

**William Trevor's *Fools of Fortune*:
The Big House Novel from the Middle-class Irish Protestant Perspective**

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Abstract

William Trevor's *Fools of Fortune* (1983) belongs in the category of the "Big House" novels. In Ireland, the term "Big House" refers to a country mansion belonging to members of the Anglo-Irish Protestant ascendancy. A Big House novel treats the characters and events surrounding such a house. Beginning with Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), this genre forms an important literary tradition within Irish fiction. Although Big House novels often have been written from a British viewpoint by the descendants of the Anglo-Irish Protestant gentry, Trevor, who has descended from a middle-class Protestant family in Southern Ireland's County Cork, describes the period's history and events by supporting the Irish side. In doing so, he creates an unconventional and atypical Anglo-Irish milieu in this work.

Centered upon the protagonist and narrator, Willie Quinton, *Fools of Fortune* sets the hardships of the Quinton family over 65 years (1918-1982) against the background of Irish national history. In 1918, members of the Black and Tans attack Kilneagh, the Quinton family estate. Led by Sergeant Rudkin, they burn the house and kill Willie's father and sisters. This incident causes Willie's mother's mental breakdown and suicide and prompts Willie's retaliatory murder of Rudkin and 50 years as a fugitive abroad. This story is narrated by three characters: Willie, his wife Marianne, and their mute daughter Imelda.

I consider the novel's key factor to be its "discourse" rather than its "story." Seymour Chatman, an American narratologist, proposes that a narrative is composed of a "story" (what is told) and "discourse" (how it is told). According to Chatman, discourse is "the means through which the story is transmitted." He divides "discourse" into two components—the "structure of narrative transmission" and its "manifestation."

I explore *Fools of Fortune* by focusing on its "discourse," particularly from two perspectives: the "structure of narrative transmission" through the three characters' narration and the "narrative manifestation" by Marianne's language and mute Imelda's imagination and silence. I analyze what and how Trevor transmits in *Fools of Fortune* and clarify the uniqueness and significance of this work within the tradition of the Big House novel.

Key words: Big House novel, William Trevor, *Fools of Fortune*, discourse, narratology

1. Introduction

William Trevor's most accomplished work, his 1983 Whitbread-Award-winning novel, *Fools of Fortune* (1983), ranks among the masterpieces of "Big House" novels. In Ireland, the term "Big House" refers to a country mansion belonging to members of the Anglo-Irish Protestant ascendancy, and a Big House novel treats the characters and events surrounding such a house. This genre begins with Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and forms an important literary tradition within Irish fiction. Big House novels have been often written from a British viewpoint by the descendants of the Anglo-Irish Protestant gentry such as Somerville and Ross, Bowen, and Keane. However, Trevor (1928-), who was born in Mitchelstown, County Cork, Southern Ireland, is from a middle-class Irish Protestant family and positions himself on the Irish side by portraying an ascendancy family's support for Irish Independence and the native Irish. His unconventional and atypical Irish narrative perspective situates *Fools of Fortune* in an Anglo-Irish milieu that differs strikingly from orthodox Big House novels.

Fools of Fortune recounts the Quinton family's history and hardships over 65 years (1918-1982) against the background of Irish national history. At the novel's beginning in 1918, its protagonist and narrator, Willie Quinton, is eight years old. He is living a happy life with his father W. J. Quinton (an Anglo-Irish mill owner), his English-born mother Evie, two younger sisters, two aunts, and servants at Kilneagh, a beautiful Big House near the village of Lough, Cork. During Willie's youth, Ireland engaged in its tumultuous War of Independence (1919-1921) against British Rule. In 1916, the Easter Rising occurred and was quashed, and in 1917, Éamon de Valera reorganized Sinn Féin, a left-wing Irish republican political party founded in 1905. It won a huge majority in Britain's 1918 Parliamentary election, and conflicts between Irish republicans and the British government intensified. Eventually, Britain dispatched the Black and Tans—World War I British army veterans temporarily enlisted as constables in the Royal Irish Constabulary—to Ireland to suppress the Irish Republican Army's guerrilla campaign against the British presence.

The Quintons become involved willy-nilly in this violent historical and political landscape. In September 1918, several members of the Black and Tans stationed at Fermoy, near Kilneagh, attack Kilneagh. Led by Sergeant Rudkin, they burn the house and kill Willie's father, sisters, and several servants. This incident causes Willie's mother's mental breakdown and suicide and prompts Willie's retaliatory murder of Rudkin, followed by 50 years of fugitive life abroad.

In addition to the "story" recounted above, a key element in *Fools of Fortune* and the primary subject of this paper is its "discourse." This distinction is taken from Seymour Chatman, an American narratologist, structuralist, and rhetorician, who contends that a narrative is composed of its "story" (content, or what is told) and its "discourse" (expression, or how it is told) (26). According to Chatman, discourse is "the means through which the story is transmitted" (9). He further divides "discourse" into two components—the "structure of narrative transmission" and its "manifestation" (26). Structurally, *Fools of Fortune* is narrated by three characters: Willie, his wife Marianne, and their daughter Imelda. Its means of manifestation include Willie's and Marianne's language and mute Imelda's imagination and silence. Born after Willie's exile, Imelda grows up hearing from Marianne about the massacre at Kilneagh and Willie's murder of Rudkin, and she becomes consumed by imagining these recounted events. Obsessed with her fancy, the sensitive child eventually loses both sanity and the power of speech, retreating into her own imaginative world.

I explore *Fools of Fortune* from two perspectives: the "structure of narrative transmission" involving the three characters' narration and the "narrative manifestation" conveyed by Marianne's language and Imelda's imagination and silence. Thus far, no study has treated this novel from these narratological perspectives although a few have focused on Imelda's silence.¹ Through this approach, I analyze what and how Trevor transmits in *Fools of Fortune* and clarify the uniqueness and significance of this work within the tradition of the Big House novel.

2. Structure of Narrative Transmission: Three Characters' Narration

Fools of Fortune is a six-part novel: Part 1, "Willie," Part 2, "Marianne," Part 3, "Imelda," Part 4, "Willie," Part 5, "Marianne," and Part 6, "Imelda." Each title corresponds with the narrator of the section although Part 6 has an omniscient narrator. In this paper, my discussion will focus mainly on Parts 1, 2, 3, and 6, excluding the very short Parts 4 (six pages in the Penguin edition) and 5 (two pages). Part 6 constituting two-and-a-half pages is also very short but relevant because of its significance as the last part.

2.1. Willie's Narration

Part 1, extending over half the book, covers the period from 1918, when Willie is eight years old, to when Willie discovers his mother's suicide, twelve years later. What does the hero-narrator Willie intend to convey to the reader? The most important stories he tells concern the Quinton family's commitment to the Irish Problem, and the family estate, Kilneagh. The Quintons take a pro-nationalist stance toward the Irish Question, which is atypical for the landed

class. The Anglo-Irish Protestant ascendancy, who came over to Ireland from Britain and became powerful by exploiting land, greatly differs from the Catholic Irish in political, religious, and cultural aspects. Generally, the former shows an affinity toward the British and support the British government. Unlike such Anglo-Irish landed gentry, the Quintons are characterized by devotion and deep affection toward the Irish.

A legendary character representative of the Quintons is Anna Quinton, Willie's great-grandmother. Anna, descended from the Woodcombes, a reputable family of Dorset, England, marries an Irishman, William Quinton, at seventeen, and moves into Kilneagh in the 1820s. During the Great Famine of 1846, she travels the neighborhood in a carriage loaded with grain and flour to save the starving and the dying; moreover, she approaches the British government to help the Irish people. She finally dies of famine fever, but her husband fulfills her wish by giving away most of his estate to those who had suffered loss and poverty in the famine.

After Anna's death, the Quintons' Irish nationalism has been handed down from generation to generation not only by the Irish heads of the family but also by their British-born wives. Willie's mother Evie, the daughter of an army colonel distantly related to the Woodcombes and mistress of Kilneagh two generations after Anna, is an eager proponent of Irish Home Rule. So, she supports the revolutionary cause more energetically than her Irish husband and urges him to support Michael Collins, an Irish revolutionary leader fighting for Irish independence.

Likewise, Evie's niece Marianne comes to identify herself with Ireland. Marianne, who was brought up at Woodcombe Rectory, the rectory of Woodcombe Park, as the daughter of Evie's younger sister and an English curate, falls in love with her Irish cousin Willie and becomes pregnant with his child at the age of 20. Consequently, young Marianne all alone moves to Ireland from England and becomes the third English girl to live at Kilneagh. When she arrives in Ireland, Willie has already left after killing Rudkin. She declares that "I am part of all this [Ireland]" (175) and that "it [Kilneagh] was where I belonged" (160) and waits there for Willie's return home for more than 50 years. Protestant nationalism, which has defined the Quintons from the past to the present, leads the family to be regarded as "traitors to [their] class and to the Anglo-Irish tradition" (25) by other Anglo-Irish gentry.

Another central topic of Willie's narrative is Kilneagh and its significance. Kilneagh was built a mile and a half away from the village of Lough, near the town of Fermoy, County Cork, in 1770. The estate consists of the E-shaped stone house, which is the living area of the family, an orchard wing (so called because of the mulberry orchard behind it), a cobbled yard, a vegetable garden, a mulberry orchard, and an avenue of birches. There is also a sloping pasture where cows graze, and beyond the pasture stands a mill, which maintains the family's livelihood.

In Anglo-Irish literature, the Big House takes on diverse symbolical meanings, ranging from prosperity to dissolution in the tumult of Irish history. This variability is evident in Trevor's narrative as Kilneagh changes in meaning from an emblem of the "harmony of the British world and the Irish world" to one of "destruction and devastation." At the end of 1910s, Kilneagh is a symbol of happiness for the child Willie. The picture of happiness he frequently recalls in later years is "the scarlet drawing-room" (5), the heart of Kilneagh. There, a Chinese scarlet carpet covers the floor, and portraits of Anna and her husband William hang above the white marble mantelpiece. The room is filled with the fragrant scent of roses or sweet peas in summer and warmed by the fireplace in winter. To him, it seems like an unchanging paradise: "I'll live in Kilneagh when I'm grown up. I'll always be here" (29). It is also a harmonious refuge, in which the Anglo-Irish Protestant master's family and the Catholic Irish servants live together happily. This harmony is exemplified by the fact that at Kilneagh, no meat is served for dinner on Fridays because of Mr. and Mrs. Quinton's consideration toward the Catholic servants, who never eat meat on Fridays in observance of their religious traditions.

However, such a picture of happiness is torn apart before long. The first of a series of tragic events is caused by Mr. Quinton's financial support to Michael Collins. Following his wife's ardent request, Mr. Quinton backs Collins financially. Doyle, an Irish spy, informs the Black and Tans' Sergeant Rudkin of what Mr. Quinton has done. An employee of the Quinton mill before the war, Doyle works there again after returning. He seems to be selling information

in the neighborhood to the British. Because of his treachery, Doyle is murdered, hanged from a tree at Kilneagh, with his tongue cut out by someone as punishment for his traitorous talk. In revenge for it, Rudkin and his men burn Kilneagh and slaughter Willie's father, two younger sisters, Geraldine and Deirdre, the housekeeper Mrs Flynn, the gardener O'Neill, and his son Tim Paddy. Willie and his mother Evie, who narrowly escape the attack, start a new life at Windsor Terrace in the city of Cork with a devoted maid, Josephine. While Willie gradually recovers from the shock, Evie becomes obsessed with hatred against Rudkin and addicted to alcohol, eventually losing her sanity. Finally, she kills herself by slashing her wrist, which drives Willie to murder Rudkin to avenge his mother's tragic end. Thus, Kilneagh comes to represent destruction, desolation, and antagonism.

Next, let us examine what characterizes Willie's narration. Gérard Genette classifies narrative situations into three types: "the narrative with omniscient narrator," "the narrative with 'point of view,'" and "the objective narrative" (188-89). Willie's narrative corresponds to the second type, the narrative with "point of view," or the "narrative with internal focalization" (189) in Genette's expression. In this case, everything is told solely through the character-narrator's voice and eyes, which provides the story with veracity and vividness because the reader experiences the events of the story alongside the character-narrator. The best example is the portrayal of Willie's boarding-school life in the Dublin mountains. His happy days, including occasional riotous days with intimate friends and unique teachers, are delineated most vividly and impressively.

The disadvantage of the mode of first-person narration is that it lacks a critical perspective for the character because the narrator's viewpoint is exactly identical with that of the character. According to Genette, when the narrator and the character are merged in this way, "the very principle of this narrative mode implies in all strictness that the focal character never be described or even referred to from the outside, and that his thoughts or perceptions never be analyzed objectively by the narrator" (192). Therefore, Willie's savage act of murdering Rudkin is not criticized. Not only that, but since the reader sees all events from Willie's perspective, he or she sympathizes with him and is eventually led to approve his revenge against Rudkin. Criticism against violence is provided only by a pacifist, Father Kilgariff, the spokesman for the author later in the book.

2.2. Marianne's Narration

The focus changes from Willie to Marianne in Part 2, in which Marianne tells of her visit to Ireland, her pregnancy, and her decision to wait at Kilneagh for Willie's homecoming from his exile. Marianne's mother visits Ireland accompanied by Marianne to attend her sister Evie's funeral. This is their second visit to Cork because they had stayed at Windsor Terrace one summer, from the end of July to the beginning of September, after the attack on Kilneagh, to cheer up Evie and Willie. At that time, Marianne fell in love with her cousin and has loved him ever since. In meeting him again, though, she finds him profoundly "different in every way from the person [he] had been" (116). He seems to have changed because of grief caused by his mother's death, self-reproach for being unable to prevent her from suicide, and humiliation over her burial having been refused by many churches because of her suicide (although it was finally permitted by one clergyman). So, eager to comfort him and share his suffering, Marianne visits his bedroom on the night of the funeral. As a result, she becomes pregnant and takes a journey to Ireland all alone to see him. However, he has already left Ireland, and nobody tells her why or where he has gone or what happened to him. It is from Mr. Lanigan, the Quintons' solicitor, that Marianne finally learns the truth about his disappearance from Ireland. Because of her firm determination to wait for Willie in Ireland, a legal arrangement is made that Marianne will be taken into the household at Kilneagh under the charge of Willie's aunt, Fitzeustace.

What are the characteristics of Marianne's narration? Although she is a character-narrator like Willie, she becomes not a hero-narrator but a witness-narrator, or "I-witness" in Norman Friedman's terms (*Narrative Discourse* 187). Friedman divides narrative situations more minutely into eight types, two of which he calls "'first-person' narrating, I-

witness . . . or 'I-protagonist'" (187). As such an I-witness type of narrator, Marianne observes events and tells the story from her perspective.

Her narration exhibits some specific features. First, Marianne uncritically supports all Willie's thoughts and actions because she deeply devotes herself to him. Second, the narration of an I-witness type tends to reveal the narrator's own personality or way of thinking rather than that of the "narratee" (Kinoshita 6). This principle applies to Marianne's case. Marianne's narration reveals her highly emotional personality, so passionate in her love for Willie and so intense in her hatred for Rudkin. Third, her narration functions to heighten suspense and mystery in the novel because, unlike an omniscient narrator, her restricted knowledge about circumstances delays the reader's own discovery of the truth about what Willie has done.

2.3. Imelda's Narration

Part 3 begins with a picnic scene beside the ruins of Kilneagh in about 1940, nine years after the end of Part 2. The Quintons (Marianne, Aunt Fitzeustace, and Aunt Pansy), Mr Derenzy, the Quinton Mill's manager, and Father Kilgarriff are celebrating Imelda's ninth birthday. When the picnic is over, everybody enjoys flying a kite, a birthday gift from Marianne to Imelda. The kite soars in the clear blue sky, and people joyously gaze up at it, making a perfect picture of happiness just like former days at Kilneagh.

Imelda grows up while constantly hearing from Marianne about the midnight attack by the Black and Tans and Willie's heroic act of revenge. In fact, he has been seen as a hero in all of County Cork because of the courage and honor he has displayed by taking revenge on the British sergeant. Marianne's narrative report is so full of bloody descriptions that the sensitive and imaginative girl comes to imagine such scenes often, which forms her habit of day-dreaming. Eventually, the most atrocious scene she imagines—Willie's hacking off Rudkin's head with a butcher's knife—triggers her loss of sanity and words, sending her into a world of silence forever.

Imelda's narration differs from that of character-narrators like Willie and Marianne. To be exact, Imelda becomes a reflector of events, not a narrator. A reflector is a person who reflects the events in the story like a mirror. Both Imelda's outer and inner worlds are seen through her eyes, but what is reflected in her eyes is communicated to the reader through the voice of a limited third-person narrator. Initially, her eyes catch the actual events happening in the outer and inner worlds, but gradually what comes into her view is only imaginings of the bloody past, not reality. Furthermore, it is presented to the reader mainly through the visual images recreated in her imagination rather than by the narrator's voice. Thus, the reflector Imelda's views are mostly expressed visually.

3. Manifestation of the Story: Language

As the narrative form, *Fools of Fortune* is structured by the viewpoints of three characters, Willie, Marianne, and Imelda. Then, in what media are their viewpoints manifested in the narrative? According to Chatman, discourse takes many forms depending on how the viewpoint is communicated. In the diagram of narrative, he offers a wide range of means of manifestation, including both narrative and non-narrative, such as "verbal, cinematic, balletic, pantomimic" manifestations (26). Likewise, in *Fools of Fortune*, Trevor uses narrative and non-narrative media of manifestation—language, silence, and imagination. Willie and Marianne present the story in language, whether spoken or written, whereas Imelda presents it by silence or visually by "fancy" or "vision," that is, as a mental image created by her imagination. Among the three significant media, I will first discuss language.

3.1. Narrative Transmission by Language

It is mainly a speech act—that is, a spoken utterance or written words—that conveys the story about the Quintons'

past to Imelda. Marianne drums the story about the past into Imelda. Deeply attracted by the story and eager to know more about her father, Imelda begins to eavesdrop on conversations between Marianne and her visitors or servants. Eavesdropping is a variation of a speech act. Imelda also soon begins secretly reading about the past. Although scolded by Marianne for her ill manners, Imelda would not listen to her mother; instead, she goes to the extent of furtively reading Marianne's letters and diaries kept in secret drawers in her desk and in a cupboard in her bedroom. The written information provides her with much more detailed and realistic knowledge about her father's story. The most notable example is an old newspaper clipping concerning Willie's murder case, which Imelda finds in a secret drawer. Its realistic, brutal portrayal of the murder delivers the blow that drives Imelda insane.

3.2. Functions of Language

Ironically, Imelda is driven to silence as the result of information transmission by language. As this fact shows, in *Fools of Fortune*, language has not only a positive role as a communication tool but also negative and destructive roles. In addition to Imelda, Doyle provides another negative example. His secret report to Sergeant Rudkin results in bringing both the Quintons and himself to ruin. In this sense, language functions destructively for him. Similarly, Evie's language also produces a destructive effect on Willie. Despite his hope of reconstructing Kilneagh in the future, Willie is driven to the reckless behavior of murder and exile, not only because of Evie's tragic end but also because of her reiterated hatred for Rudkin. Father Kilgarrieff alone, endowed with the author's viewpoint, recognizes the destructive power of language and warns Marianne to be careful not to tell the atrocities of the past to young Imelda. However, Marianne does not listen to his advice.

4. Manifestation of the Story: Imagination

4.1. Imelda's Imagination

Let us examine Imelda's imagination as the second medium to actualize the narrative. Traditionally, fancy or fantasy has constituted an essential feature of Anglo-Irish literature. Elizabeth Bowen, for instance, frequently employed fantasy or dreams as a central motif in her works because she believed "[t]he hallucinations [Bowen's collective term for illusions, fantasies, and dreams] are an unconscious, instinctive, saving resort on the part of the characters.... Dreams by night, and the fantasies...by day were compensations" (Bowen 49). For Bowen, who lived through two world wars, such hallucinations involve "saving illusory worlds" (50), where people can take refuge in order to soothe their emotionally torn and impoverished lives during wartime. The supreme embodiment of fantasy and the past for Bowen was her family estate, Bowen's Court.

Likewise, in *Fools of Fortune*, Imelda's imagination plays a significant role in conveying crucial aspects of the Quinton family's history to the reader. What Imelda imagines can be classified roughly into four elements: 1) the beauty of Kilneagh before the raid by the Black and Tans, embodied in features such as the scarlet drawing-room; 2) the slaughter scene during the assault, including the screaming of Willie's young sisters in the flames and the sight of his father's dead body; 3) an affectionate father, who is associated with the smiling picture from Willie's childhood; and 4) the scene of Rudkin's murder, committed by Willie. As a whole, these four elements constitute contrasting pictures of "peace, happiness, harmony," (1 and 3) and "violence, destruction, killing" (2 and 4).

4.2. Iconographical Functions of Imagination

What does Trevor intend through the visualization of the discourse? It is fruitful to explore the relationship between the discourse and visual images, referred to in art historian Erwin Panofsky's classic masterpiece *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (1939), and Michel Foucault's article on this book, "Les

Mots et les Images" ("The Words and the Images," 1967). According to Panofsky, "iconography" or "iconology"² is the "branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form" (3). He further distinguishes between three strata of subject matter: 1) primary or natural subject matter, 2) secondary or conventional subject matter, and 3) intrinsic meaning or content (5-7). The ultimate goal of iconography is, of course, to arrive at the third stratum; namely, to penetrate into the intrinsic meaning of an artwork and discover its "symbolical values" in the social and cultural contexts of time (5-9).

Foucault elaborates upon Panofsky's concept of iconography, under the subtitle "The Analysis of the Relations Between the Discourse and the Visible," arguing that "some elements of discourse are maintained as some themes through the texts, the recopied manuscripts, the translated, commented, imitated works; but they take body in some plastic motifs..." (621, my translation).³ Thus, when a certain theme is conveyed to the reader as a plastic art form or a visual image such as a painting, its intrinsic meaning or symbolical value seems to appeal more clearly and vividly to the reader. Imelda's case exemplifies this iconographical concept. Through the visualized presentation as pictorial images in Imelda's imagination, the theme of opposites outlined earlier (section 4.1)—"peace, happiness, harmony" and "violence, destruction, killing"—becomes an aesthetic experience beyond language and produces a revelatory effect.

5. Manifestation of the Story: Silence

5.1. The Ending of the Novel

Imelda communicates her inner and outer worlds to the reader through silence as well as fancy. What does her silence present and how does it function? To clarify its significance, it is necessary to analyze Part 6, the last section of the novel, which portrays the Quintons' life at Kilneagh during one day in 1982. After the interval of fifty years, Willie in his seventies has finally returned home. The aged couple, Willie and Marianne, walk beneath the mulberry trees, holding hands. Meanwhile, the elegant and beautiful Imelda in her middle age is respected by the locals as a saint who heals the afflicted and the injured. The concluding passages portray the three of them happily sitting for dinner in the kitchen of the orchard wing, which survived the fire and raid.

They [Willie and Marianne] say the mulberries should soon be picked, a bumper crop this year.... Imelda does not speak at all, nor ever wishes to. Her smooth blonde hair has a burnished look where the sunlight catches it; in her middle age she is both elegant and beautiful, her face meticulously made up....

Imelda is gifted, so the local people say, and bring the afflicted to her. A woman has been rid of dementia, a man cured of a cataract. Her happiness is like a shroud miraculously about her, its source mysterious except to her. No one but Imelda knows that in the scarlet drawing-room wood blazes in the fireplace.... No one knows that she is happiest of all when she stands in the centre of the Chinese carpet, able to see in the same moment the garden and the furniture of the room, and to sense that yet another evening is full of the linnet's wings.

They sit, all three of them, in the kitchen of the orchard wing.... He smiles the smile of the photograph, and in the band of her straw hat the girl he loves wears an artificial rose. They are aware that they exist so in the idyll of their daughter's crazy thought. They are aware that there is a miracle in this end, as remarkable as the Host which hung above the head of the child in Bologna [the Blessed Imelda]. They are grateful for what they have been allowed, and for the mercy of their daughter's quiet world, in which there is no ugliness. (205-207)

The above passages include three important emblems: 1) mute Imelda living in her imaginative world, 2) a tranquil picture of three Quintons, and 3) a rich harvest of mulberry trees waiting to be picked. What do these symbols mean? Among them, first, let us clarify what Imelda's silence represents.

5.2. Representative Meanings: Imelda's Silence

Concerning Imelda's silence, so far both affirmative and negative criticism has been published. Richard Rankin Russell interprets it negatively as the embodiment of her "mute suffering" (73) or of the tragedies of the past and its atrocities: "The tragedies of the past are too much to even be articulated, and...these horrors have literally become embodied in the silent Imelda" (75). However, most critics regard her silence as affirmative. Celeste Loughman points out: "Her muteness reflects an awareness of the destructive power of words" (95). Over the generations, the destructive power of words has formed the history of conflict between Ireland and Britain in which the Quintons have been caught up; but Loughman says Imelda cuts off this chain of violence. Exempt from the destructive world of words, "her madness prevents her participation in the family's legacy of violence; and her silence is assurance that she will not pass that legacy on to others" (95). Furthermore, Max Deen Larsen, regarding her silence as God's grace, states: "The line of female ascendancy at Kilneagh ends appropriately with the deformed yet dominant life of Imelda, who bears a miraculous power of inner resurgence" (261).

I regard Imelda's silence as saintly and redemptive. She reputedly possesses the power to heal as part of a saintly existence. The analogy with a Catholic saint is explicit. Imelda Quinton, born on the Blessed Imelda's feast day, May 13th, is named after the Blessed Imelda Lambertini of Bologna. According to legend, in Ireland a mad woman is sometimes considered to be sanctified, as Willie says: ". . . in Ireland it happens sometimes that the insane are taken to be saints of a kind" (198). Likewise, the middle-aged Imelda is respected by the locals as a saint who can heal the ill and the afflicted.

In this novel there is another character, Declan O'Dwyer, who is endowed with the healing power of silence. Deaf-mute O'Dwyer works as a faithful clerk of the Quintons' solicitor Lanigan in his office. Despite being a minor character, he plays an important role as a messenger to bring hope to Marianne. When the pregnant and despairing girl was at a loss on a snowy street of Cork with no information about Willie's whereabouts, he gives her Lanigan's invitation to his office to have a talk, which will make her decide to wait for Willie at Kilneagh. Just as Aunt Fitzzeustace allusively calls O'Dwyer "an angel" (175), he becomes a "heavenly messenger" for Marianne to change her fate.

Thus, as a saint or a go-between from God to human beings, Imelda becomes a redeemer who atones for the sin of violence and destruction committed by human beings. Moreover, she redeems both Catholics and Protestants, as Vera Kreilkamp points out: "Protestant Imelda, named after a Catholic saint..., exists as a symbol of healing and redemption in Ireland" (224). We should also note that *Fools of Fortune* represents two more go-betweens, Josephine and Father Kilgarriff, although, unlike mute Imelda, their speech abilities are not impaired.

Josephine, a Catholic maid working for the Quintons since the age of 18, devotedly takes care of her broken and alcoholic mistress Evie at Windsor Terrace after the tragedy. Nonetheless, Evie kills herself on the day when Willie and Josephine leave her alone at Windsor Terrace to visit Kilneagh for the first time after the raid. Therefore, Josephine feels guilty and spends the rest of her life in an institution for old nuns, St. Fina's. On her deathbed, attended by Willie, Josephine repeatedly prays for the Quintons: "Dear Mary, console them [the Quintons]...Console them everywhere..." (196). Until her end, she wishes peace and comfort for the Quinton family. Her last words are "Imelda...The Blessed Imelda" (197). As Tom McAlindon aptly states, "This confirms her significance as one of the two living saints whose goodness is regenerative" (302).

Father Kilgarriff becomes not only a go-between but also a quiet advocate of nonviolence and pacifism. A Catholic priest, he was unfrocked by his follower's betrayal. Since he was taken in Kilneagh as a lodger by Aunt Fitzzeustace and Aunt Pansy after his misfortune, he has lived in its orchard wing. Because he deeply respects Daniel O'Connell, who "had brought freedom to the Catholics of both Ireland and England and had not cared for violence either" (7),

he supports neither Ireland nor England, resolutely opposing violence. Referring to Willie on the run, he tells Marianne: "There's not much left in anyone's life after murder has been committed" (179). It is not until his death that she fully understands the truth of his words.

5.3. Representative Meanings: Hope for the Future

The concluding segments of the novel feature two more emblematic scenes: 1) the harmonious picture of Willie, Marianne, and Imelda, and 2) the fruitful mulberry trees. Clearly, they both imply a hope for restoration to life in Kilneagh. Larsen comments on the idyllic scene: "The harmonious world of the scarlet drawing-room, with its fragrant surrounding gardens and its enigmatic secret lovers forever turning and touching, grants Imelda a beatific vision of Paradise Regained" (265). Although Willie's mother Evie (the name reminds us of Eve) was expelled from her Eden, Kilneagh, Imelda will regain the paradise for the Quintons. The hope for rebirth and regeneration becomes strengthened by a rich harvest of mulberries. Originally, the mulberry orchard was planted by Anna Quinton in the nineteenth century as a reminder of the mulberry orchard in Woodcombe Park, her English home, in Dorset. In this sense, the mulberry trees symbolize harmony between Ireland and England. Also, as "the only vital symbolic agency left intact in Kilneagh" (Larsen 266), they promise the coming of peace and reconciliation to Kilneagh and Ireland.

6. Conclusion

Since the first Big House novel, Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), "strong narrators" and "history" have constituted distinctive characteristics of this genre of Irish fiction (Norris 111). *Fools of Fortune* is no exception to this convention. In this paper, I have analyzed this novel from two perspectives: the "structure of narrative transmission" and the "narrative manifestation," focusing on three strong narrators—Willie, Marianne, and Imelda. Their narration vividly depicts the past and present of the Quintons, "the fools of fortune," who have lived under the shadow of fate in the antagonistic history between Ireland and England.

Among the three characters, Imelda takes on the most significant and symbolical meaning. Although she resides in the imaginative world after having lost her sanity and language, her power of silence and imagination makes her a saintly and redemptive presence who atones for the sins of violence and destruction committed by other human beings—the Quintons, the Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, and the British and Irish. Thus, it is Imelda who is entrusted with the Quinton family's future and will resolve the family's guilt, uniting all that is good in the past to create a hopeful future.

The figure of Imelda in *Fools of Fortune* thus represents the high value that is placed on silence and imagination as nonverbal forms of communication. Herein lies a distinct feature of this novel, which distinguishes it from the other Big House novels. Trevor not only appreciates Imelda's imagination but also raises its value to that of the iconographic symbol, which serves to convey the narrative theme to the reader more convincingly than language. In addition, her silence becomes an antithesis to the world of social language.

The second characteristic of the novel is its depiction of Irish nationalism. Many of the Big House novels have explored themes relating to national identity from the perspective of the Anglo-Irish Protestant ascendancy—such as the decline of the Anglo-Irish Protestant ascendancy, their isolation from the local Irish community, and the betrayal of friendship and trust between the Big House members and the native Catholic Irish. *Fools of Fortune* in contrast portrays an ascendancy family's support for, and their sympathy with, the native Irish and Irish Independence, and the resulting conflict with the British. Trevor thus attempts to penetrate into the future of the Anglo-Irish Protestant ascendancy, positioning himself on the Irish side.

These aspects make *Fools of Fortune* somewhat unconventional in the tradition of the Big House novel. Trevor

thereby contributes to revitalizing the genre by adding new features, while maintaining the essential elements of the Big House novel, such as the strong narrators and the sense of history and imagination.

Notes

1. See Richard Rankin Russell's "The Tragedy of Imelda's Terminal Silence in William Trevor's *Fools of Fortune*," *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 42.1 (2006): 73-94, and Celeste Loughman's "The Mercy of Silence: William Trevor's *Fools of Fortune*," *Éire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 28.1 (1993): 87-96.
2. In a revised version of this book, "iconography in a deeper sense" is changed to the term "iconology."
3. Foucault's original text is as follows: "...des éléments de discours se maintiennent comme des *thèmes* à travers les textes, les manuscrits recopiés, les oeuvres traduites, commentées, imitées; mais ils prennent corps dans des *motifs* plastiques..." ("Les Mots et les Images," *Dits et Écrits* 621).

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