The 1619 Project*, xix)

③-2. I made a simple pitch to my editors: *The New York Times Magazine* should create a special issue that would mark the four-hundredth anniversary by exploring the unparalleled impact of African slavery on the development of our country and its continuing impact on our society. The issue should bring slavery and the contributions of Black Americans from the margins of the American story to the center, where they belong, by arguing that slavery and its legacy have profoundly shaped modern American life, even as that influence had been shrouded or discounted. (xxii 下線部発表者)

④ For years, this had been openly bragged about, a warning to anyone who might try it next. By the '60s it had become a quiet open secret, and then a nearly lost memory, until it was rediscovered by a graduate student in the late '90s doing archive work with the local newspaper. The result of the ensuing town meetings and public shame was a memorial plaque that went up at the former site of the building where Josiah died. ("The Office of Historical Corrections," 191)

⑤ The local black newspaper at the time could publish only sporadically. The archives are well kept now, she said, but they were not for a long time, so there are gaps in the record. "Another writer might fill them in," she said. "But I'm interested in what we fill in without knowing, what we choose to remember, and our external selves—what story we choose to tell about our family and our country, because we don't have the information or because we are ignoring it, and how we are revealing the version of ourselves that we want to be." ("In Taut Stories")

⑥ "IN 1937 AFIRICAN AMERICAN SHOPKEEPER JOSIAH WYNSLOW WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED WHEN A MOB INTEDING TO KEEP CHERRY MILL WHITE BURNED DOWN THE ORIGINAL BUILDING WHILE HE WAS INSIDE. IN FACT, HE ESCAPED WITH HIS LIFE, THOUGH THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS ESCAPE REMAIN UNCLEAR. CITIZENS INVOLVED IN THE BURNING OF THE STORE AND THE MURDER OF JOSIAH WYNSLOW WERE NEVER CHARGED OR PUNISHED IN ANY WAY, THOUGH MANY PUBLICLY GRAGGED ABOUT THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CRIME. GEORGE SCHMIDT TOOK OVER THE PROPERTY AFTER THE MURDER AND SOLD IT AT A PROFIT IN 1959. ELLA MAE SCHMIDT IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN JOSIAH WYNSLOW'S BIOLOGICAL SISTER, PASSING AS WHITE FOR SO LONG THAT HER OWN CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN NEVER KNEW THE TRUTH OF HER CONNECTION TO JOSIAH OR THEIR OWN ANCESTRY."

"Say it again," said White Justice, cocking the gun.

"You heard me," said Genevieve.

"I'm not a nigger," said White Justice.

"Neither am I," said Genevieve.

I closed my eyes. I didn't know what I was waiting for to know that I could open them, and then I heard the clear crack of the gunshot. Rain, I wanted to think. Thunder. But I know what I'd heard, and I kept my eyes closed.

("The Office," 264)

⑦-1. Our work was to protect the historical record, not to pick fights (guideline 1) or correct people's

readings of current news (guideline 2). (165)

⑦-2. Our purpose was limited to correction of the historical record, which our mission defined as events at least one year old (guideline 2, part b). We were to make every effort to avoid or back away from the kind of confrontation likely to escalate to force or police intervention (guideline 1). (173)

⑦-3. ...guideline 6: we do not posit certainty where the facts are actually murky or disputed, or intervene in a dispute over something so trivial that the relevant information cannot be verified except by weighing the accounts of the disputing parties. (177)

⑧-1. “You’re sending me so if there’s news footage of an agent taking down a memorial sign with Genevieve screaming in the background, it’s two Black women yelling at each other and not a white guy in a suit tearing down the evidence of a crime?” (193)

⑧-2. Cassandra whom the director trusted to fix Genevieve’s missteps on behalf of the U.S. government. (187-188)

⑨ *Genevieve* said in our first office meeting during her first week that we were tiptoeing around history to the point that we might as well be lying to people. She wanted a guideline emphasizing that lies of omission were still lies. (183)

⑩ ...Genevieve’s most persistent and controversial grievance was the passive voice atrocity: wherever there was a memorial, she wanted to name not just the dead but the killers. She corrected every memorial to lynching, every note about burnt schoolhouses and destroyed business districts, murdered leaders and bombed churches, that failed to say exactly who had done it. She thought the insistence on victims without wrongdoers was at the base of the whole American problem, the lie that supported all the others. (186 下線部発表者)

⑪ It’s a genre that has historically had the potential to point out the absurdity of racism—we have this whole system of race-based oppression, and yet racists often can’t tell who’s “really” Black—but also the potential to, intentionally or not, affirm racism by centering characters who identify with whiteness.

The genre has the potential to be an affirmative case for Blackness—an argument that what’s lost in passing is greater than what’s gained, even when the structural stakes are clearly high—but also has the potential to give the most voice to characters who reject or disdain their own communities and parrot stereotypes. So, I’m interested in the passing narrative’s legacy as a fraught genre, and in the way that savvy writers have navigated those fraught possibilities.

(“Microreview and Interview”)

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