

In(sub)ordinate Speech: Mimicry as
Bourdieuian Heterodoxy in Walcott's
Pantomime

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The use of language can be a potent site of postcolonial resistance, despite—and, perhaps, because of—how often it has been used as a tool of imperialist stratification. The way a person speaks, including characteristics such as accent and diction, is generally held to express identity and to mark a certain social position; yet, language itself is fluid, transmittable, transmutable. Language is often the first of the trappings of imperialism that the colonized are forced to adopt; nevertheless, they are intended never fully to appropriate it, but rather to speak in a way that is, in the terms of Homi Bhabha, “*almost the same but not quite*” (126 emphasis original). By speaking the colonial language while retaining an accent and a diction that differentiate them from the colonizers, postcolonial subjects are supposed to reflect the colonial presence without appropriating it. Thus, postcolonial subjects represent the power of the colonizer while signaling that they themselves are outside of it, subordinated to it.

The subordination described here is a product of a colonial system that invests in national and ethnic identity categories designed to reinforce a social hierarchy even as those categories are presented as natural or essential. This system must hide its arbitrary nature, including the fixed categories and the hierarchical social order that it constructs; its power relies upon its uncritical and tacit acceptance. An opportunity for resistance, however, appears in a certain dynamic where variation can call attention to the silent hegemony and thereby robs it of its uncontested status. This dynamic has been described by Bhabha in his theory of mimicry, but it has also been explicated more thoroughly by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his extensive study of *doxa*, the set of beliefs and customs that enjoy implicit hegemony, and *doxa's* disruption by *heterodoxy*.

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The relationship between the work of the two theorists will be examined in this article with particular attention paid to the ways Bourdieu can illuminate Bhabha's work and prove very useful to this analysis and to postcolonial studies more broadly. The argument I take up here is that through parodic performances, which call into question both the neatness of putative ethnic identity categories and their easy signification through linguistic markers, postcolonial subjects can problematize the assumptions of the hegemonic system, expose its arbitrary construction, and thereby weaken it. This article examines the ways Jackson Phillip, a character in Derek Walcott's 1978 play *Pantomime*, subverts dominant axioms regarding ethnic identity.

Walcott himself is widely considered to be masterful both in the elegance of his verbal expression and in its political critique. Seamus Heaney observes, "Walcott possesses English more deeply and sonorously than most of the English themselves. . . . And in spite of the sheen off those lines, I suspect he is not so much interested in the 'finish' of his work as in its drive" (307). For the purposes of this argument, then, I read Walcott's virtuosity as mindful, mainly concerned with the action of his work, with its exposure and disruption of the reader's assumptions, particularly those regarding ethnicity. Biodun Jeyifo introduces us to some of *Pantomime's* main engagements to this end:

What powers [Jackson's iconoclastic] impulse is the thinking that 'white' domination is not only political and socio-economic; it is also, or aspires to, total effectivity in the naming of things, in signifying and explanatory systems. In other words, it seeks to be an *epistemic* order of control and manipulation. . . . Jackson Philip [sic] in particular deploy[s] a surfeit of brilliant, witty conceits and tropes to debunk this epistemic, nomenclatural hegemony. (378)

Concerns about language come to the fore in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose analyses of power dynamics within societies, and of their perpetuation through hegemonic worldviews, are of urgent relevance—especially as they suggest how these dynamics can be resisted and even disabled. Yet, inexplicably, there has been relatively little writ-

ten to date that uses Bourdieu's tools to analyze postcolonial literature. This article follows in the footsteps of those few earlier works which have done so, such as Vivek Dhareshwar's discussion of the *habitus* in colonial power dynamics, and Anthony Arnone's reading of the language debate within African literature in terms of the struggle for symbolic capital within a *field*. Here I also aim to engage a broader range of Bourdieu's concepts and to consider in depth their relation to the work of postcolonial theory. As Neil Lazarus has recently confirmed in his critique of Said's writings on the role of the intellectual, Bourdieu offers a particularly useful, apt, and compelling set of tools for the analysis of ideology and power in social relations. The theoretical focus of this article aims to pave the way for further research applying Bourdieuan concepts in this field.

First, however, to avoid confusion among some of the main purposes that language use by postcolonial subjects may serve, it is important to draw one key distinction concerning the sort of language use treated here. Perhaps the most obvious purpose, which this article will *not* be addressing, is the one that Gabriel Okara indicates when he asks, "why shouldn't there be a Nigerian or West African English which we can use to express our own ideas, thinking and philosophy in our own way" (15–16). In other words, this article does not take up concepts of language for authentic communication of the self. Chinua Achebe points to this usage when he wonders whether English could "carry the weight of [his] African experience" (103). In short, I will not discuss the use of language as an expressive medium.

Another important issue that this article does not address in depth is the use of language to identify oneself with a certain group. Chantal Zabus explains this use of language, with specific reference here to the function of Pidgin in West Africa:

When the role of Pidgin is not communicative, it is identificative or disidentificative. In other words, the locutor speaks Pidgin not only to be understood but also to convey something extralinguistic. A character's utterance in a novel may therefore be interpreted as the performing of 'an act of identity'

or ‘speech-act’ whereby the character reveals his/her search for identity and for a social role. (78–79)

Zabus goes on to observe that a character may also alternate between different registers for a similarly identificative purpose: “a character may code-switch from Pidgin to S[tandard] E[nglish] and *vice versa* depending on the need to establish his/her identity and allegiance to a social group. The use of a register will therefore depend on the locutor’s audience and the social arena in which the locutor finds him/herself” (79). This sort of speech both affiliates the speaker with a particular group and expresses an inhabitable identity.

There is another mode of language to consider, which will be the focus of this article: namely, performance for a hegemonic audience. In this case, language is deliberately manipulated in a mode quite similar—at first glance—to the identificative model Zabus describes. Here, its key distinction from that model lies in its parodic or otherwise critical properties: it is not authentic expression, but utterance, which poses, or is play-acted, with the intent of highlighting the assumptions of its audience. A subject’s use of language for this specific purpose is complex in terms of its dynamics and ramifications, and it has the potential to be powerfully subversive. In the remainder of the article I will explore this citational, parodic, disruptive mode of speech.

Walcott’s *Pantomime* depicts the relationship between Jackson Phillip, a retired Trinidadian calypso singer, and his employer Harry Trewe, a British expatriate hotel owner. These are the only two characters on stage, and the majority of the exchange, set over the course of one day, revolves around a reverse rendition of *Robinson Crusoe*, which they are considering performing for the hotel guests’ entertainment. One of the most striking features of the play, as quickly becomes apparent, is Jackson’s use of language. He constantly shifts his accent, tone, and diction, and in doing so effectively satirizes the hierarchy of identity categories generally connoted by those linguistic features.

Throughout much of the play, Jackson employs what British speakers would probably regard as “proper” or “standard” English in articulate and elegant ways. This helps to highlight the irony when at other points he de-

liberately uses stereotypical or even exaggerated forms of Creole diction. When Jackson intentionally uses Creole speech his performance calls attention to Harry's assumptions and expectations of West Indian speech and identity. Since a speaker's accent and diction are generally assumed to be fixed as well as be expressive of a set category of ethnic identity, Jackson's violation of this first assumption calls the second into question as well. Moreover, given that his audience remains the same throughout, attributing his code-switching to the sort of situational strategies which Zabuz explains is out of the question. Indeed, his manipulation of Creole enhances the elegance of Jackson's expression, and he uses this form as well to make trenchant points. An example of this can be seen in the following excerpt from his discussion of the post-imperialist era:

JACKSON: And that is why all them Pakistani and West Indians in England, all them immigrant Fridays driving you all so crazy. And they go keep driving you crazy till you go mad. In that sun that never set, they's your shadow, you can't shake them off. (137)

In passages like this, Jackson's strategic mockery works on multiple levels. His statement "that sun that never set" mimics the well-known British imperialist proclamation. Furthermore, I suggest that his claim also highlights what the British would perceive to be problems of colonization: they are not able to control or terminate their encounter with the colonized, and they fear appropriation or usurpation of "their" territory by the colonized. Jackson simultaneously represents this "threat" linguistically by voicing his analysis in the diction of the colonized group who, according to imperialist norms, should not be speaking on this level.

Jackson's satiric code-switching likewise helps us to appreciate his use of stereotypically British diction. For example, shortly after the above passage, Jackson is arguing with Harry over the play. Suddenly he assumes a sarcastic condescending tone that mimics a British director:

JACKSON: Mr. Trewe. Now look, you know, I am doing you a favor.... Now I *know* that there is nobody there, but there is an

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audience, so the sooner Robinson Crusoe puts on his clothes, then the better and happier we will all be.... I am going to look up into the sky. You will, *please*, make the sea-bird noises.... I will kill you, take off your skin, make a parasol *and* a hat, and after that, then I promise you that I will remember the song. And I will sing it to the best of my ability. (139)

This unexpected and out-of-bounds mimicry challenges any unconscious assumption that the white British speaker is the (only) “proper” owner/operator of British diction. It also begins to problematize our notion of the force and legitimacy of this form as “standard.”

Jackson pushes his manipulation of language further than that in complicating our concepts of coherent linguistic patterns, and by pronouncing speech in demotic West Indian diction with a British accent. In this excerpt he is arguing about how long his restroom break will be:

JACKSON: (*in exaggerated British accent*) I go try and make it back in five, bwana.¹ ... I saw a sign once in a lavatory in Mobile, Alabama. COLORED. But it didn't have no time limit. Funny, eh? (147)

By mixing up accent and diction, Jackson mocks the ability of either to express a coherent identity.

Finally, Jackson accomplishes one of his most dramatic feats of mimicry when he holds up a portrait of Harry's British ex-wife, and adopts her position linguistically. That is, he plays her part in the ensuing conversation. Surprisingly, Harry, who had responded only with discomfort or exasperation to most of Jackson's speech-play up until this point, finds his performance so compelling that he engages with Jackson quite as though it were with his ex-wife even stop when Jackson drops the photograph altogether. Nor, it seems, is Harry bothered when Jackson periodically breaks back into his own voice and into Creole diction:

JACKSON: (*weeping*) I love you, Harold. I love you, and I loved him, too. Forgive me, O God, please, please forgive me ... (*As himself*) So how it happen? Murder? A accident?

HARRY: (*to the photograph*) Love me? You loved me so much you used to get drunk and you ... ah, ah, what's the use? What's the bloody use? (*Wipes his eyes. Pause.*) (149)

Jackson's effective impersonation of another specific individual, and one of a different sex as well as ethnicity, only troubles our conception of the relationship between speech and the speaker further.

As an introduction to the structural relationship between putative identity categories and the dynamics of domination to which they are linked, feminist theorist and philosopher Sally Haslanger steers us away from essentialism and points us instead to the central role of power in these configurations. She explains

As I see it, the core phenomenon to be addressed is the pattern of social relations that constitute certain social classes as racially/sexually dominant and others as racially/sexually subordinate; norms, symbols, and identities are gendered or raced *derivatively*, by reference to the social relations that constitute the relevant hierarchy of social classes. (5)

So, the significance of social categories derives from social relations and is then *imputed* to human subjects, rather than originating in them. In other words, whether a certain commodity, profession, or tendency is predominantly associated with men or women for example, it primarily refers to the social system in which women and "femininity" are classified as subordinate to men and "masculinity." The subsequently produced cohesion of gender as an identity category may be read as a way to stabilize this inequality.

Within the postcolonial context, according to critic Graham Huggan, this process of stabilizing the power dynamics of identity can be revealed by its recapitulation through mimicry on the part of the colonized subject: it disturbs the "naturalness" of the premises of the hierarchy. Huggan claims, "by showing the relationship between metropolitan and colonial cultures to be based on changing strategies of domination and coercion rather than on the static comparison of 'essential' attributes, mimicry may paradoxically destabilize even as it reinforces" (644). This

subversive mimicry is evident in Jackson's speech, in that it troubles not only the hierarchical arrangement of identity categories by the colonizer, but also the very dependence of colonialism upon these categories in the first place. According to Paula Burnett, colonialism's dependence on categorical separation is critical. She lauds Walcott for his "perception that the most secure counter to the binary discourse of empire that deploys alterity to justify material exploitation is not a different binary discourse but one that transcends such classifications altogether" (129).

Having established that Walcott's Jackson rejects binary categories, we can now turn to Bourdieu for an alternative way to understand binary power dynamics.

Feminist and literary theorist Toril Moi draws a distinction, similar to Haslanger's, about the construction and *subsequent* perception of gender. Her analysis introduces us to a Bourdieuan apparatus: "While the invocation of biology allows the social construction of sexual difference to appear motivated or 'natural,' its real function is to mask the true, socially produced power relations between the sexes, to present social gender divisions as *doxic*, that is to say, as that which cannot be questioned" (282). What Moi refers to here is Bourdieu's concept of the *doxa*, which he defines as "the class of that which is taken for granted...the sum total of the theses tacitly posited on the hither side of all inquiry, which appear as such only retrospectively, when they come to be suspended practically" (*Outline of a Theory of Practice* 168). Doxic beliefs are understood and accepted as having no alternatives, no competitors, not least because they are never introduced except as always already axiomatic. They generally have no point of introduction at which they could be held up to debate but are inherited imperceptibly as the legacy of "our" culture. In other words, they form the foundations upon which our worldview is based, and we are often not even explicitly aware of believing them.²

To focus more directly on how these theories can elucidate our reading of *Pantomime*, consider the case of doxic ethnic/national/class categories, as denoted by subjects' use of language, within the postcolonial context. A strong argument can be made that just as bodily features are taken to signal one's place within a hierarchy of socially construct-

ed genders or races, language (including accent, diction, and so forth) is likewise interpreted as a marker of one's place within a hierarchy of socially constructed ethnicities or classes. Using language as an indicator of status distracts from the fact that the real basis of hierarchical structures lie more in power differentials than in difference *per se*. And indeed, within postcolonial studies it is understood that "language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth,' 'order,' and 'reality' become established" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 7). Here, the authors refer particularly to the notions of "standard" and "substandard" forms of a language, as well as to the way that variations on usage, accent, and slang are codified according to this "structure of power."

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin go on to claim, however, that "[s]uch power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice" (7). This bold statement presumably indicates the postcolonial speaker's potential to disrupt the metropolitan colonizer's monopoly on language use and authority. Yet whether every "post-colonial voice" is effective in this way, or even intends to be so, should not be taken for granted. This question mainly depends on whether, as Bourdieu proposes, the post-colonial subject accomplishes a problematization of the hidden axioms involved in the hegemonic doxa. As Moi points out, "to be a member of a disadvantaged minority within a given institution or field in no way guarantees that one will develop a revolutionary or oppositional consciousness" (292). Indeed, there can be mimetic responses that are inherently complicit and that support the dominant system, which is often opposed to the interests of the subject. "For the paradox is that members of minority groups who do succeed in such a system are at least as likely to identify with it as the enabling cause of their own success as to turn against its unjust distribution of symbolic capital" (Moi 292). It is possible for these subjects to embrace the ways that the social system transfigures them and to turn a blind eye to its injustices. Such a response may be may be conceived of as a kind of mimesis that involves the subject's active divestment of his or her original social position, identity, and markers.

According to Bourdieu's definition of the *field*, or the arena in which any specific type of power is negotiated, this sort of divestment to some extent may be considered a necessary sacrifice to the struggle. Bourdieu characterizes the field as "an area, a playing field, a field of objective relations among individuals or institutions competing for the same stakes" (*Sociology in Question* 133). And, continuing with the metaphor of athletic competition, he specifies that "the precondition for entry to the field is recognition of the values at stake and therefore recognition of the limits not to be exceeded on pain of being excluded from the game. It follows that the internal struggle can only lead to partial revolution that can destroy the hierarchy but not the game itself" (134). The revolution can change who is in which position, but it cannot change the presence of the hierarchy itself. He goes on to note that, "the opposition between [dominant and dominated] constantly changes in content but remains structurally identical" (135). But like many fields of competition that wrestle for social capital, the contest is rigged. In effect, the colonized are forced to compete with the British for Britishness and its attendant prestige; yet, as in all fixed games, the prize purports to be attainable. In any event, the nature of competition entails that the competitors who play by the rules are significantly constrained from effecting substantial critique or change. This would confirm our reading of Jackson, who does not seem to be interested in such compliance, as an "effective post-colonial voice." He is fully aware of the injustices of the system, and, because he is not committed to competing within it, he is able to effectively distinguish himself from it, and to gain enough critical distance to achieve a potent critique.

Without this sort of radical critique, the agents who act within the bounds of hegemonic discourses and constructs can be "overtaken" by them, and thus perpetuate them more or less uncritically, as Bourdieu explains:

Because [the agent's] actions and works are the product of a *modus operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an 'objective intention,' as the Scholastics put it, which always outruns his conscious inten-

tions. The schemes of thought and expression he has acquired are the basis for the *intentionless invention* of regulated improvisation. Endlessly overtaken by his own words, with which he maintains a relation of 'carry and be carried,' as Nicolai Hartmann put it, the virtuoso finds in the *opus operatum* new triggers and new supports for the *modus operandi* from which they arise, so that his discourse continuously feeds off itself like a train bringing along its own rails. (*Outline* 79)

The values and mores of a culture tend to self-perpetuate, and in the case of imperialism, it can be argued that the very fabric of an imperialist culture—language, imagery, dress, customs—implicitly privilege the imperial, even when transplanted to a new environment. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's well-known thesis that language "carries" the culture from which it originated, and that, more specifically, "an oppressor language inevitably carries racist and negative images of the conquered nation" (*Moving the Centre* 35), provides an excellent example. Jackson manages to escape this vortex, however, largely because his awareness of the alternatives to, as well as the inconsistencies and poorly grounded assumptions of the hegemonic worldview disrupts its doxic nature, at least as far as he and his audiences are concerned. In subtle as well as sensational ways, he "poses the question which the doxic experience of the social world excludes by definition—the question of the (particular) conditions making that experience possible" (*Outline* 3).

Bhabha's concept of mimicry may be useful in understanding the means by which Jackson affectively questions the doxa. Mimicry's complex dynamics involve both the desire of the colonizer "for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (126), and the agency of the colonized to reflect and subvert that desire. Bhabha posits that by recapitulating the messages, desires, and authority of the colonizer, but doing so ironically and incompletely, the subversive desire of the postcolonial subject "articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical differences that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority. It is a desire that reverses 'in part' the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the

colonizer's presence" (129).³ In other words, mimicry disrupts the colonizer's monopoly on representation.

The agency involved in this intervention into the field of representation and desire normally dominated by the metropolitan gaze may remind us of the following dynamic set forth by Jacques Lacan:

Only the subject—the human subject, the subject of the desire that is the essence of man—is not, unlike the animal, entirely caught up in this imaginary capture. He maps himself in it. How? In so far as he isolates the function of the screen and plays with it. Man, in effect, knows how to play with the mask as that beyond which there is the gaze. (107)⁴

This is precisely what Jackson is doing when he “plays with” his own appearances on the postcolonial stage. By playing with his appearance he calls attention to the metropolitan gaze, and its desire, at the same time that he displaces it by introducing the implication of his own gaze. According to Lacan's hypothesis, he is the artist whose work is an unconventional self-portrait, a representation of self as viewer, not as object, ultimately emphasizing his own subjectivity:

But when a human subject is engaged in making a picture of himself, is putting into operation something that has as its centre the gaze, what is taking place? In the picture, the artist, we are told by some, wishes to be a subject, and the art of painting is to be distinguished from all others in that, in the work, it is as subject, as gaze, that the artist intends to impose himself on us. (100)

Though Lacan speaks here specifically about painting rather than performance, I argue that his analysis holds. His description of the energetic break with the gaze of the metropolitan in favor of emphasizing one's own agency is what Walcott seems to indicate when he says, “where history is being made now, in these islands, is...in the deepening stream of the way we are now learning to think. To see ourselves, not as others see us, but with all the possibilities of the new country we are making” (“Society” 15).

The distinction between representation of the self as seer and as seen is crucial for interpreting Bhabha's contention that

mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask: it is not what Césaire describes as “colonization-thingification” behind which there stands the essence of the *présence Africaine*. The *menace* of mimicry is its *double vision* which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. (129 emphasis original)

For our purposes, it is not necessary to argue that *no* “presence or identity” *exists* for the agent of mimicry, but rather that the prospect of self-disclosure *as object*, as a visible and knowable presence, is, for the moment, outside of the realm of concern. Instead, as Bhabha puts it, “the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and ‘partial’ representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence” (129 emphasis original). Against the colonial dynamic, in which the right to look is reserved for the colonizer, contestation is most effectively accomplished by the introduction of the mimicking gaze of the colonized. This act of mimicry operates as though from behind reflective glasses, asserts the capacity of the colonized as seer, precludes the possibility of seeing him or her (this eye can see but cannot be seen), and reflects the derisive gaze of the colonizer back upon itself simultaneously.

How, then, can the subordinate subject procure this disruptive power? We can find a clue in Walcott's lament that so many “politicians are trapped in the concept of a world proposed by those who rule it, and these politicians see progress as inevitability. They have forgotten the desperate authority of the man who has nothing” (“Caribbean” 5). What can he mean by this? By referring to those in power as “trapped” in their assumptions and in their conviction of “inevitability,” he provides us with an example of the Bourdieuan principle that “agents practice as irreversible a sequence of actions that the observer constitutes as reversible” (*Outline* 5). In other words, only the subject situated outside of this dynamic has the liberty to perceive its potential for alteration. This is an illustration of the relation of knowledge to power:

because of their implicit investment in this paradigm, players in a certain field are lured (or bullied) by power to subscribe to that paradigm and not to think outside of that particular box “on pain of being excluded from the game” (*Sociology* 134). Because he is situated outside a group of subjects who, by virtue of their privileged status, are particularly susceptible to taking the hegemonic doxa for granted, Jackson is able to gain insight into the reversibility of social mores, and sets about subverting them.

Jackson’s subaltern position interacts in interesting ways with his relationship not only to more abstract social conventions, but also concretely with his metropolitan counterpart, Harry. According to Bourdieu, “‘interpersonal’ relations are never, except in appearance, *individual-to-individual* relationships and...the truth of the interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction” (*Outline* 81). We can see this represented more or less literally in the fact that at multiple points Harry says that he wants to be able to speak “man to man” with Jackson, but power always remains a salient feature of the conversations that follow. And although Harry is the one who comes up with the idea of reversing the Crusoe and Friday roles in their pantomime, and Jackson is initially reluctant to take part in it, once he does agree it is Harry who backs out. He says, “er, Jackson. This is too humiliating. Now, let’s just forget about it and please don’t continue, or you’re fired” (140). He later apologizes for his bad behavior, “man to man,” and Jackson offers to help him transform his lonely, isolated life, if they can continue with the reverse Crusoe pantomime. Harry refuses. Jackson then replies

All right. Stay as you want. But if you say yes, it go have to be man to man, and none of this boss-and-Jackson business, you see, Trewe... I mean, I just call you plain Trewe, for example, and I notice that it give you a slight shock....You see, two of we both acting a role here we ain’t really really believe in, you know....We faking, faking all the time. But man to man, I mean... (*pause*) that could be something else. Right, Mr. Trewe?

HARRY: Aren’t we man to man now?

JACKSON: No, no. We having one of them “playing man-to-man” talks. (144)

On one level, it is easy to suppose that this arises out of the confounding influence of the characters' social and political context. On another level, it is also apparent that they cannot speak on equal terms because they do not share a *field*; they are not playing by the same rules, nor even necessarily for the same stakes. Another way of approaching this issue is to say that Jackson and Harry do not share the same *habitus*. Bourdieu defines this as “the ‘feel’ for the game and the stakes, which implies both the inclination and the capacity to play the game, to take an *interest* in the game, to be taken up, taken in by the game” (*Sociology* 18). In other words, the habitus may be seen as the body of unarticulated instincts, valuations, and so forth, that accrue over a significant period of time spent pursuing a certain set of (mostly unarticulated) goals and beliefs—or, to return to more familiar ground, it is the set of inclinations that accrues while living with a certain doxa, which serve to reinforce our unarticulated commitment to the doxa. Harry does not grasp Jackson's habitus, mainly for lack of experience with it, and can generally be said not to share it; Jackson may have the capacity to play Harry's game, but he will not be taken in by it.

One practical ramification of their lack of a shared habitus is the marked absence of mutual intelligibility, which quickly becomes evident. “One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of the habitus,” Bourdieu explains, “is the production of a commonsense world endowed with the *objectivity* secured by consensus on the meaning (*sens*) of practices and the world” (*Outline* 80). They lack this sort of consensus because the orchestration or “co-ordination”⁵ as Bourdieu terms it elsewhere, which would otherwise have brought about its semblance, is precluded by their lack of a shared, uniform habitus. Harry and Jackson lack coeval habitus because “[t]he homogeneity of habitus is what—within the limits of the group of agents possessing the schemes (of production and interpretation) implied in their production—causes practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted” (80). Jackson's resist-

ance—exemplified in periods where his performances are unintelligible and almost always unforeseeable—simultaneously signals, derives from, and feeds into his break with the dominant habitus.⁶ His resistance reinforces itself, then, in a way that is similar to the “train bringing along its own rails” which we considered earlier, in the sense that it provides the distance from which it is possible to continue in his critique.

In addition to disrupting any points of confluence between himself and Harry, Jackson also exposes the arbitrary and constructed nature of the habitus in general. The habitus, as Bourdieu tells us, is in the business of making “coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency” (*Outline* 87). It is the social capacity to turn even the most arbitrary or incidental of customs or beliefs into a matter of course, by shoring them up with a *sense* of consensus.⁷ Furthermore, a hegemonic worldview “*goes without saying because it comes without saying*” (Bourdieu *Outline* 167). The fact that its adoption is neither explicit nor examined is the main source of its power. This is “a world which has no place for *opinion* as liberal ideology understands it, i.e. as one of the different and equally legitimate answers which can be given to an explicit question about the established political order” (167–68). There is “no place for *opinion*,” of course, because the doxa must be not simply the best, but the *only* answer—to a question that must go unasked—and alternative answers threaten both as rivals to the doxa and because they expose the openness of the question (168).

While he may not be able single-handedly to establish his challenges to the hegemonic understanding of linguistic, ethnic, and national identity as “equally legitimate,” Jackson nonetheless introduces something like a *field of opinion*, or instance of “competing discourses” through the very multiplicity of his performances (168).⁸ Another way to describe this would be as *heterodoxy*, or that which contradicts the doxa and thereby disrupts it, forcing it to shift into the less privileged position of orthodoxy, which must recognize its opposition. For example, after Jackson begins to illustrate the Crusoe-Friday role reversal too vividly for Harry’s comfort, Harry’s clamoring for the restoration of his authority and position as master has become something like orthodoxy. The

master-servant dynamic to which he wants to revert has lost its sense of givenness, and he must now agitate for it:

HARRY: It's not the sort of thing I want, and I think you'd better clean up, and I'm going inside, and when I come back I'd like this whole place just as it was.

JACKSON: You mean you'd like it returned to its primal state? Natural? Before Crusoe finds Thursday? But, you see, that is not history. That is not the world.

HARRY: I just want this little place here *cleaned up*, and I'd like you to get back to fixing the sun deck. Let's forget the whole matter. Righto. Excuse me.

As with other forms of orthodoxy, Harry's need explicitly to express his wishes, which he was heretofore able to rely upon as a matter of course, not to mention the stridence of his insistence, calls into question the naturalness of his authority, and signals the weakening of his position. Jackson's retort of "Natural?" may be read as a way of taunting Harry's assumption that the imperialist power dynamic he wants is somehow natural, and of reminding him that it is in fact just the opposite.

When discourse has been splintered into orthodoxy and heterodoxy, doxa can no longer reign. Bhabha explains, "a gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze which, as Foucault describes it, liberates marginal elements and *shatters the unity* of man's being through which he extends his sovereignty" (129 emphasis added). This "gaze of otherness" is so inimical to the doxa, Bourdieu would add, because, "nothing is further from the correlative notion of the *majority* than the *unanimity* of the doxa," which can admit not even one dissident (168). This interference in the monopoly of the hegemonic doxa is also akin to the power of "narrative," or, in this context, testimony of the post-colonial voice. Edward Said describes it as undermining the metropolitan "vision," or dominating conception and representation, of the postcolonial:

[Narrative] asserts that the domination of reality by vision is no more than a will to power, a will to truth and interpreta-

tion, and not an objective condition of history. Narrative, in short, introduces an opposing point of view, perspective, consciousness to the unitary web of vision; it violates the serene Apollonian fictions asserted by vision. (240)

It is because the power and authority of the doxa, and its attendant habitus, is so dependant upon the uniformity of their acceptance that the introduction of even one competing perspective can prove so radically threatening.

This insurgent multiplicity also problematizes “legitimacy,” which Bourdieu indicates the “tacitly recognized” authority of the dominant party within a certain field (*Sociology* 70). While Jackson does not precisely claim the same sort of unquestioned, hegemonic legitimacy for any one of the identities he performs, mimics, or critiques, the very fact that he enters them onto the scene entails a competition of some sort. Certainly his performance problematizes the naturalness of the “given” identity categories previously assumed to be the only (coherent) options. By doing so, he enacts the “objective crisis” which Bourdieu sets forth as a requirement for the sort of true critique which we can observe in *Pantomime*:

The critique which brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation, has as the condition of its possibility objective crisis, which, in breaking the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence practically. It is when the social world loses its character as a social phenomenon that the question of the natural or conventional character (*phusei* or *nomos*) of social facts can be raised. (*Outline* 168–69)

In other words, social mores can masquerade as natural laws thanks to the veneer of self-evidence they get from their very hegemony, as well as from the social contract requiring all members of the society not to question their legitimacy, but to take them as a matter of course. When this social contract is disrupted or taken away, and when social mores may begin to be considered as matters not simply of custom, but also of

power, the seal of their self-evidence is broken, and questions surrounding their origins and intentions may be brought to light.

But how is this social contract disrupted? Jackson seems to recognize that a legitimate language or system “produces the essential part of its effects by seeming not to be what it is” (*Sociology* 70). By repeatedly calling attention to what is actually being said and done, beneath the façade that obscures what the system is not willing to admit, Jackson unmasks it and thereby deftly robs it of much of its power. As Bhabha puts it

Almost the same but not white: the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction. It is a form of colonial discourse that is uttered *inter dicta*: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them. (130)

So we can say that although Jackson explicitly exposes what “must be kept concealed,” such as in the “man to man” passage discussed earlier, Bhabha would say Jackson’s heterodoxy would be called mimicry when he simply uses the codes against themselves, playing with stereotyped speech and servile behavior in order to draw attention to Harry’s expectations. This, too, can “bring the undiscussed into discussion,” as we see in passages such as this, after Jackson says “tragedy” for “tragedy”:

HARRY: You mispronounce words on purpose, don’t you, Jackson? (JACKSON *smiles*.) It’s a smile in front and a dagger behind your back, right? Or the smile itself is the bloody dagger.⁹ I’m aware, chum. I’m aware.

JACKSON: The smile kinda rusty, sir, but it goes with the job. Just like the water in this hotel: (*demonstrates*) I turn it on at seven and lock it off at one. (144)

Perhaps the smile referred to here is another exemplar of mimicry: it is “itself...the bloody dagger” in that it reflects, rather than fulfills the imperialist desire for a smiling, subordinate subject. That is, the actual presentation of subordination is displaced by a mirror image of the problematic imperialist desire for it.

Jackson is not complicit with the system of language as an indicator of social class position within colonialist frameworks. Instead, he parodies the system, and reveals its weaknesses and contradictions, through intricately subversive mimicry. By contrast, the character of Harry appears very fixed, constrained within his single, monolithic position, perhaps even approaches obsolescence. This can be seen both in terms of language use and in broader implications. Critic Patrick Taylor observes, “[Harry] continues to identify himself with this role [as hotel manager], and when the crunch comes, he sees himself as master. Jackson is very different. As a former calypso singer, he too is an actor. However, he never identifies himself with the role he is playing” (296). Huggan also contrasts Harry’s dependence on established forms and customs with Jackson’s independence and agency referring to an instance in which Harry mocks a particular symbolic act of Jackson’s (the killing of a parrot) as unoriginal. He claims it had been done before in European drama: “Harry’s recourse to the cliché of artistic ‘originality’...merely emphasizes his reliance on the stock formulas of English pantomime. Jackson knows how to manipulate these formulas to his own advantage; Harry seems only to be able to reiterate them” (650). Indeed, Harry’s remarks are reminiscent of Bhabha’s observation that, “in that other scene of colonial power, where history turns to farce and presence to ‘a part,’ can be seen the twin figures of narcissism and paranoia that repeat furiously, uncontrollably” (132). Harry may stridently claim ownership of metropolitan conventions as his birthright, but he is bound by them. Jackson surpasses these conventions by demonstrating, through parody, his mastery over them.

Thus, in Jackson we see a versatility and mobility, a power of disguise and of being unchartable, unfixable, on the ethnolinguistic matrix—a powerful resource for evading colonial control and domination, as it resists that very “epistemic, nomenclatural hegemony” which the latter seeks to impose (Jeyifo 378). Furthermore, since this linguistic mimicry is not usually inverted and, when it is, rarely carries broad social consequences, this would appear to be a sort of power generally unique to the subaltern. In an important passage referencing both Bhabha and writer V. S. Naipaul, Huggan notes:

The 'mimic man' takes up the metropolitan desire to hear the strains of its own voice—to witness the duplication of its own authority—but he then rearticulates that desire as parody. Like the parrot, he mimics His Master's Voice only to mock it: the simulated obedience of mimicry is revealed as a form of camouflaged disobedience, a means by which the totalizing discourses supporting colonial hierarchies of power are made to confront their own partiality. (645)

An important reason for which this power, tied with mimicry, may be endemic to the subaltern is that this desire, or rather, this demand, to see its voice duplicated in the subordinated Other is generally endemic to the metropolitan.

Huggan estimates that, according to Naipaul, an essential power of the "mimic man" may be that of "drawing attention to the fallacy of his own colonially constructed 'obligations'" (644). It may be true, however, that Jackson's linguistic versatility may not bring him the conferral of very much economic, social, or other capital in traditional Bourdieuan terms. But after all, he is not actually competing in the field so much as satirizing the game itself. Through his nimble and creative linguistic performances, he parodies winning power by seeming to seize it, but not actually doing so, or by seizing it in ridiculous ways, and then immediately releasing it. He is making fun of the rules themselves:

JACKSON: Mr. Trewe? (*English accent*) Mr. Trewe, your scramble eggs is here! are here! (*Creole accent*) You hear, Mr. Trewe? I here wid your eggs! (*English accent*) Are you in there? (132)

This playful, satirical sort of performance is what, according to Bhabha, "mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them," and as a result, "radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history" (131–32). Because of his subaltern position, Jackson can recognize and disrupt hegemonic axioms. And because he finds the game as such objectionable enough that he is willing to exclude himself from it, his speech executes a trenchant critique of traditional categories of ethnic and national identity.

Notes

- 1 *Bwana* is the Swahili term for “sit,” and is used by Jackson to reference other colonialisms around the (former) British empire, as he does more extensively earlier on: “in that sin, that never set on your empire I was your shadow, I did what you did, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib. . . that was my pantomime” (137).
- 2 Freud also notes, “What we are concerned with, then, is a number of prohibitions to which these primitive races are subjected. Every sort of thing is forbidden; but they have no idea why, and it does not occur to them to raise the question. On the contrary, they submit to the prohibitions as though they were a matter of course and feel convinced that any violation of them will be automatically met by the direst punishment” (21). This may further illustrate the overlap between the concepts of *doxa* and taboo.
- 3 I do not mean to claim that all forms and instances of mimesis on the part of all postcolonial subjects accomplish, or even necessarily attempt, subversion, but only that this intentional, critical mimicry does so.
- 4 Again, I do not mean to apply this indiscriminately to all objects of the gaze, but Jackson does make a good example of such an agent.
- 5 The hyphen left in “co-ordination” is felicitous in that it suggests the sense of “ordained together,” and thus the deterministic character of the habitus.
- 6 Unintelligible not in the sense that they are incomprehensible, but in the sense that they do not signify within the hegemonic system, that they do not correspond with accepted identity categories.
- 7 I put *sense* in italics here because it does not matter for our purposes if in reality everyone, privately, does not think or practice the notion or the custom in question; all that matters is that we *feel* that “everyone does.”
- 8 Bourdieu writes, “the truth of doxa is only ever fully revealed when negatively constituted by the constitution of a *field of opinion*, the locus of the confrontation of competing discourses” (*Outline* 168)
- 9 The word “bloody” here is used in the British colloquial sense—as in “darn”—rather than literally; its pairing with the word “dagger” compels this clarification.

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