

Suturing Mechanisms and Silence as a Speech in Herman Melville's Benito Cereno

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Theorizing ships as a new chronotope for the transatlantic studies, Paul Gilroy argues that ships “were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected” (16). But, if the problematic in a certain system or a structure, whatever it may be, clearly become foregrounded at the very moment when the system or the structure is wrecked, we have to consider not merely the image of sailing ships but the image of wreckage. Or rather, what matters seems to be not the image of a ship crossing borders but the image of a ship stuck at a certain point or drifting about in the ocean. This is because, whether caused by natural forces or human activities, a shipwreck is the very accident whereby conflicts or desires, which are unresolved but repressed into the unconscious level, come up to the surface again. In this sense, a wrecked ship could function as a space in which what should be repressed in order to sustain a system or a structure is revealed, if it is only temporarily visible.

In *Benito Cereno*, there are two ships: one is *Bachelor's Delight*, “a large sealer and general trader” “with a valuable cargo” (238), the other is

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San Dominick which is a slave ship seemingly drifting about. Significantly, the narrative is not about Bachelor's Delight but about San Dominick, although it is told mostly from the point of view of Delano, the captain of Bachelor's Delight. In other words, the narrative of Benito Cereno is built around the image of wreckage, not around the image of a sailing ship. Then, what is wrecked? At first, to Captain Delano and his crew, "it seemed hard to decide whether she meant to come in or no — what she wanted, or what she was about" (240). This uncertainty of San Dominick's movement leads Delano to surmise "that it might be a ship in distress" and to board the ship (240). But, although some parts of the ship have been destroyed and people on the ship have suffered from hunger and thirst, the ship itself is not in wreckage. San Dominick is wrecked in a figurative sense, rather than in a literal sense, which Delano cannot see until he finally realizes that it is not him but Don Benito that Babo "had intended to stab" (295).

In the morning when San Dominick is first seen, everything is gray and "shadows present, foreshadowing deeper shadows to come" (239). Likewise, everything on the ship is also gray and covered with shadows. Delano, however, cannot see through these shadows and so cannot realize what is really going on under the shadows, although there are several moments when he entertains a wrong suspicion that Don Benito plots to murder him. This is partly because he is trapped in the images of the destroyed ship and of the suffering people of the ship. He cannot entertain any thoughts other than that the ship is wrecked. But it is revealed that it is not the ship itself but the symbolic structure of the ship that has been wrecked. The slave turns out to be the master and the master the slave. Both the verbal and the body languages of submission are revealed

as those of a threat. What is seen as normal turns out to be a masquerade of the normal, the abnormal wearing a costume of the normal, which is devised in order to disguise the wreckage of the symbolic structure of the ship.

San Dominick is a wrecked ship because its symbolic order has been subverted, not merely because the ship as a means of transportation lost its mobility. In this sense, the wreckage is another name for the revolt on the ship, although “no mutiny occurs during the narrative”(Rogin, 209). Then, what prevents Delano from seeing the real situation on San Dominick? Does he just have no ability to see through the masquerade performed on the ship or does he not want to see through it? What is being performed in this form of masquerade? What is Delano's story and Don Benito's deposition performing? What is it that the whole text, *Benito Cereno*, is performing? These are the underlying questions of this paper. Focusing on the body image shaped by Don Banito and Babo, and, on Delano's stereotyping of races, this paper will explore what the masquerade performs and what functions Delano's failure to read or his desire not to read the masquerade has. Along with this, it will also examine the subversive power of masquerade and its limit. Especially focusing on the question of whether the blacks can speak in their own voices in the system of the whites, it will contend that the blacks are not absent but silent and that silence serves as a potentially powerful form of speech.

From the very beginning of *Benito Cereno*, it is repeatedly emphasized that Captain Delano is “a person of a singularly undistrustful good-nature” (239). Even before he board San Dominick, “presuming that the stranger might have been long off soundings, the good captain put

several baskets of the fish, for presents, into his boat, and so pulled away” (240). When he hears all the whites and the blacks of San Dominick pouring out a story of suffering, he, with sympathy and pity, offers “to render whatever assistance might be in his power”(244). But his good nature and benevolence does not imply that he has “more than ordinary quickness and accuracy of intellectual perception” (239). Or rather, it seems that these traits prevent him from perceiving the real situation in which San Dominick is. Moreover, he believes that the blacks have good nature and that they are tractable, which also prevents him from realizing San Dominick’s real disaster:

At home, he had often taken rare satisfaction in sitting in his door, watching some free man of color at his work or play. If on a voyage he chanced to have a black sailor, invariably he was on chatty and half-gamesome terms with him. In fact, like most men of a good, blithe heart, Captain Delano took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs. (279)

As the above passage clearly shows, what Delano sees in the blacks is, above all, good-humor and cheerfulness, which frequently seems to be contrasted with Don Benito’s gloominess. But Delano considers a black at best docile and faithful servant like a Newfoundland dog or “a shepherd’s dog” (244). This implies that Delano’s gentleness and friendliness to the blacks are based on his racist discrimination of the blacks, rather than his belief in human goodness in general.

To Delano, Babo epitomizes the image of a black as a dog, which is also the first impression that Delano gets from “a black of small stature” silently standing by Don Benito’s side (243-4). Delano reads all the things that Babo does to Don Benito as the services that “the most pleasing

body-servant in the world” does to his master, to the extent that he thinks Babo “less a servant than a devoted companion” (245). The relationship between Babo and Don Benito is repeatedly visualized in the following body image shaped when Don Benito suddenly has an attack of cough: “. . . the black with one arm still encircled his master, at the same time keeping his eye fixed on his face” (248) What Delano sees in Babo’s embracing Don Benito is the slave’s act of supporting his master by forming “himself into a sort of crutch” (239). What he sees in Babo’s eye fixed on Don Benito’s face is the slave’s “sorrow and affection” to his master. He cannot even imagine the possibility that Babo’s conduct might be an act of threat, not that of devotion or submission.

In Delano’s system of belief, the blacks are a docile and uncivilized race, naturally inferior to the whites. Just as he takes Babo for a docile servant, so does he take black women on San Dominick, who later actively participate in fighting against Bachelor’s Delight, for mothers “unsophisticated as leopardesses” and “loving as doves,” which he thinks is the blacks’ “naked nature” (268). This kind of racist stereotyping the blacks not merely prevents him from “imagining the Negro in any but a passive role” (Yellin, 685), but also leads him to doubt that Don Benito, who is himself one of the victims of the revolt, may conspire to murder him. According to Delano’s belief in racial hierarchy between the blacks and the whites, if there is someone who is plotting against him, it must be a white. This is because he thinks that it is the whites that “were the shrewder race” (270). So, he becomes trapped in a vicious circle in which he oscillates between confidence and doubt about Don Benito’s verbal and bodily words. In these oscillations, he once comes to suspect the possibility of conspiracy between a black and a white. But again, his

racist stereotyping serves as a useful way of relieving doubt and anxiety:

But if the whites had dark secrets concerning Don Benito, could then Don Benito be any way in complicity with the blacks? But they were too stupid. Besides, who ever heard of a white so far a renegade as to apostatize from his very species almost, by leaguering in against it with negroes? (270)

The blacks are too unintelligent “even to be acting in complicity with piratical white leaders” (Nielsen, 18). Moreover, according to Delano’s stereotyping, it is impossible to imagine that a white can have any other relationship to a black than that of master and slave, which effectively helps him dismiss his anxiety about his own life. We could say that Delano’s stereotyping should be repeated over again and again, not only in order to sustain the “system of belief in which he has placed his confidence” but in order to dismiss his anxiety (Kamuf, 194).

In formulating “the visibility of the racial/colonial Other” both as “a point of identity” and as “a problem for the attempted closure within disclosure,” Bhabha argues that “stereotyping is not the setting up of a false image” but “a much more ambivalent text projection and introjection” (original italics, 81). Although not in the exact same way and not in the exact same sense, by stereotyping the blacks as docile but stupid, and the whites as shrewd, Delano projects passivity and stupidity onto the blacks and introjects activity and intelligence into himself, by extension, into the whites. It is this mechanism of projection and introjection that works behind Delano’s seemingly indiscriminating benevolence. In other words, he can be benevolent both to the whites and to the blacks, not because it does not matter for me whether one is a black or a white, but because he believes that there is a natural hierarchy

among races. In this context, stereotyping is a kind of ideological mode of representation by which the superiority of the whites is constructed and an anxiety about a potential insurrection could be resolved, although not completely but enough for a white to ignore it.

In the act of stereotyping, on the one hand, differences between races are clearly presented, but, on the other hand, differences within a race are ignored. Or, we could say that stereotyping emphasizes inter-racial differences by ignoring intra-racial differences, which is demonstrated in Delano's way of seeing the blacks on San Dominick. To Delano, the blacks are represented Babo, Atufal, and a negress whom he sees kissing her child "with maternal transports" (267). Babo is stereotyped as a devoted servant, Atufal as a noble slave who has a royal lineage, the negress as a devoted mother. Delano cannot perceive that there are differences among those blacks and that they could be very different types of man from his three stereotyped ones. It is, above all, this kind of universalizing tendency of stereotyping that led Delano not to pay attention to several signs of insurrection which, for example, are suddenly revealed in a black's attack on a Spanish sailor.

Just as Delano universalize what he sees in Babo into the typical characteristics of the blacks, he considers Don Benito a representative of the Spaniards. Instead of using a personal name, Delano repeatedly designates Don Benito as "the Spanish Captain" or "the Spaniard" (243, 244). He even seems to regard Don Benito's seemingly discourteous attitudes and incompetence to command his ship as typical of the Spaniards: "But as a nation –continued he in his reveries–these Spaniards are all an odd set; the very word Spaniard has a curious, conspirator, Guy-Fawkish twang to it"(273). Likewise, Delano himself is

frequently designated as “the American,” although in this case it seems that it is not Delano’s voice but the narrator’s voice that calls him as “the American”(244). In this context, Delano’s charities are told as being directly connected to his republicanism: “He complied, with republican impartiality as to this republican element, which always seeks one level, serving the oldest white no better than the youngest black” (275). In Delano’s system of belief, a hierarchical relationship is constructed within the whites as well as between the blacks and the whites. Although, in the former case, at stake are national identities, it also implies that stereotyping could be one way of building a hierarchical relationship between two nations by universalizing a personal character into a national one.

If stereotyping prevents Delano from seeing what is going on San Dominick and thereby preserves Delano’s system of belief, it also makes possible and even successful the masquerade performed on San Dominick. This is because it is racial stereotypes that are repeatedly performed in the masquerade in which Babo is taken for a faithful servant and Don Banito “a very capricious commander” (273). It is not that the blacks and the whites of San Dominick perform their roles so well that Delano is fairly taken in. It is that Delano read what he sees only according to stereotyped roles of a black and a white. In fact, he is the very reason for the masquerade and is the only person for whom the masquerade is staged. But Delano not merely watches but participates in the masquerade in that it is his stereotyping that makes the masquerade effective. By extension, it could be said that stereotyping is itself an active actor in the masquerade. Moreover, while Delano is on San Dominick, stereotyping even “preserves him from the violence unleashed all around him” (Kamuf,

194), by not letting Delano read the masquerade.

Then, what is it that Delano cannot see in what he sees? Or, what is it that the masquerade intends to do? There is one character representing the blacks to Delano and one character representing the whites. They are Babo and Don Benito whose relationship, visualized in Babo's holding Don Benito, represents that between the blacks and the whites to Delano "in such a way that he is unable to read properly danger signs which confront him" (Nielsen, 16):

As master and man stood before him, the black upholding the white. Captain Delano could not but bethink him of the beauty of that relationship which could present such a spectacle of fidelity on the one hand and confidence on the other.
(250)

To Delano, Babo's upholding Don Benito is a typical image of a faithful servant's relationship to his master. This feeling becomes so strong that he comes to ask Don Benito to sell Babo to him, when he realizes again and again that Babo always stands beside Don Benito, being ready to give the master his body at any instant. Besides, Don Benito wears "a loose Chile jacket of dark velvet," "white small-clothes and stockings," "a high-crowned sombrero," and "a slender sword" (250), which starkly contrasts with Babo's "wide trowsers" (251). This contrast in dress also heightens the image of fidelity, by denoting the hierarchical relation between the master and the slave. But what Delano cannot imagine is that the image itself, which he believes the epitome of fidelity, is nothing more than the masquerade of fidelity. Indeed, Babo does what a servant does to his master and wears what a servant wears. But his conduct is not the exact same duty that a servant does to his master and his

costume is not the exact same one that a servant wears. “Almost the same but not quite” (original italics, Bhabha, 89). This is what Delano fails to see and what the masquerade intends to do.

Confined within his system of belief preserved by his stereotyping, Delano does not doubt that Babo’s holding Don Benito could be an act of threat, not an act of submission. He cannot imagine that Don Benito may have been forced to wear in such an orderly way that his attire could hide the disorder of San Dominick, although he doubt that “relatively to the pale history of the voyage, and his own pale face, there seemed something so incongruous in the Spaniard’s apparel” (251). By assuming a submissive attitude of a devoted servant toward the master, Babo can not only threaten Don Benito into enacting the role as the captain but also place him under constant surveillance. Babo’s wearing a servant’s clothes and forcing Don Benito to wear a master’s clothes is an effective device to deceive Delano by retaining the contrast in costume “as if” their former hierarchy “had not been reversed” (Rogin, 210). In a word, Babo does almost the same things that a servant is expected to do, but not quite. It is this difference, which is “almost the same but not quite,” that makes Babo’s masquerade successful and even subversive.

Delano pays his attention mostly to Don Benito, whether Don Benito stands before him or withdraws into his cabin and whether he regards Don Benito only as an incompetent captain or suspects him as a wicked impostor. All the time when Delano sees Don Benito, he can simultaneously see Babo who always stands there beside Don Benito, as if he were his shadow. But he does not pay his attention to Babo except when Babo does a seemingly supporting act to Don Benito, as if one’s shadow should not be paid attention to. Over and over again reflecting

upon Don Benito's charade, Delano tries to read "the Spaniard's black-letter text" (259). "Without knowing it" he tells the truth "that the text he has given to read is written black on white, black over white" (Kamuf 185). But, while he can wrongly relate the blackness of the black-letter text to "the suspected 'blackness' of Don Benito's imposture" (Kamuf, 185), he continuously fails to relate it to the blackness of Babo, Don Benito's shadow. This is because in his system of belief it is impossible to imagine a text "written black on white".

There is one scene where it is clearly implied that Don Benito is the black-letter text written by Babo, which in turn illustrates that the relationship between the master and the slave has already been reversed. In the disorder of San Dominick, there are at least three things to have been devised to fake order and normality: Don Benito's apparel, Atufal's standing before Don Benito "every two hours," and Babo's shaving Don Benito at "the half-hour afternoon" (256, 277). All these devices are to disguise the disturbance of the hierarchy between the master and the slave. But, while the former two only pretend order and normality, the last one not only fakes them but also simultaneously reveals that such order and normality are nothing more than a fake and that it is the whites' lives that are in danger:

. . . just then the razor drew blood, spots of which stained the creamy lather under the throat: immediately the black barber drew back his steel, and, remaining in his professional attitude, back to Captain Delano, and face to Don Benito, held up the trickling razor, saying with a sort of half humorous sorrow, "See, master—you shook so—here's Babo's first blood." (281)

Babo's cutting Don Benito is, literally and figuratively, an act of

inscribing the new hierarchy, which both Babo and Don Benito well knows but Delano does not know at all. It is Babo's threatening Don Benito with trickling blood. Babo's saying in the above passage is not a soothing word but an intimidating word, whose intended meaning is: "Don Benito, do not forget who is the master." It is also an act of engraving a black letter on a white space, which Delano unconsciously feels when he watches the whole process of shaving: ". . . the negro seemed a Nubian sculptor finishing off a white statue-head"(283). Indeed, in shaving Don Benito, Babo creates a black-letter text which Don Benito takes for a text written by a white.

Babo is the author writing a text not merely by cutting "one little scratch" but by murdering. Right before beginning shaving, Babo "stood suspended for an instant, one hand elevating the razor, the other professionally dabbling among the bubbling suds on the Spaniard's lank neck" (280). This image is so revealing that even Delano cannot but briefly see "in the black" "a headsman" and "in the white a man at the block"(280), although this perception soon disappears. Indeed, Babo is a headsman and Don Benito a man at the block. The image alludes what happened in the past on San Dominick, the slave revolt in which most of the whites were murdered. Above all, it visualizes the act of murdering committed by the blacks, especially the murdering of Aranda, and implies Babo's potential murdering of Don Benito. This is the reason why Don Benito becomes so terrified at the sight of the trickling blood, which ironically helps Delano clear up doubts: ". . . is it credible that I should have imagined he meant to spill all my blood, who can't endure the sight of one little drop of his own?"(281) Again and again, Delano fails to read the text written black on white as it is.

The image of Babo's holding the razor to Don Benito's neck overlaps the image of San Dominick's stern-piece, "medallioned about by groups of mythological or symbolical devices; uppermost and central of which was a dark satyr in a mask, holding his foot on the prostrate neck of a writhing figure, likewise masked"(241). Both of them effectively visualizes the hierarchical relationship of the master and the slave, especially based on physical violence which always conveys the master's threat of death to the slave. The figures in the stern-piece are masked, and, likewise, Babo and Don Benito are masked in that they are acting out their roles. But Delano cannot see through their masks and cannot catch the meaning of the slaves' writhing and shuddering. Significantly enough, the satyr in the stern-piece is black. But Delano cannot relate its blackness to Babo's blackness, just as he cannot read Babo's blackness in "the Spaniard's black-letter text." Even when he puts his foot on "the prostrate negro" (295), which is itself the inverted version of the stern-piece, he cannot read the real meaning of that image. Delano's repeated question, "what meant this?" (269), is not the question which Delano can answer by himself in so far as his system of belief is primarily based on stereotyping.

Delano repeatedly fails to read the signs of slave insurrection until the very last minute when Babo and the blacks tear off the mask. Then, why does he fail to read every sign intentionally sent to him by a Spanish sailor and every symptom of disorder accidentally revealed in the form of the conflict between the blacks and the Spanish sailors? We cannot deny that Delano's credulous good-nature prevents him from suspecting the fact that he watches the masquerade. His racist stereotyping also prevents him from imagining that Babo is the real master. Stereotyped images of

the blacks and of the whites are the very base according to which Delano reads all that he sees in San Dominick. But his oscillation itself between suspicion and reassurance implies that he also chooses not to receive the signs sent to him and not to read the text given to him, not merely that he cannot read them. When an old Spanish sailor throws an entangled knot toward him, saying “Undo it, cut it, quick,” he “unconsciously” hands it to an old negro who begs the knot (271). But right after that he begins to suspect:

All this is very queer now, thought Captain Delano, with a qualmish sort of emotion; but, as one feeling incipient seasickness, he strove, by ignoring the symptoms, to get rid of the malady. Once more he looked off for his boat. To his delight, it was now again in view, leaving the rocky spur astern. (271)

He thinks that there is something suspicious but he chooses to ignore it. Put another way, he consciously chooses not to read the symptoms that he notices, which is this time made easier by perceiving his whale-boat coming toward San Dominick.

It is Delano's stereotyping of the blacks and the whites that helps him clear his suspicions. This is because stereotyping requires its agent to ignore the disparity between his own perception and a real situation, from which a certain anxiety can arise. More problematically, in the act of stereotyping, Delano assigns only a passive role to the blacks. It may imply his “weakness for negroes” (279). But, conversely speaking, it implies that Delano does not see “slavery as an evil” against which black slaves could revolt (Johnson, 430), which in turn would transform black slaves into active rebels. In the same sense, Delano's republican equity results from his stereotyping the blacks as passive inferiors. So, he cannot

see that his republican impartiality contradicts “his racist, hierarchical behavior” (Franklin, 150): “. . . the soft bread, sugar, and bottled cider, Captain Delano would have given the whites alone, and in chief Don Benito . . .”(275). In this context, we could say that stereotyping turns out to be a kind of the act of suturing gaps between Delano’s perception and the real situation of San Dominik, and those within his system of belief. A hidden meaning of a sign or a symptom “momentarily” comes up to the surface, but through the process of stereotyping as suturing, “only to be forced –repressed–once again beneath the conscious surface of Delano’s mind” (Sundquist, 113). This repression is the effect of Delano’s stereotyping whereby he can relieve himself from anxiety aroused by his perception of a sign or a symptom of slave revolt.

If focusing on the relationship of the master and the slave, especially the body-servant, it could be said that the slave is the master’s shadow. This shadow is expected to be submissive and faithful. But in the masquerade, as Babo demonstrates, the master’s shadow is not faithful and submissive but treacherous and subversive, and its embracing is not a supporting act but a threatening one. This shadow, “dutifully remaining within call of a whisper”(264), whispers to his master not “with soothing words” but with intimidating words (252). It is as a subversive shadow whispering a threat that Babo stands close to Don Benito in order to keep an eye on him and to threaten “him with instant death” when needed (307), not in order to “the more readily anticipate” his master’s “slightest want” (285). But, however subversive it may be, the shadow is the shadow and cannot be the master in its true sense.

The master-slave relationship between Don Benito and Babo has already been destroyed. However, while Delano is on San Dominick, Babo

can exist only as Don Benito's shadow, although he is the real master. This is because, in order to deceive Delano, he has to perform the masquerade in which he is "unable to claim power openly" (Rogin, 217). Assuming a slave's weakness, Babo can manipulate power, which is the subversive power of the masquerade. But, simultaneously, that assumption of weakness keeps him imprisoned in a slave's mask. Likewise, assuming a slave's voice, he gives a command to Don Benito. Simultaneously, however, he is not given his own voice, and so has to keep speaking in a slave's voice. In short, the masquerade which is devised to keep the slave revolt alive, ironically contains the revolt within the form of masquerade. As Rogin points out, "the slave who exploited the masquerade is also its victim" (217). He remains to be the master's shadow.

According to Don Benito's deposition, both in the slave revolt and in the masquerade on San Dominick, "the negro Babo was the plotter from first to last" (310). But does Babo really speak about them with his own voice? Or rather, can he speak about them with his own voice? In terms of "the language of slavery and the resultant silence of the enslaved" (Davis, 87), we could say that Babo and Don Benito are each other's double. Although Babo's former state is never narrated, it is alluded in Don Benito's present state which clearly shows what state slaves are in. In the inverted order of San Dominick, Don Benito as the slave belongs to Babo as the master, which is visualized in Babo's arm embracing Don Benito and in Babo's eyes facing to Don Benito. Although Delano sees a servant's devotion and affection in Babo's arms and eyes, they are not those of a servant but those of "a bitter hard master" threatening instant death (289). Literally and figuratively confined in Babo's arms and eyes, Don Benito can neither act freely nor speak freely. To save his own life,

a slave has to act and speak as he is ordered to. It is in these states that Don Benito is forced to be in the present and that in the past Babo was forced to be.

The language of slavery is the master's language which "is able to cripple and ultimately silence the voices of the enslaved" (Davis, 88). It is Babo, the master, who decides what Don Benito, the slave, should say and should not say "on every occasion" (307). This implies that the slave cannot speak but only with the master's voice. If he tries to speak with his own voice, his voice becomes crippled. It is in this context that Don Benito's cough should be considered. There are two physical symptoms which Delano thinks shows Don Benito's "mental distress": cough and faint, which sometimes simultaneously come in the form of "a sudden fainting attack of his cough" (248). Indeed, they are the symptoms of Don Benito's mental distress, although the cause is not the same cause that Delano guesses. More importantly, they are the symptoms which reveal that the slave is forced to speak with the master's voice. Simultaneously, however, by abruptly interrupt the master's voice with which the slave should speak, these symptoms disturb the language of slavery. In this sense, especially the cough, the "physical barrier to speech" (Davis, 89), could be one way in which the slave inserts his own voice, if it is a crippled one, into the master's voice.

Under Babo's mastery, Don Benito cannot speak with his own voice. But ironically, neither can Babo himself speak with his own voice because, as long as he performs a masquerade, he has to speak with the former master's voice. On San Dominick, Babo cannot speak with his own voice, even when he exercises his authority over the whites. For example, he has to call Don Benito "master" and himself "slave", although they

conveys the exactly opposite meaning. He has succeeded in destroying the hierarchical relationship between the blacks and the whites. But his success is incomplete in that he still has to use the whites' language of slavery. Babo is the master who speaks with the slave's voice, not with the master's voice. In the language of slavery, both the master and the slave speak with the master's voice. But in a masquerade by which the former master-slave relationship is performed, as if it has not been subverted, the master has to speak with the former master's voice, that is, the slave's voice. This is the strange ambivalence which on the one hand makes a masquerade subversive and on the other hand contains its subversive power.

Babo has no voice of his own not only in the masquerade but throughout the whole narrative of Benito Cereno. The masquerade on San Dominick is narrated mostly in Delano's point of view, although many times it is difficult to distinguish his voice from the voice of the narrator of Benito Cereno. But Delano's narration mostly focuses on himself, rather than on Babo or Don Benito. Put it differently, he narrates his inner thoughts and feelings, especially his inner conflicts, caused by the incongruous and ambiguous sights on San Dominick, rather than tells about the masquerade itself. In this narration, we can hear neither Babo's voice nor Don Benito's voice. It is not only because Babo and Don Benito speak with the voices which is not their own but because those voices can be heard only through Delano's voice. After the real situation is revealed, Don Benito gets his voice back, but Babo simply disappears. It is as if Delano does not let a black's voice interrupt his narration, which could reveal a gap within the narration, just as in his stereotyping he chooses to ignore disturbing signs and symptoms of slave revolt.

Delano's narration is supplemented by Don Benito's deposition in which the slave insurrection plotted by Babo is narrated in Don Benito's point of view. Don Benito discloses how the slave revolt occurred, what the black slaves did to their white masters and what devices Babo invented to deceive Delano. Based on Delano's narration and Don Benito's deposition, the broken pieces of the story about San Dominick's slave insurrection and the resultant masquerade seems to be put together into a coherent whole story:

If the Deposition have served as the key to fit into the lock of the complications which precede it, then, as a vault whose door has been flung back, the San Dominick's hull lies open to-day. (313)

The lock of the ship's hull is unlocked. But the conditional mood of the above passage implies that there remains something un-clarified. This makes Don Benito's deposition remain "an ineffectual key" until that something is finally clarified (Dillingham, 238). It is Babo who can tell the untold about San Dominick's insurrection, which should include the stories about what life the black slaves lived and why they rose in insurrection. However, as long as Babo cannot get his own voice, we can neither find "the key to unlock the 'why' of events" (Johnson, 432).

We never hear Babo's own voice because "before the plot is discovered, he disguises his tones and afterward he is silent" (Yellin, 687). Before the disclosure of the plot, it is Delano that robs Babo of his voice in that Babo imitates a servant's voice to deceive Delano. But, after that, it is neither Delano nor Don Benito but the law itself that keeps Babo silent, in that, "legally, a black man's speech did not exist" (Yellin, 688). In a sense, in order to be effective, this law, the law of the whites, should prohibit a

black man's speech. This is because a black man's telling about his experiences with his own voices should disclose gaps within the system of the whites which the law represses. In this context, in the form of Don Benito's deposition, the law tries to close the case of San Dominick, which is a kind of suturing. If in Delano's system of belief, stereotyping functions as a suturing mechanism, in the social and political system of the whites, the law does that function. This suturing is to choose not to see what it sees. Just as Delano saves his system of belief and his life by choosing not to read signs of slave revolt, the law saves the system of the whites by choosing not to hear a black man's story.

But the suturing of the law remains unsuccessful, which is suggested in the last dialogue between Don Benito and Delano. The latter advises the former to forget what happened on San Dominick and not to moralize upon it: "The past is passed" (314). It seems that, to Delano, everything gray in the very beginning of the narrative finally turns blue. But the past has not been passed, or rather, cannot be passed because there are memories which could not be consoled at least with the mild trades:

"You are saved," cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained;
"you are saved: what has cast such a shadow upon you?"
"The negro." (314)

Again, Delano chooses not to read the past and to forget it, which enable him to be "oblivious" "to the human price paid by others for their own comfort and power" (Franklin, 158). This "refusal to understand the 'shadow' of the Negro" "is itself a psychologically and politically repressive act" (Sundquist, 102), only by which he can dismiss anxiety caused by that shadow. Don Benito, however, cannot forget the past in

which he experienced what it is to live as a slave. In this context, we could say that Don Benito's memory is not merely about the horror which he had under Babo's mastery but about the horror which the black slaves have had under the whites' mastery. "Not just Babo, but the whole enslaved black race" still embraces him (Kamuf, 196), reminding him of the blackness of slavery itself.

"Throughout Don Benito's deposition," the blacks are "envisioned as the faceless image of evil" (Yellin, 687), whereas the whites are envisioned as innocent victims of the blacks' "ferocious piratical revolt" (295). This kind of racist stereotyping undermines the cause of the slave revolt on San Dominick and justifies the attack of Bachelor's Delight against San Dominick in the name of suppression of revolt. Don Benito's deposition just reads that "the negroes revolted suddenly" (301), without any mention of why they revolted. It seems to juxtapose a "good" white master and an "evil" black slave. But how that good master dealt with his slave is alluded in the parts telling about a black slave murdering his white master. For example, Jos é, "without being commanded to do so," "stabbed his master Don Alexandro" (309), which implies that Don Alexandro might not be a good master. It is this kind of allusion that the shadow of the negro conveys, which Delano choose not to see by convincing both himself and Don Benito that the past is the past, but which Don Benito cannot but see.

Delano tries to end San Dominick's slave revolt by dismissing the shadow of the negro from Don Benito's memory. The law also tries to close San Dominick's case by cutting the head off Babo. But both Delano and the law fail. Don Benito can never throw away the memory of San Dominick's events until his death. Babo's eyes still "met, unabashed, the

gaze of the whites” (315), just as they always faced Don Benito’s face. They look toward Aranda’s grave and toward Don Benito’s place. But this time they are speaking, rather than surveilling, although the voice cannot be heard. In fact, throughout the text, we cannot hear Babo’s true voice. It is not only that he is not given the freedom to speak with his own voice but that he chooses not to speak, especially when the revolt ends in failure:

Seeing all was over, he uttered no sound, and could not be forced to. His aspect seemed to say, since I cannot do deeds, I will not speak words. (315)

But, considering that the slave can only speak with the master’s voice, his silence could be interpreted as the very way for the slave to speak with his own voice in the system of his master. When his own voice becomes crippled into cough, Don Benito speaks “for himself,” “only in silence,” “by the look in his eyes” (Davis, 88). Likewise, in the system of the whites in which his voice is crippled, Babo speaks for himself, in silence, through his eyes.

In several aspects, Babo’s death overlaps Aranda’s death. After being “dragged half- lifeless” (309), both are decapitated, and then, their heads are used as warnings against a potential revolt: Aranda’s head to the whites and Babo’s head to the blacks. Aranda’s head, made into a white skeleton with no flesh, visualizes only death itself, which horrifies Don Benito to such an extent that any mention of him makes Don Benito fall in a faint. But Babo’s black head, still having its eyes, functions both as a warning and as a subversive reminder. It visualizes the destiny of a black rebel. At the same time, it reminds spectators both of the fact that a slave revolt once occurred and of the possibility that a slave revolt could

occur again in the future. In this sense, Babo's head causes anxiety in the whites which the law intends to repress, rather than warns the blacks into fear. These are what Babo's eyes speak by simultaneously drawing into itself the past event of slave insurrection, the present memory of that event, and the future anxiety about another slave revolt.

It is not that, as Paul David Johnson argues, "the story of Babo remains conspicuous by its absence" (432). Babo's story is there, although it is never told, along with Delano's narration and Don Benito's deposition, but only in the form of silence. Ironically but effectively, this silence speaks by not speaking: "Follow the leader!" (241), which should be interpreted as being simultaneously spoken both to the blacks and to the whites. Addressed to the blacks, it is a kind of instigation to revolt against the master, like himself, and sail to "negro countries" which is itself an impossible dream within the system of the whites (302). Addressed to the whites, it is a kind of accusation for the slavery on which the system of the whites has been built and also a kind of warning that the slavery may bring death to the whites which is demonstrated Aranda's death. It is this Babo's subversive speech that Delano's stereotyping, his narration, and Don Benito's deposition try to keep unheard. But the whole text, *Benito Cereno*, shows that kind of repression is doomed to fail, which always arouse anxiety. The past cannot be passed. Rather, in anxiety do "the past, present, and future" become one (294), which is what Benito Cereno is also performing.

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< 요약문 >

허먼 멜빌의 『베니토 세레노』에서 발화로서의
침묵과 기제들을 봉합하기...

오 봉 희

폴 길로이(Paul Gilroy)에 따르면 배는 고정된 장소들을 연결하면서 그것들 사이에 있는 유동적인 장소들을 대변한다. 그러나 허먼 멜빌의 『베니토 세레노』에서는 항해 중인 배가 아니라 난파되어 그 이동성을 상실한 배가 그 시공성(chronotope)을 구성하고 있다. 그렇다면, 배가 이동성을 상실한다는 것, 즉 배의 난파라는 사건은 무엇을 의미하는가? 노예선인 산 도미니크는 단순히 그 물리적인 이동성을 잃었다는 의미에서만 아니라 백인주인(돈 베니토)—흑인노예(바보)에 기반한 상징체계가 전복되었다는 의미에서 난파된 상태에 있다. 문제는 그 효력을 유지하기 위해서는 상징체계의 난파, 구체적으로 말하면, 흑인노예들의 선상 반란이라는 사건이 지속적으로 위장되어야만 하고, 따라서 바보로 대변되는 흑인들은 그들이 획득한 권력을 공개적으로 주장하거나 누릴 수 없다는 것이다. 들라노 선장을 속이기 위해서 바보는 노예처럼 행동하고 말하지만, 그의 말과 행동은 돈 베니토에게 복종하는 노예의 말과 행동이 아니라 필요한 상황에서는 즉시 그를 죽일 수 있다고 위협하는 주인의 말과 행동이다. 그러나 아무리 강력한 힘을 행사한다고 하더라도, 들라노 선장이 산 도미니크에 머무르는 한, 바보가 그를 속이기 위해서 위장극을 계속 상연하는 한, 그는 진정한 의미에서 주인이 될 수 없다. 위장극은 이전 상징체계의 전복 위에서 있는 새로운 체계로 하여금 그 전복적 효력을 계속 발휘할 수 있게 하지만, 동시에 그 전복적 효력에 제약을 가하는 역할을 수행한다.

그런데 산 도미니크를 떠나기 직전까지 들라노 선장으로 하여금 그 배 위에서 벌어지고 있는 위장극을 간파하지 못하도록 하는 것은 무엇인가? 그것은 무엇보다도 인종에 대한 들라노의 상투적인 전형화이다. 그에게 흑인은 기껏해야 고분고분하고 충직한 하인일 뿐 백인주인에게 대항하는 것은 고사하고 백인과 공모를 하기에 너무 우둔하다. 만일 누군가가 음모를 꾸미고 있다면 그것은 백인이자 흑인일 수

없다. 이러한 백인과 흑인 사이의 우열관계에 기반한 그의 인종차별적인 상투적 전형화는 산 도미닉의 위장극을 읽지 못하도록 할뿐만 아니라 간헐적으로 들라노를 사로잡는 불안을 효과적으로 제거해주는데, 이것은 상투적 전형화가 그의 인식과 실제상황 사이의 불일치를 망각하도록 해주기 때문이다. 그리고 위장극이 밝혀진 후 그러한 불일치를 봉합하는 역할은 산 도미닉의 노예반란을 재판하는 백인의 법이 수행한다. 들라노의 상투적 전형화와 백인의 법은 그(것)들이 보는 것을 보지 않음으로써 그 체계가 서 있는 틈새를 봉합한다. 그러나 그러한 봉합을 불완전하게 만드는 것이 있는데, 그것은 바로 참수당해서도 백인들의 시선을 뺏히 바라보는 바보의 시선, 그 시선이 침묵으로 말하는 노예반란의 이야기이다.

주제어: 난파 (wreckage), 반란 (revolt), 위장극 (masquerade), 상투적 유형화 (stereotyping), 봉합기제 (suturing mechanism), 침묵 (silence)

