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Undoing Colonialism from the Inside: Performative Turns in the Short Stories of Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster*

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I. Introduction

Leonard Woolf's short story, "A Tale Told by Moonlight," was originally published by Hogarth Press in 1921, along with "Pearls and Swine" and "The Two Brahmans," in the collection, *Stories from the East*.[1] The three short stories were written by Woolf when he came back to England after serving as a British colonial administrator in Ceylon from 1904 through 1911. As the original title of the collection implies, all of these stories are set in the East, in either India or Ceylon. Except "The Two Brahmans," a "wry retelling of a Sinhalese folk-tale"

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[1] This book was republished under the title of *A Tale Told by Moonlight* in 2006, with Victoria Glendinning's foreword, as the interest in Woolf has increased.

(Glendinning viii), "A Tale Told by Moonlight" and "Pearls and Swine" both feature white British male narrators who recount the episodes set in the British colonies to British people at home. E. M. Forster's "The Life to Come" is also set in a colonized local village in India. Although posthumously published in 1972 as one of the fourteen short stories in the collection, *The Life to Come and Other Short Stories*, "The Life to Come" was written in 1922 after Forster's second visit to India (1921-22) as a private secretary to the local rajah following a first visit in 1912-13. Delving into a homosexual relationship between a British missionary and a native chief in India, a subject not palatable to early twentieth-century British society, this story could not but be published after Forster's death. Pinmay's homoerotic desire for Vithobai in "The Life to Come" as well as Reynolds' desire for Celestinahami in "A Tale Told by Moonlight" unfolds with an adventure or quest narrative, which allows us to read the contact between the colonizer and the colonized in the more complicated dynamics of colonialism. Pinmay's adventure ends when he is stabbed to death by Vithobai, who in turn commits suicide directly afterwards. Reynolds' venture brings about Celestinahami's suicide after she is deserted by Reynolds. These interracial tales of love and death bring to light social and racial differences, disclosing an erotics of power between the colored colonized and the white colonizer. Together with a main subject of an East-West encounter in British colonialism, primary concerns about adventure, love, death, truth, and colonialism in both stories provide our reading of Woolf and Forster side by side.

Critics have not given much attention to both "A Tale Told by Moonlight" and "The Life to Come." Woolf has been mainly acknowledged as a journalist and social and political critic rather than as a fiction writer, while Forster's short stories, especially his posthumous ones, have been given much less attention than his novels. Woolf's and Forster's imaginative reconstruction of the British colonies, based on their travel and experience in Ceylon and India, has been more examined in their better known fictional works. Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle* (1913) and Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) deal with controversial aspects of British imperialism in the early twentieth century. *A Passage to India* has been much discussed, both as Forster's masterpiece and for its being the last fiction published in his lifetime. Woolf's first novel, *Village in the Jungle*, has been investigated due to Woolf's use of Ceylonese characters as protagonists while the white magistrate is merely reduced to a marginal character, and perhaps for being a college textbook in today's Ceylon. These novels by Woolf and Forster incorporating the colonial adventure have elicited various responses. Their famous Bloomsbury liberal humanism has been suspected by some critics of being restricted within western culture, and complicit in imperialism's assertion of racial supremacy, while others have praised Woolf and Forster for anti-imperialism. Lilamani Chandra de Silva finds limits of liberalism in both Leonard's and Forster's texts, and prescribes that the two writers are "illustrious writers on empire" (7). According to de Silva, Woolf's *Village in the Jungle* "recuperates colonialism through the now classic strategies (witting and unwitting) of 'othering'" (12) by making colonized characters merely stereotypes, while Forster in *A Passage to India* "reduces the colonial enterprise of systematic exploitation to an *ad hoc* set of dominations," by resolving the relationships between the colony and the empire "in terms of working and non-working personal relationships" (13). Sara Suleri also criticizes Forster's inevitable engagement in "a mode of recolonization," since Forster identifies his own failure to represent India properly as something solid and real in *A Passage to India* with "a characteristically Indian failure" (107). Wilfred Stone, however, asserts that "the idea of softness" that lies "at the heart of Forster's liberal philosophy" implies Forster's "contention with the issue of crude power through all his novels," and thus his hostility to British imperial power (16; 22). Ahmed Ali, similarly to Suleri, notes that Forster's India in *A Passage to India* is not the real India and instead merely represented "from his vision" (279), but he affirms Forster's apolitical and a religious tendency that allows Foster to focus on human relationships. Judith Scherer Herz finds *The Village in the Jungle* to be "a profoundly anti-imperialist text," but asserts that *A Passage to India* "[reduces] all meaning to 'ou boum'" and makes the East unknowable (82).

These discordant voices from critics who read Woolf's and Forster's novels containing encounters between the East and the West can also be heard from readers of short stories written by Woolf and Forster. The use of the tropes of travel, voyage, adventure, or quest in Woolf's and Forster's short stories raises questions surrounding their witting or unwitting complicity with British imperialism.[2] These stories involving a Western quest in the context of imperialism risk their collusion with imperialism, since the quests can "become synecdochical for imperialism" (Rawa 1). Or, diverging from the Kiplingesque adventure stories, Woolf's and Forster's adventure stories may serve as a turning away from colonialism, using rhetorical and narrative devices, such as irony, indirection, multiple viewpoints, and satire on the colonial narratives. The erotics of power as revealed in Reynolds in "A Tale Told by Moonlight" and Pinmay in "The Life to Come" needs a closer look. In short, Woolf's and Forster's travel writings produce the complicated issues surrounding the contentious imperialism, imperial subjects, and the possibility of harmony or love with the other in our age of globalization. In today's era, when globalization can be identified with "neo-colonial economic imperialism" (73), as Helen Carr reminds us, to reevaluate Woolf's and Forster's colonial short stores is a timely requirement. Does the colonial world depicted in their narratives represent the Manichean world of colonialism, reproducing colonial racial stereotypes? Do their narratives of quest confirm the Western eye and the authority of white subjectivity? Or, do their narratives subvert the imperial quest formula by interrogating its desire from the inside? Do their tales uncover their unease with British imperialism, and so contribute to undoing colonialism?

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2) In this paper, I use the words 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' interchangeably. As de Silva articulates, though "[t]he age of colonialism is officially over," "its effects, especially the effects discernable in the projects of imperialism in what is called its 'neo-colonialist' phase, are now very much in evidence" (9).

II. Duplicity of Love in the Colonial Adventure

In “A Tale Told by Moonlight” Reynolds embarks his adventure into colonial Ceylon under the patronage of his friend Jessop, a Ceylonese colonial official. Reynolds’s journey to seek ‘real’ life leads him to buy Celestinahami, a Ceylonese prostitute, out of the brothel and live with her. In a similar colonial context, Paul Pinmay in Forster’s “The Life to Come” sets off on a venture into central India with a desire to civilize the native people in the British colony. These simplified plots allow for the possibility of reading Leonard Woolf’s “A Tale Told by Moonlight” and E. M. Forster’s “The Life to Come” primarily as ‘adventure’ stories that risk providing “the energizing myth of English imperialism” (Green 3).

Reynolds’s and Pinmay’s ventures set about with a desire or ‘love’ for a colonized wo/man. “‘[W]hen he [comes] travelling to the east,’” Reynolds launches into his adventure by falling in love with a local prostitute for whom love “‘[begins] in him with pity’”(“Tale” 7; 10). Pinmay who “[has] partly been sent [to the colonial India] in order that he [may] discover his own limitations [as a missionary],” begins his journey as a missionary by converting the local native chief, Vithobai, by “[imprinting] a kiss on his[Vithobai’s] forehead and [drawing] him to Abraham’s [in fact, Pinmay’s] bosom”(“Life” 66; 68). These crucial episodes of the intimacy between the white colonizer and the colored colonized depicted in both stories are especially interesting when we consider that the origins of these stories are related to the writers’ own experiences of intimacy with colonized people. Victoria Glendinning suggests that Woolf projects on “A Tale Told by Moonlight” his sexual experience with a Ceylonese prostitute which resulted in complicated “feelings of degradation” as well as “ecstasy and exaltation” (viii). “The Life to Come” has been suggested to be engendered by Forster’s memory of Mohammed el Adl, an Egyptian bus-conductor (who died after his experiences in a colonial prison) whom Forster met during the First World War when he worked in Egypt for the Red Cross (1915-18). With El Adl, Forster had his first sexual experience and love affair. Forster’s story also reflects his experience of intimacy with a man named Kanaya in India,[3] which, as Ambreen Hai informs, led to Forster's ambivalent feelings toward interracial homoerotic attraction due to "the violence inherent in erotic desire and the degrading self-destruction incumbent upon the abuse of power" (145-46). The ambivalent, complex feelings that Woolf and Forster experienced in their sexual encounters with the colonized seem to be present in their imaginative reconstructions in "A Tale Told by Moonlight" and "The Life to Come."

Jessop's descriptions of Celestinahami in "A Tale Told by Moonlight"—"'[t]he delicate innocent beauty of a child'" with "'immense, deep, dark and melancholy'" eyes which "'[look] as if they [know] and [understand] and [feel] everything in the world'," carrying "'an air of slowness and depth and mystery of silence and of innocence'"("Tale" 9)—when Reynolds first meets her at a Colombo brothel seems to reproduce the stereotyped Asian woman—passive, childlike, innocent, and at the same time, mysterious and unfathomable. As narrated and observed by Jessop, Celestinahami's body is depicted in delicate details: "'She [lies] full length on the sofa with her chin on her hands, looking up into Reynolds' face and smiling at him. The white cloth [has] slipped down and her breasts [are] bare'" ("Tale" 9). Jessop's observation presents Celestinahami's body as an object of a colonial gaze. However, "'[i]t [isn't] the body, it [isn't] kisses and moonlight'" ("Tale" 10) that induces Reynolds to fall in 'love' with Celestinahami. Reynolds "'want[s] something else'" —"'the same passion, the same fine strong thing that he [feels] moving in himself'" in Celestinahami, who is "'everything to him that [is] beautiful and great and pure'" at first ("Tale" 10). Reynolds' 'love' for Celestinahami ironically trivializes her body, recasting her as something transcendental and abstract in order for Reynolds to possess "'the flame, the passion, love, the real thing'" ("Tale 10) through her; on the other hand, Jessop observes that Celestinahami is but "'a simple soft little

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3) Forster wrote "Kanaya," an autobiographical fragment, in his locked diary. It was "the erotic piece about Forster's sexual desire for the Indian barber hired by the maharajah to serve him" (Roy, *Civility and Empire* 125). His affair with Kanaya, however, was deleted from Forster's Indian memoirs published under the title *The Hill of Devi*.

golden-skinned animal with nothing in the depths of the eyes at all'" ("Tale" 10). Jessop's reduction of Celestinahami to a simple-minded pet animal is disturbing for its double prejudices both against the female and the colored race. Therefore, Elleke Boehmer's insinuation that the comparison between woman and animal "would not necessarily have regarded . . . as demeaning," since "Woolf wrote eloquently about the 'cosmic strangeness' of animals" in *Growing*, his autobiography, needs reconsideration (208, n.109). Despite their different attitudes, both Jessop and Reynolds seem to share a similar process of reducing Celestinahami merely to their 'other.' Her name is fabricated conveniently for the British colonizers, and the reader never knows her real Ceylonese name. Her body is a commodity to sell and to be gazed at by the white men. Her language to communicate with them consists simply of a smile and a "'few soft clipped English sentences'" ("Tale" 10). Reynolds' and Jessop's language that defines Celestinahami is built on the occlusion of the real Celestinahami, suppressing her bodily, social, and political truths. Their language of 'love' is engaged in a colonial discourse of binary oppositional structure which objectifies Celestinahami as a colonized other. It seems, in short, that Reynolds' 'love' for Celestinahami is already founded on the dynamics of the eroticism of inequity and the accordant abusive power, which Woolf as well as Forster experienced in their stay in the British colonies.

Woolf's dramatization of Reynolds' and Jessop's colonial adventures is not presented, however, without insight into complex colonial psychologies. Jessop, who recounts Reynolds' love story, is introduced by the nameless main narrator as "a singular, brooding individual, and a man whose knowledge comes from elsewhere, outside the familiar metropolitan world," as Anindyo Roy well puts ("Telling Brutal Things" 201). Jessop is emphasized as a man different from other British people, who experiences the 'real' colonial horror and delivers its truth to the other four interlocutors. Jessop's interlocutors—the narrator, the ex-colonial; Alderton, the novelist; Pemberton, the poet; and Hanson Smith, the critic—who listen in London to Jessop's story about Reynolds remind us of Woolf's Bloomsbury friends, while Jessop resembles Woolf himself. Jessop's desire to see the 'real' can be related to Woolf's desire to represent the 'truth' that he had directly experienced in Ceylon, which his Bloomsbury friends could not understand, as revealed in their silence regarding *Stories from the East*. Questioning the Bloomsburian ethical and political liberal humanism that might simply endorse the privilege given to a colonial man and the undoubted freedom and choice of white men while "denying the life of the colonized" ("Telling Brutal Things" 210, n.30), Woolf did not totally agree with "the deeply entrenched orientalist impulse within Bloomsbury" ("Telling Brutal Things" 190), as Roy argues. In this line of thought, de Silva's classification of Woolf within Bloomsburian liberal humanism can be problematic. When de Silva identifies Woolf's liberal humanism with a Victorian Arnoldian liberal humanism where the priorities are given to "individualism, freedom, 'civilized' values" (136) and to "art [that] expound[s] and cultivate[s] these 'universals'" (136), which, as she asserts, makes Woolf "[return] to imperialist discourse" (136), she seems to ignore "a kind of modernist doubleness within the narrative" that employs "multiple narrators, characters, and dual fictional settings" ("Telling Brutal Things" 200). As Roy contends, by replacing the quest for the 'real' in his autobiography with love in "A Tale Told by Moonlight," Woolf discloses the impossibility of grasping the immensity and the essence of 'truth' by dramatizing the failure of Jessop's quest at the end of this story. This opens the possibility of making this story a modernist, anti-colonial text. Therefore, Jessop's, not Woolf's, collusion with a colonial quest for the 'real thing' or 'truth' unfolds, as the narrative exposes "Jessop's voyeuristic narrative" ("Telling Brutal Things" 202). Jessop's gaze brings about "the native woman's objectification via the projection of male desire" that is "necessary to uphold the white man's power and the power of the colonial State" ("Telling Brutal Things" 204).

Forster's language of love in "The Life to Come" begins, similarly to Jessop's, from highlighting the body; love "[has] been born to two human bodies as a midnight cry" ("Life" 65). But as opposed to the story of Reynolds, whose love does not originate, according to Jessop, from his physical attraction to Celestinahami's body, Forster's narrative from the beginning emphasizes carnal desire. As Norman Page points out, "an equation between sex and love" (39) can be problematic. Yet, as Reynolds' 'love' for Celestinahami is founded on dubious grounds, the homosexual and interracial encounter between Vithobai and Paul Pinmay is also established on a controversial notion of love. Vithobai, who visits Pinmay's small native hut "out of the darkness and smiling at him" ("Life" 67), is presented as a "gracious and bare-limbed boy, whose only ornaments [are] scarlet flowers" ("Life" 67). Like Celestinahami, Vithobai's native primitivism is noted by his nakedness, smile, and seductive sensuality. He also resembles Celestinahami in that he does not have a proper language to communicate with his beloved, Pinmay. Vithobai's love begins from his misrecognition of Pinmay's invitation of biblical love as that of Pinmay's love toward him. Yet, Pinmay's passion toward Vithobai does not emerge from a total misunderstanding. Pinmay's love-making with Vithobai happens because the former, "determining to win him[Vithobai] there and then[,] imprint[s] a kiss on his forehead and [draws] him to Abraham's bosom," when Pinmay sees "how intelligent the boy[Vithobai] [is] and how handsome" ("Life" 68). Pinmay submits himself to Vithobai's bewitching, irresistible power in the backdrop of the primeval forest, "so dark" and "so vast" ("Life" 65).

This dark forest where the interracial, homosexual encounter occurs is a symbol of a place of "a perfection and unity" (Hai 192). However, the forest is, like the cave in *A Passage to India*, "the site of separation, of desire that conflates erotic union with possession, incorporation, colonization," which yields to "an outsider's vision," being "broken by the advent of a seeing eye/I, the colonial visitor," as Hai reads(192). This "Arcadian setting" is relinquished to "a markedly historical domain where the bodies and setting are relentlessly inscribed within the harsh logic of colonial economic extraction and the authority of British civil rule" (Hai 126). The forest becomes barren as loggers and colonial entrepreneurs cut down trees, and the hut where Pinmay embraces Vithobai's naked body is torn down. Pinmay's ecstatic moments—"Darkness and beauty, darkness and beauty" ("Life" 65-66)—yield to his religious repentance as he joins other missionaries. Being "Paul [named] after a great apostle" ("Life" 67), Paul Pinmay, "who [has] preached that the Kingdom of

Heaven is intimacy and emotion" ("Life" 70), is transformed, however, into a tyrannical missionary "with the gloomy severity of the Old Law" ("Life" 70), as he "condemn[s], with increasing severity, the arts of his seducer" ("Life" 68). Subsequently, his colonization of the local natives is accompanied by the repression of his own homosexual desire for Vithobai and his determination to refuse Vithobai once and for all. After converting Vithobai into a Christian with that first sexual encounter and giving Vithobai a new name—significantly Barnabas, who accompanied St. Paul on the first missionary journey to Cyprus and Asia Minor, and was martyred in Cyprus—Paul Pinmay dismisses Vithobai who asks him to "'come quickly'" and "stroked Mr. Pinmay's flushed face, and tried to kiss his forehead and golden hair" ("Life" 70). In this scene, Pinmay's fear of Vithobai's body and Vithobai's seductive sensuality are dramatized by the contrast between the fully clothed Pinmay and the almost naked Vithobai—between Pinmay's "suit of ducks with shirt, vest, pants and cholera belt, also sun-helmet, starched collar, blue tie spotted with white, socks, and brown boots" and Vithobai's "cincture of bright silks [that] support[s] his dagger and float[s] in the fresh wind when he [runs]" ("Life" 71). As Vithobai's name needs to be changed into Barnabas, his body must be covered, 'civilized' by Pinmay. The name change is significant and crucial in the process of colonization, since "[t]he desire to name is akin to the desire to own and possess" (173), as Hai articulates. Similarly to Celestinahami, Barnabas is subjected to the desire of the colonizer, losing his own identity. The East becomes for Pinmay and Reynolds an exotic and romantic place where they can experience adventure and mastery. As Forster's personal experience with Kanaya, along with Woolf's experience with Ceylonese prostitutes, has suggested, desire in the name of love is "constituted by both attraction and repulsion" in their stories, "inextricable from and produced by the political unconscious" and "exacerbated by the inequities of power" (Hai 149).

Although I agree with Hai that Forster shows in "The Life to Come" how desire "in the context of power and inequality" can be "violent and corruptive" (Hai 150), it is difficult to assert that "there can be a contradiction between his agenda to speak the body and his liberal politics" (Hai 150). Although Forster's acknowledgement of the abusive power lurking within the interracial homosexual relationship prevents him from advocating his ideal of personal connection on the foundation of equity and harmony, Forster investigates colonial psychology and discloses his anti-colonial perspective by dramatizing *and* thus criticizing the asymmetrical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. As de Silva's critique of Woolf for his evasion of the problem in the colonial system, by "dissimulate[ing] it in the rhetoric of universal humanism" (50) is problematic, as argued above, so is the argument that Forster shies away from elucidating the political power play and exploitation. Hence, my opinion is diverged from de Silva; instead of being immersed in Bloomsburian liberal politics of imperialism, Forster, together with Woolf, does not "depoliticize literature"(de Silva 48). Instead of "an evasion and omission of locating the problem at its political source"(de Silva 50), I find in Forster's and Woolf's works liberal political consciousness, though it is not exactly identified with Bloomsbury liberalism. Roy's subtle reading that "Woolf articulates a troubling vision about the fundamental impossibility of holding onto a truly emancipator politics while continuing to defend the standard liberal position on the empire" ("Telling Brutal Things" 190) can also be applied to grasp Forster's ambivalent attitude toward interracial homosexual desire and love in the colonial environment.

The oppositional structure in the usual discourse on colonialism—the colonizer vs. the colonized, the civilized vs. the primitive, the knowing subject vs. the observed objecti—is undermined in Forster's and Woolf's narratives. The third encounter between Pinmay and Vithobai when Vithobai in his "soiled European clothes" again asks their union, saying that "God orders me to love you now," underscores Pinmay's hypocrisy as the colonizing missionary ("Life" 71). Pinmay's repudiation of Vithobai's body in favor of Christian, abstract love uncovers his collusion with the western metaphysical, Christian, and colonial quest. Debrah Raschke's deconstructive reading of Forster is relevant here: giving a preference to the body and thus "collid[ing] with Platonism" (120), Forster "challenges the modernist metaphysical quest" (127) and re-articulates the imperial horizon.

Pinmay's "command" to Vithobai not to mention their sexual encounter in the hut and even "the thought," along with his order to wait for his love while "'[obeying] all my[his] orders, whether given directly or through others,'" ironizes the biblical relationship between God and human beings ("Life" 72). Pinmay's playing God as the supreme legislator wielding the oppressive power upon the colonized conveys a stinging satire on the missionary's work in the colony. Furthermore, the missionary's cruel but self-deceptive defense against Vithobai's seductiveness discloses the deceptive nature of the colonial impulse. Pinmay's horror of his own bodily response to Vithobai and his fear of being alone with Vithobai indicates that not only the colonized but also the colonizer is affected by the warping system of colonialism. Serving God, Pinmay's missionary work assists an imperial duty of enlightening the barbarous locals, as revealed by Pinmay's sermon to Vithobai—"We do not want your kingdom. We have only come to teach you to rule it rightly" ("Life" 72)—, but this enlightenment ironically reveals the colonizer's self-deceptive blindness. Pinmay's manipulative postponement of his sexual union with Vithobai appears to be a metaphor of double-dealing British imperialism and two-faced Christian missionary work, and at the same time, disrupts the colonial stereotyped binary structure where the colonizer's integrity is contrasted with the colonized's dishonesty.

In a similar vein, Woolf's critique of colonialism is also not constructed in a simple binary oppositional way in "A Tale Told by Moonlight." Despite the binary structure between master and slave in Reynolds' idealization and Jessop's objectification of Celestinahami, Reynolds finds what he quests for—life, "to understand it, to feel it" ("Tale" 7)—not in the British colonizers' clubs but within a den of local prostitutes. Although this part can be read as Reynolds' othering of a mysterious colonized culture ripe for exploration, the reader cannot fail to notice Woolf's critique of the imperial British people in the colony. The white British colonizers are caricatured as "these fat flannelled merchants, fussy civil servants, and their whining wives and daughters" ("Tale" 7). As Roy reads, although Jessop's limitation is evident, since Jessop does not see the Ceylonese prostitutes' "queer pathetic stories" ("Tale" 9) to be a result of the British colonial system, "subsum[ing] their individual histories under his own orientalist pastoralism" (203), I find that Roy's interpretation of the scene where Jessop shares time with the prostitutes—"Jessop never clarifies whether the 'filth' he sees around the den existed prior to colonial rule, or was in reality produced by it"("Telling Brutal Things" 203)—needs to be supplemented. In my opinion, Jessop does acknowledge the empire's social and political responsibility for the "filth and smells" of the brothel, expressing that "our[British] civilization had attracted [them]" ("Tale" 9), which gives a moment of separating Jessop from other British interlocutors in this story. Although the brothel reminds Jessop of "the Arabian Nights" ("Tale" 9) and his understanding does not include deeper consideration of the historical circumstances of colonial rule that coerce these young women into a life of prostitution, Jessop is not limited to be a mere puppet of the colonizer. Nevertheless, Jessop's and Reynolds' understanding, along with Pinmay's, of the East as sensual, primitive, and slavish, and thus in need of enlightenment and exploitation, leads us to a further investigation into Woolf's and Forster's ambiguous dis/engagement in a colonial discourse.

III. The Specter of Death and Resistance through Mimesis

Reynolds' and Pinmay's 'love' in these stories leads to a violent ending. Celestinahami's death in the attire of a western woman calls for our attention, and makes us question Jessop's quests for the 'real' love. Similar to Reynolds' and Jessop's quests, Pinmay's imperial quest also turns awry as Vithobai commits suicide by jumping from the roof of his house after killing Pinmay. The spectre of death lingers from the beginning of the stories. The suicide attempts by Reynolds and Pinmay in the earlier part of Woolf's and Forster's stories are intriguing. Pinmay "scuttle[s] back for his pistol" ("Life" 66) to punish himself after the homosexual love-making with Vithobai. In “A Tale Told by Moonlight,” Reynolds’ suicide attempt by “[shooting] himself with a revolver” (“Tale” 10) occurs not when Reynolds realizes the impossibility of communication between Celestinahami and himself after living together, but when he thinks that he falls in love with Celestinahami. To both Pinmay and Reynolds, desire for the colored colonized seems to be such a prohibition that they’d rather choose to die, and Pinmay’s homosexual desire includes a further taboo. However, Pinmay cannot find his pistol because he “[leaves] it over with the servants at the further side of the great tree” (“Life” 66), while Reynolds cannot figure out the proper working of the revolver, “how to snap it[a piece of steel] back in order to get the cartridges in”(“Tale” 11). The shadow of death persists in both stories, as the ‘love’ between the colonizer and the colonized engenders unsatisfactory consequences.

In “A Tale Told by Moonlight,” Reynolds’ tale of ‘love’ becomes a tale of his disillusion. Reynolds begins to accept, while living together with Celestinahami, Jessop’s view of Celestinahami as merely “an animal, dumb and stupid and beautiful” (“Life” 12). Jessop repeatedly assures his listeners of Reynolds’ love toward Celestinahami, emphasizing the torment Reynolds feels due to his love for her; however, Celestinahami’s love for Reynolds is, in Jessop’s tale, compared with “the love of dogs and women, at any rate of those slow, big-eyed women of the East” (“Life” 12-13). Jessop’s master/slave narrative in his story of Reynolds and Celestinahami is problematic, since Celestinahami is stereotyped as a dumb seductive animal, while Reynolds is represented as “a civilized cultivated intelligent nervous little man” (“Tale” 12). Jessop does not, in looking at Celestinahami’s impassivity, show any consideration of a broader framework of colonial relations. Yet, Woolf’s complicated narrative does not endorse Jessop’s prejudiced view. Although Jessop is described as a man who “[has] rather a brutal manner sometimes of telling brutal things—the truth” (“Tale” 3), Jessop’s story of ‘love’ between Reynolds and Celestinahami does not deliver its truth. Back at home and away from the colony, Jessop begins to tell his friends about Reynolds’ love as one example of “two cases of *real love*” (“Tale” 6: emphasis added), repudiating his

British friends' notions of love merely as sentimental. However, his story of 'real love' between Reynolds and Celestinahami is little more than another story of a banal, sentimental love, the very love which Jessop repudiates with cynicism. As Hanson Smith—one of the friends who gather and listen to Jessop's story under the moonlight—summarizes, Jessop's tale unveils "[b]attle, murder, and sentimentality" ("Tale" 14), especially when Jessop finishes his story with Celestinahami's suicide.

Hanson Smith rightly points out Celestinahami's death as 'murder,' rather than suicide. However, his accepting of Celestinahami's story not as 'real,' but as merely 'sentimental' seems to represent white men's blindness to the colonial situation as well. Jessop's interlocutors, who at the beginning of "A Tale Told by Moonlight" debate the reality of love, seem to uncover the limitations of Bloomsburian liberal humanism, as exemplified by Hanson Smith. As Roy suggest, their discussions are "reminiscent of the discussions about the 'real' within the Bloomsbury group" ("Telling Brutal Things" 200). Despite Jessop's detachment from his interlocutors, it is difficult for the reader to identify the writer with Jessop. Even though the main nameless narrator introduces Jessop as a trustworthy man whom he likes, for the latter "[has] fished things up out of life, curious grim things, things which may have disgusted but which certainly fascinated as well" ("Tale" 3), Jessop's integrity as a man of truth becomes dubious at the end of this story, as Woolf obliquely criticizes his colonial prejudice against the colonized, especially Celestinahami. Jessop's sympathy with Colombo prostitutes stops at pity, retaining white men's superiority and assuring their own right to freedom.

Jessop "induce[s] Reynolds to go away" ("Tale" 13) when Reynolds gets tired of Celestinahami, awaking from 'illusion.' Under Jessop's guidance, Reynolds gives Celestinahami "a generous settlement" ("Tale" 13) and leaves for England without much guilt. Reynolds's taking "risks" on Jessop's advice—"tak[ing] the girl[Celestinahami] and see[ing] what you[Reynolds] can make of life with her" ("Tale" 11)—simply turns out to be a useful but unsuccessful attempt. For the western colonizers, Celestinahami's love is not so much important as negligible; their quest, experience, and growth, however, matter. Reynolds comes out of writer's block and acquires knowledge about 'life' and the 'real thing' after his 'adventure' into the East. However, Celestinahami's contact with Reynolds results in her suicide.

Ignoring Celestinahami's victimization, Jessop trivializes Reynolds' "immoral consideration" ("Life" 13) and generalizes the relationship between Reynolds and Celestinahami as simply ill-matched. Jessop's cynicism and candor seems to be valid only within the framework of the main narrator's British liberalism. Jessop's story of Reynolds' "real love" that is so "rare" turns out to be exactly what Jessop criticizes as the opposite of real love, merely "a flicker of the body" that "will be cold, dead, this time next year" ("Tale" 4; 6). Jessop's story manifests his self-deception, revealing his thinking to be trapped in British colonialism. Celestinahami's dead body that floats in the sea "'bobbling up and down in her stays and pink skirt and white stockings and shoes'"("Tale" 14) performs the function of accusing Reynolds' and Jessop's collusion with the colonial framework. Like Madame Butterfly, Celestinahami seems to be reduced to an exploitable exotic object that can be easily replaceable in the colonial capitalist market for white men's desire, experience, and their growth.

While the past cannot, for Jessop and Reynolds, be "immoral," since "it's done with, wiped out" ("Tale" 13), according to Jessop's imperialist logic, Celestinahami's and Vithobai's love cannot be easily revocable as a thing of the past. Their future is determined by their experiences with Reynolds and Pinmay. Celestinahami misunderstands Reynolds' unhappiness, as Vithobai does Pinmay's invitation and then the following refusal. Celestinahami ascribes Reynolds' change —his cruelty and unkindness—to the fact that she is not a white lady. Celestinahami tries to mimic "the white ladies whom she use[d] to see in Colombo"; "she [goes] and [buys] stays and white cotton stockings and shoes, and she squeeze[s] herself into them" ("Tale" 13). Celestinahami seems to lose her personal and national identities by her endeavor to look like a white woman. Her love is relegated to that of a slave, "the patient, consuming love for a master, for his kicks and his caresses, for his kisses and his blows" ("Tale" 13). Similarly, Vithobai's pathetic courtship perseveres, while much of his land is lost "in the sudden advent of civilization" ("Life" 73), and while the native culture—dancing, the agricultural economy, and indigenous religion—are stifled under Pinmay's influencing power. Vithobai gradually loses his kingship as a chief and is forced to marry "a native catechist from the adjoining valley," "a girl inferior to him by birth" because "the missionaries [have] selected her" ("Life" 73). Like Celestinahami, his freedom as well as his dignity appears to be totally deprived as the colonizing process progresses.

Although no longer wealthy, Vithobai offers a horse and cart as a wedding gift to Pinmay after five years have passed, and asks the latter to go on a drive. Pinmay condescendingly grants Vithobai's request, though "[a]s a rule he[Pinmay] [does] not choose to be seen pleasuring with a native" because "it undermine[s] his authority" ("Life" 74). Their conversation during this drive allows the reader to notice Forster's satire on colonialism. From Pinmay's perspective, his rule contributes to eradicating vice, superstition, and intertribal war. When Vithobai mentions that the disease among the miners threatens the natives' health, Pinmay retorts, with an absurd argument, that "so do[increase] our hospitals" ("Life" 74). Pinmay's religious defense also resembles the colonizers' reasoning with their duty as civilizers; "under God's permission certain evils attend civilization" ("Life" 74). While Pinmay looks down on Vithobai/Barnabas as "a spiritual inferior" ("Life" 75), relieved to find that "[t]he brown hand [of Vithobai], lying dead for an instant in his own, [awakes] no reminiscences of sin" ("Life" 73), Vithobai implores Pinmay to accept his love, since "[his] body and the breath in it are still yours[Pinmay's], though you[Pinmay] wither them up with this waiting" ("Life" 75). Vithobai's plea to "[c]ome into the last forest, before it is cut down" ("Life" 75) and make love to him is totally ignored; now being assured of his authority and Vithobai's submission, Pinmay finally asserts "Never" ("Life" 75). Like Celestinahami's absolute submission, Vithobai's total surrender to the colonizing Pinmay seems to mark the completion of the colonizing process.

However, Vithobai's resistance to the colonizing power begins to emerge.

Vithobai protests his exploitation—"[f]irst the grapes of my[Vithobai's] body are pressed," "silenced" ("Life" 76), and then punished—, and "[jerks] himself out of the cart" ("Life" 75) without replying to Pinmay. Despite Vithobai's sensible reaction, Pinmay finds it "startling" and "disgusting" ("Life" 76), because for him "[i]t [is] a most uncanny movement, which seem[s] to proceed direct from the will" ("Life" 75). This incident "shock[s] him[Pinmay] more, because he [is] unprepared for it" ("Life" 73). Pinmay's inability to understand Vithobai's reaction, as unveiled in this articulation of his perplexity and total incomprehensibility, reveals the former's blindness to his own guilt and to Vithobai's ability to revolt against him as well.

A dramatic reversion of the roles in the last section, subtitled "Morning," of "The Life to Come," manifests Vithobai's refusal to be victimized by the colonizing process, though with much irony. When another five years have passed, Pinmay and his family are busy with preparing their departure from the colony, while Vithobai is dying of consumption contracted from the imported workers. Colonial entrepreneurs not only exploit the natural resources of the natives in the name of civilization but also bring the disease accompanied by that civilization. However, ignorant of the damage to Vithobai, Pinmay "[can] not really feel much sorrow when he learn[s] that the unfortunate fellow [is] dying" ("Life" 77). Pinmay has not had to meet Barnabas/Vithobai during those five years, as "the chief's usefulness decrease[s] as the community develop[s] and new men pushe[s] their way to the top" ("Life" 77). Visiting Vithobai, with a light heart and thanking God "for permitting Barnabas . . . to pass away at this particular moment" ("Life" 78), Pinmay for the last time reluctantly embraces Vithobai, promising him the 'life to come.' Vithobai, on the rooftop of his "lofty but small modern house" where he has moved in, "suitable to his straitened circumstances" ("Life" 77), is, as Pinmay visits, "the dying man," "coughing gently, and *stark naked*" ("Life" 78: emphasis added). This variation on the opening scene where Pinmay is initially seduced—or, rather so Pinmay thought—by Vithobai's nakedness ironically brings about another misunderstanding of Vithobai's. Pinmay's consoling remarks—"He[God] will give us other opportunities. We have erred in this life but it will not be so in the life to come" ("Life" 81)—induce Vithobai to believe their love will be fulfilled "'[i]n the real and true sense'" ("Life" 81) in the 'life to come.' Shouting "'Life, life, eternal life. Wait for me in it'" ("Life" 81), Vithobai stabs Pinmay through the heart. And Vithobai takes his own life away by "[swooping] like a falcon from the parapet in pursuit of the terrified shade" ("Life" 82).

By killing Pinmay, Vithobai "[has] sent a messenger before him to announce his arrival in the life to come, as a great chief should" ("Life" 81). As if in a sexual act, "mounting on the corpse [of Pinmay]," Vithobai "climbe[s] higher, raise[s] his arms over his head, sunlit, naked, victorious, leaving all disease and humiliation behind him" and flies from the parapet ("Life" 82). Sending Pinmay to the world of the dead before him, Vithobai seems to achieve a final victory over Pinmay. As Hai shrewdly points out, Vithobai's last word—"Wait for me in it" to Pinmay as he kills the latter—is "an ironic counter to Pinmay's false promise of 'Not yet' and 'Never'" (148). His use of "a doubleness of language," utilizing the colonial violence contained in that language, promises to Pinmay "both erotic reunion and mastery" (Hai 148). Dominic Head's critique of Forster in this story is also convincing; Forster, dramatizing Vithobai's protest, "indicates how the colonialist's ideas can be appropriated to unleash unexpected counter-forces," while showing "how the strictures of colonialism are mutually damaging to colonizer and colonized" (88). Vithobai's final and glorious act suggests the inevitable crack that lurks within the seemingly tightly guarded colonial system. The colonial system is not impregnable, nor is the hegemonic space of a white, male territory. Repeating but ironizing Pinmay's promise of the 'life to come,' Vithobai conquers his love and restores his authority. By mimicking Pinmay's exploitative behavior, and repeating the colonizer Pinmay's equivocal language of enslavement, Vithobai exposes the fragility of colonial power.

Celestinahami's death similarly uncovers a lacuna within the self-sufficient imperial scheme of white men that is dissimulated as benign. Material compensation given when Reynolds deserts her does not guarantee Celestinahami's freedom and life, running counter to Reynolds's reasoning. Roy's perceptive interpretation is quite appropriate; Celestinahami's suicide signifies "a symbolic act of defiance against the entire colonial civil and legal apparatus fashioned in order to secure the privilege of the white man" ("Telling Brutal Things" 205). Her dead body in the attire of a white woman is "a far cry from the orientalist image of native women" ("Telling Brutal Things" 205). In fact, her resistance to colonial containment of her body and soul seems to begin ironically from her mimicry of a white lady. Celestinahami adopts western accoutrements to restore Reynolds' 'love' for her when they live together. However, as Roy reads, "Reynolds's loss of interest in the western-attired Celestinahami highlights the need of the western man to preserve the image of the exotic object" ("Telling Brutal Things" 205-206). Hence, Celestinahami's imitation of a white woman in the western outfit may signify her refusal, though feeble, to remain an exotic Asian woman. This caricatured body of Celestinahami allows the reader to recognize native agency, although Reynolds is blind to it. While "Celestinahami's strange dilemma of simultaneously being the exotic object and a 'respectable' wife to the western man" ("Telling Brutal Things" 206) is poignant, along with Reynolds' witting or unwitting infliction of the colonial violence on her, Celestinahami's protest, albeit unconscious, against the exoticism imposed by white men is also emphasized. In a similar fashion, Vithobai's mimicry of Pinmay's language of love at the end of "The Life to Come" disrupts the British colonial scheme, by transforming the English language, "a very particular medium of power," into "the language of *both* colonizer and colonized" (Hai 162: emphasis original). Vithobai's mimicry of the colonial subject, refashioning the master's discourse, seems not to consolidate but to dismantle the voice of imperial power.

Celestinahami's mimicry of white women as manifest in her dead body in the western garments, together with Vithobai's linguistic and ideological mimicry of white men, can be understood in what Homi Bhabha calls "[t]he ambivalence of mimicry," which suggests that "the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal" (131). By uncovering the mimicry of the colonized, Woolf and Forster make the reader "radically [revalue] the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history" (Bhabha 131). However, my reading of the mimicry in Forster's and Woolf's stories cannot be totally understood within the framework of Bhabha's notion of mimetic ambivalence, which puts emphasis on the colonial writer's unconscious split perception of colonial condition. Rather, I argue that Woolf and Forster understand the problems and politics of colonial representation and seek consciously to address them in their fiction. Hai's critique of Forster's *A Passage to India* can be applicable to our reading of both Forster and Woolf; "[a]s an anti-colonial colonial text, confronted with racial alterity and the intensely warping force of colonial signification amid unequal power relations" (162), their narratives "examine the dangers of its power to construct that other, showing how language in Anglo-India can cause injury, and struggling to find an alternative idiom" (162-63).

The echoes of Celestinahami's death haunt the British interlocutors as well as Jessop, as Jessop's narrative stops and the story returns to the original scene in London. Finishing the tale with Hanson Smith's reproof of Jessop's corruption－"You're as bad as the rest of them" ("Tale" 14)－and the interlocutors' going to bed, Woolf seems to grasp the porosity of the boundaries between the empire and the colony. As Hai's concluding remarks on "The Life to Come" summarize, Vithobai's final act is impelled not "simply by a romantic desire" or "by a vengeful desire to reverse the exploitation and servitude," but "by the inextricability of both" (147), which also suggests the entangled desire between the metropolitans and the colonized. In both stories, the "cultural and political *exchanges* between the conventional colonial centre and periphery" (Boehmer 171: emphasis original) are inevitable, which opens up the possibility of shifting borders between the British metropolis and the colony, in the contact between the West and the East. Although Celestinahami's defiance, together with Vithobai's, is only "obtained through self-annihilation" (Roy, *Civility and Empire* 163), which delivers pathos to the reader, the sad destinies of the colonized do not merely serve "as markers of an itinerary of colonial traffic" (*Civility and Empire* 167). My focus is different from Roy's; the dramatization of the life and death of Celestinahami and Vithobai highlights the unavoidable responsibility of the colonizer, instead of revealing it to be "securing the primacy of the colonial man's freedom to make a 'choice' and to take a 'risk' in securing a future for himself" (*Civility and Empire* 167). Woolf and Forster seem to excavate British colonial history that reaches back to Britain's encounter with the colonial East and to expose stereotypical misunderstandings in the colonizing desire, which they try to undercut by dramatizing the larger story of colonial violence perpetrated under the guise of civil rule.

IV. Concluding Remarks

There are some orientalist, racist descriptions in the characterization of Vithobai and Celestinahami as well as in the colonial settings in Forster's and Woolf's stories. Furthermore, Woolf and Forster seem to focus on male experiences, risking complicity with colonial desire that is often founded on paternalism. Woolf's narrative places Celestinahami at the edge of the homosocial community of Jessop and his friends. Similarly, Forster's narrative focuses on the homoerotic desire between men, reducing the male characters' wives merely to a backdrop. However, if the colonialist logic is sexist and heteronormative, the homosocial and homosexual prioritization in their narratives may leave a potential place for alterity subversive to the colonial desire. Despite Orientalist thinking lurking in their narratives, de Silva's view of Woolf and Forster as "[falling] prey to a type of Orientalist discourse" by "[replicating] the dominant ideology of imperialism" (170) is not tenable. Rather, de Silva's favorable view of Forster's *A Passage to India* can be applied to the stories of Woolf and Forster: each writer "incorporates into [his] tale of empire social and political discourses that undermine the stability of the empire and the colonial way of life" (168).

As John Beer notes, Forster is often "criticized for not having voiced his criticisms of British rule more directly" (x). However, in "The Life to Come" Forster does not marginalize politics. Instead of avoiding a political voice which might be "dismissed as a dangerous and foolish subversive" (Beer x) in early twentieth century England, Forster, in this posthumously published work, articulates his complex investigation into interracial homoerotic desire and violence in the colonial context, though he does not give the colonized the place of the narrative center. Likewise, Woolf's debunking of colonialism in his story can be found, as opposed to the more direct anti-imperialism in his social criticism, in the margins of his narrative. Nevertheless, disclosing the harmful effect both to the colonized and the colonizer in the erotic and cultural intimacy between them, Woolf and Forster acknowledge the distressing reality of colonialism and criticize it in their intricately weaved narratives, with their artistic subtlety. Furthermore, they attribute, to a certain degree, agency, authority, and humanity to the natives in their stories. Their exploration of the subversive possibility in the colonial context seems to uncover a porous boundary between the empire and the colony, admitting the mutual influence between the colonizer and the colonized, however asymmetrical it can be. We can grasp what J. M. Rawa calls "double turns" in both "A Tale Told by Moonlight" and "The Life to Come"; while both stories are not absolutely free from "[t]he *Western quest* [that] often emerges from the context of imperialism" (Rawa 1: emphasis original), they "subvert the imperial quest and thus the imperial project" (Rawa 1-2), owing to their being "[m]odern and subversive narratives" (Rawa 2). Woolf, along with Forster, "both reinscribe[s] and subvert[s] the imperial quest scheme" (Rawa 6). The two writers' performative double consciousness does not reduce their stories merely to the reinscription of the imperial self-aggrandizing discourse; rather their narratives turn to resist that totalizing colonial desire. Woolf's and Forster's narratives can expose, undo, and deconstruct colonial discourse through complex narratives that are engaged in indirection, irony, and subversive mimicry.

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Abstract

Undoing Colonialism from the Inside: Performative Turns in the Short Stories of Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster

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This paper begins from reading seemingly colonial quest narratives in the short stories of Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster side by side. Focusing on the erotic encounter between the colonizer and the colonized in the travel narratives of Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster, we take a glimpse of the imperial gaze and colonial violence inflicted on the colonized. The capitalist economics of the British Empire exclude the body of the colonized and its specificity, while reproducing the stereotyped images of the colonized. However, Jessop's narrative that focuses on Reynolds' quest for a 'real life' while trivializing Celestinahami's victimization in "A Tale Told by Moonlight" unveils a narrative lacuna. Similarly, Paul Pinmay's pursuit of 'the life to come' that is performed with his desire for power over Vithobai in Forster's "The Life to Come" ultimately reveals a colonial porosity that ironizes the colonizer's desire. The spectre of death that persists in both stories discloses the possibility of the subversion of the power relationship seated in the colonial quest. The ambivalent mimicry of the colonial paradigm by Celestinahami and Vithobai destabilizes Reynolds's and Jessop's as well as Pinmay's racist and capitalist economy, revealing the Western characters' complicity with the imperial project. Woolf and Forster undo colonialism, adopting literary devices such as double narratives, irony, satire, and mimicry. They explore the dynamics of colonialism from the inside and disclose the violence of colonial desire and, at the same time, open up a possibility of subversive resistance from the colonized.

■ **Key words** : colonialism, E. M. Forster, Leonard Woolf, erotics of power, subversive mimicry
(식민주의, 포스터, 레너드 울프, 권력화된 성애, 전복적 모방)

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