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**From the Recognized Subject to the Ethical Subject: Susan's "Substance"
and J. M. Coetzee's Ethics**

"Substance" appears frequently in the narrative of Coetzee's *Foe* whose protagonist, Susan Barton, consistently inquires why she has no "substance" and how she could manage to be a substantial being. An etymological study demonstrates that "substance" is a philosophical concept that shares basic connotation with "subject". It is argued here that Susan's "substance," a key concept in the novel, is problematized by Coetzee as a narrative strategy to express his understanding of "subject" or "existence". Susan's initial endeavor to gain "substance" through demonstrating her rationality and obtaining the recognition of her "self – consciousness" by the dominant "self – consciousness" eventually evolves into her realization that the essential attribute of being a substantial subject is to be responsible for the existence of the other. Susan's shift in her understanding of "substance" indicates Coetzee's insistence on the ethical responsibility of the subject. The analysis of Coetzee's understanding of the subject in the context of Hegel and Levinas further indicates that Coetzee echoes Levinas in that both value more of ethics than of "being recognized". For Coetzee, a substantial being could only be actualized when the subject shoulders the ethical responsibility for the other.