

REALISM, TRUTH-TELLING, AND THE SYMPATHETIC IMAGINATION:  
THE QUESTION OF FIGURING OTHERNESS IN GEORGE ELIOT AND J. M. COETZEE

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the ethical meaning of the literary, sympathetic imagination in the novel by reading George Eliot and J. M. Coetzee. They share the idea that the novel can convey a fictional truth and, at the same time, contribute for the expansion of sympathy. My research undertakes the theoretical project of asking, first, how the two writers' engagements with alterity proceed to the question of literary forms that contain their perspective on otherness and, secondly, whether the work of sympathy through the literary imagination has some limits in figuring otherness.

Focusing on the ethical account of the novel in terms of the sympathetic imagination, the dissertation articulates the distinction between the writers' self-consciousness about truth-telling and its literary representation in the novel. George Eliot's *Adam Bede* shows eclectic aspects of the Victorian realism in which the aesthetic representation of eighteenth-century English country life, particularly for the effect of sympathy, depends on some literary conventions including tragedy. My research analyzes that Eliot's perspectival view in creating the landscape of sympathy in her country novels necessarily uses stereotyped images and unfolds ideological inclinations. Like George Eliot, Coetzee's strong self-consciousness about truth-telling yields confessional voices in his novels. The issue of authorial sincerity is examined particularly in his memoirs. In the context of apartheid South Africa, Coetzee's struggle with truth-telling and alterity in literature has a significance. The animal issue and taste discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation testify that figuring otherness is related to the matter of the sympathetic imagination, which implies a social feeling that is based on the concept of inter-subjectivity.

## DEDICATION

To my family,  
my wife,  
and Isaac

## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

J. M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) presents some interesting issues about the literary imagination and its ethical characteristics, although an ethical undertone in fact runs throughout his oeuvre. One of these issues is sympathy for others, which may be provoked by reading or writing a fiction, since the action "takes us out of ourselves, into other lives" (*Elizabeth Costello* 23). Of course, the notion of imagining others by means of literature is neither so unusual nor modern. But *Elizabeth Costello* is radical in that, in this fiction, the limit of the literary, sympathetic imagination has no limit or bound, especially when that imagination is brought to bear on sympathy for animals. For Coetzee, the sympathetic imagination is also at the root of the ideology of realism. And this mode is said by the heroine Costello to be "pioneered by Daniel Defoe" (4).

My selection and comparison of George Eliot and J.M. Coetzee in this dissertation has its basis in the extended as well as time-ridden concept of realism. Rather than strictly applying to my consideration of Eliot's and Coetzee's work the meaning of literary realism grounded in the period with which it has been associated—the nineteenth century—what I try to examine by considering the works of Eliot and Coetzee is how this concept touches upon their common concern with reality and its truthful representation. More importantly, what makes me link them in this research is not only the strong self-consciousness underlying their formal, epistemological experiments in the service of truth in fiction, but also their deep commitment to moral imagination in the novel. Derek Attridge reads J. M. Coetzee's fictions as "a continued strenuous enterprise in figuring alterity" ("Literary Form and the Demands of Politics" 249). This

statement helps us find a common ground between Eliot and Coetzee in this dissertation, because it almost corresponds to George Levine's critique that "otherness is at the heart of the enterprise of Victorian literature" (3), and his comment that "No writer [other than George Eliot] had a clearer sense of how extraordinarily difficult it was to tell the truth" (*Realism, Ethics and Secularism* 11). All these comments indicate that, for both writers, exploring the limits of representation is linked to a radical approach to the unknowable reality of others. One of the most important thematic correspondences between George Eliot and J. M. Coetzee in this dissertation is their interest in alterity, which ultimately leads to the question of how fiction could be able to create a medium that represents others truthfully.

This dissertation purports to establish a kind of dialogic inter-relationship between Coetzee and Eliot by way of the concepts of realism and of the sympathetic imagination; that is, this project is an attempt to read Eliot via Coetzee and Coetzee via Eliot. While the point of departure in this dissertation is literary realism, a careful treatment of the term would be necessary following its different contexts. For example, when Eliot criticizes Charles Dickens in her 1856 essay by saying that his description of "external traits" lacks "psychological character" and when she instead emphasizes the need of "the awakening of social sympathies" in the novel ("The Natural History of German Life" 110-11), what she regards as "truthful" representation in art does not follow the practices of mimetic realism and naturalism in the Continental style. Eliot's version of realism in *Adam Bede* (1859), for example, rather has an element of tragedy which explains her specific choice of literary conventions.

As a proponent of modernism, Coetzee takes a more critical stance on the conventions of realism. In fact, some of his novels are read as allegories and for that reason, for the absence of realist commitment to apartheid South Africa, he has received harsh criticism including from

Nadine Gordimer. Whether this kind of criticism is appropriate or not, it should be noted that in Coetzee's case, his novel writing under the censorship system of apartheid could function as an alternative to historical writing. Salman Rushdie, recollecting Indira Gandhi's Emergency, once said that "the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth" and "literature can, and perhaps must, give the lie to official facts" ("Imaginary Homelands" 14). In a similar vein, Coetzee in the article "The Novel Today" (1987) argues that "in South Africa today," there is a tendency to "subsume the novel under history" (2). In order to keep the value of "a greater truth," however, Coetzee claims that the novel or "storytelling" can be in a "rivalry" with official history.

In regard to Coetzee's contrast between history and the novel, therefore, I propose the concept of "truth-telling" as a substitute for realism, since the latter evidently denotes an aesthetic, fictional frame in representation while the selected forms of "truth-telling" can be varied according to each writer's conceptual understanding of reality. Although realism as discussed here might designate a literary mode showing affirmatively the connection between reality and text, the connection does not mean that literary realism is in itself a mode of "truth-telling" in its pure sense. What should be noted is that a distinction exists between writers' self-consciousness about truth-telling in fictions and the literary, conventional application of truth-telling in their novels.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, I choose the theme of "truth-telling" in comparing both

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Michael McKeon's research in *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987) shows that the claim to truth in the early novels was a very central issue of debate among literates in the eighteenth century. In the rise of the English novel, McKeon puts that the authorial "sincerity" (85) that guarantees the truthfulness of a fiction, as a moral virtue which consolidates the authentic voice of an individual experience, functioned as an essential factor distinguishing the genre of the novel from that of romance. Therefore, what is indispensable for the veracity of writers is their positive interest in the reality that underlies scientific observations. But confidence in an individual experience is one thing, and the reliability of its narration is another. This means that even "exhaustive factuality" (413) in the novel could be read merely as a device for "naïve empiricism," and so there were some skeptical views about the novel's claim of its truthfulness, as shown in Henry Fielding's works.



George Eliot's and Coetzee's treatment of confessional voice in the novel. As their strong interests in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) testify, in dealing with the question of truth-telling in literary representation, the identification of a writer's sincerity and authenticity is finally concerned with a judgment about truth-telling. That means, for both writers, that if the novel can work as a medium for our expansion of sympathy for others, then how the novel meets the requirements of truth-telling for others without self-deception becomes serious ethical issue.

Inspired by Coetzee's questioning of Western realism in *Elizabeth Costello*, this dissertation will also provide a retrospective point of view on the ideologies of George Eliot's Victorian realism. Interestingly, the underlying features of morality and idealism in Victorian fictions, or at least in Eliot's fiction, offer an opportunity to discuss the ethics of representation, which this dissertation aims to do. That is, this dissertation pivots upon a question of whether the work of sympathy through the literary imagination has some limits in figuring otherness. In examining Eliot and Coetzee together, the dissertation will undertake the theoretical project of asking how the two writers' struggles with alterity proceed to the question of literary forms that contain their perspective on otherness.

In the first chapter "Literary Realism and the Landscape of Sympathy" I analyze George Eliot's early novel *Adam Bede* (1859) by explicating the notion of the "landscape" of sympathy and its relation to George Eliot's ideas on literary realism. My focus is on the necessity of the landscape of sympathy in Eliot's novels in order to clarify how this concept works not only at the level of aesthetics and ethics but also with respect to ideological implications. George Eliot's realism mediated as it is with moral visions and with the projection of memories onto the past landscape makes us question the validity of the narrator's claim of offering "a faithful account" (*Adam Bede* 175). My argument is that since the "truthful" representation of the reality of

country life comes to terms with some purposive effects of tragedy used in this work, a revision of our understanding of literary realism as used by Eliot is necessary. And the fact that Eliot works with two meanings of sympathy in this novel—taking it as a moral value on the one hand and as a quality of the literary imagination on the other—adds to a more complex conception of realism.

In regards to inherent complications in George Eliot's literary realism, U. C. Knoepfelmacher observes that "Instead of faithfully copying the circumstances of external life, George Eliot arranged reality to make it substantiate her moral values" (1). If so, judging the extent to which Eliot's mimetic representation of country life is really truthful or not must be a secondary issue, since, as Jonathan Loesberg argues, "what need" Eliot's "realist tragedy" of *Adam Bede* serves is a key point in understanding Eliot's concern of realism ("Aesthetics, Ethics, and Unreadable Acts in George Eliot" 125). Considering the fact that an "ideal" purpose intervenes in the plot or characterization of "real" people of the novel, I attend to Raymond William's discussion in *The Country and the City* in which he points out a kind of parallax view from the writer in which the past is visualized from the interest of the current standpoint.

My second argument in the chapter is that although a stereotyped version of a pastoral life in eighteenth-century England in *Adam Bede* is in itself problematic for its artificiality, the stereotyping is an inevitable element that constitutes George Eliot's country landscape. As E. H. Gombrich explains in *Art and Illusion* (1960), what can be seen, in paintings, is what the beholder's projection of memory onto an object leads him or her to expect. This projection of memory is visible in George Eliot's depiction of country life.

In thinking about Eliot, we must also consider the way the illusory concept embedded in the notion of sympathy requires a corroboration. The illusion of sympathy is ultimately

concerned with one's imaginative identification with someone else's situation. According to Adam Smith's argument in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), the act of sympathy is the *representation* of a spectacle, like a suffering subject, in the mind of a spectator. When George Eliot appeals to common experiences and memories in *Adam Bede*, what matters is that the sharing of these experiences and memories depends on the evocation of sympathy and nostalgia, about which we also read in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Daniel Deronda*. In thinking about memories of the past, the chapter considers the way the revisited past, which consists of a selected memory, provides ideological as well as historical references which make possible a collective perspective on the country about which Eliot is writing. That is, the sympathy produced by the function of memories in Eliot is connected with her consideration of the constant existence of a "tie" or "web" within a community, and this concept of interconnectedness is built on an ideological landscape of the country. I discuss first George Eliot's inventive "perspectivism" in the country novel, which presupposes a sort of "distance" and means a kind of "inversion" of reality (Karatani Kojin) that is internalized in her literary realism of which, I think, Eliot is fully aware. Later in the chapter I criticize how Eliot's description of the English country life, with its theme of the sympathetic imagination, is linked to her ideological inclination which is implicated in British Nationalism.

The main argument in the next chapter "J.M. Coetzee's Question of Truth-Telling and Otherness" is partially inspired by Jonathan Lamb's argument: "Throughout Coetzee's fictions there is evident his preoccupation with the problem of truth and how it might be elicited and stated" (*J. M. Coetzee's Austerities* 178). Like Lamb, I am preoccupied in this chapter with Coetzee's experiments with "truth-telling" in his fictions. I argue that this matter is related to his ideas about otherness because the act of "telling" implies a dialogic relationship between "I" and

“the other,” and so, fundamentally, a dialogic truth. In using the term “a dialogic truth,” I refer to Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1984). According to Bakhtin, every individual has its own voice that cannot be reduced to secondhand discourse by others. “In a human being,” Bakhtin writes, “there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse” (58). He continues, “The truth about a man in the mouths of others, not directed to him dialogically and therefore a *secondhand* truth, becomes a *lie* degrading and deadening him [...]” (59, italics original). For Bakhtin, the truthful understanding of a human being requires a dialogical relationship and always brings to light the ethical dimension of human dignity. This dialogism applies as well to the writer’s description of characters. That is, bearing on the real “depths of the human soul,” the author cannot command his authority freely when he figures his characters; dialogic relationships in the novel suggest that “the author speaks not about a character, but with him” (63; 251). In contrast to the solipsistic attitude in mono-logic realism, a dialogic approach does not aim to nullify the distance between the subject and the object and in fact this distance paradoxically “guarantees genuine objectivity in the representations of a character” (63). In Coetzee’s account, a fully dialogic novel is “one in which there is no dominating, central authorial consciousness, and therefore no claim to truth or authority, only competing voices and discourses” (“Fyodor Dostoevsky” *Stranger Shores* 123).

Among the styles of his experiments with truth-telling in fictions, I notice Coetzee’s obsession with the form of confessional writings. Coetzee attentively examines a writer’s or speaker’s “sincerity” and “authenticity,” whose different nuances he self-consciously applies to his characters in the novels and in other writings. In selected texts such as *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*, I argue, the hero David Lurie and the heroine Elizabeth Costello,

respectively, each has a moment or a need to express his or her inner mind or “belief” before a public hearing. Their common reservations about that, I think, reflect the author’s own skepticism about the possibility of doing so. For Coetzee, the question of how to communicate one’s truthful thoughts and feelings with others in the mode of confession is regarded as a challenge because, according to Coetzee in his essay (“Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky”), there is an epistemological limit on the level of secular meanings. Instead, both speaker and listener must have an ethical and even religious attitude in order to experience the “faith and grace” requisite for the arrival of a “truth.”

Because the dialogic concept of truth is significant in regard to trusting the sincerity of the observer or narrator, it bears on Coetzee’s ethical approach to otherness. And this approach, I argue, is simulated in his review of “Realism” in the first chapter of *Elizabeth Costello*. Coetzee here poses questions about realistic representation and its connection with the sympathetic imagination. In order to explain the concept of realism, Coetzee introduces in the review such words as “embodied” (in the sense of literary configuration between words and things) and “embedded” (in the sense of sympathy between I and you). Elizabeth Costello’s comment on the transfiguration of words is an example of “the embodied” : “There used to be a time...when the text said, ‘On the table stood a glass of water,’ there was indeed a table, and a glass of water on it” (19). Discussing Defoe’s description of the castaway in *Robinson Crusoe* with the line “three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows” (“Daniel Defoe” 19-20), Coetzee suggests that, though the belief in the word as mirror to the world is now broken, one of the conventional notions of realism, the *formal* representation of reality or “embodying” ideas into things through text, still remains alive as a pivotal concept of representation (9).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> While Ian Watt argues that a writer’s claim in the early novels as “an authentic account of the actual

The matter of being “embedded in life” (32) is related to Coetzee’s notion of the sympathetic imagination. Embeddedness indicates a way of engaging with otherness. In the “Realism” chapter, Costello talks about Kafka’s ape in the short story “A report to an Academy.” The ape’s personification is literal to the extent that it is “embedded” in the mind of the heroine. Coetzee’s treatment of Thomas Nagel’s famous question of “what is it like to be a bat?” in the “Lives of Animals” chapter is also a matter of thinking about animals. The association of sympathy with the literary imagination is, I argue, self-reflexive for the writer in that Coetzee, who as a “late modernist” has received criticisms for his dismal and even “unrealistic” representations of South Africa, comes to reevaluate the notion of realism particularly in terms of the sympathetic imagination. The notion of the sympathetic imagination is continually applied to other discussions in the novel: to a discussion of sympathy with animal rights, for example, in chapters three and four of *Elizabeth Costello*, to a consideration of violence and its censorship in chapter six, and to the writer’s confession in a meta-imaginary court in the final chapter. After this initial discussion of Coetzee’s review of truth-telling in confessional writings and its connection to sympathy, this dissertation’s second chapter goes on to consider how these topics are related to Coetzee’s “otherness that is the challenge” (*Elizabeth Costello* 12).

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experiences of individuals” (30) not only functions as an indispensable convention for the “formal realism” of the novel but also becomes a cause of “distaste” promoting “critical confusion” for its reliability (*The Rise of the Novel* 35). J. Paul Hunter remarks in *Before Novels* (1990) that the narrative styles in the early novels owe their forms to such traditional, contemporaneous ones as diary, spiritual autobiography, biography, travel writing, and memoirs. So “the early novel’s circumstantiality,” Hunter argues, “is not so much a device to establish factuality and credibility as it is an outcome of the habit of observing and reporting” (200). Subsequently, whether the claim to truth in a fiction was conventional or circumstantial, and however the authors understood themselves to write a “genuine,” “private History” based on their experiences, it was inevitable that some skeptical readers including Fielding did not read a novel as a truth.

In chapter four “The Distance of Sympathy,” I focus on the conditions of sympathy and on its connection to theories of taste. Among these conditions of sympathy, I pay particular attention to the concept of “distance.” Virginia Woolf says, “So much depends upon distance,” in *To the Lighthouse*. Many ideas derived from this sentence can be usefully applied as well to a discussion of George Eliot’s and J. M. Coetzee’s sympathy. We know that perspective is coincident with the supposition of “distance” and the sympathetic imagination is also possible for the existence of distance between the spectator and the spectacle. But George Eliot’s comment on “perspective” in *Daniel Deronda* reminds us of some of the problems of distance:

Perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing. What horrors of damp huts, where human beings languish, may not become picturesque through aerial distance! What hymning of cancerous vices may we not languish over as sublimest art in the safe remoteness of a strange language and artificial phrase! Yet we keep a repugnance to rheumatism and other painful effects when presented in our personal experience. (155)

Already Adam Smith has remarked our “repugnance” to those “painful effects” when the concept of distance disappears (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*<sup>10</sup>). Smith presents the example of the antipathy of a spectator when he directly faces some people experiencing misery in a street. Nevertheless, to say that the optical illusion created with the help of distance is false and that the real details are much more desolate than we think would be only half a truth. On the other side of the question is George Eliot’s ironic sense that the illusory nature of both sympathy and artistic representations should be maintained (Eliot’s discussion of “the pier glass” in *Middlemarch* is a similar example). What is at stake for George Eliot, is how to conceive and how to evaluate this notion of distance, which also means for the author a kind of alterity.

In relation to one’s ambivalent engagement between sympathy and antipathy before a suffering subject, Susan Sontag’s criticism in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) about the images of “spectacle” from photos or paintings is ultimately concerned with our attitude to the real pain of others. And Sontag’s observation is that our feeling of sympathy with suffering

subjects without any commitments from us merely proves that “Compassion is an unstable emotion (101). Sontag is negative about the concept of distance in this case. But it is not the main point of this fourth chapter to determine whether “distance” should be regarded as good or bad for its conditioning of our engagement or our aloofness. Rather, what is ascertained is that distance works in tandem with otherness, particularly in terms of the act of sympathy.

My research in this dissertation focuses on the idea that, though distance brings the effect of an illusion to bear on sympathy, for that very reason it can also work as an ethical sign for the respect of alterity. An important accompanying question is, then, the question of how to avoid sympathy’s misjudgment caused by the perspective that brings the effect of an illusion. In considering these questions, I introduce first Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism that affirms the concept of distance<sup>3</sup> and secondly Kant’s ideas on “taste” in his third critique along with Hannah Arendt’s research. Briefly speaking, Bakhtin’s dialogism “celebrates alterity” (Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* 65), and Kant’s inter-subjectivity argues that “In taste egoism is overcome” (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* 67). Much of their theories are inter-communicable, which is why my dissertation find them useful.

The last question to be answered in this dissertation is about the limit of the sympathetic imagination. Graham Bradshaw aptly remarks the significant difference implicated in “imaginative sympathy” between George Eliot and J. M. Coetzee. Bradshaw distinguishes

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<sup>3</sup> Bakhtin once discussed the significance of “distance” in *The Problem of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, where he said “only a dialogic and participatory orientation takes another person’s discourse seriously, and is capable of approaching it both as a semantic position and as another point of view. Only through such an inner dialogic orientation can my discourse find itself in intimate contact with someone else’s discourse, and yet at the same time not fuse with it, not swallow it, not dissolve in itself the other’s power to mean; that is, only thus can it retain with fully its independence as a discourse. To preserve distance in the presence of an intense semantic bond is no simple matter. But distance is an integral part of the author’s design, for it alone guarantees genuine objectivity in the representation of a character” (64).



Coetzee's notion of "thinking ourselves *into* the being of another" from George Eliot's concept of "imagining an equivalent centre of self" ("Pity and Autonomy" 194-97). And George Levine uses the issue of thinking about animals in order to compare the two writers' delicately different notions of alterity and sympathy. Coetzee's persona Elizabeth Costello introduces Thomas Nagel's question of "What is it like to be a bat?" and replies, "There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination." Meanwhile, George Eliot says "we should die" if we can hear "the squirrel's heartbeat" (*Middlemarch* 182). George Levine's comparison centers on the matter of how to deal with "the unknowable reality of the other" represented by the squirrel (*Realism, ethics, and secularism* 248). But I think that what he describes as Victorian writers' respects for alterity, "the unknowable reality" of the other, is also a little different from what Bakhtin calls the "genuine objectivity" of the other guaranteed from the respect of distance. Objectivity itself implies the possibility of our approach to the other. I read Coetzee's fictions as a test of the possibility of objectivity for the other. This means seeing his sympathetic imagination as a novelistic attempt to configure the otherness of the other. Hannah Arendt, discussing Kant's aesthetic judgment and its relation to moral philosophy in *The Life of the Mind*, mentions the subject who has an "enlarged mentality" which, I believe, corresponds to "those who have the wider vision" in *The Mill on the Floss*. Though it is ironical that the existence of distance is necessary for the coming of sympathy, the man of vision would be the person who know the meaning of distance.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERARY REALISM AND THE LANDSCAPE OF SYMPATHY

#### 2.1 The Illusion of Realism in *Adam Bede*

Gordon Haight's biography of George Eliot tells us that one of *Adam Bede*'s motifs was taken from a tragic real event. Haight mentions George Eliot's Methodist aunt Mrs. Samuel Evans who told George Eliot about her visiting in prison "a young girl condemned to death for child murder, bringing her to confess, and riding with her to the scaffold." George Eliot is said to have combined this story with her father's "life and character" for "a country story—full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay" (Haight 249). Other biographical studies, like Barbara Hardy's, tells us that George Eliot's "conspicuous personal memory" related to her father Robert Evans is to some extent intertwined with specific features of the plot and characterization in *Adam Bede* (Hardy, *George Eliot* 18-19). Tim Dolin likewise points out affinities between Robert Evans and the character of Adam Bede. The father was "the kind of man who... would become a representative figure in the mid-Victorian middle-class ethos," of which some characteristics, such as "physically strong, skilled, down-to-earth, socially ambitious, trustworthy, thrifty, self-helpful" George Eliot attributed to the main hero of *Adam Bede* (Dolin, *George Eliot* 6). Denying their "portrait"-like resemblance, George Eliot wrote in her journal that " 'Adam is not my father any more than Dinah is my aunt. Indeed, there is not a single *portrait* in 'Adam Bede'; only the suggestion of experience wrought up into new combinations'" (Bodenheimer 134, italics original). Nonetheless, since the novel was set in the year of 1799, which antedates Eliot's birth by twenty years and which implies "less of personal experience" of the writer, the author had to research the historical background to be able to include "the most natural" in *Adam Bede* (Haight

249-50). All these facts demonstrate that *Adam Bede* was originally conceived with some selected memories on the part of the writer and supplemented by her with studied images of the period.

In this chapter I first examine George Eliot's perspective towards the past and its features in *Adam Bede*. In doing so, I argue that Eliot's notions about sympathy and literary realism as manifested in *Adam Bede* are deeply concerned with the writer's viewpoint on the matter of perspective. In particular, George Eliot's emphasis on the sympathetic imagination in *Adam Bede* is coincident with the recollection of a projected image overlapped with the writer's memories of country life. Briefly speaking, George Eliot's perspective works together with memories and sympathy. In the process of their working together, George Eliot's personal memories are converted into an appeal to the collective memories that functions as a buttress for British national identity. The historical details Eliot depicts serve as what Roland Barthes calls "reality effects," through which the revisited past contributes to "the sense of authenticity, the remarkable density of background her realism achieves" (Haight 250). I will not treat in detail the verities of Eliot's memories and historical *mise-en-scènes* as these are represented in *Adam Bede*. Rather, this research attends more to Eliot's "perspectival" view of the country, through which what Erwin Panofsky calls a "window" is constructed in order for viewers to see "a space" (*Perspective as Symbolic Form* 27). I propose that this virtual "space" invented in a perspectival painting be read as an analogy to the "landscape" created in Eliot's novels about the countryside. The opening paragraph of *Adam Bede* is the first example of this virtual space of the novel:

With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance corner far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show the roomy workshop of Mr Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder in the village of Hayslople, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June in the year of our Lord 1799. (*Adam Bede* 4)

As George Levine remarks, Eliot's imagination here "create[s] reality as well as 'penetrate[s]' it." (*The Realist Imagination* 266). I pay attention to two things in this passage. First, an image is "conjured up." George Eliot asks readers to believe in the magical "ink," the sympathetic imagination, since it will transport them from the present to the past. Secondly, the evocation of the imagination is helped by memories. At least for its effect, according to Neil Hertz, the imagined setting has its ground in reality due to those memories shared by George Eliot and her contemporary readers. Hertz's study tells that "the Egyptian sorcerer" was not unfamiliar with those readers of 1859 who would have known "Abd-El-Kadir El-Maghrabee, who lived in Cairo earlier in the century" (Miller 23). Therefore, despite its seemingly magical realism, hereafter we follow "a paradigmatic example of good old-fashioned mimetic realism, complete with circumstantial dates and places" (Miller 23). This means that the setting of Hayslope in the year of 1799 in *Adam Bede* is not a random choice, but a planned one made from the writer's specific perspective.

We are introduced to another perspectival view of the landscape of Hayslope in the beginning part of *Adam Bede*:

It was just such a picture as this last that Hayslope church had made to the traveler as he began to mount the gentle slope leading to its pleasant uplands, and now from his station near the Green he had before him in one view nearly all the other typical features of this pleasant land. High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds intended to fortify this region of corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north; not distant enough to be clothed in purple mystery, but with some somber greenish sides visibly specked with sheep, whose motion was only revealed by memory, not detected by sight. (16)

While this situation is that of an unnamed traveler who passes by the district of Loamshire and now observes "this pleasant land," "he" shows a peculiar perspective when picturing this land. It is noteworthy that this spectator tries to interpret his surroundings with his memories and expectations, brought to bear upon even faraway objects. For example, the sheep's "motion"

captured in his eyes actually cannot be “detected,” but can only be “revealed” or imagined by “memory.” This signifies that the scenery in the traveler’s perception is already expected, brought about by the recollection of a certain image. We do not know whether this land is really “pleasant” or not. But the traveler’s imagination colored with nostalgia transforms it to a pastoral picture, and, in that process, the sheep seen from such far distance bring the effect of an illusion of “motion.” Following for a while the traveler’s eye, which could have enjoyed “other beauties in the landscape,” the narrator then suddenly introduces the traveler’s primary interest: “there was more interesting for him in the living groups close at hand” (17). So, we recognize that all those descriptions such as “hills,” “woods,” and “grass,” coupled with the traveler’s memories in this part, set up the exterior landscape as a pastoral, and his anticipated meeting with the “living groups” signals the opening of the inside of the landscape, “a country story—full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay.” But it is odd to see that this traveler, even as a “stranger,” is treated like a transparent being. Keeping his distance while riding on his horse, he does not mingle with the people gathered in the house of the blacksmith. Although they could watch him heading for Dinah’s preaching in “the Green,” we cannot find any conversation between them. Instead, his monologue about Dinah’s appearance is brief (“A sweet woman...but surely nature never meant her for a preacher” 21), and he disappears soon. His role remains as a readers’ guide to the scene of the Methodist meeting, like a “vanishing point”<sup>4</sup> in the novel. An analogy between this traveler and George Eliot is possible, particularly in terms of projecting a pastoral image onto the

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<sup>4</sup> I borrow this term from Audrey Jaffe. We realize that this traveler’s temporary stay in the beginning with such limited role and spectrum thereof. Nevertheless, the traveler directs the readers’ perspective towards the country landscape, and his invisible entering into the Hayslope village evokes the illusion of a certain omniscience, the “Pan-opticon,” which critics often associate with the position of the omniscient narrator (Jaffe 3-5).

landscape. The traveler's ethnological interest, in a sense, for the "people" and the community can be compared with George Eliot's own, which I will discuss later in connection with Levi-Strauss's comments on Rousseau, whose works George Eliot read avidly.

My next argument from this quotation is that if a writer attempts to retrieve an image of the country landscape with his or her memories, it is framed by the projection of a certain concept about the landscape. Applying E. H. Gombrich's theory, we may call this embedded concept in the mind of the composer as "schema"<sup>5</sup> so that the writer first begins "not with his visual impression but with his idea or concept" (*Art and Illusion* 73). I propose to compare this notion of the schema with George Eliot's idea of the "stereotype," derived from the following quotation:

So I am content to tell my simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were; dread nothing, indeed, but falsity, which, in spite of one's best efforts, there is reason to dread. Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin—the longer the claws, and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvelous facility which we mistake for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real unexaggerated lion. Examine your work well, and you will find that even when you have no motive to be false, it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about your own immediate feelings—much harder than to say something fine about them which is not the exact truth. (*Adam Bede* 160-61)

Here the narrator opposes drawing an imaginary griffin to drawing a real lion and argues that depicting a real thing is much more difficult than picturing something out of pure imagination. This judgment seems to be based on a few assumptions: first, that there would be no standard to judge the truthfulness of the griffin's case; second, that discrepancy is inevitable between the original and the copied where each subjective condition intervenes. But my reading is that the objective "truth," however it draws on our empirical observation, is not only "very hard," but

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<sup>5</sup> Gombrich says: "The schema is not the product of a process of "abstraction," of a tendency to "simplify"; it represents the first approximate, loose category which is gradually tightened to fit the form it is to reproduce" (*Art and Illusion* 74).

also problematic in itself. At the surface level, George Eliot expresses the difficulty of mimetic realism through this passage. However, to suppose that someone meets a real lion unexpectedly and draws promptly its picture, following its movement, would not sound plausible. Rather, it would be more accurate or probable to say that his drawing of the lion cannot but use and combine those lasting memories of his observation and some previous lion images he is acquainted with. In other words, the actual representation of the lion is not from an automatic, pure perception, but instead it is aided more or less by its stereotyped figure. To sum up, there would not be as much difference between the griffin and the lion as we suppose, if only in terms of the process of their configuration in the mind of the painter.<sup>6</sup>

It is true that George Eliot's realism accentuates the writer's empirical engagement with the real world. This idea is evinced early in her letter to John Blackwood about *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), where George Eliot writes that "My sketches both of churchmen and dissenters, with whom I am almost equally acquainted, are drawn from close observation of them in real life, and not at all from hearsay or from the description of novelists" (Haight 235). And George Eliot defines realism as "the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mist of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality" ("John Ruskin's *Modern Painters, Vol. III*" 368). The connection between "realism" and "truth" expressed several times in Eliot's writings bears

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<sup>6</sup> Although the narrator exclaims that "It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings" (*Adam Bede* 161), it should be reminded that the Dutch painting is also, to some degree, dependent upon some traditional conventions. Gombrich argues as follows: "Even Dutch genre paintings that appear to mirror life in all its bustle and variety will turn out to be created from a limited number of types and gestures, much as the apparent realism of the picturesque novel or of Restoration comedy still applies and modifies stock figures which can be traced back for centuries. There is not neutral naturalism. The artist, no less than the writer, needs a vocabulary before he can embark on a 'copy' of reality" (87).

on its empirical sources. But choosing the subject from “nature” is one thing, and showing it as “truthful” is another. This is because, to borrow her expression, “[f]alsehood is so easy, truth so difficult” especially in representation, and so it needs to depend on certain conventions related to its formal illustration.

As an approach to deal with the question of “truth” or “truthfulness” implicated in George Eliot’s realism, therefore, I focus on its aesthetic representation rather than on a philosophical account of it.<sup>7</sup> Although there are a number of definitions of literary realism, Marshall Brown’s research in particular is helpful in conceptualizing the specific features of George Eliot’s Victorian realism. In the article “The Logic of Realism: A Hegelian Approach” (1981), Brown suggests some tenets useful in defining realism. The first is circular; as the realist text reflects the real world, realism is in itself realistic. The second comes from self-proclaimed realists such as Courbet and Flaubert; their credo is that an artist should maintain a style that conveys reality in its exactitude. The last is that realism comes from some features realistic novels have in common—for example, a number of facts, or “a meeting of high and low styles.” The conclusion Brown takes from this explanation is that any fixed concept of realism based on a single type brings counter-examples and is, accordingly, self-contradictory. So, for Brown, realism is “not an entity a novel can contain or possess.” Rather, it is regarded as “an attribute, a quality, an impression” created by the novel. Realism “describes not something ‘in’ the novel but

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<sup>7</sup> Actually, it is beyond the area of this research to review the meaning of “truth” in detail here, nor do I expect to grasp its meaning with any essential notion. Instead, I introduce Bernard Williams’s argument for the distinction between those “theories of truth” and “truth” in itself:

“philosophical theories of truth, whether more or less ambitious, quite certainly have a history, whereas the concept of truth itself does not...we should resist any demand for a definition of truth, principally because truth belongs to a ramifying set of connected notions, such as meaning, reference, belief, and we are better employed in exploring the relations between those notions than in trying to treat one or some of them as the basis of the others” (*Truth and Truthfulness* 61-63).



the novel's impact on readers" (226).

If realism is understood in light of its reality-effect, we need to register what Roland Barthes terms "the cultural rules of representation" in literary realism ("The Reality Effect," *The Rustle of Language* 145). Regarding illusionary effects in representation, Barthes and Gombrich are interconnected. If it is all right to say that what the writer, like the painter, asks to represent in his writing is "not the nature of the physical world but the nature of our reaction to it," and also if "he is not concerned with causes but with the mechanisms of certain effects," what is prioritized in representation is a kind of norm that regulates one's perception of reality (*Art and Illusion* 49). As an example of George Eliot's allusion to these "mechanisms," I quote her criticism on Rembrandt's painting:

The third characteristic of great art is *sincerity*. The artist should include the largest possible quantity of truth in the most perfect possible harmony. *All* the truths of nature cannot be given; hence a choice must be made of some facts which can be represented from amongst others which must be passed by in silence. 'The inferior artist chooses unimportant and scattered truths; the great artist chooses the most necessary first, and afterwards the most consistent with these, so as to obtain the greatest possible and most harmonious scene.' Thus, Rembrandt sacrifices all other efforts to the representation of the exact force with which the light on the most illuminated part of an object is opposed to its obscurer portions. (*Modern Painters, VOL. III* 371, italics original)

In this passage George Eliot discusses Rembrandt's technique of "chiaroscuro" and argues how important it is for "the artist" to make a certain choice between what is essential and not. What draws our attention to the meaning of "truth" is that pictorial representation is viewed as a carefully selected, highlighted representation and not something full of raw perception that "the artist" gets and expresses. This makes us wonder why George Eliot links such effective treatment on the part of "the artists" to the concept of "sincerity." She does not explain in detail its meaning nor clarify how the artist's sincerity can be recognized. Inferring from George Eliot's other remarks that "Art must be real and concrete" and "insincerity" equals "inaccurate

language” (Haight 239; A.S. Byatt, xvii), one may assume that this term is significant in the context of truth-telling. But still a question arises about whether the truth of sincerity is mainly a matter of its effective way of representation. Here I must repeat a classical philosophy question about the implication of distinguishing an original from its imitation. Does George Eliot believe what she calls “truth” arrives with its ideal form? If, as Roland Barthes says, “verisimilitude is never anything but *opinable*” (Barthes 147, italics original) and thus that there is no kind of pure representation but only the interpretation of the artist (Gombrich 363), what is the standard in decoding the “truth” in aesthetic representations? For the answers to these questions, I turn to a careful reading of a passage from George Henry Lewes’s writing:

Realism is thus the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but *Falsism*. When our painters represent peasant with regular features and irreproachable linen; when their milkmaids have the air of Keepsake beauties, whose costume is picturesque, and never old or dirty; when Hodge is made to speak refined sentiments in unexceptionable English, and children utter long speeches of religious and poetic enthusiasm; when the conversation of the parlour and drawing room is a succession of philosophical remarks, expressed with great clearness and logic, an attempt is made to idealize, but the result is simply falsification and bad art...Either give us true peasants, or leave them untouched; either paint no drapery at all, or paint it with the utmost fidelity; either keep your people silent, or make them speak the idiom of their class. (“Realism in Art” 87, italics original)

The paragraph above may be fully correlated to Eliot’s famous discussion of realism in chapter seventeen of *Adam Bede*. As in George Eliot’s writing, pictorial realism is rendered a comparison for literary realism. Just as George Eliot emphasizes “sincerity” and “truthfulness,” Lewes sets up “fidelity” as the rationale of realism. Following his argument, we sense that there should be a correspondence between a presumed notion and the actual image when one is embodying, for example, those “milkmaids” and “peasants” according to “their class.” Just as George Eliot criticizes “idyllic” representation of the peasantry (“The Natural History of German Life”), Lewes here denounces such idealistic depictions of working-class people. But Lewes’s distinction of “Realism” from “Idealism” or even from “Falsism” also can be a matter of

judgment. If we follow his explanation above, the issue of whether the writer gets his or her subjects from factual sources or not is less important than the congruence between what readers assume as a stereotype *a priori* and what they now perceive as an authentic representation. If the act of reading an artist is “to mobilize our memories and our experience of the visible world and to test his image through tentative projection” (Gombrich 314), then what Lewes values in realism in the quotation above is close to affirming the illusion made by readers’ empathetic involvement in figuring the diction, clothing, or setting with which these characters are presumably fitted. Radically speaking, Lewes, too, has a fixed, ideal notion about their images.

Interestingly, Lewes talks about “true peasants” and asks that the writer “make them speak the idiom of their class.” This comment is discursive. First of all, we need to ask who the final guarantor is of which “true peasants” are really the “true peasants.” In addition, we should ask on what basis Lewes can suppose that it is possible for someone to “make them speak.” I also pay attention to these sayings because Raymond Williams criticizes the very “idiom” used in *Adam Bede* by indicating a split between the idiom of the writer and that of the country “people” described in the novel. He points out, in *Adam Bede*, “the difficulty of the coexistence, within one form, of an analytically conscious observer of conduct with a developed analytic vocabulary, and of people represented as living and speaking in main customary ways” (*The Country and the City* 169). In order to criticize “the difficulty of the coexistence,” he refers to those “externally formulated attitudes and ideas” that George Eliot attaches to each character’s voice in *Adam Bede*. In this sense, it is reasonable to question whether those “customary ways” of stereotyping George Eliot applies to the characters militate against her own credo of realism. This is because “though George Eliot restores the real inhabitants of rural England to their places in what had been a socially selective landscape, she does not get much further than restoring them *as a*

*landscape*” (168, italics original). I think the Williams’s criticism does justice to George Eliot’s realism if, following his analysis, the “separation and observation” of the author from “the real inhabitants” results in the failure of those characters’ individual characterization, which means that George Eliot’s projection of her “memory and reflection” misrepresents something and that her self-conscious alignment of herself with working-class people merely remains at the level of moralistic narcissism. Nevertheless, I argue that insofar as George Eliot reflects on her position in treating this landscape of her perspective, George Eliot’s intended “separation” or distance embedded in describing the landscape needs to be justified. For the example, I use the same long passage Williams analyzes in his text:

Leisure is gone - gone where the spinning-wheels are gone, and the pack-horses, and the slow waggons, and the pedlars who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons. Ingenious philosophers tell you, perhaps, that the great work of the steam-engine is to create leisure for mankind. Do not believe them: it only creates a vacuum for eager thought to rush in. Even idleness is eager now - eager for amusement: prone to excursion trains, art-museums, periodical literature, and exciting novels: prone even to scientific theorizing, and cursory peeps through microscopes. Old Leisure was quite a different personage: he only read one newspaper, innocent of leaders, and was free from that periodicity of sensations which we call post-time. He was a contemplative, rather stout gentleman, of excellent digestion, - of quiet perceptions, undiseased by hypothesis: happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves. He lived chiefly in the country, among pleasant seats and homesteads, and was fond of sauntering by the fruit-tree wall, and scenting the apricots when they were warmed by the morning sunshine, or of sheltering himself under the orchard boughs at noon, when the summer pears were falling. He knew nothing of week-day services, and thought none the worse of the Sunday sermon, if it allowed him to sleep from the text to the blessing, - liking the afternoon service best, because the prayers were the shortest, and not ashamed to say so; for he had an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself, and able to carry a great deal of beer or port-wine, - not being made squeamish by doubts and qualms and lofty aspirations: life was not a task to him, but a sinecure: he fingered the guineas in his pocket, and ate his dinners, and slept the sleep of the irresponsible; for had he not kept up his charter by going to church on the Sunday afternoons? Fine old Leisure! Do not be severe upon him, and judge him by our modern standard; he never went to Exeter Hall, or heard a popular preacher, or read *Tracts for the Times* or *Sartor Resartus*. (*Adam Bede* 459)

The irony of this retrospection is that the landscape of “Old Leisure” is foregrounded “*as a*

*landscape.*” George Eliot must be aware that the “Fine old Leisure” personified here is not a real but an ideal image where a pastoral tone is dominant. If we consider George Levine’s critique that nineteenth century realism “self-consciously examines its own fictionality” when it posits “the reality of an external world” (*The Realist Imagination* 21), the question of George Eliot’s distortion of the reality of the rural past, which is affected by her childhood memories must be distinguished from the evaluation of the author’s self-reflection on the nature of nostalgia.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, it might be taken for granted that the projection of the writer’s perspective into the landscape is a necessary choice for the purposes of fictionality. I have explained that, rather than perusing such a “substantial reality,” this study more focuses on clarifying George Eliot’s position in the landscape and what she tries to represent from there. The starting point is that the nostalgic point of view cannot but produce a landscape, in which George Eliot’s underlying motif is related to her memories and her sympathy for the “common, coarse people”:

It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence, which has been the fate of so many more among my fellow-mortals than a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring action. I turn, without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower-pot, or eating her solitary dinner, while the noonday light, softened perhaps by a screen of leaves, falls on her mob-cap, and just touches the rim of her spinning-wheel, and her stone jug, and all those cheap common things which are the precious necessities of life to her.... In this world there are so many of these common, coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness! It is so needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only fit a world of extremes. Therefore let Art always remind always us of them; therefore let us always have men ready to give the loving

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<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Son Jeong Cho regards the nostalgia in *Adam Bede* as a strategic pathway to describe the past by saying that “nostalgia is produced by the distance rather than by the actual relationship with the referent that is referred. In other words, the passage deconstructs itself by revealing the narrativity and rhetoricity of the nostalgia. The passage is an allegory of the way in which the entire narrative is constructed; the past is to be looked back to, and it produces the narrative” (219). As such, we can assume that the reality in this landscape is, as Panofsky says, “a purely functional and not a substantial reality” (30).

pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things. (*AB* 161-62)

George Eliot's reason to remember these "common people," "commonplace things" is because of their universal presence. For the writer, the ignorance of their existence in the area of "Art" hitherto cannot be agreed any longer. According to Erich Auerbach, one of the foundations of "modern realism" comes from "the serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject matter for problematic-existential representation" (*Mimesis* 391). Nevertheless, when George Eliot selects peasants and craftsmen including Adam Bede in order to represent the moral virtue of these common people, a parallax view happens because the peasant class was actually recognized as part of "a vanishing reality" in her times (Linda Nochlin, *Realism* 115). She is not blind to this historical fact and so says that "In England, at present, when we speak of the peasantry, we mean scarcely more than the class of farm-servants and farm-labourers; and it is only in the most primitive districts, as in Wales, for example, that farmers are included under the term. In order to appreciate what Riehl says of the German peasantry, we must remember what the tenant-farmers and small proprietors were in England half a century ago" ("The Natural History of German Life" 113). As if to practice what she said two years ago in that article, *Adam Bede*'s period goes back "half a century ago." In this context, the Dutch paintings George Eliot's narrator mentions as a model for her literary realism cannot be taken at face value for its anachronism, if we suppose that Eliot could have chosen her contemporaries like Courbet or Constable as examples of more authentic realist, landscape painters.<sup>9</sup> More precisely, the Dutch realist paintings she discusses are

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<sup>9</sup> Nineteen-century critics found an analogy between seventeenth-century Netherlandish paintings and contemporary European novels mainly in light of "the domestic realism," focusing on their similarities, such as detailed descriptive style and the subject matter of "lowness." Eliot's "delicious sympathy" in the quotation is symbolical in that sense, because it indicates an aesthetic dimension in that feeling as well as an intended distance the writer keeps between the actual object and an ideal stereotype she has in mind.

presented as a metaphor for her nostalgia. Following Knoepfmacher's view that "George Eliot creates a complete setting in which the naturalistic and the emblematic coexist" in *Adam Bede* (92), I argue that the rural community George Eliot retrieves in *Adam Bede* may be read as the place of a paradigmatic model for her moral vision, in which Adam's "Eden" is created and his suffering and regeneration—like that of the hero in *Paradise Lost*—is realized with the arrival of sympathy (Knoepfmacher 89-127). To go further, I suggest that we should read *Adam Bede* as a result of a thought experiment in which George Eliot's ethnological or anthropological interest, however nostalgic, overlaps with that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This argument is based on a few hypothetical premises, for whose verification I will borrow Claude Levi-Strauss's reading of Rousseau.

The first premise is that, in spite of George Eliot's "faithful account" based on her memories and experiences, the country landscape in the novel is a discovered one. And this invented landscape functions as a *model* for the "unheroic," "social tragedy" of *Adam Bede* (Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot* 1-31). I argue that that kind of "model" situated in the country may be compared with that of Rousseau, for example, in his discussion of the "state of the nature." This idea comes from Karatani Kojin who remarks that "realism in modern literature established itself within the context of landscape. Both the landscapes and the 'ordinary people' (what I have called people-as-landscapes) that realism represents were not 'out there' from the start, but had to be discovered as landscapes from which we had become alienated" (*Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* 29). Karatani's main point is that the landscape in literary realism is the result of a de-familiarization of our conventional perception of reality. But as Raymond Williams says, "a working country is hardly ever a landscape." And the notion of

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See Ruth Yeazell's *Art of the Everyday: Dutch Painting and the Realist Novel* (2009).

landscape implies “separation and observation” (120). If the landscape of the countryside becomes the object of aesthetic “observation,” then it signifies the country anyhow becomes “alienated” from the observer. That is why we should read carefully George Eliot’s statement that “we have to recall [the connection with the past] by an effort of memory and reflection; for though our English life is in its core intensely traditional, Protestantism and commerce have modernized the fact of the land and the aspects of society in a far greater degree than in any continental country” (“The Natural History of German Life” 129). Riehl’s ethnological study of the German peasantry must have created a moment for George Eliot to reflect on “our English life.” But, let me say it again, these “people” in England are actually assumed to exist in the past. Therefore, their representation cannot but depend on ideal notions and stereotypes about which I have discussed, although George Eliot feels “a recognition of other kinds of people, other kinds of country, other kinds of action on which a moral emphasis must be brought to bear” (Williams 166). It is no wonder that George Eliot’s realism “became more and more eclectic” in between these two necessities (Knoepflmacher 33).

## 2.2 Self-complicity in Truth-Telling and George Eliot’s Rousseau

It goes without saying that, as Raymond Williams says, when reading a country landscape, it is necessary to consider the writer’s position because it is “part of the community being known” (165). But, as we have discussed, there is an irony that George Eliot as the observer is conscious of her position in the process of observation. And such self-reflection on the part of the writer is particularly concerned with the notion of truth-telling that George Levine notes in nineteenth-century realism. If only for the goal of an objective representation, Rosemarie Bodenheimer argues, “George Eliot was, and had always been, her own best resisting



reader and ... the creation of oppositional voices in the novels is a fictional development of a writing procedure she had practiced all her life” (*The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction*, 55). For an example of the self-reflection that shows the writer’s sincerity, I quote a passage in chapter seventeen of *Adam Bede*, in which we find a trace of Rousseau’s *Confessions*. For the purposes of comparison, I read the introductory part of Rousseau’s *Confessions* alongside it:

Certainly I could, if I held it the highest vocation of the novelist to represent things as they never have been and never will be. Then, of course, I might refashion life and character entirely after my own liking; I might select the most unexceptionable type of clergyman, and put my own admirable opinions into this mouth on all occasions. But it happens, on the contrary, that my strongest effort is to avoid any such arbitrary picture, and to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused: but I feel as much bound to tell you as precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath. (*Adam Bede* 159)

I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself... Let the last trump sound when it will, I shall come forward with this work in my hand, to present myself before my Sovereign Judge, and proclaim aloud: ‘Here is what I have done, and if by chance I have used some immaterial embellishment it has been only to fill a void due to a defect of memory. I may have taken for fact what was no more than probability, but I have never put down as true what I knew to be false. I have displayed myself as I was, as vile and despicable when my behavior was such, as good, generous, and noble when I was so. I have bared my secret soul as Thou thyself hast seen it, Eternal Being! So let the numberless legion of my fellow men gather round me, and hear my confession. Let them groan at my depravities, and blush for my misdeeds. But let each one of them reveal his heart at the foot of Thy throne with equal sincerity, and may any man who dares, say “I was a better man than he.”’ (*The Confessions* 17)

George Eliot’s adoration for Rousseau throughout her life is well known. Especially his *Confessions* is said to have impressed her strongly from her beginning as a writer through her last published writing of *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879).<sup>10</sup> When asked by

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<sup>10</sup> Ruby V. Redinger’s biographical research tries to establish a connection between *Confessions* and *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, particularly in terms of the writer’s self-reflection on “self-revelment” in writing autobiography. See *George Eliot: The Emergent Self*, 16-18.

Emerson in July 1848 “what had first awakened her to deep reflection,” she answered “Rousseau’s *Confessions*” (Haight 65).<sup>11</sup> What we can read from both passages above is a certain determination for truth-telling in the form of confessional voices. In each case, what guarantees the sincerity of the voice is the narrator’s confession itself, which delivers its experience without trying to hide its limitation. It is interesting to see that, as Rousseau stands before the “Sovereign Judge,” George Eliot’s confession takes a legal form when it is described as taking place “in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath.”

Rousseau’s confession aside, George Eliot’s method of its verification sounds solipsistic since only “I” is standing as the final instance to judge the truth. As George Eliot asserts her faithful pose in describing reality by professing the partial aspects of her experience, this assumed candid subjectivity based on framed, limited experiences, as shown in the metaphor of mirror, makes at first a sort of paradoxical contribution to the reality effects by which Eliot attests that her fictional story as a real fiction at first, especially when we read the fairy-tale-like introduction of *Adam Bede*; but it finally makes the story apparently more authentic story by authorizing her voice alone. A risk comes to the fore when Eliot’s valorization of truth is seen as dogmatic in another sense, as the narrator cannot but monopolize her experience and guarantee its truthfulness.

It is not too much to ask whether George Eliot’s apology for her incomplete representation has some self-complicit dimensions, and also to ask what we perceive as the author’s sincerity, which she has emphasized, is appropriated with a different sense in the

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<sup>11</sup> Another episode that shows George Eliot’s passion for Rousseau is her saying to William Hale White in 1853. She said that it was “worthwhile to undertake all the labour of learning French if it resulted in nothing more than reading one book—Rousseau’s *Confessions*” (Haight 65).

passage above. In Lionel Trilling's definition, sincerity generally means "a congruence between avowal, and actual feeling" (*Sincerity and Authenticity* 2), and "the avoidance of being false to any man through being true to one's own self" (5). With respect to being truthful to the self, the narrator's confession appears to be sincere enough. But Arthur M. Melzer argues that sincerity is not the same as honesty or frankness. While honesty involves "a self-disciplined adherence to the truth or to one's word," the former does "an adherence to the self" ("Rousseau and the Modern Cult of Sincerity" 5, my italics). To be clear in identifying what is characteristic of each concept in identifying element of self-deception in sincerity or honesty, first, we need to pay attention to the metaphor of mirror above. Modern subjectivity cannot be separated from the work of self-reflection, as Descartes's *cogito* implies. But the notion of self-reflection through the mirror is debatable because of the logic of self-complicity through which the self recognizes its own projected image on the mirror; the mechanism of the mirror is totally different from that of the photograph (*Transcritique* 2).<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the reality reflected in this mirror-like representation should be questioned for its collusion with narcissism. For example, we must consider Hetty's pose before the "looking-glass":

[s]he could see a reflection of herself in the old-fashioned looking-glass, quite as distinct as was needful, considering that she had only to brush her hair and put on her night-cap. A queer old looking-glass! Hetty got into an ill-temper with it almost every time she dressed. It had been considered a handsome glass in its day, and had probably been bought into the Poyser family a quarter of a century before, at a sale of genteel household furniture....But Hetty objected to it because it had numerous dim blotches sprinkled over the mirror, which no rubbing would remove, and because, instead of swinging backwards and forwards, it was fixed in an upright position, so that she could only get one good view of her head and neck, and that was to be had only by sitting down on a low chair

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<sup>12</sup> I believe Karatani's critique on the mirror-metaphor in reflective subjectivity needs to be more elaborated with other epistemological theories, but his comment of " 'pronounced parallax' between the mirror image and photographic image" can be adequately applied to explaining the real difference between the two assumed "objective" images.

before her dressing-table....But she pushed it all backward to look like the picture, and form a dark curtain, throwing into relief her round white neck. Then she put down her brush and comb, and looked at herself, folding her arms before her, still like the picture. Even the old mottled glass couldn't help sending back a lovely image, none the less lovely because Hetty's stays were not of white satin—such as I feel sure heroines must generally wear—but of a dark greenish cotton texture. (*Adam Bede* 135-36)

We observe that Hetty is standing before a “defective” mirror and is trying to “look like the picture.” It is true that George Eliot implicitly criticizes the narcissistic perspective through the gaze of Hetty. But we should ask how this episode is related to Eliot’s metaphoric use of the mirror in the narration. Does sincerity have a tricky aspect if it is possible to see self-deception in the subject who desires to look sincere but is actually not? The very example both Bernard Williams and J.M. Coetzee points out from the *Confessions* is the episode of Marion through which Rousseau’s feeling of remorse and shame in retrospection is self-serving (Williams 173-75; Coetzee 205-15).<sup>13</sup> As a word indicating one’s self-justified truthful *feeling*, Trilling suggests another term: authenticity. My reading of Trilling is that if sincerity is akin to phenomenology authenticity is psychology. That is, the phenomenology of sincerity is double-bound and *ipso facto* inter-subjective. The subject who can confirm one’s sincerity is not only the self but also the other. What is significant for its valorization in authenticity is not so much the affirmation from other people as one’s own feeling and confidence, which Charles Taylor calls the “self-determining freedom” in authenticity. While Taylor criticizes both individualism and narcissism in the notion of authenticity (*The Ethics of Authenticity* 25-41), Trilling and

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<sup>13</sup> When his theft of a ribbon was discovered, Rousseau blamed Marion in fear of other people’s public censures, and “the bitter memory” of his shameful act is said to grow “more painful” for him and so make him confess his guilty mind (*The Confessions* 85-89). However, analyzing Paul de Man’s reading of Rousseau’s *Confessions*, Ben Roth argues, “Rousseau tries to evade responsibility for his frequently abhorrent actions, rationalize his misdeeds, and explain his life in any way that would leave him faultless.” See Roth, “Confessions, Excuses, and the Storytelling Self: Rereading Rousseau with Paul de Man” (2012).

Melzer both point out that sincerity has been understood in a social context, such that one could “sincerely act the part of the sincere person” before the public even though his action would not reflect his actual feelings (Trilling 10). In this case, feeling is secondary to action. However, according to Melzer’s argument, such hypocrisy is not the same as dishonesty. While “being true to one’s own self” is proposed not “as an end but only as a means” and may signify the perversion of sincerity (Trilling 9), the judgment of hypocrisy here must be ultimately related to the self rather than to one’s own word or truth. But honesty or dishonesty is often treated in terms of private, “authentic feeling” for one’s own autonomy.<sup>14</sup> My conclusion is that, in George Eliot’s case, the “I” ’s stance is actually closer to honesty or authenticity rather than to sincerity because the standard of truth is fundamentally self-centered and beyond others’ verification. In fact, one can say that George Eliot’s readers do not have to care about how much or even whether the narrator’s mirror is “defective” or not. If this kind of warning functions as an excuse for any misrepresentation in spite of her good intention, this means that we cannot ask the writer to be responsible for the truthfulness of representation. I have mentioned the risk of self-complicity caused by the projection of narcissism, in representing not only the landscape but also the self; however it tries to reflect consciously over its position. When I take into account Claude Levi-Strauss’s comments on Rousseau, the purpose is at the first hand to investigate the latter’s

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<sup>14</sup> “The ethic of authenticity,” according to Charles Taylor, “is something relatively new and peculiar to modern culture” (*The Ethics of Authenticity* 25). And both Trilling and Melzer regard Rousseau as a great precursor in establishing the modern concept of sincerity, particularly in his *Confessions*. Nevertheless, in Trilling’s research of Rousseau, the division between sincerity and authenticity is not so clear, and one of the reasons is that Rousseau redefines sincerity within the context of romanticism. Rousseau’s concept related with authenticity becomes the target of Coetzee’s criticism especially in regard to truth-telling. What Coetzee questions radically from the Rousseau’s autobiographical writing is whether the self-exposing gesture of his shame and guilt connected with his sincerity, in *Confession*, is self-deceived or not. I will treat in-detail these issues about truth-telling in Coetzee’s section. See Coetzee’s article, “Confession and Double Thought: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky.”

impact on George Eliot in a deductive way.<sup>15</sup> Levi-Strauss's evaluation of Rousseau may provide a way to detect George Eliot's influence by Rousseau, although these connections between Rousseau and Levi-Strauss would remain as hypotheses that would be retroactively induced to George Eliot. Actually, Oliver Lovesey's research in *Postcolonial Eliot* (2017) is the only research that I have found concerning the connection between anthropology and George Eliot's novels. Lovesey argues that "[a]n approach to fiction through the lens of anthropology, including that provided by perhaps the first anthropologist, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, was central to George Eliot's practice, as articulated in her poetics of fiction in essays and reviews, letters, and metafictional 'pauses' in the early fiction, often beginning as clerical apologies" (51). Applying Derrida's work on Levi-Strauss to our reading of *Adam Bede* also finds some similar points. Though the *Confessions* is revealed as the Rousseau text that affected George Eliot most strongly, it is not absurd to surmise that George Eliot would be familiar with other Rousseau's texts, and it is possible to see to what extent Rousseau's certain ideas—including those about sympathy—are mirrored in the writing of George Eliot. First of all, we

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<sup>15</sup> What George Eliot actually had read from Rousseau are scattered in her letters. She does not seem to care much about Rousseau's "errors." Instead, she says as follows:

"[...] it would signify nothing to me if a very wise person were to stun me with proofs that Rousseau's views of life, religion, and government are miserable erroneous—that he was guilty of some of the worst baselessness that have degraded civilized man. I might admit all this—and it would be not the less true that Rousseau's genius has sent that electric thrill through my intellectual and moral frame which has awakened me to new perceptions, which has made man and nature a fresh world of thought and feeling to me...the fire of his genius has so fused together old thoughts and prejudices that I have been ready to make new combinations" (Haight 60).

Particularly in terms of Rousseau's mindfulness and "sympathy," George Eliot's comment below is somewhat telling:

"It may not be an original idea, but never mind, if it be a true one, that the proper result of intellectual cultivation is to restore the mind to that state of wonder and interest with which it looks on everything in childhood. Thus, Jean Jacques Rousseau, couched on the grass by the side of a plant, that he might examine its structure and appearance at his ease, would have seemed to a little child so like itself in taste and feeling, that it would have lain down by him, in full confidence of entire sympathy between them, in spite of his wizard-like Armenian attire" (Redinger 152).

must focus on the self-image—the image that the subject projects onto itself. Thinking about Levi-Strauss will help us to do this.

In his essay “Rousseau, Father of Anthropology” (1963), Levi-Strauss claims that “Rousseau did not just foresee anthropology, he actually founded it”:

Firstly, he did so in practice by writing the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Men* which posed the question of the relationship between nature and culture, and is perhaps the first treatise produced on general anthropology. Secondly, he founded the science in theory by setting down with remarkable clarity and precision the aims of the anthropologist as distinguished from those of the moralist and the historian:

“When one wishes to study men, one must look close at hand; but to study man, one must learn to look into the distance; one must first observe the difference in order to discern the properties.” (*Essay on the Origin of Language*, Chapter VIII.)

This method of approach which Rousseau assigned to anthropology marks the birth of the new science and helps to clarify what at first may appear to be a double paradox: that Rousseau could at one and the same time advocate the study of men living in the most remote corners of the earth, but in effect devoted most of his attention to the one man nearest to him namely himself; and that in all his writings his systematic desire for identification with others went hand in hand with his total refusal of identification with himself. (11)

Levi-Strauss values Rousseau’s self-negation, the recognition of “a third person ‘he’ that thinks within me,” the “total refusal of identification with himself,” in order to reach “unconditional objectivity” (12). He takes this negation of one’s ideal image as a necessary step not only in writing one’s confession but also in any anthropological study. Levi-Strauss adds that in “the work of anthropology,” “the observer uses himself as his own instrument of observation” that makes him conscious of his position and sets distance to himself, and, in doing so, “the principle of ‘confessions’” works within himself. Nevertheless, we need to be skeptical about whether a self-projected image in the process of confession can arise. Because of one’s monologic self-assurance of his or her own truthfulness, “the removal of distrust by first-personal explanation” (Bernard Williams 179) cannot be objective in itself. For that reason, I am suspicious of the

overtly exaggerated phrase of “an image in which they recognize their own image” that Levi-Strauss writes when emphasizing the imagined affinity between Rousseau and “they,” those descendent anthropologists including Levi-Strauss. Another part of Levis-Strauss’s methodology is critical:

The study of these savages leads to something other than the revelation of a Utopian state of nature or the discovery of the perfect society in the depths of the forests; it helps us to build a theoretical model of human society, which does not correspond to any observable reality, but with the aid of which we may succeed in distinguishing between ‘what is primordial and what is artificial in man’s present nature and in obtaining a good knowledge of a state which no longer exists, which has perhaps never existed, and which will probably never exists in the future, but of which it is nevertheless essential to have a sound conception in order to pass valid judgment on our present state.’ I have already quoted this remark to bring out the significance of my study of the Nambikwara. Rousseau’s thought, which was always in advance of his time, does not dissociate theoretical sociology from research in the laboratory or in the field, which he recognized as being necessary. Natural man did not precede society, nor is he outside it. Our task is to rediscover his form as it is immanent in the social state, mankind being inconceivable outside society; this means working out a programme of the experiments which ‘would be necessary in order to arrive at a knowledge of natural man’ and determining ‘the means whereby these experiments can be made within society.’ (*Triste Tropiques* 392)

Levi-Strauss defends Rousseau by saying that Rousseau has been unfairly “maligned” and “misunderstood” because Rousseau is said to have glorified “the state of nature” (392). He tries to correct that prejudice by saying that it merely functions as a theoretical “model.” If we take Levi-Strauss’s comment without reservation, Rousseau’s approach to his anthropology is no more than the thought experiment he undertakes by entertaining “the model” (*Triste Tropiques* 392). Actually, the “man” Rousseau concentrates on for his study turns out not to be other men but himself. Rousseau’s “model” or, in other words, “utopia” has been regarded as untrustworthy and so problematic by some critics because, according to Judith N. Shklar, the utopia is “a perfect way to express ideas that were dictated by personal imagination and by a profound need for self-revelation and self-vindication.” Simply speaking, Rousseau’s model lacks historicity



(*Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* 1-12). Levi-Strauss seems to be aware of this censure when he says that “By taking as our inspiration a model outside time and place, we are certainly running a risk: we may be underestimating the reality of progress.” The word choice of “progress” sounds very unclear and even insincere, because there he erases the subject of “progress” and does not believe in its possibility in history (*Triste Tropiques* 392-93). Here I recollect J.M. Coetzee’s words that “[a]uthenticity does not demand that language reproduce a reality; instead it demands that language manifest its ‘own’ truth,” (“Confession and Double Thoughts” 209), and, in that sense, I argue that the language of a confessional anthropologist also needs to be checked with “historical verification.” This critique is related to Derrida’s comments on Levi-Strauss, in which Derrida criticizes particularly about Lévi-Strauss’s un-methodological projection of his empirical impression of the Nambikwara tribe in Brazil:

Neither Descartes nor Husserl would ever have suggested that they considered an empirical modification of their relationship with the world or with others as scientific truth, nor the quality of an emotion as the premise of a syllogism. Never in the *Regulae* does one pass from the phenomenologically irrefutable truth of “I see yellow” to the judgment “the world is yellow.” Let us not pursue this direction. Never, at any rate, would a rigorous philosopher of consciousness have been so quickly persuaded of the fundamental goodness and virginal innocence of the Nambikwara merely on the strength of an empirical account. (Of Grammatology, 127)

While Levi-Strauss paints the landscape of the Nambikwara based on his personal experience in *Triste Tropiques*, Derrida questions the way his biased perspective is mixed with his “emotion.” It is obvious that this “emotion” is intertwined with Levi-Strauss’s feeling of nostalgia for the primitive past, which can be similarly compared to George Eliot’s. I suggest, then, that we revisit the passage in “The Natural History of German Life” where George Eliot’s self-conscious concern about “memory and reflection” turns toward the past. It is noteworthy that the subject of memory is not an individual but “we,” “English” people.

The nature of European men has its roots intertwined with the past, and can only be

developed by allowing those roots to remain undisturbed while the process of development is going on, until that perfect ripeness of the seed which carries with it a life independent of the root. This vital connection with the past is much more vividly felt on the Continent than in England, where we have to recall it by an effort of memory and reflection; for though our English life is in its core intensely traditional, Protestantism and commerce have modernized the face of the land and the aspects of society in a far greater degree than in any continental country. (128-29)

George Eliot's relation to British nationalism is evident. For George Eliot, collective memories are possible, they are grounded in the country, and it is necessary to revivify them for the national identity. George Levine attends to this feature of George Eliot's ideal landscape embedded in memories which are not "out there," but in the "heart." Although he does not explicate how or for what purpose George Eliot has to place these memories in the "heart," the concept of "heart" should be discussed with other themes, such as George Eliot's sympathy, that presuppose the distance of the observer before a spectacle. Let us consider the passage from *Adam Bede* that Levine uses as an example:

What a glad world this looks like, as one drives or rides along the valleys and over the hills! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries, where the fields and woods have looked to me like our English Loamshire—the rich land tilled with just as much care, the woods rolling down the gentle slopes to the green meadows. I have come on something by the roadside which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a great agony—the agony of the Cross. It has stood perhaps by the clustering apple-blossoms, or in the broad sunshine by the cornfield, or at a turning by the wood where a clear brook was gurgling below; and surely, if there came a traveler to this world who knew nothing of the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature. He would not know that hidden behind the apple-blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the wood, there might be a human heart beating heavily with anguish....No wonder man's religion has much sorrow in it: no wonder he needs a Suffering God. (327)

This passage is about Hetty's "journey" after she was informed of Arthur's message of separation. A contrast occurs between the view of "joyous nature" and of the human "agony" hidden in the nature, whose difference is dramatized from each position ("over" and "by") of the narrator. Reading this passage, George Levine refers to Ruskin's interpretation of the sublime beauty of the Alps as seen in "a Turner-esque painting," which, according to him, is not yet

internalized as a feeling of “sadness.” Meanwhile, in George Eliot’s depiction of the nature above, Levine writes: “The extremes of experience are shifted from the Alps to the heart; there is the peril of the sublime, and there its idealization” (*The Realistic Imagination* 215). We cannot say exactly whether this feeling of “sadness” springs from Hetty herself. On the contrary, one would feel that it comes from the observer who keeps his distance and beholds Hetty’s journey in the context of these surroundings. Radically speaking, Hetty’s agony above is presented as a spectacle for the spectator’s sympathy. We must consider Raymond Williams’s comment that Hetty is not fully represented as an individual subject but merely as “an object of confession and conversion—of *attitudes* to suffering” (173, italics original). This means even Hetty’s “heart” is described for the ideal “sadness” in tragedy. All of this suggests that the spectacle of sympathy is another version of the landscape of sympathy. According to Karatani Kojin, it is Rousseau who initiated this kind of “idealization” when facing a real landscape.<sup>16</sup> I add that Immanuel Kant follows that inversion of “romanticism” when discussing “sublimity” in his third *Critique*, where feeling is not in the outside nature, not in “the things of nature,” but is regarded by Kant as internalized in the “mind.”<sup>17</sup> I think that George Eliot’s notion of the “heart” is influenced by or,

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<sup>16</sup> Karatani Kojin says as follows:

“Rousseau, in his *Confessions*, describes his sense of oneness with nature when he was in the Alps in 1728. Although the Alps at that time were regarded simply as an annoyance and obstruction by Europeans, they began to flock to Switzerland to discover what Rousseau had seen. The Alpinist was a virtual creation of literature. Needless to say, it was Europeans who discovered the Japan Alps and initiated Japanese into the sport of mountain climbing... In the very moment when we become capable of perceiving landscape, it appears to us as if it had been there, outside of us, from the start. People began to reproduce this landscape. If this is “realism,” it has actually emerged from an inversion of romanticism.” (*Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* 29)

<sup>17</sup> Kant’s “sublimity” is expressively not in the physical “nature” but in the subject’s inner consciousness. He argues as follows:

“Sublimity, therefore, does not reside in any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind, in so far as we may become conscious of our superiority over nature within, and thus also over nature without us (as exerting influence upon us). Everything that provokes this feeling in us, including

at least, has correlation to both Rousseau's and Kant's thoughts.

### 2.3 The Tragedy of Sympathy and the Law

If George Eliot's sympathy is in the "heart," what is in the outside is not only nature but also laws. Their contrast is highlighted especially when the author considers in-depth legal issues such as crime and responsibility for it. We find examples of this in Eliot's novels from Hetty's infanticide in Eliot's first novel through Gwendolen's willful negligence of Grandcourt's drowning in the last novel. While Hetty's punishment follows a due course with respect to consequences, Gwendolen is acquitted by Daniel because Daniel judges that her inaction is not a direct cause of Grandcourt's death. These different processes of understanding the crimes, according to whether they are in action or in the mind, result in different consequences. Hetty's "unthinking violence" (Hardy 27) makes her act not a sympathetic but merely a catastrophic event, although the narrator pities Hetty's situation after that. Meanwhile, Gwendolen's inability to actualize her desire of killing her husband ironically saves her from its penalty. Nevertheless, from the perspective of a moral standard, Gwendolen's intention in itself could be castigated. As seen from these cases, Eliot's complication of morality with judicial judgments in her novels presents a difficulty in rationalizing jurisprudence. To analyze George Eliot's treatments of legal issues in the historical context of nineteenth-century's criminal laws is beyond the range of this research. The point is that George Eliot presents a dilemma between duty as a law and sympathy as an ethical call in her moral philosophy. I argue that when Eliot emphasizes the practice of

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the might of nature which challenges our strength, is then, though improperly, called sublime, and it is only under presupposition of this idea within us, and in relation to it, that we are capable of attaining to the idea of the sublimity of that being which inspire deep respect in us, not by the mere display of its might in nature, but more by the faculty which is planted in us of estimating that might without fear, and of regarding our estate as exalted above it." (*The Critique of Judgement* 64)

sympathy for “the responsibility of tolerance” (*The Mill on the Floss* 404), it could be at odds with legal approaches to crime.

This dilemma between the need of sympathy for the subject after an event like a crime or misbehavior and the observance of laws before the event denotes an inconsistency. That is, there exists a self-contradictory appeal between duty and sympathy regarding the event. Furthermore, the people who are asked to feel sympathy could be different from the people who should take the responsibility for the fact.<sup>18</sup> Another problem is, if “man’s trespass had fortunate results” (Merleau-Ponty 177), and if the experience of suffering is a kind of pattern in tragedy for the growth of a hero, like Adam (Hardy 32), then, the question of how one’s pain or trespass should be judged with the premise of tolerance needs to be answered. Merleau-Ponty asks an existentialist question about this moral “ambiguity.” He takes an example of a Christian who should follow the commandments of “the Father”:

The ambiguity of Christianity on the political plane is perfectly comprehensible: when it remains true to the Incarnation, it can be revolutionary, but the religion of the Father is conservative. Hindsight may reveal that sin helps create the general good and that man’s trespass had fortunate results. But one cannot say this at the moment of decision, for at that moment sin is still forbidden. Adam would therefore have done better to avoid sin. Perfection is behind rather than before us. The Christian always has the right to accept existing evil but may never purchase progress with a crime. He rally to a revolution that is already over, he can absolve it of its crimes, but he cannot start it (“Faith and Good Faith”177).

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<sup>18</sup> George Eliot must have been aware of this dilemma before writing *Adam Bede*, at least when she reviewed Sophocles’ *Antigone* in 1856. In the article “The *Antigone* and Its Moral,” Eliot points out that this Greek tragedy highlights the conflict between Antigone’s “reverence for the dead and the importance of the sacred rites of burial” and “obedience to the State (laws)” decreed by Creon (364). Both of these seemingly antagonistic principles are justified in their own right, since there is “a good” in each part. Eliot concludes that the conflict between the two represents “that struggle between elemental tendencies and established laws by which the outer life of man is gradually and painfully being brought into harmony with his inward needs” (365). Yet, as Simon Goldhill explains, the matter of how to make the “harmony” in the tension “between inner freedom and external necessity” cannot but set up a significant ethical challenge. Goldhill remarks that such an interest in the conflict between legal and ethical issues was one of main concerns of nineteenth-century German Idealism. See Simon Goldhill, “The Ends of Tragedy: Schelling, Hegel, and Oedipus,” p. 636.

In relation to the “Hindsight” where “Perfection” always lies, U. C. Knoepfelmacher discusses the paradox of a “fortunate fall” of Adam, which alludes to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. According to Knoepfelmacher, Hetty is compared to Eve and her eviction from Loamshire is regarded as a just punishment by the providence of “Nature,” whereas Adam’s regeneration through the awakening of his sympathy is regarded as an ideal ending according to George Eliot’s moral ideas on tragedy. Yet, when Knoepfelmacher suggests that Eliot creates “a ‘cosmos’ containing both natural and moral laws” in *Adam Bede*, which corresponds to “the combination of ‘realism’ and moralism” (Knoepfelmacher 117), there exists a dilemma concerned with the responsibility of the subject. In the case of determinism in which “Nature” rules, as Kant explains, no human actions are free and so the question of responsibility is impossible. Meanwhile, the invocation of duty in one’s moral behavior presupposes the one’s autonomy free from the laws of the “Nature.”

In chapter sixteen of *Adam Bede*, the rector Mr. Irwine and Arthur Donnithorne talk about the final subject of responsibility. Arthur insists that if someone is driven to make a mistake by external causes like “moods” or “circumstances,” he or she cannot be blamed. Arthur’s point is that if external factors precipitate a deed and so a certain action is inevitable, then the subject is free from its responsibility. But Mr. Irwine retorts that the “moods” are already conditioned by one’s “nature,” and “A man can never do anything at variance with his own nature.” Mr. Irwine repeats the word “nature” and reiterates that the final cause of a deed is from the actual agent who is supposed to act according to his or her own “nature.” For Mr. Irwine, neither taking into account one’s initial intention nor acknowledging the outer circumstances can be an excuse for one’s falling into a “folly.” Making legal judgments is, first of all, related to “Consequences” and they are beyond one’s compassionate understanding:

‘Ah, but the moods lie in his nature, my boy, just as much as his reflections did, and more. A man can never do anything at variance with his own nature. He carries within him the germ of his most exceptional action; and if we wise people make eminent fools of ourselves on any particular occasion, we must endure the legitimate conclusion that we carry a few grains of folly to our ounce of wisdom.’

‘Well, but one may be betrayed into doing things by a combination of circumstances, which one might never have done otherwise.’

‘Why, yes, a man can't very well steal a bank-note unless the bank-note lies within convenient reach; but he won't make us think him an honest man because he begins to howl at the bank-note for falling in his way.’

‘But surely you don't think a man who struggles against a temptation into which he falls at last as bad as the man who never struggles at all?’

‘No, certainly; I pity him in proportion to his struggles, for they foreshadow the inward suffering which is the worst form of Nemesis. Consequences are un pitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences, quite apart from any fluctuations that went before—consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. And it is best to fix our minds on that certainty, instead of considering what may be the elements of excuse for us.’ (*Adam Bede* 172-73)

Lisa Rodensky argues that, in *Adam Bede*, George Eliot is in a degree inclined to what is called “Consequentialism,” a moral theory supported by the nineteenth-century’s utilitarianism (*The Crime in Mind* 100-122). Actually, what “[t]hat inexorable law of consequences” (“R. W. Mackay’s *The Progress of the Intellect*” 271) means for George Eliot is ultimately the natural law mastering the process of cause and effect, or a kind of determinism with which Eliot is said to be much preoccupied (*Adam Bede* 584).<sup>19</sup>

In terms of the law with respect to consequences, Eliot’s notion of responsibility or duty departs from any humanitarian understanding. We read that after his secret love affair with Hetty is discovered by Adam, Arthur consoles himself by thinking that he “had been led on by circumstance.” As his feeling of shame overtakes his feeling of duty, Arthur makes up his mind

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<sup>19</sup> The editor of *Adam Bede* Valentine Cunningham explains at the endnote that Eliot’s concern for determinism is in parallel with such as “Darwinians, Social Scientists, Sociologist, Marxists” (584).

to leave Hetty with a “sort of implicit confidence that he was really such a good fellow at bottom, Providence would not treat him harshly” (315). Though Arthur has a fear of “Providence,” he thinks it is on his side. The writer’s tone in here, nevertheless, sounds ironic and even sarcastic in that Arthur’s interpretation of “Providence,” which signifies a kind of divine justice in context, looks so personalized. It is almost like a belief in superstition. Most of all, Arthur’s moral judgment of his action and its consequence is based upon what George Eliot terms “egoism” for its abstract banality. Appealing to “Providence” has no ground in reality but is just regarded as an expression of “fear of consequences” which George Eliot regards as “only one form of egoism, which will hardly stand against half-a-dozen other forms of egoism bearing down upon it” (“The Poet Young” 202). Mr. Irwine understands Arthur’s appeal to one’s inner struggles in the process of an action. So, he tells Arthur that he would pity “in proportion to his struggles,” and explains the reason: “for they [struggles] foreshadow the inward suffering which is the worst form of Nemesis.” We can derive a concept of duty from Mr. Irwine’s saying that one should abstain from the attraction of a desire to a misleading, although the desire is instigated by its surroundings. Such words as “pity,” “inward suffering,” and “Nemesis” all indicate some allusions to the Greek tragedies. That is, sympathy and laws altogether are staged for the reader’s judgment.

That the spectator’s sympathy is a surrogate for the actual pain of Hetty to the extent that it can be sustained implies that it is ultimately ideological and so could be staged like a theatrical performance. This observation resembles the eighteenth-century’s discourses on sympathy, especially from Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Audrey Jaffe argues that “Smith depicts sympathy not as a direct response to a sufferer but rather as a response to a sufferer’s representation in a spectator’s mind” (*Scenes of Sympathy* 4). For instance, when



Smith mentions beggars in the street and other “wretches,” what he describes as the spectator’s first response is “horror” with such an “uneasy sensation” like “itching” (Smith 10). Then, the subsequent feeling of sympathy towards the beggars arises only when they are represented, not presented, to the spectator. During this process, Adam Smith reveals, the spectators are in an uncomfortable situation: “the thought of their own safety, the thought that they themselves are not really the sufferers, continually intrude itself upon them.” He continues: “though [“the thought of their own safety”] does not hinder them from conceiving a passion somewhat analogous to what is felt by the sufferer, [that thought] hinders them from conceiving anything that approaches to the same degree of violence” (22).<sup>20</sup> As David Marshall notes, sympathy is possible in so far as some distance is maintained such that the spectator can have a perspective (*The Figure of Theater* 180-81). And for that reason, Marshall continues, sympathy entails skepticism. As “the age of sensibility [the eighteenth-century] must be played out in the age of skepticism,” both sympathy and skepticism “address the question of whether one person could enter into the thoughts and sentiments of someone else” (*The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* 180). Hetty’s “agony” below shows this theatrical aspect of sympathy:

Poor wandering Hetty, with the rounded childish face, and the hard unloving despairing soul looking out of it—with the narrow heart and narrow thoughts, no room in them for any sorrows but her own, and tasting that sorrow with the more intense bitterness! My heart bleeds for her as I see her toiling along on her weary feet, or seated in a cart, with her eyes fixed vacantly on the road before her, never thinking or caring whither it tends, till hunger comes and makes her desire that a village may be near. What will be the end?—the end of her objectless wandering, apart from all love, caring for human beings only through her pride, clinging to life only as the hunted wounded brute clings to it? *God preserve you and me from being the beginners of such misery.* (*Adam Bede* 389, emphasis mine)

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<sup>20</sup> Jaffe associates this impossible identification with sufferers such as from social losers or the low-class people with the feeling of “horror,” and explains how the middle-class Victorian readers were wary of the risky invitation of sympathy in reading fictions. See Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction*. 1-23.

The narrator appears to have a strong compassion for Hetty. The expression “My heart bleeds for her” testifies to the authenticity of that feeling. But the irony is that George Eliot exposes the ambivalent position of sympathy. Hetty’s suffering makes “you and me” recognize that they are exempted from the “misery.” That means, as Adam Smith says, the arrival of sympathy accompanies “the thought of [our] own safety.”

Therefore, the caution of observers’ direct exposure to “terrifying” events in tragedies is necessary, and we can read it in Leonardo da Vinci’s lesson for representing a tragic spectacle in painting. In *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Sontag introduces da Vinci’s words about how to create a tragic spectacle where beholders’ feeling of pity, not fear, can arise. Simply speaking, this is possible through the way a painter obscures detailed depictions of bloody scenes in a war to the extent that they do not look horrible but rather look beautiful (75). In contrast, Sontag says, we take different attitudes when watching a suffering body in a photograph. To make the suffering object appear as beautiful or “aesthetic” by cameras would be denounced as “heartless” and “inauthentic,” since a photograph is taken “as a transparent account of reality” (81).<sup>21</sup> What makes the difference between the two is that, on the one hand, the reality effect of an image more or less depends on each medium’s technical specialty of conveying the verisimilitude of realness. On the other hand, choosing a medium for the representation of tragic events incurs not only aesthetic but also ethical issues. That is, if necessary, the experience of “shock” needs to be controlled in order for observers to exercise their sympathetic imaginations. George Eliot must have been conscious of this caution. While working on *Adam Bede*, George Eliot had received

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<sup>21</sup> In a similar way, Peter Brooks notes that if only in terms of each medium’s technically mimetic accuracy, photography is given, unlike painting, with a sense in which it “records a moment of the real” That is to say, the function of “representation” in painting is replaced by “presentation” in photography (*Realist Vision* 86).

John Blackwood's message, in which, after reading the manuscript of *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), the publisher asked Eliot to "soften" her depictions of the characters. Eliot answered as follows:

The real town was more vicious than my Milby: the real Dempster was far more disgusting than mine: the real Jane alas! had a far sadder end than mine, who will melt away from the reader's sight in purity, happiness and beauty. My sketches both of churchmen and dissenters, with whom I am almost equally acquainted, are drawn from close observation of them in real life, and not at all from hearsay or from the descriptions of novelists. . . Such of your marginal objections as relate to a mere detail I can meet without difficulty by alteration; but as an artist I should be utterly powerless if I departed from my own conceptions of life and character. There is nothing to be done with the story, but either to let Dempster and Janet and the rest be as I *see* them, or to renounce it as too painful. (Haight 235, italics original)

Haight writes that throughout this letter Eliot "earnestly defends the artistic integrity of her realism" (234). Certainly, George Eliot stands firmly to Blackwood's complaint that the writer's depiction of characters is "harsher" than necessary. She stipulates that the representation of "the real town" is already a softer one than what it is supposed to be. Based upon her "close observation," Eliot says, the depicted objects in each novella in a way come to terms with her "own conceptions of life and character." What is clarified then is that, first, the novelist avoids trying to transcribe what is considered "the real" in a fiction for its accuracy, since it should be mediated by her conception. And, secondly, in order to invite readers' sympathy, such a naturalistic illustration of "the real" is discarded for its "vicious," "disgusting" effect. All these indicate that a sort of idealism becomes essential in Eliot's country novels.

#### 2.4 Perspectivism and Memories in the Landscape of Sympathy

If there exists an intended distance to the past from the position of the writer and if the writer herself is conscious of it in novel writing, I have argued, it deserves our critical attention. Perspectivism is inevitable for the writer in order to induce a realistic illusion, and this illusion

has a relationship with Eliot's emphasis on sympathy in particular. George Eliot is conscious about this point throughout her writing. As we think about this, we need to pay attention to the beginning sentence of *Daniel Deronda* (1876): "Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning." Before introducing the main story, the narrator pauses in the epigraph to ponder the function of the beginning of the novel. This pondering is a question about the conventions of the realistic novel, a wondering about whether there cannot be any other type of beginning. We see soon the appearance of main characters such as Deronda and Gwendolen and we see their surroundings in the beginning. But George Eliot takes a moment in the proceeding to make readers consider if the entering point to the first scene is really "the true beginning," since the initial focus (like the "*in medias res*" poetry) can be understood as arbitrary. To paraphrase the narrator's words, it is merely one of the many possible beginnings. There cannot be an absolute, necessary choice among them, and instead the choice is taken from the narrator's virtually fixed perspective, which the narrator compares to the position of an astronomer who needs to fix his time and place in relation to the moving stars in watching them. There must be some difference in the parallax viewpoint. Likewise, George Eliot thinks it is impossible to capture the "true-beginning." Nevertheless, to whatever extent the beginning is but "a fraction of that all-presupposing fact," "make-believe" itself must be a condition for the start of the novel and, furthermore, as I will discuss in detail later, for the start of the sympathetic imagination.

The reason I point out the invented dimension in the landscape of *Adam Bede* is because George Eliot thinks that it should be discovered, although it is shown as "a landscape" as Raymond Williams criticizes. Eliot's discovery of the country landscape and its "people" registers that there comes a new perspective and a new necessity for describing them. However, it cannot be denied that what Nochlin calls a "myth" is attached to the novel. Concretely

speaking, the myth indicates “[t]he image of the toiler on the land as the very embodiment of that near-metaphysical entity ‘le peuple,’ that prototypical figure of *quarante-huitard* virtue, a figure of unchanging, unassailable value in the midst of an all-too-swiftly changing industrial, urban and commercial world” (Nochlin 115). Since the decline of the peasantry in England accelerated with the Enclosures in the early nineteenth-century, what remained in the British countryside could not present the writer a pastoral picture at the time when Eliot was trying to remember these “common” people and to restore the value attributed to them. I have already briefly mentioned George Eliot’s comment on collective memories projected into the rural past and their connection to the British nationalism. The final criticism in this chapter goes to this mythical link between the concepts of memory and the country in which George Eliot’s ideological inclination unfolds. I argue that the politics of memory works within Eliot’s country novels, especially when it is exclusive for its selectiveness. For this argument, I wish to discuss *Adam Bede* alongside other country novels of George Eliot such as *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Silas Marner* (1861).

According to Elizabeth K. Helsinger, the rural community can be taken as a place to locate national characteristics, since “rural scenes” are “at the center of a nationalizing culture as touchstones of moral scenes and social stability, not sites of contemporary struggle” (*Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain, 1815-1850*, 218). Thus, the connotation of the “country” in the novel implies its parochial setting and the existence of a national readership at the same time. In her country fictions, George Eliot repeats the word “tie” and emphasizes the theme that “we” are linked together and that “We are children of a large family” (*Adam Bede* 264). Leaving aside the factuality of that “tie,” we can surmise that the audience George Eliot has in mind in the usage of “we” must be English readers, if their boundary transcends the

British islands into the colonial worlds. My premise is that the “we” “tied” by “our” collective memories would accept “our” identity without any reserve; but those who do not share “our” memories and do not look like “us” and do not keep the same beliefs may incur disorders and may feel wary of the insiders in the community of that “we.” Such a contrast can be more easily represented in a rural community than in an urban one because, as Raymond Williams says, “In the city kind, experience and community would be essentially opaque; in the country kind essentially transparent” (165). I criticize here the limitation of the “we” that George Eliot imagines, especially when its mechanism is exclusive for the British nationalism.

Except in the case of a few novels such as *Romola* and *Daniel Deronda*, the main settings in Eliot’s novels are concentrated on small villages and country towns, perhaps because she feels it needful to describe the “commonplace things,” the life of “vulgar citizen” with the help of “vulgar details” (*Adam Bede* 161-62). Notwithstanding this microcosmic focus in Eliot’s novels, I pay attention to those neglected or insignificantly treated people, like the gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss*, because I think they are missed from the link created by the word of “tie.” Let me suggest two explanations for this argument in advance: first, Eliot has little concern about the existence of non-British citizens, whether they live in the country or not, because they are not qualified to enter the public sphere as legitimate citizens of the British empire; the second is that George Eliot realizes British identity by discovering the “common people” and, at the same time, by contrasting their identity with the cultural “other<sup>22</sup>” through the negative representation of the other.

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<sup>22</sup> For the definition of the “other” in this chapter, I follow that of Alicia Carroll in *Dark Smile*. In using the term of “(cultural) Other,” she writes it from “a perspective which reorganize Otherness as an invention of a dominant culture, here the culture of Victorian England” (xvii). Although she capitalizes the first initial of “Other” in order to suggest “its constructedness,” I will use the word “other” with the same context.

For George Eliot, one of the elements that constitute one's identity is one's consciousness and experience of time. Only the self who keeps its time consciousness can build its identity from the past to the present. Such consciousness and experience in the duration of time, (which can be translated otherwise as memory, tradition, or history), are treated with great importance in George Eliot's novels. For example, we can think about the loss and recovery of Silas Marner's memory in the eponymous novel. When he leaves Lantern Yard and settles in Raveloe, he discards his past memory as it is affiliated with the treachery of his friend William Dane. It is no wonder then that when he becomes integrated within his community later and regains his happiness with the help of his neighbors, his mind "grows into memory" (*Silas Marner* 134). That is, he recovers a "consciousness of unity between his past and present" (151). We see that the hero's reconciliation with his past is possible only with the accumulation of small "fragments" of his memories and when he is helped by the patient listener Dolly Winthrop, who "revolve[s] what she had heard till it acquired some familiarity for her" (152). By repeating the narration of the past, he cures himself and now the past story becomes not only his but also hers. As he himself recovers his lost memory, the past is no more his "other," but his identity. Therefore, the adaptation of *Silas Marner* into a new community reminds us of George Eliot's emphasis on the role of community. Because of this, I do not think that *Silas Marner's* transition from an exile to the citizen of Raveloe is a real representation of "other" people in the British society. To the contrary, his belonging consolidates the role of community. As Josephine McDonagh puts, *Silas Marner* is "a fable of assimilation within English Communities" ("Space, Mobility, and the Novel" 64).

For another example of cultural otherness, I discuss the gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss*. The episode of Maggie's journey into the gypsy community in *The Mill on the Floss* has

attracted some critics' attentions, especially in terms of the issue of race and colonialism. What they discuss in this episode is, briefly speaking, the correspondence between Maggie's marginal position in her society and the characterization of the gypsies as another colony or cultural other in this society.<sup>23</sup> Susan Meyer remarks the "tragic tension" of Maggie with her society that is symbolized by her pigmentation (*Imperialism at Home* 130); the appearance of Maggie in her childhood incurs the titles of "mulatter" and "gypsy." Her skin color looks "twice as dark as usual" when she is by the side of a white cousin Lucy (*Mill on the Floss* 52). The comment of Tom and the narration of Maggie's inner consciousness about the gypsies seem to be a raw, unfiltered expression of stereotypes about gypsies: they are "thieves, and hardly got anything to eat, and had nothing to drive but a donkey" (88). As such, whatever drives Maggie to meet the gypsy community and makes her wish to see the queen of gypsies, her impression of the community cannot but remain fragmented and illusionary. That is, Maggie's alienated position cannot lead her to have a real relationship with the Gypsies, because the gypsies are, in reality, absolute others or total strangers in British society.<sup>24</sup> The benevolent action of Maggie who tries to be their friend and teacher can be interpreted as an expression of her good will, though it

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Fisher says that with the gypsies this novel creates "its symbols of those live in the land but not in the society." The gypsies represent "a pole outside the social life, a pole of those who accept being outlaws and wanderers" ("Self and Community in *The Mill on the Floss*" 541). Similarly, in the article "History's Progress in *The Mill on Floss*," Susan Meyer follows such polarizing schema that posits the stance of Maggie in the borderline between the white Anglo-Saxon's civilized society and the dark gypsies' savage world. Meyers's study reveals that although George Eliot criticizes the conservative norms and customs that regulate the feminine individuality of young Maggie, her fleeing into the gypsies cannot be an alternative she can take, because Maggie's link with and her similitude to the gypsies are, fundamentally, just "metaphorical," not "literal" (134).

<sup>24</sup> In *Dark Smiles: Race and Desire in George Eliot* (2003), Alicia Carroll explains how Europeans had thought about gypsies: "Marked by the darkness of their skin, hair, and eyes, Gypsies could embody multiple European fears and fantasies of racial contamination and sexual debauchery" (33); "The Gypsy was a highly visible scapegoat, breaking laws not just of towns and country but of culture and gender as well, and Gypsies found a special place as kidnappers within the burgeoning Victorian cult of the child" (34).



seems also to be childlike. However, the failure of Maggie's friendly gesture toward the gypsies shows allegorically that the imaginary coexistence and communication between the British and the gypsies are not so successful.

As we have discussed, George Eliot's limitation in imagining a community in her works makes her focus on the construction of British identity and of British memory, rather than try to include the foreign, racial others. In that sense, it would not be so wrong to say that the process of exclusion of the "other" operates also at the level of memory:

There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the labor of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our own personality; we accepted and loved it as we accepted our own sense of existence and our own limbs. Very commonplace, even ugly, that furniture of our early home might look if it were put up to auction; an improved taste in upholstery scorns it; and is not the striving after something better and better in our surroundings the grand characteristic *that distinguishes man from the brute*, or, to satisfy a scrupulous accuracy of definition, that distinguishes the British man from the foreign brute? (*Mill on the Floss* 127, my emphasis)

This scene is from the part of the novel when Tom return to his home for the reunion with his family at Christmas. George Eliot expresses here how the feeling of Tom's familiarity with his home town and the experience contacted with small, common things around him could be precious for his identity. Needless to say, this is an emphasis on (the British) tradition and community. But the British identity here is consolidated again by the distinction of the "British man" from the "foreign brute." And this "foreign brute" may indicate for George Eliot the vagrant who cannot hold his furniture and fix his memory at a certain place, like the gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss*.

As Helsinger says, "by making scenes of English village life crucial to stories of personal and national identity," Eliot invites English readers to their "nostalgia" (Helsinger 218). We may guess, then, that the "other" cannot receive the invitation to the nostalgia of rural community because the "other" and the British do not share together any memory. In that sense,

the small country settings in Eliot's novelistic landscapes are, in themselves, ideological places that contain the British nostalgia or history, and identity. It is no wonder that the morality including sympathy in both family and neighborhood are examined as central issues in some of Eliot's novels. This is because these communities are moral axes that support the nostalgia of British society, which in Eliot's times met some crises brought about and affected by the Industrial Revolution:

The other main consequence was the destruction of the peasantry. Brutal and heartless though the conclusion appears, there are strong grounds for holding that this contribution to peaceful democratic change may have been just as important as the strengthening of Parliament. It meant that modernization could proceed in England without the huge reservoir of conservative and reactionary forces that existed at certain points in Germany and Japan, not to mention India. And it also of course meant that the possibility of peasant revolutions in the Russian and Chinese manner were taken off the historical agenda. (*Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* 30)

According to Barrington Moore's analysis, the demise of British peasantry in the nineteenth century is a necessity for the growing of British democracy. If "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life" (*Felix Holt: The Radical*, 50), it can be said that the destiny of each character in *Adam Bede* is likewise a determined one, as the concept of "Nature" implies. Nevertheless, George Eliot's appeal to sympathy and the evocation of the "common people" in *Adam Bede* can be read as a response to this "[b]rutal and heartless" change that she experienced. At least, George Eliot would have thought that her response is meaningful because "Art is...a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with other fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot" ("The Natural History of German Life" 110).

## CHAPTER III

### J. M. COETZEE'S QUESTION OF TRUTH-TELLING AND OTHERNESS

“getting to the real self (finding the Mystery I) is a life's task, like cleaning the Augean stables.” (Coetzee, *Giving Offense* 231)

#### 3.1 Coetzee's Autobiography and Truth-Telling in *Youth*

In order to discuss Coetzee's thought about truth-telling in autobiographical writing, I take the example of Coetzee's second memoir *Youth* (2002).<sup>25</sup> If, according to Coetzee, “what calls to be confessed” in one's confession is “a truth about himself that he does not yet know,” I think the text shows much of his unknown truth or hidden desire in a way (“Confession and Double Thoughts 194”).<sup>26</sup> There we meet a somewhat fictional representation of the inner dialogue between two persons across the time of the past and the present. Coetzee here embodies himself as a young man who has left his native country South Africa and has now settled in London. In the job interview with IBM for computer programming, “he” says that “he has left South Africa for good” since “the country is heading for revolution” (44-45). While working there, he spends his weekends going to the cinema, reading in the British Museum, and trying to write poems sometimes. Finally, he comes to write a bit of prose intrigued by an unknowable impulse within:

The story is set in South Africa. It disquiets him to see that he is still writing about

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<sup>25</sup> Coetzee's biographer J. C. Kannemeyer says that *Youth* also can be read as *Künstlerroman* following the tradition of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Kannemeyer 506).

<sup>26</sup> Coetzee has published three autobiographical works until now: *Boyhood* (1997), *Youth* (2002), and *Summertime* (2009). David Attwell and J. C. Kannemeyer call these texts as Coetzee's “autobiographies” (Attwell 153) or “autobiographical trilogy” (Kannemeyer 607) while Derek Attridge classifies them as confessions (see Derek Attridge. *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*. 138-61.) In order to tell some differences from these terms, it would be useful to refer to Coetzee's own definition. First of all, the *confession* is distinguished from the *memoir* and the *apology*, “on the basis of an underlying motive to tell an essential truth about the self” (“Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky” 194).

South Africa. He would prefer to leave his South African self behind as he has left South Africa itself behind. South Africa was a bad start, a handicap. An undistinguished, rural family, bad schooling, the Afrikaans language: from each of these component handicaps he has, more or less, escaped. He is in the great world earning his own living and not doing badly, or at least not failing, not obviously. He does not need to be reminded of South Africa. If a tidal wave were to sweep in from the Atlantic tomorrow and wash away the southern tip of the African continent, he will not shed a tear. He will be among the saved. (62)

The young Coetzee's antagonism towards South Africa seems to be obvious. He decides to get away from the colonial influences by consciously "becoming English." To achieve this goal, he has chosen the way of the middle-class, not the working class, of English life (103). In spite of strenuous efforts to be assimilated into English life, however, he could not get rid of "an air of colonial gaucherie" (71). He feels himself still treated as a foreigner and sometimes confused by those haunting images and memories of the past. Ironically, while reading street names of South Africa in the library with "an eerie feeling," he is "captivated by stories of ventures into the interior, reconnaissances [*sic*] by ox-wagon into the desert of the Great Karoo, where a traveler could trek for days on end without clapping eyes on a living soul" (137). We know that this Karoo, with which the narrator is familiar, forms the background of Coetzee's early two novels *In the Heart of Country* (1977) and *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983). Therefore, we see a contradiction. On the one hand, the young Coetzee wants to "cut all bonds with the past" (*Youth* 98). But, on the other hand, he has recuperated it in the first prose writing. Whereas "South Africa is a wound within him" (116), it appears to be an attractive item for the first story. This memoir stops before Coetzee's next migration to Austin, Texas where he lived while doing his doctoral course in English literature.

One of the thematic concerns in this memoir is the young immigrant's inner conflict between his colonial heritage and his artistic ego that aspires to be recognized as a writer in the Western world. In order to review this conflict, Coetzee practices what he said in the inaugural

speech as a full professor at the University of Cape Town in 1984: that is, to “write down an explanation” to himself in this autobiography. Entitled “Truth in Autobiography,” Coetzee’s speech takes the example of Rousseau’s *Confessions* and points out an ambivalence in confessional writing “between *finding* the truth and *telling* the truth”:

Telling the story of your life [...] is not only a matter of representing the past [,] but also a matter of representing the present in which you wrestle to explain to yourself what it was that *really* happened that day, beneath the surface (so to speak), and write down an explanation which may be full of gaps and evasions but at least gives a representation of the motion of your mind as you try to understand yourself. Indeed, the lies and evasions may be more interesting than the visit itself. (qtd. in Kannemeyer 434, italics original)

In terms of “*telling* the truth” about oneself, Coetzee postulates that the process of self-dialogue or self-persuasion is preliminary to the representation of “I.” In the case of “*finding* the truth,” Coetzee stresses that the “lies and evasions” are inevitable and, ironically, “more interesting” for that reason. Now let us see how Coetzee tells and finds his own truth in this writing.

Coetzee explains to himself why he left his native country and chose a metropolitan city in Europe.<sup>27</sup> The narrator, who speaks in the present tense but must be assumed to have a dialogue with the Coetzee in the past, comments that “he cannot accept that the life he is leading here in London is without plan or meaning” (59). In fact, his initial plan “was to qualify as a mathematician then go abroad and devote himself to art” (22). Although he has quickly become “exhausted all the time” with his London life, Coetzee reminds himself of the determination he made before coming to England and reminds himself of those modernists like T. S. Eliot, Frantz Kafka, and Wallace Stevens, all of whom once had to earn their living doing something besides

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<sup>27</sup> Beside London, the narrator, who represents the young Coetzee’s inner voice, mentions other big cities such as Paris and Vienna for his options in order to live a proper life as an artist. He believes that “Destiny would not come to him in South Africa,” but would come only in these cities “because only in the great cities of Europe does destiny reside” (*Youth* 165).

writing (60). In the end, he finds his own answer to account for the “meaning” of his living in London—“*Experience*”:

That is the word he would like to fall back on to justify himself to himself. The artist must taste all experience, from the noblest to the most degraded. Just as it is the artist’s destiny to experience the most supreme creative joy, so he must be prepared to take upon himself all in life that is miserable, squalid, ignominious. It was in the name of experience that he underwent London—the dead days of IBM, the icy winter of 1962, one humiliating affair after another: stages in the poet’s life, all of them, in the testing of his soul. (164)

Reading in context, we may think that the idea that “The artist must taste all experience” should be from the young Coetzee. However, since the present tense is mixed with the past tense in this passage, it brings about the effect of double retrospections of the narrator. That is, we cannot decide who is actually speaking when reading, for example, this statement: “It was in the name of experience that he underwent London.” This can be spoken from the past, from young Coetzee’s perspective, or from the present, from old Coetzee’s perspective. Likewise, we may wonder whether the “plan or meaning” aforementioned is, in fact, invented or, at least, redefined from the narrator’s present moment of writing. The reason is that the diction of “experience” itself proves the narrator’s hindsight, which *would be* or *would have been* necessary “to justify himself to himself.” So, if a sort of self-persuasion is proceeding in this writing moment, this means that the “artist’s destiny” is, in a sense, re-justified at a meta-autobiographical level.

Nevertheless, Coetzee’s remarkable virtuosity in this memoir is that he makes himself appear as the most critical biographer about himself. The justification of his London life in the name of “experience” incurs another “countervoice” within himself as he senses that there is an element of pompousness. Even though a self-comforting fantasy would be required for his living with “plan or meaning,” he realizes that this comes out of his false consciousness. After all, he acknowledges that this self-justification is “contemptible sophistry”:

It is a justification that does not for a moment convince him. It is sophistry, that is all,

contemptible sophistry. [...] so telling self-justifying lies to oneself is getting to know intellectual squalor at first hand, then the sophistry will only become more contemptible. There is nothing to be said for it; nor, to be ruthlessly honest, is there anything to be said for its having nothing to be said for it. As for ruthless honesty, ruthless honesty is not a hard trick to learn. On the contrary, it is the easiest thing in the world. As a poisonous toad is not poison to itself, so one can soon develop a hard skin against one's own honesty. (164-65)

The main criticism above is about the self-complicity in telling the truth about oneself. He reflects that “ruthless honesty” is not a quintessential factor in judging one's truthfulness to oneself. Rather, he argues that this honesty could be used as an illusion for self-deception when it is blind to “self-justifying lies.” To clarify the reason he had to speak these lies to himself and, at the same time, to make the narrator apologize for these errors would be the final end of this autobiography. Frankly speaking, this exposition aims to excavate Coetzee's unconscious desire, which is unknown to him, and it requires our recognition of his sincerity in this trial. This is the writer's confessional approach to the distanced self who is supposed to exist in that specific period. Notwithstanding this, what is problematic in this narration is that “he” is in a paradox in which he keeps a self-reflective distance enough to know that he has been making the “self-justifying lies to oneself.” We need to be careful in detecting an invisible voice that continues this self-interrogation within the text. It is reasonable for the reader to question Coetzee's meta-critical position and the underlying motif of “sophistry” that “he” also criticizes here. I do not argue that Coetzee here performs “lies and evasions” intentionally. But, as George Eliot says in her last work *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), “half our impressions of his character [in an autobiography] come not from what he means to convey, but from what he unconsciously enables us to discern” (5). What we have discerned up to now is Coetzee's performative skepticism about his truth-telling in this recollection.

The ending part of *Youth* shows “his failure as a writer.” Instead, an awakening shows that “At thirty one is too old to be a programmer: one turns oneself into something else...or one

shoots oneself” (168). Coetzee’s interview with David Attwell tells that “in the mid 1960s he [Coetzee] quits computers in favor of an academic life.” He adds that this was “a life-saving decision on his part” (*Doubling the Point* 393). Hence, despite his failure as a poet or as any other type of a writer in England, the young Coetzee’s decision to continue his self-exile in America thereafter may need to be justified in some way. His answer is that it was a matter of survival for him so that he did not want to shoot himself.

Coetzee’s adoration for the European culture that is affiliated with his literary ambition has a history. His 1991 lecture entitled “What Is a Classic?” is a good reference. What attracts my attention in this lecture is Coetzee’s confession based on a memory when he was fifteen. Discussing the canonicity of a classic, Coetzee revisits his past experience of having heard Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*:

One Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1955, when I was fifteen years old, I was mooning around our back garden in the suburbs of Cape Town, wondering what to do, boredom being the main problem of existence in those days, when from the house next door I heard music. As long as the music lasted, I was frozen, I dared not breathe. I was being spoken to by the music as music had never spoken to me before...

The revelation in the garden was a key event in my formation. Now I wish to interrogate that moment again, using as a framework both what I have been saying about Eliot—specifically, using Eliot the provincial as a pattern and figure of myself—and, in a more skeptical way, invoking the kinds of questions that are asked about culture and cultural ideals by contemporary cultural analysis.

The question I put to myself, somewhat crudely, is this: Is there some non-vacuous sense in which I can say that the spirit of Bach was speaking to me across the ages, across the seas, putting before me certain ideals; or was what was really going on at that moment that I was symbolically electing high European culture, and command of the codes of that culture, as a route that would take me out of my class position in white South African society and ultimately out of what I must have felt, in terms however obscure or mystified, as an historical dead end—a road that would culminate (again symbolically) with me on a platform in Europe addressing a cosmopolitan audience on Bach, T. S. Eliot, and the question of classic? In other words, was the experience what I understood it to be—a disinterested and in a sense impersonal aesthetic experience—or was it really the masked expression of a material interest? (“What Is a Classic?: A Lecture” *Strange Shores* 9)

As for the truthfulness of the “experience,” it is beyond our criticism because the word “revelation” guarantees its authenticity. We may guess that “revelation” here is an analogy to the



“epiphany” in the classic modernist conceptualization. (Coetzee’s comment on T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound in this lecture proves their connection). Suffice it to say that a certain kind of subjectivism is necessary in this case. Coetzee is aware that, valorizing Bach as a classic aside, his personal experience could affect the evaluation of the music as a canon, and that, in this evaluation, a certain prejudice like Coetzee’s “class position” or “material interest” could intervene. That is to say, if this experience was very special for Coetzee, much of the reason is affiliated with Coetzee’s “social marginality” in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> Referring to this experience of “revelation,” the biographer Kannemeyer notes Coetzee’s “unconscious decision...to align himself with a European canon and tradition.” Kannemeyer continues, “he would not get stuck in a small corner of provincial South Africa, but that he would enter the greater world of the metropolis. He became determined to escape from the periphery to the epicenter; to escape colonial restriction and become part of the mainstream of Western civilization. (Kannemeyer 74-75). As we have read from *Youth* and this passage as well, it is not certain whether we should regard this decision as an “unconscious” one because Coetzee has already interrogated the self-complicity of his interest in remembering Bach’s music.

Recounting these examples of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, Coetzee writes in the essay that “to such young people” who live in the colonial world, “the high culture of the metropolis may arrive in the form of powerful experiences” (“What Is a Classic?” 6). It goes without saying that such impact connotes Coetzee’s own experience. When South Africa is denounced as a place of “boredom,” the young colonial boy’s dream to escape the country would work as a catalyst for the reception of the “spirit of Bach.” And the next step, as shown in *Youth*, is to emigrate to the

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<sup>28</sup> Coetzee says in an interview that “by the age of twelve he [Coetzee] has a well-developed sense of social marginality” (*Doubling the Point* 393).

“father country” of Europe and make a success as an artist. The self-appraisal of his artistic life in the London period appears not to be so satisfactory. But what should be redeemed is the willingness to overcome his provincialism. The desperation he had felt at that time cannot forbid his desire to be recognized as a serious writer. Hence we may understand why *Youth* keeps the subtitle of *Scenes from Provincial Life* attached first to the memoir *Boyhood* (1997). Inspired by Gustave Flaubert’s *Emma Bovary*, Coetzee remarks that the provincial’s inclination is “to blame their environment for not living up to art and to take up residence in an art-world.” Coetzee regards it as a “colonial fate” (7). So, there is a match between Coetzee’s “artist’s destiny” as expressed in *Youth* and this “colonial fate.” In retrospect, the fatalism indicates Coetzee’s recognition in the Western world. If it is true that “The classic defines itself by surviving” (16) and thus Bach’s music overcomes its provincialism, Coetzee’s consciousness for his survival likewise should be endorsed. I think this could be one of the unknown truths or desires in the confessional writing of *Youth*. Kannemeyer writes, “Underlying Coetzee’s essay [“What Is a Classic?”] is a tacit autobiographical subtext, the question whether Coetzee, as somebody from South Africa, somebody from the colonies, could ever succeed in writing a classic” (499). Coetzee’s frankness seems to leave room for us to look into his inner thoughts in his recollection of the Bach story. However, even though Coetzee owns that there can be his “material interest” in the evaluation of the Bach piece, it is not thorough enough to dissolve our doubt about the self-complicity between his class origin in that appreciation and his valorization of the music. Therefore, when dealing with the motivation of his emigration to England, we cannot overlook the connection between his literary taste as cultural capital and his entrance to the “middle class” of English life with a profession. If Aijaz Ahmad’s criticism has some relevance here, it is about the fact that, with respect to immigrants and immigration, “in many cases need and ambition

have become ambiguously and inextricably linked” (Ahmad, *In Theory* 86).<sup>29</sup>

On the one hand with respect to his confessional writing in *Youth*, there is a need to explain to himself why he came out of South Africa and, instead, chose England for his new start. What is shown is his long-cherished wish to be a cosmopolitan, modernist-like writer. And Coetzee does not hide his secular desire to be a success as well. On the other side with respect to the writing, there is Coetzee’s reckoning with truth-telling about himself. So, even though he is eager to prove his sincerity, he acknowledges that there can be “self-justifying lies.” In regards to these “evasions and lies” in this memoir, Kannemeyer tells us that in the spring of 1963, Coetzee returned to South Africa, finished his M.A. thesis about Ford Madox Ford, and married a woman named Mauna Philippa Jubber (130). Another odd thing the biographer raises is the question of whether Coetzee “was truly as unhappy as he often suggests in *Youth*” (134). Kannemeyer writes another observer’s testament relating Coetzee’s stay in London. At last, we do not need to believe all the records concerning Coetzee’s re-awakening that ensued from the London life of early 1960s, nor do we need to disbelieve Coetzee’s spell-bound experience of Bach when he was fifteen.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, what must be assured is that he cannot be the only person who can

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<sup>29</sup> Of course, as shown in *Boyhood*, we may need to understand more attentively Coetzee’s Afrikaan background connected with the Afrikaans language that had been in tension with his education of English language at home and school in his boyhood, which appears as one of the main sources of Coetzee’s anxiety over his national identity:

There is the English language, which he commands with ease. There is England and everything that England stands for, to which he believes he is loyal. But more than that is required, clearly, before one will be accepted as truly English: tests to face, some of which he knows he will not pass. (*Boyhood* 129)

We read here the child in this colonial world who “stands to attention when *God Save the King* is played in the bioscope and the Union Jack waves on the screen” (128) is painfully conscious of some “tests” for becoming a true English. What is ironical is that he knows already its results. Coetzee’s continued “tests” in his London life does not seem to be so satisfactory at least regarding their outcomes.

<sup>30</sup> Coetzee’s tribute to Bach is repeated in twenty-third chapter of *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007). The music of Bach is regarded by Coetzee as a sort of religious “grace”:

The best proof we have that life is good, and therefore that there may perhaps be a God

save himself from the quagmire of skeptical truth-telling about himself.

### 3.2 Dialogism and Confessional Truth

Lionel Trilling says that “The subject of an autobiography is... a self, bent on revealing himself in all his truth, bent, that is to say, on demonstrating his sincerity” (*Sincerity and Authenticity* 25). And Mikhail Bakhtin confirms the inherent dialogism in autobiography. He claims that “discovery of the *inner man*” is the ultimate goal in autobiographical writing (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 120). To combine their words, each reader of an autobiography may be a judge about whether the writer is sincere in addressing the reader his “inner man.” However, according to Coetzee, “Autobiography is dominated by self-interest... The only sure truth in autobiography is that one’s self-interest will be located at one’s blind spot” (*Doubling the Point* 392). If this saying has a ring of truth, this signifies that even Coetzee himself could be blind to his “self-interest” in any of his autobiographical writings.

Some critics remark that as part of the experiment of distancing himself from such a self-interested arrangement of truth, Coetzee uses such literary devices as third person narration and the present tense. Analyzing Coetzee’s “voices” in his memoirs and novels, Carrol Clarkson draws a schema that makes a distinction between “I” and “Not I” (the third person within the self) by which “I” is viewed from the perspective of the “He” (Clarkson 19-46). (This is like when Rousseau calls himself “this man” in his *Confessions*.) Consequently, the effects of the use of the third person and the present tense, Clarkson argues, “pre-empt the possibility of seeing the event from the past as unambiguously severed from the present, and the ‘he’ as unconnected to

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after all, who has our welfare at heart, is that to each of us, on the day we are born, comes the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. It comes as a gift, unearned, unmerited, for free. (221)

the ‘I’ who writes” (39). The point is that by de-familiarizing those conventions in autobiography, Coetzee tries to expose the illusion of its objectivity and its formal textuality mediated by the writer’s currently hidden, personal desire. Derek Attridge expresses a similar opinion. He writes that that “The use of third person implicitly dissociates the narrative voice from the narrated consciousness, telling us that this was another person...At the same time, the use of the present tense both heightens the immediacy of the narrated events and denies the text any retrospection.” Their final effect is then that “the reader is refused the comfort of a metanarrative model or perspective from which authorial judgments (here, judgments on his earlier self) could be made (*J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* 143). Then, those effects of “immediacy” and “non-retrospection” that Coetzee is said to achieve in his memoirs would disillusion the self-reflexive distance in autobiographical writing and reading. Nevertheless, I argue that we need to ask whether these effects paradoxically affirm the fact that this text is “written by me,” J. M. Coetzee.

For example, George Eliot writes in her 1879 letter that “The best history of a writer is contained in his writings—these are his chief actions” (Bodenheimer 239).<sup>31</sup> In a similar vein, Virginia Woolf writes that “every secret of a writer’s soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind is written in his works” (*Orlando: A Biography* 211). Following their ideas, Coetzee adds that, “All autobiography is storytelling, all writing is autobiography” (*Doubling the Point* 391).

Simply speaking, “All autobiography is storytelling” means that autobiography is a

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<sup>31</sup> Declining to write Lewes’s biography after his death, George Eliot added in the same letter that biographies “generally are a disease of English Literature.” But that does not mean she was not always negative in writing or reading (auto)biographies. See Nancy Henry. *The Life of George Eliot*. 1-21.

fictional construct. The diction of “storytelling” implies not only the fictional plot in autobiography but also ambiguity in discerning factual information. When it is presented according to the writer’s selected memories, as Walter Benjamin says, memory in storytelling “encompasses its varieties” (“The Storyteller” 98). If “the writer has privileged access to information” in autobiography, we cannot but agree that its reliability is contingent upon the correctness of his memory. Therefore, when someone tells his life story “by selecting [material] from a reservoir of memories” and “fashions it into a narrative that leads into a living present in a more or less seamless way” (*Doubling the Point* 17; 391), what Hayden White calls “emplotment” is necessary. That is, whether or not the connection of events in one’s life story look coherent or “real” depends on the work of the fictional plot. To the extent that the historical narrative depends on a “specific plot structure” (White 85), we also might expect it from one’s personal history.

At the same time Coetzee suggests in the second clause (“all writing is autobiography”) that any writing has a self-reflexive connection to the writer’s inner consciousness. Coetzee’s reasoning is based on the thought that “writing writes us”:

It is naïve to think that writing is a simple two-stage process: first you decide what you want to say, then you say it. On the contrary, as all of us know, you write because you do not know what you want to say. Writing reveals to you what you wanted to say in the first place. In fact, it sometimes constructs what you want or wanted to say. What it reveals (or asserts) may be quite different from what you thought (or half-thought) you wanted to say in the first place. That is the sense in which one can say that writing writes us. (*Doubling the Point* 18)

According to Coetzee, the act of writing itself makes the writer realize his desire or purpose unknown to him until the initiation of the writing. So it is not absurd to suppose that the reciprocal interplay between the writer’s psyche and the development of his biographical story is imitated in novel writing. David Attwell argues that Coetzee’s novels “get beyond the conventional realism” and instead have a metafictional level on which the writer’s self-

consciousness reveals his “autobiographical implication” in the form and the story. Attwell’s example is the medical officer of Part Two of *Michael K* who represents “the form of a second narrator” (Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing* 114-23). His confessional monologue provides an alternative observation to read K’s silence in the refugee camp. The similar motif is repeated in *Foe* (1986). There appears Susan Barton’s imaginary dialogue with Friday. Through this dialogue she hopes to get access to Friday’s consciousness. Confronting Friday’s dumbness, her speech attempts to get over the limit of an impressionistic monologue. Competing with *Foe* (or Defoe) for the erased history of Friday, Susan Barton’s “endeavor to be father to my story” (*Foe* 123) can be compared with Coetzee’s endeavor.

But it should be remembered that such a demonstration of Coetzee’s “evidence of me” (qtd. in Attwell 115) within the novel does not purport to establish the writer’s authority over the texts. To the contrary, Coetzee’s self-consciousness as a writer withdraws it. In the interview with Attwell, Coetzee says that “writing is not free expression.” Refuting the writer’s omnipotent presence in his or her text as a “phantasm,” Coetzee instead draws on dialogism in the novel, which certainly reminds us of Bakhtin’s concept. What Coetzee means by “writing is dialogic” is that it is “a matter of awakening the countervoices in oneself and embarking upon speech with them.” Coetzee continues, “It is some measure of a writer’s seriousness whether he does not evoke/invoke those countervoices in himself, that is, step down from the position of what Lacan calls ‘the subject supposed to know’ ” (*Doubling the Point* 65).

The concept of “countervoices” designates the opposition between different consciousnesses in oneself. When recognizing other voices within himself, the self’s privileged position of knowledge is negated. And this otherness is what Derek Attridge points out as the primary modernist aspect in Coetzee’s texts. Attridge writes, “One consistent aspect of Coetzee’s

techniques as a novelist is to deny the reader any ethical guidance from an authoritative voice or valorizing metalanguage” (*J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* 7). Coetzee’s critical stance towards literary realism, especially concerned with the omniscient perspective, would be a relevant example. But, as this requires in-depth study particularly in the context of the apartheid and South African literature, I will set it aside when discussing those various receptions of Coetzee’s *Disgrace*. By all means, if the self becomes “its own interlocutor” (Coetzee, “Confession and Double Thoughts” 216) and, in doing so, different consciousnesses come to speak with each other in one’s mind, it is possible to ask whether this self-dialogue is merely ventriloquism. In relation to this question, Bakhtin’s imaginative description below is revelatory:

Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation, although only one person is speaking, and it is a conversation of the most intense kind, for each present, uttered word responds and reacts with its every fiber to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person. (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 197)

Following Bakhtin, we understand that the distinction of dialogism from monologism depends on the (invisible) presence of the second speaker.<sup>32</sup> The point is that this presence should be felt or imagined at one’s consciousness. So Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist argue that Bakhtin’s dialogism is fundamentally a mechanism of human consciousness which “modulates the constant exchange between ‘I’ activities and all that is ‘not-I-in-me’” (*Mikhail Bakhtin* 65). While they say that such dichotomy of the self and the other does not lay emphasis on the self alone as in Romantic philosophy, it is not clear how they separate the otherness of “not-I-in-me”

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<sup>32</sup> Of course, the character of the “second speaker” could be diverse according to the first-person’s situation. For example, when Coetzee uses this passage in discussing a South African poet Breyten Breytenbach’s prison writings, the office of censorship in the apartheid South Africa appears as the poet’s invisible “second speaker.” Needless to say, their dialogism is antagonistic (*Giving Offense* 215-32).



from the real otherness outside of the “I.” Rather, one may be dubious whether all these ideas of dialogism and otherness do not go beyond the level of one’s self-consciousness.

Of course, Bakhtin argues dialogism is not a solipsistic self-dialogue. When Bakhtin puts that “Dostoevsky overcame solipsism,” Bakhtin means there are plural “I’s” in his novels. (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 99-100). However, if the guesswork of “the image of the speaking person and his discourse” becomes “the object of creative, artistic imagination,” this image of other person “within an individual’s consciousness” is definitely an “experimental” one in the author’s mind (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 348). What I wish to emphasize here is that the inner dialogue between consciousnesses of the self cannot be equal with the actual dialogue between two, different persons. Above all, their qualitative differences must be noted. That means that the otherness of the self is derivative and artificial in a sense, compared with the otherness of my actual Other. The first reason I heed their difference is because of the ontological distance between the self and the Other. The second is the possible inauthenticity of these “countervoices” in oneself. Though a writer needs to step down from the position of an authoritative voice in his novel and consider other voices within himself, their artistic representation must be mediated by the writer’s self-consciousness. Whether or not such “decentered” or “multileveled” self-consciousness is peculiar to modernists’ cases as Charles Taylor argues (*Sources of the Self* 480-81), its subjectivism is evident. As for the [in]authenticity of the “countervoices” in oneself, in fact, I have put some questions in the previous chapter, particularly about the matter of self-complicity in confessional writing. When it is said to show its true self by mirroring itself, I have asked again whether it is possible to suppose a totally alienated, objectified other self from its current consciousness. Consequently, this question is related to the matter of self-assurance about truth-telling in one’s autobiographical writing.

Radically speaking, this is a question about one's sincerity and authenticity in autobiography.

Especially when discussing Coetzee's attention to the matter of truth-telling in the form of monologue, we need to consult Coetzee's essay "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky" (1985). This essay is significant for several reasons.<sup>33</sup> First, it shows Coetzee's early passion with the issue of truth-telling in autobiography and his elaborate academic explication of it. Second, this essay heralds Coetzee's continuing experiments with confessional writing in his novels. Finally, in terms of the secular confession, Coetzee's criticism here has an implicit connection later to the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) of South Africa. I will apply some critical concepts outlined in this essay to reading *Disgrace* (1999).

Coetzee's interview with Eleanor Wachtell in 2001 is telling. In the middle of their conversation, Wachtell asks Coetzee, "You've written about the nature of confessional writing, and specifically about Tolstoy, Rousseau, and Dostoevsky. As you described it, Dostoevsky was skeptical that the self could tell the truth to itself. Why is self-delusion so apparently inescapable?" Coetzee gives this answer:

One's dealing here with a major dialogue taking place across time between Jean Jacques Rousseau and Dostoevsky. In Rousseau's mind one had only to be very honest with oneself, and brave—considering the possible consequences—and one could tell the truth about oneself. Rousseau's confessions are exactly that; they're an exercise in being ruthlessly frank and honest about one's, what Rousseau would have considered his, most deeply shameful character traits. The dialogue is taken up by Dostoevsky when he says that it simply is not good enough to look in your heart and write, that what comes out when you write is quite as likely to be some self-serving lie as it is to be the ruthless truth about yourself. I must say that, in this confrontation, *my sympathy is wholly with Dostoevsky*. The basis of his position is simply that *the heart of our own desire is unknown to us and, perhaps even further, that it's in the nature of human desire not to know itself fully, to have some kernel of the unknowable in it. That, perhaps, is what animated desire, namely that it is unknowable to itself.* ("The

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<sup>33</sup> Coetzee's own explanation for why the essay is "pivotal" for him is two-folded. First, it treats his continuing interest of "how to tell the truth in autobiography." Second, in retrospect, a self-dialogue for his own truth is embedded in this essay (*Doubling the Point* 391-92).

Sympathetic Imagination: A Conversation with J.M. Coetzee” 45, my emphasis)

Coetzee again makes sure that sincerity is not the same with honesty. As we will see, this passage echoes much of what Coetzee has argued in the essay “Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky.” The key point is that the claim of truth-telling in one’s autobiography is vulnerable to the criticism of the writer’s sincerity, whose example Coetzee mentions is Rousseau’s *Confessions*.<sup>34</sup> Even though one’s memoir or confession is structured by the writer’s authentic belief on his or her memory, it is partial and even tricky. Furthermore, since the self is blind to its hidden desire, the self’s verification of its truthfulness about itself cannot be reliable. For that reason, the final decision about the real truth cannot be done at the self’s conscious level nor depend on the speaker’s honest, authentic feeling. Coetzee’s judgement of authenticity is definitely dissenting for its solipsism. Coetzee says that “Being authentic includes being able to lie and steal and cheat as long as you don’t pretend to yourself that you are not a liar and a thief and a cheat.” (Coetzee and Kurtz, *The Good Story* 85).<sup>35</sup>

Instead, Coetzee argues, “True confession does not come from the sterile monologue of the self, or the dialogue of the self with its own self-doubt, but from faith and grace” (230). Through this statement, Coetzee seems to resort to somewhat spiritual or ethical absolution of one’s confession where a certain reconciliation should be entrusted. Though Coetzee does not make clear how “faith and grace” can guarantee the truthfulness of the confession, it is certain that these “faith and grace” cannot be willed by the confessant but rather they are something like

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<sup>34</sup> Coetzee argues that in the ribbon story, for example, there is Rousseau’s hidden desire for “self-exhibition” before an “unconquerable fear of shame” (206-07).

<sup>35</sup> As to such non-reflective immediacy of authenticity, Coetzee puts as follows: “what distinguishes authenticity from sincerity” is the abolition of the “distance between the writing self and the source of the feelings it writes about” (“Confession and Double Thoughts” 209).

a “blessing” (Attridge 180). To go further, I think “charity” is close to the meaning of “faith and grace.” This charity or, in other words, love, also introduced as *caritas* in *Elizabeth Costello* (156), is regarded by Coetzee as a secular, allegorized version of grace. Like Bach’s music that is given as a “gift, unearned, unmerited, for free” (*Diary of a Bad Year* 221), both grace and charity are given without expecting their compensation:

Against the endlessness of skepticism Dostoevsky poses the closure not of confession but of absolution and therefore of the intervention of grace in the world... To the extent that I am taken as a political novelist, it may be because I take it as given that people must be treated as fully responsible beings: psychology is not excuse. Politics, in its wise stupidity, is at one with religion here: one man, one soul: no half-measures. What saves me from a merely stupid stupidity, I would hope, is a measure of charity, which is, I suppose, the way in which grace allegorizes itself in the world. Another way of saying this is that I try not to lose sight of reality that we are children, unreconstructed [...], to be treated with the charity that children have due to them (charity that doesn’t preclude clear-sightedness).” (*Doubling the Point* 249)

In a practical sense, I argue that the absolution of confession aims to achieve a sort of reconciliation between confessor and confessant, whose example we will see in David Lurie’s hearing in *Disgrace*. Above all, I think this existence of the other is quintessential to the concept of “intersubjective truth” that Coetzee develops later with the psychologist Arabella Kurtz (Coetzee and Kurtz, *The Good Story* 6). In order to approach the concept, I first review the implications of dialogic truth in a monologue.

Let us say again that, in terms of a secular point of view, testifying about oneself alone cannot be objective. To prove his testimony or confession truthful, one needs the other person. That is, a truth should be built upon dialogic relationships (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 120). What is at stake is a testimony or confession in the form of a monologue. In this case, according to Bernard Williams in *Truth and Truthfulness*, two premises need to be fulfilled in conveying a truth (11). First, a subject’s proposition should be accurate description (accuracy), and secondly, the speaker himself should be sincere (sincerity). But the question of how to deem

the speaker as a sincere man belongs to the area of trust and judgment. Even though someone believes himself to be sincere, he must check his self-confidence about his inner motivation previously and then should affirm his belief that he is sincere (Coetzee, “Confession and Double Thoughts” 194). Nevertheless, the belief in one’s sincerity entails a successive question about the sincerity (or believability) of that belief so as to clear his self-complicity. This process of verifying one’s sincerity by oneself leads to but an endless circular reasoning between belief and skepticism (204), which can be compared with the concept of self-reflection through the metaphor of the mirror.<sup>36</sup>

Coetzee, analyzing Dostoevsky’s novels, argues that, with a secular standard, we cannot reach true confession because of “the nature of consciousness” (230). Though it is a very rare example, facing death can temporarily bring a moment of truth-telling as a revelation in which “earthly time ends” (225) insofar as people would not have any doubt whether there is hidden thought. But according to Coetzee’s reading of Dostoevsky, it is not always successful because self-deception can happen unintentionally. To the extent that our extreme skepticism about telling and hearing a truth stops only through the moments of crisis, then our everyday life truth seems to be too far away to catch it. Though some kind of silent action without any verbal explanation like suicide could appear to work as a guarantee of one’s sincerity (226), the violent feature embedded in this notion must be criticized.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Neill regards this state as “a kind of psychological *mise en abyme* in which the confessant endlessly interrogates not only his own truthfulness, but even the sincerity of that interrogation itself” (“The Language of the Heart” 86).

<sup>37</sup> In relation to this matter, an insightful discussion is from Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution*. Arendt regards the idea as absurd and even dangerous that only one’s deeds without speech can prove one’s truthfulness. For example, what is called “the divine truth” tends to posit itself beyond questions and skepticism through human dialogues. What Hannah Arendt criticizes from the character of Melville’s Billy Budd and Dostoevsky’s Jesus in *The Brothers Karamazov*, both of who remain in a mood of mute compassion, is that kind of non-secularism that, by nullifying human dialogues, negates those human

In Coetzee's view, telling a truth is a difficulty, and we should *know* how it is difficult. His words that true confession comes from faith and grace must have a somewhat religious dimension, but this argument shows a new approach to the issue of finding and accepting a truth: an ethical approach to reconciliation. That means the absolution of confession, which means "the end of the episode, the closing of the chapter, liberation from the oppression of the memory" (194) can occur in an intersubjective relationship where mutual trust is elicited so that sincerity can work between the confessant and the confessor. For example, Coetzee introduces Dostoevsky's reading of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* in which a spirit of "mutual all-forgiveness" is revealed (231). We have already seen that some of Coetzee's novels have narrators who tell their experience in the form of personal recollection or monologue. In spite of such partial perspectives derived from their first-person narration, there appear several moments of ethical decision that ask us to suspend our epistemological skepticism of truth and, instead, to believe the sincerity of the narrator and its narration without any condition. The confession of the heroine Mrs. Curren in *Age of Iron* (1990), for example, is such a case, where a reader's trust is required since the impending end of her life mostly makes her voice sound sincere. Thus the final guarantor of her truth-telling is not the crisis but the combination of "truth and love together at last" (*Age of Iron* 129). I argue that the "love" here has kinship to Coetzee's words "faith and grace" aforementioned, and that it also has a link to Martha Nussbaum's compelling concept of "loves' knowledge":

It insists that knowledge of love is not a state or function of the solitary person at all, but a complex way of being, feeling, and interacting with another person. To know one's own love is to trust it, to allow oneself to be exposed. It is, above all, to trust the other person, suspending Proustian doubts. Such knowledge is not independent of

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conditions for doing goodness. But such "goodness beyond virtue" as holy "innocence" is incompatible with judging and proving a truth with "human standards," with human, secular voices (*On Revolution* 77-83).

evidence. Typically it is built upon a good deal of attention over time, attention that delivers a lot of evidence about the other person, about oneself, about patterns of interaction between the two. Nor is it independent of powerful feelings that have real evidential value. But it goes beyond the evidence, and it ventures outside of the inner world. (*Love's Knowledge* 274)

In contrast to the optimism that expects the arrival of “grace” or “love” in one’s confessional writing, there is “cynicism.” Cynicism signifies “the denial of any ultimate basis for values” (*Doubling the Point* 392). I add that what Coetzee calls “the failure of love” underlies this notion of cynicism. What I would like to explore, then, is the cynical perspective towards confessional truth and the need of the sympathetic imagination as these are expressed in *Disgrace*.

### 3.3 The “failure of love” in *Disgrace*

In his speech at the Jerusalem Awards of 1987, Coetzee talked about “the failure of love” in South Africa. This comment is remarkable because this theme has been treated with great significance in Coetzee’s novels, including *Disgrace* (1999):

In the early 1950s, the heady years when the great city of apartheid was still being built, a law was passed making sexual relations between masters and slaves a crime....What was the meaning of this deeply symbolical law? Its origins, it seems to me, lie in fear and denial: denial of an unacknowledgeable desire to embrace Africa, embrace the body of Africa; and fear of being embraced in return by Africa....

At the heart of the unfreedom of the hereditary masters of South Africa is a failure of love. To be blunt: their love is not enough today and has not been enough since they arrive on the continent; furthermore, their talk, their excessive talk, about how they love South Africa has consistently been directed toward *the land*, that is, toward what is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers. (“Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech” 96-97)

I attend to two ideas shown from the speech above. First, Coetzee says that the “failure of love” in the system of apartheid is in tandem with the absence of the sympathetic imagination from these white “masters” of South Africa. Secondly, Coetzee believes that the poor love in South Africa is the result of a reification of those things in “the land.” As examples of the “failure of love” in *Disgrace*, I consider two events. First is David Lurie’s violation of Melanie Isaac. The

second is his daughter Lucy's rape by three black strangers. In that the absence of sympathy and love leads to the feeling of hatred, Lurie's lecture is telling for its theoretical approach to the issue.

Analyzing the part of Wordsworth's *Prelude* that depicts the poet's climbing the Alps (Book 6), Lurie examines the co-existence of the imagination and the real consciousness recollected in the mind of the poet. Lurie says to his students, "Yet we cannot live our daily lives in a realm of pure ideas, cocooned from sense-experience. The question is not, How can we keep the imagination pure, protected from the onslaughts of reality? The question has to be, Can we find a way for the two to coexist?" (*Disgrace* 22). Lurie's solution is to avoid a direct confrontation with reality and instead to keep a fancy for an object that enables him to retain the memory of its "sense-image." He compares it to "being in love." But we soon realize that this "love" is a projection of his ideal image. The "goddesslike form" that Lurie wants to maintain turns out to be his sexual fantasy for Melanie (22-23). Meanwhile, when reading Byron's poem "Lara," Lurie talks about the absence of love between the fallen angel Lucifer and "us." He holds that the feeling of sympathy cannot happen between the two, different species. Because "he is not one of us," Lurie argues, "there is a limit to sympathy" (*Disgrace* 33-34). Ironically, though Lucifer is depicted as "a *thing* of dark imaginings" in the poem and regarded as "a monster" with "a mad heart" by Lurie, this character has a parallel with Lurie. We read that the "dark" image attached to the fallen angel is used later in Lurie's appearance at Melanie's home. There Lurie is described as "the unwanted visitor, the man whose name is darkness" (168). Hence, if Melanie is treated like a "thing" in Lurie's sexual fantasy, it is because Lurie has no sympathy with Melanie but instead has an unknowable desire for her from the start. He thinks to himself that "*I was a servant of Eros*" (89).



The matter of reification is connected to the concept of “*Lösung*” [solution or processing] of the dogs in Bev Shaw’s hospital (142). Implying an analogy between the Jewish victims in the death camps and the euthanized dogs in the hospital, the word indicates the thing-like-ness of the animals. Therefore, the “dishonour” inflicted on the dogs is read as a comparison to the disgraced living of Lucy who “has become a dog-man” (146) and of Lurie who should live “like a dog” after the rape incident (205). The most incomprehensible aspect of her rape for Lucy was the reason she was hated by them: “It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was...expected. But why did they hate me so?” (156). Lurie replies that this “hatred” or, in other words, this “failure of love,” has a historical context in their country: “It was history speaking through them...A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors” (156). We understand that Lurie tries to see their tragic event as an allegory of the colonial history to which they commonly belong.

Despite their isolation within “their territory,” Lucy’s decision to stay in the farm carrying her baby sounds unrealistic to Lurie. Above all, the Lucy’s own claim that she is not a minor character, but has a right to insist on her own life style testifies that she has an alterity on which Lurie’s paternity cannot encroach. In a sense, we can say that her voice here represents a “countervoice” in the writer’s consciousness. That is, while Lurie’s acts and ideas hitherto have been dominant in leading the plot of *Disgrace*, Lucy now tries to change the perspective not only of his father but also of readers particularly in regard to the division between the main and the minor voice in the novel.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Michael G. McDunnah argues that “[Coetzee] sets us the ethical challenge of understanding and sympathizing with Lurie by charging us to ‘think ourselves’ into this being. Even as we resist association with Lurie we are required to follow his journey exclusively through his own limited perspective, without

You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions. (198)

What Lucy says fully attests that the father and the daughter are not “on the same side.” But, as Elizabeth Lowy remarks, it should be noted that Lurie is depicted from the beginning as “an unnatural father, a predator rather than a protector” (“Like a Dog”). If his growing sympathy with animals in the second half of the novel has some significance, the limit of his sympathy caused by the severed “normal ties of affection” in the “colonial situation” also should be considered (Lowry). According to Mike Marais, “Coetzee gives his protagonist [David Lurie] the ethical task of developing a sympathetic imagination and... places his protagonist in positions which seemingly enable precisely such a growth.” However, Marais argues that this work “undermines, even as it installs, the possibility of his development, thereby questioning the ability of the imagination to achieve what it is supposed to achieve” (*Secretary of the Invisible* 163). Lurie’s sympathetic imagination of Lucy’s rape scene is the test of the possibility. We read that Lurie’s being “capable of imagining” what had happened to Lucy leads him to reflect over his violation of Melanie Isaacs. Feeling contrition, he visits Melanie’s house to make an apology to her father. Notwithstanding, what is unfinished for Lurie is the “imaginative task” (Marais 170) “to be the woman.” This is a radical question about whether Lucy’s alterity is beyond Lurie’s sympathetic imagination.

*You weren't there. You don't know what happened.* He is baffled. Where, according to Bev Shaw, according to Lucy, was he not? In the room where the intruders were committing their outrages? Do they think he does not know what rape is? Do they think he has not suffered with his daughter? What more could he have witnessed that he is

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the comfort of any authorial presence to assist us in making ethical judgment” (“We are not asked to condemn’: Sympathy, Subjectivity, and the Narration of Disgrace” 16). In spite of the relevance of this analysis in general, I think Coetzee’s countervoice of Lucy here subverts our one-sided empathy with the character Lurie.

capable of imagining? Or do they think that, where rape is concerned, no man can be where the woman is? Whatever the answer, he is outraged, outraged at being treated like an outsider. (140-41)

*You don't understand, you weren't there*, says Bev Shaw. Well, she is mistaken. Lucy's intuition is right after all: he does understand; he can, if he concentrates, if he loses himself, be there, be the men, inhabit them, fill them with the ghost of himself. The question is, does he have it in him to be the woman? (160).

I argue that it is necessary to distinguish the failure of sympathy from the *difficulty* of sympathy. In the animal issue, for example, Lurie's position in the beginning is that "We are of a different order of creation from the animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different. So if we are going to be kind, let it be out of simple generosity, not because we feel guilty or fear retribution" (*Disgrace* 74). For that reason, Lurie follows the decision of the "Church Fathers" that "Their [animals'] souls are tied to their bodies and die with them" (78). That is, he calls for the differentiation of sympathies between different kinds of beings. Then, passing through his sufferings and helping Bev Shaw's work, his mind towards them changes and cannot bear to "inflict such dishonour upon them" (144). His expanded imagination drives him to oppose Bev Shaw's saying that "You don't understand, you weren't there," and he tries to imagine Lucy's rape scene. Lurie shows a strong, emotional repulsion to the violence and at the same time blames Petrus's irresponsibility and his assumed complicity with the incident. While Petrus "took care not to be in the vicinity," Lurie says, "I know what Lucy has been through. I was there." However, Bev Shaw's brief retorts dispels his position within the affair. She says, "But you weren't there, David. She told me. You weren't." Though Lurie first feels "baffled" and "outraged" because of their separation, he seems to finally succeed in imagining himself within the position of the men who raped his daughter. But "does he have it in him to be the woman?" is an open-ended question like "What is it like to be a bat?" in *Elizabeth Costello*. I believe Coetzee presents a positive answer at least in the novel *Elizabeth Costello*. It is possible through the work

of fiction:

“But my mother has been a man,” he persists. “She also has been a dog. She can think her way into other people, into other existence. I have read her; I know. It is within her powers. Isn’t that what is most important about fiction: that it takes us out of ourselves, into other lives?” (*Elizabeth Costello* 22-23)

As we see, the essence of the novelistic imagination from Elizabeth Costello is the sympathetic imagination. And she claims that “There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination” (77). Certainly, “if he loses himself,” Lucy can become the black intruders as they are the same kinds. But owing to his failure of love caused by his lacking “the lyrical” (171), his sympathy for femininity is frustrated. And I note that Lucy’s difficulty in the imagination “to be the woman” is no more than Coetzee’s. Attwell’s biography shows how Coetzee had felt some trouble in describing Lucy’s “inner life.” Attwell reveals Coetzee’s note written on 1 May 1997: “The problem is Lucy. Whatever she is going through, I can’t feel it from the inside” (Attwell 205). Let us say again that, this difficulty does not indicate directly the impossibility of sympathy or love between different races, genders, or even species. If feeling sympathy or love for others is taken as a must in Lurie’s case, the essential element in expanding his sympathy is, I argue, the willingness of the subject who yearns to feel it. Whether or not sympathy is a duty is a topic that will be discussed in the next chapter. Nonetheless, if there is a common ground between the dialogic imagination of the opera about Byron’s life, to which Lurie devote himself in the final part of the novel, and the sympathetic imagination “to be the woman” or to be an animal in the novel, it is the consideration of the otherness of the other.<sup>39</sup>

In the essay “Apartheid Thinking” (1991), Coetzee remarks that “Apartheid will remain

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<sup>39</sup> I agree with Peter D. McDonald’s argument that this Byron opera is “another attempt at redress on David’s part.” McDonald continues, “Testing his daughter’s claims about the limits of his imagination, he tries to see the woman’s side of the story by putting Teresa Guiccioli, one of Byron’s spurned mistresses, at its centre.” (“Disgrace Effect” 328)

a mystery as long as it is not approached in the lair of the heart. If we want to understand it, we cannot ignore those passages of its testament that reach us in the heart-speech of autobiography and confession” (“Apartheid Thinking” *Giving Offense* 164). Coetzee’s point in this statement is about sincerity in the confession, and we know this has some relation to the motif in the hearing of the TRC.<sup>40</sup> Roughly speaking, they share the idea that, in order to reflect over the wrong history of apartheid, heartfelt confessions from those wrongdoers should be first provided.

Whether or not Coetzee expected it, some critics find a parallel between David Lurie’s trial in *Disgrace* and the historical hearings of the TRC.<sup>41</sup> As his only two novels *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* are set in contemporary South Africa, such comparison would be unavoidable. However, Attwell argues that their relation is “remote” and that it is “very unlikely” that Coetzee would take into account the TRC as a direct critical context when writing the novel. Attwell says that Coetzee started writing *Disgrace* before the TRC assumed its role. And he adds that the showing of remorse on the part of wrongdoer was not in the program nor in the “ethos” of the TRC. Rather, he links the confession’s theoretical implication to Roland Barthes’s idea of “fascist” language and, especially, to Michel Foucault’s discourse of “power” (Attwell, 198-200). According to Foucault, “Western societies have established the confession as one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth” (*The History of Sexuality* 58).

Setting their connection aside, I raise the issue of “cynicism” that Coetzee mentions in discussing the secular confession. Cynicism, in opposition to “faith and grace,” is skeptical about

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<sup>40</sup> The TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) was the president Nelson Mandela’s effort to bring reconciliation in South Africa in 1995. The chair was Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the task of the commission was to “investigate violations of human rights since 1960, with the power to grant amnesty to transgressors who made a full confession” (Kannemeyer 473).

<sup>41</sup> See Rebecca Saunders. “*Disgrace* in the Time of a Truth Commission.”

the arrival of truth in one's confession and radical in distinguishing sincerity from the performance of sincerity. As Michael Neil aptly points out, confession "requires and abhors an audience" and it is "as much a social as a personal act" ("The Language of the Heart" 83). Therefore, the dilemma in the process of confession is two-fold. The first is about how to detect the voice from the "heart," and the second is about who can have the authority to judge the sincerity of the voice. After Melanie charges Lurie for his sexual harassment, the university investigates the affair and makes Lucy confess his fault in the hearing. In the conversation between Lurie and "They" of the university committee, Lurie shows his cynicism toward confessional truth:

'What do you want the statement to contain?'  
 'An admission that you were wrong.'  
 'I have admitted that. Freely. I am guilty of the charges brought against me.'  
 'Don't play game with us, David. There is a difference between pleading guilty to a charge and admitting you were wrong, and you know that.'  
 'And that will satisfy you: an admission I was wrong?'  
 'No,' says Farodia Rassool. 'That would be back to the front. *First* Professor Lurie must make his statement. *Then* we can decide whether to accept it in mitigation. We don't negotiate first on what should be in his statement. The statement should come from him, in his own words. Then we can see if it comes from his heart.'  
 'And you trust yourself to divine that, from the words I use—to divine whether it comes from my heart?'  
 'We will see what attitude you express. We will see whether you express contrition.'  
 'Very well. I took advantage of my position vis-à-vis Ms Isaacs. It was wrong, and I regret it. Is that good enough for you?'  
 'The question is not whether it is good enough for me, Professor Lurie, the question is whether it is good enough for *you*. Does it reflect your sincere feeling?'  
 He shakes his head. 'I have said the words for you, now you want more, you want me to demonstrate their sincerity. That is preposterous. That is beyond the scope of the law....' (54-55)

According to Rebecca Saunders, David Lurie's position in this part is that "justice is a matter of calculable adequation, of indemnity and exchange" (Saunders 100). I do not totally agree with this argument. When Lurie pleads guilty, that does not mean that Lurie acknowledges his ethical responsibility to the committee. On the contrary, Lurie insists that there should be a division of morality from legality in confessing his fault. To borrow Paul de Man's argument, "[t]o confess

is to overcome guilt and shame in the name of truth: it is an epistemological use of language in which ethical values of good and evil are superseded by values of truth and falsehood” (“Excuses” *Allegories of Reading* 279). Therefore, Lurie thinks that while he can admit or confess that “I was wrong,” the morality concerned with his integrity is beyond their indictment. That is the reason why Lurie refuses to “demonstrate” his sincerity before them. He claims that they cannot read his ‘heart’ nor do have the right to ask him to show it. However, what “they” want to see is a kind of spectacle that would be assumed to show Lurie’s attitude of repentance. Lurie says to Lucy later as follows: “They wanted a spectacle: breast-beating, remorse, tears if possible. A TV show, in fact” (66). What Lurie denies in his confession before the hearing is, therefore, the idea that one’s sincerity or the statement “from his heart” can be enforced out in order to be communicated with others. This is like, to borrow Mahmood Mandani’s expression, “an institutionally produced truth” (“The Truth According to the TRC” 177).<sup>42</sup>

We can find the same kind of denial of the performance of sincerity in *Elizabeth Costello*. In the final chapter of the novel (“At the Gate”), Costello is urged to speak her “belief” in an imaginary court. Just as Lurie is asked to show his “heart,” Costello is asked to show her “passion” before the examiners, who note that Costello displays “cynicism” and so she is a “disbeliever” (*Elizabeth Costello* 201). Ironically, she is told by a woman that “It is not belief that the boards are after. The effect is enough, the effect of belief. Show them you feel and they will be satisfied” (214). In other words, what “they” want to see is a kind of “ritual” of confession (Foucault 62). The desperation Costello feels comes from the thought that her passion or belief is not a substance to be measured by herself or others. Costello’s question of “*How do*

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<sup>42</sup> Coetzee expresses his reservation in judging the accomplishment of the TRC in an interview with Jane Poyner. Coetzee remarks that “Only the future will tell what the TRC managed to achieve” (*J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual* 22).

*you know where your voice come from?*" (204) designates, at the fundamental level, a cynicism about sincerity especially when it is treated as a means, not as a purpose. And this cynicism is the other side of an agnosticism that suggests that one cannot know "what one believes in" (219). In relation to this, I attend to Coetzee's saying that "the heart of our own desire is unknown to us" ("The Sympathetic Imagination: A Conversation with J.M. Coetzee" 45). For example, we can think about Lurie's mystic comment that he was "a servant of Eros" when he tries to explain why he violated Melanie. In spite of his unknowable desire, Lurie knows this saying is not only "vanity" but also "not a lie, not entirely" (89). Hence, although he can say to himself that he was faithful to his desire, he cannot say his self was responsible for this desire. Because of this skepticism about the self, Coetzee says that "getting to the real self (finding the Mystery I) is a life's task, like cleaning the Augean stables" (Coetzee, *Giving Offense* 231).

I argue that "heart" is at the core of Coetzee's emphasis on the sympathetic imagination and so it is concerned with a matter of the will or the active mind of the subject who cares and listens to the voice of the heart within. For example, Elizabeth Curren in *Age of Iron* says that the word *caritas* is "from the Latin word for the heart." And she adds that "A lie: charity, *caritas*, has nothing to do with the heart," because "the spirit of charity has perished in this country." Instead, she says, "Care: the true root of charity" (22). The work of heart then has both a spiritual and a corporeal concept. Needless to say, care to others is a quintessential element in feeling sympathy. Therefore I attend to the fact that when Coetzee argues that Bakhtin's dialogism has a spiritual meaning, it is ultimately a dialogism of sympathy:

...at a deeper level dialogue requires a power of projecting oneself, via a faculty of sympathy, into the life-view and ultimately the being of the other. This projection of oneself cannot be into some imagined version of the other: it has to be into the actual being of the other, no matter how difficult and unpleasant and even boring that may be. This power seems to me more than simply a professional one—a power that can be learned and passed on from one generation of the caste of healers to the next. In essence it seems to me spiritual. (Coetzee and Kurtz 52)



I think Coetzee is not so pessimistic finally in the realization of sincerity. If the heart also indicates something to be felt within one's body, there is no reason to deny its existence. This is like what Costello says in her belief in the ram and the frog. The sacrificed ram in the story of *Odyssey* is "not just an idea, the ram is alive though right now it is dying" (211). According to Louise Bethlehem, this reading is to "lend our own corporeality to text to animate the fiction of hers" ("*Elizabeth Costello* as Post-Apartheid Text" 25). Also the frog in her memory is "no allegory, it is the thing itself, the only thing" (*Elizabeth Costello* 217). Likewise, if Lurie helps Bev Shaw's work "out of the goodness of [his] heart" (*Disgrace* 77) and "tears flow down his face" after assisting killing the dogs, we do not have to distrust the tears. All these descriptions testify the work of sympathy for the animals. In terms of the sympathetic imagination, the connection between the animal issue and the motion of the heart will be discussed in next chapter, where we can discuss such issues as whether sympathy is a duty and whether a fiction is necessary for the sympathetic imagination.

### 3.4 Coetzee's Defense of the Novel

Coetzee says, "I had left South Africa to be part of a wider world. But now I discovered that my novelty value to the wider world, to the extent that I had any value, was that I came from Africa" (Attwell 336). This African identity is reflected in the chapter "The Novel in Africa" in *Elizabeth Costello*. The novelist Egudu talks about some African traits in the indigenous stories and their appealing to the Western world for their exoticism. Against him, Costello criticizes the role of interpreter, "interpreting Africa to their readers" (51). Though she is also from the "third-world," Australia, her theory of the novel is a little abstract:

Like history, the novel is thus an exercise in making the past coherent. Like history, it explores the respective contributions of character and circumstances to forming the present. By doing so, the novel suggests how we may explore the power of the present

to produce the future. That is why have this thing, this institution, this medium called the novel. (*Elizabeth Costello* 39)

The notion that the novel is an “institution” attracts our interest.<sup>43</sup> And this comparison of the novel and history is already made in Coetzee’s essay “The Novel Today” (1988). Actually, to circumscribe Coetzee’s writings within the contours of South Africa seems no longer possible now. Since Coetzee emigrated to Adelaide, Australia in 2002 and acquired Australian citizenship in 2006, he has published some “Australian novels.”<sup>44</sup> In a letter to Paul Auster, Coetzee says that his literary career has come to have a new phase:

One can think of a life in art, schematically, in two or perhaps three stages. In the first you find, or pose for yourself, a great question. In the second you labor away at answering it. And then, if you live long enough, you come to the third stage, when the aforesaid great question begins to bore you, and you need to look elsewhere. (Auster and Coetzee, *Here and Now* 88)

Though it is too brief, Coetzee’s retrospection in this passage provides an overview for his entire career. Of course, “the third stage” indicates Coetzee’s settlement in Australia. Consequently, we are led to ask what the “great question” was that Coetzee had had in his first stage and what if any answer he had made in the second. Although Coetzee does not stipulate the “great question” in the letter, David Attwell explains that it is the question “*What script has my history written for me, and how can I rewrite it?*” (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing* 209). I believe the “history” here cannot but have complex meanings for Coetzee. As seen from his memoirs, such

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<sup>43</sup> With respect to the feature of “institution” in fiction, I attend to Masao Maruyama’s argument that when there is a “specific attitude that underlies a belief in fiction,” it is “one that evaluates man’s intellectual productivity in the highest term.” See “From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics.” 245-67.

<sup>44</sup> This term “Australian Novels” is from J. C. Kannemeyer’s biography, *J. M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing* (575). After his emigration, Coetzee has published six novels until now: *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), *Slow Man* (2005), *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), *Summertime* (2009), *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013), and *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016).

as *Youth*, the personal history in Coetzee's early "stages" is not separated from the public history of colonial South Africa. That Coetzee "rewrites" this history signifies that Coetzee reviews some problems in this history through his post-colonial perspective. And it is true that many critics have read Coetzee novels – including *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), *Age of Iron* (1990), and *Disgrace* (1999) – as allegories of the (post-)colonial situations of South Africa.<sup>45</sup> One of the debates incurred by means of this is whether his works are truthful representation of South Africa.

For example, the reactions to Coetzee's winning the Booker prize with *Disgrace* in 1999 were not entirely favorable in South Africa. Although Gerald Kaufman, the chairman of the judges' panel for the prize in that year, commented that *Disgrace* is "a millennial book because it takes us through the 20<sup>th</sup> century into a new century in which the source of power is shifting away from Western Europe,"<sup>46</sup> some readers in South Africa took it as an unrealistic and even "racist book." Nadine Gordimer says, "In the novel *Disgrace* there is not one black person who is a real human being. I find it difficult to believe, indeed more than difficult, having lived here all my life and being part of everything that has happened here, that the black family protects the rapist because he's one of them. If that's the only truth he could find in the post-apartheid South Africa, I regretted this very much for him" (qtd. in Kannemeyer 528). In a similar vein, Chris van Wyk remarks that "The white characters are fleshed out, the black evildoers are not" (528). While in the outside of South Africa the novel was read as "an allegory about what is happening

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<sup>45</sup> However, Derek Attridge, who emphasizes the "singularity" of a literary text and its reading as an "event" (64), goes against such an allegorical reading of Coetzee's works. See Attridge, "Against Allegory." *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*. 32-64.

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Lyall. "South African Writer Wins Top British Prize for Second Time." *The New York Times* 26 Oct. 1999. Web. 27 Dec. 2007.

to the human race in the post-colonial era” (Kaufman) the ANC (African National Congress) used it as an “historical witness to the persistence of racism among white South Africans” in an oral submission to the Human Right Commission’s Hearings in the media on 5 April 2000 (McDonald 323). According to the submission, Coetzee’s depiction shows “the white ‘perception of the post-apartheid black man’” (Kannemeyer 529). Another harsh but significant criticism came from Jakes Gerwel, former professor of literature and Director-General of the President’s Office under Nelson Mandela:

J. M. Coetzee’s recent award-winning novel has now for some time been nagging at one with the bleak view it projects of the social decline, moral disintegration and fraying of the national fabric of South Africa. How come that one of our most potent creative spirits—and undoubtedly one of the most best-known internationally—would be inspired by such images in his fictional recreation of the country?... The question I am left with after Coetzee’s prize-winning novel is: what does it say about the rest of us if the homelessness of the white-in-Africa is cast in these images?

It is not just an existential homelessness of the white that becomes the metaphorical raw material of this picture. The near-barbaric post-colonial demands of black Africans and the exclusion of possibilities of civilized conciliation are the building blocks of this tale. (Leaving out of the equation for the moment the coloured characters as whores, seducibles, plaintiffs and prosecutors-with-attitude.)” (Gerwel 2; qtd. in Kannemeyer 530-31)

As the article’s title suggests (“Is *this* the right image of our nation?”), Gerwel’s critical focus is on the correctness of Coetzee’s representation of the country. Dealing with the question about the “right image” of one’s nation, one may ask whether the Coetzee’s novel should be read purely as “South African literature” so that he should take any responsibility for his “fictional recreation” of “our nation.”

Here we need to remember Coetzee’s counter-critical remark that “Stories are defined by their irresponsibility” (*Doubling the Point* 246). What he concentrates on his writing is not such historical, realistic testaments to the colonial history of South Africa. Although he feels

sympathetic with Nadine Gordimer's position,<sup>47</sup> he is resistant to the meta-narrative in the literary realism. Though Attwell designates the history issue from the "great question," I have argued that the other question of how to tell a truth in autobiography without self-deception has been a great interest to Coetzee since at least 1985, when he wrote the essay "Confession and Double-Thoughts." I propose that Coetzee's interest in truth-telling in autobiographical writing is an antidote to what he terms as "orthodox history" of South Africa. Whether it is derived from his own reaction to the apartheid system would be another issue to be clarified with in-depth biographical research.

For reference, I suggest reading Coetzee's essay "The Novel Today." Written during the state of emergency, the essay professes Coetzee's belief in the novel and its possibility as a truth. Ultimately, Coetzee's comparison of the novel and history in this article is based on an argument "about truth, about greater or lesser truth" (2). Facing "intense ideological pressure like the present," Coetzee observes that "in South Africa the colonization of the novel by the discourse of history is proceeding with alarming rapidity." That means there is a "tendency" in South Africa "to subsume the novel under history (2-3). However, Coetzee argues that the novel, in its "rivalry" to history, may arrive at "a greater truth" than "history" by virtue of the novel's "own procedures and issues" (3):

[...] in times of intense ideological pressure like the present, when this space in which

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<sup>47</sup> I believe Coetzee's remark about Gordimer also can be applied to himself:

Since early in her career Gordimer has been exercised by the question of her own place, present and future, in history. The question has two forks: What will the verdict of history be on Europe's project of colonizing sub-Saharan Africa, of which she has willy-nilly been part; and what historical role is available to a writer like her born into a late colonial community? ("Nadine Gordimer" *Inner Workings* 255)

Pointing out such influences as Sartre and Camus, Coetzee argues that Gordimer adopted "the role of witness to the fate of South Africa" (255). He also says that "At the heart of the novel of realism is the theme of disillusionment," and the example is *Don Quixote*. He adds, "Gordimer is an heir of the tradition of realism that Cervantes inaugurates" ("Nadine Gordimer" *Inner Workings* 256).

the novel and history normally coexist like two cows on the same pasture, each minding its own business, is squeezed almost to nothing, the novel, it seems to me, has only two options: supplementarity or rivalry. It cannot be both autonomous and supplementary. If the novel aims to provide the reader with vicarious first-hand experience of living in a certain historical time, embodying contending forces in contending characters and filling our experience with a certain density of observation, if it regards this as its goal for the rest—for what I will call its principal structuration—depending on the model of history—then its relation to history is self-evidently a secondary relation. (3)

Coetzee's sense of responsibility as a writer as well as a witness to the scandalous regime in *status quo* must be incisive in this essay. While he implicitly criticizes the censorship in the apartheid system of South Africa, he insists on the autonomy of the novel: "Storytelling can take care of itself" (3). I do not think that Coetzee's criticism of history here does not purport to claim the novel's superiority in depicting the reality of South Africa. He just supposes that both history and the novel are "a kind of discourse" (4), and this fully reminds us of Hayden White's argument that "Viewed simply as verbal artifacts histories and novels are indistinguishable from one another" (*Tropics of Discourse* 122). After all, Coetzee's defense of the novel implicates his anxiety about "truth" whose notion and value were distorted and depreciated in the apartheid system. Thus, as Salman Rushdie puts, "the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth" ("Imaginary Homelands" 14). If a truth in the novel depends on a "particular way" in its literary representation, then novel writing does not need to follow the model of history. And we realize that Coetzee's reservation to literary realism is in parallel with his opposition to what he calls the "orthodox history" of South Africa.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Coetzee's evaluation of Lukács's literary criticism is the example. In an interview with Attwell, Coetzee says :

I happen to think Lukács' judgment [about Kafka and Joyce] wrong, conditioned by more than a little moralistic prejudice; nor do I think much of what he has to say about Tolstoy and Balzac. Nevertheless, the general position Lukács takes on what he calls realism as against modernist decadence carries a great deal of power, political and moral, in South Africa today: one's first duty as a writer is to represent social and historical processes; drawing the procedures of representation into question is time-wasting; and so forth. (*Doubling the Point* 202).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DISTANCE OF SYMPATHY

“So much depends... upon distance.” (Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 207)

#### 4.1 Sympathy of Perception and Moral Judgment

In *Disgrace*, after watching two tethered sheep that will be killed for his neighbor’s feast, David Lurie feels reluctant to join there. Facing an unexplainable emotion within himself towards the animals, Lurie says to Lucy that “I am disturbed. I can’t say why” (127). In spite of that uncomfortable presentiment, as Lurie and Lucy “live too close to Petrus,” he goes to Petrus’s party considering their relationship with the powerful neighbor. When served the meat, Lurie says to himself that “I am going to eat it and ask forgiveness afterwards” (131). Perhaps, to “ask forgiveness” would palliate his guilty consciousness for the diet. What appears to be incomprehensible beforehand is Lurie’s unexpected concern for the animals:

A bond seems to have come into existence between himself and the two Persians, he does not know how. The bond is not one of affection. It is not even a bond with these two in particular, whom he could not pick out from a mob in a field. Nevertheless, suddenly and without reason, their lot has become important to him. (126)

Lurie’s “bond” with “the two Persians” must be spontaneous and instantaneous (“suddenly and without reason”). Nonetheless, as we see, Lurie does not know why he is “disturbed” and how there comes to be a “bond” between the animals and himself. He just happened to watch them tied up there. The event that a mere observation of those “slaughter-animals” makes David Lurie have a serious concern for them needs an explanation. My argument is that Lurie’s “perception” works here and this perception indicates the “ability to discern, acutely and responsively, the salient features of one’s particular situation” (Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge* 37). Definitely, the “particular situation” here is applied to the destiny of the two Persian sheep. In order to look into the “bond” and the invisible commotion within Lurie’s mind, I propose to read alongside a

passage in *Mencius*, particularly in terms of examining the relationship between perception and sympathy:

The King was sitting in the hall. He saw someone passing below, leading an ox. The King noticed this and said, 'Where is the ox going?' 'The blood of the ox is to be used for consecrating a new bell.' 'Spare it. I cannot bear to see it shrinking with fear, like an innocent man going to the place of execution.' 'In that case, should the ceremony be abandoned?' 'That is out of the question. Use a lamb instead.' ...[Mencius says] "It is the way of a benevolent man. [David Hinton's translation is that "That's how Humanity works" (28).] You saw the ox but not the lamb. The attitude of a gentleman towards animals is this: once having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die, and once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh." (*Mencius* 9-10, translated by D.C. Lau)

This anecdote is from the part where the King Hsüan asks Mencius if he could be a true king. Mencius replies with yes as he already heard the story above. Killing an animal for the consecration of a new bell was an official ritual in his kingdom at that time. But the King showed his compassion for the ox in his sight and gave an order to replace it of the lamb. Mencius thinks that the benevolence of the ruler for the ox could be applied as well to his people as the King compared the animal with an innocent man. What Mencius values from the King's act is not only his compassion but also his specific attention to the animal passing before his eyes. Though one would be skeptical about whether the ox is really shivering for its death, the King recognizes it with his careful attention and his pity for the animal makes the sacrifice intolerable. Certainly, what makes this difference is that the King "saw the ox but not the lamb." That means there is a strong relationship between sympathy and perception.

Furthermore, replacing the ox by the lamb indicates that the former becomes a singular being or status lacking in the latter, since the specific object observed by the subject engenders a very vivid, emotional image in the passive mind.<sup>49</sup> To apply Nussbaum's explanation, the

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<sup>49</sup> In terms of the sympathetic gaze between the animals and humans, the ox can be compared with the Derrida's cat described in the article "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)" (2000). The notable thing is that while the ox is seen by the King, Derrida in his nudity is conscious of the gaze of the



King's "perception" is "not merely aided by emotion but is also in part constituted by appropriate response" (79). Of course, the King's response, the analogy between the ox and an innocent man is, in a degree, dependent upon the King's imagination. But, sympathy, if we just follow Adam Smith's theory, is fundamentally the outcome of our imagination.<sup>50</sup> What matters is that his ethical motif such as the benevolence for the nameless, speechless other does not come from an abstract concept, but from a meaningful perception of the particular. And this must accompany our emotional response. If we can use Elizabeth Costello's words here, the King does not refuse to "think [himself] into the place of [his] victims, as did everyone else" (*Elizabeth Costello* 79) and this notion of victim as an innocent being must include the King himself.

Unlike the King, David Lurie could not save the sheep. Lurie knows if he pays for them Petrus will buy new ones. Though Lurie is dismayed that such slaughtering is too near in this African country life (124-26), he himself becomes later a "dog-man" or "dog-undertaker" in Bev Shaw's clinic where he helps to euthanize "unwanted" animals, mainly dogs. Then what we observe in the second half of *Disgrace* is that Lurie's intimacy with the lives of animals goes together with the gradual change of his perspective for animals. Lurie's perception of the sheep is meaningful in the process of the change of his mind. Contrary to the previous notion that animals have no souls following the dogma of "Church Fathers" (78), Lurie imagines practicing "mourning" for the sheep (127). That means Lurie has started to think about the dignity of animals when they are treated like "things." Although he never thought himself as a

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cat. That is, while there happens to be an exchange of gaze between the two, it triggers a sort of reversion in feeling an emotion, like shame, between the two (378-79).

<sup>50</sup> Adam Smith says that "By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them" (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* 9).

“sentimentalist,” an emotional turmoil visited upon him when he drove back after helping Bev Shaw’s work on a Sunday evening: “he actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake” (142-43). And so, because “he does not seem to have the gift of hardness,” Lurie does not let the dead dogs dumped like wastes but instead carries them to the incinerator. For Lurie, this is his own way of paying respect to their death. However, the honor or dignity that Lurie attributes to the animals incurs a confusion for its application. Concretely speaking, whether those animals in the course of “*Lösung*” (142) by humans deserve a sort of “mourning” is obviously a problematic, ethical issue, as subtly intimated in the case of the slaughtered sheep. Freud argues in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) that the act of mourning is a slow disengagement of libido from a loved object. But is it applicable to animals? Lurie’s affection for the animals is connected to the idea that they cannot be treated merely like “things.” What is compensated then might be the absolution of the guilty consciousness which he first has felt when eating the sheep’s flesh in Petrus’s party. Of course, there is no obligation that other guests in the party and other workers in the incinerator should have the same feeling like him. Lurie’s acts in his circumstances are fundamentally self-interested. I think it is significant to note that, in regard to the question why Lurie has taken on this job for the dogs, the narrator replies that it is “For himself, then. For his idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing” (146). We see here Coetzee divides Lurie’s motivation into two levels. “For himself” must imply Lurie’s personal concern, such as his conscience or self-respect. Derek Attridge regards it as “a profound need to preserve the ethical integrity of the self” (187). Then, the meaning of “For his idea of the world” makes us think about what the “world” here connotes. Lurie’s “idea” fundamentally bears on the relationship between the self and “the world,” in

which Lurie wishes to live without troubles not only with his conscience or self-respect but also with other people. In other words, he wishes to believe in what Hannah Arendt calls “the concord with the world” (“On Humanity in Dark Times” 4). In a similar way, when Elizabeth Costello says that her vegetarianism “comes out of a desire to save my soul” (*Elizabeth Costello* 89), the valorization of the “soul” implies a certain relationship with her world. Without assuming the soul’s dignity, her taste cannot have a ground to ask tacitly its positive recognition by others. As Costello wishes her taste of vegetarianism to be respected in her world, Lurie’s sympathy has his dignity weighed in with regards to the dignity of animals. In spite of their self-interested thoughts for animals, both Lurie and Costello have a yearning for the concord with the world that implicitly seek to gain some agreements by others. It is because the self is not a solipsistic being.

At the ending part of *Disgrace*, Bev Shaw asks David Lurie if he will give up his befriended dog in the clinic, and Lurie says, “Yes, I am giving him up” (220). Mike Marais associates this decision as Lurie’s “self-sacrifice” since it is “in the dog’s interests.” In light of “the dog’s interest,” Marais argues, “His [Lurie’s] own deed, desires, feelings, predilections and presuppositions are totally immaterial.” Marais continues, “To sympathize, Lurie must lose, indeed sacrifice or offer, himself. Contrary to the Levitical injunction, he must love his neighbor, the dog, generously—not as himself, but despite himself. (“J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and the Task of Imagination” 78). However, I am not convinced whether Lurie’s decision really does justice to the dog’s “interest.” Marais must view Lurie’s sympathy from the self-negation or self-sacrifice where his personal attachment should be abstained. Despite its orientation for the alterity of the animal, Marais’ reading is debatable. The reason is that as the existence of the Derrida’s cat cannot be “conceptualized” by the philosopher (“The Animal That Therefore I Am” 379), the dog’s ultimate “interest” likewise cannot be determined by us. As Elisabeth Arnould-

Bloomfield remarks in the article “Posthuman Compassions,” Derrida’s skepticism over the assessment of pain of others including animals problematizes such anthropocentric approach to the suffering of animals. Arnould-Bloomfield puts, “Derrida’s compassion...depends on the suggestion that animal and human pains are ontologically identical but share only otherness and unknowability” (1470). If only in terms of the unknowable pain of the dog, that Lurie’s sympathy here cannot but have a self-interested dimension at bottom where his emotional engagement, such as “love,” is at the core. Before the process of the dog, the narrator puts that “the dog would die for him, he knows” (215). Coetzee does not explain in detail what is behind this decision, but we need to remember that the subject who feels the “dishonour” is actually not the dogs but Lurie himself in the clinic (146). In confrontation with the suffering and indignity of the dog, Lurie’s decision may come out of his love for the animal, which Eric Meljac calls “delicate compassion” (159). In that sense, it is significant to read that the disgraced hero Lurie learns the meaning of “love” in Bev Shaw’s clinic (219).

Though Lurie’s emotional movement aforementioned may have an aspect of self-revelation for himself, its consequence does not remain only for his relationship with animals. The expansion of sympathy leads him to stretch out his imagination to the position of Lucy in the rape incident in which he tries to be the victim of the rape, and this trial also prompts him to reflect over his violation of Melanie Isaacs, which, in turn, makes him think from the standpoint her father. Therefore, what is at stake is, as D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie commonly argue, the distinction between self-interest and selfishness. They point out that while Adam Smith uses “selfishness” in a pejorative sense like neglecting others, he uses “self-interest” in the context of a “proper regard to our own private happiness and interest” that is a necessity in virtue (22). So, I understand that, to borrow Foucault’s term, both Lurie’s and Costello’s “care of the self” is not

centered on their egoism but on the self's somewhat coherent relationship with the world:

The ethical fashioning of the self is first of all this: to make of one's existence, of this essentially mortal material, the site for the construction of an order held together by its internal coherence... This ethics demands exercises, regularities, and work: but without the effect of anonymous constraint. Training, here, arises, neither from civil law, nor from religious prescription: "This government of the self, with the techniques that are peculiar to it, takes its place 'between' pedagogical institutions and the religions of salvation." It is not an obligation for everyone, but a personal choice of existence. (Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* 531)

In terms of the negation of egoism and its relation to sympathy, we will review later the concept of "taste," where the inter-subjective relationship mediated by the function of "common sense" sets a possibility of reconciliation. Cary Wolfe remarks that both Lurie's and Costello's attitudes toward animals show "one of the central ethical issues of our time: our moral responsibilities toward nonhuman animals" (*Philosophy and Animal Life* 3). We cannot treat this animal issue here in detail, but, to say again, Lurie's sense of responsibility toward animals is not initiated by any abstract, theoretical ideas. He just perceived some animals and determined that "their lot has become important to him." Since he could not ignore the uneasy emotion evoked within himself after watching the sheep and the dying dogs and, at the same time, as this issue has posed Lurie the question of how to live, he thought about what he could do for them. Indeed, we may say that Lurie's responsibility is not separated from his inner feeling, and that feeling underlies his thinking about "the idea of the world" to which he wishes to belong. This is like what Adam Bede says that "It isn't notions sets people doing the right thing—it's feelings" (*Adam Bede* 180). As Martha Nussbaum claims, "an ethics of impartial respect for human dignity will fail to engage real human beings unless they are made capable of entering imaginatively into the lives of distant others and to have emotions related to that participation" (*The Poetic Justice* xvi). So, if such sympathetic imagination can contribute for our public reasoning and moral judgments, it is because it can guide us to see a concrete, specific world of a person. George Eliot puts

emphasis on our careful attention to the concrete, “special circumstances”:

[...] moral judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot.

All people of broad, strong sense have an instinctive repugnance to the men of maxims; because such people early discern that the mysterious complexity of our life is not to be embraced by maxims, and that to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing insight and sympathy. And the man of maxims is the popular representative of the minds that are guided in their moral judgment solely by general rules, thinking that these will lead them to justice by a ready-made patent method, without the trouble of exerting patience, discrimination, impartiality—without any care to assure themselves whether they have the insight that comes from a hardly-earned estimate of temptation, or from a life vivid and intense enough to have created a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human. (*The Mill on the Floss* 403)

For Eliot, sympathy is also one of the important virtues required in moral judgments, but it is not found in fixed maxims; rather, sympathy dwells in the concrete, sensitive understanding of the lives of others. It is because “emotion links itself with particulars” (“The Poet Young” 199). In *the Mill on the Floss*, for example, when Tom hears about the scandal that Maggie and Mr. Stephen Guest will be married, what he thinks about is the “disgrace” of his family, rather than the “death [of Maggie]” (391). It is true that this feeling has social contexts, but Tom’s feeling does not grow further into sympathy for his sister Maggie. He is too doctrinaire in maintaining the ideology of family and his community, because his moral judgment is too limited and blinded, which disallows him to see his other, Maggie, in her standpoint. It is, first of all, the lack of “the trouble of exerting patience, discrimination, impartiality” that drives him to ignore Maggie’s concrete real situation. As “Tom, like every one of us, was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature,” readers are advised to be lenient with Tom’s severity for Maggie (404). However, what George Eliot ultimately emphasizes is that “the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision” (404). We understand that this wider vision as, in other words, the “widening of sympathy,” which Bodenheimer regards as “central to George Eliot’s philosophy of art” (*The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans* 83). Among those characters in George

Eliot's novels who come to acquire this "wider vision," Dorothea in *Middlemarch* (1872) is an exemplary character. In regard to the relationship between the expansion of sympathy and Kant's concept of "enlarged mentality," I think about the connection between the "imagination" and "common sense" in his third *Critique*.<sup>51</sup> As a way for approaching to the sympathetic imagination and its ethical meaning in this research, a review of Kant's third *Critique*, particularly related to the analysis of "taste" is indispensable. The following is a brief summary of Kant's "taste" theory.

In *The Critique of Judgement* (1790), Kant assumes pleasure as quintessential element affiliated with our aesthetic judgment. And Kant calls the faculty of that judgment "taste." Although the pleasure or displeasure a person feels about an object is subjective and contingent, Kant argues that if one judges the beauty of an object with *disinterested* mind, the personal judgment of taste must involve "a claim to validity for all men," "a claim to subjective universality" (32).<sup>52</sup> But as Kant says, such a claim is less logical than aesthetic because this universality or general validity has reference "not to the cognitive faculties (concepts), but to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure for every subject" (33). So it is a mistake to suppose that the aesthetic judgment postulates the agreement of everyone. Nevertheless, by assuming the existence of common sense (*sensus communis*) Kant thinks it is possible to link our subjective feeling with those of others. This common sense invokes not only our sensational (*sensus*) but

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<sup>51</sup> Hannah Arendt regards this "enlarged mentality" as "the condition *sine qua non* of right judgment" and adds that "one's community sense makes it possible to enlarge one's mentality" (*Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* 73). According to Arendt, the faculty of judgment including "taste" usually deals with the particular and its basic notion owes something to the function of imagination where "common sense" is presupposed, and that is how aesthetics and the sympathetic imagination, and finally moral judgments are intertwined to each other.

<sup>52</sup> To apply David Hume's words in "Of the Standard of Taste," a critic of "Taste" "must preserve his mind free from all *prejudice*" (145, italics original). As in the case of Adam Smith, it is true that Hume's attention to the "sentiment" of taste has implications for our moral judgment.

also our social (*communis*) feeling as we think “from the standpoint of everyone else” (84). Therefore, he keeps the notion of “the universal communicability of a feeling” through our common sense, though he admits that it is an “ideal norm” (49). Although an objective principle of taste is impossible because our taste is not based on concept but subjective feeling like pleasure, Kant holds the thread of a belief that taste is communicable and universal insofar as the judgment of taste tends to seek its validity through public agreement.

Hannah Arendt remarks that “[c]ommon sense for Kant did not mean a sense common to all of us, but strictly that sense which fits us into a community with others, makes us members of it and enables us to communicate things given by our five private senses” (*Responsibility and Judgment* 139). Arendt adds that Kant thought common sense could work “with the help of another faculty, the faculty of imagination.” Needless to say, this imagination indicates one’s thinking “from the standpoint of everyone else”:

Common sense, by virtue of its imaginative capacity, can have present in itself all those who actually are absent. It can think, as Kant says, in the place of everybody else, so that when somebody makes the judgment, this is beautiful, he does not mean merely to say this pleases me (as if, for instance, chicken soup may please me but may not be pleasant to others), but he claims assent from others because in judging he has already taken them into account and hence hopes that his judgments will carry a certain general, though perhaps not universal validity. The validity will reach us as far as the community of which my common sense makes me a member—Kant, who thought of himself as a citizen of the world, hoped it would reach to the community of all mankind. Kant call this an “enlarged mentality,” meaning that without such agreement man is not fit for civilized intercourse. The point of the matter is that my judgment of a particular instance does not merely depend upon my perception but upon my representing to myself something which I do not perceive. (*Responsibility and Judgment* 140)

The work of “representing to myself something which I do not perceive,” equals the capacity of imagination. But as Kant himself does, we can ask if taste is “a natural and original faculty” or if it is only “the idea of one that is artificial and to be acquired by us” (49).<sup>53</sup> This question, in

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<sup>53</sup> According to Kant, taste, if to avoid a “lapse to crudity and a return to the rudeness,” needs of



terms of sympathy, can be presented otherwise like this: Is the sympathy an innate feeling? Or, does it need to be nurtured and so “enlarged” by any effort? If so, we can inquire whether there is any duty or responsibility in feeling sympathy. In order to answer these questions, I return to the emphasis on “the concrete” and “the particular” that need to be elaborated with the concept of “imagination.” This is because sympathy as an emotion is also an inter-subjective feeling. Ultimately, what I want to argue is that Kant’s taste theory helps us to understand sympathy as an ethical concept. In relation to this work, Arendt’s research focusing on “thinking” and “judgment” provides us with useful ideas.

In the article “Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship” (1964), Arendt talks about controversies touched off by the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). Arendt argues there that, instead of attributing war crimes and their causes to the collective responsibilities, we should find individual, responsible subjects for each misdeed, because “There is no such things as collective guilt or collective innocence; guilt and innocence make sense only if applied to individuals” (29). For Arendt, what matters in this distinction is the operation of “thinking” in one’s moral judgment. That is, if an individual, however he or she was admittedly compelled to do some war crimes in an enforced system, was not able to use its own judgment, that cannot be an excuse. Being cautious to identify those non-participants in the Nazi-period who are resistant but not so ideologically disinclined to their evil state following their moral norms, Arendt points out other possible moral standards they would keep in their minds:

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examples of “what has in the course of culture maintained itself longest in esteem” (77). So, he seems to endorse the effect of one’s cultural tradition nurturing his or her taste. But when we say that our taste should be trained with those good examples of canons, the pedagogical idea and system of canons then enter the sociological field that is independent of the debate over the existence of aesthetic value in canons. That is, the aesthetic valorization of canons should be reviewed in terms of its perception and reception in society. That is the sociology of taste. As Pierre Bourdieu’s research shows in *Distinction* (1979), the disinterested mind before artistic objects, which Kant regards as a requirement in the appreciation of arts, is no more effective in the politics of taste.

Their criterion, I think, was a different one: they asked themselves to what extent they would still be able to live in peace with themselves after having committed certain deeds; and they decided that it would be better to do nothing, not because the world would then be changed for the better, but simply because only on this condition could they go on living with themselves at all. Hence, they also chose to die when they were forced to participate. To put it crudely, they refused to murder, not so much because they still held fast to the command “Thou shalt not kill,” but because they were unwilling to live together with a murderer—themselves.

The precondition for this kind of judging is not a highly developed intelligence or sophistication in moral matters, but rather the disposition to live together explicitly with oneself, to have intercourse with oneself, that is, to be engaged in that silent dialogue between me and myself which, since Socrates and Plato, we usually call thinking. This kind of thinking, though at the root of all philosophical thought, is not technical and does not concern theoretical problems. The dividing line between those who want to think and therefore have to judge by themselves, and those who do not, strikes across all social and cultural or educational differences. (44-45)

I argue that that, in a wide sense, “this kind of thinking” in the course of Socratic self-dialogue or self-reflection is not so different from the “care of the self” that Foucault explains. In that trying to seek a “concord with the world,” I also think that these “non-participants” would be the same type of persons like David Lurie and Elizabeth Costello. Simply speaking, they show that one can live one’s own life by his or her choice, and it is to listen to its inner voice of conscience without tarnishing its dignity. As Arendt aptly remarks, “Whatever the voice of conscience may be, it cannot be said to be ‘silent,’ and its validity depends entirely upon an authority that is above and beyond all merely human laws and rules” (*The Life of the Mind* 215). Instigated by the “voice of conscience,” the action of “to think and...to judge by themselves” is linked with the imagination of otherness, and this constitutes a principle for one’s moral judgment for its correctness and impartiality, as we have reviewed in the concept of common sense.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For example, when Hannah Arendt reports on Adolf Eichmann’s “banality of evil” through hearing his testimony, the critical focus is on the absence of his thinking. Arendt says, “a more specific, and also more decisive, flaw in Eichmann’s character was his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow’s point of view” (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 47-48). She continues, “The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with *an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else*” (49, my emphasis).

Arendt repeatedly says that Eichmann's sheer thoughtlessness is the result of his inability for the imagination of alterity. It is not so difficult to understand that here the faculty of thinking implies the sympathetic imagination. As Ursula K. Le Guin says, "The imagination is a fundamental way of thinking, an essential means of becoming and remaining human" (*The Wave in the Mind* 207). What is deplorable is that those collaborators in the Nazi period not only ignored those victims in the death camps but also did not fully think from the standpoints of them. In a word, Costello says, "They lost their humanity":

They lost their humanity, in our eyes, because of a certain willed ignorance on their own part. Under the circumstances of Hitler's kind of war, ignorance may have been a useful survival mechanism, but that is an excuse which, with admirable moral rigor, we refuse to accept...The signing of the articles of capitulation and the payment of reparations did not put an end to that state of sin. On the contrary, we said, a sickness of the soul continues to mark that generation. It marked those citizens of the Reich who had committed evil actions, but also those who, for whatever reason, were in ignorance of those actions. It thus marked, for practical purposes, every citizen of the Reich. Only those in the camps were innocent. (*Elizabeth Costello* 64)

As Arendt does, Coetzee recalls those Jewish victims in the Holocaust to talk about the failure of humanity and sympathy.<sup>55</sup> Obviously, Costello's analogy in this lecture between "those in the camps" and those animals in the meat industry aims to expose the cruelty to the animals. Apart from the relevance of the analogy, what is mostly criticized in Costello's remark is the abeyance of thinking on the part of those perpetrators which lead to their "willed ignorance" of the victims. Needless to say, this "willed ignorance" is related to the lack of sympathy that "refused to think themselves into the place of the victims." In questioning one's responsibility, it is significant that Hannah Arendt regards "thinking" not only as an ability and but also as a requirement in judging one's morality. Particularly when ignorance is concerned, it is necessary to take into account

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<sup>55</sup> To borrow Giorgio Agamben's expression, "the Jew [in the death camp]" was "the non-man produced within the man, or the *néomort* and the overcomatose person, that is, the animal separated within the human body itself" (Agamben, *The Open* 37).

what a thinking or knowing subject is mindful about his or her ignorance. As Aristotle explains in *Nicomachean Ethics*, there is a qualitative difference between “acting *on account of* ignorance” and “acting *in* ignorance.” In Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins’s translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle puts as follows:

Acting *on account of* ignorance seems different also from acting *in* ignorance, for he who is drunk or angry is not held to act on account of ignorance but rather on account of one of the things stated, [drunkenness or anger,] and not with knowledge but in ignorance. Everyone who is corrupt, then, is ignorant of what he ought to do and to abstain from; and through this sort of error, people become unjust and bad in general. But one does not wish to use the term *involuntary* when somebody is ignorant of what is advantageous; for the ignorance involved in ones’ choice is the cause, not of what is involuntary, but of one’s corruption. Nor is the ignorance of the relevant general [principle] the cause of an act’s being in voluntary (for people are indeed blamed on account of this sort of general ignorance); the cause, rather, is the ignorance pertaining to the various particulars, both the circumstances of the action and what it concerns. In these latter case, there is both pity and forgiveness, since he who is ignorant of any of these particulars acts involuntarily. (44-45)

The point is that ignorance, whether it is involuntary or not, cannot be an excuse for “one’s corruption,” because a subject is supposed to have a kind of duty to know previously “what he ought to do and to abstain from.” Such critique on the absence of thinking is the very words Arendt applies when analyzing “the banality of evil” in Adolf Eichmann’s case who was “one of the major organizers of the Holocaust” but “never realized what he was doing.” In that situation, therefore, the act of thinking is a must.

#### 4.2 Is Sympathy a (Kantian) Duty?

George Eliot's sympathy with “the responsibility of tolerance” also sounds like a must, especially for “those who have the wider vision” (*The Mill on the Floss* 404). And with an anecdote in *Mencius* I have discussed that a subject’s feeling of sympathy could be possible through its careful attention to the concrete, particular object. But I wonder whether sympathy could be universal if its arriving is contingent upon one’s subjective emotions. My question is, if one’s feeling of joy or sorrow or even love with other people cannot be willed or enforced but,

rather, is passively given, how can the emotions including sympathy work actually as a manner of morals, not in a negative but in a positive way? To put it succinctly, what is the legitimacy of sympathy as a duty, like a kind of categorical imperative? In particular, as a response to the lecture of Elizabeth Costello, I would like to ask whether there should be any duty or responsibility for us in applying the sympathetic imagination to animals.

Coetzee's view of animal rights in *Elizabeth Costello* must start from the sympathetic imagination. But, in a degree, it is arbitrary. Elizabeth Costello's comment below shows how "the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else" depends on some subjective conditions:

The heart is the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*, that allows us to share at times the being of another. Sympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object, the 'another,' as we see at once when we think of the object not as bat ('Can I share the being of a bat?') but as another human being. There are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else, there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it." (70)

If sympathy is originated from one's inclination according to "the capacity," it cannot be a duty because everyone cannot have the same capacity. The relativity has no constraint as a strict moral principle. Such subjective conditions of sympathy are rather close to those of taste. Costello's vegetarianism is the very example of the connection between sympathy and taste. But my reading is that Coetzee's critique focuses on the third kind of people "who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it." We may understand the word "choose" here as *the will*. And especially "a good will," in Kant's term, was absent from the minds of those killers and neighbors who helped or ignored intentionally the genocide of Jewish people in the death camps. Interrogating their responsibilities, Costello points out that sympathy cannot be a matter of one's capacity but instead it should be willed as a moral necessity. That is, it should be active in each mind. Nevertheless, as the poet Abraham Stern criticizes (94), one would feel it odd and even disrespectful to compare the Jewish people with the animals slaughtered in the meat industry.

Nor can it be confirmed easily that sympathy is really unconditional as she argues: “There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination” (80). In order to investigate the concept and validity of sympathy in terms of duty —about which George Eliot is said to regard so “peremptory and absolute” as “the sovereignty of impersonal and un-recompensing Law” (Haight 464)—I primarily attend to Kant.

For Kant, only the consciousness of duty through our practical reason constitutes a key principle of moral laws. In moral philosophy, Kant values the role of the emotions positively only when they work as *incentive* for our respect of moral laws. He calls it “moral feeling.” But its source is definitely from reason, not from the passions or imagination (*Critique of Practical Reason* 201). Appealing entirely to the emotions for a universal moral law is insufficient and even dangerous because they are fundamentally “pathological” (200). The negativity of the emotions relates one’s moral judgments to his subjective conditions like desire, interest, or need. Since these negative features of the emotions signify the heteronomy of a moral subject, they cannot be asked positively and objectively as a concept of duty. Although a moral good that results from certain emotion like sympathy can be desired, Kant asks if there is “the subjection of the heart to duty” (264). If not, the good is just “fleeting and transitory,” which means that it cannot be principled. Kant even says that “It is very beautiful to do good to human beings from love for them and from sympathetic benevolence, or to be just from love of order; but this is not yet the genuine moral maxim of our conduct” (206).

Therefore, Kant’s notion of the Categorical Imperative as the ultimate moral maxim, which means “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 73), presupposes the autonomy of the will. This autonomy of the will guarantees our freedom, “the ability to be

governed by reason” (Scruton 80). Without supposing it we cannot regard each individual as a human being with dignity, as “an end in itself” (86) Neither can be thought of responsibility:

If I say of a human being who commits a theft that this deed is, in accordance with the natural law of causality, a necessary result of determining grounds in preceding time, then it was impossible that it could have been left undone [...] and they [determining grounds] therefore leave no *transcendental freedom*, which must be thought as independence from everything empirical and so from nature generally, whether it is regarded as an object inner sense in time only or also of outer sense in both space and time; without this freedom (in the latter and proper sense), which alone is practical a priori, no moral law is possible and no imputation in accordance with it. (*Critique of Practical Reason* 216-17)

It cannot be denied that Kant’s moral philosophy based on freedom and duty has strength in clarifying the subject of responsibility. And it is also evident that some of George Eliot’s works have the Kantian connections, particularly when George Eliot deals with the relationship between causality, freedom, and responsibility in *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Daniel Deronda*. What concerns here reading George Eliot and J.M. Coetzee alongside is that, unlike Kant, both writers treat sympathy as an issue of duty and responsibility. While Kant’s main concern in building up his moral philosophy is, as Roger Scruton explains, to make it “objective” with the help of our “practical reason,” at the risk of simplification, however, George Eliot’s and Coetzee’s moral arguments owe much to the functions of our practical feelings including sympathy, which are affected by our subjective, situational or existential conditions. Especially Coetzee shows a strong skepticism on the notion of “reason” when it is presented as an evidence of human beings’ superiority to animals. For Coetzee, “reason is simply a vast tautology” (*Elizabeth Costello* 70).<sup>56</sup> Less severe in denouncing the role of human reason than Coetzee, and

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<sup>56</sup> In explicating the notion of “tautology” in “reason,” I read Nietzsche’s criticism below as one of the most telling views on such an anthropocentric concept of “reason”:

“If somebody hides a thing behind a bush and, seeks it again and finds it in the self-same place, then there is not much to boast of, respecting this seeking and finding; thus, however, matters stand with the seeking and finding of “truth” within the realm of reason. If I make the definition of the mammal and then declare after inspecting a

more appealing to the emotion than Kant, George Eliot tries to integrate our intellectual reason with moral sentiments:

There is not a more pernicious fallacy afloat in common parlance, than the wide distinction made between intellect and morality. Amiable impulses without intellect, man may have in common with dogs and horses; but morality, which is specifically human, is dependent on the regulation of feeling by intellect...Now that highest moral habit, the constant preference of truth both theoretically and practically, pre-eminently demands the co-operation of the intellect with the impulses. ("Dr Cumming" 44)

Hannah Arendt argues that the distinction between will and inclination becomes "the cornerstone of Kantian ethics" (*The Life of the Mind* 57). And in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant puts that "It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a good will" (49). To avoid misunderstanding, Kant's good-will follows the order of duty and so its context is not from "benevolence" in a common sense. The motive of benevolence is "a species of mere inclination (Scruton 91). Nevertheless, can it be thought that benevolence, as a branch of sympathy, is separated from one's personal desire or inclination? For example, Costello's vegetarianism comes "out of a desire to save my soul" (89). Is that selfish or not? I suggest that, as a natural common feeling, sympathy be discussed at the level of inter-personal feeling. That is, it might not be objective as Kant argues, but it could be inter-subjective. That means it leads us to recognize ours "social feelings" (Arendt) and can be communicated like "social expressions." Nietzsche's concept of benevolence below could be another version of that sympathy. And we know the idea of inter-subjectivity came to be discussed later by Kant himself in his third

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camel, "behold a mammal," then no doubt a truth is brought to light thereby, but it is of very limited value, I mean it is anthropomorphic through and through, and does not contain one single point which is "true-in itself," real and universally valid, apart from man. The seeker after such truths seeks at the bottom only the metamorphosis of the world in man, he strives for an understanding of the world as a human-like thing and by his battling gains at best the feeling of an assimilation." ("On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense" 183)



## *Critique.*

Benevolence [Wohllollen]—Among the little but immeasurably frequent and thus very influential things to which science ought to pay more attention than to the great, rare things, benevolence, too is to be reckoned; I mean those social expressions of a friendly disposition, those smiles of the eyes, those handclasps, that comfortable manner with which almost all human action is as a rule encompassed. Every teacher, every official brings this addition to what he does as a matter of duty; it is the continual occupation of humanity, as it were its light-wave in which everything grows... Good-naturedness, friendliness, politeness of the heart are never failing emanations of the unegoistic drive and have played a far greater role in the construction of culture than those much more celebrated expressions of it called, pity, compassion and self-sacrifice. (*Human, All Too Human* 38, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale)

Hangs-Georg Gadamer argues that “he [Kant] totally excluded the concept of *sensus communis* from moral philosophy” (*Truth and Method* 32). Gadamer’s critique on the Kant’s “subjectivization of aesthetics” is basically focused on the idea that narrowing down the function of common sense into the aesthetic experience of taste militates against the social, inter-subjective feelings including sympathy. Then, what we have discussed hitherto is the limitation of moral, practical reason from the subjective emotions in Kant’s thoughts. Besides criticizing such Kant’s separation of moral philosophy from the aesthetic judgment, my research now attends to the interpersonal relationship suggested from the notion of taste.

### 4.3 Inter-subjectivity in Taste and Commensality

To shed light on Kant’s political philosophy, Arendt surveys his third *Critique* as a main text. And Arendt derives the concept of “inter-subjectivity” from Kant’s theory about aesthetic judgment or *taste*, which she regards as intended for social communication. This social aspect in taste is concisely put in the Kant’s saying that “In Taste egoism is overcome.” To paraphrase, insofar as one’s taste is connected with *sensus communis*, while keeping his or her personal preference the subject is asked to be “considerate.” This viewpoint is also required from us so that we should “overcome our special subjective conditions for the sake of others.” Therefore,

Arendt establishes Kant's "inter-subjectivity" from the negation of egoism by which one's *disinterested* pleasure in taste is possible (*Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* 58-70).

Following Kant, Arendt distinguishes the faculty of thinking from that of judging and asserts their different applications. That is, in dealing with the question of right and wrong, the subject is asked to use his or her practical reason independently. Yet, when trying to relish a sensual pleasure including taste, the subject desires other people's participations and *conviviality* as well, if not always. That is, "You must be alone in order to think; you need company to enjoy a meal" (67)

Hence, if one's individual pleasure in taste can be also a communal one, a few questions related to (dis)agreement or compromise between various tastes are necessary. The first question is about the possibility of agreement in between different tastes. As we have reviewed, a kind of "standard" in taste is an ideal, but not a normative one for each judgment. Since it cannot have any regulation for other different judgments, a conflict is inherent and so inevitable. In *Elizabeth Costello*, for example, Costello's vegetarianism becomes the major cause that incurs troubles with her daughter-in-law Norma. Norma says that her grandchildren could not join their dining table because "Elizabeth does not like to see meat on the table, while Norma refuses to change the children's diet to suit what she calls 'your mother's delicate sensibilities'" (60). As David Hume remarks, "a delicate palate, on many occasions, may be a great inconvenience both to a man himself and to his friends" ("Of the Standard of Taste" 143). In the situation that "hostilities are renewed almost at once" from Costello's entrance to the family, my inquiry is whether it is possible to reconcile two people, like Norma and Costello, who have different tastes. And if it is possible or not, then why or how. Although "Norma and his mother [Costello] have never liked each other" (61), and even though such Costello's delicate taste may be a subterfuge behind

which, we may guess, stands a long-aged antagonism between the two characters in the novel, I am curious about the possibility of their sitting in the same dining table with sincere hospitality, instead of any hostility. To borrow Derrida's expression, when Costello is treated like "an undesirable foreigner" or "a hostile subject" at Norma's home, could there be such "substitutions" between the host and the master if these are the "laws of hospitality"?:

So it is indeed the master, the one who invites, the inviting host, who becomes the hostage—and who really always has been. And the guest, the invited hostage, becomes the one who invites the one who invites, the master of the host. The guest becomes the host's host. The guest (*hôte*) becomes the host (*hôte*) of the host (*hôte*). These substitutions make everyone into everyone else's hostage. (*Of Hospitality* 125)

The second question is related to the first. If we just adhere to the literal meaning of taste, when eating is not only affected by a culinary flavor but also decided by some ethos like religious credo or any pursuing beliefs, with whom would the dieter can enjoy its meal? Provided that Costello's vegetarianism as well as her doctrine on the lives of animals belongs to the minority, her dining table would be gradually estranged from others. We read the poet Abraham Stern sends Costello a letter in which he says, "At the kernel of your lecture... was the question of breaking bread. If we refuse to break bread with the execution of Auschwitz, can we continue to break bread with the slaughters of animals?" (94). Then Stern blames Costello's talk because of her analogy between the meat industry and the death camps, about which the poet denounces as "blasphemy." Since he cannot agree to regard the victims in the camps as the same kinds of those slaughtered animals, he refuses to "break bread" with her. So "breaking bread" signifies more than satisfying one's appetite. Reminding us of the Christian ritual, the act of communion must imply the participant's concord and solidarity as well with its fellow.<sup>57</sup> The poet's refusal,

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<sup>57</sup> As Montaigne advises, the choice of friends for one's dining table would be prior to the selection of menu for everyone: "Since with that same Epicurus I say that we should be less concerned with what we eat than with whom we eat, and I approve of Chilo's refusal to promise to come to a banquet at Periander's before finding out who the other guest were. No recipe is so pleasing to me, no sauce so

of course, indicates the opposite, his *distaste*.

However, in order to share foods in the same dining table, we cannot say there is any duty for Costello to respect other people's distastes. A debate continues between Costello and Norma in another dinner place prepared by Appleton College, particularly about "disgust" in eating meats. Norma contends that any taboo on a diet that results in "disgust" is ultimately based on an anthropological reason and so arbitrary. But it is also true that, in doing so, Norma shows her cultural prejudice: "Disgust is not universal....The French eat frogs. The Chinese eat anything. There is no disgust in China" (87). Norma continues that such a dietary ban as forbidding a specific meat is related to the system of social distinction "for an elite group." For the counter example, Costello tells the story of Gandhi's marginal experience in England due to his education of vegetarianism by his mother and acknowledges a sort of self-interested viewpoint in her taste of vegetarianism because she says "[i]t comes out of a desire to save my soul." If, according to Ben Highmore, discernment of taste makes us socially *vulnerable* on the one hand and "distaste is signaled through a register of affects sliding from condescension to disdain to scorn to contempt" on the other hand ("Bitter after Taste" 124), we can see both Costello's vulnerability and Norma's distaste are interlocked. While Norma's belief on human reason strongly convinces her of humans' superiority to animals so that she underrates Costello's ideas on animals as "shallow relativism" (91), Costello's rhetoric appeals to what Michael Marais calls "a profound anti-intellectualism" ("Impossible Possibilities" 3) that rejects reason and instead calls for sympathy based on corporeal sensibility.<sup>58</sup>

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appetizing, as those which derive from the company" (*The Complete Essays* 1252).

<sup>58</sup> For example, Costello's comparison of the Holocaust and mass slaughter of animals below touches on the audience's sympathetic imagination in visualizing the victims in their minds:

The particular horror of the camps, the horror that convinces us that what went on there

However, Costello's position apparently lacks "consistency" especially when she says that "I'm wearing leather shoes" and "I'm carrying a leather purse" (89). A self-mocking irony is that Costello is aware of her whim and makes herself vulnerable to other people's criticism. Costello knows her distinction of eating meat and wearing leathers is not so much based on principled ideas but just dependent upon "Degrees of obscenity" (89). Needless to say, such "Degrees of obscenity" in her taste are largely concerned with her subjective sentiments. Though Elisa Aaltola argues that whereas "animal ethics has tended to emphasize theory, principles, reason, and speaking for the animal, Coetzee emphasizes poetry, virtues, emotions, and letting the animal speak to us," it is foreseeable that logical weakness in Costello's inconsistency gives rise to adverse skepticism. ("Coetzee and Alternative Animal Ethics" 119). Norma's hostile attitude toward Costello ends up by disregarding Costello's thought as "pseudo-philosophical arguments" (113).

Inferring from the conclusion, we cannot but anticipate that those grandchildren's diet would follow the mother Norma's instruction rather than the grandmother Costello's. Norma declares to her husband John that she does not want to feel "guilty about eating [meats] in front of [them]" (114). As Costello says, if, like Gandhi's mother, "mothers can have a good influence on their children" (88), Norma would be willing to maintain her influence for children. Hence, although a reasonable thought might fancy a picture that each taste is appreciated while their conviviality is preserved, those different roles plus contrasting views on animals set a barrier that

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was a crime against humanity, is not that despite a humanity shared with their victims, the killers treated them like lice. That is too abstract. The horror is that the killers refused to think themselves into the place of their victims, as did everyone else. They said, "It is *they* in those cattle cars rattling past." They did not say, "How would it be if it were I in that cattle cart? They did not say, "How would it be if I were burning?" They did not say, "I am burning, I am falling in ash." (79)

undoes the inter-subjective relationship between them.

Contemplating over the reconciliation between different tastes that I have suggested, my perspective is not so inclined to pessimism notwithstanding. We can fully understand Norma's guilty consciousness before the children that would come from her motherhood, which I think must be beyond the human "rationality" that Norma names as a distinction from animals (92). Meanwhile, since Costello's distaste for meats is caused not only by her compassion for animals but also by her gustatory disgust of "the juices of death wounds" (83), we can also consider that her seemingly inconsistent taste is, in a degree, conditioned by some unique sensibility like that bodily repulsion to the diet. Therefore, for the first step to approach their circumstantial standpoints in taste, I cannot but repeat Kant's dictum: "be considerate." In a broad sense of inter-subjectivity, each can admit its partiality and adopt "enlarged mentality" at the same time. Actually, we read what Costello problematizes in her talks is not about eating meat but our willed ignorance on the lives of nonhuman animals and the cruelty in the meat industry. Norma's misunderstanding is that the "relativism" that Norma points out in Costello's view on animals cannot be reduced to those various levels of intelligence in animals nor that kind of "the respect due to a flea" confused with "the respect due to the dog on which the flea feed" (Frederic Ferré, "Moderation, Morals, and Meat" 324). By all means, Norma's notion following Descartes that nonhuman animals are "just biological automata" is, in itself, controversial (92) and shows her own ignorance otherwise.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Coetzee's criticism of reason or rationality scattered in fictions, interviews, and other essays is mainly in the context of its anthropocentric perspective and ignorance towards the inner lives of animals. When asked about critics' responses to animal themes in his novels, Coetzee replies:

The test case is my novel *Disgrace*, in which animals figure quite prominently. Most reviewers have more or less ignored their presence (they mention that the hero of the novel "gets involved with animal rights campaigners" and leave it at that). In this respect they—naturally—mirror the way in which animals are treated in the world we live in, namely as unimportant existences of which we need take notice only when their

We are informed throughout Costello's lectures and through the final dialogue with her son John that what Costello really seeks is "kindness" that includes "kindness to animals" (106) and "human kindness" as well (115). We realize this "kindness" is related to the matter of "heart" when we read Coetzee's interview in 2004 regarding animal rights. As the interviewer from the Swedish web magazine *Satya* asks Coetzee, "What is your relation to animal rights philosophy? In what way do you think fiction can contribute to the question?" Coetzee replies as follows:

Strictly speaking, my interest is not in legal rights for animals but in *a change of heart towards animals*. The most important of all rights is the right to life, and I cannot foresee a day when domesticated animals will be granted that right in law. If you concede that the animal rights movement can never succeed in this primary goal, then it seems that the best we can achieve is to show to as many people as we can what the spiritual and psychic cost is of continuing to treat animals as we do, and thus perhaps to *change their hearts*. ("Animals, Humans, Cruelty and Literature," emphasis mine)

Coetzee's expectation about "a change of heart towards animals" through his fiction writing must depend on readers' engagements with sympathy. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, Coetzee values the heart as an ultimate element in feeling sympathy. Likewise, Costello argues that the heart is "the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*" and accuses those Nazi collaborators of the corruption that they "closed their hearts" (*Elizabeth Costello* 79). And, in addition, in the chapter of "The Humanities in Africa," Costello links the heart to humanity and *caritas*, all of which imply the working of the heart underlies our affective benevolence and even unconditional love for the other. Finally, in the last chapter of "At the Gate," Costello preserves the heart as the ultimate reliance in keeping the sense of reality as she extends its corporeality to every living being's pulse. That is, Costello's sympathy is described as transmitted or emanated from the pulsation of blood by the operation of the heart, and the existence of blood in all animals testifies

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lives cross ours:

See "Animals, Humans, Cruelty, and Literature: A Rare Interview with J. M. Coetzee." *Satya*. 2004. Web. Oct. 13, 2017.

to the reality of the common value in each animal:

It is morning. She is at her table on the pavement, working on her statement, trying out a new approach. Since she boasts that she is secretary of the invisible, let her concentrate her attention, turn it inward. What voice does she hear from the invisible today?

For the moment, all she hears is the slow thud of blood in her ears, just as well she feels is the soft touch of the sun on her skin. That at least she does not have to invent: this dumb, faithful body that has accompanied her every step of the way, this gentle, lumbering monster that has been given to her to look after, this shadow turned to flesh that stands on two feet like a bear and laves itself continually from the inside with blood. Not only is she *in* this body, this thing which not in a thousand years could she have dreamed up, so far beyond her powers would it be, she somehow *is* this body; and all around her on the square, on this beautiful morning, these people, somehow, are their bodies too. (210)

We remember Mencius says that “once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh” and explains such reticence is how *humanity* works. That is, humanity is enacted with an emotional moving, with a specific, concrete attention to a particular living being. Like David Lurie’s unexpected concern for the sheep, Costello’s humanity is not separated from the perception of her corporeality and not from her childhood memory of the frogs (217). And so her sympathetic perception penetrates into the cry of the animal, for example, the ram in the *Odyssey*. Costello recollects her reading experience of an episode in the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus sacrifices a ram in order to meet Tiresias. She pays attention to the vivid, bloody representation of the sacrificed ram and argues that “The ram is not just an idea, the ram is alive though right now it is dying” (211). Though one might be skeptical for Costello’s direction of “open your heart and listen to what your heart says” (82) for a practical answer to the animal right issue or to the debate for eating meats, I agree with Coetzee that, even though they could not reach a consensus, there needs to be a certain change of an attitude with the moving of the “heart,” at least for the participation and discussion of the difficult problem originated from the matter of taste.

In light of preparing a common ground in the taste issue, I review the significance of



*commensality* in particular. As its etymological meaning suggests, this term has some correspondence to the notion of “breaking bread.” What I argue is that the start of commensality or, in other expression, *conviviality*, cannot be expected without bringing in such hospitality plus orderly manners for our counterpart’s sitting in. In developing this idea, I refer to Albert O. Hirschman who searches for the origin of “civil society” from the act of “eating together around a table.” He takes the example of the ancient Greek banquet and proposes that “a direct link exists between the banquet and the emergence of Athenian Democracy” (*Crossing Boundaries* 23). Nonetheless, Hirschman remarks that “[c]ommensality includes friends and family, but excludes irreconcilable enemies” (19). Its definition of solidarity is therefore not always positive as seen from the case of the Germanic *Männerbund* which, Hirschman claims, foreboded the SA and SS movement of the Nazi period (26). Significantly, Hirschman makes us heed to the different styles or *manners* between the Greek symposium and the German students’ beer drinking and their different social outcomes. As Hirschman mentions both Georg Simmel’s and Norbert Elias’s studies in his essay, their sociological insights about the history of civility focus on the discourses of manners. Interestingly, in a letter to Paul Auster, Coetzee also comments on table “manners” and their control over one’s “passions”:

What interest me are the customs that have developed around the table. Thus, despite the fact that the table is precisely a place to which one brings one’s animal appetites in order to satisfy them, manners prescribe that appetite should be reined in and—at least formally—yield place to appetites of others (“Please, after you!”). Furthermore, it is not “good manners” to sate one’s appetite in silence: the dinner table becomes a sort of conclave where family matters of the more superficial kind are aired. In these family conversations, the first rule is that the passions should not be let loose, however much they may rage under the surface. (*Here and Now* 120)

The essence of table manners that Coetzee points out above is related to the attitude of “being considerate.” It should be noted that the social code here is not that kind of an enforced but that of a customary, voluntary one in its deliberation. According to Coetzee, the participant is asked

to have a virtue of self-discipline and, at the same time, to show its will for a good humor in the table. With those civil manners comes a reciprocity based on the feeling of benevolence. This means the morality of “being considerate” presupposes the limit and moderation in which he or she freely eats something in the dining table.

The link between social manners and the banquet also can be found in George Eliot’s *Adam Bede*. The description of Arthur Donnithorne’s birthday party is fully reminiscent of an idyllic banquet image in the British countryside. While a variety of people gather together in the Chase to celebrate Donnithorne’s coming-of-age day, Adam’s entrance draws attentions from other guests. It is because Adam as a craftsman is reluctantly admitted to “dine up-stairs with the large tenants.” What we sense behind the tension between Mr. Casson and Adam is an assumed distinction in the dining table according to their social positions:

Owing to this arrangement, Adam, being, of course, at the bottom of the table, fell under the immediate observation of Mr Casson, who, too much occupied with the question of precedence... ‘You’ve niver dined before, as I remember.’

‘No, Mr Casson,’ said Adam, in his strong voice, that could be heard along the table; ‘I’ve never dined here before, but I come by Captain Donnithorne’s wish, and I hope it’s not disagreeable to anybody else.’

‘Nay, nay,’ said several voices at once, ‘we’ve glad ye’re come. Who’s got anything to say again’ it?’ (*Adam Bede* 260-61).

The host Captain Donnithorne’s hospitality toward Adam disregards the hierarchy surrounding the table. Availing himself of the opportunity given by his birthday, Arthur tries to polish his relationship with those tenants by proposing toast for his grandfather. Despite that “[t]he farmers thought the young Squire knew well enough that they hated the old Squire, and Mrs Poyser said ‘he’d better not ha’ stirred a kettle o’ sour broth’ ” (265), those invited in the feast listen to his words and drinks together. It is because such “neighborly kindness” in this “pleasant meeting” cannot be rejected (266). With the gentry’s expression of benevolence, an egalitarian mood from Mr. Irwine’s toast speech that “every sensible man knows how necessary that humble everyday

work is, and how important it is to us that it should be done well” (267) boosts up the jovial conviviality of the banquet. It might be true that, as Christin Devine argues in the article “Celebrating Class Difference: The Coming-of-Age Feast in *Adam Bede*” (2004), the feast scene in *Adam Bede* shows George Eliot’s middle-class consciousness for an organized social class system (28-35). Nevertheless, when George Eliot describes in detail another feast scene in the Poysers’ farmhouse for the harvest supper at the end of the novel where the gathered laborers enjoy eating “roast beef” and drinking “ale” with the great sounds of “the clatter of knives and pewter-plates and tin-cans,” she must appreciate such a convivial aspect in their dining rather than look down on their clumsy table manners (516). As Pierre Bourdieu remarks, one’s taste can be in harmony with others in an “ethics of convivial indulgence,” although someone would not welcome that “eating and drinking together” can “sweep away” his or her reticence.<sup>60</sup> At least, insofar as eating a meal with someone is a meaningfully social act, as the Korean novelist Hwang Sok-yong says, our taste connected with memories can be expanded for the “reconciliation with the strange and different”:

Anyone who once performed fasting for some reasons, such as being ill, would realize how the eating of every breakfast, lunch, and dinner is so crucial an issue during the day. The act of having a meal for our survival or health helps us to divide our time properly, since it gives a timely pause to our activity in daylight. Without eating anything, one would feel that the day gets longer than usual and everything suddenly

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<sup>60</sup> I think that George Eliot’s compassionate stance toward working classes in *Adam Bede* and their jovial conviviality is ascertained again in this harvest supper scene in which what Bourdieu calls “convivial indulgence” has a positive, communal value:

The art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes challenge the legitimate art of living. In the face of the new ethics of sobriety for the sake of slimness, which is most recognized at the highest levels of the social hierarchy, peasants and especially industrial workers maintain an ethics of convivial indulgence. A bon vivant is not just someone who enjoys eating and drinking; he is someone capable of entering into the generous and familiar—that is, both simple and free—relationship that is encouraged and symbolized by eating and drinking together, in a conviviality which sweeps away restraint and reticence. (*Distinction* 179)

becomes meaningless. And one of the precious discoveries through the fast is that all the varieties of human relationships vanish, including meeting, parting, conversations, facial impressions, and so on. The surroundings around him or her just appear to be desolate and quiet. Communication with others is, of course, no longer possible, and even the feeling of one's existence disappears. Time without diets cannot be felt as real....

Since I have decided to write about food, why I recollect, first of all, the experience of fasting is due to an image in my mind about the young Jesus with a cup of wine and a piece of black bread. We know what we call "the Last Supper" of Jesus has been an inspiration for numerous painters for centuries of years, and such symbolic meanings as his blood and body in the supper are now preserved in a similar ritual in the Catholic Church. To restore the meaning of meal in terms of its original purity has been regarded as the start point for every reformist movement....

We have lost all tastes. Some elements for a delicious meal: sweats of labor, a jovial conviviality in sharing, the land we have inhabited for long time, the family with us till our death, a meeting and reconciliation with the strange and different, a few days spent with our beloved, and, above all, the poverty and need. All these optimize the memory of our taste to the best condition...Food implies human relationships, and it is a kind of catalyst retrieving our old memories. (*Taste and Memories 2-4*, my translation)

#### 4.4 The Distance of Alterity

That sympathy has a fictional element in its performance is theoretically concerned with its imaginary feature. And Elizabeth Costello's lesson tells that "sympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object." All these facts imply that, at worst, the subject's imagination could be a fantasy and the object or the other can be indifferent to our sympathy.

Although Costello says that "it is because of their indifference to me that I believe in them[frogs]" (217), the frogs' vitality has nothing do with her subjective judgment. Then, what if the object refuses our sympathy or ignores our expression of a good will? That sympathy could be a projection of one's partial perspective toward the object is what I have discussed in George Eliot's chapter. What I ask now is whether sympathy has a real merit especially for a truthful understanding of others. In order that the work of the sympathetic imagination should be based upon the reality of the other, I argue that its significance should be distinguished from fantasy, of which meaning is close to the ideal, artificial invention of something rather than to the practical reasoning of our reality. Therefore, when articulating the ethical characteristics of the

imagination, I presuppose that it also has some cognitive natures related to the understanding of our other. We know Adam Smith points out such “concord or dissonance” on the part of the other’s affection with our sympathy, particularly in terms of our correct sympathetic identification.<sup>61</sup> That means our sympathetic conjecture sometimes could be wrong. For instance, before the real pain of someone, sympathy could be pointless. Virginia Woolf in the essay “On being ill” (1926) discusses how in illness benevolence becomes naught and sympathy disoriented:

Here we go alone, and like it better so. Always to have sympathy, always to be accompanied, always to be understood would be intolerable. But in health the genial pretence must be kept up and the effort renewed—to communicate, to civilize, to share, to cultivate the desert, educate the native, to work by day together and by night to sport. In illness, this make-believe ceases. (320-21)

Woolf remarks one’s bodily pain cannot be communicated with because it is entirely a private thing and there is only the “poverty of the language” (318). Woolf’s disillusionment with this “make-believe” of sympathy, therefore, indicates helplessness and even pessimism before the distance between the sufferer and the observer. If an abnormal state of a patient disrupts his or her ordinary communication with others as Woolf argues, the inversion or denial of intersubjectivity in this case requires us to see sympathy from a different perspective. Most of all, Woolf’s refusal of sympathy, I think, poses a serious question about Coetzee’s claim that “there are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination.”

Coetzee’s persona Costello claims that “If I can think my way into the existence of a

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<sup>61</sup> Adam Smith writes as follows:

When the original passion of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and, on the contrary, when, upon, bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite them. (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* 16)

being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life” (80). That is, if a writer’s novelistic imagination can embody a character in the novel, she believes such imagination also can reach into the consciousness of an animal. By saying this what she (and so Coetzee) criticizes is about Thomas Nagel’s question of “what is it like to be a bat?” from the eponymous article of 1974. Nagel’s main point is that such sympathetic identification is impossible because of “the subjective character of experience” (436). Nagel argues that “[i]f the subjective character of experience is fully comprehensible only from one point of view, then any shift to greater objectivity—that is, less attachment to a specific viewpoint—does not take us nearer to the real nature of the phenomenon: it takes us farther away from it” (444-46). So, at the level of consciousness, Nagel takes a stance of solipsism. Meanwhile, Costello puts that “his denial that we can know what it is to be anything but one of ourselves seems to be tragically restrictive, restrictive and restricted” (*Elizabeth Costello* 76). Coetzee continues this idea with his conversation with Arabella Kurtz:

I relate our whole discussion to an essay by the philosopher Thomas Nagel that has acquired near scriptural status, called ‘What is it like to be a bat?’ Nagel’s crucial move is to distinguish between two forms of the question: *What would it be like for a human being to be a bat?* and *What is it like for a bat to be a bat?* In its first form, he says, the question is answerable; in the second form it is not. I disagree with Nagel. I think that by a strenuous effort of sympathetic projection one can reach a flickering intuition of what it is like for a bat to be a bat. But this does not amount to the claim that one can have intuitions of what it is *really* like for a bat to be a bat. In Nagel’s terms, the only true, real knowledge one can have of what it is like to be anyone or anything in the world is a form of knowledge of what it is like to be oneself. Other such knowledge may be true, but its truth is the truth of fictions. This includes knowledge of what it is like for a neonate to be a neonate. (*The Good Story* 136)

Coetzee clarifies that his disagreement with Nagel is about the sympathetic identification.

Despite that we cannot arrive at the exact knowledge of the other, “by a strenuous effort of sympathetic projection,” Coetzee believes, one can have a “intuition” for the other. At least for Coetzee, the sympathetic projection cannot be discouraged because it is a trial to transcend the

confine of solipsistic consciousness. Of course, his reservation for the factualness of the intuition cannot contradict Nagel's theory sufficiently. As both George Levine and Jonathan Lamb likewise explicate, the claim of sympathy in this case could be an "anthropomorphic fiction" ("J. M. Coetzee and Realism" 183).

George Levine treats the same Nagel's question in the last part of *Realism, Ethics and Secularism* (2008) and links it to his thesis on the "unknowable reality of the other" in Victorian literature (248). Among those "unknowable others" in Victorian realist novels Levine refers to the character Mr. Casaubon and quotes the famous question "why always Dorothea?" in chapter twenty-nine of *Middlemarch*.<sup>62</sup> George Eliot's suggestion is that when Mr. Casaubon's "equivalent center of self" is recognized, his alterity cannot be assimilated to Dorothea's point of view (*Middlemarch* 252). In a similar vein, Levine notices the heartbeat of the squirrel which he takes as an example that represents the absolute otherness of the other:

That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity. (182)

Levine applies the Nagel's question to the squirrel and asks "what it is like not to be me" or "what it is like to be a squirrel," since the illusion is an indispensable element in the literary imagination. What he reads and values from the Victorian literature is "its powerful affirmation of the unknowable reality of the other" (248-49). Levine says, "George Eliot uses an animal, the squirrel, to represent that which we do not know, which we can barely imagine, barely dare to image" (253). Thus, if it is true that "human souls have only a very limited range of music, and

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<sup>62</sup> According to Alex Woloch, Mr. Casaubon is not a minor character but becomes minor "within a complex narrative system" and George Eliot there interrogates "the distributed pattern of characterization" in the realist novel (*The One vs. the Many* 45-46).

will not vibrate in the least under a touch that fills others with tremulous rapture or quivering agony” (AB 96), the limited range of our sympathy with animals must lead to an agnosticism. Nevertheless, in spite of the unknowable reality of and our limited knowledge of the other that result in our respect for the alterity, George Eliot does not seem to forsake our sympathetic bond with the unknowable entity of animals. For instance, unlike the squirrel, Adam Bede’s dog Gyp appears as an intimate, sentient being that can read the hero’s inner mind and catch his certain mood as much as Adam notices “Gyp’s mental conflict” (AB 46). When Dinah visits Adam’s house to comfort her mother in chapter eleven, we see Gyp’s reception of the stranger Dinah is decided by “[t]he kind smile with which Adam uttered that last words.” Recognizing Gyp’s emotive sensation, Dinah exclaims “Poor dogs!” and says that “I’ve strange feeling about the dumb things as if they wanted to speak...they [the dogs] may well have more in them than they know how to make us understand, for we can’t say half what we feel, with all our words” (118). Therefore, Dinah thinks that Gyp’s otherness cannot be conjectured. If human understanding is mediated by the insufficient human language, we cannot conclude that the dogs have no language with our relative knowledge. While George Eliot, in Levine’s criticism, regards sympathy has a limit in facing the alterity of the animal, Coetzee’s “imaginative sympathy” in the novels such as *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello* challenges the limit.

Coetzee acknowledges that sympathy is a fiction. But Coetzee finds a positive, ethical meaning in the fictional sympathetic imagination. What I attend to from the writer’s reflection below is the evaluation of the fictional element in sympathy and its bearing on truthfulness:

Broadly speaking, I see sympathy as an inborn faculty in human beings which may or may not grow, may or may not atrophy, may or may not be fostered; I also see it as capable of extending itself beyond fellow human beings to other forms of life. Sympathetic identifications allow us to enter other lives and to live them from the inside. It goes without saying that the other lives we live at such times are not necessarily the true lives of the others to whom they belong. Even when the other life which we are (for the time being) living is not a real life but the kind of life we



encounter when we read novels, it is not necessarily the true life of the other that we are living—witness the very different understanding different readers have of characters in novels. *I would contend that our sympathetic identifications have a fiction-like status, and that our sympathetic intuitions can be relied on only to yield fictional truths.*” (*The Good Story* 134, my emphasis)

As Coetzee puts in his novel, sympathy is regarded as “an inborn faculty” for everyone and so it is a natural, common feeling, and the sympathetic identification is possible even with non-existent beings. What he adds is that sympathy contains “fictional truths.” Although the concept of “fictional truths” is a little vague, this term reminds us of his other concepts such as “construct” or “a foundational fiction to which we more or less wholeheartedly subscribe, a fiction that may well be indispensable for a just society, namely, that human beings have a dignity that sets them apart from animals and consequently protects them from being treated like animals” (*Giving Offense* 14). Coetzee here must say that there is a need for us to realize the fictional constitution of our reality, of whose fictional representation includes “this institution, this medium called the novel” (*EC* 39). Of course, that the law, morality or any institutional belief draws on the fictional truth is not merely Coetzee’s own idea. In *Twilight of the Idols* (1889) Nietzsche calls up the name of George Eliot when he speaks of those who “are rid of the Christian God and now believe all the more firmly that they must cling to Christian morality.” Nietzsche argues that “This is an English consistency: we do most wish to hold it against à la Eliot.” Nietzsche’s sarcasm aside, what is revealed by his criticism is that George Eliot’s obsession with the notion of “Duty” has, more or less, fictional grounds.

In the introduction, I have argued that sympathy, like perspective, is an effect of distance. Whether the distance is substantial or fictional, some philosophers including Adam Smith hold that the sympathetic imagination depends on distance between the spectator and the object. In the genre of the novel in particular, according to Bakhtin, distance is regarded as “an integral part of the author’s design, for it alone guarantees genuine objectivity in the

representation of a character” (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 64). Bakhtin continues, “[a] character’s discourse is created by the author, but created in such a way that it can develop to the full its inner logic and independence as *someone else’s discourse*, the word of the *character himself*”(65, italics original). We understand the character’s “independence,” like Mr. Casaubon’s case, is redeemed by its distance to the author. This is like what Ursula K. Le Guin discusses from her characters:

As a writer I must be conscious that I am my character and that they are not me. I am them, and am responsible for them. But they’re themselves; they have no responsibility for me, or my politics, or my morals, or my editor, or my income. They’re embodiments of my experience and imagination, engaged in an imagined life that is not my life, though it may serve to illuminate it. I may feel passionately with a character who embodies and emotions, but I must be wary of confusing myself with that character. (*The Wave in the Mind* 236).

What I have understood by reading George Eliot and Coetzee alongside is that both recognize the necessity of fictional representation of reality as it is an ethical way to respect the otherness. They share the idea whether this otherness can be approached by sympathy is not only a literary but moral question and, if necessary, the distance of sympathy should be invented. In that sense, Coetzee’s play with “reality” in the first chapter of *Elizabeth Costello* corresponds to George Eliot’s beginning of *Adam Bede*:

There is first of all the problem of the opening, namely, how to get us from where we are, which is, as yet, nowhere, to the far bank. It is a simple bridge problem, a problem of knocking together a bridge. People solved such problems every day. They solve them, and having solved them push on.

Let us assume that, however, it may have been done, it is done. Let us take it that the bridge is built and crossed, that we can put it out of our mind. We have left behind the territory in which we were. We are in the far territory, where we want to be. (1)

As Eliot also writes in *Daniel Deronda*, any start of a story is inseparable from the “make-believe of a beginning” (7). Like Eliot, Coetzee thinks that this make-believe can be a “bridge” to our reality, whose representation is distinguished from history about which Coetzee emphasizes in the article of “The Novel Today.” In an interview for his novel *Atonement* (2001),

Ian McEwan says that “Within one novel you can live inside many different people’s heads, in a way that you of course cannot do in normal life.” That is, writing or reading a fiction is a way to expand on our experience with the sympathetic imagination. McEwan continues:

Knowing, or sensing what it’s like to be someone else I think is at the foundation of morality. I don’t think the novel is particularly good or interesting when it instructs us how to live, so I don’t think of it as moral in that sense. But certainly when it shows us intimately, from the inside, other people, it then does extend our sensibilities. (qtd. in Serpell 111)

The extension of our “sensibilities” or, in other words, the expansion of sympathy McEwan implies here must have some correspondences with both George Eliot’s and J. M. Coetzee’s ideas on morality and the novel. If, as George Eliot says, “imagination is a licensed trespasser” (*Adam Bede* 71), there would be no reason to withhold our sympathetic imagination for other realities and other beings.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

“A picture held us captive. And we couldn’t get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably.” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* #115)

If, by imagination, it would be permissible to appoint an intermediary between George Eliot and J.M. Coetzee in terms of literary history, which might be analogous to locate the middle point between nineteenth-century realism and the contemporary fiction, I would like to call up a modernist: Virginia Woolf. As an essay on George Eliot shows (“George Eliot”(1919)), Woolf admired Eliot’s works very much and also provided some insightful reading of her characters in particular, in which Woolf claimed a biographical connection between the writer and heroines. But Woolf asserts, in another essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1924), an arrival of new sensibility in creating characters, where she opposes the mannerism in the Edwardian writers to her Georgian writers’ experimental styles, such as T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. In that essay, Woolf shows little interest in evaluating how the previous writers developed “a technique of novel writing” (80). Woolf detests their conventions of detailed description laced with facts and things in the novel as a “materialist” one, an outmoded model, which, she argues, could not reach the character’s “life,” or “human nature,” and so she says that she threw away “that ugly, that clumsy, that incongruous tool out of window” (82). But, what if George Eliot also wrote her fiction, like the Edwardians, “very powerfully, searchingly, and sympathetically out of the window”?

In drawing a characterization in the previous novels, then, it is remarkable that Woolf symptomatically uses the metaphor of window; while Woolf argues that the Edwardian writers

tend to see and write something out of window, Woolf puts a Mr. Bennett's inner view from a bedroom window. Of course, this contrast of perspectives in/outside the window is a kind of two sides of the same coin; it is merely an illusion from the shift of the observer's position, and the window as an epistemological frame to conceptualize the reality is still there.

Though Mr. Bennett's way of representing the outside world is said to be full of old clichés following the traditional realism style and so it is close to a realistic painting from a window, the window frame is certainly applied in George Eliot's novels. For example, in *Middlemarch*, Eliot describes a scene in which Dorothea comes to feel "the largeness of the world" with an eye-contact of the outside world from her window:

[...] there was light piercing into the room. She opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond outside the entrance-gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving—perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt *the largeness of the world* and the manifold wakings of men to labor and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining. (741, my emphasis)

While it is critical for Woolf to create the interiority of a character, George Eliot's imageries outside the window have some symbolic meanings. Between the observer and the observed, there comes a corresponding vision. The depicted people and landscape are certainly picturesque, but finally they are merged into a unity configuring the expansion of Dorothea's sympathy, her escape from egoism, and her spiritual awakening, which I paraphrase in Kant's words the "enlarged mentality." My reservation is about whether we should criticize the window frame like above merely as an old-fashioned model for Victorian realism as Woolf did in her critique of Mr. Bennett's writing. This cannot be a question of which mode between realism and modernism is superior in the writer's approach to the reality of the novel. In fact, Eliot's self-consciousness about the novel's form which cannot be a perfect tool to represent a character in its totality

precedes that of Woolf. That the make-believe in the novel depends on some literary conventions and they are also changing is not a new idea from Woolf. As Woolf confesses her difficulty and asks her readers to be tolerant for “the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure” in the representation of Mrs. Brown (87), Eliot also asks us to be patient with her imperfect, fragmentary reflection of a reality and, at the same time, tries to be impartial in the description of a character. The question of “Why always Dorothea?” in *Middlemarch* must be read as such a self-reflective attitude of the author in figuring otherness. Therefore, if the convention of “omniscience” in literary realism is condemned by some modernists for its monologic narration, a counter-criticism from realists is possible, as seen from a Julian Barnes’s novel:

‘The author in his book must be like God in his universe, everywhere present and nowhere visible.’ Of course, this has been keenly misread in our century. Look at Sartre and Camus. God is dead, they told us, and therefore so is the God-like novelist. Omniscience is impossible, man’s knowledge is partial, therefore the novel itself must be partial. That sounds not just splendid, but logical as well. But is it either? The novel, after all, didn’t arise when belief in God arose; nor, for that matter, is there much correlation between those novelists who believed most strongly in the omniscient narrator and those who believed most strongly in the omniscient creator. I cite George Eliot alongside Flaubert.

More to the point, the assumed divinity of the nineteenth-century novelist was only ever a technical device; and the partiality of the modern novelist is just as much a ploy. When a contemporary narrator hesitates, claims uncertainty, misunderstands, plays games and falls into error, does the reader in fact conclude that reality is being more authentically rendered? (*Flaubert’s Parrot* 76)

Barnes introduces George Eliot as a representative example of the nineteenth-century realist who applies the omniscient perspective in the novel while denying its effectiveness in our real world.

I would like to end up this epilogue by reviewing Coetzee’s allusion to the Leibnizian Monad theory, which, like what he has said before about “foundational fiction,” however it is fictional, could function for “a good society”:

...To my mind, it will be enough if we can settle on fictions or ourselves which we can inhabit more or less comfortably, fictions that interacts sans friction with the fiction of those around us. In fact, that would be my notion of a good society, even an ideal society: one in which, for each of us, our fiction (our fantasy) of ourselves goes unchallenged; and where some grand Leibnizian presiding force sees to it that all the

billions of personal fictions interlock seamlessly, so that none of us need stay awake at night wondering anxiously whether the world we inhabit is real. (Coetzee and Kurtz 177)

Coetzee knows that “a good society” where one can live in his own imaginary world without trouble with others is idealistic. But it is true that this idea echoes his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech in 1987 where he talked about the hero’s fictional life in *Don Quixote*. Coetzee values the hero’s “willed act of the imagination” and deplors the non-possibility for such an act in his South African context, where the pressure of reality is so harsh (99-100). Then, in the self-sufficient world of a fantasy, the window frame becomes meaningless and there would be no ending such as “the capitulation of the imagination to reality.”

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