(BE)LONGING AND/OR NATION

A POSTCOLONIAL-DIASPORIC READING OF THE NARRATIVE

IN JOHN 4:1-42

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For Anna and Asher

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Chapter 1

(BE)LONGING AND/OR NATION

The idea of *nation* fundamentally invokes senses of (be)longing, displacement, and community for people and thus offers a source and a site of belonging to these senses. The idea of *Nation* is also a powerful decolonizing force for resisting colonial domination as well as an effective organizing tool for newly independent, post-colonial nations.[1] Moreover, the concept of *nation* offers a sense of solidarity and a site of (be)longing among the diasporic communities during their physical and psychological separation from their homeland.[2] As a way to reconfigure such displaced conditions and identities, postcolonial nations and diasporic communities constantly forge narratives of nation through elaborate cultural,

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[1] Scholars argue that nation is a decolonizing tool and organizing principle during and aftermath of colonialism. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (trans. Constance Farrington; New York: Brove Press, 1967); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1983); Benedit Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Ngugi wa Thiong, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967); Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries: race, nation, gender, colour and class and the anti-racist struggle* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial conquest* (London: Routledge, 1995); C. L. Innes, "Forging the Conscience of Their Race: National Writers" in *New National and Post-Colonial Literature: An Introduction* (ed. Bruce King; New York: Clarendon Press, 1996); And Elleke Bohemer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2005).

[2] Scholars also argue that the idea of nation is a source and a site of belonging for immigrants, diasporas, and refugees. See Andrew Geddes and Adrian Favell, eds., *The Politics of Belonging* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate,1999); Stephen Castles & Alastair Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Sheila L. Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); And Flemming Christiansen and Ulf Hedetoft, eds., *Politics of Multiple Belonging* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004).

ideological, and political discourses. I argue in this project that the Gospel of John is a competing narrative of community that resonates such a narrative of nation.

Johannine scholars have argued that the Gospel of John is a product[3] or a producer[4] of a community that articulates its identity in the midst of its estrangement or displacement from the hegemonic society. This work traces the recurring desire for a community articulated in the Gospel, and presents the argument that the Gospel of John imagines a community, similar to discourses of nation, through forms of religious, territorial, ethnic/racial, and gender representations. More specifically, it argues that the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman in John 4:1-42 is an enabling narrative or a foundational story of this community. In other words, it argues that the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in particular and the Gospel of John in general, are narratives that have been intentionally forged to imagine and articulate a community of the disciples that *has yet to become manifest*.

In support of this argument, this work situates the Gospel of John in the genre of nationalist literature and examines it through the lens of postcolonial-diasporic realities and theories. Within this framework, it addresses questions relevant to

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[3] See J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Raymond E. Brown, *The community of the beloved disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Jerome H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in social –science perspective*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); And Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

[4] Tat-Tsiong Benny Liew, especially, argues for the role of the gospel of John in the production or formation of the community referring Jacques Derrida's suggestion in *Writing and Difference*, that writing does not passively record social "realities" but in fact precedes them and gives them meaning through a recognition of the differences between signs within textual systems. See Tat-Tsion Benny Liew, "Ambiguous Admittance: Consent and Descent in John's Community of 'Upward' Mobility," in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power* (eds. Musa Dube and Jeffery Staley; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 193-224.

diasporic, immigrant, and refugee communities in the United States and elsewhere, in their quest for a space of (be)longing in light of the Gospel of John. It examines these questions by exploring traces of the Gospel's articulation of community, highlighting its totalizing and coercive claims, and uncovering its lucidly contained subversive utterances.

Postcolonial-Diasporic Understandings of Nation

As it emerged in the context of Roman colonial domination and displacement, the Gospel of John is a text of the colonized and displaced. I read the Gospel in light of perspectives of identity reconfiguration of colonized Diasporas, especially as expressed in postcolonial national narratives. Diasporas are generally defined as members of "expatriate minority communities."[5] They are those who live at a distance from their original/ancestral center, but maintain the customs and memory of their homeland. Most definitions also include the notion that Diasporas believe that they will eventually return home. However, it is not sufficient to understand diasporic communities merely as immigrant minority communities experiencing physical separation and displacement. Indeed, James Clifford argues that diasporic

[5] Safran argues that diasporic communities are made up with people who (1) have been dispersed from an original center to two or more peripheral setting, (2) preserve a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland, (3) believe that they are not or cannot be fully accepted by their host country, (4) consider their ancestral home as their ideal home and a place of eventual return, at the appropriate time, (5) have a sense of commitment to the maintenance and restoration of their homeland, and (6) maintain a relationship to the homeland to the extent that their communal consciousness and solidarity are shaped by it. See William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 83-99.

communities also experience a *negotiative* or *transitive*[6] process, which often results in an identity crisis. He contends that in this process Diasporas are simultaneously bound and encompassed by the norms, values, and identities of both host and homeland countries, yet often identified as members of fringe communities with norms and values antithetical to each society

Because Diasporas live at the margins of both societies, they tend to imagine and construct forms of community consciousness and solidarity which are uniquely different from those delineated in the dominant discourses of their homeland or host country. In turn, this situation often keeps them at odds with both nation states. Thus, as their situation precludes them from identifying with the dominant discourse of home or host country, diasporic communities are forced to imagine a third way – a community of *difference*. These communities often develop via a process of struggle and negotiation between the competing voices from both homeland and host country. Through these struggles, Diasporas find ways to live inside their host country, but with a communal identity that may be significantly different from the national norm.

Because their communities exist and flourish between the traditional national and/or ethnic identities of the home and host countries, the identities and values of Diasporas are often "unsettled." That is, these factors - identity and values - tend to shift between host and home parameters at different points on the continuum and at different times – even though the dominant discourses of both nations often attempt to root people within clearly-defined and homogenized boundaries. These shifts in

[6] James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (1994): 302-38.

identity and values may often be felt as a sense of being "un-rooted." Interestingly, it is this sense of being un-rooted in either system that allows Diasporas to develop a critical perspective that, in turn, provides the framework for them to question the stability of models of belonging or narratives of traditionally imagined communities which may be based on clearly defined categories such as territory, ethnicity/race, and gender.

Indeed, as Homi K. Bhabha notes, it is through this sense of being un-rooted or unsettled that these displaced or border people develop the potential to engage in "the task of unhousing received ways of thinking about the world and discovering the hybridity, the difference that exists within."[7] In other words, each literal and figurative border is a place of constant movements, crossings, and trespassing – all of which disturb the rigid territorial boundaries and the conventional patterns of thought codified in the traditional discourse of nations.

The living reality of these constant crossings also tends to have the effect of blurring the concepts and boundaries that appear to be rigid and binary features of the dominant national discourse. Thus, border crossings contribute to the destabilization of the rigid boundaries and representations of dominant nationalist, colonialist, and patriarchal discourses. Also, as border people live in the "grey area" between nations, the key features of each of the communities forged by the dominant discourse of both nations often become comingled. This intermingling provides further support for the

[7] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 5.

development of alternative patterns of thought and forms of representation that may in turn, further destabilize the dominant discourses of nation or belonging.

Ultimately, from the diasporic perspective, national discourses are seen as fluid narratives of belonging or displacement in the context of wide-ranging movements of people, in specific social locations, and/or under postcolonial conditions, rather than as stable and unified narratives of the communities. The Alternative community identities based on diversity and difference, rather than on uniformity and hegemony, may emerge from this perspective. These identities are often more reasonable and more consistent with the realities of life.

(Be)longing and/or Nation

a. The Concept of Nation

Timothy Brennan argues that *nation* is a "condition of belonging, or longing for form,"[8] that is deeply rooted in feelings of displacement, the establishment of boundaries, and a commitment to a particular identity. From this perspective, nation, becomes a process which Michael Foucault has called a *discursive formation* of a community that has yet to fully realize.[9] Following Foucault's argument, a nation is a

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[8] Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form" in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin: London: Routledge, 1995), 173.

[9] Foucault intends the term to mean more than an allegory or imaginative vision of discourse. Rather it is a gestative or formative process for the materialization of the subject discussed. See in Michael Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Trans. Alan Sheridan; London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 130-132.

process of narration by which an *imagined community,*[10]especially one invoked by physical and psychological displacements, is re-configured and articulated into a real community that has form and substance. This way of framing the concept of nation, is particular resonant for diasporic communities, because for these communities, nation is not just a decolonizing tool, or an organizing force of the defeated against external threats, or even empires, during the colonial era. Rather, in the context of diasporic communities, the idea of nation also represents a contested place/space in which displaced and fragmented identities are actively negotiated in their search for a space/place of belonging.

Globalization inevitably leads people to forge multiple, displaced and contested identities. Indeed, the notion of globalization itself suggests the decline of the idea of a stable citizen who spends most of his or her life in one country and shares a common national identity. However, Shela L. Croucher argues that globalization is exactly what enables "national imaginings" by providing conditions and mechanisms to do so.[11] In the process of forging a community among the diasporas, the idea of nation, therefore, persists to be an important image or symbol, providing a source and site of (be)longing, even though the momentum of

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[10] Benedit Anderson has called nations are *imagined communities* for which promise structure, shelter and sequence of individuals by forming a 'deep, horizontal comradeship' among the people through the function of specific forms of narrative. He argues that nation is imagined because the members of even he smallest nation will never know, meet or hear of most of their fellow-members. Yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. Nation, therefore, is an imagined community because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived a deep, horizontal comradeship. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* 6-7; 25.

[11] Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 85.

globalization (characterized by global markets, transnational corporations, regional and supra-national bodies, and a new pervasive international culture) continues to expand and increase.

In a context of globalization, nation is increasingly understood as a *sentiment* of solidarity among diasporas that invokes a sense of (be)longing and offers strategies to help them cope with their psychological and material displacement and disruption.[12] Homi K. Bhabha suggests that nation is a "form of cultural elaboration" and that culture is most productive when it fills the void left by the uprooting of communities, and turns that loss into the "language of metaphor."[13] This conceptualization of nation, one that is more closely associated with cultural or communal identities rather than with political affiliation, continues to have an impact on the process of identity negotiation in the age of globalization. Croucher therefore argues that the very "malleability of nationhood" itself explains the persistence of the idea of nation in the transnational or trans-global context.[14]

Even so, globalization increasingly leads to inequality and new forms of social exclusion that particularly and severely affect minorities. For minorities, the formation of an imagined community is often the result of experiences of exclusion from mainstream society. Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson argue that ethnic mobilization for the imagining of an alternate community is often a reaction to the

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[12] See disscusions in Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging, 3ff,* Castles and Davidson*, Citizenship and Migration*, 122ff.

[13] Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," in *Nation and Narration* (ed. Homi Bhabha; New York: Routledge Books, 1990), 200.

[14] Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 112.

social, cultural and political exclusion experienced by immigrants, indigenous peoples and other minority group members.[15] They also suggest that the process of establishing such alternate communities is often considered threatening to the status quo. In the context of this perceived threat, discourses that include the notion of assimilation for immigrants have been replaced by discourses which promote ethnic pluralism or multiculturalism. Unfortunately, both of these types of discourse tend to undermine the idea that cultural belonging is a necessary accompaniment to political membership in favor of political expediency.

For example, the practice of ethnic pluralism, such as was promoted by President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society Program," conveniently attributes economic and social problems to particular ethnic/racial groups and thus, allows ethnic/racial polarization to increase. Since it conveniently locates the root of social problems in differences of ethnic/racial or cultural backgrounds, and thus it avoids seeing the social and political inequality in our society. Similarly, the discourse of multiculturalism, or what Gerard Delanty calls a "society of strangers,"[16] tolerates and allows the maintenance of homeland cultures and languages by ethnic communities *in so far as* they do not pose threats to the hegemonic political and cultural interests. As a result, the rhetoric of multiculturalism pivotally associates with political expediency, easily glossing over fundamental issues of unequal power relationships that invoke a need for such tolerance and integration. In this way,

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[15] Castles and Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration*, 129.

[16] Gerard Delanty, "The Limits of Diversity: Community Beyond Unity and Difference" in *Politics of Multiple Belonging*, 46.

multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism, which are often merely vehicles designed to allay the anxiety, and perhaps address the xenophobia of the mainstream society become "model(s) of management rather than of genuine integration."[17]

Consequently, in the context of the so-called "global terrorism," the dominant nationalist rhetoric of the United States and many contemporary European countries such as France and England, communities based on ethnic diversity or other alternate commonalities are increasingly seen as dissident elements that threaten the "nation."[18] They are treated as forms of fragmentation that pose a threat to the "nation" that is based on the ideology of a new people not united by a common ancestry, but by a "consent" galvanized by the ideas of freedom, equality, and opportunity. The end result of this contentious situation is that, due to either a sense of anxiety or longing, both hegemonic and immigrant communities actively define and imagine a nation out of a desire to forge a community, while simultaneously contesting each other's claims of legitimacy.

b. The Concept of Belonging

The rhetoric of *(be)longing* has been historically coupled with the politics of nation-building, ethnic or cultural homogenization, minority assimilation, and national defense. Even so, scholars conceptualize belonging in many differing ways

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[17] Delanty, "The Limits of Diversity,"45.

[18] See James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, *Global Terrorism* (2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2008), 102-128; K.R. Gupta, ed., *Global Terrorism (*New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2004), 1-28; and Rene A. Larche, ed., *Global Terrorism: Issues and Developments* (New York: Nova Science Publisher, 2008), 13ff.

ranging from an describing it as an innocent feeling or an imaginary construct, to understanding it as a theoretical outlook, or even as a real-life practice.[19]

Scholars have increasingly argued for an idea of (be)longing as a construction involving several levels of abstraction that undermine the notion that one belongs simply or ontologically to the world or to any group within it.[20] They suggest, for instance, that a rhetoric of (be)longing that includes factors such as identity and community involves processes of "defining, negotiating, promoting, rejecting, violating, and transcending" the individual and communal boundaries.[21] As both the dominant narratives and the discourses at the social margins actively construct imagined communities through such articulations of (be)longing, the idea of *(be)longing* itself represents a site of identity negotiation and cultural contestation.

The idea of *(be)longing* has been a key component in political discussions of integration that have been used by the colonizer and the colonized alike as a force

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[19] Hedetoft argues four categories of belonging in following: 1) Sources of belonging - locality and the familiar, the materials, the building blocks of belongings; 2) Feelings of belonging - identification and memory is a process of a positive identification with those building blocks in a context of distances, a practice rather than a theory, realization of being and belonging. In this stage, it begins to lose its innocence; 3) Ascriptions/constructions of belonging - nationalism and racism. Institutionalization of individual, cultural and political interpretations of identity. In this stage it institutionalizes belonging in the form of passport, citizenship, ethno-national versions of historical memory, draws boundaries of sovereignty between us and them (in the process of producing exclusivist alterity forms), and transforms concrete place into "abstract (imagine) territoriality, and reinterprets familiarity as nationality and strangers as aliens – in other words, imposes homogeneity and ascribes belonging articulated with full of organicist, racist discourses; 4) Fluidities of belonging - due to increasing realities of globalism and cosmopolitanism, territoriality is becoming de-territorialized, and essentialized and thus categories of identity are contested. See Ulf Hedetoft, "Discourses and Images of Belonging: Migrants Between New Racism, Liberal Nationalism and Globalization" in *Politics of Multiple Belonging*, 24-26.

[20] Vikki Bell, *Perfomativity and Belonging* (New York: Sage Publications, 1999), pp. 1-15.

[21] Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging,* 41.

(either colonizing or decolonizing) in the history of colonialism.[22] This is because the idea of *(be)longing* not only signifies the notion of boundaries, but also signifies, as John Crowley suggests "commitment, loyalty, and common purpose" and articulates "a form of xenophobic or racist exclusion."[23] A rhetoric of (be)longing then, especially within the larger discourse of a particular national (be)longing, necessitates and implies boundaries and also violates boundaries as it attempts to forge its exclusive community and identity,.

On the other hand, the ongoing processes of migration and globalization broaden the understanding of (be)longing to a particular nation that is based on the idea that group membership is based on a confined territory, or common history and culture. This expanded or fluid idea of group membership offers immigrants a cipher through which they can actively forge their place/space of (be)longing. As previously mentioned, the increasing momentum of globalization has contributed to a reconfiguration of the idea of nation.

Likewise, globalization has contributed to the replacement of the idea of a (be)longing based on rootedness with the idea of a (be)longing that is mobile, fluid, and multiple. Understood and experienced in this way, the meaning of (be)longing challenges the deterministic understanding of an imagined community as an inheritance that belongs to a particular location, tradition or group. Instead, it enables people to be active agents in fostering subjectivities by which they wish to identify

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[22] Christiansen and Hedetoft, "Introduction" in *Politics of Multiple Belonging*, 1.
[23] John Crowley, "The Politics of Belonging: some theoretical consideration" in *The Politics of Belonging*, pp. 17-18.

themselves. It also fosters an idea of (be)longing that is multiple and changing, and which eventually becomes a source and site of struggle and negotiation, as well as an avenue for transgressing and traversing porous frontiers of cultures, identities, boundaries and histories.

This project reflects the process in which I have come to wrestle increasingly with my own identity negotiation, through the mediums of reading and writing. I was born and raised in postcolonial Burma, and migrated to the United States. I currently live in a community of diasporic refugees. This social location has allowed me to approach this project with postcolonial-diasporic sensibilities. These sensibilities have allowed me to bring both a critical awareness and caution to this discussion of the idea of *nation* as a model of belonging and a site of identity negotiations among diasporic communities.

Growing up in a postcolonial nation, Burma, I have experienced the good, the bad, and the ugly aspects of *nation*. As a postcolonial-diasporic person, I am positioned to see both the *promise* and *danger* of nationalist discourses. For instance, whereas the Burmese national discourse can be credited with infusing people with the evolutionary spirit in the face of colonial assault, it has also been used to marginalize the country's ethnic minorities causing *de facto* territorial disputes, arm struggles, and ethnic conflicts after the colonial era. Similarly, whereas the idea of *nation* has been imposed, as a model of belonging, on the immigrant population in the United States, it has been also used to define "the rightful people" (read: "true Americans") and to decide who may or may not belong to the American community.

In this project, I take on a role of facilitating the articulation of those voices that have been marginalized, displaced, and silenced in contesting narratives of belonging or nation. I believe the perspective of the minorities, who live on the 'border', or on the margins of different nations and identities, is critical and indispensible for intellectual and social change. Only from such positions, can one question the dominant forces of hierarchy, uniformity, and hegemony, and propose alternatives such as equality, diversity and difference. In doing so, I hope to fully and unapologetically insert the voice of the diasporic community into this discussion in an attempt, as Fernando Segovia insists, to create a dialogue that "ceases to be a matter of recuperation and exhibition," and becomes "a matter of ethics and politics."[24] This work then, engages the task of interpreting the Gospel of John as part of my intellectual mission to promote liberation and social change, and to refuse to be marginal in matters concerning real situations and people. To these ends, this examination of the Gospel of John is conducted, consciously and intently within a postcolonial-diasporic framework.

As I am gradually embracing my newly acquired hyphenated identity as an Asian-American, my research project has become more than an intellectual exercise. It has also become a part of my intellectual journey to reconfigure and reinvent my own identity. The act of reading and writing, particularly in this work, thus became a catalyst for my own self-discovery through the process of articulating subject(s) with

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[24] Fernando F. Segovia, "Reading-Across: Intercultural Criticism and Textual Posture" in *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 67.

which I hope to identify myself at this liminal stage. The need to forge my identity has predictably influenced my interest and approach to the Gospel of John. The Johannine articulation of a community in their colonial displacement after the collapse of their ethnic/national identity markers, their temple and their land, brings me to the heart of my research – a sense of longing to belong.

When the Gospel of John claims the disciples of Jesus live in "this" world, but they do not belong to "this" world (John 8:23; 15:19-20; 17:6, 11), and advocates for a space of worship that transcends earthly spatial places (John 4:21), it resonates with the rhetoric of (be)longing for immigrants and the displaced who live inside of the dominant culture but who actively distinguish themselves from that culture. Seen from this perspective, the Gospel of John is a displacement narrative(s) which emerged in a diasporic context - a (con)text of contestations in which feelings of (be)longing(s) were actively articulated and forged by its narrative construction of the community.

This work presents the argument that the Gospel of John, and in particular John 4:1-42, advocates for an imagined community that transcends any territorial confined notion of community. In other words, it promotes the notion of a community in which the outsiders or the displaced are the ones who actually belong. As a discourse of (be)longing, even in its narrative of *placeless place*, the Gospel is constrained by its requirements that members of its imagined community adhere to a clear boundary and a decisive community commitment .These factors would seem to qualify the Gospel and its narratives as exemplars of a traditional community discourse.

However, this work also argues that by clearly marking the parameters of the community as well as the identity of the members, the narratives contests and struggles with competing cultures, identities, boundaries, and histories. Based on these struggles, which appear to be similar in content and structure to those at the heart of diasporic communities and identities, this project also presents the argument that the Gospel of John is *a discourse of margins,* in which the imagined claims, boundaries, and identities of the competing communities (i.e., the Romans and the *Ioudaioi*; the Samaritans and Jesus' disciples), contrast, contest and collide with each other. In other words, the Gospel of John is a narrative of the displaced that displaces its *Other* in its articulation of community and its rhetoric of (be)longing.

Nation and Narration: *Reading The Gospel of John as a Nationalist Discourse*

Scholars often see nation as an abstraction that nationalists and elites have constructed to serve their partisan ends, but which lacks tangibility or natural character. For example, Ernest Gellner argues that nations have no roots in the ancient world because nations, as we understand them today, are merely the products of ideas that have largely developed from the perspective of western modernity.[25] On the other hand, many other scholars who have examined the phenomenon of nations in antiquity argue that modern nations are really the political and ideological

[25] See Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 1-5. In addition, scholars such as Benedit Anderson also consider nation to be the product of 18th Century modern development. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp 37-45.

developments of ethnocentric, cultural, and spatial orientations that have been present since antiquity.[26]

Scholars, such as Anthony Smith, argue that *nation* is a broader and more defined expression of "ethnic belonging"[27] with a real, tangible base. For Smith, it is this feeling of "ethnic belonging or "kinship with the extended family or ethnic group that distinguishes nation from every other kind of group or community. Moreover, nations are articulated in reaction to the real or perceived threat of the *Other*, which is often fostered by social, economic and/or political instabilities and anxieties. [28] These conditions, that trigger the ethnic-national mobilization such as warfare, immigration, territorial, religious and cultural invasions, and sudden economic disruption are not solely modern artifacts. In fact, they can be traced back to the time of the Roman Empire. [29]

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[26] See Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism, (*New York: Macmillan, 1946); John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism (*London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Anthony D. Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004); Adrian Hastings*, The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Mashe Aberbach & David Aberbach, *The Roman-Jewish Wars and Hebrew Cultural Nationalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); And Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

[27] Smith, *The Antiquity of Nation,* 182.

[28] Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 201.

[29] For example, Dommelen argues that in the case of the Punic under the domination of the Roman Empire, ethnic-national movements, however verbally inarticulate, existed as a cultural resistance. A strong Punic cultural or ethnic identity was defined in opposition to or by exclusion of Roman material and cultural influences. Such a "silent or inarticulate resistance" is grounded in cultural and ethnic pride, or nationalist ethos, offers a convincing explanation of the armed uprising of 215 BC in the Campidano plain of west central Sardinian. See Peter van Dommelen, "Punic Persistenc: Colonialism and cultural identities in Roman Sardinia" in *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* (eds. Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry; Landon: Routledge, 1998), 25-48. See further also in Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 186ff.

The concept or articulation of *nation* should not be rigidly confined within time, nor should it be constricted to modern western models or constructs. To circumvent this issue, some scholars have suggested that concept of nation needs to be broadened. For instance, in their book, *Asian Forms of the Nation*, Stein Tonnesson and Hans Antlov point out that non-western ideas of *nation* do not fit easily into the western models. They argue that in the Asian articulations of *nation*, there is very little emphasis on territory, residence, legal community, mass citizenship, civic culture, or any of the categories typical of the western forms of *nation*. Rather, they argue that "nation", as widely articulated among Asians, is the result of "the fictive genealogical ties, vernacular culture and religion, nativist history and popular mobilization."[30] From this perspective, the idea of belonging to or the feeling of longing for community enables the possibility of imagining a community and thus the core of national existence which must be analyzed in a broader concept of *nation* according to different historical and social contexts.

In *Narration and Nation*,[31] the authors of the book examine an intimate relationship between the idea of *nation* and the act of narration. Timothy Brenan, furthermore, suggests that nation is a "discursive formation" of an imagined community or political structure, which artists and writers are consciously building or articulating due to the lack of its presence.[32] Fredric Jameson argues that narrative is a

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[30] Stein Tonnesson and Hans Antlov, "Introduction" in *Asian Forms of the Nation* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), pp. ii-v. See also in Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations*, 134.

[31] Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London, Routledge, 1990).

[32] Timothy Brennan, " The National Longing for Form," 170.

process of [national] "form – giving," of writing a plot into history.[33] Through their narratives, nationalist writers, especially under colonialism, strive to articulate the imagined community of the people, and believe that their works harmonize national ideals and values by realizing the realities of the nation. These writers, such as Frantz Fanon, were convinced that the narrative claim of national interest, embodied by the nationalist literature, was "a divine right to be fought for and protected."[34]

Literature concerning nation, in its forms and narrative modes, not only reflects but also produces the contemporary social, economic, ideological and political conditions and contexts. The worldliness of the text (or how the text is related to the culture in which it was born) insists that one view *narratives of nation* not simply as innocent intellectual articulations, but as a product and producer of its particular society. The majority of Third World texts, therefore, can be read concurrently with nationalist narratives that reflect socio-political conditions during and after colonial dominations. Moreover nations, often seen as imaginary constructs, do depend on an apparatus of cultural traditions and fictions for their existence- an existence in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role.

One example of the way in which literature functions in society can be found in the work of colonial era Burmese writers. Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Laureate and a current political prisoner in Burma, argues that the emergence of modern Burmese literature is not only a product of British colonialism, but also an expression

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[33] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65.

[34] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 145.

of "feelings and aspirations" which constituted the foundation of the Burmese nationalist movement.[35] Burmese literature, particularly in the context of colonized Burma, was a reflection of current views and values, and thus the writers did not confine themselves to exclusive intellectual circles removed from the public at large. Burmese literature served to shape social and political opinion by utilizing cultural apparatus to articulate new ideas and provided concrete verbal form to "feelings and aspirations" which might otherwise have remained at an inchoate level in the minds of many readers.

There are four characteristics of Burmese nationalist literature written under colonialism, that may further shed light on understanding of the role of literature under colonialism, especially the Gospel of John, and how it is intermingled with religion, politics, and culture. First, the sentiments of early nationalist writings were covertly expressed in religious terms and personalities as Burmese culture is intimately, and perhaps indissolubly, connected with a particular religion - Theravada Buddhism. Second, the authors' nationalist spirit was pervasively expressed in terms of their efforts to inject new vigor into Burmese literature by adapting it to the current situation rather than commenting on issues through overtly political writings.[36]

Third, the Burmese nationalist discourses emerged as competitive and comparable to the literature of the British colonizers due to the underlying dynamics

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[35] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear* (rev. ed. London: Penguin Books, 1995), 157.

[36] Thakin Kodaw Hmaing's *Boh Tika* (1913) illustrates the concern and warning over Burmese women marrying foreigners. U Latt's *Shwpyiso* (1914) introduces the image of a young westernized Burmese, Maung Thaung Pe, who has just returned from England as a newly qualified barrister and urged 'the Burmese to preserve their culture from the corrosive effects of westernization.

of colonial power relations.[37] Fourth, these nationalist literatures are embedded with an ideology focused on revitalizing a particular race and culture, and asserting unity out of diversity.[38] In light of Burmese postcolonial literature, the nationalist discourses can be better understood as representations of socio-cultural life more than the discipline of social polity or simply ideological construct.

This project suggests that the Gospel of John is a narrative of nation. Specifically, it is a Hebrew narrative, that configures and contests its multiple (be)longings by defining, negotiating, essentializing, denying, transgressing, and transcending the boundaries of identities and communities. As a narrative of the displaced community in a context of the colonial/imperial realities and domination, the Gospel of John re-invents an imagined community as an alternative to the Roman Empire, resonating as a decolonizing nationalist discourse.

In chapter 4 of the Gospel of John, the Samaritan woman invokes the past history, territory, and culture of her people as a way to re/claim the authority or the authenticity of worship which rests primarily upon the claims of and to the native cultural or national identities of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans (John 4:21-3). The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman in John 4 reveals intentions and characteristics similar to those expressed in the nationalist writings of the colonized. Since the

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[37] The first Burmese novel, *Maung Yin Maung Ma Me Ma* (1904) was partially adapted from the Count of Monte Cristo which quickly became popular with the reading public. The novel gave birth to new approaches and innovative styles that led to marked changes away from classical traditions in Burmese literature.

[38] Novels such as *Myat-le-shwe-daboh* (1921) by *Zeya and Ye Myanmar* (1931) by U Thein Maung, which are set in the ethnic clashes between the Mons and the Burmese, promote the spirit of unity among the different races of the country.

Gospel of John, as a discourse of the colonized, strives to reclaim and restore cultural and historical elements that have been distorted, disfigured, and destroyed by the colonizing ideology and operation. The Gospel of John therefore, can, and should be interpreted as an *enabling discourse* of the community of Jesus' disciples in the context of the colonial Roman Empire.

Reading the Gospel of John for Decolonization: *Postcolonial-Diasporic Approach*

In this section, I propose postcolonial theoretical and methodological approaches to reading the Gospel of John, which provide the basis for my interest in and purposes for this project. In the heyday of British imperialism, Lord Cromer, a British nobleman, compared the British Empire with the Roman Empire and proclaimed that the "empire was the main title which makes us [British people] great… and of which we [British people] are so justly proud."[39] Scholars, moreover, were also eager to explore and investigate the history of imperial Rome for any facts or commentaries that might be of service to the modern British Empire.[40]

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[39] P. A. Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 110.

[40] Ramsay MacMullen comparatively highlights the imperial expansion that had led to unifying of diverse cultures in both Roman and British empires. He puts:"If we imagined the British Empire of a hundred years ago all in one piece, all of its parts touching each other, so one could travel….from Rangoon to Belfast without the interposition of any ocean, and if we could thus sense as one whole an almost limitless diversity of tongues, cults, traditions and levels of education, the true nature of the Mediterranean world…would Strike our minds." See Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), xi. Richard Jenkyns also argues that there are three kinds of influence of classical traditions on modernity: 1) Constitutive Influence that provides basis or necessary condition. For example, Renaissance architecture is inconceivable without classical models; 2) Auxiliary influence that provides support or coherence of modern literature. For example, Seneca as a model for English revenge tragedy; 3) Decorative influence that provides elegance of surface, pretext, starting-point. See Richard Jenkyns *The Legacy of Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 2ff.

The Roman Empire undoubtedly became the precedent for Western empires in general and the British Empire in particular. Thus, there are similar claims between the two empires that they were divinely destined to govern in the interests of the subjects.[41] In addition, both empires had clearly established their territorial and political domination in a large part of the world,[42] and both had extended their own civilization and their cultural domination.[43] More importantly, the colonization process had always been an integral part of empire building in both Roman and British empires.

Postcolonial reading is critical to forming an understanding of how identity, power and knowledge are configured during and after colonial dominations. This type of reading is also key in understanding the continued impact and influences of colonialism, as well as how these factors are reconfigured in different forms to fit current situations. Postcolonial reading is relevant here, because the Gospel of John is a post/colonial text that was written by colonized elite(s) under the shadow of Roman imperial/colonial domination. The Gospel was an attempt to reconfigure and reconstruct communal, cultural, and thus national identities in terms of a communal ideal or an imagined community or a space of (be)longing. The Gospel of John, is also one of the texts in the Bible – a powerful cultural symbol of British colonial

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[41] Sir John Ruskin, in his Inaugural Lecture 1870, summoned his fellow citizens to take up the colonizing mission saying "there is a destiny now possible to us – the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. See also in Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 13.

[42] Ramsay MacMullen comparatively highlights the territorial and political expansions of Roman and British empires. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, xi.

[43] See further discussion on similarity and differences between Roman and British Empires in Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes*, pp. 110- 130.

domination. Thus it has been a key cultural weapon in the establishment and perpetuation of the colonial enterprise. One can, therefore, aptly use postcolonial theories to examine the de/colonizing intent, language, and ideology that are not only embedded in the Gospel, but also in its interpretive traditions which are dominated by the colonizing Christian West.

Among critics, the term *postcolonialism* is highly contested regarding its definition, theoretical framework and the style of its approaches. Many scholars caution that the term *postcolonialism* should not be seen as either part of linear history or as a binary axis of power and time.[44] This understanding implicitly leads to a premature celebration of the end of colonial domination and tyranny, even though the dynamics of colonization may still exist or be transfigured to different forms, such as in continued effects of mental colonization and unequal relations of political power and wealth.

The on-going and growing unequal economic and political relationships between the former colonizing nations and former colonized nations attest to the *de-facto* colonial power relationship of domination and subordination. Moreover, the continued and intensified dynamics of domination, exploitation, and conflict remain as legacies of colonialism among the postcolonial nations. For the purposes of this work, *postcolonialism* is defined as a critical analysis that takes into account not only to the dynamics of covert colonial power and domination, but also to their continued

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[44] McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (1995), Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonialsim and Biblical Interpretation* (2004), and Boehmer, *Stories of Women* (2005).

effects on current global power relations which are manifest in violence, conflicts, poverty, and anarchy among the post/colonial nations.

Underlying this definition is the notion that postcolonial nationalism, which fundamentally emerged as an opposition to colonialism, does not end the colonial power dynamic of domination and subordination. Rather, it renders the understanding that nation is a counter-productive discourse of colonialism and which can be both an emancipatory alternative and a factor that maintains the colonial status quo. Conversely, the postcolonial configuration of nations is much more flexible, and depends on who is doing the configuring and in what context. Therefore, it requires one to conceptualize nation *beyond* a binary understanding of it as either an emancipatory force or dominating principle.

Indeed, postcolonial conditions are exactly what render the analytical perspective of nation as a hybrid construct. They alert one to be vigilant in identifying multiple nuances and implications embedded in the rhetoric of nation. Therefore, *nation*, and thus its discursive formation, must be interpreted through multiple perspectives enabled by attendant gender, imperialist, nationalist, insurgent, and diasporic discourses.

Postcolonial nations, after all, emerge as a result of the intermingling of people, cultures, and traditions due to the impact of colonialism. The constant movement across the borderlines of postcolonial nations due to immigrants, indentured laborers, refugees, and displaced communities, remind us of the fact that there is no such a single postcolonial-reality aftermath of colonialism. The

hermeneutical task presented by such diverse conditions and concerns as identity, territory, displacement, community, and migration, in turn, signifies a critical departure of postcolonial biblical criticism from historical-critical interpretations of the Bible.

Postcolonial diasporic positions or conditions enable one to realize, as Bhabha puts it, "all systems of knowledge, all views of the world, are never totalizing, holy or pure, but incomplete, hybrid, and perspectival."[45] The postcolonial conditions signified by hybridity, marginality, instability, impurity, movement, and fluidity, inform the epistemological and interpretive perspective that views identity, belonging, and community as multiple, fluid, contested, negotiated, and hybrid constructions. Postcolonial-diasporic biblical criticism, therefore, questions the myth of objective or neutral truth which has occupied the historical-critical reading of the Bible and has limited the task of biblical interpretation to one of engagement with issues that matter in real life and in real situations.

The drawback of using postcolonial theory lies in its abstract and highly theoretical approach due to its amalgamation of theoretical frameworks informed by deconstruction, post-structuralism, and postmodern criticisms. Critical tools, without a political or ethical commitment can lead to interpretations that unwittingly repeat the dominant discourses that decolonizing readings reject. For instance, the interrogation of the colonial/imperial tendencies, ideologies, and epistemologies intrinsic in the biblical texts does not necessarily lead one to interpret these texts with

[45] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 13.

decolonizing intent. Rather, this type of reading examines the pervasiveness of colonialism or imperialism in the biblical texts, but fails to address the needs and wants of the people in its findings. As a result, postcolonial theory without an ethical commitment has the potential to further marginalize biblical interpretations from real life and situations.

Biblical interpretations that relate to real life depend on the reader's perspective and thus are epistemologically grounded in particular socio-historical circumstances. Laura E. Donaldson rightly comments that liberating strategies or knowledge must arise from the concrete historical circumstances of each oppressed group. From this base, she argues that one cannot dismiss any strategies per se without some concrete knowledge of each particular situation.[46] Therefore, it is crucial to define the purpose, perspective, and interests of each interpretation in a way that foregrounds its interpretive landscape and asserts one's right to intervene and be involved in the production of meaning in that particular context. In the following sections, I will discuss the methods of the postcolonial-diasporic approach to biblical texts that will be used as analytical and conceptual tools in reading the Gospel of John for decolonization.

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[46] Laura E. Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminism: Race, Gender, and Empire-Building* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 9.

Agency of Speaking with/for Subalterns

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines the *Subaltern* in postcolonial terms as "everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern - a space of difference."[47] In her controversial essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she problematizes a construction of "speaking position" for the subaltern by postcolonial intellectuals and critics. Spivak argues that the *Subaltern*, as a collective agency assigned by the academic, cannot speak, and when "they" speak out and reclaim their collective identity, "they" inevitably re-inscribe their marginal position in the society.[48] In this sense, in speaking for the "Subalterns," postcolonial intellectuals re-inscribe the imperative mode of colonial domination that assumes the "cultural solidarity" among a heterogeneous colonized people. Spivak, therefore, cautions postcolonial intellectuals that they must learn the fact that "their privilege is their loss."[49] She argues that this is because they inevitably take on the position of accomplices by using the masters' tools and ground rules in their works.

Unfortunately, an assumption of unconditional difference between academic centers and marginal subalterns, forecloses the possibility of a profitable use of the theory for the marginalized group. Rather, there is the need to blur the unbridgeable gap between intellectualism and the subaltern perspective. As a minister and a member of the diasporic refugee community, my social location informs me

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[47]Leon de Kock, "Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa." *A Review of International English Literature*. 23(3) 1992: 29-47.

[48] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak , "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (eds. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg; Basingstrok, 1988), pp. 271-313.

[49] Spivak , "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 28.

otherwise -- that I can be both an intellectual and a subaltern. In other words, my social location, which is also a source of my recognition, provides me the agency not only to speak for, but also to speak with the subaltern immigrant/refugee communities. I read the Gospel of John, therefore, in a way that articulates and discerns the unique, contested, and imagined claims of diasporic communities, which are, at times, claims *against* one another. It is an intentional attempt not to valorize the assumption that experiences of the margins constitute an unknowable and untouchable space in the production of hegemonic cultural meaning.

Frantz Fanon warned against undermining the ability of the marginalized to critically discern their situations. He argued that, "everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you really want them to understand."[50] To aid in this understanding, the postcolonial-diasporic interpretation of the Bible relativizes the rigid boundaries created between the academia and margins by interpreting the Bible as a tool for the self-representation of the diasporic communities. This project, acknowledges the void left by the uprooting of communities, articulates the place lost as a result of their displacements, and highlights the voice of the marginalized - not only in the narratives of the Gospel of John, but also in the contested discourses of contemporary Diasporas. After all, writing itself is a gesture of providing concrete verbal forms to ideas, feelings, and aspirations which otherwise would have remained at an inchoate level in the minds and lives of many people.

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[50] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 152.

According to R. S. Sugirtharajah, the strength of this hermeneutical endeavor is best measured by "the cause it serves and the protection it offers to people who are at the receiving end of the system."[51] If this is so, then one must cautiously weigh the theoretical imposition on the text, as well as the practical and sustaining effect of those narratives on people's lives. This implies that the Gospel of John is not only a text, but also a tool that enables Diasporas to address crucial issues while forging their own space/place of (be)longing in the dominant discourse. The aims of this postcolonial-diasporic reading of the Gospel John, therefore, are to effectively address questions relevant to immigrants, diasporas, refugees and minorities, creatively turn their feelings of loss and longing into the language of hope, and thus, unapologetically intervene in the production of cultural meaning by the dominant discourses.

Reading Between the (Con)texts, Boundaries, Identities, and Margins

The aim of nationalist discourses is to create a single community out of difference - that is, to convert the 'many' into 'one.'[52] In the search of unity as the foundational stories/fictions or narratives, stories of nation impose absolute claims of homogeneity, collectivity, and originality, in order to produce what appear to be coherent and comprehensible forms of community. A narrative of *nation*, therefore, is an ambivalent narration, in that it concomitantly accomplishes the acts of

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[51] R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 197.

[52] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 130.

"subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding" in relation to communities.[53] While acknowledging the Gospel of John as an alternative discourse written by colonized people under Roman domination, the Gospel must also be seen a discourse for a particular community that inevitably asserts the "one" by suppressing its contending "many."

The Gospel of John forges its imagined community with the rhetoric of unity that ignores ethnic/racial, cultural, and territorial specificities (John 1:12; 3:16; 4: 21; 10:16). Its coercive agenda needs to be unveiled and uncovered in order to decolonize the Johannine discursive practice that asserts "many into one." To see the Gospel of John as a hybrid text in which dominant and dissident claims are co-existent and susceptible to each other is a crucial step in decolonizing the text. This project therefore intends to discover the "many" in the "one" constructed by the Gospel of John. The process of reading between the con/texts, lines, alternatives, and boundaries constructed and promoted by the gospel is indispensible in order to uncover the coercive reality it c/overtly proclaims.

a. Blurring the Con/texts: *Inter(con)textuality*

The word – (con)text –visually reminds us of its coterminous relationship with texts. Postcolonial literary critics, especially Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, have pointed out the inter(con)textuality or worldliness of a text underscoring the fact that

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[53] Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: narrating the nation" in *Nation and Narration* (ed. Homi Bhabha; New York: Routledge Books, 1990), 3-4. See also in Edward Said, *The World, the Text and Critics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 172.

texts are an institutionalized system of forces or products of non-literary socio-political forces.[54] Literary texts are intended to create, to narrate and more importantly to have effects on non-literary contexts. As literary texts participate actively in creating and changing the non-literary world, the so-called non-literary "contexts" have power to influence and affect literary texts. The majority of the biblical texts that were produced in the successive colonial (con)texts, inevitably bear the impact of its dominant non-literary (con)text – colonialism.

Writings by the colonized within the territorial colonial context emerged as a resistant discourse. Scholars have argued that these writings, especially under British colonialism, show a profitable use of the dominant texts, paradigms, assumptions, representations and ideologies of the colonizers, and in that the colonized writers effectively turn against them.[55] In and through such discursive practices of repetition of the colonizer's discourse with difference, or the appropriation of dominant cultural practices, colonized writers asserted their intercultural and hybrid demands and questions against dominant colonial ideologies. A repetition or appropriation of the colonized itself becomes a form of cultural criticism and intervention in hegemonic

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[54] Said argues that "texts are a system of forces institutionalized by the reigning culture at some human cost to its various components." See Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 3. Spivak further equates textuality and imperialism since she argues that "all narratives – fictional, political, and economic – construct themselves (like empire itself) by suppressing, or marginalizing, competing possibilities, viewpoints or material." See Gayatri C.Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" in *Postcolonial Criticism* (ed. Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley; London: Longman, 1997), 146.

[55] See further discussion on the colonized's appropriation of the master's tool in Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, especially the essay "Signs Taken for Wonders" 145-174. See also in R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), ix-x.

production of cultural meaning in the context of colonialism. This profitable use of the master's tool thus opens up another postcolonial space for the negotiation of cultural authority.

The Gospel of John, as a text of the colonized, is inevitably affected and influenced by the dominant discourses of Roman Empire. In its repetition and appropriation of dominant discourses of its (con)texts, the Gospel participates and intervenes in the business of production of the cultural meaning of the time. In order to examine the Gospel's inter(con)textuality, Virgil's *Aeneid*, especially the narrative of Aeneas and Dido in *Aeneid* 4, is read as a dialogue partner to help understand the inter(con)textuality of the Gospel of John. The *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John are inter(con)textually linked as the texts or products of the same social fabric -- Roman colonialism. Virgil's *Aeneid* is arguably one of the most definitive and influential literary works that articulate the Roman identity, and justify the existence of the Roman Empire. The inter(con)textual analysis of these texts can further illuminate of the Gospel of John as a *competing* as well as *comparable* text to the dominant imperial/colonial discourse – Virgil's *Aeneid*.

b. Complicating Issues of Race/Ethnicity in Biblical Interpretation

R.S. Sugirtharajah criticizes current biblical scholarship for its lack of focus on the needs and wants of people, and for generating "artificial needs, convoluted the

biblical histories, and complicated textual reconstruction."[56] Generally, biblical scholars are reluctant to discuss race and ethnicity as part of the substance of their work. Indeed, questions concerning ethnicity/race are often assumed to be of little importance in biblical texts and thus are in/advertently marginalized. For instance, in the interpretive tradition of the Gospel of John, the issues of race and/or ethnicity are implied, but are not interpreted in light of our contemporary context.[57] Many biblical scholars avoid addressing the issues of race and ethnicity by claiming that these issues are contemporary problems that are irrelevant to or non-existent in the biblical texts. Given the ugly and worldwide history of cultural and institutionalized racism, and the continued racial/ethnic discriminations, tensions and stereotypes, their silence toward such crucial issues in their interpretations of the Bible seems to imply their tacit acceptance, and even an approval of, status quo racial or ethnic relations.

However, minority biblical scholars seem to be able to engage in this interpretive task. Unfortunately, they seem to be the majority of scholars who recognize the importance of racial or ethnic issues in the context of current biblical

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[56] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonialism and Biblical Interpretation*, 197.

[57] Leon Morris interprets that "a woman of Samaria means a member of the "race" that inhabited the general area." He further argues that "it was imperative that this light shine to *others* than Jews. See Leon Morris, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1921), 256ff. Craig Koester's interpretation of symbolism of water would convey in the context of acknowledged national differences that 'the living water imagery helps convey the idea that Jesus offered a gift that would remove that "taint" from the Samaritans and bring them into the worshiping community. See Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, and Community* (2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 188. Such readings alludes the tendency of the interpretive mode that avoids or mitigates issue of race or racism, while bringing own stereotyping practice, and assumes the text as a model text for racial/ethnic reconciliation by privileging one party at the expense of another.

scholarship.[58] As this work presents a decolonized reading of the Gospel of John, it necessarily addresses issues of race/ethnicity. Evidently, and perhaps ironically, this means that I take on the role of a minority group member, as implicitly assigned by the current biblical scholarship community and culture. Regardless, the inclusion of these factors in this work represents a commitment to issues that matters to real people and situations. I am also fully aware of the need to include the voice of *Other* in minority discourses in order to make the conversation more meaningful and effective.

Ethnicity and race are both modern concepts that have meanings and associations that are constantly changing. In fact, scholars have increasingly argued that the terms *race* and *ethnicity* are constructions, underscoring their conceptual instability as opposed to the notion that either factor is fixed or fluid.[59] For the purposes of this paper, the terms *race* and *ethnicity* are use interchangeably, and represent interlocking conceptual and discursive categories. Part of the purpose of highlighting the interchangeability of these terms and their underlying concepts is to

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[58] Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Water* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), *Stony Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), *Race, Racism and the Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2002); Brian Blount, *Then the Whisper put on Flesh: New Testament Ethnic in an African American* Context (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); Shawn Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology, and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (New York: Routledge, 2002), esp. 211-222; Vincent Wimbush, *The Bible and African Americans: A Brief History* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2003); And Tat-siong Benny Liew, *What is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics?: Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008).

[59] Scholars such as Ann Stoler, Irad Malkin and Jonathan Hall argue that rather than race/ethnicity is understood fixed or mutable notion, they underscores that these terms are always under negotiation and flud as discursive categories. See Ann Laura Stoler, "Racial Histories and their Regimes of Truth," *Political Power and Social Theory* 11 (1997), 198; Irad Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 15; And Jonathan Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9-17.

intentionally invoke their ambiguity and the inexactness of their meanings and usages, especially in understandings of early Christians or Johannine community.[60]

The Roman writers often use the word *ethnos* to refer to non-Romans or at least non-standard Romans.[61] The Greek word *ethnikos*, from which the English "ethnic" and "ethnicity" are derived, is defined as "gentile," or "heathen," especially in Christian literature (Mathew 5:47; 6:7; 3 John 7).[62] Therefore the noun *ethnos* was used to refer not just to a specific group of people but also to a general "*Other*." Moreover, the term *ethnicity*, developed as an alternative to more biologically based understandings of the human race in scholarly discussion in the mid-twentieth century.[63] Therefore, neither *race* nor *ethnicity* can be understood as conceptual categories without referencing each other. After all, both *race* and *ethnicity* are invoked not only to designate a class or group of human beings who share a common identification, but also to classify humans in ways that support programs of ethnic cleansing, genocide, colonialism, slavery, and class exploitation.

Although race is not an invention of imperialism, it quickly became a source of support for the promotion of western imperialism.[64] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths,

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[60] In terms of early Christianity, Lieu and Buell also argue ethnicity/race are interchangeable conceptual categories to understanding of early Christian self-definition. See Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Osford University Press, 2004), 20-22; and Denise Kimber Buell, *Why this new race* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1-18.

[61] See Werner Sollors, "Who is Ethnic" in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, pp. 219 -220.

[62] William F. Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, trans. & eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2nd ed. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 218.

[63] See further discussions in Buell, *Why this new race*.

[64] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "Race" in *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998), 198ff.

and Helen Tiffin argue that race thinking "is inextricable from the need of colonialist powers to establish a dominance over subject peoples and hence justify the imperial enterprise."[65] This is because it classifies and thus hierarchizes human society based on supposed biological similarities or differences. Race thinking or the "categorization of human types," therefore, supports the colonial hierarchal practice of creating binary distinctions between civilized and primitive peoples. This colonial hierarchization of human groups often recurs at the demise of territorial colonialism as a palimpsest of nationalist ethnic/race reasoning.[66] Such colonial race/ethnic thinking is reused to set "norms and limits" of the emerging imagined communities forging national unity and deciding who may or may not belong to 'the people.'

Nationalism often supports racism by privileging one racial/ethnic group above another as the nation's most "legitimate" or "true" people. Todd Gitlin argues that throughout the history of the United States, the question of race has been "the wound in all American Dreams."[67] Racist practices and ideologies were crucial to the formation of the United States as a nation: the violent dispossession of the Native Americans, the inhumane exploitation of slaves from Africa, the forceful incorporation and subordination of Mexican Americans, and the outright discriminatory laws against Chinese and other Asian immigrants.

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[65] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, "Race," 199.

[66] See further argument on this in Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. Chris Turner; London: Verso, 1991), 43.

[67] Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 27.

In the context of such discriminatory and racist formations of the nation, the discursive slogan of “nation of equals” and “American dream” of freedom, equality and prosperity, became an agreement to conform to Euro-Anglo culture, and thus inadvertently became an ideal designated for ‘white’ people only. Nationalist discourses, in this case, wittingly or unwittingly legitimate and authorize the formation of the imagined community of unequal relationships in which racist tendencies are reproduced, expanded, and reactivated.

I argue that the Gospel of John, a foundational narrative or story of imagined communities, delineates the origins of its community to accomplish acts of affiliation and establishment by asserting disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation. Through its narrative quest for an alternate or imagined community, the Gospel invokes the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification in the context of Roman Empire.

In search of the collective identity and teleology of the imagined community, however, the Gospel also turns the difference of place into the sameness of space, territory into tradition, and people into one (John 4:1-42; 10:16; 11:52). It, therefore, forgets, displaces, and omits its own contending differences – the communities of either *Ioudaioi* or Samaritans, and peoples its imagined community anew with an exclusive and progressive rhetoric. The place that the Johannine Jesus prepares for his disciples, after all, is exclusively accessible only to the disciples (John 14:6b). Thus, the Gospel of John reflects nationalist discourse as it implicitly and covertly promotes the interests of one particular group while claiming to represent the whole.

c. Mingling Boundaries of Ethnicity/Race and Gender

Elleke Boehmer argues that the female form has long been deployed as "a repository of value in patriarchal societies" and in turn, nation narratives maneuver the female figure to stand for the national territory and for national values. [68] Scholars have problematized such gendered construction of nation, or nationalist discourses, arguing that they function as a "masculine drama" based on gendered and unequal images of family roles[69] and seek "a masculine aspiration, hope and desire."[70] In their attempts to reconfigure national and cultural identities in the wake of the post/colonial era, narratives of imagined communities have widely used female figures or characters to promote the identity, unity, and continuity of the communities.

The discursive practice of mingling issues of race/ethnicity and gender is relatively minimal, especially among biblical interpreters.[71] However scholars from other disciplines, such as Laura Donaldson, Elleke Boehmer, and Anne McClintock, have underscored the need to address the issues of race/ethnicity and gender in an integrated fashion.[72] These scholars argue that the female figure is used, especially in

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[68] Elleke Boehmer, "Motherlands, Mothers and Nationalist Sons: Representations of Nationalism and Women in African Literature," in *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial* (ed. Anna Rutherford; Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992), 245.

[69] Bohemer, *Stories of Women*, 6.

[70] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 354.

[71] Scholars such as Jean Kim and Mira Morgenstern have underscored the need to examine the use of women in nationalist discourses, especially in the Bible. See further in Kim, *Women and Nation*; and Mira Morgenstern, *Conceiving a Nation: The Development of Political Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 2009).

[72] See Elleke Bohemer, *Stories of Women*(1992); Laura E. Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminism* (1992); Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries* (1992); And Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (1995).

many nationalist discourses, as "the determinate subject"[73] that signifies the ethnic difference or other to establish the authenticity, identity, and unity of its imagined community. A discursive practice of nationalist discourses symbolically defines the limits of national/ethnic difference in terms of women or gender differences between women and men. The issues related to race/ethnicity and gender are therefore of interlocking concern for a decolonizing reading of the nationalist discourse.

The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in chapter 4 is an example of a narrative that deploys a discursive practice which mingles ethnicity/race and gender. It strategically maneuvers the private or personal history of the Samaritan woman to be reflective of the public or national history of her people. I argue in this project that the body of the Samaritan woman is used as a discursive persona of the imagined community and is thus is a source and a site of identity or community formation.

The Gospel of John, like other nationalist literature of patriarchal societies, is a male-centered and ultimately patriarchal discourse. There is therefore, a need to question and investigate how female figures are domesticated to signify the identity of its imagined community, how they are disseminated to further the masculine desire, and eventually how they are dismissed from full participation in the imagined community.

[73] Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, 6.

d. Reading Difference *Within* the ‘Minority’ or ‘Margins’

Jacque Derrida argues that one of the critical gestures of deconstruction is to see how the margins continually participate in the de/construction of the center.[74] Derrida argues that the work of deconstruction may already be seen as ‘at work’ within the system by tracing the margins that enable the existence of the center. Building on this perspective, Homi K. Bhabha argues that the contesting lives of the people or the *performative mode* are what threaten a totalizing claim or *pedagogical mode* of national discourse.[75] In other words, while the people or “we” operate as pedagogical objects of the nationalist discourse, their present reality also generates counter narratives that continually evoke and erase the totalizing claims of identity and the boundaries of nation. Therefore, the discourses of minorities and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples that contest cultural authorities and territories, continually propose alternative forms of cultural identification within the dominant discourses of imagined communities.

The minority discourse or a discourse of those at the margins of national communities – immigrants, refugees, women and so on, subversively contests and unravels genealogies of ‘origin’ that lead to claims for cultural supremacy, historical priority, and the centrality of the nation.[76] In reading for decolonization of the Johannine imagined community, this project problematizes the collective agency of

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[74] Jacques Derrida, *Memoires: for Paul de Man* (2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 73.

[75] Bhabha, “DissemiNation,” 225.

[76] Bhabha, “DissemiNation,” 229.

minority groups designated by the hegemonic cultural force. It, therefore, intentionally underscores the contesting voices within the community's minority groups, namely the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. In doing so, it presents the argument that the discourses of the marginalized minorities in the Gospel continually disturb the ideological and narrative maneuvers that give a sense of collective unity, a totalizing boundary, and an essentialist identity to the Gospel's imagined community.

Conclusion

The Gospel of John, as a discourse of imagined community, articulates and imagines what it meant to be members of the community of the disciples adding its voice to the many competing discourses in the context of Roman Empire. In *Chapter 1*, I argue that a nation or an imagined community is a narrative or discursive formation. The idea of nation is a dominant organizing tool among the "people" of a particular nation. At the same time, the concept of nation is a decolonizing force for the colonized and a source of belonging among Diasporas and immigrants. I argue that the Gospel of John is a text that echoes a desire for a community in the context of colonialism. The Gospel of John, therefore, is a text of the colonized, as well as of the displaced. In its effort to forge the imagined community that has yet to exist, the Gospel can be seen not only as a text of the displaced, but also as a text that displaces its own *Other*, while presenting a contesting narrative of the Roman Empire.

In *Chapter 2*, I contend that the Bible, and particularly the Gospel of John, are political/cultural texts. Moreover, I suggest that they represent more than mere

religious claims - these texts have political impact *then* and *now*. In consonance with postcolonial readings of the Gospel of John, I argue that the Gospel is an enabling, as well as a contesting Hebrew nationalist discourse. It is, therefore, a de/colonizing or dis/placing text. The Gospel of John is, however, also a "counter-productive narrative," - a narrative that creates its own dominant discourse while simultaneously resisting the empire/colonialism.

In *Chapter 3*, I trace the ambivalent narration of the Gospel's imagined community. I argue that the Gospel forges a community, as a nation, by narrating its authenticity, continuity and unity. In doing so, however, the Gospel constructs a community that is full of contradictions, ambivalences, and uncertainties. The Gospel of John, therefore, contains an essentialist construction of national or communal identity that fundamentally forges its identity *in part of*, as well as, *in opposition to* its *Other*.

In *Chapter 4*, I examine the role of text or *textuality* in the context of colonial operation and argue that texts actively participate in the colonial or imperial enterprise. The Gospel of John, as a text of the colonized, is inevitably affected by the dominant discourse of power produced by the Roman Empire. I, therefore, inter(con)textually read the Gospel together with Virgil's *Aeneid* – one of the most important formative text of Roman identity. In doing so, I examine colonial mimicry across the power relation between the colonizer and the colonized. I argue that if a colonizer's text such as Virgil's *Aeneid* uses mimicry, it facilitates a colonial operation. On the other hand, if a the text of a colonized people, in this case the

Gospel of John, uses mimicry without subversive intent, it fails but repeats and supports, the *status quo* or colonial discourse.

In *Chapter 5*, I argue that the Gospel of John advocates for an identity that is a *discursive,* rather than an identity defined by apparent identity markers or categories, such as race/ethnicity, territories, and traditions. The Gospel continually questions and undermines particular ethnic identities, such as of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. However, it simultaneously promotes the identity of the imagined community enabled by the norms, practices, terms and paradigms of the ethnic identities of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. I argue that the Gospel of John resembles the identity construction of Virgil's *Aeneid* or the Roman colonizers, when it uses ethnic/racial stereotypes (religious practices of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans) and female figures (the Samaritan woman). In addition, the narrative strategy of the Gospel obscures the articulated categories of race/ethnic identity, such as religion, territory, and gender, as it forges "the identity" of the imagined community.

In *Chapter 6*, I present the notion that John 4:1-42 is one of the competing nationalist discourses and argue that it exhibits, what Derrida calls, a "discursive violence," which marginalizes, dismisses, and obliterates the *Other* in its construction of the imagined community. The contending (con)texts or the minority claims within the imagined community, however, continually disturb the totalizing claims of the narrative. I argue that the opposition of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritan woman to Jesus' claims of "worship in spirit," emerge as a result of the desire to preserve their communities of *descent,* which have been denigrated by the Roman colonizers.

Representing a minority voice within the claim of the imagined community of the narrative, the Samaritan woman insists on forging an identity that complements the *cultural territories* of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. In turn, her proposal starkly opposes the *spiritual territory* advocated by the Johannine Jesus.

As a narrative that strives to assert the identity of a community, the Gospel of John defines a clear boundary that transcends, transgresses, and marginalizes its contending claims of the *Other*. The Gospel, therefore, reflects the dominant discursive practices of imagined communities, blurring ethnic/racial, territorial, and gender specificities in order to forge many into one. It is, moreover, a text written under the colonial domination that c/overtly appropriates the dominant discourses of its time and context, especially that of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The Gospel of John, therefore, must be reexamined not only in terms of the de/colonizing impulses embedded in the text, but also in light of its appropriation and interpretation of colonizing Christianity if one's intention is to read the Gospel for liberation and social change.

The liberation-critical strategies and perspectives are readily apparent within the narratives of the Gospel if one reads the Gospel as a contesting discourse of an imagined community. A decolonizing reading of the Gospel, therefore, requires one to have a reading practice that intentionally questions the Gospel's totalizing or essentializing rhetoric, and a ruse of recognition that discovers the liberating potentials in the representation of the *Other* in the narratives. The task of discovering the minority voices that the writer(s) of the Gospel anxiously tries to conceal in the text itself is a tactical and insurgent reading. The alternative claims of the

marginalized minorities in the text itself are forms of resistance and gestures of transformation. Such a reading posture challenges the Johannine intent to forge *many* into one, and thus proposes that we instead see *many* in one.

Chapter 2

DE/COLONIZING READINGS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Postcolonial Theories and Biblical Studies

Chapter 1 presented the argument that nationalist writers forge their imagined communities in and through narratives and narration. Moreover, I suggested that texts or narratives are used to actively participate in forging a community – non-literary (con)text. For instance, even the writers of the Bible consciously articulated their narratives to have effects in their own contexts. As such, through the Johannine narratives, the writer(s) of the Gospel of John also strive to forge an imagined community of the disciples. In doing so, the Gospel of John intervenes and impacts the hegemonic production of cultural meaning in its context.

This chapter examines how colonial and postcolonial interpretive traditions continually appropriate dominant and dissident elements in the Bible in order to further their interpretive objectives. More specifically, it traces how the narratives of the Gospel of John were appropriated for their content, and then interpreted differently in different contexts. For instance, this chapter argues that the Bible, and thus the Gospel of John, assumes a powerful position in the global context due to its intimate relation with Western civilization and Christianity. Therefore, this analysis will not only illuminate the appropriation of the text by the dominant interpretive

traditions, but it will also propose an alternate interpretation consistent with the decolonizing readings of the Gospel of John.

This chapter also reviews postcolonial re-readings of the Gospel of John, politicizing and thus problematizing its texts and interpretive interests, and concludes with the author's postcolonial proposal for reading the Gospel of John as a Hebrew nationalist discourse that forges an imagined community of the disciples, in which the narratives of the colonizing and liberating potentials are intricately woven together. This chapter questions the in/stability of the idea of imagined community as a model of belonging, and argues that the Gospel is a de/colonizing text.

Postcolonial Politicizations and/or Problematizations of the Bible

One of the important contributions postcolonial biblical criticism has made and continues to make is its politicization of the Bible. In this work, politicization is defined as an intentional and conscious effort to understand that the Bible has an impact on real and contemporary life. Seen in this light, the Bible is indeed a political document. Postcolonial readings, therefore, interpret and highlight the powerful position of the Bible that enables, legitimates, and implicates ideologies and policies of the Christian West that affect real people and life. The Bible, or what is also known as "the Great Code"[77] or a "Cultural Capital"[78] of Western civilization, has reached its

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[77] Northrop Frye argues that the Bible is the "Great Code" of western literature that has not only molded the development of western arts like painting, sculpture, and drama, it is also a "present, living tradition" that consumes people's passion. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Orlando, FL: Harvest, 1983), xivff.

current powerful position via its association with the unprecedented influences of western civilization – military, economic, political, and cultural – and the domination of these influences across the globe.

Postcolonial biblical critics have pointed out that Western colonial enterprises have used the Bible as a weapon to dehumanize, disenfranchise, and colonize non-Europeans during colonial eras.[79] Currently, nations in the powerful Christian West, especially the United States, still uphold the Bible as an esteemed and influential book that legitimates and justifies their political action. The biblical texts are continually invoked in order to support or renounce public policies, ideologies and operations, ranging from stem cell research to the war in Iraq.

Because the Bible has a good deal of influence in shaping the social and political spheres, its interpretation and subsequent ramifications are not simply religious matters, nor are they restricted to the Christian community. Kwok Pui-lan rightly contends, that the interpretation of biblical texts is rather "a matter with significant political implications for other peoples as well."[80] Moreover, traditional

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[78] Vincent Wimbush sees the Bible as "the cultural capital" in the context of the United States that helps justify its independence, its cruelty against native Indians, its practice of slavery, and its imperialistic policies both within and without. Vincent Wimbush, *The Bible and the American myth: a symposium on the Bible and constructions of meaning* (Atlanta, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999). 90ff.

[79] See further discussion in Musa Dube & Jeffery Staley, eds., *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*. (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*; and Kim, *Woman and Nation.*

[80] Emphasis in italic is mine. Kwok Pui-Lan, "Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World." in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside* (Susan B. Thistlethwaite and Mary P. Engel, eds., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 277.

and thus legitimate interpretations of the biblical texts tend to serve only Eurocentric meanings and interests.

Unfortunately then, the Christian West, implicitly or explicitly, uses the Bible, along with its dominant hermeneutic interests and practices, to maintain its existing power and knowledge. Thus, a critical analysis and interpretation of the biblical texts may serve not only as an important and effective strategy to question the status quo – (e.g., knowledge, power, and institutions) – but also as a platform to propose alternative possibilities of interpretation.

The Bible and Colonialism*: Colonizing* [the] *Bible*

Postcolonial biblical critics have argued that the Bible is a product of the process of successive colonial dominations and because of that, colonialism has had an inescapable influence on and is in fact embedded in the writings of the Bible.[81] They suggest that the Bible manifests the worldviews, ideologies, and practices of colonialism as it fundamentally emerged from colonial contexts such as the Assyrian, Babylonian, Hellenistic and Roman empires. Critics such as R. S. Sugirtharajah argue that the Bible is a "colonial document," and that colonialism is what "dominates and determines the interest of the biblical texts."[82] Even so, as colonial (con)texts have informed and influenced the production of a majority of the biblical texts, the key

[81] See further discussions in Dube and Staley, eds., *John and Postcolonialism,* Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, Kim, *Woman and Nation.*

[82] Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 19.

task of postcolonial biblical criticism is to question the Bible's appropriation or promotion of colonial ideology. Moreover, postcolonial biblical interpreters have begun to unveil and unravel the embedded colonial ideologies and desire that are manifested not only in the content, plot, and characterization of the biblical narratives, but also in the interpretations of the Bible.

Imbued with colonial components, codes, and legacies, the Bible became a convenient and effective tool for the British Empire. In fact, it is difficult to imagine the British Empire, as we know it today, without the contributions and involvement of the Bible. During the peak of the British Empire, the "Englishman's Book," or the "Authorized Version", was widely upheld as "the national epic,"[83] and "the Book of Empire."[84] Mahatma Gandhi once wondered "what would have happened to the English if they had not had an Authorized Version of the Bible."[85] The British and Foreign Bible Society made it very clear that the most precious of all contributions the English had made to civilization was "our [English] Bible."[86] For the British Empire then, the Bible became an effective "cultural weapon," actively used as a tool

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[83] It was Thomas Huxley who first noted the idea of the Authorized Version as a national epic. He argued that "consider the great historical fact that, for three centuries, this book [Bible] has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; and it has become the national epic of Britain." (Cook 1909: 42-3). Peter Levi further argues that 'in its range and in the use we have made of it, one would say it was an epic and there is no other English national epic. See Peter Levi, *The English Bible* (London: Constable, 1974), 10. See further discussion in Sugritharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 128.

[84] Sugirtharajah argues that the Bible or the book of the empire is used as a British national epic at the same time as a cultural weapon against others. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, pp. 53 - 63; 128ff.

[85] Mahatama K. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatama Gandhi*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: Publication Division, Government of India, 1994), 173. Quoted also in Sugritharajah,, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 129.

[86] The British and Foreign Bible society's publication of *Our Heritage* (1934), 16.

for “civilizing” and “improving” the natives. It has been used as a signifier of the superiority of the Englishmen in terms of race, culture, and knowledge, and thus as a legitimizer of the colonial enterprise.

It was well known among non-westerners that even before the British colonial era, the Bible was the esteemed religious book of the West. For instance, Marco Polo, the thirteen century Italian explorer, recorded an event in which the Chinese Emperor Kublai Khan acknowledged the “four Gospels of the Evangelists” as the esteemed book of Christians and used it in a ceremony demonstrating his religious tolerance.[87] R. S. Sugirtharajah, however, points out that without the unprecedented support of the colonial apparatuses of the British Empire, the Bible was viewed as only one among many other minor texts in the pre-colonial phase.[88]

Only together with colonial advancement and the British and Foreign Bible Society’s expansionist agenda, did the Bible become the most easily available and influential cultural symbol of the West. The Bible became the book that “rose above all national and racial distinctions” and transmitted the “English values to the colonies.”[89] As the book of the colonizers, the Bible became a symbol that

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[87] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 17.

[88] R. S. Sugritharajah, *The Bible and the Third World* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 29.

[89] Christopher Anderson, who in 1845 published a two-volume history of the English Bible, claimed that the Authorized Bible was at the time “in the act of being perused from the rising to the setting sun” and he went on the claim that it was “the only version in existence on which the sun never sets.” Christopher Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible, vol. 2* (London: William Pickering, 1845), xi. See further discussion in Sugritharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* 146 ff.

in/advertently signified the 'ignorance' of the colonized.[90] As such, from the heyday of colonialism, the Bible became an indispensible colonizing tool that went hand in hand with the creation of empire across the globe.

The colonizers actively used the Bible as part of a hierarchical construction of their culture and race that superimposed on other cultures their "normative and superior" position. In the hands of the colonizers, the Bible became the signifier of not only their superiority, but also of "a basic deficiency in the heathen [*Other*'s] culture."[91] The colonizers used the Bible in the colonial project of *improving* natives in the spheres of morality, education, and manner. In doing so, they destabilized the colonized people and their cultures, inventing the need for the arrival of the colonial *saviors* to rescue them from their wretched and sinful conditions.[92] It is important to note, however, that in the hands of the colonizing Christians, the Bible was not only a colonizing tool, but also a *colonized text*. That is, in order to promote their colonial operation, the colonizers selectively used and interpreted the narratives of the Bible in ways that supported their own interests, and thus silenced, rejected, and suppressed any contending voice that might have the potential to challenge their authority.

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[90] H. Hipsley, a Quaker, who advocated for the introduction of the Bible in Indians schools as a remedy for the lawlessness of the heathen stating "we cannot call that education complete, even in a literary point of view, which ignores the English version of the Bible" (Hipsley n. d;14). Quoted in R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 146.

[91] The emphasis in italic is mine. Kwok Pui-Lan, "Bible in non biblical world," 278.

[92] The Bible actively participated in the colonization of the mind of the colonized. To the extent Fanon argue that in the mind of the colonized, the coming of the Europeans or white men was "was unconsciously expected – even desired." He points out to the legends among the colonized, foretelling the arrival of strangers from the sea, bearing wondrous gifts with them. The "vazaha, honorable stranger" was something written in "fateful hieroglyphics, specifically in the unconscious that made the white man the awaited master." Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (trans. Richard Philcox; New York, Grove Press, 1952), 79.

The Bible and Postcolonialism: *Decolonizing* [the] *Bible*

In an effort to decolonize the dominant discourses of colonialism, postcolonial critics such as Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha have argued for a subjectivity of the colonized.[93] For these scholars, the colonized, are not only products of their socio-cultural discourse, but also producers of such discourse. Particularly, the acts of reading and writing during the colonial periods by the colonized is a "cultural intervention" that distorts, disturbs, and disrupts the reality imposed on them by the colonizer. In his essay, "Signs Taken for Wonder," Bhabha explores how, for native Asian Indians, reading the Bible becomes a direct threat to the colonizers' cultural authority as endowed by the Bible.

In reading the Bible, or the Book of the colonizers, the colonized repeat, appropriate, alter, and resist the position of the colonizer. Conversely, in hearing their own language returning through the mouths of the colonized, the colonizer faces the worrying threat of a similitude between the colonizer and the colonized that has been anxiously concealed by the colonial discourse.[94] The reading of the Bible by the colonized imposes an alternative reading, and thus turns what began as part of the dominant discourse into an inappropriate or uncivil discourse. Ultimately, by reading the esteemed cultural symbol and weapon of the colonizers in their own ways, the colonized thus questions colonial authority with challenging replies and subversive interpretations.

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[93] Especially in Fanon, "On National Culture, "in *Wretches of the Earth* and Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonder" in *Location of Culture*.

[94] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture, 85*-112.

Moreover, postcolonial decolonizing readings, suggest that the Bible did have a role in the production of the meanings of its texts in differing contexts, rather than merely a product that reflects colonial contexts. For instance, Tat-Tsiong Benny Liew, argues that the gospels are not only cultural products, but also "cultural interventions at a particular moment of history."[95] The Gospel of John, thus, is a text that undoubtedly reconfigures the identity of the community of the disciples of Jesus, in the face of colonial domination. Through its imaginative writing that proposes an alternative community other than that provided by the dominant colonial reality, the Gospel of John launched the process of decolonization. In this process, the colonized writer(s) of the Gospel of John interrupted and thus intervened in the colonial reality imposed on them by the colonizers through the act of writing and imagining alternative future.

The writings of those under colonial domination manifest the process of "subversive appropriation" in which the colonizer's language is taken and made to reflect the cultural experience of the colonized.[96] Postcolonial literature also demonstrates the colonized people's profitable use of one of the colonizers' key tools, the appropriation of the language, perspective and ideology of the colonizers. Thus the act of writing, which is endowed with potentiality of profound appropriation, offers the colonized an effective tool for a decolonizing project.

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[95] Liew, *Politics of Parousia*, 39.

[96] See further in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002), 38ff.

Through the power invested in writing for subversive appropriation, the colonized writers impose "hybridity and syncreticity as the sources of literary and cultural redefinition."[97] In other words, appropriation is a process through which the colonized writers convey and construct their message in a language that might not be their own, but becomes imbued with their own spirit. This textual strategy entails the process of replacing or displacing language of the center, and capturing and recasting it with new usages, or meanings. This process of appropriation, therefore, signifies a separation from the dominant cultural construction of subjectivities and the production of a different subject construction by the colonized.

The colonized literature, therefore, is always written in *tension*, rather than in *distance*, between the language that speaks from the colonizing center and the colonized writers' appropriation of it. In this respect, one can see the Bible as postcolonial literature. The Bible's appropriation of the language, ideologies, and narrative designs of the dominant center of colonialism, in order to convey its message, is an effective decolonizing posture in the imperial or colonial contexts.

Biblical scholars have noted a pervasive, at times even a subversive, appropriation of the Roman Empire in the Gospel of John.[98] In its appropriation of the dominant cultural texts, languages and ideologies, the Gospel of John also often

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[97] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 38.

[98] Bruce Malina argues that the gospel of John uses its antilanguage that is the same words but different meaning of the dominant society. See Malina, *Social-Sceientific Reading of the Gospel of John*. See further discussion on the gospel of John appropriation of language, metaphor, and ideology of the Roman Empire in Musa Dube, and Jeffrey Staley, eds. *John and Postcolonialism* (2002); Stephen D Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse* (2006); Warren Carter, *The Gospel of John* (2008); And Fernando Segovia, ed., *Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (2007).

exhibits colonizing narrative designs, constructions of the absolute authority of the Emperor, and an unifying strategy or ideology that originated from the imperial or dominant center. The Gospel captures, replaces, and recasts the language and ideology of the empire in its narration. Thus, in the very act of appropriation of the dominant discourse, the Gospel imposes a decolonizing posture.

Postcolonial Politicization or Problematization of the Biblical Interpretations: *The Johannine Readings*

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said examined how the Western understanding of the Orient has formed hand in hand with the colonizing projects of the West.[99] Said argued that in the comparative and competitive field of Orientalism, opened up by the Western colonial expansion, one of the crucial projects of biblical Orientalism was "to make the Bible more indisputable" and thus to make other [cultural texts] more "unbelievable."[100] The interests and history of colonization, therefore, greatly impact the interpretation of the Bible in the West.

Kwok Pui-lan argues that traditional Western "China experts," and their followers, have interpreted Chinese history according to a "Western impact and Chinese response" historical and narrative model.[101] This model of the narration of history dominates current historiography and inevitably portrays the agency of

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[99] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage Books, 1979).
[100] Said, *Orientalism*, 76.
[101] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 32.

colonized or *Other* not as the actor but as the acted upon in the unfolding historical drama of Western expansion and colonization. This model looks at world history as an extension of Western history and overemphasizes Western influences on the cultures and histories of other peoples.

Making the Bible more believable than the *Other*'s cultural texts became a key factor in the West's quest for global dominance. As a product and production of the Enlightenment and thus Western colonial expansion, the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation cannot be merely seen as a pure scientific investigation of the biblical texts. Postcolonial biblical critics, in particular R. S. Sugirtharajah, have therefore argued for the need to examine the "inescapable effects of colonization and colonial ideals on interpretative works."[102] It was not just a historical coincidence that the unparalleled growth of Western colonialism developed conjointly with the heyday of the historical-critical method of reading the other's cultural texts, such as the Bible. One must, therefore, be vigilant to the beneficiaries, casualties and victims of the historical-critical method as it primarily serves the European/Western interests.

R. S. Sugirtharajah strongly states that the uncritical application of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation in the postcolonial world is "a sign of neocolonialism."[103] The impulse of such a *colonial-biblical* interpretation,

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[102] Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, 19.

[103] Sugirtharajah describes six interpretive traditions that are still operative in postcolonial era as neocolonial apparatus. First, the bible is deemed to be the sole and sufficient case of transformation – *incalcation.* Second, the assumption that the Other or alien values required to be born again culture, and Christianized – *encroachmen*t. Third, the perspective that local culture is a hindrance to its understanding of the progressive nature of the gospel - *displacement*. Fourth, the use of biblical narratives as a weapon in a manner of colonizer to suppress opposition, justify colonizing action and to

energized by the historical-critical method, lies in a process that claims that the Bible is the sole agent of cultural transformation; that recuperates biblical narratives as a weapon to suppress contending perspectives; that privileges textuality over orality as a medium of divine revelation; and that historicizes the biblical religion, or Christianity, at the expense of non-biblical religions. Some Third World biblical interpreters have continued this interpretive tradition of the colonizers, even after their nations have gained territorial independence.

This uncritical replication of the historical-critical method powered by colonial exploitation is what Kwok calls "an ironic example of colonization of the mind."[104] In other words, the formerly colonized biblical interpreters remain colonized, not directly by the colonizer, but with their own full consent and complicity. The continued use and promotion of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, without critical caution, ensures the process and the continued impact of the colonization of the mind that does not end with the demise of territorial colonialism.

As the colonizers upheld the Bible as an important tool to assert their discourse of power, its alternative reading became an effective decolonizing tool for the colonized. In the case of India, Bhabha argues that as the Bible has become freely

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keep the native in their status quo – *analogies and implications*. Fifth, the perspective that privileges written words, that is the Bible, over oral as a broker of God's revelation – *textualization*. And Sixth, the historicization of faith energized by the historical critical mode of interpretation that enable colonial interpreters to portray non-biblical religions as the pagan other of Christianity, needing deliverance – *historicization*. See R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Bible in the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 61-73.

[104] Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination,* 43.

available, it has become a site in which and by which to question the colonial authority.[105] As the colonized gained possession of the esteemed and influential book of the colonizer, they had the power to replicate and reverse the colonial authority endowed by the Bible through the act of alternative interpretation or misreading.

Colonized people, reading the Bible in a colonial context, produces colonial *hybridity* which gives rise to questions of colonial and cultural authority and to changes of perspective. The act of reading the Bible or the colonized people's appropriation of the words and ideas of the colonizer invites the other's "denied knowledge" to enter into the dominant discourse, afflicting the discourse of power and estranging "the basis of its authority, its rules of recognition."[106] The interpretation of the Bible, and thus the Gospel of John, once used as a tool for civilizing and rescuing the degenerate "heathens," can potentially become a weapon of reprisal due to its alternative readability.

Postcolonial biblical interpretation is an interpretive posture in which the formerly colonized others forge their own identity and insist on their roles as actors and subjects of their own (con)texts through the medium of reading the Bible. These decolonizing readings, therefore, entail the critical project of destabilizing the past rather than petrifying it; of facilitating liberation rather than legitimating oppression; of asserting the agency of the colonized as an actors rather than bodies being acted

[105] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 160.
[106] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 161.

upon; and of rereading texts for positive effect rather than for a negative impact on the marginalized in our society.

The understanding that the Bible, as well as its interpretation, is political in that it affects real lives and situations. Postcolonial biblical critics, thus, position the Bible as a site of struggle, and thus insert their voices in the production of (con)textual meaning through alternate interpretations of the Bible. Postcolonial readings of the Bible then, assume the critical awareness informed by the realities aftermath of colonialism. Postcolonial reality, whether political or social, continually presents the notion that dominant and dissident elements are intricately related to each other. In other words, a decolonizing intent or interpretation is intimately susceptible to the colonizing discourse, and thus requires a constant critique to the newly opened space or rhetoric of liberation.

The impetus for decolonizing reading is rooted in the critic's awareness of the imperial–colonial formation, *in* and *out* of the Bible. Fernando Segovia calls this awareness "conscientization in the midst or face of a geopolitical relationship of domination and subordination."[107] Postcolonial Johannine scholars have pioneered the examination of inherent textual features that embody colonial codes, components, and compromises in the Gospel of John.[108] These scholars, therefore, question the textual appropriations of the interpreters for their own contexts and interests,

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[107] Fernando F. Segovia, "The Gospel of John" in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (Fernando Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds. London: T & T Clark, 2007), 4.

[108] Dube & Staley, eds., *John and Postcolonialism,* Kim, *Woman and Nation*, Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds., *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*.

inadvertently repeating, re-inscribing, promoting and marginalizing contending claims of the Gospel.

Scholars have increasingly argued that the Gospel of John is a political text that acknowledges and narrates the indissoluble understanding and claims that comprise both the religious and political spheres.[109] To postcolonial scholars, the Gospel of John reveals critical awareness of geopolitical power within the Roman Empire, and repeats colonial and imperial language, image, and ideology. Moreover, the Gospel engages a radical postcolonial project by imagining an alternative community in a way that challenges the discourse of imperial power imposed on the colonized.

The Gospel of John thus bears the core characteristic of *ambivalence* that is common in many postcolonial writings. The colonized writer(s) of the Gospel ironically embrace a colonial ideology of subjugation, exploitation, and expansion, despite the fact that they themselves are the victims of colonial domination and are struggling for their own liberation. The Gospel of John, therefore, is a de/colonizing text.

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[109] Stephen D. Moore argues that the gospel of John is "at once the most – and the least – political of the canonical" for its subversive reports of Roman imperial torture. At the same time, the Gospel enforces and endorses the growth of Empire by allowing and advocating its transformation. See Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse* (London: Sheffield, 2006), 45-74. Fernando Segovia also argues that the gospel of John is a text 'bent on claiming and exercising power – in fact, absolute power " in both the religious and political spheres at once. See Segovia, "The Gospel of John" in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, 157.

De/colonizing the Johannine Mission*: Colonial Desire*

Postcolonial readings of the Gospel of John question its intrinsic colonial desire which is signified by a will to have power over the *Other*, whether via material or spiritual aspects, in its narrative designs. Postcolonial biblical critics expose the complicit and implicit appropriation of the intrinsic [colonizing] interest of the Gospel of John for the interpreters' contexts. Traditionally, Johannine interpreters have emphasized the Johannnine interest in mission apparent in the text, and thus legitimated Christian mission to other lands/people in the reader's context.[110] The Johannine narration of Jesus' travel to Samaria and the inclusion of the Samaritans in the worshiping community have enabled these interpreters to categorize John 4 as a missionary text. Johannine scholars mainly interpret the narrator's statement in John 4:4, "he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria," as a text that authorizes divine necessity or will for the Christian mission.

Postcolonial readings of the Gospel decolonize Johannine claims of authority and identity that embrace an ideology of expansion informed and influenced by the colonial assumption, strategy, and ideology. Musa Dube, for example, unveils the concealed agenda of John 4 in which the encounter of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is seen as both divinely sanctioned and accidental. She further questions the

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[110] Scholars such as Raymond Brown, Leon Morris and Edwyn Hoskyns conveniently interpret the word "*dei*" that convey the divine imperative. Brown asserts that God's will or plan is involved in the mission activity to Samaria. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, The Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 169. Leon Morris argues that divine necessity for mission "it was imperative that this light shine to others than Jews. See Morris, *John*, 256. Hoskyns argues that Jesus' "fugitive itinerary" becomes "the divine and theological necessity" of the mission of Jesus beyond the limits of Judaism. See Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Farber and Farber, 1947), 233.

narrative plots of Jesus as a superior traveler, the hierarchical construction of geographical spaces (above/below, Judea/Samaria), the unequal inclusivity through discursive use, and the gendered discourse of land possession.[111] Such reading for decolonization, therefore, exposes the colonizing narrative design of *accidentally on purpose*. In other words, such rhetoric conceals the intrinsic violence of colonial desire and action, and claims the colonial operation as an accidental, rather than intentional project which, however, is ultimately guided by the divine will.

The Gospel of John discursively achieves its claim of power over earthly or material entities by asserting absolute heavenly or spiritual authority. In her reading of the Prologue of the Gospel of John, Musa Dube problematizes the Johannine narrative design that positions Jesus' origin as "other worldly" or "from above" and as a way to assert his authority and superiority over "this-world."[112] The Johannine narrative construction of otherworldly, however, is always positioned, whether as a superior or oppositional construct, in response to being in-this-world.

The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4 invokes the "above" in order to assert that Jesus' has the power to travel anywhere, and to remain the dominant figure (John 4:4). By implication, such a narrative design bestows the authority for unlimited travel to the disciples' of Jesus, allowing them to intrude into others' places/spaces and establish their superiority over the world (John 4:35). This

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[111] Musa W. Dube, "Reading for Decolonization (John 4:1-42)," 64-71.

[112] Musa W. Dube, "Savior of the World but not of This World: A Post-Colonial Reading of Spatial Construction in John" in *The Postcolonial Bible* (ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah: London: Sheffield, 1998), pp. 112-134.

narrative eventually reveals its intrinsic colonial desire to lay a claim, whether material or spiritual, to this world and on the "others" in it. John 4:35 states, "the fields are ripe for harvest," revealing its intrinsic desire to exploit real people and situations.

De/colonizing the Johannine Narrative Designs*: Empire*

One of the critical reading postures of postcolonial biblical interpretation is to constantly keep the Empire in view as a primary player. This posture investigates the impacts of imperialism not only in the interpretive context of the reader but also in the narrative world of the Bible. The Empire, signified by the colonizing domination and paradigm, is central to the narratives of the Gospel of John. A decolonizing reading of the Gospel, therefore, points out the interpretive practice that fails to keep the Empire in view as a central player. In doing so, this practice unwittingly maintains the structures of oppression in the past as well as the present.

Musa Dube criticizes the interpretative tradition of the Gospel of John that focuses only on the internal conflict of the colonized without highlighting the presence and role of colonizer. Such an interpretation inadvertently neglects the exploitation and oppressiveness of the Empire on its subjects in the texts.[113] Postcolonial readings of the Gospel further investigate the imperial/colonial expansionist agenda and the imposition of its cultural symbols and power on the

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[113] Dube singles out Norman Petersen and Jerome Neyrey's emphasis on internal or group conflict among the colonized and argues that such interpretation implicitly submits the blame on the victims. Dube, "Savior of the World,"131.

colonized. A decolonizing reading of the Gospel of John thus underscores the imperial imposition that stimulated a response and led to inter-group competition among the colonized within the communities of the *Ioudaioi*, the Samaritans, and Jesus' disciples.

Postcolonial decolonizing readings of the Gospel of John benefit from Historical Criticism, Social-Scientific Criticism, and Empire Studies for their contributions to the understanding of the Gospel of John against the context of pervasive and dominant imperialism. Postcolonial interpretation welcomes the contributions of Empire Studies that examine the social, political, and ideological background of the Bible, perpetuated by the Empire. Such examinations of the text highlight the Empire as the (con)text of the Bible from which the texts emerged and to which the text responded.[114] It undeniably enriches the understanding of the *worldliness* in the text by investigating the implicit and explicit subversive narrative strategies and vocabularies that resonate, repeat, and resist its larger society, the Roman Empire. Empire Studies, along with other critical disciplines, help one to understand the Gospel of John as a postcolonial writing that not only compromises the imperial domination but also challenges the Empire.

[114] Both Carter and Moore argue for the pervasiveness of Empire in the Gospel of John and how the Gospel contests its dominant claims through its language, and metaphors. The Gospel, for Carter, explicitly indicts the wrongdoings by reporting the imperial power acquired by torture in the passion narratives (John 19) and implicitly denunciates the Empire through its negative metaphor of the "world" permeated by Roman power (John 7:7; 12:31;15:18; 16:8,33; 17:5-25) and its proposal of the community alternative to the Roman Empire. See further in Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (2008); And Stephen D. More, *Empire and Apocalypse*: *Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (2006).

Postcolonial readings, however, go further to politicize the pervasiveness and domination of the Empire not only *in* the text but also *out* of the text – in other words, in the interpreters' context. In doing so, they resist interpreting the Bible merely as a matter of "recuperation and exhibition." Beyond highlighting the language, symbols, and metaphors of the Roman Empire embedded in the Gospel, postcolonial readings examine the interpreters' complication with the imperialism in their own contexts.

Postcolonial readings of the Gospel examine both the text and its interpretive context, questioning their ideological affinity with colonial/imperial expansionism,[115] as well as the unquestioned replication of colonial/imperial ideologies and narrative design,[116] and the tactical endorsement of Roman Empire.[117] Postcolonial Johannine readings, therefore, examine the Gospel's ideologies, narrative designs, and truth claims that bear overtones of the Empire. Furthermore, these types of readings problematize uncritical interpretations of the Gospel that ignore the colonial impetus embedded in the (con)text. In other words, postcolonial readings of the Gospel are

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[115] Swamson reads the Johannine ideological and tactical framing of coherent community that was entirely robbed of territorial, ethnic and cultural specificities. Such reading implicates the gospel of John in terms of the Roman imperial policy of uniting nations under the banner of Rome and physical location of the Roman Empire. Todd D. Swanson, "To Prepare a Place: Johannine Christianity and the Collapse of Ethnic Territory," AAR LXII/2 (1994): 241-263.

[116] Echoing the dominant imperial rhetoric of unity or consent, Liew argues that the gospel of John promotes a community, not unlike Empire, "an up-coming, never-ending, and ever-growing community," legitimating descent and enforcing compromise. Tat-Siong Benny Liew, "Ambiguous Admittance: Consent and Descent in John's Community of 'Upward' Mobility" in *John and Postcolonialism,* pp. 193-224. Moreover, Dube problematizes the narrative design of the gospel of John that resonates the Roman colonizing narrative that invokes the power from the "above" in order to take control of the "below," can be widely seen among the Roman colonizing or legitimizing narratives such as Virgil's *Aeneid*. Dube, "Savior of the World," 124ff.

[117] Stephen D. Moore argues that the gospel of John tacitly allow Rome to survive and thrive into the indefinite future, and thus implicitly endorses the status quo of Roman Empire by advocating for transformation brought by Christianity. For "the world" that is permeated by the Roman Empire is also the object of God's love and Jesus' mission (John 3:16). See Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse*, 73.

critical of forms of injustice that are implicit as well as explicit in the text and in its interpretations.

Decolonizing the Johannine Agency*: Gender*

Feminist biblical interpreters have noted the positive representation of women in the Gospel of John by highlighting their roles as apostles and missionaries.[118] They rightly underscore the pivotal roles of the female figures traditionally marginalized in the interpretation in the Gospel. On the other hand, some feminist readings further problematize the uncritical re-inscription of the patriarchal and biblical/wisdom traditions in its *negative* portrayals of women in the Gospel.[119] Furthermore, Postcolonial biblical critics, explore the unquestioned patriarchal and colonial notions of domination embedded not only in the Johannine narratives, but also in the feminist readings of the Gospel. These scholars caution that the use of female figures in the Gospel of John that promote a masculine agenda in the Gospel of John, as well in its interpretation.[120]

While being critical of its implicit and explicit affinity with patriarchal and imperial ideologies, postcolonial biblical interpretation strives to make use of the

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[118] See Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe* (rev. and exp.ed.; New York: A Harder & Harder, 2003), 134; And Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 50.

[119] Webster, for instance, argues that the presentation of the Samaritan woman echoes the proverbial strange woman in wisdom literatures on the basis of three characteristics: *foreign* and *unknowing* and *promiscuous*. See Jane S. Webster, 'Transcending Alterity: Strange Woman to Samaritan Woman' in *A Feminist Companion to John* Vol.1, (Amy-Jill Levine, editor: New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 128-137. The italics are mine.

[120] See Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination* and Kim, *Woman and Nation*.

Gospel of John as a tool for decolonization in the postcolonial context.[121] However, Postcolonial biblical critics have also warned that the Bible and thus the Gospel of John, must also be seen as a *political text* "written, collected, and redacted by *male, colonial elites* in their attempt to rewrite and reconcile with history and to forge both individual and collective identities under the shadow of the empires."[122]

Acknowledging that the Gospel of John is a male discourse that emerged in a colonial context, Jean Kim argues that the author(s) of the Gospel uses female characters to support Jesus' role as a national hero, thus portraying them as signifiers of the nation. Kim critically examines the multiple layers of colonization in which women are causalities at the crossroad, unveiling its nationalist ideologies embedded with masculine desire.[123] Kim asserts that the Samaritan woman must be seen not only as a victim of the author of John's Gospel, but also, on the narrative level, as "a victim of Jesus, who plays the role of a vehicle by which Jesus' identity is further revealed."[124] Such critical interrogations of the agency of feminine figures goes

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[121] Jean Kim argues that the narrative of the Samaritan woman can be read to empower the marginalized women for its narrative potentials such as 1) the mother of Jesus is a national begetter, inspire, protector and liberator, 2) the Smaritan Woman is an object of exchange for the sake of the expansion of Jesus' ministry, 3) the adultress woman is a site of competing leadership, 4) Martha, Mary and Lazarus are carriers of tradition and supporters of the national hero, 5) the mother of Jesus at the cross is valorized as the Mother of Nation who functions as a link between the past and the continued community. See Kim, *Woman and Nation,* 71, 236-237.

[122] Emphases in italic is mine. See Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 8-9.

[123] Jean Kim interrogates the Johannine appropriation of the Samaritan woman's personal history as a parallel to the successive colonial domination of five foreign nations over Samaria and examines the role of the Johannine female characters through her intercontextual reading of the colonized women stories and characters out of a Korean context. She singles out the characters of Hwa-nyang-nyun (Promiscuous Women), Choang-sin-dae (Comfort Women), and Yang-gong-ju (Yankee Princess) as casualties of the patriarchal, colonial and nationalist dominations See Kim, *Woman and Nation,* 5ff.

[124] Jean K Kim, "A Korean Feminist Reading of John 4:1-42," *Semeia* 78 (1997), 114.

against the traditionally articulated roles of the female characters in the Gospel of John such as revealers, apostles, and model disciples. As such, postcolonial feminist readings have insisted that a crucial step of decolonizing lies in destabilizing the subjectivity and agency assigned to the women in the Gospel of John.

Decolonizing the Johannine Imagined Community

In light of the postcolonial decolonizing readings of the Gospel of John, and in addition to the continued conversation regarding the Gospel, in this section, I argue that the Gospel of John can be read as a Hebrew nationalist discourse. I also propose a decolonizing reading of the Gospel's construction of the imagined community, as expressed in the narrative. In terms of postcolonial-diasporic critical perspectives of nations or imagined communities, I examine the concept and formation of the imagined community of the Gospel of John. Postcolonial-diasporic sensibilities offer not only sources of recognition and theoretical tools, but also an empirical awareness of discursive in/stabilities of the narrative construction of nations and, thus, a view of the Gospel's imagined community as a model of (be)longing.

The Gospel of John as a Contesting Hebrew Nationalist Discourse

Scholars, such as Hans Kohn (1946),[125] John Hutchinson (1987),[126] Anthony Smith (1991)[127] and Adrian Hastings (1997)[128] have argued that the religious contributions of Christians, as well as those of the ancient Israelites, are critical to understanding the modern concept of nation. The ethnic-national identity markers of the Jews -- their common religion and language (Hebrew), their texts (the Bible), territory (the land of Israel) and history -- has led these scholars to suggest that Jewish nationalism in the ancient world bears many similarities to modern day nationalism. In addition to the conventional understanding of nation, they argue for a broader understanding of nation that includes an ethno-religious symbolic analysis of the myths, memories, symbols and traditions of pre-modern ethnic communities that are persistent and fundamental components of modern nation.

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[125] Hans Kohn argues that 1) modern European civilization has its roots, through Christianity and Roman tradition, in ancient Judea and Hellas; 2) the Jews and the Greeks are the only groups who emerged before Roman times with the national characteristic of peoplehood or chosen people; 3) they developed the idea of nationalism as the result of different and even opposite national characters; 4) they had a sense of history; and 4) they believed in a messianic ideology that anticipate a better endless future of nation. See Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism,* 27- 60.

[126] John Hutchinson defines Ancient Jewish nationalism as "cultural nationalism," not unlike modern attributes of nation, constituted with qualities such as the rise of a new intellectual leadership, the articulation of an alternative vision of the community as part of a critique of the powers that be, and the development of novel cultural forms and strategies to disseminate the national ideal. John Hutchinson, "Foreword," in *The Roman-Jewish Wars and Hebrew Cultural Nationalism*, xv ff.

[127] Anthony Smith argues that Ancient Jews are the prototype of nation because of its clearly defined borders (from Dan to Beersheba), common rights and duties for all males prescribed in the Torah, a distinctive, public religious culture around the Sabbath and festivals, and in some periods a kingdom of their own existing in the contest of the regional interstate system of the near east – not to mention a fierce belief in their own collective election and special mission. See Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations*, 132.

[128] Adrian Hastings argues that the ancient/biblical Israel as proto-nation or model of nation for retained the core identity of a nation through the exercise of collective memory, the usages of religion based upon a specific literature, the Hebrew Bible and related texts, and their spoken language. See Hastings*, The Construction of Nationhood,* 185-219.

As I have argued in Chapter 1, the idea of nation embodies the attributes of religion, such as Buddhism in Burma and Christianity in the West, it must be seen not merely as a modern construct, but rather as a full-blown expression of a cultural phenomenon that exists presently, and has existed in the past. Understanding an epic as a literary work that declares and asserts national and ethnic identity, biblical scholars such as Hermann Gunkel (1901), Sigmund Mowinckel (1937) and Cyrus Gordon (1962) compared and viewed the narratives in the books of Genesis (19:30-38), Numbers, Joshua, Judges (8:9ff), Samuels, and the Pentateuch as collections of national Epic or "Epic style" materials. [129]

The Hebrew Bible, especially the Pentateuch, can be considered an epic of nationhood since it narrates or imagines the origin and destiny of the Israelite people. It recounts, as do many foundational narratives of nation, how they achieved their land and peoplehood in history via a number of great events that united the disparate elements of the community. Moreover, well before the era of modern print culture, which Benedit Anderson argues is a precursor for making possible the imagining of a nation, the ancient Israelites had developed an intellectual aristocracy, a culture of the book, and an elaborate educational system, widely accessible by its community.

Nations, seen from the postcolonial reality, frequently emerge as inherently dominant, absolutist, essentialist, and destructive, and often results in a "failed

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[129] See Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis* (trans. W.H. Carruth, Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Co., 1901); Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Two Sources of the Predeuteronomic Primeval Hitory (JE) in Gen. 1-11* (Oslo: I Kommisjon hos J. Dybwad, 1937); and Cyrus Gordon, *The Common Backgroun of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (New York: Norton Library, 1965). See further discussion on Hebrew national epic by Susan Niditch, "The Challenge of Israelite Epic" in *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (John Miles Foley ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 277-287.

historical project."[130] In the context of imperial colonialism, however, the colonized imagine nation, or a community, as a conscious effort to reconfigure their displaced identity and condition through elaborate cultural, ideological, and political discourses. *Nation*, therefore, is a cultural and epistemological formation and process rather than a socio-political construct. In its most powerful form, a "cultural nationalism" develops against imperialism, and is "a mode of freedom" for the people under colonial/imperial domination.[131] The discursive formation of nation is, therefore, an effective cultural or epistemological engagement with forms of domination, particularly under colonialism.

Franz Fanon insisted that national discourses are efforts made by the colonized people "through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence under the domination of colonial power."[132] Under the British colonial rule, William Butler Yeats created an agenda to liberate and unite the Irish people through the impact of literature. Yeats intentionally wrote literature in the service of

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[130] Laura Chrisman suggests six categories for understanding of nationalism among the recent scholarship.[130] First, *Nationalism is a derivative discourse* with colonial European origin denying the capacity of colonized and formerly colonized peoples to transform structures of thought and governance. Second, *Nationalism is a cultural/temporal paradox* of a historical and cultural rupture due to colonialism that must assert itself as a historical continuity. Third, *Nationalism is a dominatory formation/movement* that promotes the interests of a particular group while claiming to represent the whole. Fourth, *Nationalism is a nativist projection* as its authority rests primarily upon the claims of , and to "native' cultural identity or ethnicity. Fifth, *Nationalism is a narrative formation* of the inclusive community that is imagined through the narrative form of a novel, newspaper, and writings. Sixth, *Nationalism is a failed historical project* as a result of the failure of decolonization through the ignoring of the subaltern women, minorities and refugees. See Laura Chrisman, "Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies" in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (ed. Neil Lazarus: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 183-198.

[131] Simon During, "Literature – Nationalism's other? The case for revision," in *Nation and Narration* (Homi Bhabha, ed. New York: Routledge, 1990), 139.

[132] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* , 179.

nationalism and founded the National Literary Society. He believed that a literary movement would at least emancipate Ireland from English cultural domination.[133] He saw that the colonizers used words as weapons against the Irish. He therefore chose to use words as weapons against the colonizer and to "invent" Ireland.[134]

In light of Israelite/Jewish history under successive colonial and imperial dominations, Moshe and David Aberbach argue that "Jewish" nationalism is also a form of "cultural nationalism," initiated by defeat. It is also, unlike the nationalism bred by imperial or colonial victory, a possible antecedent of the modern nationalism of the defeated or colonized.[135] The cultural nationalism of *Ioudaioi*/Israelites, especially reflected in the literature created during the period of the Second Temple Judaism, fundamentally emerged as a powerful force of the traditional ethos based on the Hebrew religious-cultural heritage in the context of defeat and displacement.

The "ruling class of Judea" articulated the discontent and aspirations of the people and turned them into a full-scale revolt against Rome. The process eventually brought forth, after 70 C.E, the extraordinary hostility of the Romans towards the

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[133] See the literary works of Williams Butler Yeats that aim to decolonize the British domination such as, *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1903), *The Wild Swans of Coole* (1919), *The Second Coming* (1920), *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1929).

[134] See further discussion of Yeats' literary contribution to the Irish nationalist movement by Patsy J. Daniels, *The Voice of the Oppressed in the Language of the Oppressor: A Discussion of Selected Postcolonial Literature from Ireland, Africa and America* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 27-34.

[135] Aberbach & Aberbach, *The Roman-Jewish Wars and Hebrew Cultural Nationalism*, 2.

Ioudaioi whom they felt were a rebellious people and culture.[136] Rome retaliated against such an unprecedented national uprising by attempting to root it out from its ethnic-cultural elements, such as the religious symbols and beliefs that infused and enabled the revolution.[137] Through literature, the *Ioudaioi* articulated the people's struggle and imparted an ethnic-national resistance against the Roman domination. After the military defeat, the Hebrew literature frequently became the only decolonizing weapon and an instrument of hope and survival.[138] Thus, literature, especially related to religion, became the chief Jewish repository of strength and hope under the Roman colonization.

Hebrew literature, especially in the hands of the rabbis, became a tool to reconcile the loss of their land and nationhood, to forge a community identity, and to resist the Roman Empire. The Mishna and Midrash adapted the inherently subversive elements of the Bible and incorporated them into the Hebrew liturgy.[139] To some *Ioudaioi* in the Roman Empire, the Mishna, and Midrash fundamentally provided a space in which to preserve, recuperate, and revitalize their defeated cultural and

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[136] Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome A.D. 66-70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 987), pp. 231-239. See also Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC – AD 337* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 365ff.

[137] Aberbach & Aberbach argue that Rome tried to root out vestigial Jewish messianism and nationalism to the extant that to claim descent from King David was a capital offence. Aberbach & Aberbach, *The Roman-Jewish Wars,* 87.

[138] Henry Albert Fischel, "Hellenism" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 8 (1971), pp 301-303

[139] *Berakhot datinf* from the post 70 CE period says, "may all your enemies soon be destroyed and may you soon in our lifetime uproot and break and crush and humble the arrogant empire." See also in Aberbach & Aberbach, *The Roman-Jewish Wars and Hebrew Cultural Nationalism,* 91.

religious identity.[140] For instance, the Midrash reports in detail the loss and tragedies of the *Ioudaioi* in the years 66-138 C. E. as a way indicting the Romans for the wrongs done to the people by reporting them.[141] In this way, the literature became a medium that conveyed pervasive feelings and aspirations, which otherwise would have remained in an inchoate level in the minds of the people, in concrete verbal forms. The colonized *Ioudaioi* asserted their subversive voices against the Roman Empire through creative and imaginative literary works.

Through their narratives, colonized nationalist writers strive for the articulation of the imagined community and believe that their works brings unity to the people.[142] In fact, Frantz Fanon argues that narrative claims of the nationalist literature reflect a desire of the people embodying a nation – a divine right that must be protected and guarded against any usurpers.[143] C. L. Innes summarizes three characteristics common among the nationalist writings that are involved in a similar dialectic in opposition to colonial power and domination. First, nationalist writers

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[140] Aberbach and Aberbach compare Midrash to some Jews in the Roman Empire as Jazz was to American Blacks in a sense they both provided a space for defeated minorities to preserve, recuperate and revitalize their cultural and religious identity. See Aberbach & Aberbach, *The Roman-Jewish Wars,* 93.

[141] Martin Goodman comments that the *Aggadot* "shows remarkable acquaintance with the tactics of Roman armies in quelling revolts." See Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132-212* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), 137.

[142] See the literary works that bears the nationalist overtones such as George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953; V. S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (1967); Aime Cesaire, *Une Tempete* (1968); J. G. Farrell, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973); Ahmed Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981); Isabel Allende Llona, *The House of the Spirits* (1982); Li-Young Lee, *The Winged Seed; A Rememberance* (1995); Williams Butler Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (1893); *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1903); *The Wild Swans of Coole* (1919); *The Second Coming* (1920); *The Tower* (1928); *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1929); Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (1986); *Things Fall Apart* (1994); Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A grain of wheat* (1986).

[143] Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 145ff.

assert the existence of a culture that is an antithesis of the colonial one. Second, these writers stress an emphasis on the relationship between the people and the land in order to underline the illegitimate intrusion of the colonizers, asserting a unity between people and place. Third, these writings have a tendency to gender representations of colonial domination and nationalist resistance.[144]

In John chapter 4, the Samaritan woman invokes the history, territory, and culture of her people as a way of re/claiming the authority or the authenticity of worship that rests primarily upon the claims of and to native cultural or national identity (John 4:20-22). The narrative invokes the culture and history of the Samaritans and uses the Samaritan woman as a discursive persona to forge the identity and boundary of the imagined community of the Gospel. In a way, it is an attempt to reclaim and restore the culture and history that was distorted, disfigured, and destroyed by the colonial ideology and operation. Thus, the Gospel of John, and especially the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, share similar characteristics with nationalist writings in that the writers of each assume that their works are "enabling narratives" of nation or community.

An effort to recover and identify a relationship between self and place is a crucial step toward reconfiguring the identity of colonized nationalist writers, as they are alienated from their land due to colonial occupation. The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman recounts a definite location that invokes the cultural history of the Samaritan; "a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the land that Jacob had given to

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[144] Innes, "Forging the Conscience of Their Race: National Writers," 120-139.

his son Joseph" (John 4:5). The Samaritan woman emphasizes the unity between people and place as underscored in many nationalist discourses. She asserts that the well and thus the land are an inheritance from their ancestor Jacob (John 4:12b). She claims that Jerusalem and "this mountain" (Mt. Gerizim) are worship places that have their origins or existence in pre-colonial time (John 4:22). Her intentional attempts to embrace and promote native culture, which is an antithetical to the culture brought by the colonial domination, thus mark the beginning of a nationalist or anti-colonialist discursive dis-identification that overcomes the self-hatred and alienation that colonialism had created in its context.

As a piece of literature of the colonized *Ioudaioi* that reconfigures their cultural and religious identities under the Roman Empire, the Gospel of John serves as a form of resistance literature. Specifically, John 11:48 reflects a desire to preserve the people's cultural identity and national existence -- their "place and nation," - that was threatened by the Roman colonial power.[145] The Gospel of John, moreover, reports colonial oppression, contests the colonizers' claims, and imagines an alternative community antithetical to the dominant one – the Roman Empire (4:42; 14:2; 18 -19:30). Exhibiting one of the characteristics of nationalist literature, the Gospel covertly resists the colonizers in its narratives, by reporting the wrongs of their territorial and cultural invasions, the displacement of their colonized subjects, and their unequal power relations.

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[145] "If we let him go like this, every one will believe him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our place and nation" (John 11:48).

The Gospel of John and its De/colonizing Narratives*: Discursive Instabilities*

The idea of nation historically has been one of the strongest foci for resistance to imperialist control and ideology among the nations under colonialism. Moreover, nation is an important force for the colonized in their quest for political and economic transformation. A rhetoric of nation, therefore, becomes an indispensible discursive tool to forge identity, territory, and self-representation in emerging geopolitical entities after colonial reality.[146]

In addition, a nation that is fundamentally imagined as a limited or exclusive[147] community of one particular people, inherently poses as a counter narrative to the imperial ideology that thrives by imposing the limit-less or endless possibilities encompassing diverse people, cultures, and territories. The discourses of nation that asserted a particular or exclusive (be)longing, therefore, fundamentally emerged as counter discourses of imperialism.[148] The idea of the imagined community as *limited or exclusive*, directly poses a challenge to the spatial and ideological formulation of the *limitless-ness* of Empire.

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[146] Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (trans. Constance Farrington: New York: Brove Press, 1967), 166-199; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1983); Benedit Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Ngugi wa Thiong, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967).

[147] Slovaj Zizek contends that nation is an *exclusive community,* something that belongs to one particular group or community of people and not to others. He argues that '(nation) is "our Thing," and therefore inaccessible and denied to the other. See Slavoj, Zizek, Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 201.

[148] Anderson argues that nation is the counter-productive ideology of imperialism for its signifies its "inner incompatability" within the discourse of Empire. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 111ff.

One the other hand, a nation or an imagined community that is positioned as a similar dialectic in opposition or a counter-productive discourse of colonialism, tends to repeat the spatial and ideological justification of colonialism -- “many into one.” The Gospel of John overtly appropriates the dominant narrative or worldview of the empire by forging an alternative or imagined community that transcends particular territory and traditions (John 4: 21-23).

a. The Gospel of John’s colonizing narratives

The postcolonial conditions and realities, especially their nationalist discourses, are evident in that dominant and dissident elements are intricately interrelated parts of our social fabric. Discourses of the center and the margin, therefore, exist side-by-side, and are susceptible to each other’s influence. Any attempt to subvert either will inevitably be entrapped or contained within the structure of power. Scholars, therefore, have increasingly argued that nation is a counter-productive discourse of colonialism or imperialism. For instance, Gayatri Spivak cautions that national discourse is “a reverse or displaced legitimation of colonialism” doomed to repeat the “epistemic violence” of the colonialism it had once rejected.[149] Nationalist narratives that assert the totality and essentiality of a particular group often became clear evidence of the fact that, although colonialism had disappeared, its structures remained.

[149] Gayatri C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 62.

Nationalist discourses, that promote collective identity and unity among "the people," re-inscribe and refine the colonizing practice of "epistemic violence," or what Jacque Derrida calls the "discursive violence"[150] of the colonizers. Simon Gikandi notes that, as a result of this, the revolutionary characters in nationalist novels, such as Ngugi's Matigari, become prisoners of the emancipatory narratives they advocate.[151] A narrative of nation often achieves a national unity or collective desire only at the expense of repressing the reality of other contending or diverse forms of culture, which are often the factors that evoke its need in the first place. Ultimately, in its search of national unity, a narrative of nation suppresses and marginalizes its competing viewpoints, materials, and people, and thus fails to produce the unity it promises.

A nationalist narrative, therefore, is a counter-productive-discourse of colonial/imperialist ideology that is also highly contained and entrapped within the colonizer's discourse of power and domination. The narratives of decolonization are, too often, entrapped in colonizing ideological or narrative cul-de-sacs. Due to their dialectical complication and opposition to discourse of colonialism/imperialism, the colonized discourses of imagined communities are imbued with both liberating and dominating tendencies. Such analysis of nation, therefore, provide a critical notion

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[150] Jacques Derrida argues that writing produced by the confrontation of cultures, such as nationalist discourse involve a "violence of the letter" imposed by one culture upon the other. A violence, in other words, "of difference, of classification, and of the system of appellations." Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press,1976), 107.

[151] Simon Gikandi, "The Politics and Poetics of National Formation: Recent African Writing" in *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial* (ed. Anna Rutherford. Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992), 379-380.

that dissident and dominant elements of the text exist side-by-side as parts of the structure of discourse or power in decolonizing reading of the Gospel of John.

The narratives of the Gospel of John, while posing as decolonizing gestures by evoking a world beyond colonial structure articulated in the configuration of its imagined community, still convey the values and images generated by Roman colonial discourse. Such re-inscription, for instance, can be seen in the Gospel's construction of Jesus' absolute authority and identity (John 1:1-5; 4:42), and the justification of control over the *Other* and their land by invoking divine authority (John 4:2). Bart Moore-Gilbert argues that if such appropriations of the *Other*, or "mimicry," is not conscious on the part of the colonized, then it cannot be intentionally subversive."[152] In the process of reversing or decolonizing the reality of the colonial condition, the Gospel of John re-inscribes the totalizing discourse, paradigm, and ideology of the Roman colonizers without being intentionally subversive.

The Gospel's narrative designs, as narrative constructions of totalizing discourse, echo Roman imperializing narratives or agendas of superiority, conquest, uniformity, and civility in several ways. First, the Johannine narratives construct an absolute authority of Jesus in both material and spiritual realms.[153] Second, the Gospel forges a dominant discourse that asserts the universality of its desire to unify

[152] Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (New York: Verso, 1997), 131-135.

[153] The Prologue asserts the authority of Jesus over earthly matters by recounting his role in the beginning of "all things." (John 1:1-5).

disparate elements.[154] Third, the Gospel exposes the "ignorance" of the *Other* and, thus, imposes "true" knowledge.[155] Fourth, the Gospel repeats the colonialist/imperialist worldview and its vocabularies to legitimate the newly imagined community.[156] Finally, the Gospel embraces and repeats the imperialist values, images, and ideologies in its counter-narratives. Thus, the Johannine mimicry exhibits a worrying tendency to perpetuate the imperial paradigm.

The Gospel of John, as a counter-productive discourse of colonialism, is doomed to fail in its attempt to represent the colonized peoples, viewpoints or materials. The narrative strategy of the Gospel inadvertently suppresses the contending claims against the empire made by both the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans, which, ironically, are the genesis for the notion of an imagined alternative in the first place. Thus, the Johannine narratives require an epistemological revolution that imagines new and innovative patterns of meaning and interpretation. A decolonizing reading of the Gospel of John, therefore, must intentionally acknowledge the competing and marginalized voices in the narratives, such as of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritan woman. In doing so, the claims of the *Other* that the Gospel tries to suppress, after all, emerge as critical components of the community that not only enable the imagined claims of the Gospel, but at the same time, also disturb its full realization.

[154] The Gospel of John, especially through the rhetoric of Spirit, narrates the possibility of unity among the disparate elements (John 4:20-25).

[155] Both Jesus' conversation partners Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman demonstrate the inability to understand Jesus and, thus, provides Jesus opportunities to instruct. (John 3: 1ff, 4:1ff).

[156] The word such as ὁ σωτὴρ (John 4:42) and ἀποστέλλω (occurs 40 times in the Gospel), are associated with the dominant discourse of the Roman empire.

b. The Gospel of John's decolonizing narratives

The impetus of the Gospel of John, like a national discourse, is to imagine and invent the community and thus the identity of the disciples forging its origin, boundary/territory, and destiny through narratives in chapters 1, 4, and 14.[157] It is a conscious effort to keep the community of the disciples in existence under the domination of the "world," or the colonial power. The Gospel of John, a writing of the colonized, configures displaced conditions and identities in the face of the colonial assault. The Gospel, therefore, is also a discourse of decolonization.

In its narratives and human characters, the Gospel of John reports the reality of colonial rule and its attendant experiences. It portrays its human characters, including Jesus, as suffering and incapable colonized subjects. Jesus' strength lies not in his actions, but in his willingness to endure the necessity of suffering and death with courage and loyalty (John 3:14). The Gospel also delineates the colonized mentality as lacking a desire for social change. In John 14:1-5, Jesus' disciples are promised a place in the "father house." All they need to do is to faithfully wait for Jesus' return. Jesus encourages his disciples to live life as necessary while waiting to be saved to a place prepared for them and to trust in God who is the only constructive actor or agent of change in history (John 14: 1-3).

[157] Like a plot of realist novel, John narrates the origin of the community that traces back to the beginning of all things (John 1:1-5), the space of the community that transcend the spatial territories (John 4:21-25), and the destiny of the community prepared by Jesus in the "father house" (John 14:1-5).

The Gospel also implicitly narrates the loss of faith in human agency in the characters of John the Baptist, Jacob, Moses, and Abraham (John 1:27-30; 4:12-14; 6:32-34) and in institutions such as the temple and the land (John 2:13-22). In the Gospel these human characters are surpassed or superseded by Jesus who represents newness of the community at the collapse or vanishing of the old. Thus, the true worship can no longer take place in either human institution "on this mountain" (Mt. Gerizim) or in "Jerusalem," but must now be "in spirit and truth" (John 4:20-24).

The Gospel also delineates the instability of colonial power relations, especially in the character of Pilate who is portrayed as the agent of colonial practice of political expediency in chapters 18 and 19. The passion narrative implicitly reports Jesus is a crucified victim of the colonial tactic of scapegoating and thus points out to the reality of the power struggle among the colonized. John narrates the divisions and the struggle for power among local authorities, which assert their power within the set of ground rules established by the Romans to maintain their colonial power structure. The Gospel of John reports wrongs, and by implication, revenges the wrongs of colonial domination.[158] The narrative strategy of the Gospel and its portrayals of human agencies, subjectivities, and institutions under colonial domination are indeed effective decolonizing postures.

The Gospel of John presents the wretches of the colonial reality. The Johannine Jesus is portrayed, however, as the one who resists being a victim of

[158] Kingston argues that *reporting wrongs is, in essence, revenging wrongs.* See Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoires of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (London: Vintage Books, 1989), 53.

colonial power. The author(s) asserts that the Romans are *not* the ones in control of the cause and timing of Jesus' crucifixion. The Gospel frequently uses the catch phrase; "the hour has not yet come" (John 2:4, 7:30, 8:20), asserting that the death of Jesus is according to God's plan. In doing so, the Gospel insists that it is God, not the Roman emperor, who *is* in charge of history. Through its construction of authority, the writer(s) of the Gospel resists being a victim and shows that through the power of their writing and imagination, colonized people did and do have a hand in addressing and shaping colonial relations. After all, the Gospel of John's narrative construction of its alternative or imagined community subversively emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of the disavowal of the Roman Empire.

In John 4:42, the Johannine Jesus appears fully clothed with the emperor's title - the "savior of the world." The author(s) of the Gospel develops, especially in chapter 4, a contesting text that reaches its climax when it recasts the title of Roman emperors on Jesus. Helen Tiffin terms this decolonizing gesture a "canonical counter discourse."[159] She notes that in this type of discourse the writer intentionally reuses or reworks the dominant language or narrative in order to dismantle and contest its basic assumptions.

The Gospel of John, resonating such a discursive posture of appropriation, develops a counter text that preserves the title of the emperor, but alters its structure of power by conferring the same title on Jesus, the crucified colonized. The Gospel

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[159] See further discussion on Helen Tiffin, "canonical counter discourse" in *post-colonial drama: theory, practice, politics* (Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, eds. London: Routledge, 1996), 15-51.

reuses the same *word*, but with different *meaning*, as a discursive strategy that actively works to destabilize the authority of the Emperor. At the same time, the Gospel further challenges the power structure of the imperial enterprise insisting that Jesus the colonized, not the Emperor, is the true "savoir of the world." The Gospel deploys a decolonizing posture of a "repetition with a difference." The Gospel's repetition of the colonizing ideology invariably involves a changing of its nuances that translates eventually into ideological subversion and political insurgence.

From this perspective then, colonized writers such as the author(s) of the Gospel of John are not the disempowered or slavish individuals assumed by the colonizers. The Gospel exhibits what Bhabha calls "a spectacular resistance" by threatening the Roman Empire through an act of "mimicry" that discloses the ambivalence of the discourse of colonialism.[160] The Gospel displays the colonized writers' ability to turn against the colonizers with their own language. The title of Roman Emperor, that begins as part of the dominant discourse, turns into an inappropriate, subversive, and challenging reply in the hands of Johannine writers. In doing so, the colonized writer(s) of the Gospel of John interfere with the hegemonic production of cultural meaning once dominated by the Roman colonizers.

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[160] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 172.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the dominant discourses of power, especially that of the colonizing Christian West, have used the Bible and its interpretations to further their ideologies and their colonizing operations. At the same time, the colonized also subversively employ the Bible in their counter discourses to assert dissident claims and launch decolonizing projects. Decolonizing [the] readings of the Gospel of John, therefore, signifies a subversive posture - one that destabilizes not only the colonial ideologies and impetus embedded in the text, but also the dominant interpretation of the Gospel to serve a particular interest.

I also have argued that the Gospel of John is a competing Hebrew national discourse because of its narrative quest for an alternative community for the disciples, and thus it inevitably also serves as a revolutionary nationalist narrative in the face of Roman colonial power. The narratives of the Gospel within its own revolutionary claims, however, are also inevitably bound to the ideology found in its dominant discourse of power -- colonialism, in its attempt to forge a sense of unity or a model of (be)longing. Thus, the Gospel is also a counter-productive discourse of Roman colonialism.

As a discourse that advocates for the identity of the imagined community, the Gospel forcefully promotes unity by defining its imaginary boundaries and unifying divisions of ethnicity, religion, class, region, and dialect. In doing so, as a narrative of nation, the Gospel reveals that the representations of its imagined community are highly unstable and unequal constructions that cannot render the unity it promises.

So, although it was originally written to be an enabling text for the community and identity of the colonized, the Gospel has full potential to be a marginalizing or colonizing text as well.

Chapter 3

NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:

Certainty, Contradiction, and Ambivalence

Johannine scholars have argued that the Gospel of John is a *product* or a *producer* of a community that articulated its communal identity in the midst of its estrangement or displacement from the hegemonic (Roman) society.[161] In addition to examining the Gospel as a narrative that succeeded (product) or preceded (producer) its community, scholars should also investigate and explore the temporality of the community – or where the community is located in its negotiated or transitive process. In other words, one needs to examine the Gospel's configuration of the community that simultaneously relies on its current estranged condition (product) and its alternative imagination (producer). Such integrated understandings of the role of the Gospel in relation to its community will allow for a more nuanced reading of the text without diminishing one perspective at expense of the other.

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[161] Martyn and Brown argued that the Gospel of John bears linguistic and theological features, or sectarian characters, that emerge from a particular community that was under pressure from their larger society. See J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); and Raymond E. Brown, *The community of the beloved disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). On the other hand, Liew, especially, argues for the pivotal role of the Gospel of John in the production or formation of the community. See further in "Ambiguous Admittance: Consent and Descent in John's Community of 'Upward' Mobility" in *John and Postcolonialism*, 193-224. Derrida, moreover, argues that writing does not passively record social "realities" but in fact precedes them and gives them meaning through a recognition of the differences between signs within textual systems. See further in Derrida, *Writing and Difference*.

By using the perception of the Gospel of John as both a product *and* producer, or as a text of the struggling community and a struggling text for the imagined community, contradictory ideas in the text emerge. Specifically, its absolutizing, essentializing, and totalizing claims intersect with its transitional, contested, and fragmented (con)texts. The contested claims of the *Other's* communities within the narrative of the Gospel (those of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans) provide evidence that, like the communities it represents, the Gospel is "unsettled" and is both a product and a producer of the Johannine community. The moments or movements of disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural conflicts expressed by the *Other* within the narratives, exemplify these contending claims. However, these contested claims are, in/advertently suppressed in the narrative due to its quest for affiliation with and establishment of the imagined unified community of the Gospel.

This narrative overtone of desire for a community is at the heart of the Gospel of John. The Gospel's imagination of a community or communion of its members, through its narrative forms resonates with Benedit Anderson's concept of nations as "imagined communities." According to Anderson, the nation is imagined because the members of the nation will never know or meet most of their fellow-members, nor even hear of them. Yet in the minds of each member lives the "image of their communion."[162] Because of this, the function of specific forms of narrative or writing is crucial to the formation of a "deep, horizontal comradeship" among the people.

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[162] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7.

Like many other foundational discourses of nation, the origin of the imagined community of the Gospel of John cannot be historically remembered, and so it must be created and thus narrated.[163] The act of narration, especially the process of naming names, is critical to the existence and legitimacy of the Johannine imagined community. [164] By naming names such as εν ἀρχῇ (the origin) and ὁ λόγος (the word), the Gospel participates in the process of its own creation of community, or its "it coming into being"[165] (John 1:1- 3). The origin of Jesus, conceived through the act of narration, provides his ministry directional and territorial ambitions by narrating where he had been as a preliminary to what is going to happen in the Gospel. This discursive act of origin simultaneously endows Jesus' authority over the "world" (John 1:1).

The Gospel appropriates, defines, and captures social realities in language, and thus provides a social basis for its concept of an imagined community. As Paul Carter points out, the effect of naming in narratives, like the process of naming the identity of Jesus (such as ὁ λόγος (the Word), ἡ ζωὴ (the Life), and τὸ φῶς (the Light)),"invents the spatial and conceptual coordinates within which history could occur."[166] In addition, as the narration that names Jesus as the heavenly traveler, and establishes the world as his domain (John 1: 11), the Gospel maps out not only the

[163] Benedit Anderson argues that nation is conceived in language. Because its origin cannot be "historically" remembered, so must be narratively created. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 145.

[164] See a further discussion on how naming was used as a primary colonizing process in the context of colonial invasion in Ashcroft, eds., "Place" in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 391-423.

[165] The root word γινομαι (to become) is used three times John 1:3.

[166] Paul Carter, "Naming Place" in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 406.

places he can inhabit, but also the places where he can exercise absolute power. The Prologue of the Gospel begins by conceptualizing the world as a place of ἡ σκοτία (the darkness) or in a condition of deprivation or scarcity of τὸ φῶς (Light) (John 1:1-5). This conceptual image of "need" requires the attendant creation of something that quenches the need – in this case, the "light". The narrative, therefore, anticipates the coming of Jesus who is the light of the world, fulfilling the "need" constructed through the narration.

In an effort to establish authenticity, continuity, and unity in the imagined community, the Gospel of John, resembling other nationalist discourses, strived to produce the idea of its imagined community through the act of narration. The Gospel advocates an imagined community that is conceived in the Word (John 1:1). To establish the authenticity and continuity of the community, the Gospel uses narrative strategies and claims that ensure the primeval presence of the members of the community in the "beginning" (John 1:3, 11), and the community's self-generation (John 1:12; 3:3) and continued progress of the community (4:35-38).

In its attempt to promote unity though, the Gospel of John inevitably uses a discursive strategy that destabilizes its contending *Other* in order to establish a communal identity. So, as a text that is a product as well as a producer, the imagined community of the Gospel of John was written and imagined into existence, not only out of the temporality or reality of living, but also *against* it.

The late Edward Said reminded us that one must understand the textuality of a text, in our case the textuality of the Gospel of John, as "a system of forces institutionalized (and written) by the reigning culture at some human cost to its various components."[167] The Gospel echoes the rhetoric not only of establishment and invitation, but also of displacement and rejection. In other words, the Gospel imagines a community that must deny or suppress the legitimacy of its *Other in order to exist*. Such a discursive strategy that forges *one* out of *many* can be underscored by locating the temporality of the imagined community.

One must, therefore, read the Gospel of John in its historical and cultural contexts in order to discover the lives and claims of the *Other*, who is deprived in the text. This is a reading practice that not only engages the patent assertions made by the text, but also discovers the latent realities or contexts ignored, suppressed, and marginalized in the text. An inter(con)textual reading, therefore, requires one to use a subversive recognition and imagination. A critic must read against or interpret factors contrary to the settled claims of the Gospel in order to determine the temporality or the location of the imagined community. In other words, one must discover the contending claims, which are integral components of the imagined community, but are forcefully reconciled and anxiously concealed in the narrative of imagined community in the Gospel of John.

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[167] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 53.

Plotting the Imagined Community: *Incarnation*

The incarnation is a frequently discussed concept in interpreting the Gospel of John. Evidently, the Gospel intends for the readers to understand Jesus' identity as God's Incarnate or as the Incarnate Word (John 1:9). However, very little attention is paid to the understanding that Jesus is the community's Incarnate. In other words, in and through Jesus, the Gospel projects its sense of displacement, belonging, and community. Johannine scholars, such as Craig Koester, have pointed out that Jesus often appears as "a spoke-person" for the community (3:11, 4:22).[168] Rather than highlighting the fact that Jesus speaks on behalf of the community, the Gospel discursively actualizes its imagined community in and through the person or character of Jesus. Jesus embodies the community in defining its boundaries in relation to the world (John1:11), the *Ioudaioi* (John 3:11), and the Samaritans (John 4:22). Jesus is the decisive discursive determinant of the community. Thus, the successful configuration of the identity of the community depends on the Gospel's articulation of Jesus' identity.

The Prologue begins by narrating the arrival of Jesus, who immediately faces displacement in the world. The world, as well as his own people, ignore and reject him (John 1:10-11). The heavenly Jesus was an alien who was out of place in the hostile and evil world. Political instability and ideological threats posed by his opponents often constrain Jesus' actions (John 6:15). The Gospel's view of Jesus,

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[168] Koester also points out the interplay of the words, "I" and "we" which Jesus uses interchangeably representing the community of the disciples (3:11, 4:22,). Craig Koester, *Symbolism*, 44.

thus, replicates the experience of the identity crisis of the Johannine group, who have been severed from the synagogue and found themselves in conflict with their neighbors (John10: 1-41). Just as Jesus does not belong to the world, his followers also do not belong to the world (John 17:16). The body of Jesus itself, therefore, became a site of struggle for the community by which identity, belonging, and the notion of community itself were configured and established.

Many scholars, from J. Louis Martyn to Raymond Brown, have focused on the emergence of the Johannine community out of its members' experiences of rejection from the larger society to which they once belonged.[169] These scholars have suggested that the community's experience of alienation was mainly due to their newly acquired identity as Christians. It is not sufficient, however, to identify their religious affiliation as the sole cause of the conflict with their neighbors, the *Ioudaioi*. One must also consider the inescapable role of colonial domination that brought displacement of community and political instability, and evoked an identity crisis among the colonized.

One of the important characteristics of the postcolonial crisis, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have argued, concerns "the development or

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[169] J. Louis Martyn traces the development of Johannine community in terms of Christology which begins wih Jesus is understood as the fulfillment of the messianic hopes of Israel to development of their own identity of the community out of the experience of being rejected by their society. See also in J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel.* Raymond Brown hypothesized the development of the community originating with early Christians such as ex-disciples of Jesus with a "Low Christology" to gradually development of a "Higher Christology" due to conflicts with 'the Jews.' See also Raymond E. Brown, *The community of the beloved Disciple*. Jerome Neyrey argues that Johannine Christology replicates cosmology of the community of the disciples. See also Jerome H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in social –science perspective*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 2-4.

recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place."[170] A discursive identity reconfiguration of the Johannine community accentuates the displacement of the heavenly Jesus on earth (John 1:10-11). This mirrors the community's effort to come to terms with the its displacement due to exploitation, migration, and its 'in/voluntary' removal (to provide indentured labor) – all of which were conditions created by the Roman colonization.

The conditions and realities of colonial displacements caused the erosion of a valid and active sense of self and place of the colonized, either as individuals or as a community. Therefore, the identity of the colonized Johannine community, could have been inevitably affected, and even destroyed, by the territorial displacement and cultural domination of the Roman colonizers. Moreover, by enforcing the supposedly superior racial and cultural identity of the colonizers, the Romans denigrate, via conscious and unconscious oppression, the personality and culture of the colonized.

The colonized writer(s) of the Gospel imagined their own community of belonging in the midst of a colonial experience rooted in defeat, displacement, and grievance. The Gospel presents a community that transcended these experiences by taking strength from their religious-cultural heritage and making it a powerful force of communal identity. The community of the Gospel of John, largely deprived of the territorial, social, and political bases upon which it could construct its own communal identity, opted to base its collective identity and hope of survival on cultural, moral, and religious power. They found their social and cultural identity in the eternal

[170] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 8. The emphasis in italics is mine.

territory discursively constructed and powered by the politics or ideology of incarnation.

In and through the Incarnate Jesus, the Gospel asserts the unity of the divided communities, displaced territories, and marginalized traditions, and invokes a new social and conceptual possibility ("Children [a community of] of God" 1:12-13; "Worship [space] in Spirit and Truth" 4:1-42; "A place in the Father's house"14:1-4). Through the power of writing and imagination, the colonized writer(s) of the Gospel had the ability not only to reconfigure their displaced identity under the colonial assault, but also had a hand in addressing and shaping their own destiny.

In and through Jesus, the Gospel narrates a history of the imagined community, articulating the past and the future of the community. This discursive strategy creates a configuration of nation or imagined community in the symbolic language that Louis Althusser calls "space without place, time without duration."[171] The Gospel's tactical and ideological construction of the Incarnate Word, (i.e. "the Word that becomes flesh") legitimates the discursive authority of "the Word" that seamlessly forms, like a realist novel, the past and future of the community (John 1:13). Jesus, or "the Word" who is from the beginning (John 1:1), concomitantly provides a legitimate past and a believable future to the community, narrating its history and destiny. Through the narratives of being all in one - God, Jesus, and the disciples (John 17:20-24) - the Gospel explicitly identifies its community with Jesus.

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[171] Louis Althussar, *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx* (London: Verso, 1982), 78.

Such discursive strategy, thus, enables the narrator to recount the imagined community that develops from an immemorial "beginning," a legitimate past, and proceeds toward a limitless but a destined future (John1:1-3; 4:21-25; 14:1-5).

Authenticity*: Superiority of the Imagined Community*

As I have argued above, the prologue of the Gospel of John sets out to narrate, the origin and identity of Jesus, and by implication, the origin and identity of the community. However Jesus' opponents, mainly the *Ioudaioi*, constantly question his identity throughout the Gospel (John 1:19, 6:52, 7:15, 8:48, 9:28). The legitimacy of Jesus, which is also the legitimacy of the community, is at stake and under constant attack throughout the Gospel. The *Ioudaioi* constantly see the identity of Jesus' and his disciples (e.g., John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman, and Peter) as suspicious and questionable (John 1:19-23; 4:16-18; 18:25-27). By narrating a story asserting that Jesus emerges from divine origin, the Gospel tactfully constructs, legitimates, and thus naturalizes the authenticity and destiny of the community that is one with Jesus (17:22-23).

In a way, the Gospel creates, what Trinth T. Minh-Ha calls a "planned authenticity."[172] That is, the Gospel constructs and defends the authenticity or identity of the community by constructing and asserting the identity of the community that is

[172] Minh- Ha argues that a "planned authenticity" is "a product of hegemony and a remarkable counterpart of universal standardization" that imposes one to defend his or her authenticity and keeps one busy with "recovering so-called roots, or origins" diverting from other important issues. Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism" in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 268.

intricately linked with authenticity of Jesus. Such a conscious effort to forge a communal identity emerges out of a desire to preserve or enhance the identity of the threatened community and to transform or if necessary, even to create it.

The Gospel constructs the identity of Jesus by aligning his origin with that of God in order to circumvent any questions related to Jesus' authority and any accusations of inauthenticity or illegitimacy (John 1:1-4). By planting this origin narrative of Jesus, the Gospel preemptively constructs and defends Jesus' legitimacy – the same legitimacy that the *Ioudaioi* constantly question in the Gospel (John 1:19; 7:25-27,40-44; 9:29). In anticipation of such accusatory questions regarding the identity of Jesus, the Gospel boldly constructed the rhetoric of authenticity and superiority saying, "he [Jesus] who comes from above is above all" (John 3:31).

Scholars such as Eric Hobsbawn, Tom Nairm, and Benedit Anderson have all argued that the imagined communities are constructed in Janus-like fashion, backward-looking, and yet oriented to the future.[173] Like the rhetoric of nation that claims to be visionary, cultural, and contemporary but relies on a nostalgic past to define and legitimate itself,[174] the narrative claims of the imagined community of the Gospel are paradoxical in its use of past traditions.

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[173] Anderson, along with scholars such as Eric Hobsbawn and Tom Nairm, argues the paradoxical nature of the imagined communities signified by its simultaneous reliance on the past to define and legitimate itself." Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 183. See further in Eric J. Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge, 1990); and Tom Nairm, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus revisited* (London: Verso, 1997).

[174] Anthony Smith outlines how the discursive formation of nation constructs what he calls the "usable past" to serve the rhetoric of national discourses. According to him history or communal past 1) serves the interests of elites who use selected aspects of the past to manipulate mass emotions; 2) provides as the legitimizer of unpalatable social change.; 3) offers series of exemplary virtues to

The Gospel of John also invokes the past to emphasize the legitimacy of the imagined community in the minds of its readers. To this end, the Gospel uses pre-existing and historically inherited cultures or traditions, especially traditions related to Abraham, Moses, and Jacob. It recounts the past to invoke, inspire, and promote the new imagined community that is possible through Jesus. The Gospel, however, utilizes these past traditions very selectively and often transforms them into something radically new. The Gospel selectively remembers and retells the past history of the Israelites in a way that seamlessly melds into the narration of the origin of its imagined community.

The imagined community invents language, revives traditions, and restores a pristine past, conveying that these cultural shreds and patches used by the Gospel often appear, borrowing Gellner's words, to be "arbitrary historical inventions."[175] The Gospel of John constructs Jesus' identity by invoking the ancestors Jacob, Moses, and Abraham and selected aspects of the traditions related to these figures (John 4:13-15; 6:1-15; 8:33-58). The Gospel narrates events in the Israelites' past as the "legitimizer" that foreshadows and legitimates the radical change brought by Jesus. Jesus announces that if one eats or drinks what he provides (unlike the water of Jacob's well or the Moses' manna in the wilderness), one will never get hungry or thirsty again.

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inspire public emulation, indeed a public morality; 4) endows prior title for one or other ethnic community or nation, especially where territory is contested invoking different or parallel communal past; and 5) serve the needs and interest of present generation as it is malleable. See further in Smith, *Antiquity of Nation*. 212ff.

[175]Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 55-56.

The narratives in John 4 and 6 invoke the well of Jacob and the bread of Moses only to assert Jesus' superiority over these ancestors. These narratives, therefore, accomplish a task of providing the prior title of these spaces to the disciples of Jesus in a context where cultural, religious, and ethnic territories are blurred and contested. The Gospel thus unveils that through the act of narration, the communal past is malleable and reusable to legitimate, represent, and even to create a new and superior community.

The body of Jesus serves as the medium through which the community's identity crisis, displacement, and hopes for unity are articulated. Jesus, as a narrative embodiment of the community, dissolves, and absorbs what are seemingly conflicting and contesting elements within the community. Through the narrative construction of the concept of 'all-in-one,' in which Jesus' disciples become "one" with God through Jesus (especially in John 17:21-23), the Gospel establishes and defends the validity and legitimacy of the community. The community certifies and identifies with Jesus in order that "the world may know" them (John 17:23). Through the function of a narrative that traces back to a higher, better, and more supernatural reality of initial events and past traditions, the Gospel strengthens the identity of the community and endows it with a greater value and prestige. The narrative of origin/authenticity inevitably comes side-by-side with the rhetoric of superiority as Jesus pronounces, "I was before/above Abraham" (John 8:58).

Continuity*: Time without Duration*

In John Chapter 14, the emotions of the disciples of Jesus are running high due to the imminent departure of Jesus. Jesus comforts them by saying not to let their "hearts be troubled" and assures them that he will "prepare a place" for them, thus promising the assurance and continuity of the community (John 14:1-4). Jesus expresses his concern for the regeneration of the community as he prays for the future members of the community (John 15:20).

Understanding that nation is more than a recent and transitory political form, Regis Debray argues that the idea of imagined community fundamentally responds to the twin threats of the "disorder and death" of the community felt by the members in all societies.[176] Offering the birth/origin and the destination/destiny of the community, the Gospel narrates and delineates the fear of "disorder and death" threatening the continuity of the community. The language of origin (John 1:1-4), regeneration (John 1:13, 3:3), unity (John 13:31-35), and destination (John 14:1-4) indicate a discursive solution that offers a clear path to counter the threats of "disorder and death," either moral or physical, confronting the community.

As a discursive symbol, Jesus plays a decisive and indispensible role in the Gospel's articulation of the continuity of the imagined community that provides a comfort to the sense of "disorder and death" of the community, threatening the disciples. The Gospel therefore configures the body of Jesus as one that embodies a sense of origin/authenticity, and continuity of the community, encompassing the

[176] Regis Debray, "Marxism and the National Question," *New Left Review* 105 (1977): 26.

seemingly clouded origin as well as the uncertain future of the community. The Gospel narrates the time in which the imagined community has "come into being" through the Word (John1:20), and the time (and place) when the members will unite in the "place" enabled and embodied by Jesus (John 4:20-24, 14:3). Jesus' body discursively became the incarnation of time when he made a comparison between his body and the temple that was built over "forty six years" (John 2:19-22). Jesus absorbs and delimits what seems to be a distant and different time (and space).

Moreover, although the Gospel relates a sense of time that signifies important events in or stages of the community, it does not specify the duration of the events. For instance, language such as ϵν ἀρχῇ ("in the beginning" John 1:1), ϵν ἐἀρχῇ ("eternal life" John 3:14-15; 4:14 6:27), ὁ καιρὸς ("the time" John 7:6), η ὥρα ("the hour" John 4:21), and ἐν ἐκϵίνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ("in that day" John 14:20) refer to events or moments that could take place in certain historical time, but they do not pinpoint any historical specificities and differences that can be remembered. In other words, the times that the Gospel refers to are without durations in historical sense, but they are moments and events that ensure the existence of the community.

By narrating "time without duration," the Gospel of John counters the "disorder and death," which threaten the continuity of the imagined community. Through its discursive strategy of presenting Jesus as the embodiment of time, the Gospel delimits and turns the differences of time (and space) into a sameness of time (and space). Jesus declares that Moses had written about him (5:46), and Abraham

rejoiced to see his days (8:56). Therefore such descriptions of time culminated in Jesus, accommodates a sense of uncertainty or difference of time (and also space) that looms over the community.

Unity*: Space without a Place*

The Gospel uses the rhetoric of the conceptual space that lacks actual physical dimensions. For instance, the Johannine Jesus advocates a space of worship "in spirit and truth," in place of actual places, such as - Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem (John 4:23). Similarly, Jesus promised to prepare for "a place in the father's house, " rather than earthly places (John 14:3). The Gospel projects such symbolic spaces that unify its community members by transcending their need for actual places. In and through Jesus, the community imagines *a space of unity without a place and/or territory*. Jesus himself, in terms of the discursive design of incarnation, dissolves any spatial and ethnic demarcations and absorbs them into his body (John 4:24). Jesus turns difference of places/territories into the sameness of space or, said another way, turns *many* places into *one* space.

For the Johannine Jesus, the difference of earthly places is the source of disunity among the disciples. In John 4, Jesus infers that the difference of worship places between the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans is an obstacle to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:20-23). Jesus' earthly mission, therefore, is to forge a community of "one flock" with "one shepherd" among the scattered (John 10:16). The high priest

Caiaphas prophesized that Jesus would die “not only for the nation” (τοῦ ἔθνους μόνον) but also to gather “the scattered children of God” (τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ διεσκορπισμένα), forging many into one (John 11:52). Through the function of the narrative of many-into-one, the Gospel articulates a conceptual space that promises, structures, and promotes unity for the disciples in the midst of menacing differences.

The differences of territories, cultures, and religions inherently threaten the existence of the community. The Gospel, therefore, articulates narratives of conceptual space that entirely denies, but inevitably depends on, real social places. The Gospel favors the idea of the space of true worship, delegitimizing the actual places of worship in Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim (John 4:21-24). The Johannine Jesus will prepare a space/room in his “father’s house,” and thus in a way denying the validity and importance of earthly places of the fathers (John 4: 19; 14:1-4). The Gospel achieves a space of unity among the disciples that transcends any real social or cultural place, and transfers their allegiance or attachment to these places to the space signified by Jesus.

In search of authenticity, continuity, and unity of the newly imagined community, Johannine narratives re/turn the difference of space and place into the sameness of time/space, and collapse all of the people into one group. In doing so, such narrative design suppresses the possibility of other contending viewpoints, materials, and people. The ideological maneuver of forgetting (the past or present) or of remembering selectively becomes the basis for articulating the imagined

community. Thus, the formation of a new space in the place of the old, also implies the appearance of a greater and more superior successor to or inheritor of something that has vanished.

Forgetting in Formatting of the Imagined Community: *Contradictions*

In this section, I will argue that the Gospel of John constructs its essentialist identity, or specific claims of its community, in opposition to its *Other,* such as the *Ioudaioi*, Samaritans, and the world. However, the identity and claims of the community, were inextricably woven into the Gospel's *imagined Other* and thus emerged as contradictory, ambivalent, and hybrid constructions. Bhabha argues that a narrative of belonging, especially nurtured by the terror of the *Other* or of difference exhibits the "instability of knowledge, or conceptual indeterminacy, with its wavering between vocabularies."[177] The language of the Gospel that constructs the community that has yet to exist, therefore, is a language of contestation. It signifies a liminal space in which the differences between communities are constantly negotiated, and, therefore, produces a hybrid and imagined construction of identity.

The Gospel of John constructs its imagined community, resonating essentialist identity discourses, in opposition to its imagined *Other* or difference. The Gospel forges decisive boundaries for the community, demanding unwavering commitment from its members. In doing so, the Gospel invokes and invents the unchanging polemic of "us" and "them" by which it fosters, asserts, and contests a sense of

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[177] Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 222.

(be)longing to the community. In the imagined constructions of "them" or the use of stereotypes of *Other*, such as the world, the darkness, or the *Ioudaioi*, the Gospel anxiously tries to conceal the inescapable and indivisible otherness within the construction of "us."

The Gospel ambiguously construes the imagined community in opposition to the world. It portrays the "world" not only as the object of love, but also as the object of hate for Jesus and his disciples (John 3:16; John 15:18). The Gospel ambivalently notes that the "world" hated by Jesus' followers (John 12:25) is also the object of God's love (John 3:16). The Gospel claims that the will of God and the blood of human are opposites to each other. The members of the imagined community, therefore, are formed out of "the will of God," in contrast to the "blood and will of flesh" (John1: 13). However, both will and blood have a similar power that defines the identities of the members of the imagined community and of the *Other*. In other words, the Gospel forges the conceptual consent (the will of God) in terms of the rhetoric or paradigm of a social descent (the will of flesh).

Moreover, the Gospel promotes the spatial formation of the imagined community that is in opposition to the earthly places (John 4:21). The Gospel, however, ambivalently delineates the place/home of the believers can be out there above (John 14:1-3), as well as in here below (John1:14; 14:23). Even though the Gospel advocates for a spiritual worship in place of earthly worship, its desire and purpose are to acquire the allegiance given to the specific earthly worship places, such as in Jerusalem or at Mt. Gerizim.

The Gospel of John is a discourse of essentialist identity that depends on a successful articulation of self against the *Other* and uses ambiguous concepts and vocabularies. Jesus blurs the heavenly elements and earthly elements, or spiritual and material, with the wavering vocabularies. The Gospel forcefully denies the legitimacy of the Other signified by the contending traditions (especially of *Ioudaioi*), earthly elements (the will and blood of humans, the water of Jacob, and the bread of Moses), and worship places (at Mt. Gerizim and in Jerusalem). However, these contending elements, perspectives, and people are what enable the Gospel to forge its own imagined community of difference.

In/authenticity*: The Imagined Community and/or Empire*

Benedit Anderson argues that the imagined community is "a cultural phenomenon or system, out of which as well as against which, it came into being."[178] In other words, imagined communities are manifestations of current socio-political conditions as well as reflections of dissatisfaction with these same conditions. Ironically, but perhaps unavoidably, in representing the new imagined community, the Gospel of John also replicates, repeats, and re-inscribes the rhetoric, language, and paradigm of the dominant society - the Roman Empire. Reading the Gospel of John inter(con)textually with the dominant discourse of the Roman Empire, therefore, unveils the illusive function of a text that not only resists its dominant context, but also rehashes its dominant discourse of identity construction.

[178] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 187.

Building on Michael Halliday's theory of *anti-language*, scholars such as Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh have argued that the Gospel of John also employs the characteristics of *anti-language*.[179] According to Halliday, *anti-language* is a language that is used consciously for strategic purposes, and is used "defensively to forge and maintain a particular social reality and/or offensively for resistance and protest."[180] I have argued previously that through the discursive formation of the imagined community, the Gospel of John attempts to create an *anti-society*, a community of *difference*, or an imagined community as a conscious alternative to the Roman Empire. Indeed, the Gospel, at times, exhibits the author(s) conscious effort of to counter colonial rule by re-configuring the identity of its displaced community while still subject to the hegemonic Roman Empire. In doing so, the Gospel's choice of words[181] and ideological axioms (e.g., Jesus' divine origin, his absolute power over

[179] See a further discussion in Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 7-11.

[180] The terms *antilanguage* was coined by Halliday to refer to the special jargons, canting slang and secret languages, spoken by the members of what he calls *antisocieties* which exist in an antagonistic relationship with the dominant or norm culture. Therefore, the language structure will involve "systematic inversion and negation of the structures and semantics of the norm languages in order to construct an alternate reality." See Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic* (Baltimore, MD: University Park Press, 1978), 170ff.

[181] For examples, the Gospel of John uses the language associated to the Roman emperors. The title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (Son of God) John 1:34,49; 5:25; 19:7; 20:31) is frequently used for the Roman Emperors, especially Tiberius and Domitian. See further in Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 52ff. The Gospel render the title ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου (Savior of the world) to Jesus (John 4:42). Dio Cassius refers Augustus as "the savior of the citizens/empire" in his *Roman History* 53:16. Thomas confesses Jesus as ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. (my Lord and my God) in John 20:28. The emperor Domitian's official letters often begin as "Our Lord and Our God bids that this be done!" (Suetonius, *Lives* 13:1ff). Jesus calls God as his πατηρ("father" John 4:23, 53). The word "father" occurs 120 times in the Gospel of John. Dio Cassius around Augustan period, in his *Histories* 1-18.3 reports that Augustus was hailed as a "father' during his years as emperor. Epictetus argued that the Roman empire was analogous to a family with Caesar at its head in his *Dissertationes* 1.9.7. Suetonius hailed Augustus as the "Father of our country" in his *Life of Augustus*.

earthly things, and Jesus as superior traveler (John 1: 1-5: 4:4), intersect with the rhetoric and language of the dominant Roman Empire.

The Gospel configures its imagined community *out of* and *against* the Roman imperial context. In the process of contending and contesting with its cultural constituencies to forge the imagined community, the Gospel of John becomes a hybrid text. One way that the Gospel manifests the characteristic of hybridity is by creating a language in which the two systems of culture and representation attribute different meanings to the same words. Halliday points out that the significance of *anti-language* is that it signifies the *tension* between two realities (dominant and dissident societies), not the *distance* between them.[182] This description would seem to apply to the Gospel of John because, as previously stated, it emerges *out of* and *against* the Roman Empire. In other words, the Gospel is a compatible as well as competitive text relative to the dominant discourse of the Roman Empire.

The Gospel of John uses the title of the *colonizer* Emperor ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου (the savior of the world) in order to describe Jesus the *colonized* (John 4:42). The discourse of its imagined community, therefore, stands in *tension* as a creative critique of the dominant discourse, rather than in *distance* with the discourse of Empire. The Gospel of John is, borrowing Roger Fowler's terms, '"a medium or transaction' of negotiation between two communities, through which 'conflicts of

[182] Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as social semiotic*, 171.

ideology and identity are actively waged."[183] Therefore, it is not sufficient to suggest that the Gospel of John imagines a community that is completely autonomous and separate from the Roman Empire. Rather, the Gospel's construction of the alternative community is provoked by, and a creative critique of, the norms of the Empire.

The Gospel makes a conscious and alternative use of the titles of the Roman emperors as a way to compare and contest the Empire. The Gospel endows Jesus' with titles that are reminiscent of the titles ascribed to and closely associated with the Caesars - such as Son of God (John 1:34, 1: 49, 5:25, 19:7, 20:31), Savior (John 4:41), and Lord and God (John 20:28).

In advocating for its alternative community, the Gospel appropriates the language and symbols that provide the cultural authority and thus, the legitimacy of the Roman imperium. In doing so, the Gospel reverses the previous relationship of subjection by transferring the allegiance of the community from a Roman Emperor to Jesus. It also contests the old center, the Roman Empire, by replacing it with a better and superior "new" center enabled by Jesus. In this way, the imagined community of the Gospel of John emerges not only as a resistance or an alternative to the Roman Empire, but also as a parallel, competitive, and comparable community to it.

[183] Roger Fowler, *Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 150.

Dis/continuity*: Becoming Children of God*

In the Gospel of John, the Johannine Jesus asserts that the "scripture cannot be nullified" (John 10:35). Jesus claims that Moses has written about him (John 5:46), and Abraham has rejoiced to witness his day (John 8: 56). By legitimizing the authority of the scripture, and the ancestors, Jesus promotes the continuity of the traditions of the ancestors and claims that he is the fulfillment of the tradition of the past.[184] On the other hand, the Gospel concentrates God's revelation exclusively on Jesus to such an extent that there seems to be no room left for any other revelation of God (John 14:6).

The use or misuse of the past tradition in the Gospel echoes the ambivalence of the nationalist discourse that depends on the continuity of the past, *but* also declares a decisive and profound break from it.[185] The Gospel utilizes the past tradition, especially the tradition of the Exodus, not only as a legitimizer, but also as a springboard from which there is no return. The Gospel of John uses the scriptures,

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[184] The Gospel of John has fewer direct OT citations than the other gospels (e.g., 27 passages in John vs. 124 in Matthew). However, C. K. Barrett shows that many of the themes of the synoptic testimonial have been woven into the structure of John without explicit citations of the Hebrew Bible. See further in Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, 132ff. The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the Messiah, the servant of Yahweh, the King of Israel, and the Prophet alluding to expectations in Hebrew Bible (John 4 & 19). Hoskyns, therefore, argues for the Genesis' influence on John. See Hoskyn, The Gospel of John. Raymond Brown argued Jesus as personified Wisdom of Hebrew Bible. See further in Brown, *The Gospel of John*. The themes of Hebrew Bible were implicitly woven into Jesus' actions and words. Although there are fewer quotations from the Hebrew Bible in John than in the Synoptics, allusions and imageries to the it abound in John. It is also significant that the Hebrew Bible is commonly referred in the Gospel of John as ὅτι γεγραμμένον ἐστίν· ("that which is written"). The perfect participle appears eight times in John in reference to Hebrew Bible (2:17; 6:31; 8:17; 10:34).

[185] See further discussion on the rhetoric of national discourse that "preaches and defends continuity, but owes everything to a decisive and unutterably profound break in human history" in Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 125ff.

both their text and the history recorded in them, to legitimate Jesus, but *not* vice versa (John 2:17; 6:31; 8:17; 10:34). Thus, although he claimed to be the inheritor or successor of the past tradition, Jesus also embodied a decisive and profound break from it.

The Gospel of John uses the "shreds and patches" of the Exodus theme and tradition, at times arbitrarily inventing as well as inverting them. For instance, in an examination of Moses' typology in passages such as John 3:14-15, 5:46, 6:30-51, 8:5-11, and 9:24-34, scholars such as Wayne E. Meeks and Moody Smith have compared actions that take place in Moses throughout Exodus with actions associated with Jesus.[186] The signs Jesus performs not only invoke the Exodus tradition, but also

[186] Many isolate instances of *typology* related to Exodus traditions as well as a running parallelism of content to the book of Exodus. E.g. *unrecognized deliverer* (Exodus 2:11, John 1:11); *the sign of the serpent* (Exodus. 4:4; John 3:14); *a Response of belief to the first signs* (Exodus. 4:30; John 2:11); *series of signs* (Exodus 3:12-13:16; John 2:11-12:37); *the people of God* (Exodus 16-40; John 13-21); following the construction of the sanctuary (Exodus 25-31//John 19:30); divine commandments (Exodus 20-23//John 13:34); prayers of intercession (Exodus 32-33//John 17); the credentials of the leader (Exodus 33:16//John 17:5); the manner of closing (Exodus 40:33b//John 19:30), and the effects of signs on people (Exodus 14:31; 19:9//John 12:37-42; 20:8, 25, 30 ff). There also running comparison of miracles between the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel of John. For example, the sweetening of the waters of Marah (Exodus 15:23ff) // the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11); the feeding of Israel with Manna (Exodus 16:11-36) // the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14); the provision of water in the desert (Number 20:7-13)// Jesus' claim of living water at the well with the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-42); the healing of the Israelites with the bronze serpent (Numbers 21:8-9) // Jesus' healing by his death on the cross (John 19); and the healing serpent //healing savior. The other comparisons can be seen in the following. The call of Moses and the beginning of the Gospel (Sending mission); I, the Lord, am your hearer" (Exodus 15:26) and the healing of the official's son and the lame man (John 4:43-54); the lord's appearance in a cloud (Exodus 16:6) and Jesus' walking on the sea (John 6:19); and the complaints of Children of Israel (Exodus17:2-4) and the Jews' repudiation of Jesus throughout the gospel. See further discussion of on comparison between the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel of John in Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967); Smith, D. M. "Johannine Christianity: Some Reflections on Its Character and Delineation." *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975) 222-48; and "The Presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel." *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 367-378.

invert the tradition's meaning, its nature, and its intention.[187] These passages, therefore, convey that what takes place through Jesus is parallel, but far superior, to what Moses has enacted. The narratives in chapters 4 and 6 are constructed as if to claim that Jesus supersedes not only Moses but also the ancestors of both Samaritans and Jews.

The water in Jacob's well could not stop the thirst, just as the manna in the wilderness could not satisfy the hunger. Through such a narrative movement, the Gospel claims that only the living water and bread that Jesus offers can quench the thirst and satisfy the hunger. In this way the Gospel reinvents the community's past to enable the reader to imagine a single community with a shared past. Thus, this arbitrary invention of a communal past, that supported the essentialist identity of the community [Moses has written about Jesus (John 5:46), and Abraham has rejoiced to witness Jesus' day (John 8: 56)], became an ideal platform for community building in the Gospel.

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[187] The following incidents in the Gospel can also be seen as narrative of reversal to the Exodus tradition. 1) Turning Water into Blood in Exodus 7:14-24//Turning water into Wine in John 2:1-11 – Instead of death dealing blood, Jesus creates life-in giving water. Especially wine is widely understood as life-giving fluid (See further discussion in E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish symbols in Greco-Roman Period)*; 2) a plague upon the domestic animals of Egypt in Exodus 9:1-7 // the healing of the official's son in John 4:46-54. Whereas Moses brings about the extinction of valued possessions, Jesus sustains life in that which is treasured; 3) sores on the body in Exodus 9:8-12//healing of the lame man in John 5:2-9. Moses brings physical debilitation, while Jesus brings restoration to health; 4) whereas Moses conjures up a storm to bring destruction in Exodus 9:13-35, Jesus stills a storm and brings calm in John 6:16-21; 5)the attack by locusts which causes famine in Exodus 10:21-29//Jesus' feeding of the multitude with bread in John 6:1-15. The Exodus type describes Moses' bringing of famine to those who have food; the Johannine antitype emphasizes Jesus' supplying of an abundance of food to those who are hungry; 6) Moses' invoking darkness upon Egypt in Exodus 1:21-29//Healing of the blind man in John 9:1-41; and 7) The Slaughter of the first born in Exodus 11:1-12// the raising of Lazarus in John11:1-44. God brings death where there was life, whereas in the latter Jesus brings life where there was death. The death-resurrection of Jesus can also be understood as linked with the final Mosaic sign in further indicated by the presence of the paschal lamb typology.

Conversely, although the Gospel preaches and invokes continuity with past traditions, it also ambivalently revokes them by promoting a decisive and profound break enabled by Jesus. Jesus offers his disciples an identity as “children of God” (John 1:12), and his “friends” (John 15:14), but allegiance to him demands a decisive separation from the world and the past tradition. The imagined community, therefore, not only inherits, but also replaces, the vanished tradition of the past. The imagined community of the Gospel also daringly menaces the dominant Roman Empire by advocating the possibility of an alternative community. The Gospel, however, in/advertently marginalizes the contending claims within the community by discontinuing the traditions of the past.

Dis/unity*: Many but One*

The Gospel of John claims that its imagined community consists of members from diverse backgrounds, reflecting the spatial and ideological formulations of the Roman Empire. It includes the Samaritans (John 4:42) and *Ioudaioi* (John 8:31, 11:45). It even implies the inclusion of the Greeks (7:35, 12:20) and the scattered children of God among the nations (John 11:52). The Gospel narrates the process of naturalization of the community or “becoming the children of God” by receiving and believing in Jesus or “the Word” (John 1: 12-13). Through the act of narration, the Gospel unifies its members who are from seemingly disparate or even antagonistic religious and ethnic communities. Jesus’ mission on earth is to bring diverse and “dispersed children of God” into “one flock” having “one shepherd” (John 10:15-16).

The Gospel invokes diversity in order to form “one flock” with “one shepherd”. Such a discursive strategy echoes the contradictory and ambivalent rhetoric of imagined communities that “preaches and defends cultural diversity, when in fact it imposes homogeneity.”[188] Thus, the “Word,” which is a source of unity, affiliation and establishment (John 14:23; 17:20), also becomes a source of disunity, segregation, and diffusion (John 8:37). Due to the rhetoric of homogeneity or many-into-one, the figure of Jesus becomes not only the basis for unity, but also the source of disunity throughout the Gospel. Because of Jesus, there are divisions among the disciples, the people, and the *Ioudaioi* (John 11:52, 10:19). John (11:48) indicates that Jesus is, indeed, the potential cause of destruction for the “place” and the “nation.” The text, therefore, hints at another contesting claim among the colonized elites, which is that Jesus is the source of national (dis)unity that brings harm to the nation.

The community of “one flock and one shepherd” must be, therefore, formed not only *among* many, but also *out* of many. As the people are invited into the imagined community, at the same time, there is always the *Other* or the outsiders. The Gospel’s imagined community consists of the chosen or willing ones. This means that, the imagined community is a group that is inaccessible to outsiders. The Johannine Jesus asserts that for some people “there is no place” for his word (John 8:37).

The rhetoric of the imagined community, therefore, promotes a particular interest of the community in terms of a universal appeal, while ignoring its

[188] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 125.

contradictory claims. Thus, the benefits of belonging to the imagined community, the community of "the chosen," are only available exclusively to those who consent or agree to the necessary compromises that the Gospel of John demands (John 6:70, 15:16).

Un/covering the Ambivalent Identity of the Imagined Community:

A Discourse of Identity in Opposition to and in part of the Ioudaioi

The ancient Roman writers often portray the *Ioudaioi* as a menace and a threat to the existence of the Roman Empire.[189] The Roman elites tended to articulate such stereotypes of the *Ioudaioi* to justify their violent actions towards this population and to rally opposition against *them*.[190] The construction of the *Ioudaioi* as a menacing *Other*, in turn, offered a basis to strengthen the Roman national identity. Similarly, the Gospel of John portrays the *Ioudaioi* as Jesus' enemies, and as a menacing political pressure group of religious fanatics (e.g. John 5:18, 41, 52; 7:1, 2, 13; 8:48, 57; 9:18; 18:12, 38; 18:12; 19:7; 12:20).

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[189] It is quite often that the image of *Ioudaioi* are portrayed as enemies or menace in Roman literature. Roman writers such as Seneca, Tacitus, Plutarch and Cassius Dio are deeply concerned and threatened by the growing population of *Ioudaioi*, their political influence enabled by their mutual loyalty, and the spread of their religious customs and practices made possible by their proselytizing zeal within the Empire. Seneca in his *On Superstition,* resonates a sense of threat to their religious, social and cultural sphere caused by the *Ioudaioi* that was shared among the cultural elites: "The customs of the accused race [*Ioudaioi*] have gained such influence that they are now received throughout all the world. The vanquished have given laws to the victors" (*On Superstition* 6, 11ff). In *Roman History* Cassius Dio reports: " As the Jews flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways, [Tiberius] banished most of them" (58.18:5a). Plutarch lists keeping of the Sabbath as one of the bad barbarian customs which are taken up by Romans, indicating another critical remark about foreign customs penetrating the Roman contemporary society. (*De Superstitione* 3). See further discussion of Roman stereotypes of Ioudaioi in chapter 5.

[190] Cassius Dion justifies Tiberius' action against *Ioudaioi* in Rome out of such fear of the *Ioudaioi* (*Roman History* 58.18:5a).

Jerusalem, a religious/ethnic identity marker of *Ioudaioi*, plays an important role in the johannine plots for negative reasons. It is the place of judgment and rejection (John 2:13-24). The Gospel, moreover, depicts the *Ioudaioi* in negative terms as a representation of unbelief, the world, and the *Other*, which menaces the existence of the imagined community. The fear of the *Ioudaioi* is constantly present among the members of the community (John 7:13; 9:22,38; 12:42; and 20:19). The existence of the imagined community is, therefore, under constant threat by the presence of the *Ioudaioi*, even if it is only a symbolic menace.

The new imagined community that is in opposition to the old is intimately related to the old in terms of its viewpoints, materials, and people, especially those of *Ioudaioi*. However the Gospel presents, in oppositional terms, the grace brought by Jesus in light of and in place of the law given by Moses (John 1:17). It relates the sustaining power of the living water offered by Jesus to the water provided by Jacob (John 4:12-14). It understands the power of life and light in relation to the power of death and darkness of the world (John 1:1-5). It contrastingly defines and constructs the identity of the imagined community in relation to its *Other* or difference. In doing so, even though they are intentionally suppressed, the Gospel solidifies the position of the *Other* as crucial components in the identity formation of the community.

Therefore, identity construction in the Gospel indicates an essentialist identity that includes inner contradictions because it embodies contrasting claims. For instance, whereas the Gospel forges the identity of Jesus' followers in contrast to the *Ioudaioi*, the presence and essence of the *Ioudaioi* are indispensible components of

identity configuration of the imagined community. Also, it is interesting to note that although the *Ioudaioi* are antagonistic to Jesus (John 7:1, 10:31, 19:3-12, etc), they are also friendly to and even believe in Jesus (John 3:1, 11:45).

While narratives of the Gospel construct contrasting pictures of the imagined community and the negative characters and traits of the *Ioudaioi*, Jesus, the hero character of the Gospel, is ambivalently portrayed as an *Ioudaios* (4:22, 18:35). While the Gospel features its community in opposition to *Ioudaioi* as a people or a nation, it also conveys its imagined community as a part of the customs and ceremonies, terms, and phrases and ways of thought of the *Ioudaioi*. So, whereas the *Ioudaioi,* and traditions related to them, are presented as being opposed to Jesus' disciples, they also have a role in assuring the formation of the imagined community, as they are integral components of the community's identity.

The Gospel's understanding of the *Ioudaioi* reflects the tension, rather than a distance, between the discourses of the margins and the center. As a counter-productive discourse, the Gospel selects *Ioudaioi*, the menace or the *Other* of Roman hegemonic discourse, as the *Other* of its imagined community. On the other hand, Jesus invokes the ancestors of the *Ioudaioi* in order to legitimate his identity, and by implication, the identity of the imagined community (John 4:22b; 5:46; 8:37-56).

As an essentialist discourse of community that inseparably contains the presence of its *Other* in its own identity construction, the Gospel of John ambivalently and unwittingly claims the *Ioudaioi* as the forbearers of its community. In doing so, however, the Gospel's imagined community counters the Roman Empire

by ambivalently posing it as a community formed by the descendants of its menace, the *Ioudaioi*. Through such a ruse of appropriation, the Gospel not only adopts the dominant construction of the identity, but also *ambivalently* resists it.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the fundamental intention of the narratives of the Gospel of John is to establish authenticity, continuity, and unity of the imagined community for its existence. Like the discourses of imagined communities, the Gospel persistently strives to produce the idea of its community through the act of imaginative writing. In an effort to legitimize and assert the authenticity, continuity, and unity of the imagined community, the Gospel of John naturalizes its origin, destiny, and unity through its discursive strategy of *IncarNation*. In other words, the Gospel of John uses Jesus as its discursive persona embodying the identity of the community. In the process narrating and remembering selectively the old traditions, or the past, however, the narratives of the Gospel strive to forget and negate them for the sake of the imagined community enabled by Jesus, the new tradition.

The absolute claims of authenticity, continuity, and unity of the Gospel, even though they are the texts of the displaced community, displace its *Other*. The essentialist claims of the communal identity in the Gospel, therefore, are full of contradictions and ambivalences. These unsettled constructions of identity in the Gospel's narrative are conscious efforts to forge a community that has yet to exist. The Gospel, therefore, configures its communal identity *in part of*, and *against* its

contending viewpoints, materials, and people. In other words, its *Others* -- the World, the Roman Empire and the *Ioudaioi* -- are essential components of the imagined community. The identity of the community is then, an ambivalent identity forged by contesting, as well as imagined claims of communities or social formations.

Chapter 4

INTER(CON)TEXTUALITY OF JOHN 4:1-42 AND VIRGIL'S *AENEID*

In this chapter, I examine how text or *textuality* is used to forge and expand colonial subjectivities, and thus to maintain colonial operations and enterprises. I will inter(con)textually read Virgil's *Aeneid*, especially the chapter IV, one of the most influential texts of the Roman colonial discourse, and John 4:1-42. This is a reading practice that simultaneously examines (con)texts, the literary texts and non-literary contexts, in order to understand their mutual impact on each other. This perspective underscores that the discourses of the colonizer and the colonized intricately relate to each other as they both emerge from the common (con)text of colonialism. Therefore, an inter(con)textual reading of John 4:1-42 and Virgil's *Aeneid*, especially *Aeneid* 4, assesses both documents for their intrinsic textual or narrative designs and their features and ideologies, as re-inscribed across the colonial power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Homi. K. Bhabha argues that colonial discourse is not simply discourse produced by the colonizer or the colonized; it is rather "a mode of contradictory utterances that ambivalently re-inscribes across differential power relations" between

the colonizer and colonized.[191] One way to bridge the gap between the text emanating from the center (colonizer) and the margins (colonized) is to engage in a "contrapuntal" interpretation, in which a critic highlights the interaction or conversation of different voices in the text.[192] It is an analytic strategy also advocated by Edward Said with the intention of encouraging the experiences of the exploited and exploiter to be studied conjointly.

The inter(con)texual strategy is deliberate in its attention to inter(con)textual relations and borrowings between the dominant and dissident texts, as these transactions serve as further evidence that both types of text are developed from the same social (con)texts. To better understand how the Gospel of John is a product and producer of its own context (colonialism), I inter(con)textually read the Gospel along with the dominant literary texts of the time, particularly Virgil's *Aeneid*, which shaped and created the context in which the Gospel was written.

Homi Bhabha argues that the mimicry in the colonial context is both a means of facilitating the operation of imperial power when used by the colonizer, and resisting it, when used by the colonized.[193] I argue that in its appropriation of the discourse of Empire, John 4:1-42 contains the potential to challenge and resist the dominant discourse The narrative is full of colonial mimicry, which is a process of appropriation that involves repeating, reversing, and resisting. I argue that mimicry, when used by the colonized Johannine writer(s), represents a difference in its use and

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[191] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 95-96.
[192] See Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66-67.
[193] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 95-96.

meaning that is itself a disavowal of the dominant discourse. When colonizers, such as Virgil, use mimicry, it becomes a means to facilitate colonial authority and power. On the other hand, I will argue that mimicry, when used by the colonized Johannine writer(s) without being conscious or intentional, only perpetuates the imperial paradigm failing to transform what it resists. I conclude this chapter with some cautionary remarks for interpreting texts submerged in the colonial contexts, such as the Gospel of John. I argue that an uncritical re-inscription without a subversive intention of a dominant discourse as a result of colonial mimicry, even in a discourse of liberation such as the Gospel of John, can potentially repeat the condition that invoked its genesis – colonizing discourse.

Textuality and Empire/Colonialism

More than likely, the colonizing force initially established colonial or imperial rule through the use of physical violence. However, Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson argue that colonizers (especially the British and Romans) pivotally maintain the colonial operation by *textuality* during the "interpolative phase," after the physical colonization.[194] In this context, the term *textuality* means a practice that intentionally uses of literary texts to create, to maintain, and more importantly to have effects on non-literary contexts.

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[194] Chris Tiffin & Alan Lawson, "Introduction: The Textuality of Empire" in *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality* (Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, eds. London: Routledge, 1994), 3. Emphasis in italic is mine.

For instance, at the peak of the colonial expansion of the British Empire, many works of literature and art (across several countries) reflected the acceptance and perceived normality of British domination and imperial exploitation.[195] This apparent acceptance of Empire can be widely seen, in the literary works during the Roman Empire and British Empire. Therefore, even though these literary works were not about the Empire, they directly or indirectly condoned the imperial domination by being silent about it – indicating that all was right in the world with Rome or Britain at the helm.

In the discursive formation of the imperial nations, Elleke Boehmer argues that the history of the empire "is made up of a tale of firsts, bests, and absolute beginnings."[196] For instance, wherever the British could establish a cross, a city or a colony, they proclaimed the start of a new history. In the discourse of colonization, the "old" histories, which always pertained to the *Other* "were declared less significant or, in some situations, non-existent."[197] Texts, more specifically textuality concerning the *Other*, in the form of epic novels, adventure tales, and treaties in the Roman and British Empire, enabled and facilitated imperial domination, establishing colonial power and operation.

In the service of the Empire, *textuality* is used to create colonial subjectivities, and especially to impose subjectivity related to the colonized people. One of the main

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[195] See further in Said, *Orientalism*, 49ff.

[196] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24.

[197] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature,* 25. See also Aliou Cisse Niang, *Faith and Freedom in Galatia: A Senegalese Diola Sociopostcolonial Hermeneutics* (PhD diss., Brite Divinity School, 2007), 46-87.

functions or discourse then, is to interpolate colonial subjects by incorporating them in "a system of representation."[198] From national epic narratives to children's literature, texts are used to forge, maintain and expand a worldview that justifies the existence of the Empire, and its dominance and exploitation of its subjects. Colonizers' used texts as signifiers of colonizer's superiority over the colonized and to maintain the state of colonial power relations.

During the heyday of the British Empire, definitive Victorian genres, from triple-decker novels to best-selling adventure tales were infused with imperial ideas of race pride and national prowess. *Textuality*, especially in the form of treaties and school textbooks, became a vehicle that supported the colonial authority by symbolizing the acts of taking possession. Boehmer argues that "Empire was itself a textual exercise."[199] Since the act of writing and reading became an integral counterpart of colonial expansion. Boehmer also points out that "colonial expeditions, inspired by reading of adventurous tales, became themselves exercises in reading, or interpretational."[200] Thus, reading offered a direction and a path to colonial explorers in their uncertain journeys and frontiers. For instance, scholars have examined the influence of Homer's epics not only in the colonizing literature during the Roman

[198] Tiffin & Lawson, "Introduction: The Textuality of Empire," 3.
[199] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 14.
[200] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 16.

Empire such as Virgil's *Aeneid*, but also in literature of western colonial exploration and adventures.[201]

Relative to the expansion of Empire then, texts, in the form of novels, adventure tales, and treaties impacted the imperial policy and thus, produced colonial contexts. Since textuality actively involves in the project of Empire-building, it is not only a literary product of its context – the Empire, but also a producer of the non-literary forces that create and sustain the Empire. In order to examine the discursive or textual formation of imperial nations such as the British and Roman Empires, one must pay acute attention to the (con)textuality – colonial operations, policies and ideologies - that embody and enable the literary texts of the Empire.

The narratives of the imagined communities of both Virgil's *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John envision communities that transcend all ethnic groups, and even all nations of the world (*Aeneid* 6:850-85, John 4:21-25). One can hardly understand such narrative formations without also having some sense of Roman colonial operations and geography, which unite the idiosyncrasies of the territorially and culturally diverse Greco-Roman cities. Similar to the Roman empire's ideological and tactical framing of an imagined community in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the rhetoric of unity in John 4:1-42 entirely undermines territorial, ethnic and cultural specificities of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans in order to form many into one. One must, therefore, always consider the operation, or discourse, of Roman colonization in reading of the Gospel

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[201] See Peter Toohey, *Reading Epic: An Introduction to the Ancient Narrative* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 129-135; And David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

of John as its (con)text - in which the discourses of the colonizer and the colonized inescapably intersect. In other words, they are parts of the same social context, colonialism.

The Imagined Community and/or Identity in Virgil's *Aeneid*

Virgil's *Aeneid* is a discursive and textual exercise that emerged at a critical period of the Roman Empire. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil envisions a new imagined community of the Empire that has not existed before. It is an epic that was written and used as a legitimizing narrative at perhaps the most significant political turning point in Rome's development from republic to autocracy.[202] The poem, unfinished at the poet's death, was an instant success, and became a school text within a generation.[203] Virgil was elevated to be the poet or epic bard of the Roman Empire to the extent that his works were constantly quoted, scratched on walls, and illustrated in

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[202] *Aeneid* was begun in 29 BC and brought to its present state in 19 BC. *Aeneid* reflects the decade of the new Golden Age of the *Pax Romana* brought by Augustus and composed at Augustus' urging. The epic is, therefore, a most public and politically engaged creation. In *Aeneid*, Virgil took the enormous risk of challenging direct comparison with the Homeric epic. The subject was a patriotic one, the founding of Rome. The myth of Aeneas, a Trojan hero who survived the sack of Troy, sailed to the West and established in Italy a city which was to be the ancestor of Rome, enabled the poet to connect the national theme with the supreme cycle of Greek myth. The epic exploited both Iliad and Odyssey to the full not only by adapting scenes and echoing imageries, but also using the main lines of the plot of both poems. See Jasper Griffin, "Virgil" in *Legacy of Rome* (Richard Jenkyns, ed. New York: Oxford University Press), 125-150; See further also in David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton*; and Richard F. Thomas, *Virgil and The Augustan Reception* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[203] Yasmin Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self: Subject and Nation in Literary Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 13.

paintings and mosaics across the Empire.[204] Interestingly, he was even said to be a Christian despite his death in 19 BC.[205]

David Quint defines Virgil's *Aeneid* as a "narrative of political foundation for it is tied to a specific Roman national history to the idea of world domination."[206] Aeneas, the main character in the *Aeneid*, embodies Virgil's vision of Roman Empire.[207] Virgil depicts Aeneas, the main character of the poem, as a pious and magnanimous hero whose conduct stands as a prototype for all Roman political and military heroes culminating in Augustus. The epic story of Aeneas sets the tone for Rome's own rise to greatness.[208]

Immediately after it was written, the *Aeneid* was recognized as the "book of the Empire" as it not only justifies the mission of the Roman Empire as divinely sanctioned, but also legitimizes the action of the Empire by proclaiming the superiority of Rome over all other nations.[209] From then on, the future epic poets

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[204] Thomas, *Virgil and The Augustan Reception,* 55ff.

[205] Virgil's fourth Eclogue tells of the coming birth of a child who will bring back the Golden Age. Jenkyns argues that this came to be seen as a prophecy of the birth of Christ. Since shepherds who were the first people to whom Christ's birth had been told, were also noticed specially as virtuous forms of life in *Aeneid*. See Richard Jenkyns, "Pastoral" (151-175) in *Legacy of Rome,* 156. For hundreds of years later, national epics of Portugal, *Os Lusiadas* by Luis Vaz de Camoes in 16th Century and of France *La Franciade* by Pierre de Ronsard imitated Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid* has remained the central Latin literary text of the Middle Ages and retained its status as the grand epic of the Latin peoples, and of those who considered themselves to be of Roman provenance, such as the English. See Toohey, *Reading Epic*, 122.

[206] Quint, *Epic and Empire,* 52.

[207] In *Aeneid* 1, Virgil spells out what Fatum has in store for Aeneas and his descendants: he outlines the civilizing and pacific mission of Roman civilization and the Golden Age to be inaugurated by Aeneas. The mission of Aeneas is to inaugurate this process of civilization (*Aeneid* 1.257-96). See Toohey, *Reading Epic*, 124ff; and Michael C. J. Putnam, "Virgil's *Aeneid*" in *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (John Miles Foley, ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2005), 456ff.

[208] Putnam, "Virgil's *Aeneid*," 456.

[209] Virgil recognizes that the gods have given an empire without limits and declares the mission of Rome: "O Romans, to rule the nations with thy sway – these shall be thine arts – to crown

would emulate the *Aeneid* along with the Homeric epics. The future imperial dynasts would turn to Aeneas for epic inspiration, more often than they would turn to Achilles - as a hero deliberately created for political reflection.

The Roman educational system served the state not only by supplying it with educated administrators, but also by bestowing on its pupils a sense of Roman identity, or a sense of belonging to the social, political and cultural elite of the Roman Empire. The *Aeneid*'s articulation of Roman identity became not just a literary issue, but had a real impact on the people's sense of what it meant to be *Roman*. Yasmin Syed argues "if there is any literary work that embodied and defined a cultural identity for the readers of its time, it is Virgil's *Aeneid*."[210] In fact, the *Aeneid* occupied such a central part of the Roman Empire that knowledge of it was almost equivalent to education or literacy.[211]

The *Aeneid*, due to its centrality in Roman education, is therefore a formative text of Roman cultural identity that became embedded in the memories and

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peace with law, to spare the humbled and to tame in war the proud" (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.850-855 [Fairclough, LCL]). Virgil also narrates, "To Romans I set no boundary in space or time. I have granted them dominion, and it had no end…" (*Aeneid* 1. 257-82[Fairclough, LCL]).

[210] Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*, 1.

[211] Seneca the Elder reports several declaimers for those who imitated Virgilian lines in their speeches and discusses such imitations for instructional purpose. Lines from Vergil are quoted in graffiti from Pompeii and elsewhere suggest that literacy and knowledge of the *Aenied* may have gone hand in hand for many inhabitants of the Roman Empire, at least in the non-Greek speaking provinces. The evidence of the corpus of Latin papyri from Egypt suggests that reading *Aeneid* passages formed part of instruction in the Latin language there. Of all Latin authors Virgil is most often quoted as well as most often adapted in verse in epigraphic documents. Knowledge of the *Aeneid* could extend to the uneducated, too. Public recitations of the *Aeneid* were common even in late antiquity. The narrtives from *Aeneid*, such as that of Dido were frequently performed in the theater and were among the most popular subjects in arts. It was therefore not uncommon to know Virgil's works by heart in their entirety. Even during his lifetime, Virgil was taught in school by Q. Caecilius Epirota. See also in Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*, 13-14.

imaginations of the citizens of the Empire.[212] For instance, the *Aeneid* was an influential text among Roman elites such as Horace, Ovid, and Lucan.[213] The work also influenced the world-view of the colonized. For instance, Josephus, the colonized elite, was convinced of the divinely mandated mission of Rome to civilize, and to impart law and peace to the world, a position that reflects *Aeneid's* understanding of Roman identity.[214]

The *Aeneid* is also a poem inspired by national sentiment and is expressive of the idea of Rome. It narrates the foundation of the nation and reflects on the meaning of Roman-ness by recounting the origin of Rome. The *Aeneid*, as a legitimizing narrative for the rise of the Roman nation, expressed the two inseparable modes of national and religious sentiments associated with Rome. Similar to his contemporaries, the *Aenied* promoted the belief in the greatness of the Romans as a

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[212] Quintilian suggests that epic poetry had a considerable influence on the formation of the ancient self. He saw a purpose, a valuable educational goal in letting the school boys read Homer and Virgil at an early age not only as a basis for their future training, but also for the content of heroic poetry, its sublimity, and the ethical values it incorporated and bestowed on its readers. He argues, "in the mean time let the mind soar through the sublimity of epic, and let it derive inspiration from the greatness of the subject matter, and let it be instructed in the best values." (Quint 1.8.5) Augustine described the effects of this type of schooling as it was still conducted in the early fifth century AD. He tells us that in his time school boys had to memorize the *Aeneid* to such an extent as to make it impossible to erase it from their memories again later (Civ. Dei. 1.3). St. Augustine expresses his concerns over the influence of Virgil's *Aeneid* saying" we ought rather to attend to the teachings of the gospels than to the verses of Virgil (Epistle 119); and "I wish the four gospels, not the twelve *Aeneids*, filled your breast" (Epistle 216). See Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*, 16-18.

[213] Already for Horace, Ovid, and Lucan the *Aeneid* was among the most important works of Roman literature. See further discussion in Thomas, *Virgil and The Augustan Reception,* 55.

[214] *Aeneid* makes it clear that it is not merely the pride of conquest and dominion which is expressed, but the higher and the more humane belief that the ultimate mission of Rome is to give law and peace to the nations of the world (*Aeneid* 6. 852-4). To the extant that even the colonized like Josephus concurred with *Aeneid*'s claim of divinely mandated mission of Roman Empire. See Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.360; 4.370; 5.378.

people and the belief that the existence of the Roman Empire was willed by the divine.

It was, therefore, Virgil's aim in the *Aeneid* to show that the glorious expansion of Empire was not merely the work of human hands, but in fact had been designed and created via divine purpose and guidance.[215] The *Aenied* therefore occupied a powerful position in the formation of the community -effecting the Roman Empire and its identity, imparting the Romans' belief of their divine origin, the great antiquity originated in divine, the unbroken tradition with the past, and promoting the notion of the eternal duration of the state throughout the Empire.

Discursive Construction of Roman Identity or Ethnic Thinking in *Aeneid*

In *Aeneid*, Virgil articulates, as a discourse, a notion of Roman identity, adding his voice to the many competing discourses about what it means to be Roman in the Roman Empire. The Roman identity that emerges from the poem can best be compared to the modern concept of nationhood. Through narratives, Virgil strives to unite many ethnic groups to form one, unified by common language, customs, and religion. Through the *Aeneid,* Virgil reinvents Rome's past and enables Romans all over the empire to imagine a community of Romans with a shared history. The

[215] Virgil recognizes that the gods have given an empire without limits and declares the mission of Rome. See Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.850-855.

version of Rome's origin that is narrated in *Aeneid* becomes canonical during the imperial period.[216]

In its political and cultural dimensions, the Roman identity articulated in the *Aeneid* can be seen as an ethnically inclusive concept of national or communal identity that bears resemblance to the modern concept of nationhood. In *Aeneid,* Virgil brings together narrative characters of different ethnic groups, such as Greeks, Punics, Italians and Trojans, casting them as either allies or opponents. It struggled to define a common ground that all Romans might identify with. The poem, thus, wrestles with the concept of nationhood. At a time when the body of Roman citizenship became more ethnically diverse, the *Aeneid* articulated the Roman identity as one that allowed for ethnic diversity.

One of the important strategies of construction of Roman identity in the *Aeneid* is a *discursive* articulation of identity. In the *Aenied*, the idea of Rome embodied in its main character, Aeneas, becomes the basis of union among the diverse ethnic groups. Aeneas is primary example of what it means to be Roman or of "Roman-ness." One of the pivotal functions of the discursive strategy that the *Aeneid* uses is to continuously call the notion of ethnic essentialism, or specificity, into question through its portrayals of narrative characters, especially of Aeneas. Virgil makes the ethnic identity of Aeneas ambiguous, rather than assigning him to a particular ethnic group either as Italian or Trojan. Such discursive strategy can especially seen in discussion of the *ambiguous* Eastern-ness of Aeneas and the

[216] Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*, 221.

Trojans in the *Aeneid* 4. Virgil, therefore, presents Aeneas as a figure with a discursive, rather than an immutable, race/ethnic identity.

Virgil constructed Roman identity by destabilizing Greeks, Trojans, Punics, and other ethnically different characters. However, the *Aeneid* defined the essential Roman identity fundamentally in ethnic terms and configurations. Virgil, through textual and narrative strategies in *Aeneid,* sought to create a unified Roman identity by destabilizing the particular ethnic identities of its *Others* and replace those identities with a Roman essentialist one. In doing so, the poem uses a fluid, mutable, or discursive race/ethnic identity as an indispensible category for its definition of Roman-ness.[217]

Virgil supported the notion that this central sense of "Roman-ness" should be adopted by all of the subjects in the Empire.[218] To that end, Virgil advocated an ambiguous and discursive identity that exudes Roman pride and sentiment, invoking Roman ancestors and past traditions and customs, and thus articulating the Roman identity with ethnic terms and categories. The essentialist identity or national sentiment to which Virgil gives expression is thus seen to be the sentiment of the *Roman ethnic identity*.

One of the most obvious and effective ways of defining Roman ethnic identity in the *Aeneid* is, moreover, by means of gender differentiation. Virgil narrates a story

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[217] See further discussion on Aeneas' ethnic identity in Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*, 222ff.

[218] In the Aeneid, the Roman identity is conceived as a cultural identity that can be learned and enacted by cultural practices such as the *Ludus Troiae* (*Aeneid* V), or the custom of opening the Gates of War (*Aeneid* VII).

in *Aeneid* 4 in which private and public, history and desire are mingled through the use of female figures. By utilizing a female figure, Virgil undertakes not only to justify Roman colonization, but also to construct Roman 'ethnic' identity.

The story of Dido in *Aeneid* 4 narrates the historical conflict between two nations, Rome and Carthage. The narrative encounter of Aeneas and Dido in the story provides the readers with an etiology for Rome's ultimate possession of Carthage. *Aeneid* 4 recounts the emergence of the Roman identity by the ultimate union of its narrative characters, Aeneas and Dido. Roman identity or culture as represented by Aeneas, however, ultimately supplants the Trojan customs and culture represented by Dido. I will further discuss the use of female figure, Dido, in Roman identity construction and colonial operation in length in Chapter 5.

An Inter(con)textual Reading of John 4:1-42 and Virgil's *Aeneid*

Virgil's *Aeneid* is a powerful discourse that exerts a formative influence on its readers, shapes Roman identity, and maintains the imperial-colonial power. The poem intentionally justifies and endorses the operation of the Roman colonial domination over the *Other*. In *Aeneid*, Virgil makes it clear that the ultimate mission of Rome is to give law and peace to the world.[219] He softens and humanizes the idea of the Roman Empire, representing Romans as not only the conquerors, but also the civilizers of the ancient world, and the transmitters of that civilization to the world of

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[219] "Thine be the task, O Roman, to sway the nations with thy imperial rule – these shall be thy arts –to impose on men the law of peace, to spare those who yield, and to quell the proud" (*Aeneid* 6. 852-4).

the future.[220] It is no wonder that for hundreds of years thereafter Virgil's *Aeneid* served as an extraordinarily successful ideological vehicle. It has helped to explain and to justify the exploitation and operations of colonial rulers as diverse as the Germans in Papua or the English in India.[221]

In the context of European colonial domination, it is not surprising, as Richard F. Thomas argues, that Virgil, especially in his "Augustan voice, has always been made to represent the idea of Europe."[222] It is for just this reason –the *Aeneid's* powerful and influential role as a formative text for the Roman Empire, and the colonizing enterprises of the West -- that it is important to read *Aeneid* along with a de/colonizing text such as the Gospel of John. Such reading practice will offer insight into how dominant and dissident (con)texts are intricately interrelated parts of our social fabric existing side-by-side and thus susceptible to each other's influence. Moreover, it will enable us to see more clearly that the Gospel's imagined community is a representation of a difference within the Empire, which is itself a process of disavowal.

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[220] William Young Sellar, *The Roman poets of the Augustan age: Virgil* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1965), 328.

[221] National epics of Portugal, *Os Lusiadas* by Luis Vaz de Camoes in 16th Century, and of France *La Franciade* by Pierre de Ronsard imitated Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid* has remained the central Latin literary text of the Middle Ages and retained its status as the grand epic of the Latin peoples, and of those who considered themselves to be of Roman provenance, such as the English. See further Toohey, *Reading Epic,* 122ff.

[222] Thomas argues that the dominant European reception of Virgil is always inextricably involved with the reception of Augustus. The Augustan reading has always been a support to political authority and dominance. The pervasiveness of this reading throughout much of the European reception of Virgil has always been a function of elitist, particularly scholarly, communities supporting the interests of the state, be it a monarchy or tyranny. See Thomas, *Virgil and The Augustan Reception*, 234.

An inter(con)textual reading unveils colonial mimicry that is mutually embedded in discourses emerge from the socio-political center and challenging reply at the socio-political margin. Such reading, therefore, aims to make colonial power and operation intelligible. An inter(con)textual reading , therefore, contrapuntally examines the foundational texts of empire, *Aeneid*, and the competing texts of colonial reaction, the Gospel of John. Reading inter(con)textually between one of the most influential texts of the Roman Empire --Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the colonized text --the Gospel of John, challenges a typical understanding of colonial relations in a way that tends to magnify the obvious oppression of the colonizer and the silent reaction of the colonized.

An inter(con)textual reading acknowledges the subjectivities and agencies of both the colonized and the colonizer in the production of cultural meanings. Moreover, it underscores that the Gospel of John is both a comparable to and competitive with texts that represent traditional Roman discourse, such as a discursive formation of identity used in *Aeneid*. Such reading practice acknowledges that the Gospel of John makes profitable use of the colonizers' tools – language, metaphor and worldview. In its repetition of the master's tools but with *difference,* the Gospel launches its decolonizing project.

According to Frantz Fanon, the first of three phases of cultural evolution among the colonized during and even after the colonial era is the *assimilationist* phase. In this phase, the writings of the native intellectual give proof that "he [sic] has

assimilated the culture of the occupying power."[223] Such an *assimilationist* phase is especially evident when a native intellectual reinterprets, reforms, and modifies the dominant group's cultural resources in the process of furthering a sense of the people's national unity.

Characteristically, the literary productions of the native at this assimilationist stage bear resemblance to those in the literary tradition of the colonizing country.[224] P. A. Brunt also notes the voluntary nature of colonial mimicry in Roman Empire. Brunt reports that though the authorities sometimes encouraged it, there was no compulsion to mimic empire norms. Yet, the natives began to adopt the Latin language, to build towns of the *Italian* type, to imitate Greco-Roman architecture and sculpture, to "copy the manner of the Romans."[225]

Virgil's *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John are colonial discourses in which contradictory claims of the colonizer and the colonized constantly re-inscribe each other. Through this dynamic, the colonial discourse becomes a hybrid discourse when the intersection of language, narrative designs, systems of culture and representation between the colonizer and the colonized takes place. For instance Johannine scholars have acknowledged the pervasiveness of Empire in the Gospel of John.[226] In light of

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[223] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 179.

[224] The first Burmese novel, *Maung Yin Maung Ma Me Ma* (1904) was partially adapted from *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which quickly became popular with the reading public and led Burmese literature to a new direction. See further discussion in chapter 1.

[225] Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes,* 117.

[226] In his book *John and Empire*, Warren Carter also points out the pervasiveness of Empire in the Gospel of John and argues that the "accommodation with the Empire is the problem/issue for the writers of the Gospel." Therefore the gospel counters the empire through the "rhetoric of distance" and presents Jesus' mission that "collides, contests and repairs Rome's mission." See Carter, *John and*

the *Aeneid*'s role in shaping Roman identity, imperial education, colonial subjectivities, and legitimating imperial conquest and expansion, there is no doubt that the *Aeneid* greatly influenced the minds of the colonized, including the writers of the Gospel of John. There are some obvious intersections of discursive practices or narrative designs between the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John that need to be underscored in inter(con)textual reading practice.

First, both the *Aeneid* and John narrate *the imagined communities* that are largely dependent, for their existence, on a successful articulation of cultural traditions and fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role. Narration, therefore, is a conscious act and plays a critical role in the formation of the communities, which Virgil and the author(s) of the Gospel of John advocate. In other words, Virgil's *Aeneid* delineates the notion of Rome more intimately with the narrated world of the poem, a world in which Rome is not yet in existence.[227] Similarly, the Gospel of John is, as I have discussed in Chapter 3, also a conscious effort that emerges out of the desire for a community that has yet to be fully realized. Both the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John use a similar discursive strategy in which, through the discursive personas of Aeneas and Jesus, establish the authenticity, continuity and unity of their imagined communities.[228] Both Aeneas and Jesus

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Empire: *Initial Explorations,* 81ff. See further also for the pervasiveness of Empire in Stephen D Moore, *Jesus And Empire*, and Musa Dube, "Savior of the World, but not of this Word."

[227] Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self,* 215.

[228] The prophet Anchises utters, "this is the man, this is he who you are frequently told is promised to you, Augustus Caesar, offspring of a god, who will again found ages of gold in Latium through fields once ruled by Saturn, and will carry his power beyond the lands of the Garamantes and Indians." (*Aenied* 6.791-5). Richard F. Thomas points out that the prophetic utterance is to be

embody visions of the imagined communities of the texts. Also, in both communities the story of their' divine origins, eternal duration, and unity among the members are discursively made possible through Aeneas and Jesus.

Moreover, Virgil exemplifies the essentiality of Romans through the ambivalent ethnic characterization of Aeneas. As noted previously, Virgil makes ethnic identity of Aeneas as a cipher -- that is, a blank space onto which the Romans' national identity is projected through his interactions with various ethnic others.[229] In *Aeneid*, Virgil undermines the concept of ethnicity that it is a category that has meaning to the ancient self. The Roman identity, however, is conceived in and through Aeneas as a much broader, more inclusive category that is not ethnically defined by literal *descent* from Roman ancestors, but essentially constructed by individual *consent*.

The Gospel of John, especially in chapter 4, also destabilizes the concept of ethnic identity through a textual strategy that advocates the identity of the imagined community as a discursive one. Jesus undermines the ethnic differentiation made by the Samaritan woman that is based on cultural/ethic stereotypes (John 4:9) and worship places (John 4:20). In Jesus, the ethnic, territorial and religious division between the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritan is dissolved and transmuted into the new identity available through Jesus (John 4: 21-25).

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understood in connection to the divine promise of a new golden age carried out by Augustus. See Thomas, *Virgil and The Augustan Reception*, 2. John 1: 1-4; 4: 20-26; and 14:1-5, are especially the texts that establish the authenticity, unity, and continuity of the imagined community of the Gospel in and through Jesus and his actions.

[229] Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*, 175.

Second, both the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John legitimate the formation and expansion of their imagined communities by narrative constructions of authority *from Above*, or divine authority. Virgil believes the existence and expansion of the Empire is divine will.[230] Aeneas is constrained and motivated to establish the Roman Empire, not so much by a personal sense of honor (like the other precedent national heroes), but by the will of gods, or demands made by Fate or *Fatum*.[231] Aeneas' role, and by implication, that of Augustus, was to subject his personal desires to the greater needs of state and empire willed by the Divine.

The author(s) of the Gospel of John also assert that everything comes into being through the "Word" from the beginning and thus it is the "Word" that is behind the unfolding drama that follows (John 1:1-4). The Johannine Jesus and, by implication, his disciples, are sent by God with a mission to do "the will of God" (John 1:13: 4:4, 34: 12:27), rather than to follow their own human desire (John12:27). The missions of both Aeneas and Jesus, therefore, require their ultimate submission to the divine will.

Both *Aeneid* IV and John 4 ambiguously explain their colonizing missions. They narrate that even though the missions that both Aeneas and Jesus undertake are

[230] Virgil narrates; "To Romans I set no boundary in space or time. I have granted them dominion, and it had no end" (*Aeneid* 1. 257-82).

[231] Sellar argues that it is by the 'Fates' that the action is set in motion and directed to its issue. The human and even the divine actors in the story are instruments of the divine, some more and some less conscious of the part they are performing. Even Jupiter is represented rather as cognizant of the Fates than as their author. See Sellar, *The Roman poets of the Augustan age,* 337-339. Virgil narrates that Fate is behind Aeneas wanderings, and thus implies imposes on the free agency of the divine and human actors playing their part in it. See further for discussion on Fate or *Fatum* in Toohey, *Reading Epic*, 126ff.

accidental in human terms. These encounters, however, occur according to divine plan. In other words, this narrative strategy justifies the acts of colonization as accidental events in human history, but ultimately willed by the greater destiny or the divine. For instance, *Aeneid* IV presents the narrative of encounter primarily initiated by Juno (the divine) who raises a storm that drives Aeneas and Dido into the same cave. Aeneas encounters Dido while he is wandering aimlessly but ultimately guided by the divine will (or wrath).

Similarly, the chapter 4 of the Gospel of John asserts the divine will behind the encounter of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The narrative begins with the invocation of divine guidance that Jesus "had to" (δει) go through Samaria (John 4:4). Although there may be a geographical reason or human incident that causes the encounter, the narrative establishes a divine imperative for his mission among the Samaritans. Both the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John display a similar narrative design that invokes authority from *out-of-this-world* in a way to power and claim *in-this-world* interests.

Third, there is a narrative tendency *to romanticize the land and the past* in both *Aeneid* and John 4:1-42. Virgil expresses a patriotic sentiment in *Aeneid* by articulating a Roman identity that depends on romantic associations with the past and the land. William Young Sellar argues that, in this sense, Virgil has something in common with "the most distinctively national of the poets" of modern day, who

invoke sentimental elements of the past and the land in order to forge a community.[232] Virgil depicts the very site of Rome as the *religio loci* that must be revered and protected by the next generations.[233] The three great prophetic passages in the first, sixth, and eighth books in *Aeneid* enable Virgil to relate and revive Roman association with an immemorial past by invoking great ancestors and families of Rome, and the great events both of earlier and more recent history.

In chapter 4 of the Gospel of John, the Samaritan woman invokes and recounts her ancestor Jacob, the well and Mt. Gerizim ("the mountain"), as a way to relate the unity between the land and the people, and the past and the present. For the Samaritan woman, the well of Jacob and Mt. Gerizim are the places that give her and her people cultural, ethnic, and thus religious identity. Thus, the Gospel of John recounts, as *Aeneid* does, a communal sentiment deeply rooted in the past, combined with strong local attachments and historic memories, which had impressed on the tradition and imagination of the successive generations.

Fourth, both the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John narrate the formation of their imagined communities by means of *a story of encounter with a woman*. *Aeneid* IV is devoted wholly to the narrative of Dido and Aeneas' love affair, which is to be read as an etiology of the encounter that leads to ultimate union between the two nations, Rome and Carthage. Virgil presents the image of Dido who is frenzy and madly

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[232] Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age*, 332.

[233] In the eight book of the *Aeneid*, Evander ordains Aeneas over the ground which is destined to be occupied by the temples and dwellings of Rome. See Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age*, 330.

obsessed with love. Dido's ardent speeches contrast dramatically with Aeneas' careful, seemingly cold response.[234] Not unlike the encounter between Aeneas and Dido, the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4 narrates the inclusion of the Samaritans into the Johannine community. The narrator intentionally underscores the particular region (Samaria), people (Samaritans), ancestor and land (Jacob and his well) and their religious traditions (Mt. Gerizim), in order to highlight their ethnic specificity or otherness.

The narrative of encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman replicates the on-going ethnic stereotypes of the Samaritans by imposing these stereotypes on the image of the Samaritan woman. She is portrayed as ignorant, foreign, and as an adulteress, reflecting the negative labels given to the Samaritans of the time.[235] In doing this, the narrative defines the identity of its imagined community in opposition to negative ethnic stereotypes.

The narrative constructs the notion of ethnic difference through the Samaritan woman's claim of 'ethnic' difference or tension between the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans (John 4:8) and the narrator's further explanation of her claim (John 4:9). The usage of "we/us" and "you/them" throughout the narrative (4:12, 20, 22), moreover, highlights such as ethnic tension and difference. By strategically using the Samaritan woman, the narrative aims to reconcile such difference (4: 23). The *womanhood* of the

[234] *Aeneid* 4.296-392. See also in Toohey, *Reading Epic*, 135-136.

[235] Josephus's writings, rabbinic literature and New Testament rehearse the ethnic stereotypes of Samaritans of the time as ignorant, foreign, and adulteress. See further discussion on these stereotypes in the following chapter 5.

Samaritan woman is exactly what enables the union between the different ethnic groups (*Ioudaioi* and Samaritans), represented by Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The narrative, therefore, is an etiological story of an imagined community created through the discursive strategy that *causes* and *obscures* the Samaritan ethnic identity through the use of a female figure, the Samaritan woman.

The Gospel of John as an Ambivalent Intervention of Empire**:**

Colonial Subjectivity and Agency

I have argued at the beginning of this chapter that literature plays an active and vital role in the colonial operations of empires by shaping, justifying, and maintaining colonial power and relations. The dominant narratives that construct the subjectivities of the colonial/imperial (con)text are mainly disseminated through literature. For instance, even the colonized Josephus was convinced of the belief that there was a divine will and sanction behind the growth of the Roman Empire.[236] This belief closely resonated with the dominant discourse of the (con)text - such as *Aeneid*'s narrative thrust of divine will behind the Roman Empire. Reading the Gospel of John inter(con)textually with *Aeneid* not only alerts us to the intersectionality of the Gospel's narrative designs, claims, and purpose with the "book of Roman Empire." Moreover, it enables one to examine the mutual mimicry in the construction of colonial subjectivities and/or agencies between the colonizer and the colonized that facilitate operation of the colonial power.

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[236] See Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.360, 4.370; 5.378.

A cautionary task that one has to carry out in reading such ambivalent colonial discourses is to go beyond the traditional historical model of Roman impact and Jewish response. The effect of colonial discourse should be seen, as Bhabha argues, to be "the production of hybridization," rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions.[237] A critical exchange and change of perspectives occurs in the discourses of the colonizer and the colonized as these discourses emerge from the same social (con)text. It is imperative not to overlook the mutual impact or mimicry made in shaping colonial relations between the colonized and the colonizer. Reading *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John inter(con)textually allows us to see the ambivalent constructions of subjectivities, agencies, and authorities that re-inscribe each other in such seemingly contradictory texts.

There is a tendency to downplay the ability of human agency in both *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John, displaying the instability of human agencies and subjectivities in the colonial context. In *Aeneid*, even Jupiter is represented as merely cognizant of the *Fatum or* Fates (in plural form), rather than as its author. [238] *Fatum*

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[237] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 112.

[238] Virgil present *Fatum* as impersonal power is to the Romans both the object of awe and the source of their confidence. The word by which Virgil recognizes the agency of this impersonal, or perhaps we should rather say undefined, power, is '*Fatum*,' or more often in the plural 'Fata.' It is by the 'Fates' that the action is set in motion and directed to its issue. In the first three books, the word 'Fatum' or 'Fata' occurs more than forty times. *Fatum* is behind Aeneas stars on his wanderings and Juno desires to secure the empire of the world to Carthage. While the prayers of men are addressed to a conscious personal being, *Fatum* as the sovereignty of an impersonal power over the fortunes of nations is acknowledged in the *Aeneid* "Fortuna omnipotens et ineluctabile fatum" (All powerful fortune and fate from which there is no escape). See also in Sellar, *The Roman poets of the Augustan age: Virgil , 3*37-339.

imposes and guides the free agency of the divine and human actors. Virgil depicts Aeneas as a long-suffering hero who endures passively, for the most part, his fated destiny. In his willingness to suffer the unfolding hardships and follow the guidance of *Fatum*, he assures that the destiny of the Empire, its existence and growth.

Virgil, as a colonial elite whose intention is to promote and justify the Roman Empire, portrays the agency of Aeneas by visualizing the instability of human agency in the (con)text of colonialism, especially the agency of *the colonized.* Virgil mimics or visualizes the agency of the colonized in order to portray Aeneas' ultimate submission to the divine or fated destiny. In using this mimicry Virgil accomplishes the construction of the colonial authority and, thus, facilitates the operation of colonial power. Virgil uses the colonized agency that signifies inability and unwillingness to change the course of the history, and casts it on his main character *Aeneas*. This time, however, the colonizer's mimicry of the colonized's agency enables and empowers the *status quo* colonial power and operation.

The prologue of the Gospel of John claims that the origin of "everything," including the origin of its imagined community, is willed by God (John 1:1-4; 14). Thus, the mission of Jesus, God's Incarnate, is to obey and follow the will of God (John 4:4, 34; 12:27). God, through Jesus, is the only actor who can save the world from destruction (John 3:16), unite diverse race/ethnic groups and territories (John 4: 22; 12:20; 11:52), and prepare a place for the disciples (John 14:1-4). God, through Jesus, is the single agent of change in the enfolding drama of history (John 14:6).

The Gospel portrays people such as John the Baptist, Moses, Jacob, and Abraham not so much as the actors of change, but as figures acted-upon in the larger scheme of divine plan (John 1:15-18; 4:12ff; 5:45-46; 8:33-57). The Gospel of John narrates Jesus' mission to Samaria as a divine mandate. The narrative implies that Jesus' journey to the land of Samaria is a divine imperative (John 4:4). The Greek word δει is frequently used with the sense of theological necessity in the Gospel (John 3:14, 30, 9:4).[239] By using this word, the narrative establishes Jesus mission to the Samaritan as part of larger divine plan.

The Gospel of John portrays God as the single constructive actor in history to the extent that the human characters are no longer subjects or agents of positive change. The Gospel presents the inability of the colonized by narrating their loss of faith in human agencies and institutions brought by colonialism. Jesus symbolically points to the instability of the Temple (John 2:19-22). He also states that a true worship can take place neither in Jerusalem nor Mt. Gerizim (In John 4:21). John 3:14 narrates the necessity of Jesus' suffering, saying "the son of man must be lifted up." The Johannine Jesus reinforces the colonial condition in which waiting for God and living life as necessary seem to be the only options available for the disciples while he "prepares a place" in the "father's house" (John 14: 1-4). The destiny of the disciples will thus be assured, through their willingness to suffer the unfolding hardships and follow the guidance of God.

[239] See Brown, *The Gospel of John,* 155ff.

In the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4, the Samaritan woman also indicates the inability of the colonized to change, and even to understand, their unfolding history and destiny. She is convinced of the *necessity to wait* for the coming of the Messiah who will explain and "proclaim all things" (John 4:2). Through a discursive strategy of irony, or misunderstanding, the Gospel of John presents Jesus' disciples and his conversation partners as unable to understand and thus unwilling to change the course of history. This is especially true regarding the conversations with Nicodemus in John 3 and with the disciples in John 14. The ability and strength of the disciples, and even of Jesus, ultimately lies in their willingness to endure the necessity of suffering and death, obeying God's will (John 4:34; 11:51-52; 12:27).

Both the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John narrate the arrivals of Jesus and Aeneas to the *Other*'s land as willed by the divine. In doing so, these narratives justify their actions over the *Other*. Moreover, both *Aeneid* and the Gospel of John, echo that inability and suffering are essential components of colonial subjectivity and/or agency. In the *Aeneid*, the colonizer Aeneas is portrayed as a passive individual, visualizing the subjectivity and/or agency of the colonized. In doing so, Virgil articulates the notion of divine will behind Aeneas' action and thus justifies Roman colonization. Using the mimicry of the colonizer, Virgil, endorses *the status quo* and becomes a means of facilitating the *de facto* colonial relationship.

Similarly, like Virgil's *Aeneid* the Gospel of John also claims a divine origin and will in order to legitimate the identity and mission of the imagined community.

Such an appropriation of prevailing discourse of power with a representation of difference itself poses as a decolonizing gesture. However, due to the differential power relationships created by the colonialism, the use of such a discursive strategy that justifies human action by invoking authority from above effects differently between the colonizer and the colonized.

Virgil invokes the authority from above, and submits to the guidance of *Fatum* in order to legitimate the existence and growth of the Roman Empire. On the other hand, when the Gospel of John asserts God as the ultimate actor of history, it inadvertently downplays the ability of human agency. In doing so, the Gospel of John repeats the prevailing colonized subjectivity and/or agency, unwittingly reinforcing the status quo and even allowing it to thrive, thus failing to transform the dominant discourse of power. Moreover, when the Gospel invokes authority from above, it marginalizes the contending colonized *Other*, the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans.

Therefore, when reading the Gospel of John for decolonization, one must also note the *inability and unwillingness* of the colonized subjectivity and agency reported in the Gospel of John is an ambivalent narration. In presenting the inability of the colonized and the instability of human agencies and institutions under colonialism, the Gospel assigns the divine actor as the sole agent of change, assuring the condition of the *status quo* -- colonial condition. As a result of such an uncritical replication of the dominant discourse of power, even in the process forging their own power to contest the Empire, the author(s) of the Gospel of John unwittingly re-inscribe the subjugated or passive agency of the colonized that maintains the colonial power

relation. Therefore, if mimicry is not unconscious on the part of the colonized, then it cannot be intentionally subversive, only perpetuates the imperial paradigm failing to transform what it resists.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that literature plays a vital role of colonial or imperial operation. Virgil's *Aeneid* is one of the most important literary works of the Roman Empire because of its effective narrative formation of Roman identity. The Gospel of John uses discursive and textual strategies that create community out of difference, and convert the "many into one." The Gospel resonates with Virgil's *Aeneid* in its attempt to advocate for its imagined community that has yet to exist. In doing so, the Gospel of John, as a text of the colonized, emerges not only as a contrasting text, but also a text comparable to the dominant discourse of the Roman Empire.

The Gospel of John, as a counter-productive narrative of its dominant discourses, echoes narrative or discursive strategies of Virgil's *Aeneid*. In its repetition of the dominant discourse, the Gospel of John potentially leads to subversion because what begins as part of the dominant discourse turns into an inappropriate and therefore challenging reply. The colonized writer(s) of John threaten the colonizers because they threaten to disclose the ambivalence of the discourse of colonialism. The Gospel intervenes and counters the Empire by

reporting wrongs in its articulation of the inability and unwillingness of colonial subjectivity and agency to its readers.

However, the Gospel of John is also a discourse that emerged out of colonial relationship as a product, as well as, a producer of colonial hybridization or mimicry. The dominant discourse of the Roman Empire inevitably influences the Gospel of John's narrative and ideological assumptions. The Gospel's attempt to subvert the Empire becomes, therefore, inevitably entrapped or contained within the structure of power. The inter(con)textual reading of the Gospel of John and *Aeneid* shows that dominant and dissident (con)texts are intricately interrelated parts of our social fabric. The elements of dominant and dissident forces exist side-by-side and are susceptible to each other's influence.

The colonial mimicry impacts the colonizer and the colonized differently, due to the differential power relationship created by colonialism. When Virgil assigns God as the sole agent of change in history by re-inscribing to the inability and instability of human agency under colonialism in *Aeneid*, he maintains the status quo colonial reality. On the other hand, when the Gospel of John assigns God as the single actor in history, it undermines the ability of human agency. Thus, the Gospel repeats and even allows it to thrive the colonial power discourse, failing to resist it. Thus, when reading the Gospel of John for decolonization, one must be always vigilant of the dynamics of differential power relationships that differently produces the effects of the dominant discourse and the dissident discourse. Therefore, if mimicry is not

conscious on the part of the colonized, as well as in our reading, it cannot become intentionally subversive, bur rather perpetuates the imperial paradigm.

Chapter 5

GENDERED AND/OR RACIALIZED BOUNDARIES OF THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY

In this chapter, I examine the race/ethnic thinking in the Gospel of John, especially the narrative in John 4:1-42. I trace the ideological claims and discursive strategies embedded in the narrative, which specifically reflects race/ethnic thinking in forging authenticity, continuity, and unity of a community. I argued in Chapter 4 that Virgil's *Aeneid* uses a narrative strategy to construct a Roman identity. I further argue in this chapter that the Gospel of John uses a similar discursive strategy in the formation of an identity.

The Gospel of John, especially the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, has several commonalities relative to Virgil's *Aeneid* regarding the construction of identity. For instance, similar to the *Aeneid*, in John 4 Jesus continually questions the essentiality of ethnic/racial identity, and undermines any particular ethnicity/race as a defining category of identity for the imagined community. However, like *Aeneid*, the narrative in John 4 advocates the discursive identity of its imagined community, which depends on the effective articulation of ethnic stereotypes, norms, characteristics, and identities. I, therefore, read the use of ethnic stereotypes attributed to the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans in the narrative, in light of the dominant Roman stereotypes of their subjects or *Other*. In doing so, I

argue that the colonized Johannine writer(s) and their Roman colonizers share the same perceptive framework as they forged their respective identities.

I also question the narrative's essentialist tendencies, ambivalent claims, contradictory statements, and its use of stereotypes to forge the essentialist identity of the community. I argue that the essentialist identity promoted by the narrative replicates the ethnic/racial identity that which it sets out to undermine or reject. I particularly pay attention to the discursive strategy of the narrative that articulates gender and ethnicity/race in an intermingled fashion in order to define and assert its communal boundaries and identities.

Johannine scholars such as Raymond E. Brown and Gail O'Day have read John 4:1-42 as an intentional literary unit -- as a story either with factual or fictional claims. Brown sees John 4:1-42 as either "a master fiction or a story with facts."[240] In consonance with such an interpretive tradition of John 4:1-42, O'Day argues that the narrative is "an intentional literary unit with multiple levels of meaning in a narrative style that can and should be examined and interpreted in its final form."[241] Moreover, the narrative as a report of Jesus' mission to the Samaritans stands alone as an etiological story of the inclusion of Samaritans to the imagined community. The narrative is, therefore, a unique historical and literary tradition among the New Testament writings.

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[240] Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 176.
[241] Gail R. O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 50.

The narrative of the encounter of Jesus and the Samaritan woman pivotally reflects a desire for a community, and highlights the senses of displacement, identity, and boundaries of the community. I read John 4:1-42 in this chapter, therefore, as a foundational story of the imagined community that stands in its own right. Through the narrative, the author(s) of the Gospel not only narrates the inclusion or blending of Samaritans into its community, but also imagines a community that transcends any ethnic, territorial, and cultural particularities (John 4:21-23). I also simultaneously read the story within the larger Johannine corpus in order to encompass its historical and literary tradition.

As an etiological story of the community, the unit comprises multiple discursive strategies and categories of identity, including gender, power, race/ethnicity, and territory vital to the formation of communal identity. Due to the important position the narrative assumes in the Gospel of John, its analysis can offer us an understanding of the Johannine community, as well as its mission and theology/ideology.

Johannine Race/Ethnic Thinking

The narrative in John 4:1-42 articulates the identity of the community in and through a discourse. In doing so, the narrative added its voice to the many competing discourses about what it meant to be disciples of Jesus within the competing communities, and in the larger context of the Roman Empire. One can compare the identity of the imagined community promoted by the narrative to the modern concept

of imagined national/nationalist identity. Through its rhetoric of consent to form many into one, the Gospel strives to forge a community out of various ethnic groups -- the *Ioudaioi*, the Samaritans, and the Greeks (7:35; 12:20). Especially in its effort to forge the essentialist identity of the imagined community, the Gospel inevitably resembles the nationalist interpretation of diverse phenomena through "one glossary, thus erasing specificities, setting norms, and limits, lopping off tangentials."[242] The Gospel uses a in-group language such as "children of God," "born of water and spirit," "us," and "children of light" that encompasses diverse groups of people, and forges an exclusive community (John 1:12; 3:5; 4:20; 11:52; 12:36). However, in its attempt to forge this community, the narrative discursively undermines the contending ethnic, cultural, and territorial particularities of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans.

Scholars have unsuccessfully argued that the terms *race* and *ethnicity* are different theoretical categories used to conceptualize and categorize human groups or communities. The concept of *race is primarily defined* as a socially constructed category based on the notion of biological similarity.[243] By contrast, the term *ethnicity* is used to denote both the self-consciousness of belonging to a particular group and the dynamic process that structures, and is structured by, both intra and inter group

[242] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge University Pres, 1996), 14.

[243] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies*, 198.

social interactions – that is, interactions between group members and with the *Other*.[244]

Denise Kimber Buell suggests that, conceptually, *ethnicity* cannot be understood without referencing to race. She bases this idea on the fact that the term ethnicity was coined in the mid-twentieth century specifically "as an alternative to biologically based understandings of race."[245] In place of the term *race*, which is based on the idea that racial differences are biologically determined, the term *ethnicity* is increasingly used in discourses of identity underscoring a process or construct. However, the concept of ethnicity, similar to Etienne Balibar's concept of "meta-racism," continues to make these intra-group differences culturally and historically contingent, rather than biologically contingent as implied in the definition of race.

In other words, rather than assuming that biology delineates difference, this perspective of ethnic thinking suggests that *culture* itself functions as "a natural determinative force." In this context, cultures are fixed entities and parameters that serve to maintain cultural distance and difference, and to define cultural and/or ethnic

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[244] Hall outlines some characteristics of *ethnicity* widely discussed by the scholars. The term *ethnicity* implies 1) a self-ascribing and self-nominating social collectivity that constitutes itself in opposition to other groups; 2) biological features, language, religion or cultural traits may appear to be highly visible markers but not ultimately define the ethnic group; 3) shared myth of common descent and kinship, an association with a specific territory and a sense of shared history; 4) it is neither static nor monolithic, and is subject to processes of assimilation with or differentiation from, other groups; 5) membership in an ethnic group tends to assume greater importance when the integrity of the ethnic group is threatened; and 6) Often emerge in the context of migration, conquest or the appropriation of resources by one group at the expense of another. See Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 7-10.

[245] Buell, *Ethnic Reasoning*, 17-18.

in and out groups. Whereas the ability to determine group boundaries may be, at times, helpful, it also has the unfortunate side effect of locking individuals and groups *a priori* into their cultural genealogy or ethnic background.[246] Thus, this type of ethnic thinking that forcefully defines the essentialist identity of a particular community in terms of cultural or historical contingents, can be as dangerous as racism because it employs racist measures while pretending to oppose racism, thus falsely posing as its opposite.

In this section, I use the terms *race* and *ethnicity interchangeably* as interlocking discursive categories and conceptual tools, invoking their ambiguity and inexactness of meanings and usages, especially in relation to understanding Johannine Christianity. Since both terms, *ethnicity* and *race* are socially and conceptually constructed categories, oriented around the unstable notion of a fixed or fluid construction of identity. After all, both terms, race and ethnicity, are invoked in the processes of defining a racial/ethnic difference that designate a class or group of human beings by imposing a common identification on them. These terms have also been used to classify humans in ways that support the interests of colonial and nationalist exploitation and domination.

Racism or race thinking, as a counterpart to colonialism, is an operation of discourse. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin argue that race thinking and colonialism are imbued with “the same impetus to draw a binary distinction

[246] See further discussion on *meta-racism* in Renata Salecl, *Spoils of Freedom: Psychoanalysis and Feminism after the Fall of Socialism* (London: Routledge, 1994), 12.

between civilized and primitive, and the same necessity for the hierarchization of human types."[247] Race thinking, therefore, establishes a rationale for the use of colonialist powers over the colonized and, in general, justifies the colonial enterprise. Race thinking, therefore, became an indispensible ideological tool of colonialism. Furthermore, in the contexts of many postcolonial nations, such racism or ethnic thinking became a "primary strategy in constructing myths of national unity and in deciding who may or may not belong to the rightful people" in many nationalist discourses.[248] Thus, nationalist ideologies can become complicit with racism by privileging one racialized/ethnic group over another as the nation's most "legitimate" or "true" people.

In the process of imagining a community, race/ethnic thinking is justified, expanded, and practiced in order to convey the "rightful people" status on certain individuals or groups. The Gospel of John shows tendencies of such ethnic/race thinking when it envisions its imagined community. Since the identity of the imagined community employs essentialist thinking while pretending to oppose ethnic essentialism, it falsely poses as its opposite ("neither this mountain nor in Jerusalem," John 4:22). It asserts that the imagined community advocated by the Gospel is something that particularly belongs to one group or community of people, and by implication, not to the others (John 1:12; 3:5; 4:21: 12:36). The Gospel clearly

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[247] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Key Concepts,* 198.
[248] Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism," 43.

reminds the readers that the place Johannine Jesus prepares for his disciples is, therefore, inaccessible and denied to the "Other" (John 14:6b).

Discursive Ambivalences of the Johannine Community/Conformity and Consent/Decent

As the community of the disciples became more ethnically diverse (including *Ioudaioi*, Samaritans and even Greeks), the narrative in John 4 articulated an identity for the community that allowed for ethnic diversity. In its political and cultural dimensions, thus, the identity of the imagined community is an ethnically inclusive concept of communal identity that bears resemblance to the modern rhetoric or concept of nationhood.

The race/ethnic thinking that is imbued in the narrative in John 4:1-42 primarily serves to define the communal identity in opposition to ethnically different characters such as the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. In doing so, such a discursive strategy inevitably leads the community to define its identity in ethnic terms. The narrative brings the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans together through depiction of characters or symbols from two different ethnic groups – Jesus (*Ioudaios*) and the Samaritan woman, and worhip placese in Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim. By casting them as opponents, the narrative wrestles with the concept of its imagined community and struggles to define a common ground for both the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans to serve as a point of group identification.

The Gospel, as a whole, depicts the essentiality or identity of the imagined community in terms of ethnic categories, norms, characteristics, and traditions. For instance, the Gospel asserts confidence in the community's *common* (divine) *origin* (John 1:12), the belief that they are the *special objects of love* to God (John 3:3, 16), the language of *regeneration* of the imagined community through re-birth (John 3:5-7), and a common *allegiance* to the divine patriarchy represented by God the Father and Jesus the Son (John 8:35, 20:17). Such articulated categories of race/ethnicity, therefore, are in/dispensable components in the Gospel's construal of identity. In other words, even though the Gospel continually undermines ethnic essentialisms of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, it defines the identity of the imagined community *in terms of* the ethnic identity constructions of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans.

In the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman in John 4:1-42, the narrative forges the identity of the imagined community in terms of the *discursive formation* of race/ethnic identity. Jesus calls into question the notion of the ethnic essentialism of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans that centers at Mt. Gerizim and in Jerusalem. However, he continues to use ethnic norms, characteristics, and identities as in/dispensable categories or perceptions to articulate the identity of the imagined community.

The Johannine Jesus destabilizes the traditions related to the ethnic or communal identities of both Samaritans and *Ioudaioi,* such as their ancestors and places of worship. He undermines the water given by the ancestor Jacob and the worship in Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem (John 4:14:21). Jesus, however, re-asserts that

the "living water" and "true worship" is available through him and "the father." The water of Jacob that provides identity to the people of Samaria foregrounds the understanding of the "living water" provided by Jesus. The act of "worship," which is an essential category used to define the ethnic particularities of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, is also an indispensible category for articulating the *new* imagined community. Jesus recognizes the existing defining category -- a "place" of worship, and replaces it with the notion of "spirit," repeating the identity construction of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans (John 4:21ff).

Through the discussions of ethnic difference between the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, and the *ambiguous* presentation of Jesus' ethnic identity, the narrative further informs the reader about the *discursive*, rather than a fixed or immutable, nature of race/ethnicity. The narrative also advocates for the essentiality of the Johannine community identity through the ambivalent ethnic characterization of Jesus. The narrative uses Jesus' ethnic identity as a cipher, or a blank space onto which its community's identity can be discursively defined. In doing so, the Gospel of John projects an *ambivalent* ethnic identity for Jesus in the form of Jesus' interactions with the Samaritan Woman in specific, the Samaritans in general, and by the discussions of the Samaritan and the *Ioudaioi* ethnic identities.

Both the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans frequently question Jesus' ethnic identity in the Gospel (John 4:9; 8:48, 18:35). The Johannine Jesus, however, neither confirms nor denies the description of him as Ιουδαῖος (John 4:9; 18:35) or as a

"Samaritan" (John 8:48). In the narrative, the Samaritan woman tags Jesus as an outsider by calling him a "Ιουδαῖος," just as the *Ioudaioi* in the Gospel tag him as an outsider by calling him a "Samaritan." The Gospel of John, and also the narrative in John 4, anxiously conceals Jesus' ethnic identity, anticipating a broader and more inclusive identity of the imagined community that is possible through Jesus.

Through various textual strategies, the Gospel of John as well as the narrative in John 4:1-42 destabilize the concept of ethnic identity and simultaneously stabilize its essentialist identity. The narrative clearly undermines ethnicity as a defining category for the identity of the imagined community. The Johannine Jesus dismisses an identity associated with the attachments to either Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim. The narrative constructs an identity of the imagined community that is not ethnically defined by a literal descent from ancestors, but instead by being "true worshipers" in spirit (John 4:24). The narrative, therefore, forcefully asserts, as a part of its particular communal identity, that the members of the community must become "true worshipers" and thus full members of the imagined community (John 4:23).

Whereas the Gospel of John destabilizes and undermines the notion of a *particular* ethnicity or race as a defining category/identity of the community, it ambiguously advocates a discursive essentialist identity that favors a particular community, reflecting ethnic or racial thinking. However, instead of using ethnically or racially loaded concepts such as blood, custom or tradition to mark the community's boundaries, the language of Gospel's imagined community centers

around the essential concepts of love, spirit, and word. In other words, although the Gospel of John uses different words to construct and define the community's identity, the function or effect of the words is similar to those that might be used to define ethnic/racial *difference*. Through this use of language, the values, norms, and beliefs advocated by the Gospel, became the basis of unity among diverse ethnic groups and the main grounds of their self-identification in relation to other ethnic groups, such as the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans.

The Gospel of John designs the narrative performances in chapter 4 and 6 to invoke the essentiality of Jesus' tradition over traditions related to Jacob (i.e., that of Samaritans) and Moses (i.e., that of the *Ioudaioi*). The narratives demonstrate the fact that Moses' manna in the wilderness could not satisfy the hunger of those who ate (John 6) just as the water from Jacob's well could not stop the thirst of those who drank (John 4). At the same time, these narratives point to the notion that only Jesus, who is the "living water" and "living bread," can satisfy and fulfill these 'necessities' of life. Through this discursive strategy, the Gospel of John destabilizes ethnic identities – such as of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, associated with these traditions and simultaneously essentializes the traditions provided by Jesus.

By asserting "us vs. them" statements that represent the essentialist identity of the imagined community, the narrative in John 4:1-42 poses an oppositional or contrary identity not only to that of the *Ioudaioi* but also to that of the Samaritans (John 4:22). In the narrative, Jesus destabilizes the traditions related to both the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, the water from Jacob's well, and the worship in Jerusalem

and at Mt. Gerizim. In doing so, Jesus transfers the ethnic allegiances of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, which were once related to these places of worship, to the imagined community (John 4:13, 23). Jesus looks forward to the "hour" when the worship (identity) of the imagined community will disappear, blend, and supplant all ethnic differences or religious traditions that cause divisions (John 4:23). The narrative in John 4:1-42 essentializes a discursive identity particular to the imagined community, undermining the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritan ethnic identities and advocating conformity.

The Gospel of John marginalizes the parts of its communal identity associated with particular ethnicities, territories, and traditions, especially through the ambivalent ethnic characterization of Jesus and the discursive de-territorization and re-territorization of worship places in Jerusalem and Mt Gerizim. However, even though this essentialist identity is inevitably defined in opposition to the ethnic identities of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, it remains fully cloaked in the guise of a transcendental and universal identity of the "true" worshipers in "spirit" (John 4:23). Thus, the narrative in John 4 exhibits a discursive identity of "nowhere but everywhere." It is an ambivalent identity that negates any specific ethnicity, territory, and tradition, but transfers the allegiance associated to these specificities to anywhere desired, or as stated in the narrative, to a space of "worship in spirit."

Moreover, the prologue of the Gospel advocates for an identity that requires *consent* rather than *descent*. In other words, the identity of the community is not acquired through "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh," but rather, through a consent to the "will of God" (John 1:13). The Gospel defines the identity of the

children of God as a much broader and a more inclusive category of *consent* than the identity defined by a literal *descent* from the ancestors or ethnic identity.

The Johannine discursive strategy of *consent*, however, reveals the ambivalence of its essentialist claims. The Gospel uses different words, "the will of God" rather than "the blood of man" as a contingent or basis for the formation of the imagined community. In other words, "the will" or consent promoted by the Gospel function similarly as a "natural determinate force" as the "blood." The "blood," a signifier of descent, is a visible and integral element for defining race/ethnicity. The Gospel undermines this defining category of "blood of the flesh" that sets a community apart from the *Other*. Rather, the Gospel substitutes the notion that it is the *spirit* among the disciples that sets them apart from the *Other*, and that functions as the core characteristic of the identity of the imagined community (John 4:23-24). The Gospel constructs the identity of the imagined community through the use of ambivalent consent/descent repeats the essentialist racist or ethnocentric measures while pretending to oppose ethnic specificity, thus falsely posing as its opposite.

Another factor of ethnic/communal identity to which the Gospel gives expression is the sentiment of *love* (John 3:16; 13:34-35; 14:21; 15:5). Again though, the "love," similar to the "blood," becomes the basis of unity among the members of the community, and the main ground of their self-understanding in relation to others, either to other Christians or to other races and/or ethnic groups (John 5:42, 8:42, 13:34, and 14:15-31). So love, similar to blood, is what distinguishes or sets the imagined community apart from others. The aspiration to become "children of God,"

a language and paradigm *implying biologically contingent descent,* is reflective of the Gospel's contradictory construction of identity (John 1:12). Even in the Gospel's construction of consent, the belief in common *descent* from God, the Ancestor, among the members of the community functions as the basis for unity. On the other hand, the descendants or *children* of the "devil" have no place in the community (John 8:44).

The narrative in John 4:1-42 also ambivalently forges the consent of the community opposition to and in terms of a defining category of *decent* manifested in the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritan ethnic identities. Even though the narrative undermines identity acquired through descent, and thus mitigates the traditions related to the ancestors of both the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, it re-inscribes the paradigm of *decent* in its construction of a community of consent.

Even in presenting the notion of the place of true worship that transcends ancestral traditions and ethnic/religious boundaries of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, the narrative re-inscribes God as a father figure and thus, the object of worship. In doing this, the narrative repeats some categories and contingencies that are pivotal to the articulation and identification of ethnicity – ancestry and religious practice. The worship of "the father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23) revokes and replaces the place of worship of "our fathers" invoked by the Samaritan woman (John 4:20). This narrative then, reveals the importance of *decent* or ancestry to the identity of the imagined community – an importance that the Johannine essentialist discourse

anxiously tries to conceal. After all, the members of the imagined community are the children of "the father" from "above."

The use of family language, either to deny or to confirm the identity of the imagined community, contradicts the notion of *consent* that the narrative strives to advocate -- the "will" rather than the "blood." Similar to the ethnic identity markers or ancestors of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, the narrative asserts that the members of the imagined community are descendants or children of God the Father, or the Ancestor. In doing so, the Gospel of John demonstrates an essentialist ethnic thinking that claims diversity and universality, but demands (and conceals) conformity and particularity.

Johannine Ethnic Stereotyping and Colonial Mimicry

One ambivalent appropriation of the use of race/ethnicity as a defining category was the conscious effort of the Johannine writer(s) to shape what it meant to be children of God in the context of the expanding body of followers under the Roman Empire. This section will further examine how the Gospel of John adapted and appropriated the existing racial/ethnic stereotypes in its construction of identity. The Romans' understanding of their subjects is reflected in their in stereotyping of the *Other*, mostly in negative ways. The Roman elites use racial/ethnic stereotypes of the *Other* not only to construct their own identity but also to further their colonialist agenda of subjugation and expansion. Ancient Roman writings frequently refer to

colonized people as *barbarians*, the *accursed race* and the *superstitious*.[249] These Roman writings frequently contrast the negative stereotypes of the "*Other"*, such as the "wild and frenzied manners" of other racial/ethnic groups, with the civility and rational manners of Romans. In this way, the act of stereotyping functions as a support to and a rationale for the idea of Roman superiority over the *Other* in terms of racial origin, religion, and culture.

The Gospel of John constructs the identity of the imagined community by re-inscribing and thus contrasting the community's identity with the existing cultural stereotypes of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans. The Gospel of John reports, along with Josephus, some New Testament writings, and the rabbinic literature, that in the first Century CE, tensions were rife between the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans, involving the cultural politics of the time.[250] The use of racial stereotypes in the Gospel, however, reflects the use of racial/ethnic stereotypes that go both ways between the conflicting groups. The Gospel also echoes ethnic stereotypes, mostly

[249] From Cicero to Tacitus, Roman elites use the terms *"*barbarians, accursed race and superstitious" to refer to the colonized. For instances, Quintilian calls *Ioudaioi superstitious* (Quintilian*, Institutio Oratoria* 3.7.21) and hostile to all non-Jews (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.1). The Roman feelings about *Ioudaioi* are often hostile, reflective in the language they use. The Roman elites refer them as *sceleratissima gens* or accursed race (Seneca, *On Superstition*), *taeterrima gens* or hideous race (Tacitus, *Histories*. 5.3.1), *perniciosa gens* or pernicious race (Quintilian, *Sermones* 1.4.139-3), and *nation nata servituti*, or people born to be slaves (Cicero, *De Provinciis Consularibus* 5.10). See further discussion for Roman's stereotypes of *Ioudaioi* in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, vol I, II & III* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Academic Press), 1974.

[250] Josephus reports that the Samaritans were pleased with sufferings of the Judeans when their sacred places were violated by the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes IV. During the Maccabean War, John Hycranus destroyed the Samaritan temple at Schechem, and its population was forced to acknowledge the religious jurisdiction of Jerusalem (*Ant*. 11.114-115).

negative ones, which emerged from the on-going *Ioudaioi*-Samaritans ethnic conflict in order to define the identity of the imagined community.[251]

The Gospel uses, and at times even reinvents, cultural stereotypes as a way to contrast and assert the identity of its imagined community to the identities of other communities. The *Ioudaioi* asked Jesus, as an insult reflecting their negative stereotype against the Samaritans; "You are a Samaritan and *possess a demon*?" (John 8:48). Likewise, against the negative cultural stereotype of the *Ioudaioi* as descendants of Cain or the sons of Belial the devil, [252] the Johannine Jesus accuses the *Ioudaioi* of being the children of the devil [Cain] who was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). Such remarks reflect the discursive identity construction of the Gospel that asserts the identity of the "children of God" by contrasting them with the negative stereotype given to both the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans.

However, a postcolonial reading reveals that the colonizing process involves not only the exploitation of land, material, and people but also entails a *colonization of thought*, and/or viewpoints of the *Other*. According to Paulo Freire, in a

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[251] There are some negative stereotypes of Samaritans in rabbinic literature in which they are presented as perfidious, cunning, wicked, bastards, foundling or doubtful stock, and impure. Josephus also stereotypes the Samaritan as perfidious (Ant. 11:340), other/foreigners (*Ant*. 11.88; 12.261).), stooges (*Ant*. 11.114-115), violent, (*Ant* 11:61) and etc. In Josephus writings, Samaritans are 'apostates", heathens, latecomers, impure – a mixture of five different peoples who had later intermarried with various other peoples. The "purity of blood" or "lack of it" seems to be a factor in Jewish antipathy toward the Samaritans in Josephus. Even n the Gospel of Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus seems to accede to a well-known Jewish anti-Samaritanism saying; "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans."

[252] See further discussion of this particular stereotype against *Ioudaioi* in Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); Ingrid Hjelm, *The Samaritans and Early Judaism: A literary Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); and T. Robert & Terry Giles, *The Keepers: an Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).

colonial/oppressive society, the colonizers/oppressors become "the model of humanity" for the colonized.[253] For Freire, the gravest of obstacles to the achievement of liberation is to decolonize the ideology/perspective of the colonizer housed in the consciousness of the colonized.

Johannine scholars have explained the cultural stereotypes operative in the image of the Samaritan woman.[254] However, these scholars tend to ignore the influence of Roman stereotypes of the *Other* in shaping identities of the subjects. Instead, scholars explain the Johannine portrayal of the *Ioudaioi*, and the image of the Samaritan woman in light of biblical traditions and stereotypes *without* any reference to the dominant colonizing cultural discourses and stereotypes. It is important to consider and examine the impact of Roman cultural/religious stereotypes of their subjects, especially that of the *Ioudaioi*, not only to understand how the colonization of thought operates, but also to avoid blaming the victim uncritically.

The colonization of thought often manifested without compulsion, although it was sometimes encouraged by the Roman authorities. P. A. Burnt points out the voluntary nature of colonial mimicry in that many colonized people began to adopting the Latin language, building Italian-type towns, imitating Greco-Roman architecture

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[253] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed (*new rev. 20th ann. ed., New York: Continuum, 1997), 27.

[254] Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 235ff; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 177ff; Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 229ff; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 188ff; Adeline Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 69ff; and Jane S. Webster, 'Transcending Alterity: Strange Woman to Samaritan Woman' in *A Feminist Companion to John* Vol.1, (Amy-Jill Levine, ed.: New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 128-137.

and sculpture, and copying the manners of the Romans.[255] Fully convinced of the Roman colonizers' divine right to rule, the colonized elite Josephus depicts the destruction of the Temple by the Roman legions as the act of God who brought "the fire to purge his [sic] Temple and exterminated a city so laden with pollutions."[256] Moreover, in the Babylonian Talmud's tractate *Aboda Zara*, a Rabi declares to his fellows that God has ordained Rome to rule, destroy, burn, slay, and persecute them (*Aboda Zara* 18a). So, even the colonized, echoing the colonizers' thinking, justify the colonial operation as willed by the Divine. In the so-called narrative of the "cleansing the Temple," Jesus symbolically uses the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple after his actual acts of whipping, pouring out, and overturning the apparatus in the Temple (John 2:13-22). In doing so, Jesus alludes to the destruction of the Temple as a purifying event, and thus reflects the colonizers' justification for their violent acts.

It is, not uncommon for the colonized to repeat the colonizer's stereotypes or perspectives about them, even in their own discourses of resistance and liberation. Even the colonized Josephus and the writer of the Babylonian Talmud were convinced that there was divine will and sanction behind the growth of the Roman Empire. Reflecting the Roman stereotypes of the *Ioudaioi,* Josephus reported that the *Ioudaioi* were fraudulent and unproductive.[257] In fact, Josephus joined Roman elites

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[255] Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes*, 117.
[256] Josephus, *Jewish War* 6:110.
[257] Josephus, *Antiquities*. 12.261; *Jewish Wars* 2:16, 4; 2:18, 7.

such as Tacitus and Cicero in describing the *Ioudaioi as a menace* due to their impact on culture and their growing population within the Roman Empire.[258]

As noted above, the Roman elites held negative and hostile stereotypes regarding the *Ioudaioi*. They labeled the *Ioudaioi* superstitious,[259] hostile,[260] an effective political pressure group, and an exclusive social community.[261] As a text written under Roman colonialism, one must also read the negative portrayals of *Ioudaioi* and of the Samaritans in the Gospel of John in light of the hegemonic Roman perspective on their subjects. In doing so, it becomes obvious that the Roman's stereotypes of the *Ioudaioi*, especially as reflected in the writing of Tacitus, Cicero, and Josephus, influenced the narrative construction of the Samaritans and the *Ioudaioi* as racial/ethnic others in the Gospel.

The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman establishes the essentialist identity of the Gospel's imagined community in *contrast* and *in relation* to the ethnic stereotypes of both the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. In John 4:121, the narrative replicates the on-going ethnic stereotypes of the Samaritan in depicting the Samaritan woman as an ignorant worshiper and as a promiscuous *Other*. As it is evident from this description, the identity of the *Other* is established by using popular stereotypes of the *Other.* Such practice was a very common feature of the Roman Empire by which the Romans related to and thought of the colonized people. Thus, one must pay

[258] Josephus, *Antiquitis,* 19:5, 2; 14:7, 2.
[259] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.7.21.
[260] Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.1.
[261] Horace, *Sermones* 1.4.139-3.

attention to the inevitable influence Rome's practice of stereotyping the *Other*, and how that practice is adopted in the Gospel of John.

One must, therefore, explain the polemic thrust and ideological bias against the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans in the Gospel in light of the analysis of Roman stereotyping of their subjects in general, and of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans in particular. After all, in order to forge a community alternative to the Roman Empire, the Gospel of John selects the *Ioudaioi*, the menace or the *Other* of the Romans, as its own menace and *Other* (John 4:22b). The Johannine portrayal of the *Ioudaioi*, and the image of the Samaritan woman, therefore, must be viewed in light of not only biblical traditions, but also in light of their ethnic/racial stereotypes *with* reference to the dominant cultural discourses. Only then, one can better understand the impact of the colonization of thought operative in the minds of the colonized.

A Stereotype of the Other as Ignorant Worshipers

Religion, among the Roman writings, is an important category that defined peoplehood, *genos* or *ethnos*. Religious practice, therefore, is a distinguishing characteristic of peoplehood or ethnicity in Roman literature.[262] The Roman elites mainly define the *Ioudaioi* as *ethnos*[263] due to their religious practices.[264] The Roman

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[262] See further in Werner Sollors, "Who is Ethnic" in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, pp. 219 -220; Irad Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 15ff; and Hall, *Hellenicity*, 9-17.

[263] The Greek word *ethnikos*, from which the English 'ethnic' and ethnicity' are derived, also means "gentile," or "heathen," especially in Christian literature. Therefore the noun *ethnos* was used to refer not just to people in general but also to 'others." The Roman writers often use the word *ethnos* to refer to non-Romans, non-standard, or not fully Romans.

Emperors such as Vespasian, Titus, and Hadrian prohibited the religious practices of the *Ioudaioi* when they did not wish to recognize them as a legitimate *ethnos* within the Empire. Likewise, the cultural elites, such as Cicero, Tacitus and Strabo, on the ground of "distasteful" and "superstitious" religious practices of *Ioudaioi,* they refused to acknowledge the *Ioudaioi* as *ethnos*. In addition, the Roman writers from Diodorus to Seneca stereotyped the *Ioudaioi*'s religious practice -- their pivotal ethnic characteristic, as antisocial, hostile, and superstitious.[265] These Roman elites mainly used the religious practices and stereotypes of the *Ioudaioi* to both identify and obscure their ethnicity. Thus, the negative stereotyping of the *Ioudaioi* religious practices functioned to also undermine and assault their ethnic identity.

In the context of competing identities in the community, the use of negative religious stereotypes can become an effective strategy of *othering* within the discourses of the colonized. Josephus, for example, labels the Samaritans as other/foreigners on the basis of their religious preference and practices. In order to deprive their ethnic identity that are linked with *Ioudaioi*, Josephus accuses the

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[264] Josephus reports that Caesar stipulates that the *Ioudaioi* are "an *ethnos* (non-Romans) ruled in Judaea by a recognized ethnarch/high priest." (*Antiquities* 14:10.2). Therefore, when emperors such as Caesar, Augustus and Claudius considered them as a recognized people, the *Ioudaioi* were allowed to practice their religion without hindrance, both in Judaea and elsewhere, and even in Rome.

[265] Diodorus calls *Ioudaioi* as "a people that has made its own a life apart and irreconcilable" (*Vita Apolloni* 5.33). Tacitus repeats that the *Ioudaioi*, while maintaining strict loyalty towards one another, "feel hostility and hatred towards all others…they instituted circumcision to distinguish themselves thereby from other peoples(*Hist*. 5.5.1)**.** He views Moses as the one who misled the *Ioudaioi*: "Moses introduced new religious practices quite opposed to those of all other religions. The *Ioudaioi* regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor." (*Hist*.5.4:I). In *De Superstitione*, Plutarch negatively singles out Jewish religion listing it among the many barbarian customs adopted by the Greeks. Strabo mentions circumcision of the *Ioudaioi* as one of the bad customs of the *Ioudaioi* which were typical of their decline and adopted when, after Moses and his first successors, "superstitious men were appointed to the priesthood and then tyrannical people (*Strabo* 16.2.37).

Samaritans of conducting "tainted" religious practices. He declares that Samaritans are distinct from the *Ioudaioi* "in both race (*genos*) and custom/ethnicity (*ethnos*)" on the basis of their religious practice (*Antiquities* 11.88; 12.261). In association with their distinct religious practices, Josephus calls the Samaritans "Cuthaeans" (*Antiquities* 11.88), "Persians" (*Antiquities* 12.257), and "Sidonians in Schechem" (*Antiquities* 12.261). Through the use of such stereotypes, Josephus destabilized the Samaritan *ethnos* by obscuring the religion of the Samaritans, which gave them ethnic identity.

The Gospel of John, similar to the Roman discourse and ethnic reasoning, presents the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans as ethnically defined groups, or ethnic others, in terms of their visible and distinctive religious practices (John 1:19-28; John 4:20-22). Like any other crucial markers of ethnic difference in the context of the Roman Empire, religious practice marks the boundary between the imagined community, and the communities of the Samaritans and the *Ioudaioi*.[266] The Gospel of John portrays the *Ioudaioi* as a group concerned, and perhaps obsessed, with religious matters, such as purification and observation of the Sabbath (John 2:6: 2:13-22). By portraying these religious concerns in negative ways, the Gospel of John undermines the religious practices of the *Ioudaioi*, the group's primary ethnic identity

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[266] In resonance with Roman stereotypes of the *Ioudaioi*, the Gospel of John presents the *Ioudaioi* negatively in order to define the identity of Jesus' followers in contrastive ways. They demonstrate inability to understand Jesus (John 3:1-21); they do not associate with other groups (John 4:1-42); they are obsessed with Sabbath regulations (John 5:1-47); they are ignorant or credulous followers who are misled by Moses (John 4:1-42; 9:1-10, 21); they are hostile, destructive, backstage instigators, cunning and hypocritical (John 7:1-52;12:1-11;18:1-19, 42); and above all, they have the devil as their father (John 8:12-59).

marker, and attempts to replace it with the imagined community's religious practice signified by "worship in spirit" (John 4:25).

In John 4:1-42, the narrative defines the Samaritans as ethnic *Other* by ascribing the Samaritans as *religious Other*. The Samaritan woman asserts the cultural practice of defining ethnic other through religious practices/place. She insists on worshiping at Mt. Gerizim and that such worship is a marker of identity, distinguishing the Samaritans from the *Ioudaioi,* who worship "in Jerusalem" (John 4:20). Similarly, the Johannine Jesus defines the ethnic otherness of the Samaritans in terms of the negative or in/correctness of their religious place and practices centered on Mt. Gerizim (John 4:22). Both Jesus and the Samaritan woman use the dominant cultural/colonial practice of stereotyping the *Other*, and especially the *Other*'s religious practices.

In many instances, the Roman writings portray *Ioudaioi* as ignorant or unknowing worshippers who are misled by Moses or by their "barbaric superstition."[267] The narrative in John 4 reflects the same type of practice when it refers to the Samaritans as an ethnic group known as ignorant worshipers. John 4:22, in particular, defines the ethnicity of the Samaritans by via the assignation of the

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[267] Diodorus the Sicilian, first century BCE, records the reason Antiochus VII attacked the Temple indicating, "Moses, the founder of Jerusalem and organizer of the nation …had ordained for the Jews their misanthropic and lawless customs." The anti-Jewish adviser of Antiochus, therefore, advised him "to make an end of the race completely, or failing that, to abolish their laws and force them to change their ways." He accused *Ioudaioi* of being antisocial, and hostile cutting themselves off from the rest of humanity (*Diodorus* 40.3.4). In his *Histories*, written in the first decade of the 100s C. E., Tacitus's view the Jewish origins is as negative as Cicero's: "Moses introduced new religious practices quite opposed to those of all other religions. The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor." (*Hist* 5.4:I) Tacitus explains the expulsion by Tiberius had to do with oriental (Jewish) "superstitions" infiltrating Roman traditions (*Annals* 2.85:4).

"ignorant worshippers" stereotype. Scholars have inadequately argued that both Josephus and the Gospel of John invoke the biblical traditions that label Samaritans as being false worshipers or an illegitimate ethnic group, without paying attention to the Roman narrative of the *Other*.[268] This, in spite of the fact that the Johannine Jesus echoes the well-known Roman accusations of the superstitious religious practice of their colonized subjects, especially that of *Ioudaioi*. For instance, Seneca accused *Ioudaioi* of being ignorant religious fanatics who did not even understand their own rituals.[269] The colonized Josephus, in turn, often re-inscribed the same colonizing stereotype when he refers the Samaritans as false worshippers in his writings (*Antiquities* 12.261).

As a discourse of the colonized that emerged in the (con)text of dominant Roman colonialism, one must see the labeling of the Samaritans as ignorant worshipers in John 4:22 in conjunction with the Roman stereotyping of their subjects. Romans label their own religion/identity as *religio*, which is often constructed in their writings in opposition to the religion/identity of the colonized others, *superstitio.* The term *superstitio* is often used to suggest that a religion thus labeled engages in

[268] Josephus calls the Samaritan as Sidonians, identifying them as the worst or false worshipers of the goddess Ashtoret (1 kings 11.5), who caused the partition of the kingdom (Ant. 12.261). Joseph Cahill argue that the question about the Samaritan woman and the five husbands "are really not all commentaries on literal sexual practices but rather references to 2 King 17:30-31 which indicates the five idolatrous cults of the Samaritan." See P. Joseph Cahill, "Narrative Art in John IV," *Religious Studies Bullettin* 2 (1982), 44.

[269] Seneca the Younger accuses *Ioudaioi* that "the greater part of the people [*Ioudaioi*] go through a ritual not knowing why they do so" (*On Superstition* 5.5.3).

immoral or excessive cult-practice and lacks any rational or true understanding of the true nature of religion.[270]

Likewise, since the religious practices of the *Ioudaioi* conflicted with the Roman religious practices, they were also considered barbaric and illegitimate. Cicero defines the religion of the *Ioudaioi* as "*barbara superstitio*" in contrast to the Roman religion and ancestral institutions. He defends Flaccus who confiscated Jewish collections from the Temple in Jerusalem on the grounds that these funds were used to support "excessive, immoral, and irrational" religious practices.[271]

Not only Josephus, but also the Johannine Jesus further inscribes the Roman's denigration of religious practices of the *Other* in their portrayals of Samaritans. Jesus says to the Samaritan woman; "You worship what you do not know" (John 4:22). The Johannine Jesus, while advocating for the religious practice of the imagined community, undermines the religious practices of both the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans. He does this by claiming that one must worship "neither in Jerusalem nor this mountain," a claim that resonates with the Roman's negative stereotype of *Other* (John 4:21). In this way, Jesus declares the worship at Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim to be illegitimate or ignorant religious practices, lacking the "true" nature of worship/religion.

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[270] See further discussion in Peter Garnsey, & Richard Saller. *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

[271] Cicero accuses of *Ioudaioi* that, "the practice of their [*Ioudaioi*'s] sacred rites was at variance with the glory of our empire, the dignity of our name, the customs of our ancestors. But now it is even more so, when that nation by its armed resistance has shown what it thinks of our rule" (*Pro Flacco* 28:67-69).

Gendering and/or Racializing of the Imagined Community:

A Promiscuous Other

Biblical traditions, especially the historical background given for the Samaritan people in 2 King 17:30-31and the sexual life history of Gomer, the wife of prophet Hosea, reflect the apostasy of the Israelite nation. The Johannine scholars have read, in light of biblical tradition and the writings of Josephus, the actual life history of the Samaritan woman with men as a symbolic representation of her people's history.[272] However, they have paid little attention to the discursive strategies of the Roman colonizing narratives that deploy female figures to define its *Other*.

The colonizers often construct and define the identity of the colonized *Other* in terms of female figures, especially sexually perfidious and promiscuous female characters. Virgil, for instance, articulates the Roman identity by identifying the Carthaginians as its *Other,* especially with the female character, Dido. In *Aeneid* IV, Virgil presents Dido as frenzied, sexually perfidious, and madly obsessed with love, in accord with Roman stereotypes of Carthaginians. In doing so, Virgil defines the Roman identity not only by opposition to the image of Dido, but also by identification with the calm and rational image of Aeneas, the prototypical Roman.

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[272] In Josephus' writings, Samaritans are apostates, heathens, latecomers, and impure mixture of five different peoples who had later intermarried with various other peoples. Samaritans as false worshipers, disloyal and opportunistic seem to be the central theme in Josephus' writings (*Ant*. 11:340 - 341, 12.257, and 11.85). See also in Cahill, "Narrative Art in John IV"; Jean Kim, *Women and Nation*; Adeline Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*; and Jane S. Webster, 'Transcending Alterity."

In John 4:16-19, the portrayal of the Samaritan woman as sexually promiscuous and perfidious is reflective of the stereotyped image of native women in the Roman colonizing narratives. Insinuating and re-inscribing the prevailing image of the colonized in the dominant narrative, the narrative in John constructs an imagined community that is in opposition to that of the Samaritan people. The narrative represents a community of the Samaritans as represented by the personal life of the Samaritan woman. Jesus insinuates that the Samaritan people and their religious practices are unstable and inauthentic by unveiling the personal life of the Samaritan woman, who has had unstable or inauthentic relationships with five husbands (John 4:18). In doing so, the narrative sets the stage for the necessity of *stability* and *authenticity* enabled and available in and through Jesus.

Gender is a contested social and political construct, which is used not only as a category or mechanism of "assignment and control," but also as "a source and site of belonging" in the discursive formation of the imagined community.[273] The most obvious and effective form of defining a communal identity in the Gospel is by means of gender differentiation. The narrative encounter of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42 informs the historical conflict between two ethnic groups, the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans, and thus explains the union between them by becoming members of the imagined community. The Samaritans confess at the end of the narrative saying; "we know that he [Jesus] is truly a savior of the world" (John 4:42). The

[273] Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 179.

narrative, therefore, provides the readers an etiology for the Johannine community's ultimate inclusion of the Samaritans.

The narrative in John 4:1-42 delineates the encounter of Jesus and the Samaritan woman that leads to the union of the traditions related to the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans. These two ethnic groups became reconciled by the disappearance of their religious traditions, and thus their ethnic identities, and by their absorption into the religious tradition, and thus into the ethnic identity, of the Johannine imagined community. Moreover, in light of biblical tradition related to the scene of the encounter at the well, the reader of the story can expect something more than a casual and passing conversation will happen.[274] By invoking such a setting for a patriarchal *exchange* between two different/opposing parties through the use of a female figure, the narrative suggests the future incorporation of disparate communities represented by Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The narrative is, therefore, a story in which private and public history and desire are mingled through the use of a female figure – the Samaritan woman.

By utilizing a female figure, the narrative not only legitimates the Johannine mission in Samaria, but also constructs its communal or ethnic identity. Scholars have pointed out de/colonizing nationalist discourses that present female figures as symbols and signifiers of the communities.[275] In concert with such de/colonizing

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[274] The encounter of a male and female at the well will lead to a marriage bond between two parties. For examples, Moses and Rebecca in Exodus 2:16; and Jacob and Rachel in Genesis 29:1-14.

[275] Anne McClintock have problematized such gendered construction of nation arguing that in which women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct

discourses, the narrative in John 4 relies on and replicates narratives, ideologies, and desires that are gendered, and thus, essentially "masculine hopes and aspirations." In addition, echoing the notion of "doubly-colonization," Jean Kim argues that the Samaritan woman "is not only victimized by the colonizer, but also manipulated by the patriarchal nationalist ideology of the Johannine narrative."[276]

The role of the Samaritan woman in the narrative resembles the use of woman figures in both colonial and national discourses, which position women in the role of the domesticated, disseminated, and dismissed. In the narrative in John 4, the Samaritan woman is domesticated through the narrative portrayal of the nuptial-type scene at the well (John 4:5-6). She is disseminated with Jesus' message concerning the "living water" and the "true" worship. She further assumes an important role in the dissemination of Jesus' message to her people (John 4:28-30, 39). At the last part of the narrative, the people of Samaria readily dismiss the pivotal role of the Samaritan woman in bringing Jesus, the "Messiah," to their land saying, "it is no longer because of your [the Samaritan woman's] words that we believe" (John 4:42).

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relation to national agency. See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 354. Elleke Boehmer also notes that the male role in the nationalist scenario is typically "metonymic," that is, men are contiguous with each other and with the national whole. Women, by contrast, appear " in a "metaphoric or symbolic role." See Bohemer, *Stories of Women,* 6. Yuval-Davis argues that women's exclusion in the Imagined community was not an accident or a cultural oversight to be rectified through the course of history. Instead, "excluding women was part and parcel of the construction of the entitlement of men." See Anthias and Yuval-Davis, *Racialized Boundaries*. 8. Carole Pateman argues that the very concept of citizenship is inherently gendered and was from its conception, constructed in terms of the "rights of Man." See Carole Pateman, *The sexual contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 225ff.

[276] Kim, *Women and Nation*, 92.

The depiction of the Samaritan woman in the narrative reflects an uncritical re-inscription of female figures among the colonized writers, as the colonizers do, in order to further their own decolonizing agendas. This nationalist narrative not only re-inscribes the practices of the colonizers in its identity discourse, but also relies on the traditional patriarchal hierarchy of God, man, and then woman in its newly forged identity**.** Thus, the Johannine Jesus reminds the Samaritan woman that God is the "father" figure of the new worshipping community of spirit and such patriarchy remains unchallenged in the narrative (John 4:23).

The discursive formation of the imagined community, which is constituted with the father (John 20:17), the son(s) (John 8:35), and the brothers (John 20:17, 21:23), is a male-centered discourse that requires a critic to remain vigilant regarding issues of gender difference if his or her reading posture is going to significantly challenge a masculine document such as the Gospel of John. A decolonizing reading of the narrative then must also contain an analysis of gender power in order to destabilize the gendered construction of the imagined community that speaks of "repositories of male hopes, male aspirations, and male privilege"[277] in which women's voices remain marginalized and silenced.

Frantz Fanon pointed out another crucial cautionary marker, arguing that in such a male-centered nationalist discourse, the agency of women is more often than

[277] McClintock, "No longer in a Future Heaven," 109.

not, “a designated agency, ” or “an agency by invitation only.”[278] It is an agency created exactly to further masculine agenda. Therefore, one must be aware of the narrative scheme of the Gospel that foreshadows, appropriates, and predicts the responses, or agency, of the Samaritan woman in a way complicit with the *ideology* of the imagined community.[279] The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman reflects such a process of ideological construction that appropriates the Samaritan traditions relevant to the claims of the imagined community, and suppresses those elements of Samaritan ancestral and religious identity that challenge those claims.

In the narrative, Jesus accepts and asserts his identity by appropriating and accepting the religious and cultural expectations of the Samaritans. The narrative insists that the Samaritan woman understands Jesus' identity as a prophet and messiah in *her own way* or in terms of her Samaritan tradition (John 4:19, 25). Her own understanding of Jesus as a prophet and messiah, or Christ, goes uncorrected by either the Johannine Jesus or the author(s) of the Gospel, who constantly makes sure no other misunderstandings go unexplained (John 4:2, 9, 25). In its process to legitimate the claims of the imagined community, the narrative conveniently appropriates the usable, congenial, or supportive viewpoints, traditions, and materials related to the Samaritan woman and her people. In other words, the agency of the Samaritan

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[278] Frantz Fanon, “Algeria Unveiled,” in *A Dying Colonialism* (trans. Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press, 1965), 37. See also in McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 366.

[279] Laura Donaldson summarizes ideology as a process in which a dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it; naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; denigrating ideas which might challenge it; excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself. See Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminism*, 58-60.

woman in the narrative, at times, appears to be complicit with the ideology of the imagined community. A decolonizing reading must, therefore, actively locate the given or assigned agency of the Samaritan woman if it is significantly going to challenge the nationalist or patriarchal ideology of the imagined community.

The Samaritan Woman and/or the Land and People of Samaria

Many scholars have investigated the strategic use of female figures to narrate and justify imperial/colonial conquests, to define racial/ethnic boundaries between the colonizer and the colonized, and to galvanize anti-colonial ideologies and nationalist movements in colonial and postcolonial literature.[280] In the (con)texts of colonialism/imperialism, the colonizing or foundational narratives of colonies deploy the land or the people and female body as interchangeable discursive metaphors.[281] These narratives strategically and particularly use female figures to narrate and justify the violence of colonization. Frantz Fanon rightfully observes that the dynamics of colonial power are fundamentally, if not solely, the dynamics of gender. He once parroted such colonial thinking saying, "if we want to destroy the structure of

[280] Flora Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis explore five major ways in which women historically have been positioned within nationalist discourses as1) biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; 2) reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; 3) participants in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and transmitter of its culture; 4) signifiers of ethnic/national differences, as a focus and symbol in ideological discourse used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic categories; and 5) participants in national, economic, political, and military struggles. See Yuval-Davis and Flora Anthias, *Women-Nation-State*, 7ff.

[281] By narrating female figures as ethnic others, colonizing stories such as of Lavinia in *Aeneid,* introduce the possibility of erotic narrative into stories about colonization and imperialist conquest. See further discussion in Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*, 138ff. Moreover, in a famous drawing (ca. 1575), Jan van der Straet portrays the "discovery " of America as an eroticized encounter between a man and a woman in which a fully armored Vespucci standing before a naked and erotically inviting woman. See McClintock, *Imperial Leather,* 25.

Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women."[282]

Nationalist literature frequently portrays female figures as discursive determinants invoking desires for communities, boundaries, and commitment.[283] The (con)texts of nationalist writings, especially in ethnic-national wars, such as in Burma, repeat such a colonizing practice that assumes a female body as a locus of subjugating the *Other*. For instance, the Burmese military government officially endorses rapes, and rewards forced marriages between minority or ethnic women and Burmese soldiers. They use the assault on women as an effective and symbolic weapon against ethnic minorities, and a strategic national policy to unionize or *burmanize, a term that means* bringing diverse ethnic groups under the same banner. Female bodies, therefore, are symbols as well as real territories used to subjugate and conquer the *Other*.

Similar to the nationalist literature discussed above, the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman uses the land and the female body interchangeably. There is a movement in the narrative from the *land* to the *flesh-and-blood woman*, or from the land/people of Samaria (John 4:4) to the woman of Samaria (John 4:7). The narrative recounts Jesus' travel to the land of Samaria and an immediate encounter with the Samaritan woman, employing a narrative strategy that mingles the land and the flesh-

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[282] Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled," 37-38.

[283] See further discussions in Bohemer, *Stories of women* (1992), Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminism* (1992), Anthias and Yuval-Davis, *Women-Nation-State* (1992), and McClintock, *The Imperial Leather* (1995).

and-blood woman. The narrative spells out the private life of the Samaritan woman, identifying it with the people and the land that Jesus and his disciples will conquer or "harvest" (John 4:16-17, 35-38).

The discourses of imagined communities also play a vital part in the production of "gendered action," which primarily involves passive female bodies or feminine related imageries.[284] In the representations of the imagined communities, a female body is frequently threatened by foreign aggression that often appears specifically in terms of sexual violation or rape. Such production of gendered action portrays masculine figures as actors who protect and defend, and feminine figures that are acted upon, protected and defended.

The Gospel of John reflects such tendencies when it narrates the process/progress of its imagined community. The narratives in the Gospel of John invoke the male figures to take the actions necessitated by the portrayals of the female figure, the Samaritan woman.[285] For instance, a narrative in John 4 presents a movement or strategy that mingles female body and the land, and legitimates the in/actions of the actor and the acted-upon. Specifically by identifying the land of Samaria with the Samaritan woman, the narrative justifies the action of Jesus' and his

[284] The editors of *Nationalism and Sexualities*, Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger, point out that a deeply ingrained metaphor of the nationalist discourse in which "the depiction of the homeland as a female body whose violation by foreigners requires its citizens and allies to rush to her defense." See Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger, eds., *Nationalism and Sexualities* (London: Routedge, 1992), 6ff.

[285] While being surrounded by female figures such as his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene, Jesus leaves his mother at the protection of a male compatriot, the beloved disciple: "Then he [Jesus] said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home"(John 19:25-27 NRSV).

disciples (harvesters) and the acted-upon or passive agency of the Samaritans (harvested).

The narrative designs that position women in a passive role appear more vividly in the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The thirst of the Samaritan woman, either physical or spiritual, must be satiated. Her condition, therefore, invokes Jesus to take action, that is to offer “the living water” that satisfies her need (John 4: 7-15). Jesus offers the gift of “the living water” to the Samaritan Woman *at the well*, a symbolic place for a patriarchal exchange. We hear, however, nothing of counter-gift of the Samaritan woman at that time. Later in the narrative, however, she must offer *herself* as a counter-gift to Jesus when he implies that she is the food that he has eaten (John 4:31-34).

The narrative suggests that her reciprocal gift to Jesus is the act of offering herself to him when she, along with her people, are discursively equated with the “fields” that are already ripe/white for harvest (John 4:35). The narrative, therefore, calls for the actions of the harvesting, reaping, and gathering, invoked by the depiction of *untended* and *ripened* “fields” (John 4:35-38). Such actions are strategically gendered and discursively enabled via the action of Jesus and the (in)action of the Samaritan woman.

The narrative, furthermore, highlights the womanhood of the Samaritan woman and her ethnic otherness, demonstrating a discursive strategy to mingle gender and race/ethnicity. The narrative refers to Samaria as the city and land of the Samaritans. As the narrative progresses, it becomes vividly clear that the Samaritan

woman and her history represents the people and land of Samaria. The narrative implies the Samaritan woman's private history with men is identical to or reflective of the public history of the Samaritan people, invoking a negative religio-cultural stereotype of the Samaritans (John 4:16-18). This discursive practice that uses a female figure, the Samaritan woman - especially in relation to Jesus, a man, accomplishes not only the act of *eroticizing* but also *othering* the Samaritan ethnic identity.

The rhetoric of gender, furthermore, was frequently used to make an increasingly refined hierarchical structure among different races during the colonial era. McClintock argues that in the effort to justify their dominance over the native Africans, the discourses of western colonialism often portrayed women as an inherently degenerate race, akin in physiognomy to apes and black people.[286] The white race, as reason follows, was figured as the male of the species and the black race as the females. Consequently, these colonizing or racist discourses equate black males with white females, using gender difference to racialize the *Other*.[287] Such colonizing discourses, therefore, *gender* race due to the need to create a hierarchy of humanity, and thus, justify the colonial operations. Likewise, by equating the Samaritan woman and her past history with that of the Samaritan people, the narrative

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[286] Gustave Le Bon compared female brain and guerilla: "they (women) represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man," Quoted in McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 54.

[287] McClintock points out that the Zulu male was regarded as the 'gentleman of the black race but was seen to display features typical of females of the white race. Irish or Jewish men were represented, moreover, as the most inherently degenerate "females races." See McClintock, *Imperial Leather,* 55-56.

feminizes or *genders* the Samaritans, particularly against the backdrop of the negative cultural stereotypes of Samaritan women (John 4:16-18).[288]

In concert with the colonizing narrative, the narrative in John 4 equates Samaria and the Samaritan people with the Samaritan Woman. In doing so, the narrative invokes an erotic link between Jesus' mission and the people of Samaria. The narrative thus anticipates a union in a destined future between the communities. The narrative, therefore, justifies the contest or mission to the Samaritan people and/or territory as an *amatory*, rather than a *military* theme. Representing the land/people of Samaria with the womanhood of the Samaritan woman, the narrative symbolizes a marriage between the imagined community and the Samaritans, introducing the possibility of an erotic narrative into the story of missionary and spiritual conquest.

Also, in portraying the Samaritan woman as an ethnic "*Other"*, the narrative forges the identity of the imagined community or/and the identity of the reader in opposition to that of the Samaritan woman. The narrative characterizes the Samaritan woman by reflecting negative stereotypes of the Samaritans. The narrator casts the Samaritan woman as a foreign (4:7), promiscuous (4:18), and as an ignorant worshiper (4:22). Using these negative stereotypes, the narrative then presents her as

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[288] There are negative stereotypes against the Samaritan women, both in rabbinic literature and Josephus' writings, in which they were seen as impure *par excellence* and any association or sexual intercourse with them would render him unclean anytime. The Samaritan men, by implication, are to be considered degenerate race or ethnic group. In a way to justify the negative stereotypes against the Samaritan people, there is a process in which the Samaritan women are denigrated to the level of degenerate gender. *Niddah*. 4.1 in Mishnah accuses that the Samaritan women as those who are "menstrous from the cradle" and who "defile a bed both below and above."

a spectacle for the reader's gaze. In turn, such negative portrayals have the effect of distancing the reader from her experiences and emotions. This discursive strategy renders a vantage point for a reader that is in opposition to that of the Samaritan woman -- who is an ignorant and promiscuous ethnic *Other*. In contrast to the character of the Samaritan woman, the narrative concurrently, defines the community's identity in relation to Jesus – who is knowledgeable, rational, and calm. The worship in spirit that Jesus advocates is thus contrastively defined with the Samaritan woman's attachment to earthly worship places.

In addition, In the Gospel of John, Jesus invokes *feminine related symbols* in order to elucidate the continuity and/or discontinuity of the imagined community as a natural process and progress. Jesus insists that one must be born from above/anew in order to join the community (John 1:13; 3:7). He naturalizes the process and progress of the imagined community with the metaphor of birth or a woman in labor (John16:21).[289] Such symbolic uses of feminine imagery are meant to represent the dis/continuity of time and/or space of the past traditions that must be transformed or relinquished. At the same time, these imageries invoke and explain the emergence of the imagined community as a natural and necessary process – like giving birth.[290]

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[289] "When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world" (John 16:21 NRSV).

[290] In the nationalist discourses, Anne McClintock argues that women are represented as the "atavistic and authentic body of national tradition" (inert, backward-looking and natural), symbolizing and embodying nationalism's "conservative principle of continuity." In contrast, McClintock continues, men represent the "progressive agent of national modernity" (forward-thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principles of discontinuity. McClintock, *The Imperial Leather*, 360.

In John 4:1-42, the Samaritan woman symbolizes an unchanging or backward tradition. She clings to the territory related to the ancestor Jacob and the tradition related to Mt. Gerizim, representing the continuity of past traditions that need changing. In contrast, Jesus, who is a male, represents discontinuity, bringing progress and change to an out-of-date territory and tradition. The water she drinks, the place she worships, and the traditions she upholds are *backward looking* and *ineffective*, and thus, require the progress brought by Jesus' revolutionary message of discontinuity (John 4:20-26). The rationale of the narrative implies that her history of unstable and multiple marriages must be corrected by the stable and monolithic relationship available through Jesus and also the "father" (John 4:18). The portrayal of the Samaritan woman serves not only as a condition of necessity to which Jesus and his disciples can take action, but also as a representative of the *backward-looking* community that requires change.

The Samaritan woman, as a discursive persona of the imagined community, plays an important and effective role in defining the Johannine ethnic identity. It is precisely her womanhood that both *obscures* and *causes* the traces of ethnic characterizations and identities of the communities. That is, the Samaritan woman and her womanhood enable not only the disappearance of the past ethnic identity, but also the emergence of the new identity associated with the imagined community. It is not a coincidence that her personal history conveys the negative stereotype of the Samaritan people who went through five different "false" gods (John 4:18b).

Moreover, her current non-committed, or still available living arrangement, ensures the possibility, even the necessity, of a new relationship or union.

The narrative uses the womanhood of the Samaritan woman not only to *destabilize* the religious practice or identity of Samaritans, but also to *enable* a new identity of the imagined community. As the narrative develops, the Samaritan woman is portrayed as a representative of the imagined community. She refers to Jesus with the titles that echo the *confessional statements* of the community. She proclaims that Jesus is "a prophet" (John 4:19), "messiah," or "Christ" (John 4:25; 4:29). She becomes a decisive symbol that enables the identity construction of the imagined community. As she represents her Samaritan people with her private and personal history, once again, she represents the newly emerging imagined community as advocated by the narrative. Jesus may well be a spoke-person of the community as scholars have argued,[291] but the Samaritan woman embodies it. It is precisely her womanhood that enables the disappearance, blending, and supplanting of identities and communities, which are crucial steps for forging the new identity of the imagined community.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the Gospel of John, especially the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, continually questions the communal identity that depends on the confined, fixed, or immutable category of *decent*. Rather, the narrative

[291] Craig Koester, *Symbolism*, 175ff. Webster, "*Transcending Alterity*" 165ff.

discursively promotes an essential identity of the imagined community that is a fluid or mutable category of *consent*. The Gospel, however, ambivalently reuses the ethnic identity marker of worship and decent as identity contingences in its newly constructed imagined community. In doing so, it uses discursive design that superimposes the transcendental or spiritual nature of worship promoted by the narrative on the contending communities – the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans.

The Gospel of John, moreover, uses the Roman (or colonial) practice of racial/ethnic stereotyping of the *Other* to define a communal identity and justify the colonial operation. I have argued, therefore, a decolonizing reading of the Gospel of John must keep colonialism/empire in view as a dominant cultural force that has an impact on the discourses of the colonized as well. Through the use of stereotyping the *Other* in terms of their religious practices, and through the use of female figures, the Gospel constructs an identity of the imagined community that is in part defined by, yet in opposition to, the ethnic identities of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans.

The Gospel of John, and especially the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42, presents religious practices (worship of both the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans), and a female figure (the Samaritan woman), as representations that *enable* the identities of their communities. At the same time the narrative uses these representatives to *destabilize* the identities of these competing communities. These discursive representations function as markers or signifiers of the imagined community advocated in the Gospel of John. In the next chapter, I will explore how these articulated and marginalized representatives that enable the absolute or

essentialist claims of identity in the Gospel of John, also continually interfere with the full realization of these claims.

Chapter 6

TOWARD A MINORITY DISCOURSE

In this chapter, I further argue that the Gospel of John, particularly the narrative in John 4:1-42, is a discourse produced *by* and *for* the contest and confrontation of ethnic or cultural difference. The narrative, therefore, imposes, suppresses, and marginalizes the presence, viewpoints, and narratives of the *Other*. I argue that the narrative resonates a discursive violence in its construction of the decisive boundary that separates the imagined community from its *Other* –the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans. I propose an alternative reading of the narrative in order to uncover the competing possibilities and the subversive spaces that this narrative of *difference* forcefully and anxiously tries to suppress and conceal.

The perspectives of minorities, or that of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, c/overtly contest the claims of the narrative, as well as of the Gospel of John. I contend that the narrative in John 4 particularly mentions the worshipping place of the *Ioudaioi* in Jerusalem, only to contrast and marginalize it in order to promote the worship space proposed by the Johannine Jesus. For instance, the narrative uses the religious practice of the *Ioudaioi* without offering any reference to their contending claims that are made throughout the Gospel. I argue that the *Ioudaioi* continually counter the rhetoric of *consent* advocated by the Gospel by articulating their own communal identity – one that is acquired by *descent* or lineage. I also further underscore the Samaritan woman's proposal in the narrative to acknowledge the

difference *within* the imagined community, supporting the notion of "the *many* in *one"*. In doing so, she invokes the cultural territories and specificities of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, and thus, destabilizes the spiritual territory advocated by the Johannine Jesus.

A Discursive Violence of *Difference* in John 4:1-42

Postcolonial theorists have problematized the dominant nature of textual construction or *textuality* that limits, silences, and dismisses its competing possibilities. Edward Said argued that "texts are a system of forces institutionalized by the reigning culture*."*[292] Texts or the *textuality* of the text, therefore, inevitably suppresses and marginalizes any competing possibilities in order to construct a narrative. Gayatri Spivak contends that "all narratives – fictional, political, and economic – construct themselves [like empire itself] by suppressing or marginalizing competing possibilities, viewpoints, and material."[293] Due to the discursive strategy of the narrative which dominates, displaces and silences alternative voices, a decolonizing reading must first disturb the neutrality of the texts by (de)constructing their (con)textuality and identifying the ideological impetus behind the texts.

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[292] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 31-53.
[293] Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 146.

A narrative of nation or an imagined community is certainly a discursive practice that provides authenticity, continuity, and unity to the community.[294] To accomplish this, a narrative of an imagined community inevitably requires one to forget and suppress the contending narratives and presence of the *Other* within its imaginary boundaries. The narrative in John 4:1-42 is a narrative used to mediate between communities or cultures, especially those of *Ioudaioi*, Samaritans, and Johannine community.

Jacque Derrida argues that texts that are used as vehicles between cultures, regardless of intentional or unintentional purposes, exhibit the practice of what he calls a "discursive violence."[295] He argues that writing produced by the confrontation of cultures involves a "violence of the letter" imposed by one culture upon the other. It is a violence committed against the *Other* in terms "of difference, of classification, and of the system of appellations" in the process of cultural confrontation and contest.[296]

The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42 prominently stands as a foundational narrative of the community as it recounts the integration or inclusion of the Samaritans, the *Other*, into the community. The narrative particularly

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[294] Bhabha argues that nationalist discourses/texts also require 'essence, origin, unity and coherence, and need to forget the presence and the narratives of certain peoples within its imaginary boundaries in order to function. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 148.

[295] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, trans. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 107ff.

[296] David Spurr argues in the context of colonialism that the very process by which one culture subordinates another begins in the act of naming and leaving unnamed, of marking an unknown territory lines of division and uniformity, of boundary and continuity. See David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 4. See also in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 107.

uses a female figure, the Samaritan woman, in order to define the boundaries and identity of the community. The focus of the narrative, therefore, is less about the soon to be missionized "*Other"* (the Samaritans) than it is about identity-crisis, particularly the masculine identity, of the community.

The Johannine Jesus, a discursive representation of the community, is also a man of margins or transition, who must pass from one community's boundary to another's. Although he embodies the displacement of the community, he also has the potential to displace the *Other*. In other words, Jesus himself, as a man of margin, is in danger of marginalization, yet he also presents this same danger to the *Other* in the narrative of communal contestation and transgression. The narrative, echoing a colonizing discourse, uses a discursive strategy that assumes "dangerous marginality, segregation, and reintegration"[297] in its construction of the community.

Moreover, the function of imagining or "inventing the *Other* is a pivotal component that defines the identity of the community.[298] The presence of the *Other* therefore, is necessary and fundamental to the existence of the imagined communities. The narrative in John 4:1-42, as a foundational narrative of a community, requires the suppression and thus, the marginalization of the oppositional

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[297] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 24-25.

[298] Hall has examined how the Greeks, and in particular the Athenians, defined their self by inventing the barbarian other. See Hall, *Hellenicity*, 1-2. Smith points out that the origin of the Aeneas legend as a new Roman foundation myth is to assert a specific Roman and Italian national identity, selecting Greece's classical enemy as its forbear, was both part of, and opposed to, the Greek cultural world. See Anthony D. Smith*, The Antiquity of Nations,* 132. Eireann Marshall also argues how the Romans perceived the Cathaginians, Sabines, and Cyrenne, both as their others and as integral to their identity. Eireann Marshall, "Constructing the Self and the other in Cyrenaica" in *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* (Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry, eds. Landon: Routledge, 1998), 85-91.

or contending claims of its *Other*, such as the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans, in order to forge its essentialist identity. The narrative of the imagined community, therefore, utilizes a textual strategy that actively constructs a communal *difference*, exhibiting a discursive violence against its *Other.*

The idea of *Difference*, like representation, is also a slippery, and therefore, contested concept. This is because racial/ethnic differences are socially constructed for particular political and social purposes, and are, of course, open to contestation and change. Stuart Hall problematizes the rhetoric of ethnicity of *difference,* noting that this type of construction of *difference* makes "a radical and unbridgeable separation" between communities and deploys it as a means of disavowing the realities of racism and repression in the discourse of racism.[299] Laura Donaldson further argues that the danger of such a logic of radical *difference* or opposition lies in the uncritical construction of "an exclusive Self and an excluded Other," by making distinctions, not only meant as a way of devaluing difference, but sometimes, as in the case of Hitler, even "annihilating difference."[300]

The essentialist claims of the Gospel intersect with the differences within it. The Gospel fundamentally defines the identity of its imagined community by placing it within imaginative boundaries and then noting the differences between it and its *Other* -- the world, the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. In the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4, the discursive articulation of the *Other* of the imagined

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[299] Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities" in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, 223-227.
[300] Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminism*, 9.

community involves re/asserting the community's existing cultural boundaries and dis/placing the imaginative borders, identities, and differences between groups within the community (John 4: 9, 20).

The narrative constructs an identity of the community that idealizes "worship in spirit." However this ideal can only be realized by eliminating cultural and spatial places of worship such as at Mt. Gerizim and "in Jerusalem." The narrative, therefore, construes the identities or traditions related to the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans as the *Other* of the imagined community. In doing so, the narrative differentiates, subordinates, and even obliterates these identities and traditions.

This discursive strategy presents the opposing characters – the world, the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritan woman, as spectacles for the reader's gaze, in turn, rendering a vantage point that is in opposition to these characters (4:1-42; 5:18; 10:30; 14:27-30; 15:18; 16:8). Specifically, the narrative dramatically presents the image of the Samaritan woman as a spectacle or the reader's gaze, which has the effect of contrasting the reader from her experiences and emotions.

The narrative, therefore, articulates the identity of the imagined community as an opposition to the Samaritan woman and traditions associated with her. The living water Jesus offers and the true worship place in "spirit" that the Johannine Jesus promotes are contrastively understood with the water and the worship place of the Samaritan woman and of her people (John 4:13, 23). Moreover, the hostile and menacing images of the *Ioudaioi* throughout the Gospel of John are starkly contrasted

with the hospitable and friendly gestures of Jesus and disciples, especially in chapters 10 and 13.

The communal or ethnic difference forged in the Gospel of John, at times, shows an indifference to or a lack of awareness of the *Other*. For instance, as previously noted, the author(s) of the Gospel suppresses the overwhelming concerns of the *Ioudaioi* who merely want to preserve their "place and nation" and their community, forged by descent or lineage (John 11:45-53). The narrative in John 4:1-42 also marginalizes the claims of the Samaritan woman (and, by extension, the Samaritans) that emerged from a desire to preserve the Samaritan ethnic identity and cultural territory, which were under assault by the Roman colonial domination (John 4:7-15). In short, both the Gospel of John, and the narrative in John 4, suppressed contending claims *within the imagined community,* as it strived to achieve "*one* out of *many."*

The act of marginalization and suppression occurred, for the most part, due to the narrative's strict delineation of who is a member of the community and who is not. For the most part, the Gospel presents this division as binary. That is, that one belonged to one of two mutually exclusive groups – them or us. Or, said another way, one is part of the community, or an *Other*. This binary perspective becomes a problem in the reading of John because both the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans are not only *Other*, but also *members* of the imagined community. In other words, the community of John 4 is composed of the viewpoints, materials, and peoples of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritan ethnic groups, in addition to the disciples of Jesus. In fact,

the Gospel reports that many *Ioudaioi* believed in Jesus as a savior (John 11: 45) and that the Samaritans eventually became Jesus' disciples (John 4:42). However, the Gospel of John indicates that members of the imagined community may only belong to that community. To maintain this community boundary, the narrative silences, forgets, and obliterates the presence of the alternative narratives of these people – even though they are also community members.

The Gospel also indicated an indifference to the *Other* when articulating the boundaries of the imagined community by de-legitimizing the practices of the excluded *Others*. For instance, the "worship in spirit" or the space of worship that the Johannine Jesus promoted negates the legitimacy of worship in traditional *Ioudaioi* or Samaritan places such as Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim (John 4:21). The Gospel thus claims that the members of the imagined community are born of God (John 1:12), regenerated anew exclusively by the providence of the Son (John 3:7; 8:35), and the permission of the Father (John 14: 6), and those who worship in spirit (John 4:22). In a sense then, the narrative forges a communal identity by contrasting the religious practices of community members against the traditional practices of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. These types of exclusions provide the community members with a sense of belonging to an exclusive community. In addition, this type of communal identity, achieved through a forceful construction of devaluing the *Other*, indicates a culturally (religiously) closed, exclusive, and regressive form or concept of ethnic thinking.

The narrative strives to construct the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans as communities or ethnicities of difference by desperately highlighting their communal/cultural

differences from the imagined community. Similar to the discursive constructions of "the will of God," "being born from above or anew," and "love" (1:14; 3:5; 13:34), the narrative asserts the "living water" provided by Jesus and the "worship in spirit" function as "fixed entities" or as a "determinative force" that define the identity of the imagined community. Via these processes, the Johannine Jesus marginalizes the traditions and practices that once represented the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritan cultures or ethnic identities. The communal difference of the imagined community forged and contested in the narrative, similar to essentialist ethnic identity of nationalist discourse, displays the coercive or violent conception of ethnicity of *difference*.

In the process of excessively emphasizing a radical difference between the imagined community and the *Other*, the narrative obliterates memories, viewpoints, materials, and people that are integral to the identity of its *Other* -- the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans. Such constructions of *difference,* based on an unbridgeable and radical difference,[301] demonstrates the narrative's attempt to *suppress* the awareness and to conceal the existence of the *Other* in its own identity construction. After all, the community of *consent* and *spirit* advocated by the Johannine narratives, as I have argued previously, can only be intelligible and attainable by terms, categories, viewpoints, and people of *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans.

[301] The will of God vs. the will of human, above vs. below, and children of God vs. children of Devil, worship in spirit vs. worship at Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem.

Thus, the Johannine imagination of community, exemplifying Paul Ricouer's notion of "actualizing and limiting,"[302] denies possibilities as much as it actualizes them. In other words, the narrative forges a community that can only be realized by excluding the *Other*. The narrative constructs an imagined community that signifies newness at the cost of eliminating or violating past traditions (Moses and Jacob related traditions), earthly territories (Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem), ethnic and cultural boundaries (Samaritans, and *Ioudaioi*), and gender identity (the Samaritan woman).

Oppositional Resilience of The Johannine (Con)text

Readability of the Text and Marginality of Living as Subversive Spaces

I have argued that both dominant and dissident discourses in colonial (con)texts are susceptible to each other as they are intricately contained within the structure of power. Michael Foucault argues that a liberation discourse often opens up a new relationship of power, which has to be controlled by "practices of liberty." One of the essential "practices of liberty" that this decolonizing reading of the Gospel of John undertakes is to include the voice of "what was once forcibly excluded" in the narrative.[303] In other words, a critic must read *for* the voices suppressed, silenced, and marginalized in the text by reading *against* the totalizing and essentializing claims of the Gospel, and in deed, the narrative in John 4:1-42.

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[302] See further discussion by Imre Szeman, *Zones of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism, and the Nation* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 2.

[303] Said proposed a "contrapuntal reading" that extends "our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded." See Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66-67.

The Gospel of John undoubtedly poses a counter-discourse that undertakes an insurgent act of narration by mimicking the colonizer's discursive design, proposing an alternative community to the Roman Empire, and reporting and exposing wrongs imposed by the colonial conditions. The Gospel, however, is also a counter-productive discourse of power and domination in its context, colonialism. For imperialism generates, in Said's term, "a second nature" through its "domination, classification, and universal commodification of all space,"[304] including a discursive space of decolonization, such as the Gospel of John.

Due to the ingrained and pervasive nature of the dominant discourse or imperial paradigm, even in an emancipatory or liberatory discursive space, Said advocated that one seek out, map, invent, and discover "a third nature," or space. Such a space is not pristine and pre-historical but, according to Said, the one that derives from the "deprivations of the present."[305] Such reading practice, therefore, acknowledges and discovers the "deprivations" in narratives. In doing so, it requires a ruse of recognition, imagination, and assertion of voice forcibly excluded in the text, in our case, in the Gospel of John.

Postcolonial reading is a conscious effort to search for alternatives to the dominant discourses that give meaning to imperial/colonial (con)texts. Such alternative reading, therefore, must insert and articulate voices dominated, displaced,

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[304] Edward Said, "Yeats and Decolonization" in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward W. Said, eds., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 78.

[305] Said, "Yeats and Decolonization," 79-80.

and silenced by the (con)textuality of the texts. Ross Chambers argues that the alternative "readability of the texts" fundamentally provides a "potential for oppositional resilience."[306] An alternative reading destabilizes the dominant discourse, and thus, estranges the discourse of power. Moreover, by reading alternatively, one participates and intervenes in production of cultural meaning.

An alternative reading of the narrative can be as simple as acknowledging and locating the margins or the marginal voices that enable and legitimate the totalizing claims of the narrative. For instance, it is a recognition that while the imagined community of the Gospel is constructed in opposition to the negative characters, traits and images of the *Ioudaioi* , Jesus, the heroic character of the Gospel, is ambivalently portrayed as an *Ioudaios* (John 4:22, 18:35).

Moreover, an alternative reading, is also a realization that even though the Gospel advocates a stance in opposition to the *Ioudaioi* as a people or a nation, it suggests that its imagined community is a part of the customs and ceremonies, terms or phrases and ways of thought of the *Ioudaioi* (John 1, 4, and 6). Such understanding enables one to see that the *Ioudaioi* are not only the *Other* or menace of the imagined community, but also those who assure the *possibility for imagining* a community in the first place. Thus, they are an integral part of the identity formation of the imagined community. Through such ambivalent construction of identity, the Gospel of John tactfully contests the Roman Empire by claiming the *Ioudaioi*, the

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[306] Ross Chambers, *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 3.

stereotyped menace of the Roman, not only as the menace, but also as the *forbearers* of the imagined community (John 4:22b).

Bhabha, therefore, argues that what challenge the totalizing claims of the narratives of imagined communities are real people and real life.[307] The context of real life continually generates counter-narratives, evoking and erasing the totalizing boundaries promoted by a narrative of imagined communities. The Gospel of John's imagined community then, is not only forcefully constructed, but also simultaneously challenged by its contending viewpoints, materials, territories, and people. In other words, the context of a real life and people (the Samaritan and the *Ioudaioi*), is a subversive space that continually interferes with the Gospel's totalizing narrative claims and rigid representations of the imagined community.

The Gospel of John strived to contest the Empire by granting comparable and competitive titles to Jesus (Lord and God, Savior, and Father). The reality of living under the colonial domination, however, disturbs the claims of these titles and exposes them as contradictory narration. Although the Gospel claims Jesus' absolute power over the world (John 1:1-4), he is hopelessly subjected to the context of the colonial condition. The claims of Jesus' absolute power over the world were in conflict with his real life displacement and the necessity to be on the move as a colonized subject under colonial political conditions (John 1:11, 4:4, 7:10).

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[307] One of the pivotal functions of the *pedagogical mode* of imagined community is to assert its totalizing claim by suppressing its contesting narratives. However, simultaneously, Bhabha argues, challenging such *pedagogical mode* through the contradictions of national discourse itself are the operations of the *performative mode*, or reality of living. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 225.

Even though Jesus is bestowed with absolute power through the narrative design that narrates his origin "from above," the reality of living under colonialism restrains Jesus' actions and abilities in the Gospel. Everything is made through him, but he is rejected in this world, even his own (John 1: 11). The absolute power of Jesus provides the narrative authority over earthly places (John 4:4). However, he cannot travel as he wishes due to the fear of being arrested or fear of the Roman surrogate authority, namely, the *Ioudaioi* (John 7:1). Even though the Gospel contends that he has an authority that surpasses the authority of the Emperor, Jesus, the hero of the Gospel is inescapably subjected to the earthly colonial condition in which suffering becomes a necessary component (John 12:27). In other words, the colonial condition that the Gospel covertly narrates ironically disclaims the absolute power of Jesus overtly asserted in the Gospel.

Even though Jesus and his disciples are essentially not *of* this world, they are inevitably *in* this world (John 17:15). It is in fact the reality of living "in this world," or living life as necessary, that constantly destabilizes the supposed stability that is promoted and safeguarded by the Gospel's discursive formations of an out-of-this-world existence, placeless and timeless space. The "place" in the "father's house" can only be imagined and desired because of the displacement of the disciples here on earth due to colonial conditions (John 14:1-3). The Gospel's decolonizing gesture that reports wrongs of colonialism, can only be found through the *discovery of contradictions* tacitly narrated in the Gospel. Otherwise, the Gospel's totalizing and dominant narration suppresses its subversive narration or context, which contains the

contending temporalities of histories, narratives, and traditions not only among the colonized sub-groups, but also *against* the colonizers' dominant claims. A decolonizing reading of the text must, therefore, *locate* the contradictory movements and ambivalent claims, and *recover* its subversive gestures already at work within the text.

The Gospel of John inherently forms its imagined community or the people who will "worship in spirit," not only by the discursive claims of the narrative, but also by the flesh and blood individuals, namely the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans. Reading the (counter) claims/living of the *Ioudaioi*, and the Samaritan woman or people, into the narratives of the Gospel, therefore, is a crucial step to uncover the contesting claims within the imagined community. In doing so, a decolonizing reading of the Gospel provides an awareness of the temporality of the community that suggests a much more negotiated or transitive social reality than implied in the Gospel's assertion of its origin or authenticity, continuity, and unity of community, as a *location* of the imagined community.

In the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the water of Jacob, the Samaritan woman's private history with men and the worship places of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans are voices of the margin that offer a glimpse of the image of the imagined community. One can, thus, see a community in transition that was just acquiring its shape within the margins of contesting social formations. In the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus not only denies the claims of the Samaritan woman (the water of Jacob, and worship places of Jerusalem and "this mountain"),

but also accepts her understanding of him as a prophet and messiah, based on her own *Samaritan traditions* (John 4:19, 25). Such an ambivalent and contradictory narration of the *Other*, thus, destabilizes the clear and decisive claims of identity, boundaries, and commitment to the imagined community. Jesus' *denial* and *acceptance* of traditions related to the Samaritans reveals that the community that the narrative imagines is still in the negotiative or transitive process. The community's competing viewpoints, materials, and people, therefore, traverse and transgress across the malleable and porous boundaries of its identity.

Jesus' authority given from above, or achieved by consent, is often countered by the Samaritan woman's and the *Ioudaioi*'s constant appeal for authority from the *past, or by descent* (2:20, 4: 12; 8:33, 9:29). It is these claims of *descent,* made by the *Ioudaioi* in the Gospel, and by the Samaritan woman in the narrative in John 4, that persistently contest and call into question the community of consent advocated by the Johannine Jesus. The contending claims of communities of descent, or the claims of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, gradually expose the concealed agenda of the Gospel, which is to establish a new community of an alternate descent, covertly promoted through its discursive consent.

The Johannine Jesus unveils the descent paradigm of the imagined community of the narrative in John 4:1-42. The Samaritan woman invokes the authority of the fathers to legitimize the water she drinks (Jacob's well: John 4:12) and the place she worships (the worship places of the fathers: John 4:20). In doing so, she prompts Jesus to acknowledge and admit that God is the "father'" figure, a signifier of

descent, in the new worship space (John 4:23). Such an inherent and concealed descent-paradigm of the imagined community surfaces due to the contesting voice of the Samaritan woman.

Moreover, at the end of the narrative, the Samaritans acknowledge that Jesus is the "savior of the world," unveiling Jesus' identity fully cloaked with the Emperor's costume (John 4:42). Thus, the new imagined community that is intended to be an alternative to the Empire is, after all, merely the old "haunted house which the colonizers once inhabited."[308] The minority discourses, or the claims of the Samaritan woman, exposes the concealed agendas of the essentialist claims of the narrative. Ergo, the claims and perspectives of the Samaritan woman not only *witness* the production of the imagined community, but also *destabilize* its patriarchal and colonizing intent, that is concealed behind its universal or spiritual claims.

The *Ioudaioi*'s Proposal: *A Community of Descent Rather than of Consent*

In John 4:1-42, the Johannine Jesus promotes "worship in spirit," instead of worship "in places" such as in Jerusalem and at Mt. Gerizim. The Johannine Jesus in the narrative marginalizes the religious claims of the *Ioudaioi* as less significant, and illegitimate. Also, it seems that the narrative mentions the worship place of the *Ioudaioi*, Jerusalem, for the sole purpose of advancing its replacement by the worship space "in spirit," advocated by the Johannine Jesus. In other words, the narrative articulates the religious tradition or identity of the *Ioudaioi* related to worship in

[308] Spivak, *The Spivak Reader*, 27.

Jerusalem *without any representation* of the communal claims of the *Ioudaioi*, just to dispel it.

This section intends to articulate the deprived voice of *Ioudaioi* in the narrative in John 4. In doing so, this reading incorporates the *Ioudaioi*'s contending voices from the Gospel into the narrative claims in John 4:1-42. Adding the claim of the community of *descent* made by the *Ioudaioi* in contrast to the claim of Jesus and his disciples throughout the Gospel of John, allows for a contending voice to be heard within the narrative of John 4.

The Gospel of John narrates the power struggles of the colonized elites (John 11:45-53), the tactics of political expediency and scapegoating under colonialism, and the outright arrogance of the Roman colonizer Pilate in its passion narratives (John 18 – 20). The Gospel underscores the impact and dynamics of colonial power that instigated and agitated the conflict between the colonized Jesus (and his disciples) and the *Ioudaioi*. The Gospel, therefore, poses as a decolonizing nationalist discourse that articulates the unstable realities of the colonial context.

John 11:45-53 implies that there are competing nationalist claims within the *Ioudaioi* groups, that emerge out of a desire to preserve and protect the cultural territory and identity of the colonized from the threat of Roman hegemony. The narrative of plotting to kill Jesus starts out with an image of two contrasting groups among the *Ioudaioi*. The first group is the *Ioudaioi* who opted to participate in a community of *consent* offered by Jesus, because they "believed" in him (John 11:45). On the other hand, the second group of *Ioudaioi* decides to preserve and protect their

endangered community of *descent* by plotting to kill Jesus. They apparently perceive that Jesus is the source of national disunity that will invoke the wrath of the Romans, and thus bring harm to their "place and nation" (John 11:46-48). The attempt to kill Jesus reflects a desire of some *Ioudaioi* who want to preserve their "place and nation" or the community of *descent*, which is under threat of extinction and at the disposal of the Roman colonizers.

Such a desire to preserve and protect their community of *descent* constantly appears in the Gospel as a counter discourse to Jesus' rhetoric of *consent*. The *Ioudaioi* invoke and defend the traditions related to Abraham and Moses, which they deem to be misused, marginalized, and disregarded by Jesus (John 8:5, 33, 39, 57; 9: 28). They pose a fierce opposition to Jesus throughout the Gospel. Especially when Jesus claims himself equal to 'their' God (John 5:18, 10:33, 19:7), and also claims superiority over the traditions related to Abraham and Moses (John 1:17, 8:52), the Temple (John 2:19-20), and the Sabbath (John 5:10).

The narrative in John 11:45-54 is, therefore, fundamentally about the colonized *Ioudaioi* who had lost their territory and local autonomy, and who were struggling to protect and preserve the cultural/religious identity built by their ancestors. Out of this desire to preserve the remaining shreds and patches of their community of *descent*, the *Ioudaioi* strive to avoid the total annihilation of their community (by the Romans) by plotting to kill Jesus (John 11:45-54). Jesus will thus become a casualty of the power-struggles among the colonized elites prompted by the Romans colonizers.

The intention of the *Ioudaioi* to avoid Roman vengeance becomes clear when they refuse to acknowledge Jesus as the competitive and comparable figure to the Roman emperors in the passion narrative. The *Ioudaioi* refuse to judge Jesus according to their law (John 18:31) or claim him as the "King of the *Ioudaioi*" (John 19:21). Since such action and acknowledgement could possibly instigate the "wrath of the Romans," and offer an excuse for the Romans to destroy their "place and nation." The imperial power sets up the ground-rules by which the colonized elites are constrained to play their game.

The opposition of the *Ioudaioi* faced by Jesus, and by the disciples of the imagined community of the Gospel at large, emerges not because of the Johannine community's marginal status among these competing colonized communities. Rather, it is Jesus' contesting actions and titles against the Roman Empire, such as the "savior" of the world (John 4:25,42), that incur the opposition from the colonized *Ioudaioi elites.* More importantly, the absolute claims of Jesus may have echoed the dominant and totalizing rhetoric of the Roman colonial ideology, which devalues and diminishes the cultural and national identity of the colonized *Ioudaioi*. Jesus' direct attacks on their cultural and national identity (such as the Sabbath and the Temple), which had already been denigrated by the Roman colonizers, further remind them of the Roman imperial rhetoric of *consent* that was all too familiar to the colonized *Ioudaioi*.

The universality imagined by the Gospel of John inherently undermines and underestimates the particularity of the *Ioudaioi*. The colonized *Ioudaioi*, therefore,

seek to preserve their vanishing community of *descent* rather than being immersed into a *consent* ideology or community, promoted explicitly by the Roman Empire and implicitly by Jesus. Indeed, the opposition from the *Ioudaioi* against Jesus and his disciples assumes a dissident posture toward not only the Roman colonizer, but also toward the competing nationalist claim made by the Johannine Jesus and his disciples. If given a chance, the *Ioudaioi* who want to preserve their cultural/ethnic identity would vehemently oppose Jesus' proposal to "worship in spirit," rather than in Jerusalem (John 4:24). The worship space that Jesus promotes in the narrative, after all, can only be realized in place of, or at the vanishing of, the cultural tradition of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans.

The Samaritan Woman's Proposals

Even in the feminist readings of the narrative, scholars have paid minimal attention to the identity of the Samaritan Woman as a *racialized* ethnic minority woman. Underneath tiers of intentional or unintentional de/colonizing reading practices, such as colonial, patriarchal, and (Western) feminist readings, the identity of the Samaritan woman as an ethnic minority woman is still under-recognized, and thus her voice as a racialized minority woman remains unexamined. In the construction of difference, the gender difference of the Samaritan woman is appropriated or othered by the Johannine discursive construction of identity. Reading the narrative for decolonization, therefore, must underscore the Samaritan woman's *social or ethnic difference* in order to assert her racialized, as well as minority voice.

It is important to acknowledge the historical and social circumstances of the Samaritan woman as a marginalized ethnic *Other* so as not to disregard or misappropriate her social/ethnic difference.

The "sixth hour" or around noon is the time when the Samaritan woman appears at the well in the narrative (John 4:6). It is an unusual hour for someone to come and draw water.[309] Not unlike the working hours of marginalized ethnic minority women in present day, she came to work during the *unsocial* hours of the day. Regardless of many speculative explanations concerning her appearance during such a time at the well, it is a dangerous and unfavorable time for physical labor. She would not risk so much to come at noon just to avoid the crowd. *Necessity*, more than any other reasons, must have dictated her coming to the well during such a time. The story, therefore, is a discourse of margins narrated at human cost. A decolonizing reading of the narrative, therefore, must underscore the minority or marginal socio-economic status of the Samaritan woman in addition to her racialized gender.

Toward a Politics of Relational *Difference*

In the narrative, the Johannine Jesus promotes a community that is based on radical differences between communities - the water of Jacob vs. living water, and earthly worship places at vs. a heavenly/spiritual worship space (John 4:13, 21). Such claims that promote unbridgeable or radical difference demonstrate an inability or unwillingness of the community to acknowledge the presence of the *Other* in its own

[309] Brown, *The Gospel of John*, 169; Morris, *The Gospel of John*, 258.

identity construction. On the other hand, there are some efforts on the part of the Samaritan woman to *engage*, rather than *suppress*, differences between Jesus' and her own construction of ethnic/communal identity. By invoking cultural stereotypes and insisting on the religious norms and practices that are operative in both the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritan communities, the Samaritan constructs and engages ethnic differences that are positional, conditional, and, thus, *relational*.

First, the Samaritan woman *recognizes* Jesus' ethnic difference in terms of his visible and recognizable ethnic/racial appearance: "How is it that you, a *Ioudaios*, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan Woman?" (John 4:9). But there is no answer from Jesus! The Samaritan woman invokes the racial stereotype and acknowledges the uneasy history and relationship between the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans in the past and present. Jesus is, however, reluctant to directly engage her invocation of this ethnic and cultural difference imposed by the ongoing ethnic tensions of the time. Jesus unwittingly disavows the reality of racial/ethnic stereotypes and discrimination.

The Samaritan woman, on the other hand, attempts to frame the conversation with Jesus by acknowledging ethnic difference and tension obvious in the cultural politics of the time. By invoking ethnic stereotypes and questioning Jesus' action, the Samaritan woman insists that Jesus acknowledge and engage the ethnic tensions between the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans, which include an uneasy history and current cultural practices.

Second, the Samaritan woman engages in a conversation with Jesus in terms of religious and cultural *conditional* difference. She recalls: "Our fathers worshiped

on this mountain, but you claim that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem" (John 4:20). She points out the conditional difference in worship between the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans due to their different traditions and places.

While her assertion is that conditional difference (of places of worship) makes the distinction, it does not devalue or obliterate the *Other*. Instead, she acknowledges the legitimacy of the worship place of the *Ioudaioi* in Jerusalem, and invites Jesus to consider the worship place of the Samaritans as well. In other words, she engages Jesus by acknowledging the legitimacy of a *conditional* difference between the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans due to their ethnic/cultural places of worship.

Third, the Samaritan woman shows her ability to engage Jesus in terms of a sympathetic, contextual, and hospitable *understanding* of the *Other.* In other words, she demonstrates an awareness of the *Other* in her own identity and, thus, proposes that ethnic difference is *relational*. She strives to understand Jesus' claims and accepts Jesus in terms of her own cultural and religious backgrounds. She does not foreclose Jesus' claims on the basis of an unbridgeable ethnic, religious, or cultural difference. Even though Jesus' claims are confusing, or at times even offensive, she continues to interact with Jesus, providing a hospitable environment for him.

She recognizes and accepts Jesus as a prophet and messiah, even though there are apparently distinctive designations and understandings of these titles in the traditions of the *Ioudaioi* and of the Samaritans.[310] Even though the Samaritans

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[310] Brown argues that the Samaritan woman might have understood Jesus in terms of the Samaritan Pentateuch in which the Prophet-like-Moses figure is expected to restore the proper

expect a "*Taheb*," a teacher or lawgiver, rather than a Jewish nationalistic overtoned "messiah,"she sees such titles as a difference that can and should be engaged, rather than being suppressed or dismissed as inapplicable knowledge. In doing so, she fosters her own conjectural, contextual, and, thus, relational understanding of Jesus' claims.

Toward a Cultural Territory

In the narrative in John 4, the Samaritan woman further proposes that Jesus acknowledge the territorial difference. She claims her ancestral territory rather than the spiritual space promoted by Jesus. In the context of the Roman territorial domination, such a demand of particularity poses as a decolonizing gesture. Anti-colonial nationalist movements often contest national territorial borders that have been blurred and fixed as political territories by colonizing nations. Colonizers have traditionally forged political territories for administrative expediency without any consideration of the histories and cultural geographies of diverse ethnic groups within the colonized population. One of the critical tasks of the colonized nationalist groups or political parties has always been to reclaim their cultural territories that have been invaded, blurred, and fixed by the colonial enterprise.

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worship. He also argues that the Samaritans did not expect a messiah in the sense of an anointed king of the Davidic house. They expected a *Taheb*, the prophet-like-Moses., even though the more familiar Jewish designation of Messiah is placed on the woman's lips. See Brown, *The Gospel of John*, 171-172.

The narrative claims of the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42 resonates with such struggles for nationalist territorial claim and, thus, qualifies as a decolonizing narrative against the Roman Empire. The narrative employs a textual strategy that invokes Jesus' divine authority, allowing him to travel limitlessly through the territory of the Samaritans (John 4:2). This type of discursive design imposes the understanding of ethnic territories/place as shifting grounds, rather than as homogeneous, or closed constructs. In doing so, the narrative imitates the colonial spatial and political ideology that forges *many* cultural geographies into *one* political territory. In its replication, however, the narrative employs colonizers' ideology and strategy in its decolonizing discourse. The narrative thus de-territorizes the cultural territories represented by Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim, claiming that the imagined community transcends such spatial orientations.

In constructing or re-territorializing a space or territory they wish to belong to, both the Samaritan woman and Jesus represent contesting approaches decolonization among the nationalist discourses. On the one hand, Jesus advocates a de-territorializing of ethnic places in order to re-territorialize a space of worship. Jesus' rhetoric of a space of unity, however, reflects the Roman imperial spatial ideology that unifies and transcends disparate elements, cultures and traditions under the banner of Rome. On the other hand, the Samaritan woman counters Jesus' claims by reasserting the ethnic places/spaces (the water of Jacob, and the worship of "our fathers"), which are already marginalized and denigrated by the Roman colonizers (John 4:12, 20).

The spiritual territory/worship that Jesus advocates is articulated in contrast to the competing narrative of the Samaritan woman's claim of cultural territory. The claims of Jesus, and by implication those of the imagined community, at times intentionally suppress the contesting viewpoints and narratives of the Samaritans (e.g., the water of Jacob, and worship place at Mt. Gerizim). The narrative, therefore, reveals the realities of conflict and competition among the local nationalist groups, especially between the groups represented by the claims of Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

The assertions of Jesus, however, resonate with the narrative designs of the Romans -- *many-into-one*. The narrative, therefore, demonstrates a replication of the colonial ideology among the colonized in their struggle for power. The Johannine Jesus dismisses the contending nationalist claim advocated by the Samaritan woman who insists a place of worship must be either at Mt. Gerizim or in Jerusalem. Jesus decolonizes the Roman spatial power by using the rhetoric of spirit. However, Jesus does so only by replicating colonizing strategy and delegitimizing its contending claims. The Samaritan woman, on the other hand, counters the rhetoric of Jesus and the Roman Empire by reclaiming her cultural territories, which have been not only devalued by Jesus, but also denigrated by colonial domination.

By invoking places of worship, which are intimately related to the *Ioudaioi*'s and Samaritans' cultural traditions and territories, the Samaritan woman challenges Jesus' rhetoric of *a space without a place*. At the same time, she uncovers the Johannine Jesus' replication of colonizing practices that create political boundaries by

diminishing and blurring local and cultural territories. She questions Jesus' assertion of a space of worship that echoes the Roman spatial ideology of *limitlessness*. She then proposes a kind of imagined community/nation *limited* to a place that complements the people and their cultural territories and traditions – specifically, Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim (John 4:20-23).

The narrative in John 4 articulates the identity and unity of the imagined community by positioning the Samaritan woman as a discursive persona or pedagogical object (see chapter 5). Her womanhood, her personal history with men, is used as a reflection of the communal past and future. At the same time, her marginality or marginalized claims in the narrative exposes the concealed agenda of Jesus and destabilizes the Gospel's essentializing claims. The Samaritan woman *witnesses*, as well as *destabilizes*, Jesus' construction of worship space. Through her contending claim of the communities of *limited space*, she exposes Jesus' concept of a community of limitless space – an idea that bears a worrying resemblance to the Roman imperial spatial ideology. After all, the community of "worship in spirit" promoted by Jesus, collides with the earthly reality of ethnic territories, abolishes the place-bound character of ethnic identity, and replaces it with the newly discursive identity of the imagined community.

Thus, the Samaritan woman and the *Ioudaioi*, the individuals and the voices of margins in the narrative, discursively enabled the formation of the imagined community. At the same time, they continually destabilized it by generating counter narratives, contending forms of cultural authority and identification, and

heterogeneous histories. The Samaritan woman persistently returns to her ethnic identity markers such as the land (John 4:9), ancestors (John 4:12), and ethnic religious shrines (John 4: 12, 20). Ultimately, she came to understand and accept Jesus *only* in terms of her cultural knowledge and traditions (John 4:25). The Samaritan woman's quest or claim to the cultural authority (Jacob) and ethnic territory (Mt. Gerizim), in turn, disturbed the ontology and epistemology of unity or stability in the notion of "worship in spirit," promoted and safeguarded by Jesus in the narrative.

By inferring and insisting on re/turning to the place of worship that relates to her ethnic places/spaces, the Samaritan woman charted the cultural territory/space in a way that invoked and reclaimed the geographical territories of her people, as well as those of the *Ioudaioi*, that had been displaced and destroyed by the Roman Empire. In doing so, she also brought a contending and/or an alternative voice to the spiritual territory advocated by Jesus – a territory which resonated with the Roman imperial ideology that imposed the idea of the limitless political space in *place* of the limited cultural places recognized by the colonized people.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the narrative of John 4:1-42 is a discursive violence because it is a narrative that forges its imagined community in the context of contending cultures, territories, and traditions, as well as of contesting the Roman colonialism. In search of its communal identity, the narrative's construction of

conceptual time/space and a “worship in spirit” suppresses its *Others* or the contending viewpoints, materials, and people that enable the possibility of imagining a community. Moreover, the marginal elements or characters in the Gospel of John also constantly challenge and destabilize the dominant construction of the imagined community. In doing so, these contending marginalized *Others* expose the fact that one must locate the imagined community within the contested and transitional spaces between the communities. The imagined claims of the *Ioudaioi*, of the Samaritan woman, and of Jesus (and his disciples) often intersect and contest against each other, demonstrating the power struggle among the colonized.

The claims of the Samaritan woman in the narrative and the *Ioudaioi* in the Gospel, or the lives and voices of the margins, contest the Johannine genealogy of origin/authenticity that leads to claims for Jesus’ (and his disciples’) cultural supremacy and their historical priority (4:12; 8:39, 57; 9:28-29). The counter temporal or historical claims of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritan woman destabilize the Johannine Jesus’ essentialist claim, and turn it into a hybrid construction, signifying *differences* within such monopolizing discourse. These marginal claims in the Gospel interrupt its representation the “fullness of life,” or settled identity, and reveals subtleties of the identity of the imagined community. When the voices of the minority communities in the Gospel of John are attended to, it becomes clear that the identity of the imagined community is constantly *negotiated* rather than *given*, signifying the presence and contest of its *Other* in its own construction of identity.

CONCLUSION

The desire to forge a community that has yet to exist was the driving impetus of the Gospel of John, and particularly, the narrative of John 4:1-42. The Gospel articulates discursive analogies such as "children of God," "worship," "spirit," "place," and "the world" to forge a space/place of (be)longing of the community. In doing so, the Gospel, destabilizes the territorially and ideologically confined notion of communal identity (John 4:20-23), replacing this rooted identity with a shifting one.

Such conceptual understandings of identity as fluid and malleable in the Gospel are partly due to the experience of physical/mental displacement and the conscious effort of the colonized writer(s). The Gospel, therefore, demonstrates that a space or place of (be)longing, especially among the displaced, is not *predetermined*, but must be actively forged out of a confluence of narratives and identities. In search of the space of (be)longing of the community, the Gospel of John replicates the discursive formation of nations or imagined communities that creates *one out of many.*

The Gospel of John is also a text of a colonized people under Roman rule. Yet, through the act of writing, the colonized writer(s) of the Gospel asserted a narrative of their own, and thus, created a space to counter the hegemonic production of cultural meaning, addressing, and intervening the dynamics of colonial power. In doing so, The Gospel of John, at times, replicated the basic assumptions of the dominant discourse of power of the time. Moreover, through their imaginative

writing, the colonized author(s) inadvertently made the Gospel of John a counter productive text that echoed the dominant discourse of the Roman Empire, Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The Gospel of John accomplished, in its ambivalent narration, reporting wrongs of the colonial condition, imagining an alternative community and contesting the colonial discourse of power. However, even though the Gospel's narratives of decolonization imagine a community beyond its dominant culture, the colonial mimicry exhibited in the Gospel may have reproduced the colonial power dynamic in its own community. When the Gospel's colonized writer(s) unconsciously used colonizing ideologies and narrative design, they re-inscribed the values and images generated by colonial discourse. However, although the Gospel of John mirrors *Aeneid*'s discursive identity of the discourse of colonialism, it also poses a dissident discourse that dialectically ran in opposition to the system of Roman colonialism/imperialism.

A decolonizing reading of the Gospel of John, therefore, cautions us that such dominant and dissident discourses are intricately interrelated to each other, and often comingled. In other words, a colonizing text and its counter text exist side-by-side and are susceptible to each other's influence. Any attempt to be subversive, therefore, is inevitably entrapped or contained within the structure or discourse of power.

The Gospel of John endows the titles of the Emperor, such as "my Lord and my God" and the "savior of the world," and the "Son of God" to the colonized Jesus (1:49; 4:42; 19:19-20; 20:28). Without a critical posture that questions such an

inverted form, a decolonizing discourse of the colonized author(s) of the Gospel of John repeats a discourse of domination while striving to resist it. Such discursive practice of the imagined community sometimes repeated and prolonged the dynamics of the old structure, the Roman Empire, while it claimed to be creating a new community. Thus, it became, borrowing Spivak's words, the old "haunted house, which the colonizers once inhabited."[311]

The Gospel of John, especially in the narrative of John 4:1-42, imagines a community in the context of colonial displacement. As a discourse of a displaced community or of Diasporas, the Gospel challenges the authority of older ideas such as rootedness and fixed identity by actively forging new narratives of identity. The Gospel as a discourse of a cultural contestation, or a narrative of margins, continually strived to marginalize and obliterate the *Other* in its construction of an identity or community. In other words, the Gospel as a text of the displaced or as a text of the margins has the potential to displace and suppress its contending claims and people.

In an effort to forge the identity or boundaries of its imagined community, the Gospel suppresses its contending histories, traditions, perspectives, territories, and people. In forging its shared sense of (be)longing or community, the Gospel marginalizes certain people, such as the *Ioudaioi*, the Samaritans and their contending narratives within its imagined boundaries. The Gospel of John delineates a community by intentionally forgetting the differentiated, heterogeneous, and contested narratives of its *Other,* even as these contending elements inextricably and

[311] Spivak, *The Spivak Reader*, 27.

continually participate as critical components in the formation of the identity of the imagined community. Thus, the Gospel reflects as a conscious effort of its author(s) to configure their crisis of identity caused by their marginal position at the border of contending communities.

A decolonizing reading of the Gospel of John, and thus the narrative in John 4:1-42, therefore, destabilizes an ambivalent narration of the imagined community of the Gospel of John. It uncovers the ambivalence of the Johannine discursive identity of the imagined community that not only *uses*, but also *suppresses* the identity markers of the *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans, and the female figure of the Samaritan woman. Since the Gospel, and the narrative in John 4:1-42, configures the identity of the community in terms of traditions, viewpoints, and people of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans. The Gospel simultaneously represses the legitimacy of these contending traditions, viewpoints and people in order to forge the identity of the imagined community.

The identity of the imagined community, therefore, is ironically achieved only at the expense of obscuring the identities that make the imagining of a community possible in the first place. Such a discursive strategy of the community suggests that the worship places and traditions of the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans, and the Samaritan woman and her womanhood, are all discursive objects used, not only to destabilize the identity, but also to *enable* the identity. The narrative in John 4:1-42 which sets out to impose the difference between the two traditions, the *Ioudaioi* and the Samaritans, therefore, ends up collapsing their inherited notions of their cultural

differences, and thus, disappearing or blending them into the discursive identity of the imagined community advocated by the narrative.

The Gospel of John boldly forged the identity of its imagined community, while at the same time, it anxiously repressed the ambivalence or uncertainty of its communal boundaries in its narrative representations. The Gospel of John, therefore, imagined a community by simultaneously reflecting recognition of it and an alienation from it. In other words, the Gospel John is a text of the excluded community that concomitantly forges an exclusive community by excluding the *Other*.

In sum, a decolonizing reading must simultaneously recognize the Gospel of John not only as a narrative of displaced community/identity but also a narrative that displaces its contending *Other*. Therefore, a crucial step in reading for decolonization is to discover or activate the *many* contending claims that are forcefully marginalized or forged into *one* in the narratives of the imagined community of the Gospel of John.

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