Chapter Two

Language as Sensibility:

The Spatial/Temporal Loop in *The Names*

> As a sensibility, of flesh and blood, I
> am on the hither side of the
> amphibiology of being and entities,
> the non-thematizable, the
> non-unitable by synthesis. (Levinas
> 2000b: 79)

The Names (1982), Don DeLillo's seventh novel, engages his portentous
meditation and exposes his vigorous passion about language amid the postmodern
ambiance in which language has been under severe inspection and suspicion.   Yet,
DeLillo makes a novelistic move by saliently stressing the inevitable, enchanting and
yet confusing force of language, which is examined on the basis of two
dimensions—the spatial and the temporal.   The former is used to designate DeLillo's
idea of language which comprises the spatial diversity,[1] while the latter, drawing on
Levinas's notion of dischrony, aims to account for man's ethical relation with
language as the Other.   Spatially speaking, as the novel spins around foreign settings,
man's perception of the geological variations makes up an-Other of language which
contains not merely the visible but the audible.   The novel, set in the places from
Greek, Egypt, Jerusalem to India, is marked by the integration of the geological
diversity and the linguistic complexity and multiplicity.   The scenarios with different
languages act as self-disquieting confrontations rather than the means of

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[1] There are different levels of spatial diversity which comprises more than the geological variations
and would be elaborated in the following discussions.

communication as DeLillo's idea of language is initiated by man's reaction to the immediate milieu.   Hence, the exotic setting in *The Names* launches DeLillo's observation on language with the diversity of landscape incorporated.   First of all, language has been examined in a broad sense while the landscapes are transformed into part of man's reading material.   That is, DeLillo means to assert that man's communication starts with his perception of the world before any symbolic languages are applied.   Language in a broad sense, as DeLillo suggests, is what opens the world to people.   Bearing an inseparable relation with man, language is the terrain where DeLillo delves into the re-examination of how man interacts with the wor(l)d.[2]

In addition to the spatial integration, DeLillo's observation of language involves the temporal aspect which is embedded in the incomprehensible and the irreducible in language.   With Owen's obsession with the archaeological research, time accounts for man's incessant effort to explore certain meaning or the origin in language.   It is, ostensibly, how the temporal dimension of language is incorporated.   Nonetheless, DeLillo's notion of the temporal refers to at least two levels here.   On the commonly-understood plane, it is the temporal transformation in history responsible for the changed and the unchanged in language.   The other part suggests the abyss or lacuna in language which neither reason nor idea could reach, corresponding to Levinas's notion of diachrony.   It indicates the irretrievable meaning or irrecoverable lapse in language.   As the leading character, James the risk analyst for a U. S. company, was greatly inspired by another character, Owen the archeologist, who was enthusiastic about and overwhelmed by the mystery of ancient inscribed words, their

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[2] The wor(l)d is usually used to express the inescapable network of language in which man situates himself in terms of postmodern writing.   The word designates the only world that man could resort to. Different from the ongoing perspective, the wor(l)d designates the intertwining relationship between the spatial world and the word, the language constructed in different places.   As what DeLillo demonstrates in the novel, a language might presents various perceptions of different landscapes which in turn express immediately and differently.

pursuit or exploration is initially marked by their sensitivity to and encounter with different languages, both contemporary and ancient, but gradually is diverted to the mystic power of language itself which is a temporal and spatial composite stressing the imposing nature of language inherited especially in names, the unknown combination of the alphabets.   With the visible and audible landscape incorporated, DeLillo's wor(l)dly reading foregrounds the incomprehensible abyss underlying language—a site where, DeLillo demonstrates, the spatial and temporal nature of language makes up man's ethical relation with language as the Other.   That is, behind the archeological trace of language is DeLillo's premier suggestion that the relation between man and language implies an unspeakable and unbridgeable Other embedded in geological diversity and marked by the temporal lapse.   The ethical relation is thus forged as languages *talk* in a way that characters can neither evade nor grasp but can't help but respond and react in a non-communicative communication.

Based on the spatial complexity and temporal imbrications, DeLillo depicts how man is *thrown* (in Heidegger's terms) to and actually set in an inescapable linguistic network.   However, language, as DeLillo presents, is more ethical than instrumental.   There seems to be a perpetual relation with the unknown part of language, the Other, which goes beyond any interpretation or comprehension.   The Other could only be traced in the mysterious concerning the never-dissolved meaning that dangles beyond the signification, with the alluring power that orbits man into different sensory perceptions, and is even imbued with the terror that incarnates the irrational part embedded in language.   It is a call, immediate and imposing, as the self answers in a self-nullifying way.   Starting from the spatially and temporally forged idea of language, this chapter is to explore the ethical relation with language as sensibility in *The Names.*   DeLillo's ethical relation is not aimed at providing an exact answer to what the Other refers to but focuses on the relation between language

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as the Other and the self.   On the one hand, DeLillo uniquely structures his language

as the ethical Other from the spatial to the temporal to the ethical.   On the other, he

means to explore how the self situates himself in the confrontation of language as the

Other.

I.   Language in *The Names*: From the Instrumental to the Ethical

DeLillo's obsession with language in *The Names* is well-observed but

differently interpreted.   Tom LeClair dubs *The Names* as DeLillo's "'breakthrough'

book" after its being widely noticed and well reviewed (1987: 180).   A more

substantial interpretation of the breakthrough, as Anne Longmuir says, lies in this

"'realistic' fiction to question epistemology, language, and geopolitics to an extent

unprecedented in his earlier work" (105).   The strides he makes in this novel are

well-observed in perspectives such as politics, history, subjectivity, and a

hardly-ignored subject—language.   As its title indicates, "this novel is language

obsessed," (Bryant 17) which consequently makes up the major part of the critique.

However, various and even conflicted are the reviews on DeLillo's idea of language

in *The Names*.   Dennis A. Foster, drawing on Kristeva's notion of *chora,* speaks of

the alphabetic pleasures imbedded in language.   They come from "an unconscious

that inhabits the body of language, a disturbing presence carrying memories of

preverbal pleasures that consciousness cannot speak of" (398).   Foster applies Owen

Bradmas' notion of glossolalia and Tap's misspelling in his novel to illustrate the

pre-verbal ecstasy.   Tap's misspellings and Bradmas's obsession with the ancient

carved words may partly attest to this argument.   However, what is not noticed is the

fact that the disturbance, anxiety and even violence are neglected in man's encounter

with language.   The counter perspective is picked up in Matthew J. Morris's article,

"Murdering Words: Language in Action in Don DeLillo's *The Names*."   He,

reversely, focuses on the "violent" aspect of language in which man is either subsumed or overpowered.   The emphasis is placed on man's ambivalence toward language as illustrated by Owen's overfascination with cryptic letters and the potential violence of words in the cult's killings which are irrationally triggered by the correspondence of the initials of the names of the murdered and the places. Language takes on a mysterious, luring and even destructive character.   However heterogeneous the critique, they point out a focal point in DeLillo—there is an invincible and elusive power beyond the signifying mechanism or syntax structure of language, ecstatic or otherwise.

DeLillo's unknown part of language results from his serious and shrewd observation of language itself.   He starts with a paradox that there is a perpetual failure in man's grasping the world with language.   With *End Zone*(1972), his second novel, DeLillo stated that "I began to suspect that language was a subject as well as an instrument in my work, although I'd find it hard to say in what ways exactly" (2005a: 5).   Language *talks* more than the pre-supposed meaning.   His perception of language is not restricted to the networks of signs or the process of signification. Rather, it is embedded and should be explored in real life.   Hence, his insisting on a sense of the real in writing does not mean to naively construe a reality with language but foregrounds the real as the starting point of language with life perception and observation, despite the recognition that "[t]he vocabularies don't match.   It's hard to correspond to reality . . ." (2005a: 4).   Reality or the sensual real provides the unavoidable base for the analysis of how man construes and comprehends the world through language.   Nevertheless, what language brings about is the mysterious and invincible power lurking beyond the visible, the audible or the written.   To understand how man oscillates between the world and words, DeLillo believes that names are the starting point to work with.   As the title, *The Names,* indicates, an

arbitrary or illogical process in language-formation is unavoidably involved. DeLillo contends that

> I think naming things helps us hold the world together, almost literally. Without naming it would fall apart. Names are the sub-atomic glue of the human world, and for a certain type of mentality, the clandestine mentality . . . naming becomes a secret act, secret and obsessive. I think people do it as a way of keeping their grip on the world. (2005b: 37)

Names are the basic route to structure and conceive the world, but simultaneously names present the fundamental arbitrary and imposing nature of language which defies any reasoning or intelligible process. That is, a hollow base lies behind the naming of the world. The undermined ground manifests itself in the quasi-autonomy of language as Heidegger holds that naming ambivalently brings the world closer to us,[3] since "[l]anguage speaks in that I, as showing, reaching into all regions of presences, summon from them whatever is present to appear or fade. We, accordingly listen to language in this way, that we let it say its saying [*Sage*] to us" (1971: 124). Yet, the trilateral relation among man, language, and the world makes up such a complicated relation that DeLillo considers a secret act owing to the fact that nomination is a more equivocal than equivalent relation. Besides, Heidegger further contends:

> This naming does not hold out titles, it does not apply terms, but it calls into the world. The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls. However this bringing closer does not fetch what is called only in order

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[3] Heidegger holds the idea that language is our access to the world, both empirical and ontological, as Timothy Clark summarizes that "[l]anguage is not merely an entity upon the *stage* of the world, *it is that stage*, that 'space' in which alone things become present. The 'nature' of language is thus that of effecting a peculiar crossing or interlacing of the *ontic* (pertaining to entities) and the *ontological* (pertaining to being)" (29). That is, with language speaking, man is given the picture of the world; nevertheless, Heidegger undercuts man's dominance over language but foregrounds the autonomy of language, which is beyond man's grasp and disturbs man's conscious recognition of what is around. It is the disturbance which could not be solved or relieved in man's confrontation of the world.

to set it down in closest proximity to what is present, to find a place for it

there. The call does indeed call. Thus it brings the presence of what

was previously uncalled into a nearness. (1971a: 198)

Language not merely names the world by making present what is called but also *talks*

for its own sake, implying a character of its own. Language's self-presence or

self-expression is first found in the unbridgeable lacuna between man's intention and

naming. This is a situation also observed by Benjamin who "acts against the

bourgeois view of language that the word has an accidental relation to its object, that

it is a sign for things (or knowledge of them) agreed by some convention" (1978: 324).

Yet, whereas Heidegger recognizes there is always something uncalled and unknown

brought to man in language, Benjamin also reminds us of the paradoxical mechanism

of naming—as man communicates his linguistic being in language, he steps outside

the pure language of name, makes language a means, a *mere* sign, which consequently

results in the plurality of languages (1978: 328). The difference between Benjamin

and Heidegger lies in the fact that Heidegger maintains that language and the world

sustains a bilateral relation, while Benjamin assumes that it is in language, not

through language, that the mental being of man as well as nature is communicated, as

"[m]an is the namer, by this we recognize that through him pure language speaks"

(1978: 318), and "*there is no such thing as a meaning of language; as communication,*

language communicates a mental entity, i.e., something communicable per se" (1978:

320). It is either language or linguistic being speaks while man is no longer the

meaning-giver or language-manipulator. Yet, despite the difference between

Heidegger and Benjamin, it could at least be affirmed that man establishes his relation

with the world through the paradox of naming which brings to man something which

is more than what man can consume or comprehend. Language, in terms of naming,

simultaneously and ambivalently mediates the communicable and the

un-communicable.   Specifically, names, combinations of alphabets, seem to be innately equipped with an unknowable and irretrievable mechanism.   They are ostensibly like the bricks building up our sense of the world, yet constantly disturbed by the untraceable or unknown base of the alphabetic reign or order.   Names lay bare the ambivalence of language in being a medium and asserting an incomprehensible message of its own as if language helps complete our world-recognition, yet substantially leaving open a fathomless void which exposes the futile epistemological base.   The superficial designation with a hollowed center accounts for how the recognition of the world is partly concretized in expression and communication, while the insolvable world-word discrepancy is acutely reminded.

Levinas's notion of diachrony and Benjamin's idea of translation aim to elaborate on the unspeakable in naming.   Insisting on an unreachable origin of divine pure language, Benjamin observes that "[a]ll human language is only reflection of the word in name. . . . The infinity of all human language always remains limited and analytical in nature in comparison to the absolutely unlimited and creative infinity of the divine word" (1978: 323).   Both of them recognize the limit of human language which is based on human consciousness and intentionality.   Benjamin takes naming as translation.   However, "the translation of the language of things into that of man is not only a translation of the mute into the sonic; it is also the translation of the nameless into name.   It is therefore the translation of an imperfect language into a more perfect one, and cannot but add something to it, namely knowledge" (1978: 325).   Every translation simultaneously approaches and removes itself away from the original language.   In contrast, as human language undergoes a process of translation, the language of the nature would rather present something unsaid or unspeakable.   The translation in a sense corresponds to Levinas's notion of diachrony in the saying, designating an impossibility to represent the original or grasp the moment of the real.

Yet, their similarity is merely partially established as Benjamin insists on an origin

and totality of language[4] derived from the divine word.   Levinas's diachrony does

not aim to probe into what the unsaid might indicate but marks his ethical observation

by stressing the ethical relation between the self and the Other registered in language.

It is meant to shed light on DeLillo's manifestation of man's persistent exposure or

response to the names or naming of the world.

      Being well-conscious of the world-word incongruence and the *saying* of

language, DeLillo arouses the critics' interest in his perspective on the self.   The

language abyss not only manifests the ambivalence or amphibology of language (in

Levinas's terms) but questions self-sufficiency and autonomy in the exchange and

encounter with language.   With language roughly drawing but adversely

undermining the coordinates of the world, it is no longer an easy task to position the

self in relation to the world, as Paula Byrant states that "[l]anguage is the net they

seize upon in order to pull their existence neatly together, yet reality keeps escaping

through the warp and weft" (17).   Language, to Byrant, fails to act as a stable

mechanism for man to map the world and assure oneself of the identity in the social

fabric.   Two-fold implication is implied here.   One is that it is by means of language

that man gets to know the world but at the same time acutely experiences its

uncertainty.   Another thing is that when reality is hardly possible to talk about,

language becomes the arena of inadequation where man finds no way out.   These

two perspectives further reveal the paradoxical trilateral relationship among man,

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[4] The scope of totality Benjamin renders language comes from his argument that "in name culminate both the intensive totality of language, as the absolutely communicable metal entity, and the extensive totality of language, as the universally communicating (naming) entity.   By virtue of its communicating nature, its universality, language is incomplete where the mental entity that speaks from it is not its whole structure linguistic, that is, communicable" (1978: 319).   Benjamin holds that names are consisting of the absolutely communicable and the universally communicating part; man then at the same time communicates himself in language and communicate with the world through language.   That seems to be rather a complete picture of language circulating in man's world.   Man is in a sense submerged in language.

language, and the world: Though man gets into the immediate contact with the world, the comprehension of the world has to be done by dint of language which is marked by a self-reflexive mechanism.   In other words, when man is trapped in the incongruence between the world of language and the empirical experience of the world, man's inevitable relation with the ungraspable and the unknown becomes all the more obvious.   The complicate situation is partly noticed in Thomas Carmichael's reading of DeLillo.   Owning to the maniac language pattern of the cult's murder, Thomas Carmichael brings forth a Derridean reading of DeLillo, quoting Owen's words in *The Names*—"'the world has become self-referring.   You know this.   This thing has seeped into the texture of the world. . . . This is my vision, a self-referring world, a world in which there is no escape.'"   Madness becomes a premier structure in the world of the word, signaling "a fundamental absence of significance. . . . These murders are a systematic mockery of the decentered and disseminated world of indifference" (Carmichael 213).   Carmichael presents a direct reading of the world on the basis of the self-reflexive and self-referring language.   And the viewpoint leads him to maintain that the subject is postmodern in a sense of being subsumed in the intertextual language meshwork.   Obviously, Carmichael has reduced DeLillo's language concern to a self-referring process and applies such a viewpoint to the comprehension of the experiential world.   In a sense, he equates the sensible world with the linguistic system as he takes the world and the subjectivity as language fabrication, reducing man's genuine experience with the world.   Such a critique neglects DeLillo's insistence on the "sense" of the real world in his notion of language.

　　　　A more comprehensive reading of DeLillo's employment of language is done by Curtis A. Yehnert.   He detects DeLillo's uniqueness in breaking away from the grid of either modern or postmodern subjectivity, as [m]odernist characters are

defined through agonistic conflict, forging identity through resistance; but postmodern characters, stripped of secrets, repressions, and depths, have nothing to resist with and nothing to resist" (Yehnert 358).   The former believes that identity is potential and possible while the latter regards it as merely the social effects or products of the intertextualizing language, culture and media, with little sense of self left.   Instead of falling into either of the two mechanisms, Yehnert contends that DeLillo's characterization "emphasizes how the self is always bound up in reciprocal influences, how it exists somewhere between the stable, intelligible self we create and the contradictions and unknowable depths from which we create it" (361).   This designates man's ambivalent relation with language, when man is confronted with an inexplicable void in language which is supposed to open up the world to man by means of its function in communication and expression.   This argument takes us back to the contradictory nature of language in constituting and undermining our sense of the world, and, more significantly, ourselves.   That is, the self is no longer able to posit himself in terms of his rationality or consciousness as he is constantly haunted and threatened in face of the irreducible and inexplicable lurking behind language.   His autonomous and integral façade paradoxically implies a heterogeneous existence.   It is the situation in which language fails our understanding and shatters our integrity.   Interestingly speaking, this is just the point of departure that DeLillo means to explore the ethical relation embedded in man's experience of language.

In terms of the preliminary reading of DeLillo's observation of language, it is not difficult to find similar observation in theorists mentioned above like Heidegger, Derrida, Benjamin in that they no longer believe in the representation and reflection of the world in language.   Language either leaves an unavoidable abyss or swirls us into the self-referring process of signification.   Yet, DeLillo stresses his concern

about the elusive and even overwhelming realistic confrontations along with the daily use of language.   He subsequently reveals his ethical concern shown in his exploration of the relation with language.   His notion of language is not reduced to the situation of "language speaks" (Heidegger's terms) or "nothing outside the text" (as Derrida asserts) or Benjamin's conflation of nature and language trying to mark the embedded linguistic property of the world.   Rather, DeLillo's elaboration of man's confrontation with the Other in language corresponds to Levinas's ethical configuration drawn up with language.

II.   Diachrony in Language as the Ethical Other

What makes Levinas a profound interlocutor with DeLillo's novelistic presentation lies in his viewing language as an ethical Other to the self.   Aiming to break away from the totalizing or thematizing intentionality constituting the logic of the same, Levinas is inspired by Husserl and Heidegger.   The most important thing that links them together is the notion of time in their delineation of man's grasp of the world; yet, each of them evolves a different picture from it.[5]   Time presents an angle

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[5]   Levinas ever says

> if it was Husserl opened up for me the radical possibilities of a phenomenological analysis of knowledge, it was Heidegger who first gave these possibilities a positive and concrete grounding in our everyday existence.   Heidegger showed that the phenomenological search for eternal truth and essences ultimately originates in *time,* in our temporal and historical existence.   (1986: 16)

To understand the variations from Husserl through Heidegger to Levinas, the notion of time has to be first explored as it is the axis of their thoughts.   As Heidegger and Levinas are influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, they have in common with Husserl that the meaning production involves people's daily experience or sensual perceptions instead of presupposing certain pre-existed truth or preconceptions.   Leivnas affirms that the contribution of Husserl's phenomenology lies in

> its methodical disclosure of how meaning comes to be, how it emerges in our consciousness of the world, or more precisely, in our becoming conscious of our intentional rapport (*visée*) with the world.   It reveals consciousness to be an intentionality always in *contact* with objects outside of itself, other than itself. (1986:14)

Yet, it is also from Husserl's taking into consideration the contact with the real world that Heidegger and Levinas start to meditate on and modify their notion of time. Husserl focuses on the experiential present and regards that "the double extension of the present into the past (retention) and the future (pretension) reinforces the ontology of presence as a seizure and appropriation of what is other or transcendent" (1986: 26).   The present becomes the thematizing totality while the alterity of time is

to the understanding of the world which is no longer measured or judged as a synchronized, synthesized and static entity. Especially, as Levinas incorporates time in the idea of language, more subtle relation among man, the world and language would be revealed.

Language has been the premier site in Levinas's configuration of the ethical relation, embodying Levinas's notion on the sensual perception in a not only spatial but *temporal* dimension. Levinas elaborates on the temporal mechanism with the implication of being in the verb *to be*, remarking

> [t]he verb *to be* tells the flowing of time as though language were not unequivocally equivalent to denomination, as though in *to be* the verb first came to function as a verb, and as though this function refers to the teeming and mute itching of that modification without change that time operates. . . . Temporalization is the verb form to be. Language issued from the verbalness of a verb would then not only consist in making being understood, but also making its essence vibrate.
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> (2000b: 35)

The verb *to be*, most significantly, reveals not only the temporalization of be-coming but vibrates the essence which fails to make definite the designation. The implication of time in the verb *to be* further indicates the inner conflict in language as denomination is never a clear-cut correspondence or identification between the

left unexplored. It is Heidegger that introduces alterity into the notion of time by marking the anguish or angst before death. "Temporality is now disclosed as an ecstatic being-toward-death, which releases us from the present into an ultimate horizon of possibles, rather than as a holding or seizing or retaining of the present" (1986: 26). Heidegger has unwound time from the grid of the present-centered logic. However, his difference from Levinas lies in the fact that the alterity of time for Heidegger is still subsumed in the totality of being which is ethically indifferent, neutral and anonymous. "It does not accuse freedom. Man receives a place (*Ort*) in the clearing of being, but his place in the sun is never called into question. The existence of freedom is never unmasked as injustice" (De Boer 108). In contrast, Levinas aims to explore the absolute Other by stressing the diachrony and putting the self into question. From the sensual or experiential practices to the notion of a diachronical time, Levinas makes distinct his ethical contour. Based on these convergences and divergences from his previous thinkers, Levinas initiates his journey of the absolute otherness.

sensible and the sign.   That is, it is from the rudimentary idea of the verb *to be* that

Levinas rooted nouns in the temporalization occurring in the sensual perceptions.

> Language is also a system of nouns.   Denomination designates or
> constitutes identities in the verbal or temporal flow of sensation.
> Through the opening that temporalization works in the sensible,
> disclosing it by its very passing, assembling it by retention and memory,
> the word identifies "this *as* that," . . . . The "this as that" is not lived; it is
> said.   (2000b: 35)

With the temporal dimension considered, there is always the surplus existing beyond

the mechanism of "this as that," the intended meaning termed as the said or the doxa.

The surplus overflowing the said is what makes tremble or puts into question the

identical or the identifiable.   It is the disturbing force working into the said, leaving

it perpetually restless and meaning-*less*.   Hence, signification in language "is not an

ideal essence or a relation presented to the eye.   It is preeminently the presence of

exteriority.   Discourse is . . . an original relation with exterior being," (1979: 66) the

absolute Other.   Here, it is obvious of how the spatial and the temporal work together

to construe the ethical relation in language.   The vision is basically a spatial

mechanism in which every thing would be laid out and positioned in a static plane of

the present.   Yet, to catch the always be-coming life process, the temporal dimension

has to be considered but it in turn marks the immediate and ungraspable expression of

life.   It seems that there is a pre-linguistic or ultra-linguistic presence of the Other

which we are not able to subsume or reduce in signification or identification.   It is

the extreme alterity embedded in the identity or the same, resisting the conscious

structure-regulation and eluding any form-confinement of the present.

Time, revealing the ethical relation embedded in language, makes the axis of

Levinasian ethics.   What is worth-noting is that to stress time as an irreducible or

non-synthesized factor, Levinas no longer takes time as a linear process to define life's causality and sequence as a logical and rational manifestation of life.   Neither does he synchronize the past, the present and the future on the same plane of a totality. Rather, he uses the concept of diachrony as the saying in language to designate the unreachableness and incomprehensible Other.   "This saying, in the form of responsibility for another, is bound to an irrecuperable, unrepresentable, past, temporalizing according to a time with separate epochs, in a diachrony" (2000b: 47). Simply put, it is a presence of an absence that the present could neither claim nor deny.

To understand Levinas's diachrony, referring to the irretrievable and unidentifiable, we may have to reexamine how the temporal notion is construed in Levinasian sense.   Not designating something which is forever lost in our memory, it depicts a complex ethical configuration between the self and the Other in concocting both the temporal and the spatial.   First of all, diachrony is non-in-difference in nature.   It is no doubt a temporal concept, originally depicting changes in the process of different epochs.   Levinas emphasizes the difference which is not reducible or comparable.   That is, the first thing that Levinas wants to undermine is the common ground or the shared standard or value underlying the concept of the linear time order in which divergences or heterogeneity is oppressed.   The irreducibility and incomparability are incompatible with the totality or unity a comparison might fall back on.   Diachrony "is an irreducible difference that does not enter into the unity of a theme" (2000a: 177).

It is meant to assert the persistence of the utter or absolute alter-ity, immeasurable and incomparable.   Second, diachrony in language does not indicate an absolute temporal idea but is always spatially-relevant.   The inevitability of the ethical relation marked by diachrony paradoxically concerns proximity which

"signifies as a difference which is outside of all knowing, non-in-difference" (2000b: 97), as Levinas states:

> Proximity, suppression of the distance that consciousness of . . . involves, opens the distance of a diachrony without a common present, where difference is the past that cannot be caught up with, an unimaginable future . . . This difference is my non-indifference to the other.   Proximity is a disturbance of the rememberable time.   (2000b: 89)

Levinas's ethics centered on the concept of diachrony is mainly a temporal notion with the spatial implication, as diachrony refers to a spatialized temporal lapse and the difference is temporalized in order to avoid the synchronized totalization of comparison.   In other words, diachrony is not a purely temporal idea since it aims to account for the inevitable proximity with the Other.   Levinas significantly implicates the spatial attributes into the temporal notion, delineating the paradoxical ethical relation between the self and the Other—unrelated relatedness, incompatible compatibility, separated unseparatedness.

III.   Language Comprising the Spatial-Temporal Loop

DeLillo's exploration of language in *The Names* not only echoes but extends the paradoxical conflation of the temporal and the spatial in Levinas's language.   First, the Other-confrontation in language is geographically or spatially initiated.   Despite the fact that Levinas's diachrony is derived from his notion of the saying and designates a time lapse in language, DeLillo redefines language in terms of the space in which man situates himself.   DeLillo demonstrates that man's confrontation with language not starts with the audible or written words but the environment besieging him.   Hence, language's multiplicity and complexity in *The Names* uniquely involve the geographical variety.   That is, in addition to the various languages bespeaking

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part of the geological characteristics, these spatial diversities make the immediate

language to man.   As the novel is exotically set, ranging from Greek through the

Middle East to India, the landscape varies from the island, the mountains, the desert,

to the prairie, which respectively entitle the chapters of the novel.   The foreign

environment initiates the "Other-ing" process on account of the unfamiliarity and

incomprehensibility aroused in these places.   Language is not merely an audible or

literal construct.   DeLillo integrates the geographical reading or perception as the

fundamental languages.   Man responds to or communicates with the spatial variation

before the intrusion or interruption of any man-made language.   Language then

could be defined as the immediate exposure of man to the space.   Secondly, the

proximity with foreign lands does not indicate the possibility of comprehension.

What features the experiential or empirical tour of the self is the passivity of the self

and the thwarted conception of what is around.   James, a risk analyst in the novel,

thought of himself as "a perennial tourist. . . . To be a tourist is to escape

accountability.   Errors and failings don't cling to you the way you do back home.

You're able to drift across continents and languages, suspending the operation of

sound thought.   Tourism is the march of stupidity" (43).   The unknownable implied

in stupidity designates man's incapability to sustain his dominance as well as the

losing ground of knowledge, and rationality.   The foreign land unsettles the self who

is supposed to be equipped with a concrete center and a logical and rational base to

situate himself.   The drift from the routine life dismantles the self in handling life.

Everything disquiets the self as landscape functions as a kind of defamiliarizing

language and defies any intellectual thematization.   Characters are obliged to

respond to foreign lands.   DeLillo especially stresses the impact of the landscape on

the characters, who no longer take the geographical features as granted or subsume

their feelings in any established recognitions.   Instead, he gives an immediate and

sensual account of their perceptions.   Being the one-for-the-Other as Levinas

depicts, the characters are confronted with the deeper and cryptic sense of things.

That is what fascinates Owen who was constantly troubled by what he couldn't

"identify in [his] feelings about this place.   The deep-reaching quality of things.

Rock shapes, wind" (113).   It is an inevitable response to the Other in a passive but

obliged manner.

     Interestingly, the failed understanding is actually concretized as the overflowing

of the language system.   That is, what landscape expresses marks the

language-structure failing comprehension and even arousing great fear.   "All these

places were one-sentence stories to us.   Someone would turn up, utter a sentence

about foot-long lizards in his hotel room in Niamey, and this became the solid matter

of the place, the means we used to fix in our minds.   The sentence was effective,

overshadowing deeper fears, hesitancies, a rife disquiet" (94).   Such a foreign setting

first of all questions and disturbs what our vision used to reign or define, laying bare

the disquietude and commanding passivity embedded in the confrontation with

"other" landscapes.   What is more significant is that by equating places with a

sentence, DeLillo no longer takes places as a static name but extends it to be a

combination of a subject, an action, and even an object.   Especially, the action which

contains a duration of time adds decisive variables to the places and makes the places

all the more elusive.   Hence, a sense of time has been comprised in what the places

might tell and render the spatial reading an-Other meaning which resists intended

imposition.

     DeLillo's foreign setting exposes us to a language which is rid of the familiar

signifying process—the accordance between the names or words and the sight, the

sound and the object.   The direct or acute contact with what is there presupposes the

existence of any man-made language.   The contact with language's paradoxical

nature first occurs in the spatial arena.   An inexplicable existence behind the signification is spatially perceived but not recognized.

The *natural* language expressed in the exotic landscape, aside from *talking* in its own way, demands characters' immediate response.   The foreign scenes, no longer speaking in the language of the familiar or *the same,* are endowed with an ability to talk in an-Other language which characters have to respond to before they are conscious of the demand.   It is a feeling that "[t]here was around us nothing we knew as familiar and safe" (94).   In that situation, the signification of language is something not merely inadequate but disturbing to the reality.   This is also when man-made language intrudes, making up the trilateral relation among man, the world, and the signification system.   Naming, especially the place-naming, would be a significant indication of the relation.   When James reflected his random answer to tell the concierge the place he wanted to go by pronouncing whatever sound that came to his mind.   He then wondered if he was "tampering with the human faith in naming . . . . The smoky crowded places where we did business were not always as different to us as the names assigned to them.   We needed the names to tell them apart, in a sense, and I was playing fast and loose with this curious truth" (102).   The environment with a foreign tongue sets loose the place-names designation, further demonstrating the discrepancy between language and places.   These places, an inevitable surrounding Other, are perceived to have an immediate relation and communication with the self and simultaneously demand the process of naming for designation or recognition.

The naming of these places makes an inevitable but inappropriate way to communicate with the world and subsequently channels man to the confrontation with the Other.   The inevitability accounts for the inseparable relation between man and the world, while the inappropriateness of naming indicates the inability of the

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signification chain to represent the real, a perpetual lapse.   Yet, it is the signifying

lapse where DeLillo and Levinas converge by incorporating the temporal dimension

into language.   DeLillo implies that man's understanding of the world is related to

the spatial confrontation but the relation is extended to something beyond what the

space could embrace.   Levinas's notion of diachrony characterizing the ethical aspect

of language may well render a clue to what lies behind the language of the world or

the language itself.

The impact of the unspeakable on the self is more than obvious as man is

placed in certain space but find himself displaced.   DeLillo provides a chance to

review such an experience with the foreign setting in the novel.   When characters in

the novel stepped into a new space, most of their efforts had to be spared to position

themselves by responding to and figuring out what was around them.   The space, is

defamiliarized as a whole new book to read, making its power much more perceivable

and influential.   The tense relation between the self and the space is first presented in

DeLillo's foregrounding man's experience in these places since the foreign settings

render the characters a chance to re-examine his relation with the world.   Yet, the

more characters get involved in places, the harder they are able to place themselves.

The restlessness in the interaction and communication with the *primitive* and

immediate language of the world gives rise to the ambivalence while the characters

find themselves attracted to and immersed in these foreign places at the cost of the

certainty of self autonomy.   Places speak in a louder or more imposing language

which wraps characters with fear and anxiety.   While Frank, Kathryn's ex-husband,

commented on his journey to the Middle East, he especially emphasized the

ambivalent relation with places which was ostensibly appealing but actually

threatening.   Making films in the Middle East, he took a defensive manner towards

the places and tried to treat them as mere framework of his works.   He argued:

I can't surrender myself to places.　I'm always separate. . . . I never

understood the lure of fabulous places.　Or the idea of losing myself in a

place.　The desert down there is stunning at times. . . . I need it for

something, I want it as a frame and a background. I can't see myself

letting it overwhelm me.　I would never give myself up to the place or

any other place. I'm the place. . . . I'm the only place I need.　(143)

Despite his resistance against being absorbed in the places, what comes to the fore is

his acute perception of the absorbing threat that the places pose.　That is, despite the

fact that his anxiety and stress in confronting the new places are obvious, his relation

with places is far more ambivalent than antagonistic as these places provide him a

place to situate himself but tend to overwhelm him.　It is the same with Owen,

saying that "I was afraid of the desert but drawn to it, drawn to the contradiction"

(296).　Own's ambivalence is apparent in facing the desert with fear and appeal.

Different from Frank who endeavors to subsume the places under the frame of his

work, Singh, an Indian who knew more than three languages (e.g. Hindi, English, and

Sanskrit), assumes that "[t]he world has become self-referring. . . . the world has

made a self of its own" (297).　The world, with a strong self-referring character,

demands man's response but resists any human conceptual imposition or

interpretation.　However, the message deduced from these perspectives suggests that

man's response to the places involves language.　Language used to be taken as the

means for man to deal with the world and thus makes meanings possible.　The

situation reminds us of the trilateral relation in which man's recognition of the space

is trapped as man has an immediate contact with the world but has to build up his

understanding on the basis of language.　However, linguistic signification usually

fails in achieving any kind of understanding.　The space says more than what the

signification could designate.　*Language* involves and is involved in the reading of

the space as an-*other* language speaks beyond the daily communicative language. The incongruity between the space and language is prevalent in naming, as James recognized that names are required to tell places apart and in a way to distinguish one place from another, which made him wonder, "Could reality be phonetic, a matter of gutturals and dentals" (102)? From the visible to the audible, from the real to the names, places are undergoing a kind of translation in which man senses the un-designifiability of the world. The translation is like a journey from an uncertainty to an-Other deferred uncertainty until the ambiguity and anxiety culminate in the experiential immediacy and sprawl in the mediated language.

Language acts as an inevitability in man's confrontation with the space which arouses more apprehension than comprehension. James in *The Names* can't help but read the exotic places with the linguistic structure, narrating that places were one-sentences stories in a way that " [t]he sense of things was different in such a way that we could only register the edges of some elaborate secretes. . . . Tense and inflections . . . . This was the humor of hidden fear" (94). As language frames the structure of the world, it imbricates the temporal dimension into the relation between man and the world and provides a temporary shelter from the disquietude or fear in the immediate confrontations. However, DeLillo's further reading of the places engages more variations in tenses and inflections and the designating language could only grab a moment or a chip of the passing real. The messages of the places vary not merely in accord with time but *in* time. Names of the places, DeLillo thinks, mean more than the arbitrary sign-designations with the notion of time implicated. In other words, DeLillo does not read places as fixed or unchangeable scenes but lively and always-changing scenarios. People and events add new characteristics to the scenes and even time makes differences. While the unknown part of language is manifested in the immediate spatial reading of the world, time plays an essential role

in face of the world.

The temporal-spatial loop in DeLillo is responsible for the ethical relation with language.   James and his son, Tap took a trip through the mountain in the Mani.   In their drive, the cryptic power of the place came flowing in their perception as it is sensed that "[t]he mountains here contained a sense of time, geologic time.   Rounded, colorless, unwooded.   They lay in embryo, a process unfolding, or a shriveled dying perhaps.   They had the look of naked events. . . . They were mountains as semantic rudiments, barest definitions of themselves" (180).   First of all, the mountains are a spatial configuration with a temporal facet.   The geological time of the space is like words with inflections but more elusive than they are since time is in incessant fluidity. In addition, behind the spatial time, there is always a distance sustained in terms of meaning-designation.   The meaning is unable to hinge upon any intersections between time and space since there are none of them, according to DeLillo.   The expression of the mountains is immediate, evanescent and perpetually on-going. That kind of spatial-temporal loop makes a naked communication, which *means* something irreducible and non-thematizable.   The relation with the world of space characterized by a sense of time corresponds to the unrelated relatedness and incompatible compatibility in diachrony, with which Levinas especially marks the incommensurability and irreducibility of the Other.   Diachrony accounts for the talk with something present but unpresentable as the space-reading means something perceivable but unconceivable, something present but unrepresentable, either in form or content.

With the notion of the geological time, DeLillo has expanded the meaning of space which could no longer be restricted to something present and visible, it further elaborates characters' response to an-Other language of the landscape, the (in)audible. The situation could be understood in terms of the language structure.   Places, being

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one-sentence stories in DeLillo, verbalize the name, conspicuously registering the

temporal dimension in man's interaction with the spatial.   The temporal facet of the

space is all the more obvious as man goes from the reading to the listening of the

space.   The situation is unfolded in the way James and Tap are *listening* and

responding to different landscapes along their journey.   Language diverges in two

levels.   Aside from the visual feast of the scenery, there is an essential

communication with the Other going on in a verbal or nonverbal way as James

described "[i]n our mood of reticent observation, of speaking of other things, the

journey through the Mani. . . . the Mani forms an argument for silence, for finding a

way to acknowledge the bleakness that carries something human in it" (182).   James

perceived that the silence of the Mani *talks* in a *human* way.   Moreover, the space is

not merely composed of different landscapes in silence.   The noises and voices

filling them up render another explication of the temporal.   That is, a lively space

would certainly incorporate lively communication, the *talk* of the space.   People

could not talk about places without considering the noises or voices filling up the

environment.

> Noise is a kind of rain to Athenians, an environment shaped by nature. . . .
> The noise is annunciatory, we feel.   They are saying they are on the way,
> they are close, they are here. . . . People everywhere are absorbed in
> conversation. . . . Conversation is life, language is the deepest being.
> We see the patterns repeat, the gesture drive the words. This is a way of
> speaking that takes such pure joy in its own openness and ardor that
> begin to feel these people are discussing language itself.   (51-52)

The sounds or noises animate the world as a real being and even are regarded as the

essential character of a place.   The space, from the visible to the (in)audible, is

amazingly condensed to language itself.   The distinction between Athens and Mani

lies in the voices these places use for self-expression.   "If Athens is a place where people breathe the spoken world, if much of Greece is this, then the Mani forms an argument for silence, for finding a way to acknowledge the bleakness that carries something human in it" (182).   In a sense, language has been perceived in another level, paradoxically with the immediate language of places.   Yet, the interesting edge of DeLillo's description of the languages is that the spatial immediacy is being diverted to the mediating language which becomes an extended arena of communication.   It marks an-Other sense of language—the temporal edge is added to the spatial comprehension.   Teeming with different languages, the environment is audibly and visibly multi-lingual as James perceived:

> Words sounded incomplete to me.   The starts and stops in people's voices came unexpectedly.   I couldn't figure out the rhythm.   But the writing flowed, of course.   It seemed to have a movement from top to bottom as well as from right to left.   If Greek or Latin characters are paving stones, Arabic is rain.   (137)

DeLillo stresses that the talking filling up the space is more ungraspable and unexpected, compared with the written words which is granted a well-structured order. The talking presents a spontaneous exchange of ideas or opinions.   Language is both a fluid process and a floating dispersion.   That is, from places to names to sentences to languages, the world read as language is obviously characterized by the uncertain edge.

The ethical with the Other looms over the *talk* of the visible and the audible in space: "The air is filled with words" (79).   Places are differentiated as "the noise of Athens," "the roiling voice of Bombay," and the silent Mani.   Languages, sounds, voices, and noises fill up the living space, giving the world different facades.   They altogether mark the call of the Other lying beyond languages.   An Indian, Tap's

friend, at the airport, "hears Tamil, Hindi, and begins curiously to feel a sense of apartness, something in the smell of the place, the amplified voice in the distance. It doesn't feel like *earth. . . .* The journey is a muted pause between the noise of Athens and the roiling voice of Bombay" (90). The place is not merely a visual consequence but uniquely makes a voice of its own. Behind the languages is an-Other persistent voice remote from man's reach. What is intriguing is the *other* voice getting even louder in the distance. It takes on a compelling manner and establishes an immediate relation with the self. It is a trans-(non)verbal language which could assert itself despite the spoken language floating in the air. A more concrete depiction of the voice of the Other in conversation as James observes in Ann's talk:

> There was a ready-made quality about the way she spoke. Tired
>
> nonstop fluency. It came raining out . . . . almost frantically eager to
>
> string sentences together, any sentences. She used pitch as an element
>
> of meaning. What she said was beside the point. It was the cadences
>
> that mattered, the rise and fall of the ironic voice, the modulations, the
>
> stresses. What we lacked was a subject. (100)

There is a voice speaking beyond the realistic talk, a relation with the non-*related,* the unspoken. What counts in the communication lies not in the spoken words but the manner the spoken words are conveyed. The latter helps mediate or channel the Other voice. The Other embedded in the cadences and the intonation of the voice is the temporal dimension embedded—the saying in Levinas's terms. It is the words unsaid or beyond the said—a language beyond "this-as-that" mechanism. It talks of its own accord. The spatial-temporal loop appears again like that in the language of the landscape while the temporal dimension is vividly demonstrated in the manner of talking which varies in and through time. That keeps an unbridgeable space between

the self and the Other.   Besides, the Other takes the initiative while the self, who responds before perceiving it, can't help but be a passive addressee.   It is the ethical encounter engaging the self before the self's consciousness.   Language as the Other, rather than opening up a field for the common understanding, launches the self's ethical journey.   The Other here does not refer to the other person the self is conversing with, nor is he delimited by the spoken words.   Instead, it is an-Other talk, an everyday confrontation emerging in any common talk.   It is illustrated when James felt that he and his wife, Kathryn, "could talk to each other behind his (Owen's) back, as it were, as long as we didn't get close to the basic state of things between us. . . . There's a close-up contact warmth in the names and images" (31).   It is through the *Other* talk filled with names and images that James is rendered an-*Other* kind of conversation with Kathryn, which might seem impossible in their real talk. The names and images are seemingly taking a temporal flight to another communicative level.   Yet, their relation was not severed but reinforced by the intimacy given off in the names and images.

Another revelation of the Other in the spatial-temporal loop occurs in one's gaze.   The first example happens when James flew to Athens to meet his wife who worked with the archeologist, Owen.   James was impressed by the "gaze of hers. Wondering who I am and what I want.   The look in the dark I've never been able to answer" (27).   Behind the communication in the language of silence emerges the look in the dark, the trace of the Other.   It is not something which formulates itself within our vision.   There is the presence of a dialogue lurking behind the actual. The talk with the Other marked by a spatial lacuna is constituted as the temporal lapse. Diachrony emerges in the visible appearance, accompanying the spatial reading. Furthermore, the diachronic presence of the Other is far more acutely perceived when James followed Owen to India and was amazed by the way Owen took him in his

gaze.   "He was reading when I entered and looked up to regard me in a speculative manner, trying to balance my physical make-up, my shape, form, with some memory he carried of a name and a life.   A moment in which I seemed to hang between two points in time, a moment of silent urging" (274-75).   DeLillo's depiction of James's hanging between two presences amazingly makes a more vivid illustration of Levinas's diachrony.   It is a temporal gap inserted into a spatial order which seemingly contains everything on the same plane but perpetually sustains the lapse designating the elusive and the progressive as well as the irreducible and incommensurable.   Thus, the ethical order constructed on the diachronic basis aims at the exposition of what goes beyond the audible or the visible—the spatial responding or reading.   It is marked by the Other who is indeterminate and unspeakable but acutely perceived and closely related.

Actually, what DeLillo emphasizes is the response to a language as the Other, an absolute alterity pivoted on the spatial-temporal loop.   It is a relation which allows no further definition or explication except for the unavoidable confrontation with its compelling presence.   Extending the notion of man's relation with language from the spatial to the temporal, the visual to the audible, DeLillo presents an ethical proximity between man and the looming and inevitable unknown.

Aside from the *languages* wrapping the landscape and making up daily communication, more evident and concrete example of language is revealed in the words inscribed on the stones or walls which function as a perpetual mystery worth pursuing to Owen, the archaeologist, and Kathryn, his assistant.   Two levels of diachrony are considered here.   First, the temporal lapse is implied in the repeated sentence—"[t]he word for yesterday was the same as the word for tomorrow" (279, 287).   The repetition occurred along Owen's search for certain kind of eternity in carved words in India.   Immersing himself in the sights and scenes of India, Owen

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learned a few words of Tamil and Bengali and was able to ask for food

and lodging in Hindi when necessary, and to read a bit and ask directions.

The word for yesterday was the same as the word for tomorrow.

Professor Coomeraswamy said that if he asked someone for details of his

life, the man might automatically include details from the lives of dead

relatives. Owen was taken by the beauty of this, of common memories

drifting across the generations.   (278-79, italics mine)

Owen was enchanted by the beauty of the unchanged meaning or memories along the

history.   Along his journey, the idea was attenuated when he came to know the fact

that "[h]e would have to learn the names of things" (286), as the names of the place

would be the stairs to his destination.   The names attached to the places help achieve

the understanding between Owen and the natives:

Owen: "But what will you show me? We're somewhere between

Jaisalmer and the Pakistan border."

The native: "Jaisalmer, Jaisalmer." He made a happy chant of it.

"And the Pakistan border," Owen said

The man looked at him.   *The word for yesterday was the same as the*

word for tomorrow.   (287, italics mine)

In this passage, the name of Jaisalmer leads to a mutual understanding between them,

implying an established historical common ground.   With the names, they *see* each

other.   Ostensibly, the argument assumes an eternity of words.   But, the repetition

of the sentence marks how the meaning overflows the intention or designation as

every meaning presupposes an inaccessible origin with the historical course

considered.   That is, the words might be the same but the context or meaning might

have been expanded, reduced, or even lost in a way that is never known to us.   A

contact with the unreachable and unretrievable contained in the alphabets, as Owen

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talks about his fascination with the stones: "[t]he stones spoke.   It was a form of conversation with ancient people.   It was also riddle-solving to a certain degree.   To decipher, to uncover secrets, to trace the geography of language in a sense" (35). The words passed down in carved or written form are compared to a spatial metaphor, a geographical mapping of language.   In the spatial rummaging of the ancient words, the temporal distance or dimension would keep reminding us of the irretrievable nature of language, the irreducible Other.   Hence, the diachronical relation with language makes an incommunicable communication with a time lost in history, leaving the secrets perpetually undeciphered or unsolved.

The other diachronical dimension is rooted in the process from the world to the word as Owen comments that "[e]veryday objects, animals, part of the body.   It's interesting to me, how these marks, these signs that appear so pure and abstract to us, began as objects in the world, living in many cases" (116).   The wor(l)d translation is an irreversible process in which the word gradually and irreversibly defers itself from its origin and takes on its own property.   But it does not mean the word is totally irrelevant with the world but maintains a disconnected connection as Benjamin contends:

> It is plausible that no translation, however good it may be, can have any
> significance as regards the original.   Yet, by virtue of its translatability
> the original is closely connected with the translation; in fact, this
> connection is all the closer since it is no longer of importance to the
> original   (1968: 71).

As DeLillo presents, Owen's fascination with the words may not only lie in a nostalgic feeling toward the past or the lost but is involved with something both beyond and in the words.   The diachronical concept perpetuates in the word's never-transparent translation from the original, the object or the world.   That is,

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DeLillo takes the route from the world to the word, the empirical to the linguistic, the spatial to the temporal, depicting the situation of being trapped in the unsolved situation between the untraceable world/word translation, spatial and temporal integration.   Language as the ethical Other is never cut off from man's perception of the real world.

Pivoted on the spatial and temporal integration, DeLillo's observation of language as the ethical Other is significant in several senses.   First, language is not restricted to the speaking or written language but comprises man's immediate perception or reading of the world, the space people inhabit.   Second, the space does not merely include the geological diversity, the visual surroundings.   The audible, inclusive of the voices, the noises and even the silence are components of the space for reading.   Thirdly, the spatial-temporal configuration is furthered in DeLillo's exploration of practically-used language itself.   That is, an-Other voice talks beyond the dialogue, demonstrating the saying of the Other which involves the pitch, cadences or intonation of the speaker as well as a response to an unnamable interlocutor.   Besides, it is from DeLillo's spatial reading of the world as language that we detect how Levinas's notion of diachrony underlies the ethical relation with language.   More interestingly, the ethical relation structured on the trilateral relation among man, the world, and language makes a spatial and temporal loop in which man starts with the spatial reading and confronts the incommensurable and irreducible alterity of the temporal stressing an ethical distance unable to be eliminated.   And it is in the loop that language makes the perpetual ethical Other to us.

IV.   The Self in the Ethical Relation with Language

Relation is usually bi-lateral; that is, the observation of language as the Other does not negate the existence of the self.   However, the impact of the Other leaves

the self ambivalent towards language.   The self tends to treat it as a means but simultaneously is conscious of its un-thematizable character.   Language as the Other in *The Names*, coexisting with and even prior to one's connection with other people, makes an ethical call to the self.   It is the ethical responsibility that makes up either the dilemma, the adventure, or the risk for the self, who ends up with vulnerability and passivity in *face* of the *Other* language.

The ethical relation marked by diachrony puts into question the self.   The complicating process starts with what Andahl told James, "We are no longer *in* a place. We are a little disorganized" (207).   The multiple-lingual environment unsettles the ambience of the place which turns out to be destabilizing.   The spatially-decentered self is acutely presented in James's self-observation, treating himself as an Other:

> I made my way through the mud streets, the same complicated solitude.
>
> I could almost see myself, glowing in borrowed light.   A voice, my own
>
> but outside me, speaking something other than words, commented
>
> somehow on the action.   (206)

His amazement at himself implies the preceding Othering process of the self which James himself does not catch or is not conscious of.   The diachronical time is again inevitably presented in the self recognition.   More important but paradoxical is the other voice in him but not of him, speaking incomprehensibly.   Who was actually speaking there?   There is a growing difficulty distinguishing the knowable and the perceived.   The indeterminacy of the self expression as well as the spatial perception greatly challenges the thought and ideas held in one's mind.   Aside from the recognition of an-*Other* self and an-*Other* voice in him, James also illustrates the fact that his empirical behavior is prior to his thought or ideas as he feels "I was ahead of myself, doing things that didn't correspond to some reasonable and familiar model. I would have to wait to understand.   Why had I gone to the Mani, knowing they

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might be there and why with Tap?   Was he my safeguard, my escape" (191)?

Bewildered and apprehensive, James could only shift back to the material or realistic

fact, saying "I was made of denim and sheepskin.   My shoes were water-proof, my

gloves lined with wool."   Nevertheless, his attempt to resituate himself in the real

fails as his confusion increases in words—"how else would it be? What did I expect?

The only true surprise is that I am in the scene.   It ought to be someone else sitting

here, a man who has seen himself plain" (206).   The scene actually thwarts the

possibility of such a "plain" or "normal" self-perception.   This, on the one hand,

makes the ethical relation an inevitability as the Other is found embedded in the self.

On the other, the perceived incomprehensibility again accounts for the diachronic

nature of the ethical.

The empirical experience of the space as a kind of communication lays out the

embedded Other whose relation with the self is set on the basis of the diachronical

time, transcending the domain of consciousness.   DeLillo, in the geographical

complication, marks the inevitable Other, even in one's solitude.   James perceives

his own solitude as "a collection of things rather than an absence of things.   Being

alone has components. I felt I was being put together out of these nameless things"

(162).   The certainty of the self is diminished with his perception that he was made

up of those nameless things, the temporalized spatial reading.   The self is no longer

what the self could tell.   The Other is not merely relevant but closely related to the

self.   DeLillo's ethical relation thickens as the immediate contact with the geological

diversity shatters the certainty of the self.

To reassure him-self, Owen, who was obsessed with inscriptions, believed there

was much effort made by man in history to find the pattern in words.   He took

Rawlinson, "the Englishman who wanted to copy the inscriptions on the Behistun

rock," for example.   He commented that "it's a story about how far men will go to

satisfy a pattern, or find a pattern, or fit together the elements of a pattern. . . . With his grids and lists the decipher searches out relationships, parallel structures" (79-80). Seemingly, it is the pattern which intrigues Owen all along his route to the mystery of the inscribed stones as if they were mingled in a way to yield something meaningful and more than meaningful as he found that "[t]he Greeks made an art of the alphabet. They gave their letters a symmetry and a sense that something final had been made out of the stick figures of various early forms" (167). Actually, what comes to the fore is the confrontation with the inscribed words in which he immerses himself in and is overwhelmed with as he said that "I've given myself over to the stones, James. All I want to do is read the stones" (23). Distinct from general research workers, Owen acts in a passive and responsive manner without knowing what to find or achieve as he told James

> I've been preparing for this all my life. . . Not that I knew it. I didn't
> know it until I walked into this room . . . . All I can tell you is that I'm
> not surprised to find myself here. The moment I stepped inside it
> seemed right. It seemed inevitable, the place I've been preparing for. . . .
> For sixty years I've been approaching this room. (275)

That passivity implies his destined obligation to reply to "[t]he mystery to alphabets" (284). This is also the trait that characterizes the ethical as the "superlation of passivity." (Llewelyn 137). The passivity which is beyond being and nothingness is "indeed sub-jectivity, but subjectivity of the for-others, not of for-itself" as if the absolute passivity "answers the infinitude of the absolute other" (Llewelyn 142). This corresponds to Levinas's notion of passivity which is absolute in two senses: one is the diminished authority or autonomy of the self and the other refers to the unknown force eliciting the self's pre-conscious responsibility for the Other lying behind language. That is, the self is obliged to respond to the Other which could be

located neither in terms of being nor nothingness. The ethical relation with the Other turns out to be a magnetic force, perceivable and demanding rather than visible or comprehensible, pulling the self to the Other. More importantly, the passivity does not imply any reluctance; instead, what is found different from Levinas's passivity is that Owen is somehow enchanted and inspired by the call and highly-motivated in the response, though he is denied any possible meaning.

Passivity is the self's responsibility for the unknown Other as the self no longer takes hold of himself. Inevitably, everyone engaged in the responsibility for the infinite Other lying behind the sensible reading of the world—the visual, the audible, the written, as well as the perceivable. In *face* of the Other, the self responds and reacts rather than request or act. The self commits himself to and communicates with the saying which is "prior to being a communication in which a truth is manifested. . . . breaks through the noema involved in intentionality, stripping me in extreme passivity of every identical quiddity" (Hand 6). That is, the responsibility for the Other by means of language engages the outward exposure to the world and leads to an inward recognition of the decentered self. It is a state in which

> I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from a "prior to every memory," an "ulterior to every accomplishment," from the non-present par excellence, the non-original, the anarchical, prior to or beyond essence. The responsibility for the other is the locus which is situated in the null-site of subjectivity, where the privilege of the question "Where?" no longer holds. (2000b: 10)

This is a lapse of time involved in the responsibility since it occurs before the self's consciousness, essence, or origin. Such a responsibility for the Other accounts for the passivity of the self in the saying which is "not the passivity of a 'language that speaks' without a subject. It is an offering oneself which is not even assumed by its

own generosity, an offering oneself that is a suffering . . . . the suffering of suffering, the ultimate offering oneself, or suffering in the offering of oneself" (2000b: 54). This is the crux of Levinasian ethics while the self is stripped of his supposedly freedom, rationality and intentionality by giving in him-self. Hence, that ethical state is far from reciprocal and harmonious. Rather, suffering and fear are what accompanies the ethical relation.

DeLillo arranges a subplot of mysterious murders to demonstrate the threat and fear implied in the power of language. As the implanted murders were committed by a cult for unknown reason, James was insinuatingly informed that the victims' initials matched those of the places—a horrifying and amazing matching which is associated with violence as well as mystery. Violence of language first appears when man starts his relation with names. Nevertheless, the violence not merely involves the brutal behavior but the *other*-ing of the self under the name. James once said, "When women call me James, it gives me an image of myself. It *affords* me James. Grown-up" (223). While the names mysteriously render James an image to identify with instead of a mere sign signifying him,[6] DeLillo has paradoxically extends the violence by bringing in the names of the places which grant the self a sense of presence but makes acute the mysterious risk. There is a loop of DeLillo's ethical relation with places. It starts from man's reaction toward different places to the languages characterizing these places and is marked by the relation with language, the names of the places, and then the initials of the names which lead the attention back to the places. The loop again presents the impotence of the self who is overwhelmed by the irreducible Other lying behind the spatial and temporal loop of language as mentioned in earlier sections.

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[6] DeLillo presents a similar idea on names while Jack in *White Noise* tries to create an image to match his study on Hitler. Names, again, provide an image for the one to respond to and reshape one's recognition of the self. This aspect would later be further discussed in next chapter.

With the unknown matching of the initials, the violent power of names leaves the self vulnerable and fearful in face of the secret of the murders.   As a risk analyst, James has cultivated his sensitivity to the mysterious murder as he probed into the cult concerning the name and the pattern.   He told Owen that "[i]t scares hell out of me, Owen.   My life is going by and I can't get a grip on it.   It eludes me, it defeats me. My family is on the other side of the world.   Nothing adds up.   The cult is the only thing I seem to connect with.   It's the only thing I've been right about" (300). Names are the essential clues to the murders and violence becomes his daily obsession as the mysterious language pattern or power has worked on him as he found himself scanning for stories of assault, suicide and murder in daily newspaper reading and "trying to match the name of the victim with the name of the place where the crime was committed" (250).   More amazingly, he had witnessed the incarnation of the ethical relation in the accident of being shot on the street, wondering if he was trapped in the acts of terror because of the initials of his own names.   In a word, DeLillo illustrates the anxious and obsessive self under the threat of the Other with the dramatized presentation of the mysterious power in language.

The ethical relation with language as the overwhelming and even threatening Other is more forcefully illustrated by the presentation of the violence in language. It makes up the spatial and temporal milieu that people are obliged to respond to as James found himself immersed and even drowned in languages as he last appeared in the crowd.   "Everyone is talking.   I move past the scaffolding and walk down the steps, hearing one language after another, rich, harsh, mysterious, strong.   This is what we bring to the temple, not prayer or chant or slaughtered rams.   Our offering is language" (331).   Languages, in DeLillo's perspective, construct a complicate ethical relation for man to reach and relate the world.   Yet, the risky and mysterious aspect of language makes a ubiquitous and overwhelming Other and poses great threat on the

self.   At the end of the story, it describes a boy trapped in the language maze and "tongue tied" while communication in language is reduced to the barest level while the horrified and restless self felt that

> [t]here was no where to run but he ran. . . . No where did he see what he
> expected.   Why couldn't he understand and speak?   There was no
> answer that the living could give.   Tongue tied!   His fait was
> signed. . . . This was worse than a retched nightmare.   It was the
> nightmare of real things, the fallen wonder of the world.   (339)

Language as the Other approaches in a way completely depriving the self of the ability for self-expression or recognition.   The self responds in silence, not knowing what to say.   DeLillo compares it to a nightmare in which the character has no way to shun away from but fearfully proceeds in the ethical journey with the Other.

As DeLillo depicts, the self in the ethical relation with language has been passive and vulnerable in an adventurous life journey with nothing pre-assumed or presupposed.   DeLillo focuses on man's preoccupation with language which is foregrounded as the prominent ethical Other.   As the characters in the novel go from one place to another, confront one language after another, the transition of the places defamiliarizes their sense of the world.   The voice of the world is made particularly conspicuous and evokes the response or responsibility of the characters.   The saying of the world functions as an adventurous access to the wor(l)d as an incomprehensible Other lurking behind the wor(l)d relation in a spatial-temporal loop.   Yet, being incomprehensible or unknown is not enough to account for the self's ethical confrontation.   What accompanies the incomprehensibility is the fear for the possible risk or violence.   The more you dig in the enigma of the saying, the more risk that one is exposed to.   Hence, DeLillo's foregrounding of language actually makes manifest the paradoxical nature of language in communicating the incommunicable,

expressing the inexpressible in which man could no longer claim the center or dominance but is passively confronted with the violent and threatening uncertainty.

Conclusion

As *The Names* is set in areas linguistically-multiple and geographically-complex, the characters are awakened to language as it is no longer meant to bridge the gap between man and the world. Paradoxically speaking, the linguistic collision or translation keeps defying any possible meaning instead of retrieving or forging any certainty. With the setting, DeLillo, in his unique perspective, stresses how language takes *place* in the spatial reading of the world. From Greek through the Middle East to India, what confronts man is the places *talking* in their own *languages*, re-awaking man to the immediacy of the spatial languages in a forceful and imposing way. Aside from the *spatial* language, the actual languages *speak*, too. The abundant geographical variation accommodates more languages than the variations of the landscapes could account for. Language hence incarnates man's inevitable responsibility for the Other, as Levinas states that

> the beginning of language is in the face. In a certain way, in its silence, it calls you. Your reaction to the face is a response. Not just a response but a responsibility. These two words [*réponse, reponsabilité]* are closely related. Language does not begin with the signs that one gives with words. Language is above all the fact of being addressed . . . which means the saying much than the said. (1988: 169-70)

In *face* of language, man confronts the Other, who is incomprehensible and unknown. The inevitable response as well as responsibility makes up a relation which does not hinge upon the difference reducing the Other to the logic of the same. Instead, DeLillo's presentation of the ethical relation corresponds to that of Levinas, depicting

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a situation in which characters are overwhelmed by the mystic power lying behind the world or words.   It is especially characterized by Levinas's idea of diachrony, which designates a temporal lapse and an absolute alterity.   Nonetheless, though drawing on Levinas's temporal notion, diachrony, DeLillo makes unique the ethical configuration by going from the spatial to the temporal, construing an ethical loop. Going further than Levinas in exploring the ethical Other in language, DeLillo founds a base for the ethical dimension of language from the confrontation with the surroundings to the daily communications.   That is, DeLillo's ethical relation starts with the trilateral relation among man, the world, the language and is pivoted on the spatial and temporal loop which goes from the visible to the audible, from the names to the verbs, from the spoken to the written.   Hence, from the spatial reading to the temporal dimension, the ethical loop goes back to the idea of the proximity of the un-subsumable or incomprehensible Other which perpetuates the distance from the self.   More significantly, DeLillo's emphasis on the anxiety over the Other especially corresponds to the ubiquity of the risk in the postmodern age.   Hence, the self, journeying through constant adventure in confrontation with language as the Other, awakens to the fact that language is by no means a tool but an endless confrontation with the unknown, overwhelming and threatening Other in the wor(l)d.