IMPOSSIBLE NARRATION: THE UNKNOWABLE OTHER AND THE ETHICAL IMAGINATION IN MODERNISM

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the ethics of impossible narration in its struggle to represent an unknowable other as a thread in modernist novels. I coin the term 'unknowable' other in response to Emmanuel Levinas' ethics as first philosophy and his claim on ethical subjectivity based on her responsibility toward the Other. Levinas suggests the ethical potential in language by distinguishing an ongoing practice of the Saying and its ethical disruption from the absolute of the Said. I demonstrate how the ethical failure of narrative in certain modernists' works conversate with Levinasian ethics in that their texts precisely address the problem of a modern subjectivity in relation to others, given the differences of class, gender, and race, at the collapse of empire. I argue that some modernist writers—Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and J. M. Coetzee as an inheritor— achieve the Levinasian Saying by staging that their narration is impossible in the encounter with an other.

Chapter Two analyzes how the three early modernist novels of colonial exploration, *Heart of Darkness, A Passage to India*, and *The Voyage Out*, commonly foreground the impossible narration through Western characters who become disillusioned and fail to consummate a heteronormative marriage in result of facing the unknowable alterity. Chapter Three examines Woolf's antifascist aesthetics and ethics in *Between the Acts*, through Levinasian notion of the Saying. By framing a revised English pageantry, Woolf betrays the genre's nationalist rhetoric, and ultimately demystifies the ideal of Englishness that has justified British imperial history. Chapter Four examines

how Coetzee's *Foe*, a postcolonial rewriting of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* deconstructs the power of authorship by making Susan Barton the endlessly self-doubting narrator in telling the unrepresentability of Friday. Likewise, modernist writers stage their struggle with impossible narration by featuring artist figures and the process of their artistic creation. The failure of narration at the narrators' level echoes and parallels the impossible narration of the frame novel. These metanarrative elements in modernist novels disrupt conventional knowledge production and deconstructs a totalizing impulse in representation, while also engaging us in the reader's position from outside to inside the story.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In an essay for *The Guardian* right after 9/11, Ian McEwan wrote:

> If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality.

In this pithy quotation, McEwan criticizes the hijackers for their inability to imagine an other's mind, which is normally understood as the concept of sympathy. From this wrath, McEwan emphasizes that sympathy is what makes us human beings. Though McEwan's statement sounds natural, it still leaves questions: Is it possible "to enter the mind" of an other, or "to be someone other than yourself," if that is what we mean by "imagining?" This supposes that we can know an other's mind; in other words, that the other is knowable if we wish. This question is at its heart related to the doubt or problem we have when facing the ethical dilemma of sympathy.[1] In his classical work *The Theory of*

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[1] Sympathy can be also a vulnerable, or even dangerous sentiment, if it does not allow separation between self and other. In Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent (1907*), Stevie, an emblem of extreme sympathy, is sacrificed in Verloc's failed attempt to explode The Greenwich Observatory. The disintegration of Stevie instead of The Observatory magnifies the irony of the failure to attack the morally and politically insensible society. The narrator comments that Stevie's "immoderate compassion" is vulnerable to "pitiless rage" as having no sense of difference between self and other. Through Stevie, Conrad criticizes, on the one hand, the indifference of people who overlook injustice and

Moral Sentiments, Adam Smith claims that, although we have a sort of natural empathy toward others as social creatures, we are not capable to 'enter the other's mind' and feel as it is: "we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the matter in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation … by the imagination only that we can perform any conception of what are his sensations … It is the impression of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imagination copy" (9).[2] The foundation of Smith's claim here suggests two crucial things: one is that empathy is a self-centered process, exacted by reaffirming self as the subject who conceives others from her reason or experience; another is 'the imagination' that anyhow mediates our senses to other's mind is a 'copy' of copy, as the latter is derived from the impression we project. Yet, the imagination is essential as it is the only way through which we attempt to conceive the pain of an unknowable other.

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violence on the marginalized other; on the other hand, the danger of not having a sufficient distance for sympathy as the extreme case of Stevie. For more discussion about modernism's representation of violence, see Sarah Cole's *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland*.

[2] In *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction*, Audrey Jaffe conceptualizes Victorian sympathy as a projection of class identities liking sympathy to spectacle. Jaffe begins her discussion by tracing and rephrasing Smith's view on sympathy that, "sympathy not as a direct response to a sufferer but rather as a response to a sufferer's representation in a spectator's mind" (4), turning the other's suffering into a spectacle. Jaffee problematizes this "imaginary" relation between a spectator and a sufferer since the image not only objectifies the other but also displaces the other into a representation. In this sense, she claims that modern sympathy is inseparable from representation. Furthermore, Jaffee claims that Victorian representations of sympathy are related to mediating and constructing middle-class identities (9). Pointing out class as an identity-defining issue in Victorian fictions, Jaffe illustrates that "spectatorship is inseparable from self-reflection" (3) in the hierarchical relationship between the spectator 'at ease' and the other in suffering as the identification occurs without threatening the coherence and ideality of self.

Perhaps what literature does by its literary representation basically entails this limit and capacity of imagination.

McEwan's deploring the hijackers' lack of sympathy can be linked to the matter of reading literature as a cultivation of sympathy that he also explores in his profession:[3] It can be rephrased into questions as follows. Can literature acquaint readers with perspectives completely foreign to their own? Or when one reads, does one merely empathize with those who are similar? This dissertation takes up the question of narration as an ethical act to pose questions about the minds of others. My dissertation attempts to answer the following questions: "Is it possible to know an other? Can representation of an other be ethical, presenting that other without appropriating them to the assumptions of the self? I propose that modernist literature creates a space for the ethical humility of facing the unknowable.

The idea of knowing an other is problematic because it assumes the other's feeling is the same as one's own, a form of solipsism and thus a totalizing gesture. Since the ethical turn inspired by Emmanuel Levinas in 1980's, critics have focused on defining terms that nuance both "knowing" and "sympathy." Distinguishing "knowing" and "acknowledging," for example, Stanley Cavell claims that "it is not enough that I *know* (am certain) that you suffer … I must *acknowledge* it" (original emphasis, 263),

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[3] Ian McEwan's works have dealt with the issue of knowing the unknowable other and the role of literature. *Saturday* (2005) dramatizes an encounter between a skeptic surgeon Perowne and an aggressive other Baxter who becomes affected and disarmed by the poem "Dover Beach." *Atonement* (2001) tests readers asking if Briony's writing a fiction of the probable story of the victimized couple can be an atonement.

which means, “I must do or reveal something.” Kelly Oliver in *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (2001) claims to radically redefine subjectivity as founded not on a sovereign-self but on the ability to respond to an other, which she calls “bearing witness beyond recognition.” Building on Levinasian ethics, then, these critics among others specify the ethical attitude and responsibility a subject should have toward others’ suffering. My own ethical thought is grounded in Levinasian ethics and these descendent critics who follow his ethics of the other.

My dissertation explores the ethics of impossible narration in its struggle to represent an unknowable other as a thread in modernist novels. I coined the term ‘unknowable’ other in response to Emmanuel Levinas’ ethics as first philosophy and his claim on ethical subjectivity based on her responsibility toward the Other.[4] To be brief here, before expanding below, in Levinasian thinking, the idea of knowing an other is problematic because it is a totalizing gesture of an ontological self who subsumes the other into the same. Levinas claims that a subject is claimed by an other even before being called, and the responsibility for the Other preexists any self-consciousness. Interestingly, Levinas does not talk about “sympathy,” regarding it as one of the cultivating sensibilities; for him, our responsibility to an other is preconditional, even before being.[5] Based on the Levinasian sense of the other, first, I argue that the other is unknowable, and that representing the other should be therefore partial, unsettled, and

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[4] In Levinas studies, an other simply means the other person, while the Other might ultimately signify God. The face of the other is regarded as the trace of God.

[5] Similarly, though the concept of intersubjectivity is indebted to Levinasisn ethics, he does not mention it in this sense.

must eventually fail. As a result, though literary representation specifically aims to represent the other, to resist totality it will always-and should always-fail.

To explore "the impossibility of narration," I focus on modernist writers who struggle and experiment with the problem of representing an other. This matter is closely related to building a modern subjectivity in relation to others, given the differences of class, gender, and race. I am using the term modernism as suggested in recent modernist studies, which emphasizes its transnational turn and an expansion in space beyond Europe and also in time to span the twentieth century.[6] I also align with the body of scholarship that connects modernism and postcolonialism; tracing how postcolonial writers are influenced by modernist form, and postcolonialism in turn broadens the modernist cosmopolitan approach and redirects it to a transnational optic.[7] In my dissertation, I define modernism in particular as the encounter with imperialism in its necessary decline. The writers predict in their works the end of colonization due to their ethical responsibility to the other who is subsumed by imperial governance. I demonstrate that modernist writers from various backgrounds bear witness to the

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[6] Regarding the transnational turn in literary modernism over the last twenty years, see Paul Jay, Peter Kalliney, Douglas Mao, and Rebecca Walkowitz. Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz introduce three strands of expansion in modernist sturdies—temporal, spatial, and vertical—which often overlap: Temporal expansion that encompasses artifacts from the middle of the nineteenth century and the years after the middle of the twentieth; Spatial broadening that include not only works produced in, say, Asia and Australia but also complex intellectual and economic transactions among, Europe, Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean; vertical expansion that reconsiders the boundaries between high art and popular forms of culture (737-38).

[7] For the recent studies connecting modernism and postcolonialism, see Peter Kalliney, Rajeev S. Patke, Richard Begam, and Michael Valdez Moses.

construction of imperial subjectivity at the collapse of empire, and that their struggle to imagine the unknowable other is ultimately conceptualized through their ethics of impossible narration.

Levinas's Ethics of the Other

Levinas's thought has its radicality in its rethinking the self-other relation in the tradition of western philosophy. In the Western tradition, a self has been defined as an ontological being who is a self-sovereign and knowing subject in her relationship with an other. Ontology in Levinasian terms is "any relation to otherness that is reducible to comprehension or understanding" (Critchley 11), which is the exact opposite to Levinasian ethics disposition toward the other. While Levinas's philosophy derives from modern phenomenology, he substantially revises his former teachers, first Husserl and then Heidegger. Husserlian phenomenology, which Levinas takes as his methodology, cannot explain the noncomprehensive relation between the self and other; although its "intentional analysis" gives meaning to the unreflective experience we forget, it tends to be intellectualism overlooking the density of lived experience (*Totality and Infinity* 82). In Heideggerian ontology, by which Levinas's philosophy is primarily influenced, the meaning of Dasein is only founded in the comprehension of Being. Further, for Levinas, the failure of Heideggerian ontology lies in its claim to comprehend the other. By claiming others can be understood in their totality, Heidegger's ontology presents a 'thematic' view of Being, one that totalizes others rather than encountering them in their infinity. In contrast, for Levinas, the other is beyond being and our comprehension.

Knowledge is an act of appropriating the knowable, reducing wisdom to self-consciousness (77-78), thus the knowing of Being as *a priori* structure is incompatible with the acknowledgement of an unknowable other. In his words: "Metaphysics – the relation with the being (etant) which is accomplished as ethics – precedes the understanding of Being and survives ontology" ("Transcendence and Height," 31). As the title of his influential work *Otherwise than Being* suggests, ethics is otherwise than knowledge from the totalizing position of one's own being.

In Levinas's ethics of the other, language is inseparable to the self's attempt to comprehend the other, which is not an accomplishable aim but an endless, ongoing practice. The ethical relation to the other can be manifested in language since "addressing the other is inseparable from understanding the other. To understand a person is already to speak to him. . . . Speech delineates an original relation" ("Is Ontology Fundamental?" 5). Levinas suggests this ethical potential in language through the distinction between the Saying and the Said in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974), although the two are not completely separable.[8] Levinas posits the theory of the Saying and the Said in response to Derrida's criticism that his ethics is still based on the language of ontology. The Saying is an attempt to escape from

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[8] Waldenfels claims that "there is no pure Saying and no pure Said" but both are border-experiences near the two extremes (88). The "self-differentiation of the speech" (Waldenfels 86) reflects Levinas's deconstructive turn in response to Derrida, as his performative writing in *Otherwise Than Being* demonstrates. It also reflects Levinas's struggle with the methodological dilemma that philosophical language eventually becomes propositional, that the Said is inevitable in philosophical discourse. The same is not true in literatary language.

Heideggerian Dasein and ontological language: It is a speech act by which one moves from ontology to ethics.

Considering the relation between language and the self-other relation, if simply put, the Saying is ethical, and the Said is ontological. The Said is understood as a propositional statement, intentionality, and proclaiming the meaning as presupposed. In contrast, the Saying is provisional as it is not definitive, but a continuous attempt, a performative act that is not exhausted in "ascriptions of meaning, … as tales, in the Said" (*OTB* 47). The Saying is also explained as a contact, approaching the other in proximity. It is a form of complete responsibility/respond-ability to the other while my being is exposed and "inseparable from patience and pain" (*OTB* 50). This exposure is different from thematization, which the Said presumes. In Levinas's metaphor the Saying is like nudity: that one is exposed as a bare skin to the other prior to any intention (*OTB* 49). Levinas defines Saying as "the most passive passivity" which makes one a subject: "The subjectivity of a subject is vulnerability" (*OTB* 50).

The Saying enacts the resistance of the other to the same, in other words, totality. Although the Saying is subsumed in the Said in its process, Saying also interrupts the absolutes of the Said: "the Saying in being Said at every moment breaks the definition of what it says and breaks up the totality it includes" (*OTB* 126). The Saying holds an ethical "residue" of language that resists the totalizing impulse of the Said. In addition, to follow Waldenfels's explanation, the split the Saying makes in discourse entails a delay, a diachrony of the Saying, by which it goes beyond the synchrony of the Said (Waldenfels 86): The diachrony of the Saying signifies the transcending dimensions of

time which derives from the inter-subjective relation. One cannot locate a particular moment regarding one's obligation to the other because it is always ongoing beyond temporality, thus prehistorical and infinite. In brief, the diachronic temporality of the Saying is core to the responsibility of an ethical subject that is explained by his key phrases such as "immemorial past never present," and "future always future."

Levinas and Literature

In some of his writings, and particularly in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas claims that the interruptions of the Saying in the Said only occur in philosophical or scriptural language. As for aesthetic representation, in his view, art cannot achieve the Saying and is limited to only revealing the Said. My dissertation argues that literary language not only works according to the same principles of interpretive intervention as Levinas ascribes to scriptural language but further demonstrates various cases of the encounter with the unknowable other through its experiments with forms.

Levinas's reservation about art is due to his regarding it merely as a representation, in his term, "a form of intentionality" (*TI* 122). In his view, representation is a form of knowledge that totalizes and thematizes an other since "knowledge is re-representation, … nothing remains other to it" (77). Such a view adopts a Platonic rejection of art as a copy of copy, "two removes from the truth"; it considers art only as a medium to mirror the essence (being), which is an incomplete

part of the world/reality.[9] In his early essay "Reality and Its Shadow" (1949), Levinas describes art as a "shadow" which does not refer to reality itself, but functions as an allegory of being or a neutralized imitation. Levinas contends that representation in art is a closed world, irrelevant to history, thus irresponsible to reality. Thus, his emphasis on the fixity of art here seems to anticipate the Said rather than the Saying. In brief, Levinas concludes that art is not useful, and the poets exile themselves from reality.[10]

Regarding this notorious essay of Levinas on art, Richard Cohen argues that Levinas is not hostile but rather "stands in a positive relation to art" (158) contrasting Robert Eaglestone's charging Levinas of repressing language's role as representational (156). In "Levinas on Art and Aestheticism: Getting "Realism and Its Shadow" Right," Cohen first points out that, in "Reality and Its Shadow," Levinas clarifies "the intentionally limited perspective of this study" (*LR* 143) limiting its significance for the imperative that art "must stand in an essential relationship to ethics" (160). Cohen

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[9] Robert Eaglestone explains that in *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas partially accepts Heidegger's position that art makes essence (being) appear; but it only "makes the Said resound" and has no access to beyond being (*Ethical Criticism* 154).

[10] In literary and critical history, however, this kind of criticism of art has been disputed in various forms. In Philosophy, Martha Nussbaum's view famously suggests the opposed stance. Nussbaum views that literature, especially fiction, can perform as a moral philosophy because narrative engages the reader in the "fine perception" of particular circumstances, whereas philosophy's abstract reason is disengaged from the particular. Literature encourages "our ability to see and care for particulars, not as representatives of the law, but as what they themselves are: to respond vigorously with sense and emotions before the new." (184) Nonetheless, while the question of whether reading literature guarantees cultivating these abilities remains in contention, Nussbaum's claim that only fine narratives can educate us is prone to limit the act of reading to a certain purpose.

suggests interpreting the text by the two dual aspects of disengagement and engagement in art. He argues that, although Levinas criticizes art's "disengagement" (*LR* 129) due to "its inner tendency toward self-closure" (Cohen 161), his ultimate aim is to reorient art to be 'engaged' to the world through "philosophical criticism," which means both art criticism and philosophical exegesis. To elucidate this alternation of disengagement/engagement, he compares science/scientific knowledge—which has its own disengaged dimension—to art in that both relate to the world ontologically by totalizing "the world as art, the world as truth" each at the expense of others (Cohen 161-62). Cohen writes that, "yet each also, for Levinas, must fail in such totalizing because they are both ultimately bound to ethics" (162), and claims that Levinas demand they recognize "a prior and commanding allegiance to ethics." In this sense, Cohen claims that "the ethical disruption of Levinas's Saying and Said … cuts across both science and art" (162) through criticism; in case of science, that its results are tentative, thus its process goes over criticism, publicity, and corrigibility over time is another necessary dimension of engagement (163) and a strength, which can be comparable to the Saying.

Cohen's interpretation of "Reality and its Shadow" is useful to consider Levinas's exposition of art based on his 'ethics as first philosophy' that, as Cohen argues that it is coherent throughout Levinas's career within his unchangeable priority on ethics. Nevertheless, it seems that Levinas's defending his discussion of art as "the intentionally limited perspective" in "Reality and Its Shadow" also applies to Cohen's reading of the essay. This is because as Levinas estimates whether the works of art give access to the ethical, Cohen views the vocation of art 'must stand in an essential relationship to

ethics" (160). Cohen's adherence to 'ethics as first philosophy' supposes a clear hierarchy between ethics or ethical purpose and art as if art should serve ethics. For instance, Cohen's statement that Levinas's distinction of Saying/Said "Raise them (art and science) to their highest calling" (162) exposes that hierarchy. This can sound as if ethics naturally subordinates and thematizes art to be functional for a should-be-ethical purpose.[11] Cohen's understanding art and science in comparison tends to simplify the complexity of art: whereas his explanation about the ethical possibility of engagement in science, particularly of its tentativeness, sounds persuasive, the similarity between art and science seems too easily guaranteed while his discussion mostly concentrates on science. Following Levinas's criticism on art in "Reality and Its Shadow," Cohen's discussion of art limits the ways in which art relates to the world to "the inner telos" (162) of totalizing.

Yet, Levinas holds a much more positive views on art in his later essays in *Proper Names* (1975), particularly addressing the work of Shmuel Yosef Agnon, one of the central figures in Modern Hebrew fiction. In "Poetry and Resurrection: Notes on Agnon," Levinas distinguishes "poetic expression" (*PN* 7) in art that transcends time

[11] In "Reality and Its Shadow," Levinas disapproves the tradition of 'art for art's sake' as "false" and "immoral" when an art work is completed in its closed world without relating to reality, thus disengaged.: "This completion does not necessarily justify the academic aesthetics of art for art's sake. The formula is false inasmuch as it situates art above reality and recognizes no master for it, and it is immoral inasmuch as it liberates the artist from his duties as a man and assures him of a pretentious and facile nobility" (*LR* 131).

from the literal meaning of language that flows in "every passing age." Levinas values how the poetic language in art processes as the Saying:

> It is of the essence of art to signify only between the lines – in the intervals of time, between times – like a footprint that would perceive the step, or an echo preceding the sound of a voice. Only exegesis, after the fact, completes and repeats again, indefinitely, that step and that call. … In this there is no belittling of the literal meaning. The letters bordering the interlinear trace remain, in literature, a refined suggestive language, through imagery and metaphors, from which no speaking is exempt. (*PN* 7-8)

In this passage, Levinas claims that "a refined suggestive language" in literature works as an "exegesis" between lines and times beyond the fact, "through imagery and metaphors," while not distorting any of the literal meaning. While he describes this capacity as "poetic," he uses that term broadly, as a synonym perhaps for "literary" and applied to both poets and prose writers in his essays in *Proper Names*. Agnon's prose, according to Levinas, is "a living language, modern language, but one whose birth was a resurrection, a raising up from the depths of the Scriptures (*PN* 8); it does not resurrect the dead language of Scripture as a theme but signifies it "to seek the ineffable" as a Saying. The practice of "exegesis" in literature is regarded as the Saying as it layers commentary over time like the metaphor of "an intricate lace": "Beneath the froth, like an intricate lace, stands the minute script of commentaries on commentaries" (*PN* 7-8). Levinas also suggests ethical possibilities of poetic language in that literature places meaning in the interpretive relation as much as in the text itself: "Writing as

interrogation. Interrogation as relationship. … [The books] go toward the "deep past" of these superimposed texts, though never reaching it. (*PN* 8) In this sense, Levinas makes equivalent the experience of reading literature to that of reading the scripture, the root of the Saying.

If we examine how Agnon's work satisfies Levinas's expectation of an ethical disruption of the Saying in literature, it is because his language "carries the clear but mysterious sonority of the Scripture" (*PN* 12), in other words, works to embody the presence/sound of the Scripture. "Poetry *signifies* poetically the resurrection that sustains it: not in the fable it sings, but in its very singing (original emphasis, *PN* 12). Levinas emphasizes the particularity of Agnon's work which is written in Hebrew; since the Hebrew word has "an ambiguity or an enigma," the sentence with "biblical turns of phrase … [achieve] a rhetorical effect" (*PN* 9). Levinas states that "This trope in Agnon's writing becomes the breaking-away from a certain ontology" (9). Despite the particularity of Agnon's work rooted in Jewish tradition, it is noticeable that Levinas praises Agnon's literary language to become the Saying itself with "a rhetorical effect" that summons "the unrepresentability" (*PN* 12) being "a living, a resuscitated language." In addition, Levinas assesses that Agnon's work bridges the "dilemma" between the world of Jewish tradition he belongs to and "the anguish of the modern world" (*PN* 7) he witnesses. Levinas's questioning if Agnon "[bears] witness to the breakdown, the collapse, the end of that world, and consequently … is "seized by the anguish of the modern work" suggests the affinity of Agnon's prose to modernist works that deal with the collapse of Western civilization as modernism did. In his essay on Paul Celan,

Levinas makes similar claims regarding this poet's work in the German language. The claims regarding Agnon are specific to his work and to Hebrew but have implications across languages.

Considering the context in "Reality and Its Shadow" where Levinas disfavors modern works (in comparison to classical art) criticizing them as separating objects from "the world of sounds" (*LR* 134) while not having "the quality of the living instant which is open to the salvation of becoming" (*LR* 141), Levinas's approval of Agnon's work suggests a positive openness in his perspective on modernist works. Briefly stated, my dissertation puts into discussion the ethics of modernism with Levinas's ethical theory in its confronting the impossible narration when representing the other's unknowability. I use Levinasian ethics to explore how his vocabulary makes evident the ethical possibility latent in modernist novels.

The Engagement between Levinasian Ethics and the Political

While my project is to draw the ethical signification of modernism by examining the movement in conjunction with Levinasian ethics because the fiction I focus on addresses the colonial context which is inherently political, it is necessary to clarify the relation between ethics and politics, connections where Levinasian ethics is often misunderstood. Critics have discussed whether Levinas's view of ethics as anterior to any ontological condition can be compatible with politics. Levinasian ethics is centered around an individual relationship between self and other who is a particular being, a singular other rather than a collective or political entity. This face-to-face

relationship in which the subject substitutes itself for the other is beyond essence, beyond reason, memory, or emotions. In contrast, politics is "an ontological praxis of mediation among at least three people: the ego, the other, and any third party" (Herzog 1). The focus on individual relations raises questions about how his ethics can be applied beyond the dyad of self and other to ethically resolve conflicts between three or more entities. Politics is a communal situation, and, as Annabel Herzog encapsulates, politics entails "the emergence of questions about responsibility" (2) within the ethical, face-to-face relationship since it is complicated by "the entrance of the third party" (3). However, Levinas affirms that the third party is already present in our encounter with the other: "The third looks at me in the eyes of the other" (*TI* 234); "it is not that the entry of a third party would be an empirical fact, and that my responsibility for the other finds itself constrained to a calculus by the 'force of things.' In the proximity of the other, all the others obsess me, and already this obsession cries out for justice, demands measure and knowing" (*OB* 158). This quotation might sound paradoxical, as the existence of the third party is not limiting my responsibility to the other (the ethical), but simultaneously all the connected relationships with the other and the third party already demand my justice, the political.[12] Herzog comments of this passage that, in the Levinasian frame, "all relationships can be considered to be always, and necessarily, political" (2).

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[12] Levinas offers three reasons for this contradiction:

> The first reason is that it is ethics which is the foundation of justice. Because justice is not the last word; within justice, we seek a better justice. That is the liberal state. The second reason is that there is a violence in justice. When the verdict of justice is pronounced, there remains for the unique I that I am the

While there seems to exist a paradox regarding the "entrance of the third party" in Levinas's ethical theory, Michael Morgan focuses on the concreteness of Levinas's conception of interpersonal responsibility. Morgan emphasizes that the concreteness of Levinas's ethics can be found as involved in our complex and ordinary life, and thus "provides a standard by which our social and political institutions, policies, and practices can be considered and evaluated" (xiv). Morgan views the nature of our being responsible to the other as "normative," and "the normative character of the particular face-to-face relationships … ground all of human social experience" (4). The ethically normative claim is both "determinative" of our moral duties and "a transcendental" for every aspect of our lives. Due to its inclusive and normative character, our responsibility to the particular other can apply to a wide spectrum of our life, from the most ordinary but perceptual experience to the narrower sense of the political, which includes institutional or legal domains. In their mutual relation, the ethical and the political encompass each other in both the concrete and abstract realms of our life.

In my discussion of modernist narrative through Levinasian ethics, the paradoxical compatibility between ethics and politics emerges in the matter of representing colonial experiences in modernism. Modernist novels address the injustice of colonialism, which is deeply embedded in their cultural and economic prosperity. In

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> possibility of finding something more to soften the verdict. …. The third reason is that there is a moment when I, the unique I, along with other I's, can find something else which improves universality itself. ("The Paradox of Morality" 84)

colonial situations, the colonial subject can be "the third party," and in most situations, Western subjects fail to encounter the colonial subject by ethically responding to the other's infinity. For instance, in the colonial novels I discuss in Chapter One, ethical relation becomes possible when the characters respond to an other's suffering in ways that exceed their own political stance according to gender or race. Yet, the hierarchical relation colonialism inculcates between colonizer and colonized keeps the imperial subject from realizing and respecting the colonial subject as "the third party" who is equally "other than the neighbor but also another neighbor" ("Peace and Proximity" 168). The first step to understanding politics is founded in an ethical imperative. In the subsequent chapters, I examine how the Western characters, particularly in the earlier modernist novels, struggle with their failed encounter with the colonial other as the colonial situation further complicates their ontological relation with the other.

Levinas and Postcolonialism

In my analysis of post/colonial novels in following chapters, I attempt to read them by linking postcolonial theories to Levinasian ethics. Postcolonialism is usually defined as critical reactive studies to imperialism, more specifically, to the imperial past. It has been discussed in a relational term of the systematic, triadic relationship among modernism, imperialism, and capitalism, which emerged inseparably from one another (Huggan 1-3). While postcolonial studies are consequently concerned with these phenomena, what differentiates the field is that it reclaims and rethinks the history and agency of the colonized under various forms of colonial authority from their perspective.

Regarding Hegel's master-slave dialectic "as the principal organizing trope in the history of modernity" (Aching 913), Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), emphasizes the slaves' perspective in Hegel's dialectic: it would question the validity of enlightenment project in modernism that includes ideas such as history as progress, fixed meaning, and the subject's coherence (Gilroy 53-55). Since postcolonial studies concern the political and historical problems of the subalterns under the oppression of colonialism, there has been criticism that regards Levinasian ethics as disinterested in the injustice of racism and slavery. Building on what I expound in the previous section that Levinasian ethics mutually supplements the political, in this section, I review how the relation between postcolonialism and Levinasian ethics has been discussed. This dissertation, however, assumes that the ethical responsibility to the other can account for racial difference and the modern project of colonialism though these were not Levinas's primary concerns.

John Drabinski's *Levinas and the Postcolonial* puts Levinas in conversation with postcolonial philosophers starting with a claim that Levinas's insight regarding the Other brings the ethical into a postcolonial context. What Drabinski sees most problematic in Levinas's thought, however, is his Eurocentrism: he does not seem to address the slave history and colonial conquest in other continents as much as he contemplates the Holocaust in Europe in the mid-20th century. Drabinski states that Levinas's 'ethics as first philosophy' without historic context "obscures the ethical across … geographies informed by history" (3). He problematizes Levinas's Eurocentric thinking as a 'colonial fantasy' that imagines other continents as separate from European identity. Bringing in Edouard Glissan's concept of Europe's identity as the

"entanglements of modernity" with its history of colonial conquest and exploitation, Drabinski argues for "decolonizing" Levinas by re-entangling his notion of Europe with the transnational other.[13] In brief, by decolonizing Levinas, Drabinski aims to link Levinas's ethics of the other to the experience of historical violence "across geographies" so that it can address the cultural and political questions together with the ethical ones. In other words, while Levinas himself does not address the colonial question, Drabinski sees within his philosophy the structures through which the postcolonial can be understood.

Reviewing the recent Levinas-colonialism conversation, Patrick Anderson argues for reading Levinas's ethics from an "anticolonial" approach putting his Jewish background into consideration. Anderson problematizes Drabinski's reading, which regards Levinas's Judaism as preventing decolonizing Levinasian ethics from his Eurocentric statements; Drabinski's "universalizing" (150) Levinas's ethical project is "to perform the Hegelian move" of eliminating the particular of his Jewish element. While Drabinski focuses on situating Levinas's philosophy in the horizontal movement of colonial geography, Anderson claims that the colonial problem is created not by its location but by the vertical stratification of ontology. Anderson distinguishes anticolonialism from postcolonialism "where postcolonialism sees a psychic antagonism between a superior and a subaltern, anticolonialism sees a material enmity between the

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[13] Drabinski's project of decolonizing Levinas is in line with other postcolonial scholar's discussion such as Chakrabaty's provincializing Europe and Walter Mignolo's decolonial shift.

human and the non-human" (153).[14] According to Anderson, Frantz Fanon, who is regarded as a representative figure of anticolonialism, criticizes the system of colonialism as a Manichean ontology that separates the colonized in the "zone of nonbeing" (qtd in 154), and this "non-tology" resists being subsumed to European philosophy, to which postcolonialism genealogically resorts.

Anderson's claim of anti-colonialism is effective to examine the ontological structure of the colony which presupposes the colonized existentially as 'non-being' opposed to the Being of Western subjects. Anderson attempts to brings to the table what Levinas's ethics of the other suggests to the impasse in Fanon's sociogenic account of the colonized non-being. Anderson emphasizes that Levinas's *otherwise than being* does not belong to either the preontological level he supposes, or ontological level Fanon criticizes. For this reason, Levinas's ethical face of the Other could suggest a possibility to disrupt the dividing line of colonial ontology Fanon problematizes as it does the ontological. Anderson's understanding Fanon and Levinas in comparison interrogates the validity of Levinasian ethics as transcending the issue of color/race. Fanon's zone of

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[14] Anderson points out the limitation of the postcolonial paradigm and suggests the need for an anticolonial perspective for the following reasons. Postcolonialism which has been defined as "a radicalization of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and Marxism" (151) turns out to be suspect since, first, genealogically, postcolonialism borrows its central concept from European philosophy, and second, "it is methodologically flawed because it views the colony through a lens of horizontal pluralism rather than a vertical dualistic ontology" (152). Nonetheless, as Anderson analyzes Levinas's complex status as a Jewish philosopher who remains committed to European philosophy, which informs the colonial effort, but also declares a de-colonial autonomy in his centering Jewish culture, postcolonialism also needs to be understood in its complex status as being rooted in European philosophy but simultaneously resisting its European-centrality and continuity.

non-being counterargues Levinas's claim that "Speech cuts across vision" as his experience of colonialism attests that Black speech is overdetermined by Black appearance, thus "vision cuts across speech" (Anderson 161). As Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1957), "it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (17). For Fanon language is always already racially differentiated. However, Levinas concentrates on "a kind of colorblindness in the ethical realm" (Eisenstadt 542): "The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of hie eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in the social relationship with the Other" ("Ethics and Infinity," 85-86). Yet, Anderson's emphasis on the distinction between Levinas's ethics of the other beyond any politics, which is individual and, in Anderson's expression, ontogenic, and Fanon's sociogenic view of the colonized nonbeing seems not easily reconcilable but rather remains circular. In a sense, Drabinski's attempt to expand the Levinas's ethics transnationally or horizontally and Anderson's emphasis on the anticolonial approach to track the vertical move from ontological to non-tological in the colony's reality both demand Levinas's ethics be endowed with the political.

As Oona Eisenstadt's review of Drabinski's work states, since Drabinski correctly understands the political and ethical distinction in Levinas's theory, his discussing Levinas with influential postcolonial thinkers such as Spivak and Bhaha rather paradoxically betrays that the political is already phenomenological. Eisenstadt comments that the fissures Drabinski finds in Levinas's argument are from Levinas himself (543). I agree with Eisenstadt's point that postcolonial studies and Levinasian ethics can meet not as antagonists but contribute to understanding each other (544).

Levinas's emphasis on the Other's otherness beyond any attribute could offer an ideal against the totalizing violence of colonialism while postcolonial theories point out the complexity of the historical and political realm of colonial problem.

The Ethics of Modernist Narrative as Saying

Adam Newton *in Narrative Ethics* claims narrative text as a site to be exposed to others' story in the sense of the Levinasian Saying. Newton's narrative ethics starts from the difference between a deontology and a phenomenology of reading, that while the former attempts to evaluate or solve a text's problems, the latter "engages the problems in their concrete, formal, narrative particularity" (Newton 11). In other words, what Newton defines as a narrative ethics is not a reading of ontology for knowing but a reading of phenomenology in Levinasian sense that discovers and responds to an immediacy and particularity of alterity. He outlines the triadic structure of narrative ethics: 1) a narrational ethics including its conditions and consequences of the narrative situation, 2) a representational ethics of "life-turned-into-story" which supposes the distance between person and character, 3) a hermeneutic (interpretive) ethics which holds the readers' responsibility for their act of reading. Citing in a passage from Levinas's "Reality and Its Shadow," Newton interprets Levinas's idea of "an essential doubling of reality" as it ties acts of representation to responsibilities, that is, links the representational to hermeneutic ethics:

> There is then a duality in this person, this thing, a duality in its being. It is what it is and it is a stranger to itself, and there is a relationship between these

> two moments. We will say the thing is itself and is its image. And that this relationship between the thing and its image is resemblance.... The whole of reality bears on its face its own allegory, outside of its revelation and its truth. In utilizing images art not only reflects, but brings about this allegory. In art allegory is introduced into the world, as truth is accomplished in cognition. ("Reality and Its Shadow," 6-7)

In this passage, Levinas views the act of art not limited to a reflection but a manifestation of the gap between a self and its image in its relationship to an other. Newton argues that "the epistemological parallel Levinas draws between allegory and cognition" suggests that fiction's power to represent "gives way before the more severe and plenary power of ethical responsibility" (19). In other words, narrative manifests the relation derived from a duality, an allegory of reality in which selves represented by others the relation in its realm of representation. Further, Newton expands the intersubjective relation between the self and other to an interlocutional relation in a text that claims the readers in their responsibility. In brief, Newton coins the term 'narrative ethics': a narrative situation "translates the interactive problematic of ethics into literary form" (13) while "cutting athwart the mediatory role of reason" for knowing. Narrative is a performing text where lies an ethical confrontation.

In *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism*, Jessica Berman regards the capability of narrative to the extent of refiguring the world in its imaginative act. She positions narrative as "at the crossroads" where rhetoric, ethics and politics intersect. Berman argues that modernist narrative is "a constellation of

rhetorical actions … motivated by the particular and varied situations of economic, social, and cultural modernity worldwide and shaped by the ethical and political demands of those situations" (16). In her view, modernist narrative with all these dynamics challenges the distinction between politically engaged writing and self-consciously experimental modernisms; modernism depends on narrative experimentation as engagement which "ground[s] their formal resistance to consensus-based realism." In addition, Berman emphasizes the connection between ethics and politics in the narrative act rather than separating or ordering them by importance. Berman also points out the readers' engagement in the process of imagining justice from the text quoting Derek Attridge's statement, "The distinctiveness of the ethical in literature . . . is that it occurs as an *event* in the process of reading, not a theme to be registered, a thesis to be grasped, or an imperative to be followed or ignored" (654), which recalls Levinas's Saying as an ongoing practice against the Said as a thematization. In brief, Berman sees modernist texts as narrative action which is not a mirror of reality but reworks and revises reality into an ethical experience, thus bridging the gap between the ethics and politics.

The Ethics of Impossible Narration in Modernism

Aligning with Newton's narrative ethics and Berman's modernist commitment, I argue that modernist novels (as evident in those discussed in this dissertation) show an ethical acknowledgement, in their encounter with an other, that their narration is impossible. My discussion of modernist novels is selective as I agree with Newton's statement that not all but "certain kinds of textuality parallel" Levinasian ethics of the

other in which the relation originates from the other to me (12 -13).[15] While I agree with Berman's claim that modernist narratives act to imagine justice, in other words, the ethico-political possibility that modernist commitments open up, I focus on the ethics of failure that certain modernist novels confront in their attempt to representing the unknowable other.

Modernist texts precisely address the problem of ethical relations in modern subjectivity since the modernist period coincides both with the height of British imperial expansion and with advancements in gender rights.[16] While there is a possibility of ethically imaging others, what these texts confront (or the characters in them narrate) is the unknowable other and the impossibility of narration. The failure of narration by the

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[15] The texts Newton discusses have characteristics such as a story of storytelling like Coleridge's narrative poem "The Rime of Ancient Mariner," and a story that blurs the boundary between life and story like Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. His focus is not particularly on modernist experimentation.

[16] Regarding modernism as the literary engagement with the end of empire, See J. Esty, *A Shrinking Island* and John Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire*. Focusing on the early twentieth century, both critics rebuke a tendency to connect the collapse of British imperial power and the diminishment of English literature in terms of mere coincidence (Esty 2).

Esty claims an "anthropological turn" in modernist writers, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and E. M. Forster, arguing that they actively participated in the rise of Anglocentric culture and sought a recovered cultural particularity in their later works (1-3). While Esty emphasizes the modernists' reinscribing universalism into the language of English particularism (14), Marx focuses on how the novels of Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, E. M. Forster, and D. H. Lawrence internationalized the English Language, shedding their provincialism and developed into a wide variety of "local Englishes" (4). Marx argues that modernists' "narratives of decline" not only "elevated English while devaluing Great Britain" but "helped authorize immigrants and colonial subjects to write fiction in English that privileged marginality for a cosmopolitan readership" (1).

characters within the novels creates by inversion a model for the ethical imagination of an unknowable other. My concept of the ethical failure of imagining the other resonates with Cavell's assertion in that "the concept of acknowledgment is evidenced equally by its failure as by its success," as there is a difference between failing to know and failing to acknowledge (263). Again, acknowledging the unknowability of an other enables ethical narration. Thus, the ethical imagination I draw from the modernist novels might be directed in a different direction from Berman's reading of imagining justice. In my discussion of modernist novels, the ethical imagination flashes out at the points of narrative failure, such as La Trobe's conceiving a new play with "words without meaning" in *Between the Acts*, and an anonymous narrator's facing an unending stream from Friday's silenced mouth in the place where stories and words are diffused in *Foe*. And by narrating the failure of imagining an other, these texts diagnose the reason for the failure of the political project of modernity. This is because modernity then assumed knowledge in a totalizing way to thematize individual experience under principles of a dominant subject's experience. Jurgen Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985) pointed out that, from Hegel to the present, the project of modernity is to insist on human freedom because a person is no longer subjected to tradition or external authority but only the reason the subject produces themselves. But that version of modernity presumes a subject with a unified and even universal rationality.

In terms of changing the mode of representation, the ethics of modernism needs to be further discussed in its response to the atrocity of colonialism that most influenced late nineteenth-century fiction. Colonialism here includes "the experience of exploitation

of other cultures along with the expansion of industrial capitalism" (Just 275) that economically exploited the colonies. Modernist writers including Conrad attempt to revise their mode of representation as they found realistic depiction "domesticat[e] the unsettling historical experiences by presenting them as classifiable objects" (Just 275).[17] They challenge the problematic connection between colonialism and realistic representation by designing a different literary practice, and thereby disrupting the totalizing illusion of realistic narrative (Attridge 18). And the issue of what appropriate or justifiable representation could be possible regarding racial alterity has been inherited by the postcolonial novel. Derek Attridge asks "is it possible to do justice to the otherness of the other in the language and discursive conventions that have historically been one of the instruments ensuring that this other is kept subordinate? (17). addressing this question, Attridge argues that realist representation is rather ineffective since it is through this language that the mastery of colonization is perpetuated. Similarly, in his discussion of the ethical implication of post-colonial novel genre, Mike Marais problematizes the realist tradition as it presents a knowing subject established beyond dispute and inscribes the subject through the novel's seemingly transparent language. The novel presents this subject's relation to the world as innocent, while in fact this relation is one in which the subject constitutes the other into the order of the same while

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[17] In "Between Narrative Paradigms: Joseph Conrad and the Shift from Realism to Modernism from a Genre Perspective," Daniel Just states that for Conrad in particular the historical experience of colonialism "precipitates a need to radically change his mode of representation" (275). Just positions *Heart of Darkness* in the gap between a moment of indecision after the dissolution of realism and modernism, while I view the novella as the beginning of modernism.

subsuming the other's alterity. Marais argues that, by this concealment, the realist novel installs an appropriative subject-object relation, and "the relation's homogenizing operation [is] particularly apparent in representations of the colonial encounter" (3). Modernist narrative attempts an alternative form to address racial otherness which is saturated with the brutal history of colonialism while resisting the totalizing operation of realist representation.

Structure of Chapters

My project features the ethical failure of imagination and narration as addressed in Conrad, as the precursor of modernism who showed a perception of the unsettling meaning of the world through a insecure narrator Marlow, Woolf, as the author who has given the most sustained attention in the matter of ethical representation; in Forster, as the creator of various characters most associated with this question; and finally in Coetzee, as the inheritor of the problem that Woolf was exploring.

This dissertation starts by grouping three early modernist novels that focus on colonial exploration: *Heart of Darkness, A Passage to India*, and *The Voyage Out*. These three texts foreground the impossibility of narrating in the particular situation of encountering the colonial other. Then the comparison between Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* in Chapter One and her last novel *Between the Acts* in Chapter Two epitomizes the stylistic and thematic differences between modernism in the early twentieth century versus in the forties. In terms of formal aspects, *The Voyage Out* contains remnants of Victorian novels, including characterization, whereas *Between the*

Acts exhibits a deconstructive gesture, defamiliarizing words while the pageantry functions as both a dramatic form and a subject for fiction. While the British characters in *The Voyage Out* "voyage out" to expand Englishness with pride, in *Between the Acts* the characters strive to represent Great Britain by staging an annual village pageant but only confront their fragmented being and witness the decline of Great Britain in the face of imminent war.

Between the Acts in Chapter Two and *Foe* in Chapter Three depict aspects of late modernism in that both novels self-consciously decenter the mode of representation: the former deconstructs "words" by placing La Trobe's play within the novel; the latter deconstructs fiction-making itself with a self-doubting narrator. I view Coetzee as an inheritor of modernism, situating him in late modernism for two reasons. One is that Coetzee's being a White South African complicates his relation with the racial other in the colonial situation of apartheid. This situation parallels the crisis of the Western subject in the encounter with colonial otherness in the early twentieth century. The other reason is the modernist mode of writing he takes. Among his works, *Foe* in particular shows elements of modernist experimentation and self-reflexivity about the novel genre itself. By rewriting Defoe's canon, the novel critically reflects the problem of representation in realist novels along with the rise of the novel in English literature. Coetzee complicates a postcolonial approach to the novel by placing Susan Barton, a veiled character Coetzee borrows from Defoe's *Roxana*, as a self-doubting narrator. Susan intervenes in the master-slave relation between Cruso and Friday as a usurper of the unknowable story of Friday's mutilation. Lastly, Coetzee questions and deconstructs

the myth of "Authorship" by magnifying the fictive nature of authoring and the unrepresentability of Friday. In addition, *Foe*'s postcolonial critique echoes the Conradian narrative, thus turning back to the starting point of this dissertation. Susan's (fabricated) fascination with Friday as an impenetrable barbarian resonates with Marlow's elusive way of narrating colonial otherness. With conflicting narrators (Marlow, Susan), the two novels inscribe the impossibility of narration and the unrepresentability of the colonial other.

I expect that my project will contribute to opening a new approach to within modernist studies with my theoretical framework for defining ethics through Levinas's ethics of the other. This is because the field has so far emphasized the political in both imperial and gender issues, but consequently elided the ethical investigation that properly precedes political engagement in modernist texts.

Chapter Two: The Ethics of Impossible Narration: Failed Exploration in Colonial Novels

Chapter Two explores the political questions of gender, race, and imperialism presented in three colonial texts, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Forster's *A Passage to India (1924)*, and Woolf's *The Voyage Out (1915)*. *Heart of Darkness* presents a new form of the narrating subject through Marlow's failure of knowing and representing an other, thereby setting itself apart from other colonial narratives that conform to colonial discourse. Published at the end of century, *Heart of Darkness* presents a conflicting narrative told by an unreliable or unknowing narrator Marlow. In

its frame narrative, the text anticipates the failure of Marlow's narration from the beginning, as it indicates that his story reports one of his "inconclusive experiences" (11). Marlow's wanderer narrative corresponds to the paradox of colonial discourse, in that, while seeking to discover unknown territory, it fears mystery and preserves the home values by appropriating otherness into familiar experience. Marlow is insecure both as a narrator and as an imperialist male subject; his self-knowledge is limited and obscured as his witnessing Kurtz's horror, which should be the climax of his narrative, remains as an enigma. And it is important to note that the matter of unimaginable other is not only applied to race but is complicated by gender difference in its treatment of the African Intended and the European Intended.

In Forster's *A Passage to India*, the Anglo-Indian problem is complicated by the differences of gender, class, and even religion. Forster's characters struggle with barriers and attempt to understand each other. Adela Quested's and Mrs. Moore's desire to see "real India" is frustrated the echo of Malabar cave, which symbolizes the otherness that they cannot penetrate or understand; they feel threatened by its indescribability. That Adela can only testify that she was wrong and Mrs. Moore refuses to testify on Aziz's behalf, despite her belief in him, suggests their disillusionment with knowing an other, which emerges not as appreciating but appropriating India to their existing knowledge. Despite the tone of Forster, which sounds like a Victorian rather than a Modernist style in the sense that he seems to indicate the transparency of narrative, Forster balances that transparency through his positioning of various characters with unbiased perspectives.

Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out*, published between *Heart of Darkness* and *A*

Passage to India, addresses similar themes in the crisis British subjects undergo given their failure to know the other. *The Voyage Out* and *A Passage to India* share a similar storyline: an inexperienced, young, British woman voyages out to explore the world. Rachel, like Adela, becomes disillusioned in her relationship with her fiancée, Terrence Hewet, and their marriage is not consummated. The novel addresses the issue of gender asymmetry between the lovers, which prevents them from understanding each other: Hewet, an aspiring novelist, considers himself liberal-minded but is ultimately traditional in the sense that he wants to know her in a way that forgets the ethical unknowability of an other. Significantly, Rachel refuses to conform to the decorum her father and Hewet force upon her, expecting her to be an ideal middle-class woman. Meanwhile, Rachel's trip down the river from outer to inner Amazon writes back to the issues in *Heart of Darkness.*

Chapter Three: "Words Without Meaning": Woolf's Levinasian Saying in Between the Acts"

Chapter Three examines Woolf's antifascist aesthetics and ethics in her last novel through Levinasian notion of the Saying. In *Between the Acts,* words have suggestive power; they "menace" and "noose" the villagers individually, but at the same time collectively during the annual pageant. By framing a revised English pageantry in her novel, Woolf betrays the genre's nationalist rhetoric, and ultimately demystifies the ideal of Englishness that has justified British imperial history. The climax scene, "The Present," culminates this process of deconstructing English civilization by declaiming

phrase fragments from previous scenes and forcing the audience to face their fragmented state of being reflected in cracked mirrors. The deconstructing impulse in Woolf's text has an ethical implication by acknowledging both impossibility and capacity of language to understand the other and represent the reality. I argue that the novel inscribes Woolf's attempt to achieve the Saying through the multi-layered narrative, by letting us witness the audience's continuous participation in the pageant's meaning-making, which unsettles the Said of English history.

Chapter Four: "A Story Unable to be Told": The Ethical Failure of Susan's Confession in Coetzee's Foe

In Chapter Four, I explore the ways in which Coetzee's *Foe (1986)* write back to the modernist novels in previous chapters in terms of the politics of gender and race. I read Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) from Levinasian ethics of responsibility, arguing that Levinas's ethics of other and Coetzee's rewriting Defoe's cannon share the essential questions of human subjectivity with relation to an other. Levinas's criticism of ontology as egology and philosophy of power is applicable to the matter of writing as power relation in fiction. What Coetzee does in *Foe* is to critique the nature of fiction writing which takes up the position of power and assumes that knowing and representing the Other is possible. *Foe* is a story in which the female narrator Susan Barton—who does not exist in the original Defoe's novel— realizes the impossibility of representing the other and calls into question the possible narration by encountering the otherness of Friday.

I discuss *Foe* with the genre of confession Coetzee discusses in "Confession and Double thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky" (1985). Coetzee emphasizes the self-reflectiveness of confession as its central characteristic that leads to "regression to infinity of self-awareness and self-doubt" (274). The paradoxical drive of confessional narrative toward absolution differentiates the novel from the impasse of postmodern textuality. For this reason, despite the seemingly postmodern qualities of his works including antirealist devices, allusiveness, and its metafictional address, I argue to read Coetzee as the inheritor of modernism in terms of his struggle with ethical representation and experiment with self-reflexivity.

CHAPTER II

THE ETHICS OF IMPOSSIBLE NARRATION: FAILED EXPLORATION IN COLONIAL NOVELSTITLE OF SECOND CHAPTER

Emmanuel Levinas's ethical theory is valuable to our understanding of colonial narration, specifically due to his criticism of the ontological knowledge in Western thought that subordinates the other into the same of Being. In this chapter, I read early modernist novels in the context of Levinas's thought: these literatures question modes of representation at the decline of British Imperialism, questions that correspond to Levinas's tendency toward anti-representation in his critique of ontological knowledge. With this perspective of Levinasian ethics, I define Modernism as the encounter with imperialism in its necessary decline. I examine how modernist writers witness to the construction of imperial subjectivity at the collapse of empire. In particular, I examine how Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and two other colonial texts, Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), share the theme of failed exploration and reflect the ethical issue of the unknowable other while exploring political questions of gender, race, and imperialism.

The three novels I group here have received similar criticisms from a postcolonial perspective. *Heart of Darkness* was famously attacked by Chinua Achebe, who argued that the novel's representation reduces Africans to "the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind" (21). Even less severe critics state that the novel

(or Conrad) does not provide a "definite condemnation of colonialism" (Just 284) nor a "fully realized alternative to imperialism" (Said 28), no new language beyond the imperial rhetoric (Manocha 37). The novel's thematic ambiguity, that is, Marlow's ambivalent attitude toward both imperial depravity and the idea of impenetrable otherness, can be seen as rendering the novel's narrative style ambiguous as well. In a larger sense, character criticism of these novels, particularly regarding the limits of British subjects' Western-centric perspective, tends to be expanded to blame the novels for not subverting imperialism without careful attention to how these limits function as a narrative device. In terms of narrative style, these novels are assessed as not reaching the assumed highest modernist style, as being merely in transition from the Victorian novel. My reading, however, discusses the ethical implications these early modernist novels have in common by arguing that Conrad, Forster, and Woolf responded to the needs of changing modes of representation in fiction by making visible the impossibility of knowing the other, let alone representing them through language. My discussion moves from pointing out the epistemological failure of knowing the other to the ethical questionings the novels pose regarding the encounter with the other.

I first illustrate my argument in some detail using Conrad's novel and then move on to tracing its implications for Woolf's and Forster's narrations.[18] While my

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[18] In "Two Cultures and One Individual: *Heart of Darkness* and *The Ambassadors*," Michael Levenson investigates a likeness between Conrad's novella and Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, most notably, "the confrontation between cultures, the "sharp rupture of and the transvaluation of values" (3) in both novels. Levenson focuses on the similarity of the two novel's plots centered around the male protagonists' undergoing a

conclusions regarding the latter two texts are subtly different, the starting point is the same. These three novels share a similar storyline: an inexperienced, young British subject voyages out to explore the land of the colonies, where s/he hopes to gain knowledge of the colonized other. When they go near the heart of the country and encounter colonial otherness, they become inexplicably deranged and/or physically damaged. They enter the colonized world only to find barriers to knowing the other and to discover how their personal values are as groundless as their identity is. For instance, Marlow's belief in civilization or Adela's (and other British characters') liberal humanism does not make them a moral subject in relation to the colonized other. In the case of Woolf's Rachel Vinrace and Forster's Adela Quested, they become disenchanted in their relationships with their British fiancés, and the marriages are not consummated. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's Intended is left alone while she never knows the truth that Kurtz's last words were not her name but his disillusioned cry, "The horror!" Nor is she aware of his failed union with a parallel other, the African Intended.[19]

In his "ethics as first philosophy," Levinas decenters the self as the knowing

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self-division between two cultures: a man travels to another country, "where he hopes to retrieve an unaccountably estranged member of his community" (2), but only finds the object of his quest become disoriented by the alien community and himself lose his own certainties about the values he has inherited. Levenson's grouping the two novels of the same historical moment is instructive; it motivates me to do this chapter's case study of the three novels of colonial exploration plot, while I focus on the similarities of the western subjects' becoming disillusioned in their encounter with the colonized other.

19 I like to refer to Kurtz's two women as the African Intended or the European Intended to emphasize their parallel place.

sovereign in the ontological tradition of Western thought. The other precedes our knowledge and commands us to respond to their infinity. In Levinasian terms, knowing the other means reducing alterity to the order of the same, which is totality. The metaphysical other is beyond ontological knowledge, "prior to every initiative, to all imperialism of the same" (*Totality and Infinity* 38-39). In line with his criticism of knowledge, "representation" implies the same thing for Levinas, to possess and dominate alterity under the self's knowledge: "If I can no longer have power over him it is because he overflows absolutely every *idea* I can have of him (*TI* 87, original emphasis). In other words, the other in its infinity exceeds my representation of it (Gibson 119). Representation is a manifestation of what Levinas calls "freedom," as its ontological principle is egology; it exerts a denial of the other's independence. Levinas criticizes imperialism as ontological ("ontological imperialism" [*TI* 44]), warning that "men can easily be treated as objects" (*TI* 170) in its system of totalization.

Heart of Darkness: The Totality of "the Saving Illusion"

I begin with *Heart of Darkness* in part because it is understood to be the foundational text of the colonial critique at the turn of the century. In my view, the novel's ethical complexity emerges when we focus on Marlow's representations of Kurtz, the one he projects as his desire, and of the colonized land, the other about which he confesses the impossibility of knowing. *Heart of Darkness* is certainly a text about representation, and has been discussed with the question whether it is "Kurtz's story or

Marlow's experience of Kurtz?" (Booth 346). As for the unreadability of Marlow's narration, F. R. Leavis, who praises and includes Conrad in *The Great Tradition* of the English novel, is nevertheless disturbed by Marlow's unclarity and by Marlow's implicit insistence on the limits of representation to achieve any ideal clarity. Andrew Gibson claims that, for Leavis, "a novel's ethical power is inseparable from a kind of mimetic adequacy" (Gibson 116), and that such a perspective assumes essences which presuppose cognition or knowledge (117). I build on Gibson's analysis, which uses Levinasian ethics for reading *Heart of Darkness*, but I read Marlow's narration differently by taking gender into account. I will focus on two consequential moments where gender dynamics complicates the impossibility of Marlow's representation.

Before turning to the novel's exploration of gender, I will review the question of Kurtz's moral standing. The question of why Marlow is so fascinated with Kurtz matters to our reading of his narrative. I view Kurtz's desire to totalize as so excessive that he ruins himself. Marlow qualifies Kurtz's self-destruction, saying, "Confound the man! He had kicked the very earth to pieces" (65). In other words, Marlow breaks Kurtz free from the restraints of any norm or morality enforced under the sheen of civilization. This freedom is what Levinas would criticize as an extreme case of egology that shows a limitless expansion of the self. Marlow describes Kurtz's rhetoric as one-directional, not allowing conversation, and in the ways he envisions Kurtz's character, Marlow projects his own desire for totalization. Marlow's experience of Africa is largely vicarious as he traces Kurtz's career in his journey to retrieve him. Although Marlow acknowledges that Kurtz's supposedly noble plan for reforming the native is changed into brutality, as

evinced in Kurtz's postscript "Exterminate all the brutes!" on the report "The suppression of Savage Customs," Marlow is reluctant to comment on Kurtz's moral decay, instead eagerly describing how far Marlow devotes himself to his desire.

As Gibson rightly points out, Kurtz's discourse is that of ontology and totalization as his words indicate the desire for total possession: "'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—' everything belonged to him" (49). In Marlow's narration, ruptures are prevalent in his gaze at the colonial brutality brought to an extreme through Kurtz's ruthless exploitation of ivory. These ruptures especially emerge in how he represents and interprets Kurtz's end with the last words "The horror! The horror!" On the surface, Marlow assesses Kurtz's last moment as "a moral victory" (70) and asserts that Kurtz reaches self-knowledge about his adventures, a "supreme moment of complete knowledge" (68), which implies a totality of ontological Being and knowledge in Heideggerian terms. Nonetheless, Marlow's words, especially "supreme moment of complete knowledge," sound ironic; they could be rather a rhetorical trick to negate not only Kurtz's failure in terms of his ontological relation with the colonized other but also Marlow's failure to know Kurtz. The dilemma of Marlow's narrative is that, although Kurtz's horror is the climax of his narrative, it remains an enigma, a hollow at its core.

Marlow's narrative continuously confronts its incapacity to represent the other. Although his narration silences the land and people of the colony, the existence of an "inscrutable" other remains visible and undercuts what Marlow tells and fails to tell. Conrad makes the impossibility of knowing the other evident primarily in the gaps or

silences of his text; Marlow's failure of understanding becomes visible in the novel's silences. Marlow's narrative cannot appropriate the other by his language, which cannot go beyond the imperial discourse. Significantly, the matter of the unimaginable other emerges not only regarding race but is complicated by gender differences in Marlow's description of Kurtz's African mistress:

> She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (60)

Here, as Marlow first sees Kurtz's African mistress, his gaze objectifies her and describes her as an embodiment of the African land. In his gaze, her exotic image is overlaid with the "ominous" and "sorrowful" images of the African land, which Marlow obsessively repeats throughout the story. His description reduces her individuality, her singular otherness, into a thematized image that is identified with the land, which is even personified as looking "pensive." It is ethically problematic that Marlow invents an imagined identification between the colonized land as gendered in his gaze, "the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life," and the African mistress as the land's own soul

"like the wilderness itself," thereby merging land and woman in his totalizing gaze.20 In addition, the passage shows the void in Marlow's narrative style: although his language is descriptive and impressionistic, it often ends up making vague assumptions that convey no substantial truth or crucial information (using expressions such as "must have had," "seems to," and "as if" repeatedly). In this scene, for instance, his description evades specifying any purpose or results for her movement. His narration also exposes anxiety about the security of colonial male subjects facing the land's immediate vengeance. He interprets the impenetrable other as a threatening gaze looking at the European colonizers. The sentence in next paragraph, "She stood looking at us without a stir and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose" (60), epitomizes Marlow's totalizing interpretation of the land and of the African mistress and hints at the epistemological crisis he meets in the process of perceiving the other.

Similarly, Marlow's encounter with the Intended betrays his failure to understand. There is complexity at the end of Marlow's narrative where he encounters the Intended and lies to her about Kurtz's last moment. About this scene of "the saving illusion" (74), Gibson suggests a fresh and positive reading of Marlow's lying, that it is an ethical response to the immediate command of the other in a Leviniasian sense.

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20 Sander Gilman argues that nineteenth-century perceptions of racial otherness and inferiority were typically projected onto the image of the sexualized black woman. He shows how the late nineteenth century represented the sexualized black female as "the source of corruption and disease" (230).

Gibson analyzes that it is a hard decision for Marlow to abandon his exclusive knowledge about Kurtz's end (135). Marlow is certainly intensely overwhelmed by the incessant sorrow on her face. Considering the intensity of the moment when Marlow is asked to save her from her seemingly incessant sorrow and give her something "to live with," Marlow's lying seems to have a compassionate motive. Gibson argues that Marlow's responding to the Intended reverses the patriarchal norm that dominates the novel, saying that "he resorts to a very different conception of justice to the patriarchal one" (135). In my view, however, the ways in which Marlow acknowledges her sorrow are still in doubt as his gender ideal intervenes to read her character only as demure and innocent. It is noticeable that he begins to construct his (failed) understanding of her from the portrait Kurtz left to him, which is used as a static form of representation for the male gaze. His choosing not to tell the truth of Kurtz's last moment is read as his firm commitment to maintain the secured world of women he describes early in his narration: "We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own lest ours gets worse" (49). For that justification, he excludes her from the truth, "complete out of it," as his existing gender ideals let him have "infinite pity" (75) for her ignorance. His lying is less an ethical acknowledgement of her condition than a projection of his gender ideals.

Moreover, it is problematic that Marlow thinks he knows the contents of her sorrow based on his experience with Kurtz. He overlays her sorrow not only with Kurtz's phantom but also with the image of his African mistress: "I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live, and I shall see her, too, a tragic and familiar Shade,

resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness" (75). In this regard, the Intended's alterity is reduced by his representation of her to a reminder of Kurtz's death and the apparition of the African mistress, which are both impenetrable to him.

In the narratological realm, Marlow's encounter with the Intended adds a layer to his narration of Kurtz, and simultaneously to the novel's frame narrative. The Intended's immediate claim on him to tell her the story of Kurtz in the Congo is significant since her asking turns their encounter into an exigent moment of storytelling. Marlow's telling her not the truth but a lie not only keeps her with other women "in their beautiful world," but also serves to beautify Kurtz's end. Marlow is comparable to Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, the eponymous character of that narrative poem that presents a model for the challenging ethics of storytelling. They have in common the fate of being seized by the headlong rush of a story, a fate that Marlow must suffer as the Ancient Mariner does. We can imagine that Marlow recurrently repeats his narrative to other seamen, always with an unwitting listener like the entire novel's narrative "I," even as the Ancient Mariner tells his story to the unwilling wedding guest "With a woeful agony" that returns "at an uncertain hour" (582-83). If the Ancient Mariner's fate of narrating with such agony is the price of his killing the Albatross, we can say that it is Marlow's punishment for not telling the truth to the Intended that his life is narratively

trapped as a witness of Kurtz's and imperialism's brutality.21 In brief, through this fatal encounter, Conrad dramatizes Marlow's being an interlocutor of the narrative situation as immediate and dialogic, thereby making his narrative act seem more like the Levinasian Saying that exceeds any determined meaning.22

A Passage to India: The Infinity of the Cave Echo

Forster's novel confronts the failure of exploring otherness, particularly through his characters' attempts to forge relationships in the face of alterity. The novel's central characters, Aziz, Fielding, Mrs. Moore, and Adela, attempt to relate to others despite their differences of race, gender, and religion. Through his characters, Forster emphasizes the value of "goodwill" or "affection" as the best expression regarding relationships: the spiritual Mrs. Moore asserts the value of "Good will and more good will and more good will" (Ch V), and the atheist Fielding reflects, "The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence" (Ch VII). The characters' pursuit of "goodwill" could be compared to Levinasian unconditional responsibility toward the

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21 Adam Newton in *Narrative Ethics* identifies this sort of suffering fate as "a price of fictionalizing" (6).

22 As I discussed in the Introduction, the Levinasian category of the "Saying" refers to a process always ongoing as an ethical gesture in language to address and respond to the other.

other, where ethics precedes politics, in that they admit the value of humanistic impulses before any political interests. Nonetheless, what the novel faithfully reflects is the failure of the good will; the characters are unable to live up to their moral principles in the face of their prejudice toward each other.

Adela's misconstrued accusation of Aziz, which ignites huge enmity between the British and Indian society, becomes a mirror in which the characters are forced to confront the essence of their attitudes toward the other. As Adela confesses that she is unable to sincerely apologize to Aziz, Feilding rebukes her, saying, "you have no real affection for Aziz, or Indians generally . . . Indians know whether they are liked or not – they cannot be fooled here. Justice never satisfies them, and that is why the British Empire rests on sand" (Ch XXVIIII). "Justice" here can be translated as moral and political rightness, and Fielding points out that it cannot serve to conciliate the racial tension between the Empire and the colony. Adela, disillusioned at this point, "assent[s]" and admits, "That's the defect of my character. I have never realized it until now." Affection, however, like the "good will," is prone to distort its positive implications when it presupposes a hierarchical relationship between colonizer and colonized, as if this relationship is one directional or a product of British subjects' beneficence. The way Fielding talks of "Indians" is vulnerable to the pitfall of exoticizing them as if their affective lives are entirely different from those of Europeans. It sounds as if he presumes to know the content of both Adela's and all Indians' minds, reinforcing difference even as he asserts similar legibility.

Forster dramatizes the failure of the characters' epistemological approach

through their frequent misconception and misinterpretation of things. The numerous cases—including Aziz's misunderstanding of Mrs. Moore's behavior in the Mosque at their first encounter, the passenger's misconceiving a dead twig as a serpent on the way to the Marabar caves, Aziz's distrust of Fielding that he must have had an affair with Adela and married her, and so on— indicate that the characters remain blind in the face of prejudices and unwilling to break from them to know the truth. And in most of these cases, language does not help at all to correct or mitigate the misunderstanding. Rather, the characters experience the uselessness of words while they undergo disillusionment regarding their knowing self and others, as Fielding's admonition reveals. The novel's central event, Adela's misconception that Aziz "insults" her in the cave, depicts the epistemological crisis Adela goes through between the unresolved experience that haunts her and the impossibility of putting it into a narrative. As she recovers from the shock, she strives, unsuccessfully, to review what actually happened and convert her experience in the caves into definitive language.

What the Marabar caves and its echo signify has been substantially discussed by critics. What I want to focus on is how Forster's novel stages the characters' encounter with otherness using complicated narrative devices. On the one hand, Forster's narrative perfectly exemplifies what Homi Bhabha calls a "colonial nonsense." Discussing how to approach cultural representations of difference, Bhabha points up a pattern of mythic "colonial silence," such as the Africans' mute presence in *Heart of Darkness*, in the narratives of empire. This silence utters "an archaic colonial otherness" (123); it "turns imperial triumphalism into the testimony of colonial confusion and those who hear its

echo lose their historic memories" (123). Bhabha states that this "colonial silence" is slowly undone when repeated, and that the language in these works, such as Forster's "Ouboum," is not "primitivistic descriptions of colonial 'otherness'", but "the inscriptions of an uncertain colonial silence that mocks the social performance of language with their non-sense; that baffles the communicable verities of culture with their refusal to translate" (124). He problematizes an epistemological approach to cultural difference, where the "threatened 'loss' of meaningfulness" tends to become "a hermeneutic project for the restoration of cultural 'essence' or authenticity." In this sense, Bhabha analyzes Adela's preferring of "Akbar's 'universal religion' to keep [her] decent and sensible" (Ch XIV) as "the sublation of cultural differentiation in an ethical universalism" (126).23 Bhabha's endeavor to find a right approach to cultural difference while avoiding ethical naturalism or cultural relativism, such as troubles Fielding's rhetoric, can be considered together with Levinas's critique of totalization that reduces the other to the same order of the self. What Bhabha views as "nonsense" or non-sense, something from which Forster's characters cannot make sense, I propose as impossibility, something in which they would like to see meaning, but which they must acknowledge and preserve as wholly other.

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23 Mrs. Moore's and Adela's interest in Professor Godbole can be interpreted in this regard. Godbole's indifferent and seemingly unbiased presence is presented to them as a conciliatory mediation who could "supplement Dr. Aziz by saying something about religion" (Ch VII), in other words, who would balance their knowledge of India, since Aziz as a Muslim represents only part of India. Godbole's "whole appearance suggested harmony—as if he had reconciled the products of East and West, mental as well as physical, and could never be discomposed."

The Marabar caves scene epitomizes how Forster's narrative subtly turns a colonial silence into a colonial non-sense. It is noticeable that the description of the native land including the caves at some point sounds similar to that of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness,* projecting an archaic otherness. When Aziz's group enters the first cave, the precipices and the surrounding sky are described as "bland" (Ch XIV) and recall the "primordial" state of the world: "Before man, with his itch for the seemly, had been born, the planet must have looked thus. The kite flapped away. . . . Before birds, perhaps. . . ." After Mrs. Moore experiences "a tarrying echo," the Marabar is characterized as "entirely devoid of distinction" in her perspective. The echo is unlike "some exquisite echoes in India" that return the perfect whispering the British visitors seem to expect, where "the long, solid sentences … return unbroken to their creator." Mrs. Moore is threatened by the echo's nullifying force that turns any words or sounds into the same, the seemingly meaningless onomatopoeic "aboum." In addition, the echo's howling is compared to "a snake composed of small snakes, which writhe independently," and appears repeatedly in Mrs. Moore's reflection on the echo, that "the serpent would descend and return to the ceiling," and that "The abyss also may be petty, the serpent of eternity made of maggots" (Ch XXIII). The snake image is significant throughout the novel as an emblem on which the British people, including Fielding, Adela, and Mrs. Moore, continuously project an ominous dread or evil, particularly when they regard the Kawa Dol.24 For the spiritual Mrs. Moore, it signifies a biblically

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24 On the way to the cave hills, Adela misperceives "the withered and twisted stump" as "A snake!" and even after she corrects the error, "[t]he villagers contradicted her"

seductive evil that obstructs the relationship between humans and God. As the latter quotation shows her pursuing "visions" regarding the cave's echo, the image of "the serpent of eternity made of maggots" seems to suggest her inclination to contemplate the incomprehensible, horrid echo despite her feeling it an abomination. This image also recalls Marlow's projection of an archaic otherness and his fascination with how "the river was there—fascinating—deadly—like a snake" (*HD* 14).25

Forster depicts how Mrs. Moore's experience of a colonial nonsense results in her losing faith in the Christian God, which has until then been the way she understands the world. In her reflection on the echo, the "boum" sound deconstructs her belief in a way that invalidates the scriptural words constituting her life's values: "Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value." It is noteworthy that the echo's "boum" sound makes her lose all meaningfulness from her own life and worldview rather than from any other specific culture:

> But suddenly, at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from "Let there be Light" to "It is finished" only amounted to "boum." Then she was terrified over an

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refusing to abandon the word she "had put in their mind"; this "confusion" foreshadows her hallucination and faulty accusation of Aziz.

25 In *Literature and Fascination*, Sibylle Baumbach conceptualizes the term *literary fascination* through the concept of medusamorphosis. Baumbach states that, commonly from the late-Victorian period on, Medusa's image, blended with disgust and dread, was used in colonial discourses as a trope through which modernity creates its others (207-208).

> area larger than usual; the universe, never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no repose to her soul, the mood of the last two months took definite form at last, and she realized that she didn't want to write to her children, didn't want to communicate with anyone, not even with God.

The "divine words," "Let there be light" and "it is finished," are significant since they represent the whole story of creation and salvation by God's will and also suggest the relationship between the created world and the Almighty. According to Levinas, scriptural language is the first Saying whose words indicate God himself: "The first saying is to be sure but a word. But the word is God" ("Language and Proximity" 126). In this scene, Mrs. Moore's belief in God which has guaranteed her an intimate relationship with God is challenged, as the scriptural words lose their signification, in other words, as they are no longer the Saying of God but are reduced to the Said. The extent of her realization that her religious epistemology is futile, that "the universe, never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no repose to her soul," is comparable to the Fall of Man that separated humans from God after they ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Mrs. Moore's disillusionment puts her in a state of apathy such that she is reluctant to communicate with anyone via words, the medium through which she had previously perceived and expressed a doctrinaire "God is love." Forster's leaving Mrs. Moore with "horror" in the face of a colonial nonsense implicates her belief in "God is Love" as just another justification of British rule in India. Her earlier sermon to Ronny, that "God has put us on earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent, *even* in India" (Ch V), exposes her problematic reasoning; the added

"even" implies the superior position of British colonizers, justifying the totalizing rules of the British Empire and its Christianity. In that sense, her "argu[ing]" that "The English are out here to be pleasant" sounds as if the British colonizers were sent as missionaries to the colonized country, which echoes Ronny's patronizing attitude: "We're out here to do justice and keep the peace." With that presupposition, her benevolent love or affection for the colonized other, India represented by Aziz, is doomed to fail as it does not derive from responding to the alterity that precedes the self but from the self as a sovereign who subordinates otherness.

Regarding the novel's mode of representing otherness, similar to *Heart of Darkness*, the "indeterminacy" of the echo's meaning has "intrigued critics because it remains an aporia that the novel refuses to explain despite the presence of an omniscient narrator" (Childs 191). Such criticism views the novel as limited to merely describing the imperial subjects' inability to comprehend other cultures, repeating the rhetoric of colonial silence. Nonetheless, Forster's narrative strategy takes a different approach to depict the very moment when the characters encounter otherness. If we think back to Marlow's narration in *Heart of Darkness*, his descriptive but hollow words continually reduce the Congo to a primordial darkness in a linear path following his travel inland; the further he travels from the European port, the more impenetrable the land appears. In contrast, Forster's omniscient narrator moves back and forth between showing the main characters' thoughts, in the form of free indirect discourse, and subtly intervening in them using the mode of satire. Particularly in the "Cave" chapter surrounding the Marabar excursion, Mrs. Moore's and Adela's encounter with the echo is represented

not in a linear way but rather by "time in the mind" of the characters.26 Most notably, the narration intentionally omits what actually happens to Adela in the Kawa Dol and jumps to show the consequent events including Aziz's arrest, thereby breaking with realist conventions that would have accounted for the origin of Adela's traumatic experience. Forster's narrative devices, including the temporal ellipses and the interior perspective on Adela's hearing the echo, show how the novel does more than merely present a colonial ambiguity. His way of embracing ambiguity while tracing the interiority of the characters constitutes a modernist experiment with ethical representation.27 The main British characters, Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested, turn their attention to reflect on their own misconceptions of the other, rather than to knowing the impenetrable other. Through a series of conversations with Fielding, answering his questions about the truth of the event, Adela says "indifferently," "Let us call it the

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26 Randall Stevenson discusses Forster's path, which was distinct but also consistent at times with his contemporaneous modernist writers. Regarding the modernist experiment with time, Woolf representatively asserts "time in the mind" rather than "time on the clock" as resisting the "appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner" (*Modern Fiction* 160). Although less "appalled" than Woolf, Forster writes in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), "there seems something else in life besides time… something which is measured not by minutes or hours, but by intensity" (19). In this sense, his distinction between "the life in time and the life by values" would be consistent with Woolf's emphasis on time experienced in individual consciousnesses.

27 Pericles Lewis regards "Forster's disavowal of narratorial and even authorial omniscience" as evidence of Forster's transition from the Edwardian to the modernist age. Forster had his own experience of an impenetrable echo when he visited the hill caves called the Barabar in 1913: "Whatever was said and in whatever voice the cave only returned a dignified roar" (quoted in Mishra 9). For that reason, Forster wrote of the echo, "In the cave it is either a man, or the supernatural, or an illusion. If I say, it becomes whatever the answer a different book. And even if I know!"

guide," "It will never be known" (Ch XXIX). In this scene, which is the last with Adela, she moves from her struggle with ontological uncertainty to being responsible to others:

On the surface level, the novel seems to leave the source of the echo unexplained. However, it does not project its cause onto the impenetrable native land; rather, it uses several devices that predict the failure of Mrs. Moore's and Miss Quested's exploration of India. In the case of Mrs. Moore, we observe that she realizes herself that there is nothing substantial that harmed her, but the problem is her own terrified response to the cave's echo: "Nothing evil had been in the cave, but she had not enjoyed herself." Forster's narration even intimates that her wariness about a possible villain in the colonized land is proved wrong through Mrs. Moore's focalization: "As each person emerged she looked for a villain, but none was there and she realized that she had been among the mildest individuals." In addition, Forster sets a significant episode that foreshadows her disillusionment earlier in the novel, Godbole's song at Fielding's tea party. A religious song, in which the Hindu god Shri Krishna is called but does not come, profoundly affects Mrs. Moore, anticipating her sense of disconnection from her Christian God through hearing the echo. Her experience of the echo predicts and mirrors Adela's undergoing the hallucination in the cave. Like Mrs. Moore, Adela admits that she was in an inexplicable state of disorientation when she entered the cave, and this disorientation started with Godbole's song ("nothing as solid as sadness: living at half pressure expresses it best. Half pressure. I was certainly in that state when I saw the caves" [Ch XXVI]).

Considering that God is an Absolute exteriority for her, just as God is for

Levinas, Mrs. Moore's struggle with an unresponsive God is comparable to her disturbance at encountering the otherness of Indian land, as the Marabar is often compared to mystery, even to gods ("here the Marabar were gods"). Chapter XXIII, where we see the interiority of Mrs. Moore on the sea leaving India and soon the world, shows her inclination to spiritual "resignation," which reflects, however aloofly, her acceptance of her failure and of the impossibility of knowing the other: "we can neither ignore nor respect Infinity." Here, infinity recalls what Levinas defines as the relation we should sustain with the other, which her totalizing Christianity reduces to the same under the name of unbiased love. Levinas asserts ethics beyond totality, suggesting that religion should also be a relationship based on that ethics: "We propose to call religion the bond that is established between the same and the other without constituting a totality" (*TI* 40). Mrs. Moore's end, her death and burial at sea, is however not merely seen as a tragic separation from the world whose meaning was incomprehensible to her. She feels different about India while visiting Bombay, and, as if responding to her wondering, "thousands of coco-nut palms appeared all round… to wave her farewell. 'So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar caves as final?' they laughed" (Ch XXIII). Although she still longs to "disentangle the hundred Indias that passed each other in its streets," it can be said that she just started her own journey to face "the hundred Indias" whose infinity calls her to respond and refuses to be subjugated to her desire for totality.

As another device to foreground the failed encounter with otherness, the novel addresses the failure of marriage. Adela's desire to see "*real* India" (Ch III, original

emphasis) is deeply associated with her measuring the possibility of marrying Ronny. When Adela abruptly tells Ronny that she will not marry him, since she has been continuously unsure about their marriage, she finds that "her desire to see India had suddenly decreased. There had been a *factitious* element in it" (Ch VIII, my emphasis). The "factitiousness" of her motivation implies a situational awareness that would be required by her marriage, not her own desire to know India. Socio-politically, Adela's union with Ronny would mean her becoming a part of the colonial system that Ronny as a British-Indian administrator represents, which she is reluctant to do after watching other British women's unexceptional arrogance. Both Mrs. Moore and Adela feel disappointed by finding Ronny's personality changed from a noble humanitarian attitude in England into a patronizing and even racist one in the colonized land. The reluctance to see India is also applied to Mrs. Moore since her visit to India is entangled with the marriage problem between Ronny and Adela. When she discovers that they have reconciled and become engaged, she thinks, "My duties here are evidently finished, I don't want to see India now; now for my passage back," which contradicts her apparently affectionate attitude toward Aziz's invitation to stay. Her growing disinterest in Ronny's marriage is linked to her reflecting on her own marriage: "she could not speak as enthusiastically of wedlock or of anything as she should have done. Ronny was suited, now she must go home and help the others, if they wished. She was past marrying herself, even unhappily; her function was to help others, her reward to be informed that she was sympathetic. Elderly ladies must not expect more than this" (Ch VIII). Looking back on her own experience of "wedlock," her identity as a married woman restricts her

to functioning for others. Marriage reduces a woman's individuality to the virtue of serving family and being sympathetic, the model "Angel in the house" of the Victorian era.

On their trip to the Marabar caves, while Adela is immersed in planning her marriage, Mrs. Moore's skepticism of marriage is deepened:

> She had brought Ronny and Adela together by their mutual wish, but really she could not advise them further. She felt increasingly (vision or nightmare?) that, though people are important, the relations between them are not, and that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man. (Ch VI)

It can be said that Mrs. Moore's perspective on relationships in general is already inclined to be nihilistic at this point, as her destiny in the story drives toward its climactic encounter with otherness. She contemplates that marriage in particular, which is usually expected to be the most intimate relationship between human beings, is useless for understanding others. This reflects Forster's criticism of marriage within patriarchal systems, since patriarchy depends on a hierarchy that makes ethically facing the other impossible.

Cynicism about marriage or a sense of disappointment regarding it runs as a central theme throughout the novel. On the one hand, several failures of marriage seem to function as Forster's trope for displaying the "difficulty of love" among humans in general. Aziz suffers from losing his wife, regretting that he did not love her while she

was alive. Mr. McBryde, who is introduced in a mocking way as "the most reflective and best educated of the Chandrapore officials, had read and thought a good deal," but "owing to a somewhat unhappy marriage, had evolved a complete philosophy of life" (Ch XVIII), and his marriage ends in divorce as his affair with Miss Derek is revealed. On the other hand, marriage is criticized as an institution that supports nationalism and imperialism through reinforcing patriarchy. In Levinasian thinking, patriarchy and imperialism are both designed to assert alterity in order to justify control, which contrasts with Levinas's asserting alterity to claim responsibility. Fielding's comment on marriage, about which he is "cynical," shows how artificial and empty marriage is as a socially arranged union that has lost something essential, that is, love for the other: "Marriage is too absurd in any case. … The social business props it up on one side, and the theological business on the other, but neither of them are marriage, are they?" (Ch XXVI). A shared feeling about the "difficulties of love" bind Fielding and Adela.

Considering the novel's negative tone on marriage, the association between Adela's marital fear and her panic in Kawa Dol is reinforced. During the trial, "A new and unknown sensation protected her, like magnificent armour" (Ch XXIV); this sensation comes to her like an epiphany and lets her confront and rehearse what really happened in the cave:

> her disaster in the cave was connected, though by a thread, with another part of her life, her engagement to Ronny. She had thought of love just before she went in, and had innocently asked Aziz what marriage was like, and she supposed that her question had roused evil in him. (Ch XXIV)

Thus, “the story of her private failure she dared not allude to” signifies her mistaken belief that she is in love with Ronny, which she confuses with her imagined assault by Aziz. This confusion is reflected in her comparing the hallucination to a falsely perceived marriage proposal: “the sort of thing—though in an awful form—that makes some women think they’ve had an offer of marriage when none was made.” It can be said that there lies “the fear of miscegenation behind her hysteric reaction to the incident,” as some critics have suggested in the context of the racial tension (Childs 196). Nonetheless, it is noticeable how Forster stages the trial scene in which Adela gives a deposition to correct the false accusation she made, thereby testifying that she herself underwent a “colonial nonsense” (“He never actually touched me once. It all seems such *nonsense*” [Ch XXII, my emphasis]), though she is not ready to have any real affection for India and Indian people.

This scene is when a possibility is opened for an ethical response to a suffering other. While Fielding had no interest in Adela before and blames her false testimony against Aziz, he begins to value Adela not for her faults but for her virtues of honesty. As Adela is condemned and excluded by both sides of the community, Fielding feels sympathy with her: “She advanced into his consciousness suddenly. … he felt that we exist not in ourselves, but in terms of each others’ minds” (Ch XXVI). Fielding’s thought here can be seen as a moment of Levinasian ethical subjectivity as he realizes that a subject is made in responding to the call of the other, even if the other’s existence can possibly threaten the self. Although Aziz’s trial is inevitably a political and national issue that makes all the characters complexly involved, a sort of friendship between

Fielding and Adela becomes possible when they acknowledge and attempt a mutual responsibility toward each other beyond politics. This corresponds with Levinas's concept of ethical subjectivity, that is, "to be oneself … is always to have one degree of responsibility for the responsibility of the other" (*OTB* 117). At this moment of mutual understanding, Fielding and Adela think, "Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle." "Muddle" is a thematizing word from the colonial perspective that indicates an opposition to "civilization," or "a frustration of reason and form" due to the impossibility of knowing India under the order of the same. This epiphanic moment that allows them to regard life as a "mystery" resonates with Levinas's notion of "enigma." As Critchley summarizes, "The other is not a phenomenon but an enigma" (8) beyond all recognition. India and Indian people are not the other reducible to a recognizable phenomenon, and the whole novel gears toward admitting and acknowledging this unknowability.

A similar pattern emerges in the friendship between Fielding and Aziz. I view Forster's novel as pursuing the possibility of an individual ethics beyond the racial and national barriers of the colonial relationship Fielding and Aziz represent. Forster does imply a pessimistic view regarding the impossibility of knowing the racial other, as the novel ends with the reply "No, not yet. … No, not there" (XXXVII) to the question "Why can't we be friends now?" However, despite this bleak vision, Forster opens the possibility of a more ethical relationship by letting Aziz reunite Fielding and his wife Stella, Mrs. Moore's daughter, a couple with the only successful marriage we see throughout the three novels.

The Voyage Out: The Ethical Failure of Rachel's Education

Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915) addresses the above issues, including the encounter with colonial otherness and the failure of marriage, while fitting more closely to the genres of Bildungsroman and imperial romance. The novel includes the conventional marriage plot of the female protagonist's coming out into society, her courtship, and her engagement, yet all these events take place during her voyage out to South America and up the Amazon. During her voyage to the colonies, Rachel Vinrace, an inexperienced twenty-four-year-old young woman, becomes engaged to Terence Hewet, an aspiring novelist, under the tutelage of Helen Ambrose, a sister of her deceased mother. After an excursion to a native village, however, she catches a mysterious tropical fever and dies before she is married. On the surface, the novel seems to follow the chronological order of time in the Edwardian marriage plot, in contrast to Woolf's other novels that are more experimental with time and consciousness. Nonetheless, Woolf breaks from the conventional plot of the female Bildungroman, which tends to drive toward a successful marriage as its destination. The novel depicts the journey wherein Rachel's education fails from the perspective of British imperialism and patriarchy, which expects her to be a proper part of the imperial "machine" (57), and even further in a political sense, "a Tory hostess" as her father Willoughby Vinrace wants her to be. The novel's ending is unsettled not only because of Rachel's helpless death but also because of the unperturbed group of British people who continue their ordinary life.

Although the novel contains explicit criticisms of imperialism, its racial treatment has been given mixed reactions by critics. Helen Carr points out that it betrays some of the limited racial perspectives (210) with which Woolf had been brought up in a family lineage deeply involved in British imperialism, although she moves against those assumptions. Michael Cunningham similarly indicates Woolf's concentration on the English educated classes and claims that her first novel is not yet dominated by her strengths. Mark Wollaeger critically assesses that the novel represents native women as "mere object-symbols of global patriarchy" (44), while also indicating that Woolf had no experience or knowledge of South America. These criticisms mostly result from the passivity and immaturity in the characterization of Rachel, who seems to hold a limited view of the world. As it is acknowledged that the novel carries many of Woolf's autobiographical elements, these critics tend to reduce the distance between Woolf and her created protagonist. In contrast, Jed Esty claims that Rachel's passivity is characteristic of colonial protagonists who "are built to serve a null function, to be fictional devices that disrupt the traditional coming-of-age plot, throwing into relief its masculinized and nationalized concepts of destiny" (129). Reading the novel as anti-bildungsroman saturated with the trope of "stalled development," Esty focuses on its formal features as a modernist fiction attempting to avert the teleological narrative of imperialism. While I agree with and build upon Esty's reading of the novel in its broader implications as a modernist revision of the bildungsroman and how he regards Rachel's passivity positively but as an inevitable device for a "Pyrrhic victory" (31) that affirms her innocent, I focus on how Rachel's self-knowledge evolves and particularly is

influenced by the encounter with otherness. Even as we point out the limits of Rachel's point of view, it is significant to read the tension between her resistance against the violence of totalizing imperialism and the helplessness she acutely feels from "the weight of the world" (Ch XIX) while being surrounded by British norms.

The ironic voice of the omniscient narrator points out the inefficiency of Rachel's education while leaving the cause and effect of its failure equivocal. The "ordinary" education she received, like "the majority of well-to-do girls in the last part of the nineteenth century," does not teach her "the most elementary idea of a system in modern life" (26). While being neglected, Rachel is allowed to study nothing but music; she became "a fanatic about music," her only fashion. More crucially, the narration's irony implies that her circumstances are not "common" (27) but secluded from the world. Rachel's world had been limited to her life with two conservative aunts at Richmond after her mother died young, while her merchant marine father, Willoughby, neglects her education. In this sense, Rachel's "voyaging out" to the new world has a twofold significance in terms of her education: she is brought to meet various people beyond her small world and comes to acknowledge her ignorance; however, what she is asked to learn is the customs that make them English, which have nothing to do with "the facts of life" (Ch 6). Even as she is becoming aware of the other, she is blocked.

Rachel tries to learn the ways of the world by questioning but is never provided a valid explanation. Rachel asks about the basis of British life such as marriage and (Christian) faith ("why do people marry?" [Ch 4], "why do you go [church]?" [Ch 17]). The empty answers from the mistresses, Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Flushing

respectively—"That's what you're going to find out," "'I've been every Sunday of my life ever since I can remember,' … as though that were a reason by itself"—suggest that the education from the established generation is doomed and that it would be impossible for Rachel to learn these elements of life which have to be based on knowing what one really wants. The Dalloways, whom Rachel encounters on board the *Euphrosyne*, exemplify a typical married upper-middle class life and even a comical spousal relationship that Woolf satirizes. The caring and sympathetic Clarissa Dalloway—who will be the heroine of *Mrs. Dalloway* later with a more disillusioned or awakened perspective on life—shows great interest in Rachel, trying to communicate with her. Yet she also appears at this moment as a snob while showing a blind admiration for her husband Richard Dalloway, even as her "mother and other women of her generation felt for Christ" (Ch 3).

While Rachel finds immediate connection with Clarissa, Richard is a mystery to her. Having lived primarily among women who gave her little education in social or sexual mores, Rachel experiences men as radically other and unknowable. Yet even as they threaten her equality and even her safety, her impulse is one of inquiry. She wishes to know the other as much as she is threatened by them. Richard, an egocentric politician, discourages Rachel's will to know him, dismissing her inquiries as lacking knowledge about the systems of the world. He is explicitly satirized by Woolf to reveal his jingoistic nationalism ("the English seem…whiter than most men") and imperialist patriarchy without disguise. He is caricatured by his bragging and defensive imperialist rhetoric: while he boasts about his contribution allowing "some thousands of girls in

Lancashire" to rest "an hour" when their mothers could not, he defensively adds that he knows "the drawbacks—horrors—unmentionable things done in our very midst! I'm under no illusions." Leaving behind the "horrors" and "illusions" with which Marlow's narrative is left lingering at the end of tracing Kurtz's downfall, Richard asserts with certainty his "ideal," "Unity of aim, of dominion, of progress." His work with the Lancaster women, however, while socially effective, takes them as an extension of his own ambitions. Rather than inquiring into their situations, he imposes his will, his ideal, and his supposed beneficence on them. Richard preaches to Rachel about the logic of the world as follows:

> Conceive the world as a whole. … I can conceive no more exalted aim—to be the citizen of the Empire. Look at it in this way, Miss Vinrace; conceive the state as a complicated machine; we citizens are parts of that machine; some fulfil more important duties; others (perhaps I am one of them) serve only to connect some obscure parts of the mechanism, concealed from the public eye. Yet if the meanest screw fails in its task, the proper working of the whole is imperilled. (57)

Here, he attempts to teach Rachel the principle of the world by comparing the imperial state to a "machine." It assumes hierarchical orders between people based on the importance of duties, some highly visible, others obscured and invisible. Individuals are only valued as a part of the whole, being reduced to a "citizen of the Empire" for the most "exalted aim." Rachel's "shivering private visions," "the image of a lean black widow, gazing out of her window, and longing for some one to talk to," is incompatible

with “the image of a vast machine, such as one sees at South Kensington, thumping, thumping, thumping.”[28] Rachel’s attempt to imagine the life of others, including that of marginalized people like the “lean black widow” whom she hardly gets a change to meet, is discouraged by the technologies of Empire.

Richard’s influence is more problematic in that he excludes women’s gaining knowledge about imperial politics and business. Instead of replying to Rachel’s inquiry about his ideal of unity, he appeals to binary gender roles: men are “to fight” and women are “to have ideals”; he “seriously” insists, “I never allow my wife to talk politics” (56). He emphasizes that he can maintain his “public life” because his wife is guaranteed to perform the “domestic duties” in her role as the Angel of the House. Richard’s patriarchal gender politics, boasting that “her illusions have not been destroyed,” certainly corresponds with Marlow’s assertion that women are “complete out of it,” that “We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own lest ours gets worse” (*HD* 49). Such views limit women using the unsubstantial boundary of “ideals” within an “illusion,” a “beautiful world” that is separated from the real world. While Rachel acknowledges her lack of knowledge about the world (“‘I know nothing!’ she

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[28] On “Thumping,” see Montgomery, “Colonial Rhetoric and the Maternal Voice.” Montgomery analyzes that the empire becomes a metaphor that dissolves into the onomatopoetic, industrial noise, “thumping, thumping, thumping” by Rachel’s imagination. The pulse of the machine makes it sound like an organism, and conversely brings up an image of automaton. It can also be “a blow, an act of aggression against the person” (Montgomery 38). Montgomery states that “this antagonism between automaton and human … describes the unsustainable relationship between the industrial-imperial complex and its constituent subjects” (38).

exclaimed"), Richard excludes women's engagement from the outset by saying, "It's far better that you *should* know nothing" (my emphasis). "The attempt at communication" through which Rachel hopes to learn about the other and the world turns out to be a "failure"; this early scene suggests that her education about the world is forced to remain foreclosed. Rachel's remark, "we don't seem to understand each other"—which is first reported by Helen in Chapter One—is repeated as the impossibility of knowing the other, particularly between men and women in the system of imperial patriarchy, and this sense of impossibility pervades the mood of the novel.

Rachel's second encounter with Richard exposes her to the violent and forceful nature of heterosexual union and the hypocrisy of institutionalized marriage. His forced kiss on Rachel is a symbolically violent breaching of Rachel's virginity, not only in the physical sense but also in the sense of her deferred maturity under Victorian womanhood. He takes it upon himself to educate her on matters of love and marriage, an education more enforced than elicited. By forcefully kissing her, he exposes his paternalistic attempt to educate her about "love" and initiate her into sexual maturity. It reveals him as betraying his boast about his peaceful marriage with Clarissa, who is loyal to him. For Richard, all women seem an extension of himself, an expression of his power or his knowledge of the world. He treats Rachel in some ways as interchangeable with Clarissa, failing to see either woman as other, unknowable and calling on him to be responsible, to respond to their difference, to recognize their context.

Helen's attempt to explain men's desire to kiss by comparing it to their desire to marry suggests the ways in which men objectify women. Helen's explanation that in

relationships with men women “must run risks” (72) prompts in Rachel a dark vision: “she saw her life for the first time a creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously between high walls, here turned aside, there plunged in darkness, made dull and crippled for ever.” This is a variation of the nightmare caused by Richard’s kiss, in which “she found herself trapped in it [a long tunnel], bricks meeting her wherever she turned, alone with a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails” (69). This bad dream represents her feeling of entrapment under patriarchy, burdened with an enforced sexual adulthood. These traumatic “moments of being” foreshadow the discordance between Rachel and Terence once engaged and further Rachel’s illness that thwarts her heterosexual union with Terence.29 That the nightmare haunts her again during her critical condition evinces how far it threatens her being.

Rachel hopes to find her own personality by “seeing the world” during her voyage out. She desires to be herself as “a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, unmergeable, like the sea or the wind” (75), and this means being an individual, not conforming to the standardized life the British Empire imposes on citizens like those

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29 Woolf describes “moments of being” in her autobiographical memoir, “A Sketch of the Past.” Woolf does not explicitly define “moments of being,” but uses “shock” as a synonym, and its meaning is enhanced in contrast with moments of “non-being,” which are "not lived consciously," but instead embedded in "a kind of nondescript cotton wool" (70). Moments of being occur when the “nondescript cotton wool” of “non-being”—associated with routinized or normalised appearances of the world—is abruptly torn open. From this tear the self is opened out, exposed, and made vulnerable. In “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf recalls several incidents of “shock” in her childhood, many of which left her in a state of “despair”: “many of these exceptional moments brought with them a peculiar horror and a physical collapse; they seemed dominant; myself passive” (72).

recorded in "a fat red book" (74), a biographical dictionary that thematizes people's lives by certain achievements including education or civil service.[30] Nonetheless, Rachel can only know herself by encountering others; in a Levinasian sense, she comes into being in this kind of ethical relationship of responding and taking responsibility. While she is becoming aware of the other, her attempt to imagine the other is curtailed by the mores of English society, which shelters her as an imperial subject under the name of education.

Perhaps the most liberating moment for Rachel's being herself comes when she strolls alone the riverside of Santa Marina:

> So she might have walked until she had lost all knowledge of her way, had it not been for the interruption of a tree, which, although it did not grow across her path, stopped her as effectively as if the branches had struck her in the face. It was an ordinary tree, but to her it appeared so strange that it might have been the only tree in the world. … Having seen a sight that would last her for a lifetime, and for a lifetime would preserve that second, the tree once more sank into the ordinary ranks of trees, and she was able to seat herself in its shade and to pick the red flowers with the thin green leaves which were growing beneath it. She laid them side by side, flower to flower and stalk to stalk, caressing them for walking alone. Flowers and even pebbles in the earth

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[30] The "fat red book" sounds like Leslie Stephen's own *The Dictionary of National Biography*, not just Debrett's.

> had their own life and disposition, and brought back the feelings of a child to whom they were companions. (Ch XIII)

Through this epiphanic moment, Rachel discovers the singularity of "an ordinary tree" that looks as if it were "the only tree in the world." It reflects her identification with the tree in her search for "the vision of her own personality." Rachel's empathy with the tree, thinking that flowers and even pebbles have "their own life and disposition," resists Richard's view of a marginalized individual as "the meanest screw" that should perform their assigned role to keep the imperial "machine" running (57). "[T]he feelings of a child" that the flowers under the tree bring back explicitly indicate Rachel's persistence as an arrested adolescent, which Esty emphasizes in reading her narrative.

Rachel's identification with the colonized land is noteworthy in that it differs from the ways in which imperial subjects relate to otherness in Conrad's and Forster's novels. Esty argues that Woolf consistently parallels Rachel's deferred maturity with the unevenly developed Santa Marina, that they "share a generalized unboundedness and a resistance to purposeful or smoothly clocked development" (134). Numerous textual moments support this point as Rachel's virginity is compared to the ship *Euphrosyne* ("She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men" [Ch II]), to Santa Marina ("the country was still a virgin land behind a veil" [Ch VII]), and to the voyaging out itself. Such comparisons emphasize her being vulnerable and an unknown to be explored. On the other hand, beyond the trope of virginity, these objects of exploration—the *Euphrosyne,* Santa Marina, and the voyage—function to rethink Englishness through a reversed perspective. When the ship is sailing out of sight of

England, the land appears “a shrinking island in which people were imprisoned,” as if proving its insularity. The immensity of the sea lets the travelers in the ship see how all parts of the world “shrank” into “wrinkled little rocks.” This vanishing view of England contrasts with Richard’s conservative imperialism that credits the extension of British rule as being “a lasso that opened and caught things, enormous chunks of the habitable globe” (43).

Likewise, Woolf continuously shifts narrative perspective on the British travelers, who are a microcosm of the British Empire, by zooming in and out; this undermines their self-centered view of the world. When the *Euphrosyne* approaches and disembarks at Santa Marina, the narration subtly oscillates in the power relation between the conqueror and the conquered. The ship, described as “the little ship—shrunk to a few beads of light” over the sea, also appears “as if she were a recumbent giant requiring examination,” alluding to Part One of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. While the ship’s disembarkation is described as if she were conquered by men, the object of conquest is changed from the leaving boat to the island in the very next sentence (“She rang with cries; men jumped on to her; her deck was thumped by feet. The lonely little island was invaded from all quarters at once” [78]). Woolf’s narrator links the *Euphrosyne*’s disembarkation to the failed history of settlement in Santa Marina, which first occurred three centuries ago. The English attacked the land, which was already occupied by the Spanish, and then the conquest was repeated vice versa. The English conquerors are caricatured as barbaric and greedy (“tawny with sea-voyaging, hairy for lack of razors, with muscles like wire, fangs greedy for flesh, and fingers itching for

gold" [79]), akin to the "vengeful Spanish and rapacious Portuguese" (80). The narrator mockingly comments that the English settlement, which "seemed to favour the expansion of the British Empire," failed for lack of "men like Richard Dalloway" with his imperialistic "imagination." Resulting from the mixed history of colonization, Santa Marina achieves "a happy compromise" in a multiracial population (apparently without English descent), and its development has been stalled: "in arts and industries the place is still much where it was in Elizabethan days" (80), not having grown into modernity.

Back to the analogy between the colonized land and Rachel's stalled development, we need to pay attention to the ways in which Woolf creates Santa Marina as a plausible but imagined colony in her novel.31 In narrating its colonial history, the narrator points out how the English invent representations of the native people for their own interest: when they first attacked the colony, they "reduced the natives to a state of superstitious wonderment" (79-80) to justify their settlement. After "the three hundred years odd" of uneven occupation, the English exoticize the native land and people in their effort to regain the colony as a newly discovered holiday spot:

> The country itself taxed all their powers of description, for they said it was much bigger than Italy, and really nobler than Greece. They declared that the natives were strangely beautiful, very big in stature, dark, passionate, and quick to seize the knife. The place seemed new and full of new forms of

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31 The brief history Woolf imagines for Santa Marina is based on the real history of the Brazil coast.

> beauty, in proof of which they showed handkerchiefs which the women had worn round their heads, and primitive carvings coloured bright greens and blues. (81)

The narrator ironically mocks the lack of justification in the English re-colonizing of the island ("The reasons … are not so easily described, and will never perhaps be recorded in history books" [69]). In this passage, the narration exposes how the English invent a fantastical colonial rhetoric at the national level by exaggerating some travel accounts that glamorize "the splendours and hardships of life at sea" and then idealizing the native land and indigenes. Such representations of colonial otherness as "strangely beautiful" thematize the other into the stereotype of the noble savage, intended to evoke curiosity and lure colonial tourism.

This thematization is predicted and reproduced during the voyage on the *Euphrosyne* in Helen's embroidery, which shapes a tropical paradise with the noble savage stereotype ("She was working at a great design of a tropical river running through a tropical forest, where spotted deer would eventually browse upon masses of fruit, … while a troop of naked natives whirled darts into the air" [25]). By introducing the English reinvention of Santa Marina as their colony, Woolf clearly foregrounds the artificiality in the colonizer's representation of the colonized and consequently the unethical relationship between the two.

While the space of Sana Marina provides the English guests with familiar European trappings, they still face colonial otherness in the country's nature during their

excursion upriver on the Amazon. The six members of the expedition group, Mr. and Mrs. Flushing, Helen, John Hirst, Terence, and Rachel, respond differently to colonial otherness, yet they share a feeling of disturbance before the unknowable other while they strive to continue patterns of English life on the Amazon riverside. It is ironic that while seeking to discover unknown territory, they fear nature beyond civilization's control and pursue a stay-at-home order by appropriating otherness into familiar experience. As they are overwhelmed by the unfamiliar scenery of a thick forest, Hirst complains that it threatens an outsider's sanity: "These trees get on one's nerves…What sane person could have conceived a wilderness like this" (Ch XX). That the imperial tourists blame the land's "wilderness" exemplifies what Bhabha calls "colonial nonsense" in that they regard unfathomable cultural difference as a threat to their sense of cultural authenticity. Their feeling disturbed corresponds with how Adela and Mrs. Moore feel regarding the wilderness of India on their way to the Marabar caves. Confronting otherness, the British sets their status as "one of those colonists, to cut down trees and make laws" in relation to an unknown territory. They project Englishness over the nature they cannot gain knowledge of by subjugating otherness to the same: they are eager to reclaim a home value from the wilderness and to regulate it by saying, "It resembled a drive in an English forest save that tropical bushes with their sword-like leaves grew at the side," and "It might be Arundel or Windsor… if you cut down that bush with the yellow flowers." Their desire to erase colonial difference is problematic as an eager gesture to totalize, to reduce the other into same, in Levinasian terms.

Woolf's narration moves freely between focalizing and defamiliarizing the

British travelers in their encounter with colonial otherness during their journey into the deep Amazon. By doing so, her narrative decenters and mocks their colonial perspective, showing how "unnatural" their imperial expedition looks. As the team lands on the shore, the sailors laugh at the six English behind, "whose coats and dresses looked so strange upon the green, wander off" (Ch XXI). The encounter with the colonized other culminates in a scene where the British expedition enters the village and looks at the native women making goods:

> Stepping cautiously, they observed the women, who were squatting on the ground in triangular shapes, moving their hands, either plaiting straw or in kneading something in bowls. But when they had looked for a moment undiscovered, they were seen, and Mr. Flushing, advancing into the centre of the clearing, was engaged in talk with a lean majestic man, whose bones and hollows at once made the shapes of the Englishman's body appear ugly and unnatural. The women took no notice of the strangers, except that their hands paused for a moment and their long narrow eyes slid round and fixed upon them with the motionless inexpressive gaze of those removed from each other far far beyond the plunge of speech. Their hands moved again, but the stare continued. … As they sauntered about, the stare followed them, passing over their legs, their bodies, their heads, curiously not without hostility, like the crawl of a winter fly. As she drew apart her shawl and uncovered her breast to the lips of her baby, the eyes of a woman never left their faces, although they moved uneasily under her stare, and finally turned away, rather than stand

> there looking at her any longer. When sweetmeats were offered them, they put out great red hands to take them, and felt themselves treading cumbrously like tight-coated soldiers among these soft instinctive people. (Ch XXI)

This cross-cultural encounter is an annual event when English people "looked at the native village, bought a certain number of things from the natives" as if visiting a tourist sight. We can compare this encounter to the scene in *Heart of Darkness* where Marlow is overwhelmed by the presence of the "magnificent" African mistress and feels intimidated by her gaze. Here, a similar pattern of the colonial gaze occurs. The native women are objectified as primitive without any means to express themselves to the imperial guests. The ways in which the native people communicate with each other are deemed as void of meaning only because they are impenetrable to the colonizers ("the motionless inexpressive gaze … beyond the plunge of speech," "some harsh unintelligible cry"). Such a description, which silences the colonized other, recalls Marlow's gaze that objectifies the African mistress as an exotic but incomprehensible being while observing her from a distance. Nevertheless, the returned gaze that the strolling imperial visitors receive from the native women complicates the relation between colonizer and colonized. The British become an object rather than a subject. They are passive under the natives' staring, while their movement is expressed with passive verbs such as "undiscovered," "seen," and "made [them] appear." In contrast, the native people are presented as the subject of the gaze as they are described with active verbs such as "took no notice," "fixed upon," "stare continued" and "followed."

My reading here reflects Mark Wollaeger's view.32 Reading this scene of encounter as an imperial spectacle, Wollaeger points out that the reciprocal staring between the imperial visitors and the indigenous people on display reflects an inversion of spectatorship, which results in blurring the boundaries between English subject and native object. For instance, "great red hands" would seem to indicate the indigenous people, but it refers to the tourists, while a series of "they/them" throughout the sentences obscures the pronoun references. Likewise, Woolf's narrative style reverses the hierarchical relation between the imperial tourists and the native people through her "interplay between the represented and the representer" (Wollaeger 67). The native peoples' returning gaze undoes the colonial gaze while making the English members "seem insignificant" and dispersed out of the group.

During the excursion, the colonial landscape affects the romance between Terence and Rachel in a complex way. However, nature facilitates Terence's courtship of Rachel as they recede from the civilization under which their courtship would be regulated. It is during the excursion that Terence's courtship of Rachel succeeds and their engagement is accomplished. This process of colonial romance seems similar to the "spurious" union Adela and Ronny build when they wander in nature in a dark night. Yet nature intervenes, rendering ineffective Terence's performance of Englishness

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32 Mark Wollaeger, in "Woolf, Postcards, and the Elision of Race: Colonizing Women in *The Voyage Out*," focuses on this pivotal scene of cross-cultural encounter while situating it in the cultural politics of imperial postcards, which were popular in the early twentieth century when Woolf wrote her first novel.

through citing words from the English tradition such as Walt Whitman's poem *Leaves of Grass* (1855). Nature not only obliterates the words but even mocks them ("the number of moving things entirely vanquished his words," "A bird gave a wild laugh, a monkey chuckled a malicious question, and, as fire fades in the hot sunshine, his words flickered and went out"). It is a kind of cliché that a personified, "malicious" colonial nature mocks imperial explorers, which we also find in the two novels discussed earlier. In a broader sense, the mocking of nature foreshadows the doomed relation between Terence and Rachel, particularly regarding Terence's demanding and possessive attitude that he reveals to Rachel more after their engagement.

Terence's ontological approach to knowing the other threatens Rachel's will to be connected and relate to the other. Terence seems to have a more liberal gender politics than other men; he expresses that he supports women's rights, including the issue of women's suffrage, and that he is interested in "this curious silent unrepresented life" of women throughout history. Nonetheless, "His determination to know, while it gave meaning to their talk, hampered her," since his attempt to know the otherness of women is not derived from an ethical responsibility to respond to their unrepresentable hardship but from a curiosity to gain an ontological knowledge about them. For him, knowing unrepresentable women is the ultimate motivation for his act of writing. Writing functions as an expression and expansion of his knowing of the world; his feeling "an extraordinary satisfaction in writing" suggests that it works as a solipsistic knowing of the world. His self-confidence—he is so sure of his being a good writer, "about as good as Thackeray"—"astounded" Rachel as she begins confronting the

impossibility of knowing the other. When he talks of writing, Rachel feels that "he became more and more remote" and "suddenly impersonal." Woolf continuously criticizes her literary figures and their works of writing, showing that it is problematic if these works are self-serving, only expressing one's own knowledge while simultaneously alienating the other. Ridley Ambrose, whom Woolf models on her father, is so deeply absorbed in editing Pindar that he disconnects himself from others and neglects to respond to them. He is caricatured as "alone like an idol in an empty church," sitting among books all day with his door always "shut," preventing others' approach. The narrator mockingly comments that "learning" is another "barrier between human beings" in addition to "age" and "sex," disconnecting him from society, especially "some thousand miles distant from the nearest human being, who in this household was inevitably a woman," his wife Helen. Similarly, Terence's own world of writing makes Rachel feel distanced in their relationship.

Woolf dramatizes the discordance between Terence and Rachel with respect to marriage and gender roles through their act of reading literary works. The readings Rachel is most engaged with are the *Works of Henrik Ibsen,* especially *A Doll's House* (1879), whose heroine Nora impresses her, and Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). These "modern books" Rachel chooses instead of Jane Austen's novels have in common the story of a woman resisting patriarchy, resulting in the breakdown of her marriage. Rachel's reading of them is a kind of active self-education: she sympathizes with the heroines by acting out their lives and, as Helen reflects as she witnesses Rachel's change, "it was not all acting, and […] some sort of change was taking place in

the human being." These literary texts' criticism on contemporary society and the situation of married women lets her keep "thinking of things that the book suggested to her, of women and life." In contrast, the literary works Terence reads—for instance, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* from which he compares Rachel to Miranda ("a creature who'd lived all its life among pearls and old bones")—tend to reveal a gender politics that is violent to women while enforcing in them the virtue of chastity or purity. It can be said that Terence betrays and imposes his conventional view of women, which is intensified once he is engaged to Rachel, through referring to those texts. In this sense, it is symbolic that Terence's reading of Milton's marriage masque *Comus* negatively influences Rachel to the extent of a headache that portends her death. The words "Brute" and "Locrine," the name of the king and his kingdom, represent the power of patriarchy, and "curb" adds another meaning of restraint, sounding so suggestive to Rachel that she feels "painful" and sees "unpleasant sights" before her eyes.33 Rachel is haunted by these lines as water laps at the foot of her bed during her first day of fever. As Wollaeger analyzes, Milton's lines both suggest "the symbolic threat of Milton (author of the first domestic epic) and the more palpable threat of domestic life with Terence" (66).

Rachel's feeling of entrapment in the embedded patriarchy of marriage is predicted by the image of a static existence in nature with the specific expression "going on." While quarreling with Rachel over the indistinguishable congratulatory letters they

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33 Milton's *Comus* is the first marriage masque in which the Lady, trapped in a silver chair, is rescued by the water nymph Sabrina.

receive, Terence defends the normality of their female English companions, comparing Mrs. Thornbury to an "old tree": "[h]asn't she a kind of beauty—of elemental simplicity as Flushing would say? Isn't she rather like a large old tree murmuring in the moonlight, or a river *going on and on and on*? (Ch XXII; my emphasis). Terence values Mrs. Thornbury not because of her individuality but for her "elemental simplicity" in having raised plenty of children. In addition, he abruptly emphasizes that Mrs. Thornbury's support contributes to her husband's earning a high social position in the colonial ministry ("By the way, Ralph's been made governor of the Carroway Islands—the youngest governor in the service; very good, isn't it?"). Terence's words here remark the close relationship between patriarchy and imperialism in which the two assist each other. The static image of "going on" corresponds with Richard's emphasis on the "Continuity" (42) that he claims endures in English history up to the pinnacle of Great Britain's Empire; this myth of continuity, however, is proved false by the failed and uneven history of Santa Marina. As a counter example to Terence' position, the old Mrs. Paley mourns for the untimely death of two of her beloved people, "who had not seemed to her at all selfish or fond of money." She regrets that the life of her corrupted being continues, whereas the unseasonable youth of the two "finer" people is stalled: "we selfish old creatures *go on*. … she felt a genuine regret for them, a kind of respect for their youth and beauty, and a kind of shame for herself" (Ch 14; my emphasis). Another victim of patriarchal control, Rachel's mother Theresa, suffers an untimely death, about which Helen suspects Willoughby's possible bullying of his wife, considering the "selfishness" with which he wanted Theresa/Rachel to be "a Tory hostess" for his

ambition of expanding his imperial business to politics.

In this sense, Rachel's response to the native women during the colonial tourism, "So it would *go on* for ever and ever, she said, those women sitting under the trees, the trees and the river" (my emphasis), needs to be understood in the context of her consistent resistance to the static state of going on, which is repeated in the image of infinite nature. There is a self-identification in how Rachel reflects on the vision of the native women's sitting under "the trees and the river" endlessly; in them, she sees "her immanent state of subjection to patriarchal oppression," as Wollaeger states. Wollaeger argues that Rachel's identification with them still "implies a reassertion of her hierarchical advantage," since the issue of colonial oppression is omitted in the gender politics Rachel implies. I argue that Rachel is a complex site where Woolf's shifting perspective on the hypocrisy of the British Empire appears twofold; Rachel is both a to-be imperial subject and one who resists that subjectivity to the extent that she meets an unseasonable death trapped between the two. On the one hand, Rachel certainly has limitations; she does not acknowledge her complicity in joining the imperial excursion, which is a microcosm of colonial exploitation as Mrs. Flushing brags about how "they don't know what they're worth, so we get 'em cheap."34 The narrator mentions Rachel's "Perhaps … English Blood" when she with Terence at the summit of Monte Rosa finds

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34 The narrator writes that, while not responding to Mrs. Flushing's excitement about the excursion, "Rachel was enthusiastic, for indeed the idea was immeasurably delightful to her. She had always had a great desire to see the river." Rachel's "desire to see the river" again recalls Marlow's desire toward the Congo river.

the vast expanse of land "uncomfortably impersonal and hostile" to them. On the other hand, Rachel remains as an outsider to the English community, who never doubts their status as inherently superior colonizers in relation to the colonial other. Throughout her voyage, Rachel's education, which is intended to mold her into an imperial subject, is changed into disillusion with the norms and institutions that constitute English society. One of the critical moments that appalls Rachel is a church service where she discovers people's pretensions about their beliefs and their hypocrisy in relation to the native pastor, Mr. Vax.35 A "moment of being" comes to her when she observes a hospital nurse pretend to believe:

> She was a limpet, with the sensitive side of her stuck to a rock, for ever dead to the rush of fresh and beautiful things past her. The face of this single worshipper became printed on Rachel's mind with an impression of keen horror, and she had it suddenly revealed to her what Helen meant and St. John meant when they proclaimed their hatred of Christianity. With the violence that now marked her feelings, she rejected all that she had implicitly believed. (Ch 17)

I view that what Rachel sees in this blind worshipper is rather herself in the past or a self

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35 The English gathered there, "the men in particular," reveal a condescending and hostile attitude when the black pastor reads a Psalm that contains curses on enemies, feeling "the inconvenience of the sudden intrusion of this old savage." Their attitude toward Mr. Bax is changed as his sermon emphasizes that the success of colonial rule depends upon "a special duty upon earnest Christians" such as showing sympathy and politeness toward native people, thereby satisfying their complacency.

she might have likely become, one who is "slipping at once into some curious pleasant cloud of emotion" just as she easily admired Richard's boasting himself at first. That Rachel's critical looking at the nurse is transformed into envisioning the image of "a limpet" senselessly and motionlessly stuck to the ground shows her thinking process. If Marlow is mesmerized by Kurtz's crying out "The horror! The horror!," a horrid awakening to the void of colonial brutality, Rachel is left with "an impression of keen *horror*" (my emphasis) by the pretending face of both the individual worshipper and of English society within institutionalized Christianity. The hypocrisy of Christianity satisfies the complacency of the English while justifying their duty to civilize native peoples, recalling Mrs. Moore's disillusionment of her own belief in Christianity that makes her "motionless with terror." This scene at the church service haunts Rachel as she wrestles with Terence over the pretension and absurdity of marriage.

The tragedy of Rachel's death is predicted by the immanent violence in her doomed vision of marriage with Terence and also by the colonial brutality her imperial patriarch Willoughby Vinrace betrays along with his supposed domestic violence. In Chapter Twenty-Two, which we can read as a family drama, Terence threatens Rachel by clenching and shaking his fist near her while implicitly expressing his fear of her eccentricity beyond his control, "because now you look as if you'd blow my brains out. There are moments […] when, if we stood on a rock together, you'd throw me into the sea." The scene in which Rachel acts "as if she were indeed striking through the waters… cleaving a passage for herself" and then is caught by Terence starkly foreshadows Rachel's being victimized by the threat of institutionalized marriage. In

addition, I read Rachel's untimely death as an inevitable consequence through which Woolf criticizes the intimate relation between the tyranny of patriarchy and imperialism. Through Helen's state of mind described in a long sentence, we are informed that the violence Willoughby's imperial depravity exerts on "wretched little natives" is not separable from his demanding that Rachel be educated into a useful Victorian lady: "Yes, there lay Willoughby, curt, inexpressive, perpetually jocular, robbing a whole continent of mystery, enquiring after his daughter's manners and morals—hoping she wasn't a bore, and bidding them pack her off to him on board the very next ship if she were—and then grateful and affectionate with suppressed emotion, and then half a page about his own triumphs over wretched little natives who went on strike and refused to load his ships, until he roared English oaths at them." Both Willoughby and Terence regard Rachel not as an unknowable other they have a responsibility to respect, but rather thematize her value through their ideal of women in English society.

Rachel's desire to be connected to the other and to express herself just as she feels is discouraged by the threat of institutionalized marriage that demands "unselfishness and amiability founded upon insincerity" (Ch X). Perhaps what Rachel feels "very real" and wants to expand is the life of, symbolically, "old spinsters" who are always "doing things," mindful of the marginalized people who call upon their responsibility. Rachel reflects their building their own world while being connected to each other: "their little journeys to and fro, to Walworth, to charwomen with bad legs, to meetings for this and that, their minute acts of charity and unselfishness which flowered punctually from a definite view of what they ought to do." Rachel envisions individuals

within society as being always responsible to each other, “like grains of sand falling, falling through innumerable days, making an atmosphere and building up a solid mass, a background” (Ch XVI).

The Failure of Colonial Exploration and Heteronormal Marriage

In brief, the ethical implications of these early modernist novels make visible the impossibility of knowing the other as well as of narrating them. These three novels commonly address the failed exploration of colonial land and the subsequent broken engagement. Each of the failed explorations is influenced by gender dynamics. As for the latter two novels, they representatively break from the conventions of the courtship and engagement plot of Victorian novels, as if the failure of marriage were an indication of ethical failure where disillusioned western subjects cannot achieve a heterosexual union. The novels also respond to each other’s patterns, particularly regarding the encounter with the colonial other. *The Voyage Out*’s imperialistic excursion to the Amazon river from outer (Santa Marina) to inner space (the native village) writes back to the theme of the failed exploration in *Heart of Darkness*.

Comparing the two female protagonists in Forster’s and Woolf’s novels would suggest quite different conditions for women and also a different relationship between England and the colony. English women in Forster’s novel seem to have more freedom and their own voice. Adela has mobility to move between England and India to visit Ronny and also a strong enough individuality to break her engagement with him, and

later to disappoint the British community by retracting her accusation of Aziz. This is reflected in how Ronny regards their relationship as depending on Adela's decision about whether to marry. In Forster's novel, characters struggle with the question of whether the colonizer and the colonized can befriend each other. As Forster himself struggled between his friendships and British-Indian problems, he parodies how British people change their attitude toward Indian people as they settle down in the colonial land whereas they were kind toward them in their home country.[36] In the case of Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, situated between *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India*, Rachel has less freedom in terms of her mobility and choosing her fiancé. The British tourists' visit to the colony is more about expanding Englishness by conquering new lands while paradoxically claiming that they want to be in England. In this sense, Rachel's inclination to identify herself with the colonial other, though exposed to the error of totalization, is derailed from other imperial subjects' anxiety to erase colonial difference and reduce the other to their order. This makes her look disengaged from the group of imperial subjects although she does not (is not allowed to) proceed to build an ethical relation with the other directly.

Differences between two of the novels might derive from the writers'

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[36] Forster dedicates *A Passage to India* to Sayeed Ross Masood, a Muslim aristocrat, he met in England in 1906 (Mishra 10). In *The Hill of Devi and Other Indian Writings*, Forster expressed his concern about English people's attitude toward Indian over the years while he visited India twice. He writes that although "English manners out here have improved wonderfully in the last eight years. …. But it's too late. Indians don't long for social intercourse with Englishmen any longer" (quoted in Childs 189).

contrasting ways of experimenting with narrative form. In terms of creating the colonial encounter scenes, the cave scene in *A Passage to India* comes from Forster's own experience of hearing the inexplicable echoes in the Barabar caves. Similar to Conrad's strategy of setting Marlow as his surrogate young narrator rather than himself, Forster reflects his own experience with distance by dramatizing the disillusionment of a sincere character like Mrs. Moore. Despite the narrative tone not overtly engaging in modernist self-reflexivity, the novel shows an experiment with form, first notably with its unbalanced structure consisting of three parts, Mosque/Caves/Temple. In addition, Forster's narrator calls to readers to explicitly remind them of their responsibility, their ethical duty to be engaged and interpret the story ("Visions are supposed to entail profundity, but—Wait till you get one, dear reader!" [Ch XXIII]). In Woolf's case, the colonial encounter scene comes from her imagination; she creates the imagined colony Santa Marina. *The Voyage Out* does not use the conventional gesture of addressing readers, but rather creates a narrative drama where the tragedy of the protagonist is left unresolved in the narrative setting. Rachel's reflecting on the caring life of old spinsters anticipates ethical subjects who imagine suffering others in Woolf's later novels. Lastly, the three novels suggest in common that narratorial closure is prone to forestall the ethical relation; avoiding this foreclosure, they rather leave us with open endings that either imply the impasse of the fate of story (in Conrad's and Woolf's cases by sacrificing the protagonist) or invite readers to imagine things not yet come (in Forster's case).

CHAPTER III

″WORDS WITHOUT MEANING”: WOOLF’S LEVINASIAN SAYING IN *BETWEEN THE ACTS*

> Words, English words are full of echoes, of memories, of associations—naturally. They have been out and about, on people’s lips, in their houses, in the streets, in the fields, for many centuries. . . . You cannot use a brand new word in an old language because of the very obvious yet always mysterious fact that a word is not a single and separate entity, but part of other words. Indeed it is not a word until it is part of a sentence.
>
> -Virginia Woolf-

“Words, English words are full of echoes, of memories, of associations—naturally,” Virginia Woolf muses on the cumulative and communal nature of English words in an essay “Craftsmanship” (1937), which was one of her BBC talk series “Words fail me.” English words, she proceeds to suggest, exist as a communal heritage, and because of that, their “power of suggestion” hinders writers from using them as new. However, later in this talk, Woolf emphasizes the autonomy of words, such that “[T]hey hate anything that stamps them with one meaning or confines them to one attitude, for it is their nature to change.” Asserting the many-sided, changing nature of words, she not only objects to a writer’s control over their meaning, but also warns of how this mutability could enable language’s use for propaganda purposes in the rise of fascism at that period. This seemingly contradictory nature of words, that they are bound as communal but also seek to be autonomous, is also what Woolf relates to human relationships through language in her later works. Particularly in *Between the Acts,* her posthumous novel, Woolf contemplates both the power and the limits of language to

express one's own and others' minds, and she develops this matter in the novel's narrative act itself by making self-reflexive and metafictional comments on the ethics of representation in literature. This chapter examines Woolf's struggle with the failure of words but also her attempt to envision a new realm of language, "words without meaning," at a bleak stage of civilization.

The limits of language and the problem of other minds are major themes in Woolf's fiction, and scholars have paid attention to this matter of language and recognition mostly through the lens of epistemology. Several critics have noted the influence of philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and William James on Woolf.[37] Their discussion has focused on the ways in which Woolf's characters perceive reality and how a self relates to others, thereby evincing the connection between Woolf's work and theories of knowledge. While agreeing with this scholarship's interest in discovering the epistemological element in Woolf's works, this chapter reads *Between the Acts* with an approach of ethics, specifically Emmanuel Levinas's ethical theory of the other, which reconsiders the self-other relation and pursues an ethical move in language, identified by the term "the Saying." My argument is that Levinas' philosophy and Woolf's later works share a deconstructive impulse in terms of their view on human subjects and on language as a medium. Levinas's Saying comes from his response to deconstructive criticism,

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[37] For instance, see Banfield, *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*; Zhang, "Naming the Indescribable: Woolf, Russell, James, and the Limits of Description"; and Greer, "'A Many-Sided Substance': The Philosophy of Conversation in Woolf, Russell, and Kant."

particularly Derrida's, whose language model still remains in the realm of Heideggerian Being. As Levinas himself had to overcome the influence of Heidegger's ontology, which later turned to support the Nazi regime, his struggle to escape the language of ontology leads him to divide the Saying and the Said of language. In the late thirties, Woolf struggled with the nature of language that can both ensnare and be easily susceptible to manipulative purposes. In "Craftmanship," Woolf contemplates this paradoxical nature of language and attacks fascist uses of language; though she does not directly reference politics, her historical context of fascist regimes' rhetoric and propaganda makes her critique clear. As a writer, Woolf resists words being under any control, especially when that control is used to draw a boundary between self and other.

"Words" are the main subject in Woolf's last novel *Between the Acts.* The novel tenaciously reveals the nature of words, particularly their materiality and their implication in cultural/historical heritage, and it ultimately deconstructs their structure associated with the history of British imperialism. The novel describes a day when villagers gather for an annual pageant and then are forced to confront their fragmented being through the play's representation of national history. The villagers are not freed from the suggestiveness of words that bind them together as a community. What they believe they know of themselves is dismantled just as the words during the last stage which epitomizes English history are cut into pieces. By framing a revised English pageantry and then presenting its failure, Woolf's text explores the possibility of ethical representation in literary works.

What Levinas' "ethics as first philosophy" does is basically to decenter a self in its relation to knowledge and the other. Rethinking the self-other relation, Levinas claims that the other exists beyond our knowledge and that our responsibility for the other preexists any self-consciousness. In brief, Levinas's deconstructing the knowing subject calls into question the absolute Being and the belief in knowledge in the Western tradition. In a move from ontology to ethics, in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974), Levinas suggests the ethical potential in language through the distinction between the Saying and the Said; simply put, the former is ethical and the latter is ontological. The Said is a propositional statement, intentionality, and proclaims meaning as presupposed. In contrast, the Saying is provisional as it is never finished but a continuous attempt that is not exhausted in "ascriptions of meaning, … as tales, in the Said" (*OTB* 47-48). The Saying is a performative act that resists the totalizing impulse of the Said.

As for art and literature, however, Levinas believes that art cannot achieve the Saying and is limited to only revealing the Said. In his early essay "Reality and Its Shadow" (1949), Levinas explicitly criticizes art as a "shadow" which does not refer to reality itself, but functions as an allegory of being or a neutralized imitation. Levinas contends that representation in art is a closed world, irrelevant to history, thus irresponsible to reality. Levinas' emphasis on the fixity of art anticipates "the Said" in his later distinction of language.

What Woolf's text can debate with Levinas' criticism of art is the very thought that art is a mere representation, in other words, a mirror of reality. Among numerous

criticisms of art as mimesis in literary history, Shelley's "A Defense of Poetry" (1840)—celebrating "Poets; the legislators of mankind"—is a notable case for the debate as it posits the exact opposite of Levinas's stance by magnifying the worth of poetry: "Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted." Within the context of Romanticism, for Shelley, literary imagination or representation goes beyond imitating reality, to the extent of being a divine work that can restore "the eternal truth … as existing in the mind of the Creator." In *Between the Acts*, however, Woolf seems to cast doubt on such an optimistic view and rather questions what significance literature could have in the face of a declining civilization and imminent war. In the novel, the library of Pointz Hall is described as a significant space for characters' acts of reading, and the narrator repeats the epigrammatic phrase "[b]ooks are the mirrors of the soul"[38] (13, 14) in an ironical way. The diverse collection on the bookshelves—from classics of English literature such as *The Faerie Queene* and poems of "Keats and Shelley, Yeats and Donne," to biographies of great men, country archival records, and scientific texts—appears to display the achievement of western civilization, but soon its status is questioned by Isa, the main character as well as a poet figure: "There they were, reflecting. What? What remedy was there for her at her age—the age of the century, thirty-nine—in books" (14). Likewise, the metaphor of the "mirror" pervades the

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[38] According to Cuddy-Kean, this quote comes from Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841): "In Books lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time." Woolf mocks Carlyle's approach to history as the "Biographies of Great men," and by adding the image of a mirror, "gives more emphasis to the reader's active, self-reflexive role" (Cuddy-Kean 156-57).

narrative, addressing the matter of representation in art that the novel self-reflectively contemplates.

In what follows, analyzing the varied mirror metaphor as both reflection and representation, I examine how Woolf's text experiments with deconstructing words in multi-textual levels, thereby reconfiguring the Levinasian Saying. I argue that the ethical status of art can replace one mode of representation and function as another reflection. I expand Levinas's concepts of the interpersonal subject and the encounter with the other in the Saying to the reading experience in literary narrative, arguing that this reading experience is also an ongoing experience and thus can achieve the Saying.

The Said of the Newspaper

Where books no more "reflected the soul sublime" (12) and fail to cure the agony of Isa's generation, the newspaper is introduced as a substitute for books. Throughout the novel, journalism is described as a dominant medium for the two world wars generation: "Book-shy she was, like the rest of her generation; … For her generation the newspaper was a book" (14). Characters read newspapers instead books, and the immediacy of war influences their minds with violent images. Indeed, from the late 1920s, newspapers along with radio brought daily news of the war into people's homes. Patricia Laurence argues that the radio and the newspaper "collapsed some of Woolf's distinctions between the private and the public, the home front and the war

front, the individual and the communal and journalism and art" (227).[39] The newspaper was a "daily purveyor of politics, violence and war" (Eberly 207), and what dominated newspapers then was the male-centered national rhetoric and war propaganda. In the novel, Giles Oliver reacts the most to such rhetoric of war via newspapers; he is obsessed with "actions" taken at the war front: "sixteen men had been shot, others prisoned, just over there, across the gulf, in the flat land which divided them from the continent" (32). The war reality represented through newspapers is reimagined in "his vision of Europe" as vivid, imminent, and even devastating, "bristling with guns, poised with planes. At any moment guns would rake that land into furrows; planes splinter Bolney Minster into smithereens and blast the Folly" (37). In a sense, his excessive anxiety about war insinuates his obsession with the destructive power of war, reflecting his dissatisfaction with the stagnation of life and his inability to act. And his struggle with the life-in-death state of being leads him to stamp on a snake "choked with a toad in its mouth," "a monstrous inversion" (69).[40] Confronted by war, his anxious mind is

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[39] Citing Woolf's diary entries where she records how the news media like radio influenced people, Laurence emphasizes that Woolf feared how "a communal voice," such as patriotic rhetoric generated during the war period, invades daily life (227-29).

[40] Many critics have commented on this famous image of Giles' stamping on the snake-toad monstrosity, most commonly discussing Giles' masculine impulse of violence and hostility toward homosexuality—in this novel, obviously Dodge, who contemplates himself as "a flickering, mind-divided little snake in the grass" (51). Scholars have focused on the image of blood on Giles' canvas shoes, connecting it to Miss La Trobe's: Marina Mackay observes that Giles's self-consciousness about his bloodstained tennis shoes is replicated by Miss La Trobe's "panic" when "blood seemed to pour from her shoes. This is death, death, death . . . when illusion fails" (180, 239); Cole reads the blood as allegorizing Woolf's own writing, standing for "an instance and refraction of artistic creation" and "Woolf's observation about how violence and art mutually inseminate" (285). Focusing on the historical context, McWhirter writes that the image

influenced by how journalism represents that war, and this anxiety is regressively transformed into his violent action on the snake and the toad, which he feels "relieved him" (69).

Through inserting several scenes of reading newspapers, and caricaturing Mr. Page, the reporter who notes what happens during the pageant while "licking his pencil," Woolf calls into question the function of the newspaper as a medium to represent reality. On the one hand, the newspaper is expected to be a pure reflection of what happens, thus, in a sense, to be a medium that copies reality as it is. Yet in actuality, its way of reflecting reality is not entirely unbiased or flawless. In the lens of the Levinasian Saying and Said, the newspaper would then be a clear example of the Said as it thematizes what happens in politics and designates it as finished.

However, the diverse ways Woolf's characters read and respond to newspapers complicate the notion of the Saying and the Said. In the case of Bart Oliver, his reading of the newspaper stimulates him to glorify himself in his reverie. After reading a newspaper, he dreams of himself, once a colonial bureaucrat in India, as a young man who conquers India's wilderness. Bart envisions himself in a nostalgic fantasy, and the opaque image of a mirror—"seeing as in a glass, its lustre spotted, himself" (13)—suggests the distortedness of his reflection. The images of a wild deserted land, "savages," and "in his hand a gun" suggest Bart's inherent desire to conquer, while

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also "captures the larger historical impasse in which these characters are caught" (796). Recently, Rebecah Pulsifer reads the image as one that "demonstrates how any act of resistance involves a degree of intimacy with the enemy" (108), pointing out Woolf's awareness that resisting fascism also risks incorporating aspects of the enemy.

presenting a typical vision of colonial invasion. Considering that the newspaper he reads contains news of international politics and imperial wars, that Bart fancies himself as a young colonizer in his reverie seems not irrelevant to his newspaper reading. In this sense, his reading of the newspaper leads him to extend his imagination to dream about his "youth and India," which he lacks in present.

The newspaper can be weaponized as the Said that controls and instills fear in readers, but it can also be transformed by those readers into an act of Saying. When Bart scares his grandson, George, by disguising himself with a newspaper, his newspaper reading is diverted in a metaphorically suggestive way.[41] Bart crumples the newspaper into a peak over his nose, turning himself into "a terrible peaked eyeless monster moving on legs, brandishing arms" (9), and imposes his masculine, aggressive nature on George, seemingly in a defeating-monster game. His embodying the threatening look of a savage "monster" is problematic as it implies his insistence on colonial fantasy and imperial masculinity. As George bursts into tears, Bart reproaches Isa's son as "a coward" (14)

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[41] What George, Isa's son, might stand for is interesting as his character shows the opposite of Bart's, however little he is. The name literally means farmer, and St. George is the patron saint of England. Though short, George is described as a boy who loves and plays with flowers as if resembling his mother Isa. Flowers have significance in the novel, symbolizing a mysterious, fleeting beauty; they signify an act of art that the narrator captures in one of the male servants, Candish: "Queerly, he loved [flowers], considering his gambling and drinking"; he puts them in an aestheticized form by "arranging them, and placing the green sword or heart shaped leaf that came, fitly, between them," which can be viewed as a form of art. In the last pages of the novel, Isa "watch[es] the pageant fade," which is paralleled and followed by the statement, "The flowers flashed before they faded. She watched them flash," in which flowers seem to mean an epiphanic moment of being for which Isa continues to seek.

for his disappointment that George does not play along with but rather fears his game. Here, while Bart's weaponizing the newspaper is comparable to what media does by thematizing "the Said," his embodying the newspaper by using its materiality suggests a divergent way to consume or transform the Said for the reader's own purposes. Ironically, while performing a monster, he is depersonalized into "a hollow voice," "[a] very tall old man, with gleaming eyes, wrinkled cheeks, and a head with no hair on it" (9). In some sense, these descriptions of him sound grotesque, deindividualize him only to his aged appearance. He instantly turns his attention away from the failure of the game by ordering his dog "as if he were commanding a regiment" and reading a column about Edouard Daladier, the French prime minister at that time, whose participation in the Munich Pact later turned into a capitulation to Hitler (9-10). This instant shift from home front to war front via the newspaper suggests how Oliver's inclination to imperial masculinity mirrors the Said of the news media that propagandizes war, showing how both imperial and patriarchal violence are in play.

In addition, the narrator satirizes Bart through pairing him with his faithful Afghan hound, Sohrab, while playing with the hero-and-his-beast archetype. The relationship between Bart and the "Afghan" dog suggests the British imperialism in which Bart was involved, considering that Afghanistan was under the imperial control of the United Kingdom.[42] The narrator's mocking voice caricatures the dog, originally

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[42] According to Franck Haymann, "Afghan Hound, From The Streets Of Kabul To The Main Rings Of The World," the Afghan hound descends from dogs brought to Great Britain in the 1920s that King Amanullah of the Afghan Royal Family gave away as

known for its elegance, as an impetuous, untidy, but faithful old dog who follows Bart all the time: “a stone dog, a crusader's dog, guarding even in the realms of death the sleep of his master” (12-13). On different levels, the ways in which the Afghan dog is described suggest that he is Bart’s alter ego, or an object onto which Bart projects his colonial masculinity. At first glance, the emphasis is on the dog’s animality, such as his untamed character—“he never admitted the ties of domesticity” (13)—or scruffy condition. It is not only Bart disguised as a monster but also the Afghan dog (“The hairy flanks were sucked in and out; there was a blob of foam on its nostrils”) that makes little George scared and burst out crying (9). Yet, the dog’s accompanying Bart with its caricatured description disrupts what Bart signifies: patriarchy, reason, logos. In addition to the reverie scene above, when Bart sinks into meditation between the acts, the dog interferes with the scene as “his familiar spirit,” “flopped down on to the floor at his feet. Flanks sucked in and out, the long nose resting on his paws, a fleck of foam on the nostril.” Significantly, during “the present” stage of the pageant, when all the constructed identities of “we” (the audience or community more generally) are exposed as naked and deconstructed, the Afghan hound joins: “the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved. Then the dogs joined in. Excited by the uproar, scurrying and worrying, here they came! Look at them! And the hound, the

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gifts. Some had been kept as hunting dogs, others as guardians. Various sighthounds were brought to England in the 1800s by army officers returning from British India, which at the time included Afghanistan and Persia, and were exhibited at dog shows and the Kennel Club (UK) (Haymann, 5 May 2006).

Afghan hound . . . look at him!" (125). The Afghan hound is represented twofold: on the one hand, as a Bart's double, the dog functions to caricature comical sides of Bart who rests on the past; on the other hand, he reveals what Bart suppresses under the ideals of imperial regime.

Isa's Reimagining the Said into the Saying

Throughout the novel, Isa contrasts with Bart's way of reading and imagining the Said. Isa reenters the scene while "destroy[ing]" (13) Bart's colonial fantasy derived from his reading the morning paper. Isa's interrupting his fantasy is also significant considering the symbolic nature of the library that it is a traditionally patriarchal place to the army base/occupied territory. While the patriarchs of the Oliver family, Bart and Giles, read international politics, and the villagers are drawn to stories about the royal family, Isa reads about a story of a rape from the *Times* that Bart drops. It tells of the rape of a young girl by Royal Guardsmen, which accurately reflects a rape case reported in the *Times* in June 1938 (Cuddy-Kean 158; Cole 282).

> "The troopers told her the horse had a green tail; but she found it was just an ordinary horse. And they dragged her up to the barrack room where she was thrown upon a bed. Then one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face. . . ."
>
> That was *real*; so real that on the mahogany door panels she *saw* the Arch in Whitehall; through the Arch the barrack room; in the barrack room the bed, and on the bed the girl was screaming and hitting him about the face, when the

> door (for in fact it was a door) opened and in came Mrs. Swithin carrying a hammer. (my emphasis, 15)

Woolf's bringing the rape case to her text through Isa's reading is a clear attempt to reconstruct the violent crime from the girls' point of view and to invite the reader to reflect on how they would react to the victim's case. It was spotlighted in a series of news coverages, and there was even a following trial on the doctor who helped the girl to get an abortion, which was of course illegal at the time (Cole 282, 340; Clarke 3-4).[43] Considering the ethical dilemma media risks when representing the atrocity of a traumatic event, the rape language in the article exposes the problem of making the reader vulnerable to the violence it reproduces. Sara Cole's discussion of enchanted and disenchanted violence sheds light on this matter of representing violence. Cole theorizes how art answered predominant violence in an observable form in the twentieth century,

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[43] In the actual news coverage of the trial, there exists an explicit imperialistic rhetoric that emphasizes hierarchical order and defends the accusers, who were identified as belonging to his Majesty's Army. In the "Girl's Evidence" section, the most part is spent on delivering the judge's claim to imperial authority, that he "sit[s] here as one of the commissioners of the Central Criminal Court to do justice in the name of the King, and witnesses who are in his Majesty's Forces should appear here to give evidence in the uniform appropriate to their rank." The victim's voice is silenced except her answering "not willingly" to the question that involved her complicity. Although she testified that the soldiers had seduced girls in the same way before, the girl was accused merely because she followed the soldiers, whereas the first trooper who raped her was only "found guilty of attempted rape."
The last coverage on the trial abruptly shifts from a pathetic view on the victim to nonsensically defending the morals of English soldiers, stating that "She went out of the place not yet ravished, although she had gone through an experience which much have reduced her to a condition of misery and despair. One would think that every Englishman, especially English soldiers, would be anxious to help her and protect her." (The *Times* on June 28,29,30. The *Times* Archive)

crisscrossing disenchantment and enchantment. According to Cole, "To enchant is to imbue the violent experience with symbolic and cultural potency," whereas "to disenchant is to refuse that structure, to insist on the bare, forked existence of the violated being, bereft of symbol, and expressing only a regretful beauty" (43-44). For instance, in the long western tradition, war and blood are thought to be communal and sacred and are thus represented in the language of enchantment. In the thirties, when violence overwhelmed in the interwar period, it was often represented in enchanted form as having a generative power. In the news coverage of the rape case, the victim's and the witnesses' testimonies are transcribed in a way to enchant the violence; even the subsection that contains what happened after the first rape is titled "Dragged Upstairs."

In Woolf's text, Isa is first influenced by the way journalism repeats the violence in order. The deceitful language that coaxed the victim is reproduced in the article, as Isa imagines "A horse with a green tail" as "fantastic" and "romantic" (14). However, Isa's reaction in the next paragraph, "That was real," shows a different way of perceiving the terrible case. The place and the moment of the crime are connected to Isa's "here and now," that is, her domestic space under patriarchal violence and the time doomed to war, as the girl's hitting the soldier and Lucy's entering with a hammer are overlapped in her internal vision. Here, it is significant that Isa's imagination develops to focus on the girl's hitting back as an act of resistance and connects it to Lucy's holding the hammer. As Cole reads the scene as "[Isa]'s own unfulfillable wish to smash back at men, a repressed and reversed narrative of female rage" (282), Isa's reconstructing the two scenes suggests a female solidarity against men's violence and oppression.

Throughout the day, Isa constantly returns to the story in her imagination and lingers on the moment of the girl's hitting, trying to piece it together behind the Said of the newspaper. In part, her remembering the story and putting it into her language might have some aspects of appropriating it as a part of her personal poem. For instance, during the intermission, Isa "turns to the raped girl as part of her retreat … from public violence and apathy" (Cole 283) and composes a lyric: "On, little donkey, patiently stumble. Hear not the frantic cries of the leaders who in that they seek to lead desert us. Nor the chatter of china faces glazed and hard. Hear rather the shepherd, coughing by the farmyard wall; the withered tree that sighs when the Rider gallops; the brawl in the barrack room when they stripped her naked" (107). Is Isa's imagination of the raped girl an ethical response to the suffering other, or is it a failed attempt that rather remains as self-centered contemplation? Indeed, it is paradoxical that Isa has failed to compose lyrics until she reads about the raped girl. Cole analyzes that for Isa, the rape is "invigorating; it shakes up her language, just as it breaks the somnambulatory quality of the day. It does not enchant—Woolf will never allow that—but it does revive; it demands *recognition*" (284; my emphasis). Considering Cole's categories of enchantment and disenchantment, Isa's being haunted by the rape victim's case does not clearly fit into either category. Isa's persistent memory of this newspaper account can be understood in terms of the way in which Isa responds to the girl as an ethical subject in the Levinasian sense. Isa's respond-ability to the unknowable other suggests her struggle to be an ethical subject beyond showing a passive recognition of the crime. In other

words, Isa's continuous reimagining of the girl's case and forming it into her own language represent Woolf's version of the Saying.

The intimate encounter with the raped girl that Isa experiences in her imagination is closely linked to Levinas' explanation of Saying as exposure to another. Levinas explains that the saying is "an unblocking of communication," which is irreducible to what is inscribed in the Said "as tales," and it is accomplished "in the risky uncovering of oneself, in sincerity, the breaking up of inwardness and the abandon of all shelter, exposure to traumas, vulnerability" (*OTB* 48). Levinas compares the uncovering of Saying to a skin that is exposed to what wounds it and claims that this vulnerable passivity is what makes the subjectivity of a subject (49-50). That Isa reads the victim's story as "so real" that she "saw" the crime scene throughout the day suggests her vulnerability and passivity to the raped girl. In this sense, Isa's reconstructing the rape case into her aesthetic form of lyrics is radically differentiated from the newspaper's Said that thematizes the girl's case. Isa's remembering the moment in her continuous attempt of composing disrupts and disenchants what is inscribed in the newspaper as the Said. Isa's speaking subjectivity, her becoming as a poet, becomes possible by virtue of her respond-ability and address-ability to the other whose pain summons her. Isa's witnessing what is unseen in her imagination is thus ethical, not a way of consuming the story in her thought, but "bearing witness" to something beyond recognition, in Kelly Oliver's terms.[44]

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[44] In *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, taking Levinas's conception of a responsible subject, Kelly Oliver seeks to redefine subjectivity, arguing that it depends on the ability

Furthermore, it is important to notice the context in which Isa juxtaposes the rape story and other narratives.[45] That the raped victim's case is revisited through Isa's imagination several times throughout the novel clearly suggests that it is Woolf's intention to situate it among the articles on international politics and news of war that Bart and Giles read and then forget. Near the end, after Isa "watched the pageant fade" from her mind, she returns to the newspaper: "The paper crackled. The second hand jerked on. M. Daladier had pegged down the franc. The girl had gone skylarking with the troopers. She had screamed. She had hit him. . . . What then?" (147). The news about "M. Daladier" is again the very article that Bart was reading at the beginning of the novel, which emphasizes the male-centered politics of war while playing down the oppression of patriarchal violence. Woolf magnifies this real case of visceral violence by showing how Isa responds to it, whereas the news on the war is cut short in fragments while Bart and Giles read them without further thought or critical engagement, and thus their reading remains in the realm of the Said. As she herself was a victim of sexual abuse by her stepbrother, Woolf is keen to the matter of how such violence on a

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to respond to and address others, which she calls "witnessing." Witnessing has a double sense of testifying in that it connotes not only an eyewitness in a juridical sense but also "bearing witness to something that you cannot see" (18) in a religious sense. Oliver describes this bearing witness to something that cannot be seen as a "vision" that can enable us to "move beyond the melancholic choice between either dead historical facts or traumatic repetition of violence" (16). Oliver claims that this address-ability to other people is infinite and also responsible for the other's ability to respond that eventually sustains us as a community.

[45] Cole emphasizes how Isa's remembering the raped girl's story represents a particularity of the receiver, suggesting the possible postcolonial reading that Isa hears the story that "recontextualizes imperialism in India as forcible penetration" (22).

marginalized individual systematically proceeds in a patriarchal society and is closely connected to imperialistic politics.

Two Paintings: The Possibility of Silent Saying

The two paintings hung in the Pointz Hall dining room explicitly comment on representation through art.

> Two pictures hung opposite the window. In real life they had never met, the long lady and the man holding his horse by the rein. The lady was a picture, bought by Oliver because he liked the picture; the man was an ancestor. He had a name. He held the rein in his hand. (25)

What explains the man's portrait is the narrative about him, or more accurately, what is recorded as history. It re-presents the ancestor's specific story, the story of someone who "has his place in history" (34), a name, and a family lineage. Woolf's narrator intervenes here to give a voice to the ancestor, as if he were a character, by inserting direct quotations of what he is imagined to have said to the painter, a comical touch. He had the power to command the painter concerning this copy of his "likeness," thus becoming not a mere object to be pictured but a subject participating in his own representation. He could leave on record that he lamented that his dog Colin was not painted in the picture and wished the dog to be buried with him. Likewise, the portrait represents him in a pose "hold[ing] the rein in his hand," signifying this ancestor's power to direct and control, the social and economic power that secures his identity and history. Woolf's narrator also notes that he "was a talk producer" (26), which sounds rather ambiguous, but

implies, as David McWhirter observes, that his power is "discursive for he produces talk" (McWhirter 806). In this regard, Lucy Swithin remarks, "I always feel … he's saying: 'Paint my dog'" (34). Yet, if the painting seems to grant the ancestor agency in how he is represented, it is only through Lucy's interpretive gesture that he gets that power. If the painting is received as a participatory act that invites Lucy's response and responsibility (however playful), it is more Saying than Said.

In contrast, the picture of the anonymous lady is described in its form: "In her yellow robe, leaning, with a pillar to support her, a silver arrow in her hand, and a feather in her hair, she led the eye up, down, from the curve to the straight, through glades of greenery and shades of silver, dun and rose into silence" (26).[46] McWhirter points out that Woolf's pairing of the two paintings is influenced by Roger Fry's formalism and suggests that while the ancestor's portrait represents empathetic realism, the lady's picture does abstract formalism (805-806). The formal perfection of the lady's picture "evokes an impersonal, primarily aesthetic response" (McWhirter 805) through the form of the picture—colors, lines, and shape. McWhirter argues that while the lady's being objectified in the male artist's picture is "inseparable from her gendered powerlessness," there is something "liberating" in the picture's formalism since her silence does not force the beholder to a certain interpretation (806). While the man's portrait reproduces reality, so its meaning tends to be determined, but the lady's form is

[46] This allegorical painting has many cultural references, but most essentially, it recalls a mythical Diana, goddess of the hunt, who is often portrayed with an arrow and a dog.

resistant to any single narrative. The emptiness of the lady's picture leaves the beholder to imagine her as unknowable and unnarratable. The unknowability of the lady does not draw the beholders to "a representational power" (McWhirter 806) as the man's portrait does but leaves them to continue wondering at her. The lady's portrait, its leading the beholders to "the heart of silence," suggests Woolf's ekphrastic gesture that can accompany the Levinasian Saying in its always being attempted but ongoing state of unutterability. Another ekphrastic image of an alabaster vase amplifies the emptiness and silence that the portrait evokes.

> "Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence." (26)

In "From Text to Tableau: Ekphrastic Enchantment," Kathryn Stelmach examines Woolf's "reverse ekphrases" in her major novels, underscoring how Woolf uses metaphors "to transmute the fleeting power of language into the paradox of the still living tableau vivant that is suspended beyond the confines of space and time" (305). Reading this scene, Stelmach focuses on how the alabaster vase's spatial substance surrounds the room with silence and suggests "a living fluidity rather than a frozen density" (305). The description of the vase ("it was made of immortal marble," BA) substantially recalls Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," with its resonances of the silence

and stasis of eternity in artistic representation.[47] Woolf's alabaster vase, unlike other poems by Keats's inheritors that tend to focus on the shape and form of the container, draws our attention to "the hollow inside, and her complex, off-center syllable repetitions convey a pattern that is both fluid and resonant" (Cuddy-Keane 163-64). The ekphrastic images of the room visualize the paradoxical coexistence of density and fluidity of the "still"-ness as if reflecting Woolf's pursuit of "a plastic sense of words" (quoted in Torgovnick 67) in this novel.[48] The vase's verbal representation with triadic repetitions ("Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent": this sort of repetition of three words or triple rhythm occurs often in the novel) has much in common with the novel's paradoxical interest both in silence, which functions to "add its unmistakable contribution" to meaning, and in "words themselves," stripped of all saturated meanings. The story of another anonymous lady "who had drowned herself for love" (31) in the lily pond that comes between the painting scenes also directs us to see the verbalized silence. The lady's story does not seem to have a substance—a thigh bone was recovered but it

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[47] "Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought/ As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!/ When old age shall this generation waste,/ Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe/ Than ours." Keats's image of the Greek vase, the "still unravish'd bride of quietness," influenced many modernists, for instance T. S. Eliot's Chinese jar from "Burnt Norton" ("Only by the form, the pattern/ Can words or music reach/ The stillness, as a Chinese jar still/ Moves perpetually in its stillness") and Wallace Stevens's "Anecdote of the Jar" that "takes "dominion" over the surrounding landscape (Stelmach 305).

[48] Stelmach reads Woolf's ekphrastic revelation as "linguistic re-enchantment and communal solidarity" and what often brings memory into life. While agreeing with her analysis of Woolf's ekphrastic metaphors in general, as for reading this scene of two paintings in the context of *Between the Acts,* I take a different perspective, particularly regarding the silence that the lady's figure and the vase entail.

turned out to be not hers but a sheep's—but her unknowable story silted in the hollow haunts the people in Pointz Hall as if the dining room's "singing of what was before time was" (26) transcends the history of men's civilization that was doomed at this period of imminent war. In Levinasian sense, the dining room's "singing of what was before time was" (26) resonates with the Saying of the silenced ladies that is not located in a particular moment but always already there as a 'immemorable past.'

It is worth noting the dynamics between the Olivers and the guests who are "the uninvited, unexpected, droppers-in" during their discussion of the two pictures. Bart feels a sort of obligation to share his knowledge about the paintings to the guests: "He must, rather laboriously, tell them the story of the pictures at which the *unknown* guest had been looking" (34; my emphasis). Yet his narration is limited as he merely repeats what is recorded about the man's portrait, and his knowledge does not help maintain an advantage over his audience. It is crucial to understand that "the unknown guest" is Dodge, whose homosexuality Bart's son Giles immediately disdains with the term "these half-breeds" (34) when he enters the room. Yet, while other people pay attention to the man's portrait, Dodge, who has been suffering from society's rejecting of his queer identity and cannot even utter it in language, "was still looking at the lady." He does not comply with Bart who invites him to join in objectifying the unknown lady by calling to him, "you're an artist" (34).

The two guests—who threaten the norms of British society—disturb the way in which Bart knows and narrates the paintings. What Bart can say about the lady's picture

is only about the male artist, and he even rambles, which exaggerates his not knowing the picture at all: "A man—I forget his name—a man connected with some Institute, a man who goes about giving advice, gratis, to descendants like ourselves, degenerate descendants, said . . . said …" This limitation is also applied to his knowing of his ancestor. Mrs. Manresa, another guest whose life history is in all the gossip (which I will look at in detail in the next section) and unknowable to the townspeople, asks the question, "But what about the horse?" which he cannot answer because he does not know. His inability to narrate suggests that his interpretation of the ancestor's portrait is also limited. The narrator hints the untold story that the ancestor blames typical representational portraiture whose social norms require that he cannot be pictured with the dog that he loves most but only with the horse. In brief, it is not that the man's portrait represents the Said and the lady's painting the Saying; rather, Oliver's narration is the Said as his assumption about knowing reduces the ancestor to the same.

The Pageant as a Mirror of English History

La Trobe's pageant as a play-within-a-play allows the novel a further self-reflective exploration on the nature of literary representation and its readers to reflect on their role while looking at the audience of the pageant that Woolf's narrator observes. It expands the novel's trope of the mirror as reflection to comment on English history, more specifically, the cultural form of Parkerian pageant that represents reality and history. Moreover, it pushes Woolf's characters' self-other problem to the matter of

national rhetoric, which defines "us" as Great Britain while excluding and sacrificing the other.

Woolf makes the village pageant in this novel an explicit parody of the Parkerian pageant that was popular in the early twentieth century up to the thirties.[49] This particular form of art needs to be understood in its contemporary socio-historical context, as Woolf must have been aware of this trending revival of nationalistic and communal ritualism.[50] Arising under anxiety about the diminishing power of Great Britain, the Parkerian pageant was characterized by its ethos of democratic potential, reinforcing communities, and patriotic sentiment (Yoshino 51), even claiming to forget class distinctions, however temporarily. Yoshino specifies how Woolf was involved in the boom of pageantry when Woolf herself was asked to write a village play by the Women's Institute of Rodmel in 1940, the same year she wrote *Between the Act* (55).[51]

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[49] Esty points out that important modernist writers such as T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, and Woolf were attracted to the Parkerian pageant as they regarded the plays as "opportunities to integrate aesthetic and social power" (*A Shrinking Ireland* 54). The success of Nazi theater and spectacle alerted English writers, and their concern about the marginalized status of modernist art from the public turned their attention to modern pageantry (Esty 55-56).

[50] In his article, "*Between the Acts* and Louis Napoleon Parker—The Creator of the Modern English Pageant," Yoshino argues that, although the richness of Woolf's pageant can be interpreted in a broader sense of (traditional) theatre form, it explicitly recalls the contemporary and highly political form of pageant created by Louis Napoleon Parker in 1905.

[51] Forster was attracted to the pageant and once asked for Woolf's advice for his second pageant when she started *Pointz Hall* which later became *Between the Acts* (Yoshino 51). Melba Cuddy-Keane marks a "life-art intersection" in Woolf's attendance at a village pageant on August 24, 1940, when she had written most of the first draft of *Between the Acts*: "We had a fête: also a village play. The sirens sounded in the middle. All the

She instead participated in the performance, but the experience did not give her a communal feeling. Quoting her diary in which she wrote “I’m bored… by the ready-made commonplaceness of these plays” (56), Yoshino states that Woolf saw the deception of the pageant’s claim to be democratic when in reality the class boundaries still existed. Woolf, who was dissociated from the jingoistic nationalism of the time, penetrates this paradox of the pageant. In Three Guineas, Woolf questions the meaning of the educated men’s procession : For we have to ask ourselves, here and now, do we wish to join that procession, or don’t we? On what terms shall we join that procession? Above all, where is it leading us, the procession of educated men?...Let us never cease from thinking--what is this "civilisation" in which we find ourselves? What are these ceremonies and why should we take part in them? What are these professions and why should we make money out of them? Where in short is it leading us, the procession of the sons of educated men?” (59).This recognition is reflected in how marginalized people, such as Albert “the village idiot,” are thoroughly othered in *Between the Acts*.

Still, the Parkerian pageant was acclaimed by contemporaneous critics as a great medium that enabled the achievement of communal value and representational authenticity. Writers of this period saw the artistic pursuit of democracy and the possibility of “civic betterment” in it (Yoshino 53). They believed that this form of communal ritual could transcend some limits of “art” in general. For instance, the

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mothers sat stolid. I also admired that very much” (*Letters* 6: 430, quoted in Cuddy-Keane 37). It was during the most intense period of German bombing in the Battle of Britain.

American critic Sheldon Cheney imbued this "invented tradition" with "a communal expression and inspiration" which supplements its being "ephemeral" if considered only as art ("The Open-Air Theatre" (1918) 116-17; quoted in Yoshino 53). Parker himself declares the genre's ambitions as follows: "Scenes in a Pageant convey a thrill no stage can provide when they are represented on the very ground where they took place in real life; especially when they are played, as often happens, by descendants of the historical protagonists, speaking a verbatim reproduction of the actual words used by them" (Parker, *Several of My Lives*). Here, Parker emphasizes that the scenes a pageant represents are rooted in reality, thus having historical authenticity. Parker argues that the pageant can unite this representational authority with the mass participation of local people, which seems to envision a democratic representation by calling them "descendants of the historical protagonists." Although this vision of representation, which mixes a pure aesthetic of mimesis with a political ideal of democracy (Esty 249), sounds attractive, it is also deceptive. In fact, the national history the Parkerian pageant represented was modified typically from Roman times to the Revolution.[52] It condensed hundreds of years of English history into a continuity of glorious tradition without change while no scene presents an historical era closer to the present, their "real life." In addition, Parker's conception of language—that the mimetic and democratic

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[52] Esty states that pageantry's cultural populism was coupled with a broadly Royalist sensibility in that it concludes the play "where the besieged and glorious townsfolk resist the Cromwellian usurper. "The typical pageant managed to represent hundreds of years of English history by suggesting that all the important things had stayed the same, by dissolving linear time into the seductive continuity of national tradition" (249).

representation of the pageant is realized by the descendants' "speaking a verbatim reproduction of the actual words"—recalls what Woolf struggles with: that is, English being comprised of "old words" badly in "need of change," of obtaining liberty ("Craftmanship").

Through La Trobe's pageant, Woolf's text debunks the Parkerian pageant's patriotic nationalism and mimetic representation of history. While each scene of La Trobe's pageant contains elements that parody the Parkerian pageant, Woolf's novel focuses on describing the paradoxical ways in which words impact each audience member's mind during and between the acts. Woolf's contemplation on the nature of words not only contains her concern of using language as a writer but also demonstrates her active politics of art before the menace of European fascism. It reveals her arguing against the use of language reduced to a means by the totalitarian rhetoric that both Nazism and jingoistic nationalism show in common. Woolf penetrates the paradoxical nature of words, showing that they have a suggestive power to define and differentiate the self-other relation at once. As Natania Rosenfeld comments, "the moment of access to language" can be easily the moment "when self is distinguished and other distanced with a label," and it is "this very distancing" that dictators and warmongers employ in "their rhetorical constructions of the enemy" (125). The novel captures how the pageant's rhetoric of national history might work to distance an English self from the other or vice versa. When the pageant starts with the birth of England embodied in the figure of a little girl, the words "England am I …" influence the audience, particularly Manresa's mind.

> Her [England's] words peppered the audience as with a shower of hard little stones. Mrs. Manresa in the very centre smiled; but she felt as if her skin cracked when she smiled. There was a vast vacancy between her, the singing villagers and the piping child. (54)

"England am I/ Now weak and small/ A child, as all may see"; the words embody and reinsert British history while connecting national identity and each of the audience members. We might guess that the phrase "[H]er words peppered the audience as with a shower of hard little stones" recalls for them how England as a small island has developed into Great Britain and their involvement in that history. In Levinasian sense, the child's embodiment of the Great Britain with the line of "England am I" works as the Said with its strongly suggestive propaganda that totalizes the experience of nationality as a unified one. Yet, once the words define who they are, Manresa, who has pretended an enthusiastic face toward the "we" of British imperialism, feels herself differentiated as an other and perceives "a vast vacancy" between her and the other villagers. This is because she knows that she is regarded as a stranger rather than as one of "we," surrounded by gossip about her birth and family background: that she was born in Tasmania, that her grandfather had been deported "for some hanky-panky mid-Victorian scandal," and that her present husband is Jewish. For this reason, we need to read carefully her conspicuous reaction to the message of "we," such as "speaking in a loud cheerful voice" and "clapping energetically," as her deliberate way to fill up "the vacancy" and present herself as a self within the rhetoric.

Although the words of the pageant suggest certain implications, throughout the novel, they are described not simply as a means to convey totalitarian messages, but in diverse formations as having materiality or often being personified: “Words this afternoon ceased to lie flat in the sentence” (41); “The words rose and pointed a finger of scorn at him” (102). They are alive, floating, and oftentimes blown or interrupted by nature. Woolf’s figuration of words as autonomous entities opposes the dictatorial use of language under control. In addition, Woolf connects the communal nature of words (“a word is not a single and separate entity, but part of other words. Indeed it is not a word until it is part of a sentence” (“Craftmanship”) to the nature of human community: each member of the audience is an individual reacting differently to the pageant, but they are still bound under “we.” Throughout the pageant, they confront the question whether “[e]ach is part of the whole” (130). In part, inherited culture saturated in words “both informs and restricts the mind’s mnemonic pathways” and recalls for them “their shared debt to national tradition” (Esty, “Amnesia” 266). Nevertheless, I argue that Woolf’s text does not focus solely on the stock of collective memories but moves forward to dismantle the mystified tradition through the tension between being united and dispersed, as reflected in the repetitive phrase like a chorus after the play, “Dispersed are we” (133-34) . Each viewer’s reaction to the play tends to be individuated and expanded. Some of them proceed to muse and build up their own interpretation, which turns the possible Said of the nationalistic rhetoric to an ongoing process, the Saying.

Woolf organizes the story into a multi-layered and self-referencing narrative; her text frames the pageant as an interactive performance and a space of ongoing artistic

communication, breaking away from the typical Parkerian pageant's simple and utilitarian allegory. Since the pageant also has its play-within-a play two times during the program, the actors on stage become the first audience while the off-stage audience is watching both. In this sense, the novel's reader is situated as an audience external to both pageant audiences. Accordingly, our reading the play's meaning and its interpretation is mediated through these multi-layered narratives. Like Isa's poetic response to the newspaper article shows multi-layered acts of reception.

In terms of emphasizing the pageant as an interactive art, Woolf makes clear the complication of being the audience in that it is given as a communal demand to the characters. They are asked to take an active role in beholding the stage while remaining seated ("We remain seated"—"We are the audience" (41)). Being an audience compels an interpersonal relation in that they are responsible for "being present and listening, of attending to the story of another" (Eberly 212). The characters feel "the intolerable burden of sitting silent, doing nothing, in company," and the narrative voice reflects this anxiety by changing the pronoun "we": "Their minds and bodies were too close, yet not close enough. We aren't free, each one of them felt separately, to feel or think separately, nor yet to fall asleep" (45). This anxiety summarizes the major conflict throughout the novel, that characters oscillate between a desire for unity and a propensity for multiple subjectivity. This conflict is also applied to the director, La Trobe, in a more paradoxical way. Her ultimate goal is to "make them see" a vision of a unity, as she claims that "A vision imparted was relief from agony." Nonetheless, she confronts the fact that a sense of unity is ephemeral in that she holds them together, but

"[E]very moment the audience slipped the noose; split up into scraps and fragments" (84). Although she longs for freedom from the audience's influence, wishing "to write a play without an audience," she admits that "I am the slave of my audience," that she is the first audience of those behind the stage, "feeling everything they felt." As the words of the pageant are released out of her control, so are the villagers who are later transformed to "the voices" that anonymously fill the pages. In brief, Woolf pictures the relation between La Trobe and the audience as not one-directional, showing that La Trobe is also influenced by the audience.

Woolf characterizes La Trobe as a complicated artist figure, first certainly as having a dictatorial disposition. La Trobe's desire to control the emotion of the audience recalls fascist rhetoric of the period, which sought to regulate people's minds though various means, including art and media technologies. Significantly, her using the gramophone has been compared to the wireless radio Hitler used as a tool of manifestation, which was "traveling through the air and thus made manifest to the senses an *unseen* world" (Pridmore-Brown 411; my emphasis).[53] When the pageant audiences hear the tune on the gramophone, "The King is in his counting house/ Counting out his money, /The Queen is in her parlour /Eating bread and honey," they "sink down peacefully into the nursery rhyme"; these scenes explicitly address their manipulation by authoritarian messaging and show how it "contributed to creating a unified national

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[53] Pridmore-Brown analyzes how radio as a technical realization was deployed during this time to penetrate domestic space and regulate the masses' emotions and body movements.

experience" (Pridmore-Brown 411). Among the audience, Isa recognizes that the gramophone's orchestration of people's emotion occludes individual voices, contemplating, "But none speaks with a single voice. None with a voice free from the old vibrations. Always I hear corrupt murmurs; the chink of gold and metal. Mad music. . . ." (106). It echoes what Woolf criticizes as the "derisive mimicry" of the history of male dominion and capitalist greed (Roseldfeld 122), "the old tune which human nature, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is now grinding out with such *disastrous unanimity*" in *Three Guineas* (59; my emphasis). Through La Trobe's character, Woolf criticizes dictatorial aesthetics and the sense of unity they manipulate, signaling the danger of intersubjectivity when art does not admit individual voices. Furthermore, Woolf self-consciously ponders on the possibly totalitarian nature of communication in art and the resemblance between a dictator and an artist. She may have very likely thought that the relation between a charismatic pageant master and audience can be applied to the relation between the author (Woolf herself) and the reader.

Still, La Trobe's gramophone functions in a contradictory way as it repeatedly draws the audience's attention to itself. By increasing the noise in the channel, La Trobe lets the audience confront the medium itself. Although hidden in the bush, the gramophone's materiality is acknowledged by everyone through its ticking sound. The machine's ticking functions differently from how the tunes it plays do; its emptiness reminds listeners of the time passing, in other words, of the reality that binds and nerves them together, adulterating "the imperialism of perfect communication" (Pridmore-

Brown 411) that liquidates individual analysis. Exposing its noise, La Trobe's gramophone reveals that the moment of unity through the gramophone is a fabricated one. Her manipulation of the gramophone is certainly intentional; it proves Woolf's and La Trobe's collaboration on the deconstructive force of the pageant as it goes further.

La Trope's pageant re-creates the narrative of English history and reminds the audience what constitutes the identity of "we" who belong to Britain's history of colonial expansion. Unlike the typical Parkerian drama that concentrates on the glorious pages of English history up to the Restoration age, La Trobe's pageant expands to the Victorian era and the present. This irritates one of the villagers, Colonel Mayhew, who expects "a Grand Ensemble, round the Union, to the end with" (107) and complains, "Why leave out the British Army?" of which he was a part. The immediate past reflected in this scene awakens the audience to the imperial past in which their parents' generation and they have participated. In the Victorian scene, a Victorian constable (Budge) appears, presenting himself as "a guardian" of the rules of the Victorian regime and exhorting words of command while waving a constable's baton: "Prosperity and respectability always go, as we know, 'and in 'and" (111).[54] Budge's orders explicitly convey the imperialist politics that have excluded and exploited marginalized people: "… the Minories. Let 'em sweat at the mines; cough at the looms; rightly endure their lot. That's the price of Empire" (111). This exposure without glorification of British

[54] Budge's waving his truncheon recalls an image of dictatorship, what Woolf recorded as "mad voice vociferating" and "the cheering ruled with a stick" when she heard Hitler's Nuremberg speeches broadcast by the BBC (quoted in Pridmore-Brown 411).

imperialism disturbs some members of the audience. For instance, a villager, Etty Springett, recalls the victims under the expansion of Empire ("Yet, children did draw trucks in mines"), but she avoids confronting and struggling with that recognition and instead passively wishes that "they would hurry on with the next scene" (112). In contrast, Mrs. Lynn Jones continues to contemplate what might be wrong in her family's past even after the scene is over. The pageant encourages the audience to reflect the discrepancy between the mythic construct of the nation as an imagined community and the actual experience of the past, thus questioning the composition of "we" and considering those marginalized by England's grand narrative.

The last scene of the pageant attempts to deconstruct the illusion of British civilization that the previous stages represented. While the previous stages that reinvent the past betray themselves as possibly the Said, the last stage experiments to show "The Present Time. Ourselves." Woolf turns the Said of the Parkerian pageant into a Saying through this particular scene while experimenting with an ongoing temporality. All sorts of glass pieces suddenly show up and mirror each audience member in parts, while the actors from the previous stages "declaimed some phrase or fragment from their parts" (125); this fragmented form of representation figuratively mirrors the audiences' fragmented state of being, "neither one thing nor the other; neither Victorians nor themselves. They were suspended, without being, in limbo" (121). The distinctions between on-stage and off-stage, the actors and the audiences, are blurred and inverted: as in a mirror's reflection occurs the inversion of the subject-object relation. The audiences are resistant to this inversion, to the idea of knowing about the self and representing the

reality of the moment. Still, the play's changing its object of representation to the audiences "themselves" awakens them to their involvement in both their national history and the act of representation. The actual mirrors here signify not just a picture of reality, but metaphorically a moment for them to stop and contemplate who they are. In addition, the stage's reflecting the present through mirrors is differentiated from what journalism or the realism it professes does. It is contrasted with what Mr. Page the reporter writes down while just looking at the stage setting before the actual scene: "With the very limited means at her disposal, Miss La Trobe conveyed to the audience Civilization (the wall) in ruins; rebuilt (witness man with hod) by human effort; … Any fool could grasp that" (123). This news writing does not reflect what happened; rather, it hastily oversimplifies and distorts the not-yet-come meaning of the stage, thereby exemplifying the Said.

The last stage further deconstructs the words, the medium itself: "(L)et's talk in words of one syllable, without larding, stuffing or cant. Let's break the rhythm and forget the rhyme. And calmly consider ourselves" (127). Accordingly, the last words of the pageant are uttered in a peculiar way; syntax is broken, and context is omitted or cut short. Blurring the barrier between the actors and the audience, the words of an anonymous voice plainly disclose the truth that "They do openly what we do slyly," identifying "ourselves" as liars, thieves, lechers, tyrants, and slaves. Like the pieces of mirrors that reflect the audiences in parts, the broken words at the end of the pageant symbolically show a narrative moment where "the great wall" of English civilization is dispersed, as it is compared to the reality of the audience's being "orts, scraps, and

fragments." Paradoxically, from this deconstruction and the broken reflection of them, a possible unity emerges that allows multiple subjects to go forward "on different levels."

> Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united. The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was born in opposition; then another. On different levels they diverged. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some on the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all comprehending; all enlisted. The whole population of the mind's immeasurable profundity came flocking; …. Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united. (128)

In this paragraph, sentence structures are distinct by the inversion of subjects and abbreviated syntax connected with commas or semicolons; such an arrangement of words contributes to a faster rhythm and describes what happens invisibly at this narrative moment: "the mind's immeasurable profundity" is particularized but at once "came flocking." The subject of each sentence changes between "filings," "they," and "ourselves," suggesting a community in which individuals exist unbound but united at the same time. It is noteworthy that the narrative voice is omniscient, but its authority is diverted as its perspective shifts between characters without weighting any one character. While this sort of free indirect discourse is used throughout Woolf's novel, the narrative perspective in *Between the Acts* becomes more decentered and freed from one voice. The narrative voice becomes a random one of multiple subjects' blurring the

boundary between I and You, rather becoming a "we" who are interconnected. It reflects Woolf's resistance against the insistent perspective of the pronoun "I" that she criticizes as "the shadow of the authoritarian proclaiming his will" that in the 1930s was squelching other voices and other perspectives (Rosenfeld 122).[55] It also supports Woolf's experiment in narration against the tendency of Georgian novels in which omniscient narrators dominate the text as a centered authority, producing a singular voice. Returning to the passage, "A force was born in opposition" signifies a new form of unity possible only after dismantling the totalitarian ideals of "we." It resembles "a far more coherent unity in which all the visual values are mysteriously changed" (Fry 21), a unity that Roger Fry sees in Henri Matisse's work.[56]

The Saying of the last scene is disturbed when the Reverend Streetfield, who performed the role of conveying the final words, reveals himself and tries to interpret its message as one of audience. "Scraps, orts, and fragments! Surely, we should unite?" (131). Streetfield's interpretation confines the pageant's meaning and becomes meaningless, which "excruciate[s]" La Trobe. It is an explicit intervention that reduces

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[55] In *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf writes: "but after reading a chapter or two a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter 'I.' One began dodging this way and that to catch a glimpse of the landscape behind it. Whether that was indeed a tree or a woman walking I was not quite sure. Back one was always hailed to the letter 'I." (99-100)

[56] Roger Fry describes the art of Henri Matisse: "our familiar every day world… has been broken to pieces as though reflected in a broken mirror and then put together again into a far more coherent unity in which all the visual values are mysteriously changed" (Fry 21; quoted in Cuddy-Keane 209).

the ongoing significance of the play to the Said, as his speech has certain purposes, to raise funds for "the illumination of our dear old church." Here, Woolf situates Mr. Streetfield's plea to collect funds as continuously disturbed by the impending war, making his words cut and unheard by noises from nature and significantly from a set of military aircraft: "The words are cut in two. A zoom severed it. Twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck came overhead. *That* was the music" (131; original emphasis). The appearance of the clergyman who is a spokesman for the Church of England is not welcomed and instead regarded by the audience as "an intolerable constriction, contraction, and reduction to simplified absurdity" (129). In this moment, words are rejected as not only useless but villainous to address the "we": "O Lord, protect and preserve us from words the defilers, from words the impure! What need have we of words to remind us?" (129). The audience's mind in collectivity resists the Said, which the clergyman designates as the realm of any political or religious purpose.

Without a moment to conclude the pageant, either by the director's speech or the audience's thanking her for the entertainment (since La Trobe is hidden), both the actors and the audience reluctantly begin to disperse. Yet, inasmuch as there is no clear end to the pageant, the audience members continue discussing and contemplating what the meaning of the pageant is and what being "ourselves" means. "Still the play hung in the sky of the mind" (144), but differently in each character's mind.

Words Without Meaning: Woolf's New Vision of Language

Before the last stage, where the illusion of unity is betrayed as a failure, there is a sudden interruption of nature, which takes up its burden. The yearning voices of cows, one of whom "had lost her calf," "annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and continued the emotion" (96). This sound from nature contrasts with the fabricated nature of the emotion La Trobe's gramophone regulates. The echo of the herd's crying together stirs a sense of unity and is different from the way in which the gramophone artificially injects people's minds with Great Britain's cultural references. A sudden shower later unites the audience again: the rain embodies "totality momentarily evoked as language" (Beer 134) and symbolizes "all people's tears, weeping for all people" (BA 122). The shower "sudden and universal" (BA 123) reveals longing for the end of agony and redemption of human beings. These brief moments of salvation can be read in a Levinasian sense, that (inter)subjectivity becomes meaningful when the villagers hear the echo of the cattle cry together, when their lamenting loss and grief summon them to accompany the Other in their mortal solitude. Woolf creates her own way of presenting the moment of Saying through literal enactment. This is also the very moment when a community becomes possible as the villagers acknowledge that their subjectivity is affirmed by the presence of the other and confront their lost and fragmented state.

Although La Trobe is a veiled character toward the end, being separated (or separating herself) from the audience, there exists a moment when the artist and the audience face and understand each other; unlike others who regard La Trobe as someone they can "put the blame on" for the pageant's failure, Swithin visits La Trobe in the

bushes and thanks her for "ignoring the conventions" (104). Though it is added by the narrator's voice that "they failed" as Lucy Swithin's naïve vision of unifying cannot match with La Trobe's, "their eyes met in a common effort to bring a common meaning to birth." Their encounter suggests a possibility of a more opened community of "we" as Lucy embraces La Trobe who has been ignored as an "outcast," "not pure English," and a homosexual.[57]

Despite painfully admitting the failure of the pageant, La Trobe does not end up exiling herself but makes herself ready to write again among people, and finally listens as "words rose above the intolerably laden dumb oxen plodding through the mud. Words without meaning—wonderful words" (144). Back to the essay where Woolf considers the suggestiveness of old language, La Trobe's epiphanic moment to envision "words without meaning" opens up a new possibility to invent and use words as a medium of representation. The vision enables the meaning of words to emerge from the material instantaneously (mud is often mentioned throughout the novel, symbolizing genesis) as opposed to words controlled and confined by any form of usefulness. In a sense, La Trobe's solitary work of writing plays recalls Isa's uncle who was a clergyman and "never did anything; didn't even preach; but made up poems, walking in his garden, saying them aloud" (35) in a period of war and madness. This hermit life of Isa's poet

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[57] Drawing on the possibility that the characterization of Miss La Trobe is in some ways influenced by the existence of Parker, Yoshino suggests that Parker's foreign name and unusual background—he was born in France to an American father and English mother and wandered Europe in his childhood—seem to have created an image of the pageant master as a socially alienated figure (57).

uncle points to the uselessness of art, however extremely, but its creating beauty without an end suggests the ethics of aesthetics that Woolf ponders in her last phase of life. In brief, Woolf intends the failure of words and narrative as an ethical gesture to envision a new dimension of community, while resisting the lure and danger of dictatorial aesthetics. At the end of the novel when Isa and Giles become the new Adam and Eve in Woolf's possible rewriting of Genesis, the last sentence "They spoke" (149) implies her vision of new phase of civilization and language. Woolf's vision of "words without meaning" which strives for overcoming the saturated Said within language as a medium, implies an opening toward the Levinasian Saying over the Said.

CHAPTER IV

″A STORY UNABLE TO BE TOLD”: THE ETHICAL FAILURE OF SUSAN’S CONFESSION IN COETZEE’S FOETITLE OF FOURTH CHAPTER

> Stories are defined by their irresponsibility: they are, in the judgment of Swift’s Houynhnhms, “that which is not.” The *feel* of writing fiction is one of freedom, of irresponsibility, or better, of responsibility toward something that has not yet emerged, that lies somewhere at the end of the road.
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> - Coetzee, *Doubling the Points*

In an interview with David Attwell, J. M. Coetzee expresses the “*feel*” of fiction writing as that of “irresponsibility,” which suggests a freedom of authorship to invent the fictive, “that which is not” (*Doubling* 246, original emphasis). It is noteworthy that Coetzee discusses the power of authorship with respect to the notion of (ir)responsibility, which implies an ethical attitude toward someone or something; he states that the better side of authorship is being responsible to imagine something that has not yet come, the unimaginable. This “responsibility” epitomizes Coetzee’s acute sense of dilemma as a writer, caught between pursuing a form of truth-telling in narrative that purports to be confessional and facing the inherent falsity of fiction-writing.

In this chapter, I attempt to read Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986), which has been regarded as the most postmodern of his works, through Levinas’s ethics of responsibility. In Levinas’s ethics as first philosophy, a subject is claimed by an other beyond comprehension and responsibility, for the other preexists any self-consciousness. Levinas starts by critiquing Heideggerian ontology, which for him epitomizes Western

thought: in *Totality and Infinity*, he writes, "Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being" (43). Levinas contends that, in Heideggerian ontology, the relation with the other is accomplished only through a third term such as "truth" or "universality," which comprehends the individual as an abstraction. Ontology's assumption that "There is nothing outside me" takes the "I" as its starting point and "promotes freedom" (*TI* 42), because the other that is totally consumed and possessed by the same does not impede the subject (Eaglestone 186). The underscoring of freedom in ontology thus corresponds with the idea of knowledge where the other existent is marked as impersonal being by the same. "Heideggerian ontology affirms the primacy of freedom over ethics" (*TI* 45).

In contrast, Levinas suggests an ethics as a respect for exteriority that critiques this dogmatism and "calls into question" ontology's affirmation of freedom. The moment of facing the other calls into question the same, its egoist spontaneity. Levinas states, "We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics" (*TI* 43). The inability to comprehend and grasp "the strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and possessions" suggests the way in which ethics "accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge" (43); in other words, "ethics critiques knowledge" (Eaglestone 187). In this vein, Robert Eaglestone connects the radical critique of Levinasian ethics to the essential characteristic of postmodernism, claiming that postmodernism—before being an artistic or philosophical movement—is "an ethical response" resisting the idea of "a single pattern" that has generated

totalitarianism and imperialism throughout Western history (183).[58] Eaglestone asserts that Levinas's ethics of the other is essential to fracture the self-centered history of Western thought, while pointing out the inherent condition of postmodernism: that its language still operates within the mechanisms of Western thinking.

I view this "calling into question" as closely connected to Coetzee's critical rewriting of (De)Foe's authorship in *Foe*, which conceals its depriving of the other's voice through the neutralizing terms of Western thought. Levinas's ethics of the other and Coetzee's rewriting of the canon share the essential questions of human subjectivity in relation to the other. Levinas's analysis of ontology as egology and philosophy of power is applicable to the matter of writing as a power relation in fiction. Regarding *Foe*, Coetzee points out that "The nature and process of fiction may also be called the question of who writes? Who takes up the position of power, per in hand?" (quoted in Kossew 161). What Coetzee does in *Foe* is to critique the nature of fiction writing, which assumes that knowing and representing the Other are possible. *Foe* is a story in which the female narrator Susan Barton—who does not exist in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*—confronts the impossibility of representing the other: Friday's existence calls into question the very possibility of representational narration.[59] I will examine how the

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[58] Borrowing the language of Levinasian ethics, Eaglestone theorizes postmodernism as "*the disruption of the metaphysics of comprehension, which is the gesture that characterizes Western thought. This disruption stems from an encounter with otherness*" (184, emphasis original).

[59] Laura Wright, in her article "Displacing the Voice: South African Feminism and J. M. Coetzee's Female Narrators," points out that Coetzee adopts the voices of female narrators in many of his novels; one reason for his identifying with the feminine emerges

ethical dilemma Susan Barton confronts in her relation to Friday epitomizes *the phenomenology of the other* that Levinas attempts to theorize.

In a sense, both Levinas's ethics and Coetzee's *Foe* received similar criticism in their respective fields: that they elude their specific, contemporary history. Regarding Levinas's ethics, Drabinsky, in his book *Decolonizing Levinasian Ethics*, criticizes Levinas's concept of Europe as center as having no concern for locality, for example, not addressing postcolonial movements in Algeria. However, Levinas's ethics seeks not to avoid discussing socio-political injustice rampant in reality, but rather to emphasize that one's responsibility to the other is asked unconditionally, even before Being: ethics precedes politics. Levinas's refuting of Heideggerian ontology implies radical resistance to its imperialist domination that subordinates every relation with existents to the relation with Being. Levinas clearly problematizes slavery as the dominance of the neutral and the impersonal. On the other hand, his criticism of imperialism as "totalizer" applies not only to universal circumstances but also to specific historical moments. Levinas's "On Hitlerism," for instance, problematizes how the rational foundation of Nazism used the binary of Hegelian logic in its premise of anti-Semitism.

In a similar vein, Coetzee' *Foe* was criticized on its release as being politically irrelevant to the apartheid situation of the country. Particularly, the reception was divided regarding the novel's postmodern form, within which Coetzee rewrites the white canon from a postcolonial perspective. Among the critics dissatisfied with the novel's

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in how "Coetzee's politics seem to be aligned with those of his female characters" (15).

literary allusiveness, Benita Parry expresses her discomfort that "the social authority on which the rhetoric relies and which it exerts is grounded in the cognitive systems of the West" (150), thus "sustaining the West as the culture of reference" (151). In this line of thought, Parry criticized Homi Bhaba, Mohammed, and Gayatri Spivak for "being so enamored of deconstruction that they will not let the native speak" (quoted in Spivak 16). Spivak opposes this idea, saying that Parry "has forgotten that we are natives too" (16) who communicate through the language of imperialism. Spivak further claims a subaltern agency, saying that "the native is not only a victim, but also an agent. He or she is the curious guardian at the margin" (172). Likewise, many scholars have critically reacted to the representation of Friday, the colonial other of the novel, "the subaltern," in Spivak's words. Since Friday is always objectified by Susan as silenced and mutilated, his body is described as a sign saturated with the colonial narrative, which has disturbed critics.

Nevertheless, Coetzee's silencing of Friday, rendering him literally unable to speak reveals the impossible narration with a careful intention. I argue that Coetzee respoonds to the question "Can the Subaltern Speak?"; he is speculating on this impossibility in the long tradition of Western literature, particularly by reworking Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which has been characterized both as the origin of the English novel and as embodying the great myth of Western imperialism. Among the many reworkings of *Robinson Crusoe* (which are usually called Robinsonade[60]), Coetzee's

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[60] In "Anti-Crusoes, Alternative Crusoes: Revisions of the Island Story in the Twentieth Century," Fallon introduces and traces the history of numerous revisions of Robinson

Foe emerges as radical for questioning the authorship and authority of the canon, underscoring the association between the origins of the English novel and those of colonialism. Coetzee's speculating on the interrelation between the novel genre and colonial expansion also has political implications for "a pointed historical correspondence" between Western colonization and his country of South Africa. It is historically significant that, when *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719, it was also "the era of early Dutch settlement in South Africa, the Dutch East India Company having established a settlement at Cape Town in 1652" (Head 62). South Africa underwent the colonial situation of Apartheid, systematic racial segregation, until the early 1990s, so Coetzee's rewriting of Defoe's work has its weight in addressing the issue of ongoing colonization in his country, especially since it was published after Coetzee had received global attention for *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The Levinasian questioning I read in *Foe* not only contains metaphysical questions about being and the other but also suggests politically radical thinking, which can justify its postcolonial critiques.

In terms of rewriting Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, while Defoe's method was to conceal artifice and appeal to verisimilitude, projecting the novel as an autobiographical account written by Crusoe himself, Coetzee's *Foe* demystifies both the myth of Crusoe

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Crusoe up to the twentieth century, through which they became a genre, the *Robinsonade*. Fallon divides these works into two categories: one that rewrites Defoe's novel within an eighteenth-century context and the other that recreates the Crusoe character in a contemporary scene. Fallon pays attention to Coetzee's *Foe* as among the first category, particularly in its depriving Crusoe of his mythical characterization while focusing more on the text itself (210).

as a figure of masculine colonial endeavor and the premise of realism that assures a truthful account of self and the other. Coetzee's device here is to introduce Susan Barton, whose unstable status oscillates between a marginalized woman and a white colonizer, as an intermediary to Cruso's story. Her narration, which starts as a letter to Foe, is gradually transformed into a confessional narrative while revealing its metatextual artificiality. Woven around the existing plot of *Robinson Crusoe*, Part One conveys Susan's castaway story on Cruso's island until its ending reveals that the recipient "you" she addresses is the prominent author Foe. Part Two presents Susan in London with Friday alone after Cruso died on the voyage back to England. It is framed as Susan's letters to Foe in which she begs him to make her stories into a fiction, with the exact dates on top; however, they later turn into a sort of confession as being neither read nor responded to by Foe. Part Three, now with no more quotation marks, delivers Susan's conversation with Foe, their disputing over the ownership of the stories while she records the conversation only for herself. Susan's voice disappears in the last short coda where an anonymous "I" narrates two fantastical visions of visiting Foe's writing space and the shipwreck from the island where words are diffused and only "bodies are their signs. It is the home of Friday" (157).

Considering its emphasis on Susan's failure of narration, *Foe*'s postmodern textuality needs to be understood as the genre of confession Coetzee discusses in his essay "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky" (1985). Connecting the traditions of novel and confessional narrative, Coetzee clearly refers to Defoe as a pioneer of fictional confession: "[A]s for fictional confession, this mode is

already practiced by Defoe in the made-up confessions of sinners like Moll Flanders and Roxana; by our time, confessional fictions have come to constitute a subgenre of the novel in which problems of truth-telling and self-recognition, deception and self-deception, come to the forefront" (*Doubling the Point* 252).[61] Here, Coetzee emphasizes the self-reflectiveness of confession that cycles the movement of doubting and questioning (252), which leads to a "regression to infinity of self-awareness and self-doubt" (274). This "lack of finality" with regard to truth telling is closely connected to the central question of *Foe*: how to bring closure to the narrative.

As confession relates to the matter of truth telling, its paradox of both inevitability and impossibility to attain an absolution can be compared to the characteristics of postmodernism, in brief, its skepticism of certainties and truths. For confession in a traditional sense, absolution is an inevitable process even though it is not completely achieved; in other words, it presupposes an absolute, a truth to reach for, though the meaning is always yet-to-come. In this sense, self-reflexivity in confessional narrative is differentiated from postmodern reflexivity, which claims that no order or

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[61] In his influential work, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, George Starr demonstrates Defoe's indebtedness to the tradition of spiritual autobiography, which was widespread in the Seventeenth century. Starr argues that the ideal of the form as the literary merits comes from a balance between the narrative of events and the statement of their "spiritualization." Starr argues that the "coherence of design" in the episodic literary structure is supported by a central experience of conversion, "particular mercies," that "a law of spiritual autobiographies that the greater the attention paid to events before conversion, the less emphasis given to what happens afterwards, and vice versa" (46). Starr assesses that, while the formal balance achieved its height in *Robinson Crusoe*, the realistic details of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* reduce the effectiveness of the confessional form, which render them less effective as works of art.

meaning is absolute but rather exists as our own creation (Hutcheon 43); thus postmodern texts self-reflexively regard their own textuality. In *Foe*, the paradoxical drive of the confessional narrative toward absolution collides with the impasse of postmodern textuality. This conflict also corresponds with Susan's acknowledging of the fissure in her narrative: on the one hand, the problem of the self's residence within language is highly visible in confession (*Doubling* 245); on the other hand, given the perspective of Levinasian ethics, language is ultimately the only way to relate with the other ethically. The contradictory nature of language causes Susan's narrative to deconstruct as it turns from narration to confession.

The Unknowability of Friday

In *Foe*, the Western subjects Cruso, Susan, and Foe imagine Friday as a barbaric other through neutralizing terms while reducing the other to the relation with Being, that is, their knowing in estern thought. "Truth," "Providence," and "slavery" are the exact neutralizing terms they use to comprehend Friday within their knowing process. In the early pages of Part One, Susan asks Cruso, "Was Providence sleeping?" (23), quickly showing her sympathy to Friday's undergoing several hardships, but Cruso mockingly answers: "If Providence were to watch over all of us, […] who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane? For the business of the world to prosper, Providence must sometimes wake and sometimes sleep, as lower creatures do" (23). Cruso's sinister way of mystifying Friday's suffering, which justifies slavery in the Western point of view by appropriating the meaning of Providence for his logic, magnifies the egotistical attitude

of Western thought's attempt to narrate the unknowable other.

Susan's narration uses othering language in her attempts to represent Friday as the absolute other whom she can never communicate with nor comprehend. From the first page, Susan describes him who first discovers her being castaway as "a dark shadow," "black," "a Negro," and finally, a possible cannibal. It is clearly shown that she represents Friday from the beginning within the frame of Western knowledge as a negro-cannibal-savage, a frame she has acquired from castaway stories or travel writings that represent the racial other as primitive. Nonetheless, the truth regarding Friday is inevitably exposed at times, which contradicts her description of him. Importantly, without language, Friday responds to her suffering (her heel hurt by a long thorn) by giving his back to help her move: "The Negro offered me his back, indicating he would carry me. I hesitated to accept, for he was a slight fellow, shorter than I. … my fear of him abating in this strange backwards embrace" (6). This hints that he does not seem threatening to her at their first encounter in a desperate situation when she needs his help to be saved.

Somehow, in a Levinasian sense, Friday is the one character in the novel who practices being responsible to alterity whose suffering threatens the self; he follows the command "you shall not commit murder" (*TI* 199). In contrast, Susan experienced the cruelty of mutineers who "slew heartlessly" (10) the captain and threw her in a boat with the captain's corpse, after which she concludes, "The heart of man is a dark forest" (11). This scene is also the only moment where we can see Friday's own willed response to Susan, whereas he is unresponsive (or described as unresponsive to her) through the rest

of the novel. The narrative about the scene is, however, cut short by the next paragraph where she seems to orient the reader's attention (Foe's, as we find out later) to the types of island stories she attempts to imitate: "For readers reared on travellers' tales, the words *desert isle* may conjure up a place…" (7). Such an abrupt gesture of redirecting her story while evading what she faces regarding the other occurs repeatedly.

Significantly, Susan's relation with Friday's alterity is differentiated from the way in which Cruso relates to Friday, and this is a crucial point of Coetzee's rewriting that refutes Defoe's representation of the other.

> But to return to my new companion. I was greatly delighted with him, and made it my business to teach him everything that was proper to make him useful, handy, and helpful; but especially to make him speak, and understand me when I spoke; and he was the aptest scholar there ever was. (*Robinson Crusoe* Ch XIV)

Considering the context that Crusoe colonizes Friday in Defoe's novel, Friday's ability to speak and communicate is regarded as the most successful result he attains from this enlightenment project. In other words, Friday's ability to speak is thoroughly instrumentalized to make him a subordinated companion to Crusoe. While there are moments when Friday is described as a charming, humanized other[62], his character

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[62] In his essay "Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe," Coetzee's reads Defoe's Friday as an exception among other native peoples of the new lands, claiming that "Defoe chooses to represent them … as cannibals," thus "savage" (21), while Friday by contrast "becomes inseparable from Crusoe, in more than one sense his shadow" like Sancho Panza to

functions to show how Crusoe successfully enlightens him, reducing alterity into the same based on Western knowledge. In *Foe,* Coetzee re-creates Cruso as "emblematic of exhausted imperialism" (Head 63) while maintaining a minimal life of survival for Friday. Among many things that discourage Susan's expectations, Cruso's salient characteristic is his indifference to language. Cruso teaches Friday words, "as many as he [Friday] needs" (21), but in actuality, this is as few as he himself needs in order to extract Friday's labor, and this bothers Susan. Her claim recalls what Defoe's Crusoe would conclude regarding his relationship with Friday: Susan asserts the need to teach Friday English, "the pleasures of conversation," which she values as "the blessings of civilization" and what can "[make] him a better man." Nonetheless, Cruso gives no response to the matter, "as if language were one of the banes of life, like money or the pox" (22). While language is the only way in which a being can relate with the other outside of the self, Cruso's taciturnity is closely connected to his having no desire to tell stories, to give accounts of his relationship with others: he neither wants to hear about Susan's history nor seeks to know the truth of Friday's mutilation. In addition, his rambling about his past and Friday's past does not provide a solid ground of truth ("he no longer knew for sure what was truth, what fancy. … So in the end I did not know what was truth, what was lies, and what was mere rambling" [12]. Cruso asks, "How will we ever know the truth?" [23]), as if mocking the verisimilitude of realism that

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Quixote. He further claims that Friday's character has its uniqueness while "his self-evident goodness of heart" prompts Crusoe to reflect on the usefulness of Christian doctrine, its rationale of offering salvation to the New World.

Defoe's original novel centered.

Unlike Cruso, Susan is eager to penetrate the mystery of Friday which can never be verbalized. Susan's way of comprehending Friday, which is through her storytelling, however, reduces him to what her knowledge allows. During the first half of the novel, her narration (to Foe) tends to remain in ontological relation with Friday, a relation Levinas describes as erasing the other: "the relation with Being that is enacted as ontology consists in neutralizing the existent in order to comprehend or grasp it" (*TI* 46). While Friday's mutilation is the first mystery she conceives, the next mystery emerges as she happens to observe his ritual of scattering petals on the surface of a river. Tracing his unexpected behavior, she endeavors to interpret his inconceivability by reducing it to a primitive, "superstitious observance" ("Curious to find… I waited…Then I searched… So I concluded he had been making an offering to the god of the waves to cause the fish to run plentifully, or performing some other such superstitious observance" [31]). Nonetheless, her struggle to subordinate him under her ontological knowledge fails; she finds that her racialized assumption never illuminates the unknowability of Friday. She abruptly "concludes" his indescribability within her own conceptualizing terms, ascribing to him a sort of interiority: "This casting of petals was the first sign I had that a spirit or soul—call it what you will—stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior" (32).

The Retelling of *Robinson Crusoe*: The Incompetent Narrative of Fascination

Coetzee shows that Susan's castaway story readily adopts the rhetoric of fascination popularized in colonial fiction. Yet, that fascination, which drives her

fabrication, also confabulates the truth of the colonial situation. It is evident that Susan's gaze toward Friday presents an enduring fascination with the colonized other, which is vexed by a tension between attraction and abomination. The unknowability of Friday's mutilation, which she continuously calls a mystery, is what fascinates her, and it can be said that this fascination drives her narrative, emphasizing her futile attempt to know the truth.

> Hitherto I had found Friday a shadowy creature and paid him little more attention than I would have given any house-slave in Brazil. But now I began to look on him - I could not help myself - with the horror we reserve for the mutilated. It was no comfort that his mutilation was secret, closed behind his lips (as some other mutilations are hidden by clothing), that outwardly he was like any Negro. Indeed, it was the very secretness of his loss that caused me to shrink from him. I could not speak, while he was about, without being aware how lively were the movements of the tongue in my own mouth. I saw pictures in my mind of pincers gripping his tongue and a knife slicing into it, as must have happened, and I shuddered. I covertly observed him as he ate, and with distaste heard the tiny coughs he gave now and then to clear his throat, saw how he did his chewing between his front teeth, like a fish. ... I was ashamed to behave thus, but for a time was not mistress of my own actions. Sorely I regretted that Cruso had ever told me the story. (24)

Here, Susan writes that it is Friday's mysterious mutilation that individuates him and draws her previously distracted attention to him. She describes her contradictory

reaction: she cannot take her eyes off him despite feeling repulsion. Fascination works in various ways in this passage. Narratively, she articulates that "the very secretness of his mutilation" makes her recoil in horror, while she vividly imagines the procedure in her mind, employing all kinds of senses such as sight, sound, and smell. This apperception molds what she perceives into a fantasy constructed from her existing beliefs about the colonial Other. Such fascination, interfused with disgust and attraction, typifies what Sibylle Baumbach conceptualizes as the fascination particularly of the encounter with the other in (post)colonial contexts.[63] According to Baumbach, some of the most compelling fascination "occurs with the forbidden, with images or events that are and should remain concealed" (3), and this irresistible but simultaneously disturbing appeal "surfaces in the fascination with the Other, the abject and the unknown" (5), specifically in a colonial encounter. Hearing that Friday's tongue was mutilated ("This is a terrible story!" [23]) but not knowing the specifics of the situation, stimulates Susan's imagination, producing this fantasy of the forbidden spectacle of atrocity; her fascination accelerates her narration, reinforcing her ideas of "primitive" abomination and feeding on her "fears of degeneration" (Baumbach 219), which is opposite to ethically contemplating Friday's inconceivable pain. Rather, she ends the passage by expressing her fascination with the desire to penetrate his secret and her dissatisfaction that his

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[63] In *Literature and Fascination*, Sibylle Baumbach conceptualizes the literary term *fascination* through the concept of medusamorphosis. According to her, fascination evokes "our innate, hidden, subversive and potentially devious desires"; it is repressed by social norms but "surfaces when we are confronted with images or practices of transgression that challenge ethical codes, aesthetic conventions or cultural norms" (3).

experience cannot be fully appropriated by her knowledge.

In this passage, Coetzee shows us that Susan's dread and fascination, rather than Friday's actual appearance, compel her narration, which is purely imaginary. The ways in which she describes her mixed fascination in his presence are combined with racist ideologies and cultural anxieties of degeneration, thereby constructing Friday as a primitive other. Moreover, amplifying fears of degeneration, Susan again associates the mystery of Friday's mutilation with cannibalism. As Baumbach points out, cannibalism was often imposed as a key anxiety in imperialist fantasies, associated with notions of regression (209-210). Discussing the role of the (returned) gaze in colonial representation, Baumbach introduces a counter example, *The Raft of the Medusa*, a painting (1819) by the French Romantic artist Théodore Géricault, which was a sensation then both aesthetically and politically. *The Raft of the Medusa* depicts the aftermath of the shipwreck of the French Royal Navy frigate, whose name *Medusa* recalls the luring monster in Greek mythology, that set sail to colonize Senegal in 1816. The disaster of the shipwreck, with over 150 soldiers on a raft but decimated by starvation, descended into brutal murder and cannibalism. The macabre realism of Gericault's painting, despite mixed reactions from critics, fascinated and drew 40,000 people to its London exhibition. As Baumbach comments, "While cannibalism had previously been associated with savage cultures, Gericault's painting brought it 'home,' right into the heart of the Empire" (210); the artwork represents a counter-image of the West as civilization opposed to the primitive, symbolizing how "the colonial stares back."

Thinking back to Coetzee's novel, Susan's cannibal fantasy regarding Friday contradicts her own experience of the callous mutiny in the ship on its way to Lisbon before coming to Cruso's island. Her shipwreck resembles the gruesome incident of the *Medusa* in terms of committing acts of cruelty on other human beings in an extreme situation. Thus Susan's connecting of Friday's mutilation to cannibalism seems arbitrary, but by associating the brutal case with the primitive, she builds on her own assumptions of "primitive" regression. In that process, she fabricates fears of degeneration regarding Friday's tonguelessness while obsessively emphasizing speaking ability as a guarantor of humanity.

The Impossibility of Susan's Narration

In the recursive structure of Coetzee's novel, Part Two begins with Susan's recognition of the failure of her narration in Part One. Here, she comes to confess the impossibility of telling another's story. While Susan claims that she is Cruso's only executrix ("it is I who have disposal of all that Cruso leaves behind, which is the story of this island" [45]), she also begins to question her legitimacy in writing Cruso's story. "Who but Cruso, who is no more, could truly tell you Cruso's story? I should have said less about him, more about myself" (51). To put it another way, she confesses the innate falsity of her telling of his story, when it is in so many ways unknown to her. It is only her own story that she can know and truly tell, yet hers is a story she feels unsafe in telling. Structured as a letter to Foe, to which he does not respond, Part Two makes visible both the confessional form and the role of the other as reader or audience in

narrative as a relation. The failure of narrative is made evident in Foe's lack of response.

The impossibility of narration is evident in Part Two on another level as well: Susan finds it impossible to tell her own story because of the gender conventions of her moment in history and in society. As a woman who lived alone abroad and unwed with other men on an island, she is conscious of her vulnerability to the moral judgement of her community. In emphasizing this vulnerability, Coetzee foregrounds the gendered limitations on narration. When Susan first tells her story to Captain Smith, she is advised to distort her past as if she had been shipwrecked together with Cruso as his wife, a deception that would facilitate her settling in England with her castaway story. The captain's warning—"If the story of Bahia and the mutineers got about, he said, it would not easily be understood what kind of woman I was" (42)—implies that her adventure story would threaten her reputation in English society, whereas a wife's position would guarantee her affinity in London. It also suggests in reverse that her marginalized standing as an unwed woman (a trans-textual borrowing from Defoe's *Roxanna* that I will discuss later) disadvantages her storytelling. Considering this vicious circle, Susan might have an excuse for not telling her story enough up front. It is certain that she strives to build a relation with white males, Cruso and Foe specifically, by copulating with them, in order to obtain the right to tell the island story.

As such, Susan's reluctance to tell her story can be understood most clearly in relation to its trans-textual borrowing from Defoe's *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724). Coetzee's *Foe* not only makes trans-textual reference to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, but also borrows and adapts plot elements from Defoe's confessional narrative

Roxana: Roxana's first-person, confessional narrative sets the precedent for the generic form of Coetzee's novel.[64] Susan Barton's name is taken from Roxana's original name, and her story also borrows from that of her eighteenth-century namesake. Besides his explicit references to the original text, such as the reappearance of Roxana's namesake daughter Susan, Coetzee stages *Foe* as if it were not only a revision of *Robinson Crusoe*, but also a sequel to *Roxana*. If we imagine that Coetzee's Susan carries Roxana's doomed fate, Susan Barton's story begins where Defoe's Roxana ends. Susan's wandering in search for her lost daughter, if following Roxana's context, could be read as her punishment or atonement. There exist differences between the character's narration style in each novel. While Roxana tells the series of events but skillfully conceals her guilt, Susan is silent about her own story, which seems related to her inconceivable guilt. Although Susan starts her story by revealing her name, and thus her identity (which Roxana does not until the later part of her account), she does not talk about her past in detail, especially regarding the ill-fated loss of her daughter. Rather, she focuses her narrative on the island story, which may not be as relevant to her life,

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[64] *Roxana* tells the story of a woman whose unfortunate marriage with a conceited husband causes her to relinquish their five children to her husband's family and decide to become a "woman of business" using her sexuality. Roxana's adulterous relationships first with the Jeweller and then with the German prince leave her a sizable fortune, which facilitates her status rising upward from a merchant-class woman to a courtesan in aristocratic circles. When she eventually accepts the proposal of the good Dutch merchant and leaves for Holland to live a new life, however, her eldest daughter reappears and interrupts her. The ending hints at the murder of Roxana's daughter and her own fortunes devastated by the "Blast of Heaven" (326). Due to its troubling and ominous conclusion, which implies Roxana's immorality, the novel was not well received by Defoe's contemporaries.

thereby keeping her past from being disclosed.

The novel's intertextuality has some symbolic implications for both works regarding the issues of truth and deceit in the novel genre. *Roxana* has been assessed as Defoe's "darkest novel," as it tells the tale of a young émigré who rises to immense wealth and notoriety as a courtesan, "only to find that she cannot sever her ties with the past and live a virtuous life" (Mowry 13). Unlike Defoe's other picaresque novels in which a first-person narrator shows a sort of penitence and quest for absolution in their confession, Roxana ends with a sudden and still elusive confession that indicates Roxana's involvement in murdering her own daughter, her namesake Susan.[65] Her confession is resentful: "I was brought so low again, that Repentance seem'd to be only the Consequence of my Misery, as my Misery was of my Crime." Crucially, for Coetzee's project, on the level of narrative, *Roxana*'s first-person narrative vacillates between her apparent claim to be honest, to be "impartial," as if speaking of other people ("I must be excus'd to give it as impartially as possible, and as if I was speaking of another-body" [6]) and her desire to conceal and assuage her guilt.[66] Roxana's

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[65] After the apparent murder of her namesake daughter who threatens her status quo, Roxana ambiguously implies Amy's guilt and her connivance in that crime, "if Amy had not by the Violence of her Passion, and by a Way which I had no Knowledge of and indeed abhorr'd, put a Stop to her; of which I cannot enter into the Particulars here" (325). Such elusive comments on her guilt, however, meet an impasse as her narrative reaches its abrupt ending.

[66] In his essay "Other Bodies: Roxana's Confession of Guilt," Steven Cohan examines the contradictions in Roxana's narrative of guilt-ridden confession. Cohan argues that Roxana's first-person narration is torn between the desire to control the meaning of her actions and the retrospective attitude of confession that gives a deterministic view of her

unreliability as a first-person narrator contradicts her pose as confessional narrator who is expected to tell the truth about her life. Reaching an abrupt ending, Roxana's defensive narration suddenly acknowledges her guilt and the resultant punishment. The tension between confession and subterfuge in this first-person account is crucial to Coetzee's retelling.

In drawing parallels between Roxana and Susan, however, Coetzee shifts focus and emphasis. If Defoe's Roxana secures her survival and then raises her social status through illicit sexual liaisons with men, Coetzee's Susan uses her sexuality for another purpose: to own the right to tell the island's story. If "relating" a tale requires some intimacy or "relationship" with its protagonists, Susan copulates with Cruso as a way of "relating" to and with him. He becomes, through this sexual relation, an intimate subject for her island story. Susan's sexual permissiveness with both Cruso and Foe (and even possibly with Friday), however, does not work as Roxana's sexuality does. Telling her readers of her intimacy with Cruso, Susan cements her right to tell his story. Yet her efforts are compromised: she cannot alter Cruso's own disinterest in recording his castaway memoir, as he says: "Nothing I have forgotten is worth the remembering" (17). And though told in confessional mode, Susan's claim of sexual intimacy is not entirely credible; it is ambiguous whether this intercourse happened. Her confession during a dispute with Foe—"It is no wonder I failed to charm Cruso" (115)—contradicts what she evasively describes as their sexual congress in Part One: "So I resisted no more but let

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guilt based on the moral assumptions of society.

him do as he wished" (30). Coetzee juggles Susan's conflicting claims to authority and authorship. First, her attempt to trade her sexuality for the authorship of the island story fails, and next she seeks to cement her authority through Foe's surrogacy. He has authority as a published author; her letters to him seek to trade on that authority, just as her sexual congress sought to trade on the authority of the castaway Cruso.

More significantly, Susan's failed motherhood, which intertextually comes from Roxana, is metaphorically compared to her infertility to generate a story. If Roxana avoids and even literally annihilates her namesake daughter Susan, who was a main conflict against her pursuit of freedom and success, Coetzee's Susan in several scenes denies her motherhood of a girl who abruptly approaches her and claims to be her lost daughter as she doubts that the girl is Foe's fabrication. While Defoe foregrounds the conflict of "the affective value of mothering when contrasted with the destiny of female individualism" (Spivak 9) as the main subject of the novel, Coetzee places Susan's mother-daughter plot rather metaphorically in the novel's metanarrative setting. For instance, a sequence where Susan lures the girl into the heart of Epping Forest is described as less a real event than an imagination, as the ending paragraph describes her state as if awakened from a dream: "Have I expelled her, banished her, lost her at last in the forest? Will she sit by the oak tree till the falling leaves cover her…?" (91-92). Here, Susan dismisses the girl's pursuit of her, saying, "You are father-born. You have no mother," indicating that the girl's existence (or her playing of the daughter role) is only a fiction invented by Foe for his design of storytelling ("Your father is a man named Daniel Foe" [91]). This scene, which seems quite abrupt and contextually tangential, can

be read as Susan's resistance against Foe's forced mother-daughter plot by projecting her expulsion of the girl in the form of narrative. In a feminist perspective, her statement "what you know of your parentage comes to you in the form of stories, and the stories have but a single source" conveys a specific criticism of a male-authorized plot that does not allow diversity. Regarding this imaginary scene of Susan's expulsion of the daughter, Spivak comments that this intended narrative aporia reflects the subject's dislocation with "the language of undecidability and plurality" (11). Spivak states that the plural plausibility opens up our interpretation toward the narrative void: we can criticize Foe for "not letting a woman have free access to both authorship and motherhood" but also praise him for "not presuming to speak a completed text on motherhood" (11), which would be another authorial appropriation of the mother-daughter plot as Foe attempts.

Susan's desire "to be father to my story" (123) is related to her desperate resistance against Foe's authorship, an authorship that exploits her indescribable history of loss. Her desire also expands to challenge gendered myths and stereotypes with regard to this male-centered authorship. Susan emphasizes how she is the father of her story, drawing an analogy between a "man-Muse" and herself: "I wished that there were such a being as a man-Muse, a youthful god who visited authoresses in the night and made their pens flow. … The Muse is both goddess and begetter. I was intended not to be the mother of my story, but to beget it" (126). Susan's reversing of the Muse's gender offers a feminist revision of the myth. She claims that she is not the Muse of Foe who inspires him to author *The Female Castaway* (in his way), but the one who, as origin, begets or

creates her own story. In a similar vein, she conducts a psychological battle with Foe by metaphorically subverting their gendered power relation even while supposing their being in a relationship. She describes him as "my *intended*, the one alone intended to tell my true story" (126, my emphasis); through the pun "intended," she suggests that his role is not to beget but to "mother" the story. Even further, she "protested" against his calling her "An old whore" by telling him that "I think of you as a mistress, or even, if I dare speak the word, as a wife" (152) who provides a welcoming embrace and receives her story. Thus, Susan struggles to subvert the gendered implications of authorship as she resists the appropriative violence of Foe's authorship.

Defoe's Roxana declares her right to be "free" as a woman by breaking away from the fetters of the marriage contract: "that it was my Misfortune to be a Woman, but I was resolv'd it shou'd not be made worse by the Sex; and seeing Liberty seem'd to be the Men's Property, I wou'd be a Man-Woman; for as I was born free, I wou'd die also" (Defoe 190). Similarly, Susan declares her free subjectivity by choosing not to tell her story: "I choose rather to tell of the island, of myself and Cruso and Friday and what we three did there: for I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire" (131).

That Susan cannot fit into either fathering or mothering of a story impacts on her impossibility of narrating Friday's story. Mothering a story, with its gendered implication of giving birth, implies substantiality, from which a story and/or a life is generated. The boundary between life and story is slippery as much as Susan's identity is revisable in story. For this reason, Susan's denial of maternity attenuates not only her

essential identity as a mother in reality but also her eligibility for narrating Friday's story. Susan's complicated position as a woman, mother, and would-be but always self-doubting storyteller puts her in a status of in-betweenness. Susan's in-betweenness between mothering and fathering the island story functions to question Foe's authorship and its ontological violence to usurp the other's story throughout the novel. In a sense, Susan and Friday put in a parallel as a prey under the tyranny of Foe's fathering, whose story resists to be known, refuses to confess.

Questioning the Authority of (De)Foe's Authorship

Foe's characterization as a secluded author indirectly reflects how Coetzee attempts to demystify authorship. This characterization substantially mirrors Defoe's biography, his life full of political and economic vicissitudes, even spending time in prison. In the novel, he is described less as a real person than as the allegorical figure of a writer. Foe's authorship is described as ghost writing; he is collecting and institutionalizing tales, mostly from sinners, travelers, or outlaws who have deviated from social norms or trespassed moral boundaries. Susan characterizes Foe as "a very secret man, a clergyman of sorts"; in his work, she observes, he hears "the darkest of confessions from the most desperate penitents" (120), comparing his authorship in a religious sense to a chaplain who shrives sinners in their last minutes before capital punishment. Foe's being a kind of pastoral recipient of confessions, however, endows him with the power not only to gain knowledge of confessors' secrets but also to appropriate their stories afterwards. In other words, unlike a priest's shriving a

confessor, which guarantees secrecy and penance, Foe becomes a predator who lives by exploiting the stories of others; Susan also compares Foe to the image of a spider (120).

The two wisdom-tales he tells Susan meta-narratively epitomize his stance on the nature of confession and the destiny of confessors. The first tale is about a woman thief at Newgate who asks for a minister to whom to make her true confession until the minister yields, shriving her just to avoid her ceaseless confessions of sin (123-24). The second tale tells of a condemned woman who, when seeing her infant daughter safe in the arms of the gaoler's family who adopts the child out of pity, declares her emancipation from the prison as her body is all but "the husk of her" (125). Foe's tactic through these wisdom-tales is explicit; he implies that he knows Susan's past and that he considers her a sinner. The two tales tacitly target Susan as they refer to the similar secrets she seems to have: the children she abandoned in her youth, and the namesake daughter who haunts her. Moreover, he adds an "application" to each story as if the stories' morals were decidable: regarding the first story, he says, "we must give reckoning of ourselves to the world" (124), and of the second, "The application is: There are more ways than one of living eternally" (125). Putting his words otherwise, he insinuates to Susan the imperative to confess the indescribable in her past, the merit of confession being that her story (through the mother-daughter plot he insists on) will outlive her. While restricting the stories to these interpretations, he insists on his appropriative power to know her secret: "I must know about Bahia, that only you can tell me" (114).

The scene where Foe makes up Susan's story reveals the fabricated nature of

fiction-making that precedes the question of what really happens, the truth. Susan and Foe dispute the matter of the narrative, quarreling over which story arc is the one that demands narration. While Susan insists on the island story as central to *The Female Castaway*, Foe refuses the idea, arguing that it is "too much the same throughout," "without commotion" (117). Instead, he suggests "five parts" in the story, particularly centered around Susan's loss of and quest for her daughter. "It is thus that we *make up* a book: loss, then quest, then recovery; beginning, then middle, then end" (117, my emphasis). What Foe emphasizes is a certain pattern of dramatic composition that makes a travel narrative absorbing. For him, the "art" of storytelling precedes the matter of truth: "Rehearse your story and you will see. The story begins in London. Your daughter is abducted or elopes, I do not know which, it does not matter" (116). Here, by revealing Foe's tactic of narrative structure, Coetzee parodies what is believed as the verisimilitude of realism. Coetzee's discussing the nature of Defoe's realism and *Robinson Crusoe* sheds light on this passage. In "Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe," Coetzee reassesses Defoe's realism as that of "an impersonator, a ventriloquist, even a forger" (19), as his works are more like arranging historical documents or confessions. Coetzee states that the kind of "novel" Defoe writes is "fake autobiography heavily influenced by the genres of the deathbed confession and the spiritual autobiography"; importantly, he claims of *Robinson Crusoe* that Defoe tries "to bend the story of his adventurer hero to fit a scriptural pattern of disobedience, punishment, repentance, and deliverance" (19). In brief, Coetzee argues that Defoe's works are pretensions of autobiographical narration imitating a possible hero's recital, and particularly with

regard to *Robinson Crusoe*, that it follows a scriptural pattern totalizing a story of adventure. Back to the relationship between Foe and Susan, the narrative structure Foe invents proves that Foe's authorship is forgery and that it commits representational violence beyond distortion by reducing Susan's story of suffering into a typical pattern without any caution to deal with the truth.

In addition to making opaque the realist transparency of the eighteenth-century confessional narrative, Coetzee draws out the ethical question of representing the other in the (post)colonial realist novel. In the introduction to the special issue "The Novel and the Question of Responsibility for the Other" (*Journal of Literary Studies*, 1997), Mike Marais invites us to consider the implications of the post-colonial novel genre in establishing an ethical relation with the other from the Levinasian point of view. Marais argues to rethink Ian Watt's view of realism that a distinguishing feature of the novel is to represent "Cartesian shift to the point of view of the perceiving individual ego" (Watt 1957: 295). Marais problematizes that realism tradition presents this "apodictic subjectivity," a knowing subject established beyond dispute and inscribes the subject through the novel's seemingly transparent language. The novel presents this subject's relation to the world as innocent, while in fact this relation is one in which the subject constitutes the other into the order of the same while negating its alterity. Marais argues that, by this concealment, the realist novel installs an appropriative subject-object relation, and "the relation's homogenizing operation [is] particularly apparent in representations of the colonial encounter" (3). Significantly, Marais points out the Robinsonade stories as the most representative tradition that presents a pure and

immediate relation between the European subject and apparently empty colonial spaces while concealing the fact that "'the displaced percipient' (Said 1985) brings with him knowledge assimilated elsewhere prior to the encounter and that he arrives at knowledge through a negation of alterity" (3) In brief, Marais emphasizes that colonial realist fictions tend to reflect the universalizing drive of European structures of knowledge by representing a tension between home as the site of absolute meaning and colonial territory as unknown (3-4), a tension that is particularly evident in the figure of the "displaced percipient" and "the return-of-the-hero-as-master-of-two-worlds," as we read in the Robinsonade. In my view, there is also another peculiar characteristic of castaway narratives—which appears in *Foe* as well—that the returned Western subject yearns for the marooned life while they resettle themselves in the so-called civilized life at home.

In Coetzee's retelling of the Robinsonade, Susan's returning home disrupts these typical configurations in colonial realist novels, "the tension between home-as-known and wilderness-as-unknown" and "the return-of-the-hero-as-master-of-two-worlds." Susan's marginalized position as a woman, particularly one who seems to be socially fallen both at home and in colonized Bahia, keeps her becoming and representing these types in two realms, the real and the fictional world. As Susan directly visits Foe to make her castaway story into a marketable one and secludes herself while waiting for him to complete writing it, in other words, as she decides to be a captive in his fictional world, her existence is subject to his authorship, increasingly precarious given his suspicions regarding her past. London cannot be the site of absolute meaning for her since her identity becomes unclear both socially and narratively. Susan's and Friday's

road trip to Bristol, which she executes to send Friday back to Africa, makes her experience her unstable standing at first hand. Above all, her identity is questioned specifically in terms of her relationship with Friday as much as his identity is: "Twice have Friday and I been called gipsies. What is a gipsy? … Words seem to have new meanings here in the west country. Am I become a gipsy unknown to myself?" (108-109). Not belonging to any category, she is reductively compared to "gypsies," which is an inaccurate, accusatory signifier of people who are despised as dirty, wandering, or homeless. Interestingly, while answering questions from passersby about who Friday is and why he keeps silence, she never explains who she is, though strangers question, "Are you his mistress?," "Are you gipsies, you and he?" Her silence indicates that her concealment is intentional. In addition, this scene depicts how Susan is marginalized as an "internal" other by London people, as a wandering woman of low class, while being grouped as "gypsies" alongside Friday, who is also regarded as an African slave, thus an "external" other to them.[67] As much as her relationship with Friday is undefinable, her very being is othered and assumed as inexplicable and/or unacceptable in London society.

The scene where Susan teaches Friday to write words presents the chasm

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[67] Eaglestone identifies some groups of "the others" whom Western thought encounters as "those with other sociocultural ways of existing": there are those who are "internal" to Europe (women, Jewish, Roma, Sinti; any people who do not "possess") and those who are "external" through the experiences of trade or colonialism. Eaglestone emphasizes that Western thought is not monolithic but a mixture of such different voices throughout history (189).

between what she perceives regarding the other and its void in the signified. She attempts to teach him to write by matching words with images drawn on the slate. Unlike other words she teaches him, "house," "ship," and "mother," she slyly confesses the uncertainty of the image of Africa she draws on the slate: "Africa I represented as a row of palm trees with a lion roaming among them. Was my Africa the Africa whose memory Friday bore within him? I *doubted* it" (146, my emphasis). What she calls "my Africa," the image of a wild state of nature, is an abstract generalization which has no original reference. In fact, Susan's ignorance of Africa is previously hinted. Earlier in the scene where she accompanies Friday to Bristol, she mentions that for travel costs she sells a book, Pakenham's *Travels in Abyssina*, that she had taken from Foe's library: "I had no time to read in it and learn more of Africa, and so be of greater assistance to Friday in regaining his homeland" (107). I argue that here, Coetzee explicitly discloses and parodies how a Western subject's knowledge of the colonized other is based on appropriative representations in colonial literature, adding the mocking twist that Susan does not even read but rather sells the travel narrative. Susan takes a defensive posture regarding her ignorance of Friday's origin and justifies her knowledge again by generalization: "Friday is not from Abyssinia I know. But on the road to Abyssinia the traveller must pass through many kingdoms: why should Friday's kingdom not be one of these?" Nevertheless, this posture reveals its illogic as much as does the rhetorical question she uses to cover her self-doubt.

Both Susan and Foe confess that they are locked in the labyrinth of storytelling, while their stances on the conflation between story, the fictive, and the real are different.

Susan's stance regarding how to relate herself to stories is unstable. On the one hand, she resists the constitutive power of story, asserting to Foe that "I am not a story" (131) in which her life would be reduced to source material for Foe's story. She emphasizes that her life, her "substance," precedes the island story and asserts that Bahia is so vigorous and vast that it cannot be "subjugated and held down in words, such as desert islands and lovely houses" (123-24), though it may seem that she is just avoiding telling about her years there. On the other hand, Susan seems to succumb to Foe's story world, however much she resists it as entirely fabricated. This is evident in the scene where Susan kisses and embraces the girl Susan and the maid Amy whom Foe conjures. Susan's accepting them as if reunited is significant; it dramatizes a moment when Foe's narrative compulsion overwhelms and deprives Susan's sense of reality and overrides the truth of her actual experience. Susan's submission can be considered in relation to her beliefs on some principles of storytelling. When she takes Foe's writing space and tries to substitute herself in the role of author, she emphasizes the "strange circumstances" (i.e. cannibals appearing, mutilation, etc.) necessary to make up a story. Specifically of Friday's mutilation, she argues for the need to disclose its secret as an essential element for a story though she would not have insisted upon it in her own real world: "On the island I accepted that I should never learn how Friday lost his tongue, … But what we can accept in life we cannot accept in history" (67).[68] Likewise, she admits the

[68] "History" here seems to mean "story." In *Foe*, the word "history" is used rather loosely. In general, Coetzee's conception of history puts weight on its nature as writing or records of what happens.

discursive power of narrative and imposes the same speculative disclosure on Friday that she resists for herself. Regarding the conflict between Susan and Foe, Lewis MacLeod argues that Susan is far from being "a truth-seeking, marginalized quest figure who is victimized by oppressive structures" (4), as Foe's critics tend to read her. MacLeod writes that the discrepancy between Susan and Foe "arises out of a difference in narrative ability, not power or ethical intentionality" (5). Although I agree with his point that Susan shows a desire similar to Foe's to subject people to narrative manipulation, particularly in terms of her relation to Friday, I think that the nature of Susan's and Foe's power struggle over the narrative frame is not merely narratological, but essentially both political and ethical. In my view, it is Coetzee's intention to foreground Susan's struggle between wanting to gain Foe's narrative authority and resisting his homogenizing plot that fabricates what is not.

During the conversation with Foe, who talks only through stories, Susan confesses that she gradually loses to stories her "substance" and speaking subjectivity:

> But now all my life grows to be story and there is nothing of my own left to me. … Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong? And you: who are you? (133)

At this confession, she says that the order between her life which is essential and the story which is derivative is reversed to the extent that narrative swallows her subjectivity, specifically, her speaking self as a narrator. The existential questions she

asks are not limited to showing her struggle between the discursive frames of narrative (either the island story or the mother-daughter plot can be a larger frame), as MacLeod analyzes. First, the order of narrative frames is not freed from the power relations between her and Foe and between her and Friday. Her acknowledging the impossibility of telling Friday's story—"The story of Friday's tongue is a story unable to be told, or unable to be told by me" (118)—makes herself insecure since she knows that the impossibility of narration is the sole truth and if she succumbs to Foe's storytelling, it is against the truth in the same say. Thus, this is a crucial moment where Susan confesses her confronting "the endless chain of doubt" Coetzee discusses as the principal characteristic of a confessor who struggles with the problem of truth and self-knowing. Susan's narration ends with her confessing the impasse of her storytelling, remaining self-deconstructive without a breakthrough. Nonetheless, her struggle with the question, how and who can give a voice to the other, is a move that turns toward an ethical way of storytelling.

In addition, her questioning of Foe's existence, "Who are you?" brings back his ghost writing. Foe also confesses to the storyteller's existential void, that "In a life of writing books, I have often, believe me, been lost in the maze of doubting" (135). Yet, his way of dealing with these doubts is to take them as "part of the story you live, of no greater weight than any other adventure of yours" (135), which means that he lets the boundary between the real and the fictive be obscured. Foe's narrative aspiration can be hazardous, as his way of preying on others' stories eventually makes his speaking subjectivity indistinct. His way of appropriating others' stories obliterates not only the

voice of the other but also that of the self.

As the novel's title suggests, Coetzee draws attention to interrogating and questioning the authority (De)Foe's name implies or what is beneath that name of *Foe*. Part Three ends with Foe's commanding Susan to teach Friday by writing the alphabet ("you must teach him *a*" [152]) and Susan's watching Friday "busy at his writing." Susan shows her anxiety lest Friday take over the authority of writing when she discovers Friday seated at Foe's writing place wearing his wigs and grabbing his pen, which enrages her. Coetzee plays with the conflation between the writer and the protagonist more explicitly in his Nobel Prize lecture "He and His Man" (2003)—a short story. It is read as another version of *Foe* without Susan Barton, focalized through (Defoe's) Robinson Crusoe but narrated by an omniscient third person narrator. The story presents the later life of Crusoe who is now elderly, retired, living a life of solitude in the coastal city of Bristol while continuously looking back on his castaway years. It has multiple intertextualities in its condensed length and form, incorporating Defoe's trilogy of *Robinson Crusoe, The Whole Island of Great Britain, A Journal of the Plague Year,* and others.

The short story expands the premise that Friday learns to write and becomes the figure of surrogate-writer to Crusoe. The conflation of the two figures, Foe and Friday, becomes more vexed in "He and His Man" as the conflation is doubled by introducing both Crusoe and Friday as writing figures while confusing the relation of their writing orders: "Only when he yields himself up to this man of his do such words come" (para 33). At first glance, Crusoe's narration—though from the omniscient narrator's point of

view—seems to appropriate Friday's narrating voice, limiting him as a "report-gathering man." Nonetheless, Coetzee obscures the seeming master-slave relation between Crusoe and Friday in the realm of its intertextuality with Defoe's works. The reports from Friday about the treacherous "decoy ducks or duckoys" and death in Halifax are lifted almost verbatim from Defoe's *The Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain,* thus from Defoe's writing that insists on the authenticity of his travels. According to Gareth Cornwell, Defoe's *Tour* presents itself as a series of letters addressed to a nameless "Sir" by a peripatetic "Gentleman" (Tour b, 41) who signs himself (apparently Defoe) "your most humble and obedient servant" (Tour b, 112, quoted in Cornell 99).

Coetzee posits a sarcastic touch when describing Crusoe's character, particularly regarding his writing practice and his relation to his man Friday. The outside traveler's position is reversed such that it is the colonized other Friday who busily travels and reports in the heart of the Empire while Crusoe prefers to stay in seclusion, "having grown used to solitude on the island." Above all, the writing business, which makes Crusoe wealthy through the writing of his adventures, is described as having nothing to do with truth. The narrator gives a metafictional commentary that Crusoe's writing of the island story, particularly its description of cannibals, was primarily fabricated: the "plagiarists and imitators descended upon his island history and foisted on the public their own feigned stories of the castaway life." The narrator states that writing becomes a habit for Crusoe as a "pleasant enough recreation," but "That old ease of composition has, alas, deserted him." Although Friday is described as the successor of Crusoe's travel writing, Friday is still regarded by him as an instrumentalized other for the business of

writing as a "native informant" in a reversed condition. Crusoe's questioning of the identity of his man, "what species of man his report-gathering man might really be," is disrupted and then neglected in the process of his writing. Leaving questions about "how are they to be figured, this man and he?" throughout a whole paragraph, Coetzee leaves a sarcastic view of the relationship between Crusoe and Friday that is generated by the business of colonial narrative. And despite the conflation of the two characters as writer figures, Coetzee concludes the story by comparing their relation via writing to "two ships sailing in contrary directions," even when "they pass each other by, too busy even to wave," being doomed never to meet, as if recalling the last scene of Forster's *A Passage to India*.

Diving into the Wreck

> But who will dive into the wreck? But if Friday cannot tell us what he sees, is Friday in my story any more than a figuring (or prefiguring) of another diver? (142)

The last short Chapter IV is written as two versions of a fantastical visit to Foe's house and/or a wreck from the island. An anonymous "I" narrator moves around transcending several spaces where s(he) finds Susan and Foe lying together as "the couple" (155) and Friday lying in the alcove.[69] If this scene the narrator visits comes

[69] It is interesting to notice whether the three main characters are called by their names: Susan Barton is identified only as a woman's body in the first round and called by her name in the second one; Foe's name is never mentioned, if not "her dead captain" (but this could also be Cruso), except as the words on the plaque "Daniel Defoe, Author."

from the text we read, it may possibly be the moment when Susan and Foe lie together inventing stories about Friday's act of scattering the petals over the water while Friday lies in the alcove (thus it is before Friday learns to write). Regarding the identity of the narrator, critics have mostly suggested that it is Coetzee. In my view, the narrator's dive into the wreck can be compared to a reading practice that attempts to respond to the other in the text with an ethical perspective. As we do so, the narrator has knowledge about the details that Susan and Foe talk over in the previous chapters ("the kraken" [156], "the petals cast by Friday" [155], "a country bath-house," "little fishes [156]," etc.), which emerge as mixed and fragmented. Put another way, covering the same ground of knowing and reading, we are involved as a readily knowing subject in this imaginary trip back to the text.

Whether the narrator's exploration in this coda is an ethical way to read the other's story is a point to be considered. On the one hand, it can be seen as no more than an enactment of Foe and Susan's plot to verbalize Friday's secret, what they call the task of "descending into the eye" of the story (141-42). What the narrator eventually does is to find and open Friday's mouth forcefully ("I press a fingernail between the upper and lower rows, trying to part them" [154]). It is thus an act to penetrate Friday's silence, to "have the unspoken spoken" (141), what Susan and Foe seek in their writing practice. On the other hand, this urge to go into the deep, into another realm of the story, can be

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This can be considered as a deliberate gesture to undermine Foe as a substantial character in the novel and also to figure his authoring power.

seen an effort to avoid the risk that "we sail across the surface and come ashore none the wiser, and resume our old lives, and sleep without dreaming, like babes" (141), to avoid a reading that is superficial while not responding to the other, thus learning nothing from the experience.

The contrast between the first and second visit to this scene implies a conflict between different modes of reading. These virtual visits stand for the different ways in which the narrator explores the text and encounters the other, Friday. The relationship between the first and the second dive is open to question; it is possible that the first visit follows Susan's version of imagining some sound from Friday's mouth whereas the second one follows Foe's version of imagining Friday's ritual of scattering petals. I read the second narration as a revision of the first one, and also as a second attempt to reach and encounter the other. The first dive seems completed without difficulties: there are no obstacles that keep the narrator from finding and reaching Friday's body. It ends with the narrator's hearing from Friday's mouth "the faintest faraway roar," "the sounds of the island" (154) that Susan writes in earlier pages. Nevertheless, it means that the narrator's exploration repeats the superficial knowledge of alterity just as Susan fails to access Friday's interiority throughout her narration. In the second section, the narrator (re)visits the place with more knowledge. While the opening phrase in the first section is "On the landing I stumble over a body" (153), in the second visit, this is turned into, "On the landing I stumble over *the body*" (my emphasis). While the narrator in the first visit observes and passes by the virtual spaces (seemingly of Foe's house) described with the images of static death and eternity, in the second narration, (s)he has to overcome

several obstacles under the water to move forward. Water by its nature lacks a fixed shape but fills the (narrative) space with its paradoxical density with transparency; this imagery seems to signify the intangible depth of Friday's unknowability. The narrator's "dive" is successive as (s)he "enters" these places one after the other. The dive is also metatextual as the narrator suddenly "slips overboard" (155) after reading Susan's sentences on the table—"Dear Mr Foe, At last I could row no further"—that we read as the first sentence of the novel. In addition, the narrator discovers a scar around Friday's neck—"I had not observed this before" (155) : this is a moment to encounter the substantiality of alterity, the body with its pain, which witnesses the suffering history of black slave.

Importantly, the narrator's "diving into the wreck" has many elements similar to Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving into the Wreck" (1973), showing an explicit intertextuality.[70] In addition to the overall theme of exploring a wreck underwater, Coetzee's narrator and Rich's speaker share some common ground (possibly) as white knowing subjects in terms of the purpose, ways, and order of their act of exploration. As Rich's speaker goes down to the wreck "first having read the book of myths" (1),

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[70] Regarding the intertextuality between *Foe* and Rich's "Diving into the Wreck," see Barbara Eckstein, "Iconicity, Immersion and Otherness: The Hegelian 'Dive' of J. M. Coetzee and Adrienne Rich." Reading *Foe* as a novel centered around "the fact and metaphor of immersion," Eckstein focuses on "the possibility of comprehending an/other and of getting through language to the thing itself" (58) in the dialogue between the two works. As the Preface of Rich's collection *Diving into the Wreck* refers to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, Eckstein draws on Hegelian thought about self and other and uses the conception of immersion as comprehension.

Coetzee's narrator apparently starts his exploration by having read the myth Foe invents and proceeds to dive until he finds Friday's body "half buried in sand" (155). The significant difference is that Rich's narrator states "The words are purposes. The words are maps," implying the inevitability of language as a medium, while Coetzee's narrator realizes that the encounter with alterity is not possible through words:

> But this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday. (157)

All of the narrator's attempts to know Friday's secret by asking him "what is this ship?" and "trying to find a way in" to Friday's mouth to access his interiority fail. In contrast, it is the water, "a slow stream" from inside Friday, that overwhelms and immerses the narrator: "Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beasts against my eyelids, against the skin of my face" (157). The bursting water, which symbolizes the invulnerable authenticity of Friday, washes and fills the world ("it runs … to the ends of the earth") without interruption and also "diffuses" words that tend to set boundaries and subordinate the other into the same. This tangible and immersive experience embodies the moment when we could encounter alterity, "his face to my face" (157), in Levinasian terms, the infinity of the other seen through his face. Significantly, this unending presence of the other clearly contrasts with Susan's narrative that, until the third chapter, grows into the "endless chain" of self-doubt and eventually ends in a lack of finality. Regarding the novel's ending and "the importance of the body" (247), Coetzee firmly states that he intends "an ending, not a gesture toward an ending" (248), whereas the previous chapters

within the frame of Susan's narration might be seen as metafictional gimmicks. As I mentioned in the introduction, the representation of Friday's body has irritated many critics since Friday the subaltern literally cannot speak. Coetzee clarifies his intention to foreground Friday's body at the end so that "[T]he body with its pain becomes a counter to the endless trials of doubt" (248) and "the authority of the suffering body" takes its own power that is "undeniable" (248). Coetzee further implies that his depiction of Friday as a suffering body is relevant to its undeniable power in the contemporary South African situation for "political reasons" (248).

Returning to a consideration of the novel in the context of confession, Coetzee suggests that Friday's body emerges instead an instance of "grace" ("Not grace, then, but at least the body" [248]), which is the only thing that can intervene and pose the "closure of absolution" to the skepticism about truth in the Dostoeveskian model of confession. Despite Coetzee's eager emphasis on Friday's body in his text, "This is a place where bodies are their own signs" (157), we acknowledge its limits as well, that "the text so far tells us that Friday's body cannot be its own sign" (Said 18). Nevertheless, while simultaneously exposing and embracing the limits of language, Coetzee's text draws attention to questions of authority in narration and invites readers to consider their own responsibility to confront the impossibility of narration. Coetzee's imagining the infinite face of Friday that diffuses any word to represent his un-representability echoes Woolf's dreaming "words without meaning—wonderful words" through La Trobe at the moment of a failure, signaling both writers' striving for an ethical imagination while stepping on the impossible narration.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Western characters in my second chapter take a boat trip to the unknown territories. As Marlow does, they have a passion to see the colonized land with their own eyes believing "the glories of exploration" (*HD* 8) and "the cause of progress" (*HD* 10). This prevailing image of a boat trip in the colonial novels turns out to be both paradoxical and symbolic. It shows the mobility of western subjects but also that their unsettled state of wondering. Their voyage out to the colonies is compared to virginity, as the inexperienced Rachel signifies while herself being often compared to the ship Euphrosyne, but also implies a vulnerability even to that far of death. On their way to the land, they hear the ominous news about how previous explorers were dead; a sudden fever or there rebellion of the natives are suggested as a latent threat—in *Heart of Darkness*, captains of the Company "had been killed in a scuffle with the natives" (*HD* 10); in *The Voyage Out*, the excursion group is informed that "Mackenzie, the famous explorer, had died of fever" (*VO*, Ch 21). And those ominous incidents eventually happen as if symptomatic of their failure of the cross-cultural encounter or of manifestation of their fearing the alterity. Marlow witnesses Kurtz's horrid death which subsequently hunts his sanity; Rachel, one of the excursion group, meets an untimely death unable to overcome a fever after the encounter. Mrs. Moore in *A Passage to India,* who falls into a skepticism after hearing the cave's echo, dies during her voyage returning to England. Their colonial exploration voyages, through which they see the

world and encounter the other, is as limited as their boat is precariously floating on the surface. These early modernist novels bear witness to the failure of exploration which mirrors the subsequent failure of their narration, of knowing and representing the other.

The failure of boat trip visitors to see the "real" in the colonies can be considered in conjunction with the dives into the wreck in the short coda of *Foe*. The anonymous "I" narrator dives into the wreck, under the water where all things that have constituted the narrative space so far including Susan, Foe, and the manuscript they wrote are submerged, as if signaling their being stuck in the impasse of the storytelling. The unnamed "I" could be Coetzee himself. If we suppose that this voice reflects Coetzee's ego, we can think of the flexible transference of authority between writer and reader Coetzee suggests: the writer who was once a reader of Defoe's novel, an essential part of the English literary tradition, progresses to write it back. Yet, what he stages in his novel is an impossible narration Susan faces in telling the story of the unrepresentable Friday. It can be said that Coetzee in this coda shifts the responsibility to the other left within the narrative space to the readers who might have expected to imagine the representability of Friday in their interpretation, in their act of a hermeneutic ethic. When we compare our act of reading to this dive into the wreck, its ethical implication in terms of encountering the other is ambiguous. It can be said that the "I" narrator's dive into the wreck is another kind of exploration, an act eager to penetrate Friday's "story unable to be told." The diver goes to where the story is left incomplete, the point of narrative where Susan could not proceed further in her telling, which is the surface of water where Friday casts the petals. That the diver attempts to forcefully open

Friday's mouth and asks him to speak with an epistemological question "what is this ship?" (*Foe* 157) reflecting the readers' possible desire to get some knowledge of what is unspoken against Friday's unrepresentability. Coetzee's staging this metanarrative situation lets us question our privileged status that through reading we can consume the story of an other's suffering, which inversely applies to Susan's (and also Coetzee's) in their making stories from knowledge of the other. Our hermeneutic ethics emerges from acknowledging the dilemma between remaining superficially on the surface of narrative as Foe warns that "we sail across the surface and come ashore none the wiser, and resume our old lives, and sleep without dreaming, like babes" (*Foe* 141) and diving into wreck of the narrative while searching for the heart of the unspoken. The metanarrative frame in these modernist novels engage us in the reader's position from outside to inside the story through characters such as the "I" narrator who listens to Marlow and the audiences of La Trobe's pageant.

On a narratological level, the two versions of diving into the wreck can be regarded as Coetzee's version of the Saying in that the second dive revises the first one. Eventually what the two attempts of 'diving' lead us to face is not of any words but the impossible narration and the unknowable other; the presence of Friday's body, realizing via a stream from his mouth, signifies it. I argue that Coetzee's ending the novel with Friday's body is a clear gesture that his fiction does not aim to display a postmodern gimmick but to stage an encounter with the unpresentable alterity, which is unending as the stream of Friday continues to flow out "to the end of the earth" and "beats against the skin of my face" (*Foe* 157) as if transcending the impasse of storytelling. This open

ending of narrative suggests an ethical imagination: it summons the reader's responsibility to imagine the presence of the other beyond the limit of language. Coetzee's claim, "But this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday" (*Foe* 157), is radical in that he attempts to represent the moment in which words are deconstructed in front of the presence of the unrepresentable other, however paradoxically, through his language of fiction.

Coetzee's diffusing the words resonates with the mirror section of "The Present Time. Ourselves" during La Trobe's pageant in *Between the Acts* where the cracked mirrors figuratively reflect the audience's fragmented state of being. The last stage's interpretation about these mirrors deconstructs the words that have constituted not only each stage of the pageant but also the identity of the empire subjects. La Trobe's play reveals that the impulse to unity elides the ethical recognition of otherness while avoiding confronting what is excluded or marginalized for the sham glory of the British Empire. In addition, Woolf's parodying the nationalistic Parkerian pageant in La Trobe's play can be comparable to Coetzee's rewriting Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Woolf exposes that the tradition of English literature is closely connected to the history of British Empire while being complicit in justifying and making narratives for building imperial subjects. In terms of their approaches to narrative closure, Coetzee's confronting and embracing the impossible narration resonates with Woolf's search for a new language, "words without meaning," as the very last sentence "They spoke" (*BA* 149) signals an ongoing relationship through language while seeking the Levinasian Saying over the

Said ‘between the acts.’

Modernist writers stage their struggle with impossible narration by featuring artist figures and the process of their artistic creation: Marlow as the orator/storyteller in *Heart of Darkness*, Terence Hewit aspiring to be a novelist in *The Voyage Out*, Isa’s aspiration to write poetry and La Trobe’s staging in *Between the Acts*, and the complex provenance of Susan’s manuscript/letters in *Foe*. The writers distance themselves from their artist figures describing their work of creation as likely vulnerable to solipsism or totalizing in its process of representing an other. And these artist figures confess the impossibility of their narration without exception. The failure of narration at the narrators’ level echoes and parallels the impossible narration of the frame novel. Through these metafictional elements, the modernist writers critically reflect their own arguments about the role of artists: La Trobe’s case in *Between the Acts*, for example, shows that an artist can possibly take a control like a dictator. By staging the failure of narrative as the central theme of their fiction, modernist writers also deconstruct their own authority as authors.

In conclusion, the metanarrative elements in modernist novels disrupt conventio nal knowledge production, and facing the impossibility of narration in the encounter wit h the other deconstructs a totalizing impulse in representation. There remain some possib le confusion or questions to be addressed. In a Levinasian scheme, we are always alread y in the ethical relation and language should be an ethical structure only through which s ubject can relate to the other. However, as I state in Introduction, not all modernist novel s show and stage the ethics of impossible narration while confronting the other’s unrepre

sentability through their style. In other words, some essential features including thematic or formal experiments that normally characterize modernist literature do not guarantee t he works as examples of the ethical imagination through which I connect Leviansian the ory and modernist ethics. In my continuing research, I hope to examine another suppositi on that, if other moments in literary history, which would be evidently distinguished fro m modernism or the modern period–for instance, eighteenth century literature– also acknowledge ethics through impossible narration.

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