Creolization, Theatricality, and Parodization in Derek Walcott's *Pantomime*

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Abstract

This paper annexes two dynamic keywords, "creolization" and "theatricality", to create a strategic critical synergy of reading Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (1978), a two-act play about the postcolonial "Black-vs-White" relationship between Harry Trewe and Jackson Phillip, an allegory of a Crusoe-Friday relationship. In seeing creolization as a fusion of heterogeneous elements into a linguistic amalgamation, and theatricality as a polyphonic orchestration of staging these elements via language, this paper showcases Walcott's play as such critical synergy. This play tackles the socio-political implications of postcoloniality in the Caribbean archipelago and the legacy of plantation slavery and its impacts on the common folks. In *Pantomime* the code-switching between Harry's cockney English and Jackson's creolized English intensifies the theatrical exchange and tension between the two actors. Walcott parodizes the modern Crusoe-Friday interlocution onstage by revitalizing the dialogue with popular British pantomimes and music hall comedies as well as Caribbean indigenous cultures. This paper wishes to delineate a shared de-colonization of linguistic liberation in the Caribbean theater during a turbulent time of cultural reformation and revisionism.

Ce texte associe deux mots-clés dynamiques, « créolisation » et « théâtralité », pour créer une synergie stratégique critique de la lecture de Pantomime (1978) de Derek Walcott, une pièce en deux actes qui met en lumière la relation postcoloniale entre Noirs et Blancs qui lie les personnages de Harry Trewe et de Jackson Phillip, écho allégorique de la relation entre Crusoé et Vendredi. En présentant la créolisation comme une fusion d'éléments hétérogènes dans un amalgame linguistique, et la théâtralité comme une orchestration polyphonique de la mise en scène de ces éléments incarnée par la langue, ce texte présente la pièce de Walcott comme une synergie porteuse d'un discours critique. La pièce aborde les implications sociopolitiques de la période postcoloniale dans l'archipel des Caraïbes, l'héritage du système esclavagiste dans les plantations et son impact sur les gens ordinaires. Dans *Pantomime*, l'alternance des codes linguistiques entre l'anglais cockney de Harry et l'anglais créolisé de Jackson accroît la tension dramatique entre les deux personnages. Walcott parodie cette version moderne de l'échange entre Crusoé et Vendredi sur scène en revitalisant le dialogue avec des références aux pantomimes britanniques populaires, aux comédies de music-hall, ainsi qu'aux cultures autochtones des Caraïbes. Ce travail de recherche vise à délimiter le processus de décolonisation qui affecte la libération linguistique dans le théâtre caribéen à une époque marquée par la réforme culturelle et le révisionnisme.

Keywords

creolization, theatricality, parodization, pantomime, postcoloniality, Derek Walcott
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Drama and performance – along with epic poetry – is the oldest Western literary genre, starting in the Greek theater and continuing to gain popularity in today's Broadway's musicals and cinematic adaptations. The theatrical elements of expression and performance remain powerful with profound impacts on cultural productions and socio-political changes both regionally and globally. Slightly different from critical analyses of fiction and poetry with an inductive approach to deciphering poetic and descriptive narrations, what is fascinating and distinctive with "reading" a play before setting it onstage is an inquiry into its inherent dialogue accompanied with a visual imagination of the stage as a concrete space to "perform" the dialogue. In other words, the performativity of elements (e.g., visual aesthetics, dialectal expressions) intrinsic to the theatrical discourse is quite different from the narrative in fiction

and poetry. As Della Pollock writes, "dialogue describes the necessary but impossible desire to own meaning – to appropriate it to one's own interests, to stabilize it within a single discursive con/text" (22). However, because language in a dialogue "is forever subject to barter and raids, intersection and interception" (22), dialogical language in performance can generate countless intercepted and intersected theoretical, philosophical, and political interpretations. What happens if a performing language is rendered estranged, unsettled, and unpredictable? Why would a playwright employ "unpredictability" to de-familiarize the audience? Language creolization as theatricality in this context thus poses the paradoxical questions of de-familiarization as familiarization and unpredictability as predictability onstage, thereby opening up interesting approaches to re-reading the power of a play (of words).

Many cultural theorists in the late 20th century, dwelling on creolization as a transformative acculturation, proffer new insights into this productive term in cultural studies. *Oxford English Dictionary* online denotes "Creole" as "chiefly in the Caribbean, certain parts of the Americas… and in Mauritius and Réunion: a person born in one of these countries, but of European or African descent… In modern use, the term is generally used for people with shared European linguistic and cultural heritage, rather than relating to race." In *Poetics of Relations*, Édouard Glissant theorizes "Creole" to describe the entanglement (i.e., Relation in his coinage) between mixed indigenous and imperialistically dominant cultures and languages, where creolization "is devoted to what has burst from lands that are no longer islands" (34). According to Glissant, the most salient symbol of creolization is the creolized language, "whose genius consists in always being open, that is, perhaps, never becoming fixed except according to systems of variables that we have to imagine as much as define" (34). Glissant adds one important trait to this formation: "unpredictability." If we situate the unpredictability of creolization in theatricality, language in these postcolonial plays featuring linguistic diversity releases more performative dynamism and verbal momentum.

Taking the aforementioned statement to foreground my argument, I focus in this essay on the creolization of language as theatricality, annexing two dynamic keywords "creolization" and "theatricality" to create a strategic critical synergy in my reading of Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (1978), a two-act play about the postcolonial "Black-vs-White" relationship between Harry Trewe and Jackson Phillip, an allegory of a Crusoe-Friday relationship. In the play, however, the reverse colonial dynamic is effected through Jackson's constant attempt to parodize the language in mockery and mimicry to topple the hierarchy in theatrical performance. The two keywords in the title "creolization" and "theatricality" in separation provide nothing refreshing in scholarship, but coupling the two dynamic words as a disciplinary "encounter" creates a strategic critical synergy of reading plays from a polyvalent perspective. Both creolization and theatricality constitute a pertinent oppositional pair. Creolization is a linguistic phenomenon, and theatricality is a performative discourse, both sharing the trait of a vigorous process. Similarly, creolization is a fusion of heterogeneous elements into a linguistic amalgamation, and theatricality is a polyphonic orchestration of staging these elements via language as an old yet potent intermedium.

Derek Walcott was born in St. Lucia in 1930 but grew up between two worlds with two ancestral lines, one White and the other Black. Walcott fashioned himself as a "mulatto of style, the traitor, the assimilator" ("What the Twilight Says" 8-9) distinctive for "an eclectic fusion of the old and new" (17). As a prolific writer producing various genres in poetry, fiction, and drama, he was internationally acclaimed for his works on the socio-political implications of postcoloniality in the Caribbean archipelago. His most famous play is *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967) about the legacy of plantation slavery and its impacts on the common folks in the Caribbean region, but I choose a less known play, *Pantomime* published and premiered in 1978 because this play precisely addresses the triumvirate of "colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial encounters" of the special issue of this journal. Walcott revisits the Robinson Crusoe

narrative in a radically different fashion in the two-men play, first performed in 1978 at the Little Carib Theatre in Trinidad.[1] This play is chosen mainly for the analysis of code-switching between Caribbean Patois and standard English as well as the intricate colonial-postcolonial-decolonial implications in the Caribbean region.

The play takes place in the island of Tobago, Trinidad, where Harry Trewe, a retired British actor, tries to reenact Crusoe's story in pantomime. His co-actor, the retired Trinidadian calypso singer, Jackson Phillip, however, sharpens his tongue as a sword towards the frustrated English actor. Harry comes to Tobago to run a resort named Castaways Guesthouse for British tourists, where he solicits Jackson to perform a "Christmas panto" of Robinson Crusoe for hotel guests during the peak season of the holidays. On the one hand, their verbal jousting displays the racial, economic, and class differences typically analogous to the (ex)colonizer-colonized, master-slave, Christian-cannibal dichotomy, but on the other, Walcott envisions a much wider range of possibilities and ambivalences for the relations of Crusoe-Harry and Friday-Jackson.

In Act I, while Harry proposes to rewrite the Crusoe story to linguistically and culturally tame the "Black Friday," Jackson in reaction frustrates Harry's attempt by exaggerating the serious plot and speaking the Patois English (non-standard English mixed with local dialects), literally butchering the standard English and debilitating Harry's Englishness. When Jackson first enters, Harry gestures to him: "Friday, you, bring Crusoe, me, breakfast now. Crusoe hungry" (95). Jackson, however, responds defiantly to his employer: "Mr. Trewe, you come back with that same rake again? I tell you, I ain't no actor, and I ain't walking in front a set of tourists naked playing cannibal. Carnival, but not canni-bal" (96). As Jackson refuses to play Friday as Harry wishes, Harry then proffers to reverse the plot: "Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday. We could work up a good satire, you know, on the master-servant—no offense—relationship. Labor-management, White-Black, and so on" (109), but again refused by Jackson, thinking his boss's idea "is shit" (111). Then Jackson concedes by changing Friday's name: "Robinson obey Thursday now. Speak Thursday language. Obey Thursday gods" (114). Jackson's defiance irritates Harry again: "I'll tell you one thing, friend. If you want me to learn your language, you'd better have a gun" (117). Reveling in seeing Harry's agitation, Jackson further improvises that if he is to play a "Black explorer," Harry should play a "white sea bird" (120). As Harry cannot stand playing the colonized, he gets disturbed and stops playing along. However, the attempt to "authorize" Jackson to play the master gives him a certain kind of realization where Act II does not proceed in the way Harry wants to act the play from his European colonizer's perspective.

In Act II, where the real panto performance takes place, we can read carefully the subtext of the "pantomime," a comic play with jokes, music, and slapstick based on a fairy tale performed especially around Christmas in mostly western countries. Walcott stages the postcolonial pantomime of Robison Crusoe, which embodies the colonizer's "panto" and the colonized's "mime," and he tweaks the performance in certain mockery of its origin. Walcott parodizes the modern Crusoe-Friday interlocution onstage by revitalizing the dialogue with popular British pantomimes and music hall comedies as well as Caribbean indigenous cultures. Not only do these role-playing, role-swapping, code-switching, and re-making of the pantomime highlight the revelation of the dramatic ideal, but they also reiterate Derrida's concept that there is no center (i.e. standard language), whose "transcendental signifier and signified"[2] need to be re-contextualized with other peripheral linguistic signs and codes.

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[1] See the information in: Stan Bishop, "Walcott's Pantomime - From Port of Spain to Castries," *The Voice* (Nov. 9, 2014). https://thevoiceslu.com/2014/11/walcotts-pantomime-from-port-of-spain-to-castries/

[2] See in Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967).

A Trickster's Mimic Performativity

From the early years of his career, Walcott, quite aware of writing the subjectivity of the Caribbean people, refused to represent the Caribbean defined by colonial fantasy: "To see ourselves, not as others see us, but with all the possibilities of the new country we are making" ("Society and the Artist" 15). Nirjhar Sarkar observes that Walcott re-vitalized the stage by "creolizing" performance styles: "In the Caribbean archipelago, non-scripted and ceremonial everyday performances were rich in theatricality; 'theater was about us, in the streets, at lampfall in the kitchen doorway, but nothing was solemnized into significance' (Twilight 7)" (10). It is not uncommon that postcolonial playwrights and dramatists often select an oppressed character in the canonical work – Caliban, Bertha, or Friday – to recuperate the character with a new voice or a new language "to represent the contingency and complexity of contemporary New World identities" (Pollard 62). While British Harry would naturally choose Crusoe to identify his Britishness, Jackson's parrotic linguistic play acts as the "the-empire-writes-back" interlocution both *against* and *with* his White counterpart. In this play, the use of language as an expressive intermedium is quite remarkable, particularly, the use of a language of creolization (Patois English and vernacular dialects) from Jackson.

The audience can immediately hear onstage a typical subversive reversal of the colonizer-colonized power dynamic in Jackson's creolized diction and code-switching to dismantle the imperial tongue and to satirize Harry's authority. In Jackson's butchering as well as mastery of both languages (English and his dialect), his performativity de-authorizes the English language to render the linguistic hegemony at stake.

> JACKSON: He not sitting in his shipwrecked arse bawling out … "O silent sea, O wondrous sunset," and all that shit. No. He shipwrecked. He desperate, he hungry. He look up and see this fucking goat with fucking beard watching him and smiling, the goat with its forked fucking beard and square yellow eye, just like the fucking devil standing up there… (*Pantomimes the goat and Crusoe in turn*) smiling at him, and putting out its tongue and letting go one fucking *bleeeeeh* ! And Robie went thinking 'bout his wife and son and O silent sea and wondrous sunset ; no, Robie is the First True Creole, so he watching the goat with his narrow eyes, narrow, and he say *blehhh, eh* ? (148)

Jackson's hybrid, creolized language and pugnacious performance draw our attention to "the existential anomaly of colonially inspired contexts" (Sarkar 11). The intertextual references (e.g., "marina" as in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner") in Jackson's speech and his parodic rewording subvert the "standard" imperial tongue, change the literary references, and dismantle the authoritarian hierarchy of categories. In her detailed analysis of language use in *Pantomime*, Megan K. Ahern well argues:

> 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 deliberately 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. (4-5)

Creolization in this sense combines the disruptive vocabulary and the use of mixed registers with all the recounted sources to be "tested, remodeled, played out, and played with" (Gilbert 130).

The word "creole" derives variously from French *créole*, Spanish *criollo*, and Portuguese *crioulo*, usually referring to a similar range of people, with overlapping but distinct

geographical parameters.[3] In English and other global contexts, according to the *OED*, Creole descendants of settlers and slaves are "more or less modified in type by the climate and surroundings." In *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery* (2006), as Carolyn Berman defines it, the Creole/creolization in its cultural appropriation and application "permits (and requires) us to practice a kind of double vision, seeing every Creole twice, within the field of antislavery and the field of domestic fiction. It also requires (and permits) us to practice this double vision within a transnational frame" (4). The classic French critical framework in *Éloge de la Créolité*, a collaborative work by Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant, succinctly defines and eulogizes *créolité*, as in the blurb of the Gallimard edition: "*Ni Européens, ni Africains, ni Asiatiques, nous nous proclamons Créoles. Cela sera pour nous une attitude intérieure, mieux : une vigilance, ou mieux encore, une sorte d'enveloppe mentale au mitan de laquelle se bâtira notre monde en pleine conscience du monde*" (*Éloge*). Read in the context of *créolité* in Jackson's speech and performativity, his theatrical manipulation of creolization not only enhances the aesthetics of creolized expressions, but also variegates these verbal expressions as jabbing points. Two salient strategies of creolization employed by Jackson in his performance are quite noticeable yet potent in this play: code-switching and mimicry.

The code-switching between Harry's cockney English and Jackson's patois English intensifies the theatrical exchange and tension between the two actors. As for the code-switching strategy, I want to argue that creolization is a powerful weapon from Jackson because "[t]hrough his nimble and creative linguistic performances, [Jackson] 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" (Ahern 21). It is also a hidden agenda from Walcott to use creolization as theatricality to reiterate the postcolonial the-empire-writes-back discourse. One crucial trait for the development of creole languages is the "creole continuum," defined by linguists. According to Ashok Bery, "The existence of this continuum allows speakers to move between different language varieties – a characteristic known as code-switching. Although creolization is not synonymous with translation, it is nevertheless one manifestation of a translational structure within Caribbean cultures" (156). A clear example of the creole continuum occurs from the onset of the play:

> 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 ?
> (*To himself*)
> And when his eggs get cold, is I to catch.
> (*He fans the eggs with one hand*)
> What the hell I doing ? That ain't go heat them. It go make them more cold. Well, he must be leap off the ledge. At long last. Well, if he ain't dead, he could call. (94)

One important linguistic trait in this passage is the Creole continuum which "involves an adjustment of word use and spelling to give an accessible rendering of dialect forms" (Ashcroft *et al.* 45). The continuum is constantly "discontinued" and disrupted syntactically by Jackson in his use of grammar, diction, and accent in interspersing the standard language and the indigenous dialect. Jackson's speech abounds in code-switching and invented language: "Get offa that ledge" (96); "I ain't know what it is eating you this Sunday morning, you hear, Mr.

[3] See the etymology of "Creole (n)", in *Online Etymology Dictionary*: https://www.etymonline.com/word/creole

Trewe, but I don't feel you have any right to mamaguy me, because I is a big man with three children, all outside" (105); "I pick up this parasol, and I walk like a mama-poule up and down this stage" (111); "Amaka nobo sakamaka khaki pants kamaluma Jesus Christ!" (114); "Me na strangle him, bwana" (155). Code-switching enlivens the language by estranging its familiarity, and in turn this creole continuum, together with the actor's exaggerated non-verbal performativity onstage, addresses cultural differences that paradoxically create comic effects on the performance. Jackson's code-switching in the dialogue is constructed to look natural while employing various sources and references to accommodate the monolingual audience forced to experience a modicum of uncertainty and unpredictability as mentioned at the beginning of my essay. This uncertainty makes the uttering of the meaning volatile and rife with interpretive possibilities.

In addition, code-switching, examined in the context of postcolonization or decolonization suggests language as a free agent akin to the indigenous trickster language. It reminds us of Gerald Vizenor's important claim that "the trickster figure is comic nature in a language game" (*The Trickster of Liberty* x), and the "language game" itself becomes the ultimate trickster. The author of a trickster text, usually written by an indigenous or postcolonial writer, employs the language as trickster that "perceives and corrupts the sacred center to avoid numerical perfection and terminal values" (*Landfill Meditations* 176).

I will take up Vizenor's trickster discourse and further argue that Jackson's "corrupted" language as creolization in the play decenters British English norms and conventions through tricksteric performativity. Jackson talks and plays like a trickster onstage. Refusing to speak or follow the "orthodox" language and syntax, Jackson plays with a creolized utterance by pronouncing his words in Creole, sometimes punctuated with invented words or vernacular dialects, and exaggerating the imitated British accent: "I go try and make it back in five, bwana. … I saw a sign once in a lavatory in Mobile, Alabama. COLORED. But it didn't have no time limit. Funny, eh?" (153-4). Soon after this funny trickster language, Jackson impersonalizes Harry's British ex-wife in his Creole language:

> 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 ? (161)

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

If we look at the theatrical space between the problematic two poles Harry-Crusoe and Jackson-Friday, the space is a trickster space that by its very definition is filled with humor and incongruity. The trickster discourse, reminiscent of the trickster figure in indigenous stories, is as well a resistance against the imposition of a structure on the discourse: an interior landscape that "summons agonistic imagination in a comic holotrope to a discourse on the revolution in semiotic signs" ("Trickster Discourse" 193). While Jackson proposes the Crusoe-Friday reversal, Harry's authority as master is constantly challenged, and Jackson further uses Harry's imperialist logic against it.

> HARRY : Well, I do. 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. I mean, just before everything started.
> 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 : No, no, I don't give an Eskimo's fart about the world. Jackson. 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. (127)

In this clamoring Jackson, jumping in and around the trickster space, splits the hierarchical division, where Harry views imperialism as "primal" and "natural," but Jackson challenges "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" (Ahern 17). As such, the play both *negotiates* and *negates* the space of a performing self that refuses to situate itself in one category and in one "language." For Jackson, playing the trickster to reverse and to subvert is significant because in this untotalizable rupture of the creolized space, the trickster figure and his language symbolically capture the amoral and non-logical rhythms and outcomes of the theatrical effectiveness. Right in the beginning of Act II, Jackson affirms that it is "Creole acting… Yul Brynner. *Magnificent Seven*. Picture, papa! A kind of Western Creole acting. It ain't have no English cowboys…" (131). Jackson's wordplay, a symbolic dismemberment of the generative parts from Harry, thus creates a new cultural space out of the big bang of symbolic narrative explosion, the climactic free-for-all of his playful performance.

By mixing up accent and diction and by playing with both ethnicity and gender, he successfully disrupts the Black-and-White systems and categories. Walcott's play does not (intend to) present any purity of culture, nor that of language. Jackson's language rebuttal blends the White and Black wor(l)ds through the hybridization of languages, exposing conflicts, contacts, contaminations, and collisions. In other words, *Pantomime* particularly employs the linguistic wordplay of code-switching, interposing, and blending to form a chorus of tricksteric voices.

The Anticolonial Parody and Paradox

It is also inevitable to expound colonial mimesis/mime/mimicry without revisiting Bhabha's concept of mimicry to further understand Jackson's speech. Mimicry, in the postcolonial language politics, becomes the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the languages of the other, thereby enabling the critic to trace complex movements of disarming alterity in the (post)colonial text. Jackson's linguistic creolization involves fusion, the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form or the master narrative. Creolization as race-less and class-less chaos by contrast then produces no stable new form, but rather something closer to Bhabha's "restless, uneasy, interstitial hybridity: a radical heterogeneity, discontinuity, the permanent revolution of forms" (Young 25). Such an employment of creolization through mimicry corresponds to Bhabha's concept of the foreignness of languages: "the performativity of translation as the staging of cultural difference" (Bhabha 227). Concerning mimicry in relation to parody, in Bhabha's words, "the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy.... mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically" (90). In other words, the mimicking personage uses the duplication of its authority to ridicule it.

Furthermore, this foreignness of creolized language "'destroys the original's structures of reference and sense communication as well' not simply by negating it but by negotiating the disjunction…" (Bhabha 227). Jackson's resistance in the form of mimicry actually reflects a

capacity for survival at the edges of discourse. Jason Allen-Paisant well justifies Jackson's performing Black body in relation to the indigenous survival through mimicry:

> Instead, Jackson relies on codes stored in his body to resist nihilistic violence. These codes are adaptations, reiterated behaviours, developed as a result of a sustained, embodied reality of violence. The significance of what Nettleford calls 'marronnage,' then, is that it comes about through histories of masking, duplicity, and fugitivity that offer creative capacities for engineering space in the institution of enslavement in which "other avenues of knowledge production were closed categorically." (2021, 54)

Mimicry in this particular instance effectuates parody as both produce the disruption of the ability to make clear-cut distinctions between linguistic normality and deviation, between cultural authenticity and imitation. We probably understand why stand-up comedies make the audience laugh through the mimicry of race, language, and gender. Moreover, parody suggests a form of transgression, thus dismantling and frustrating the authorial representation. In her essay "Performativity, Parody, Politics," Moya Lloyd argues that "parody may be transgressive from the perspective of the specific linear history of practices that constitute a particular individuated subject (exposing the fact that their doing of gender is always contingent)" (208). We first see Jackson in switching the roles and renaming Harry "Thursday" with Harry's objection:

> JACKSON : This cannibal, who is Christian, would have to start unlearning his Christianity. He would . . . have to be taught by this—African that everything was wrong, that what he was doing . . . I mean, for nearly two thousand years . . . was wrong. That his civilization, his culture, his whatever was . . . horrible. Was all . . . wrong. Barbarous, I mean, you know. And Crusoe would then have to teach him things like, you know, about . . . Africa, his gods, patamba, and so on . . . and it would get very, very complicated, and I suppose ultimately it would be very boring…. (126)

Jackson attempts to act as Harry's counterpart rather than subordinate by mocking the British empire. Later we hear Jackson's transgressive language in his discussion about the post-imperialist era: "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" (113). Jackson's parodic mockery "that sun that never set" mimics the 19th-century British imperialist mindset, and by equating the "third-world" immigrants with the indigenous Friday to disrupt the European rationality and sanity – "driving you crazy till you go mad" – he is also mockingly alluding to hysteria, a pathological definition created by the empire and by the patriarch on the other, the subaltern. Now Jackson writes back to the empire and he drives the empire crazy.

Framing the postcolonial debates and resonances in language use in the previous two parts on trickster and parody, I would add a revisionist Glissantian reading of creolization of the Caribbean in the heterogeneous archipelagic islands, mentioned briefly in the opening section of this essay. Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* details his poetics of the nation to affirm the paradox about the national language that language "can precede and found the 'reason' of the land, but it cannot live at a distance from its substance and its flavour, which it signifies. In other words: the land must have throbbed at least once in its total freedom in order for the poem, which has signified the land, to install itself forever in its truth" (150). According to Glissant, the Martinicans, like many colonized peoples, begin to speak this distinctive language of "reason" and "flavour." Such a proclamation resonates precisely with the paradoxical language barriers between Friday's governed savagery and Crusoe's governing civilization – only when the writer shapes their words into the Hegelian dialectics of "language" exchange. Harry speaks with an imperialistic tone to Jackson, mocking the savagery of the ex-colonized "You people

create nothing. You imitate everything. It's all been done before, you see, Jackson. The parrot" (156). In turn, Jackson replies with a subservient yet parodic manner to shut Harry up: "Pardon, master, pardon! Friday bad boy! Friday wicked nigger. Sorry. Friday nah t'ief again. Mercy, master. Mercy" (158).

The structure of the play is also quite symbolic in response to the paradoxical "relations": Act I as an open dispute and rehearsal of the pantomime and Act II the real performance. The actual performance happens in Act II – as a postcolonial dramaturgic response to coloniality – with Jackson taking control and giving orders to Harry: "Thank you, Mr. Robinson. . . . Mr. Trewe, sir! Cru-soe, Trewe-so! (Faster) Crusoe-Trusoe, Robinson Trewe-so!" (133). Act II confuses the audience with the reversal of the (ex-)colonizer-(ex-)colonized relations and further the deeper complicated political, economic and psychic relations. It is a hidden agenda by Walcott to use creolization as theatricality to reiterate the postcolonial the-empire-writes-back discourse through this linguistic poetics of shifting relations. It seems paradoxical that a resisting text like *Pantomime* should accommodate what it is resisting, but it stands to reason that communicating only resistance is not very productive. The paradoxicality of the standard English language that is deconstructed syntactically yet homogenized in creolization allows the seamless cadences that somehow reinforce the creolized poetic patterns in the pantomime.

Glissant's poetics of Relation signals an important theatrical exchange between Harry and Jackson in the play. The question of creolization as intervention in the master narrative may find answers in Glissant's notion of locating the Caribbean with reference to historical, ethnic, and linguistic "turbulence," the trope of the poetics of Relation, "engendered by the continuous interweaving of those disparate, clamorous cultural traditions" (Patteson 6). Developing in its tradition of creolization, the Caribbean today still displays important problems like neocolonialism and post-independence politics, "closely tied to the success or failure of creolization and the building of new societies" (Patterson 7). In his own counter-imperialistic signifiers, Walcott uses the stage as a political and social site to express his personal narrative and to comment on the mixed influences of "island identity." Mostly likely through Jackson the character as Walcott's mouthpiece, in Jackson's constant shifting of signs, languages, gestures, genres, creating confusions, interventions, and disruptions, Walcott attempts to define through almost a self-reflexive performance to challenge the "relations" to disentangle wholeness, security, and stability. These postcolonial relations, paradoxically, would not take place without the presence of the colonial power in play.

Finally let's rethink Glissant's statement that "All mimesis presupposes that what is represented is the 'only true reality.'" When it involves two realities of which one is destined to reproduce the other, inevitably those who are part of the process see themselves living in a permanent state of the unreal. That is the case with "us" (*Caribbean Discourse* 242). His challenge of mimesis (i.e., who represents whom and what is represented) best articulates how "true reality" is distorted or camouflaged in representation through a mediating lens, in this case, the theatrical performativity. As Harry shouts at Jackson at the end of Act II "Ape! Mimic! Three bloody minutes!" (154), Jackson in response uses Harry's language – very much like how Caliban uses Prospero's language to curse – to ridicule him: "Okay. "free fi to fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman… One parrot, to go.! Or you eating it here?" (155). The creolized poetics of "relations" between Harry and Jackson ventures into "the imperial and colonial zones" onstage, in Paul Gilroy's words, yet reversing the centers and the foreground as the margins and the background, and vice versa. As Jackson questions the boundaries of manners and representations "You want my honest, professional opinion? [...] I think is shit" (110-11), this defiance against colonial subjugation metaphorically repositions him to the center and Harry to the periphery. On stage the theatrical effect of Jackson's refusal to and reversal with Harry's

role playing reveal the reworkings of the empire on the "sea of islands."[4] Jackson's creole character and utterance through performing the language thus represent the archipelagic identities of the Caribbean today, still unhinged by colonial boundaries and unsettled by hegemonic imaginaries.

This essay concludes that using "Creole acting" or creolization as a trope to extrapolate theatricality is instrumental because the production, performance, and execution of the plays onstage are never a static aesthetics, but rather – like creolization itself as an ongoing transformative motion – a dynamic process informed by history that connects the past, the present, and the future as well as by a discursive cultural space that connects the performers with the audience. As such, creolized expressions give new energy to performance while infusing the play with a new chorus of prismatic heteroglossia and hybridity. This essay as a departing point wishes to delineate a shared de-colonization of linguistic liberation in the Caribbean theater during a turbulent time of cultural reformation and revisionism, and yet this kind of post-postcolonial script in the twenty-first century still writes on.[5]

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[4] The "sea of islands" is reconceived by Albert Wendt, "Towards a New Oceania" and the Tongan writer Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands."

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