

‘The Elephant in the Dark Room’: Merrick and Menacing Mimicry in Bernard Pomerance’s *The Elephant Man*

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Abstract

This paper tries to look at Pomerance’s *The Elephant Man*, from a new perspective from which no critic has investigated the play, before. Applying postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha to the play, the author scrutinizes how ‘mimicry strategy’, employed by the colonizer and the Other, can be threatening for both and how the identity is mutually constructed in the Third Space in the presence of the Other, the difference. Comparing the way people project their own fears and desires onto the Other—Merrick—with Rumi’s Parable of “The Elephant in the Dark Room”, the author tries to lucidly delineate the colonial relationship between Merrick and other characters more comprehensibly.

Keywords: Pomerance, The Elephant Man, Homi K. Bhabha, colonial mimicry strategy

1. Introduction

The Elephant Man was written in 1977 by Bernard Pomerance. The play is based on the real-life story of John Merrick known as the Elephant Man who lived in London during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Merrick is well-known for his extreme deformity of his body. Because of his hideous deformity, he has been a freak attraction in traveling side shows. Abandoned and helpless, he is found in the nick of time by a brilliant young doctor, Frederick Treves, who takes care of him in prestigious London Hospital and educates him and introduces him to London Society. With the help of Treves’ education, Merrick changes from a sensational object of pity to the urbane and witty favorite of aristocracy but he can never reach his ultimate wish of becoming a man like any other.

This paper tries to have a new look at this play. Employing Homi K. Bhabha’s postcolonial theory, the author studies the colonial relationship between the characters and shows how “Mimicry Strategy” proposed by Bhabha can paradoxically be an opportunity and a threat for both the colonizer and the Other in the Third Space and how the identities are mutually constructed in the presence of the difference or the Other. Rumi’s parable of “The Elephant in the Dark Room” also contributes to critical reading of the play in which the characters mistakenly evaluate Merrick, the Other, from their own perspectives without understanding Merrick as he is. Therefore, Projecting their own fears and desires onto the Other, they make Merrick assimilate himself so thoroughly that he reflects each character’s identity, like a mirror, but he loses his own identity and does not reach his end of becoming a man like others. This paper tries to show how Bhabha’s theory of becoming almost the same but not quite the same, is employed by the characters in the play. This paper tries to show how Bhabha’s idea of becoming almost the same but not quite the same is employed by the characters in the play.

2. Homi K. Bhabha’s Theory

Homi K. Bhabha in his influential book, *The Location of Culture*, emphasizes the mutual and complex power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. In his view, the power scheme is not a straightforward exertion of power from top to bottom, from the colonizer to the colonized. He deconstructs the binary oppositions, the rigid distinctions between the colonizer and the colonized, the black and white or superior and inferior. In other words, he deconstructs Edward Said’s traditional notion towards the colonizer’s straightforward treatment of the colonized as the Other, or the inferior.

Bhabha argues that the colonizer tries to internalize inferiority in the colonized and imposes “mimicry strategy”—he also calls it “sly civility”—onto it; while the colonizer, at the same time, is afraid of the reformed colonized. Bhabha highlights the anxiety of the colonizer and the agency of the colonized. The colonizer wants

the colonized almost the same but not quite, Bhabha claims. Bhabha believes that “mimicry is at once resemblance and menace” (1994, p. 123). Since becoming quite the same means that the colonizer’s authentic identity is paradoxically imitable. Thus, the colonizer is troubled by the Other, the colonized or the colonizer’s double.

On the other hand, the colonized exerts power on the colonizer and intimidates it. The colonized resists the colonizer with different resistance strategies. Ball maintains that Bhabha’s ideas “show how colonial power relations inevitably generate resistance and inhibiting ambivalence as by-products of their discursive and administrative structures of control” (2003, p. 37). The colonized deliberately would not imitate the colonizer perfectly or imitates the colonizer too perfectly that it looks fake and artificial. The resistance strategies, as Huddart argues, mean that “mimicry is repetition with difference, and so it is not evidence of the colonized’s servitude” (2006, 39). Huddart argues: “Bhabha’s close textual analysis finds the hidden gaps and anxieties present in the colonial situation. These points of textual anxiety mark moments in which the colonizer was less powerful than was apparent, moments when the colonized were able to resist the dominance exercised over them. In short, Bhabha’s work emphasizes the active *agency* of the colonized” (original italics 2006, p. 1).

The colonizer tries to make the colonized aware of its difference from the colonizer through its domineering behavior. The colonizer tries to convey to the colonized that the colonized is the Other and thus different from the colonizer. However, the benefit of this awareness is twofold; both the colonizer and the colonized understand themselves with the help of “Otherness”. Iser stipulates: “Otherness turns into a mirror for self-observation, and such a relationship sets the process of self-understanding in motion, because the alien that is to be grasped realizes itself to the extent to which one’s own dispositions come under scrutiny. The knowledge thus obtained is twofold: by getting to know what is different, one begins to know oneself” (2007, p. 36).

Habib also notes that Hegel believes difference to be indispensable to the notion of identity (2008, p. 387). Hegel believes that, “identity has its nature beyond itself, in difference . . . identity and difference are inseparable” (Habib 2008, 388). Based on Homi K. Bhabha’s theory, the identities of the colonizer and the colonized are formed in the Third Space. Bhabha perceives it as: “the encounter of two social groups with different cultural traditions and potentials of power as a special kind of negotiation or translation,” which “takes place in a Third Space of enunciation” (Ikas & Wagner, 2009, p. 2). Based on “The Third Space” theory of Bhabha, “minority groups in the metropolises—marginals within the center—adumbrate a third rhetorical space that disrupts and destabilizes centralized authority” (Huggan, 2001, p. 21).

3. Discussion

Reading *The Elephant Man* from Homi K. Bhabha’s postcolonial perspective would be a novel investigation and reevaluation of the play in which Merrick is considered as the Other whom the people of the play project their desires and fears onto. Except one scene of the play which happens in Brussels, the setting of the play is in London of the late Victorian period when Great Britain was the Empire. The setting, the characters, themes, and plot of the play very well correspond to the “colonial mimicry strategy” proposed by Homi K. Bhabha in his influential book: *The Location of Culture*. The colonial mimicry strategy desires: “a reformed recognizable Other, as a *subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (original italics, Huddart, 2006, p. 40). Though all the characters are English people, there are some references to the colonies of Britain and their Oriental eccentric atmosphere. Merrick, the English deformed character in the play, who is considered as the Other because of his wired disorder is an apt portrayal or better to say the embodiment of the Orient as the Other.

The play starts when Treves enters the London Hospital as a surgeon and teacher and visits Gomm, the administrator of the London Hospital. Gomm introduces London Hospital and its doctors’ capabilities of studying and treating the widest range of diseases and disorders. He introduces the London Hospital as the greatest institution in the world; he assumes: “the Empire provides unparalleled opportunities for our studies, as places cruel to life are the most revealing scientifically” (Pomerance 1). However, Gomm warns Treves that despite all these prosperities, the outcome is consolation. Treves who is a young doctor cannot realize what Gomm means, at that point:

Treves: A Happy childhood in Dorest.

A scientist in an age of science.

in an English age, an Englishman. A teacher and a doctor at the London. Two books published by my thirty-first year. A house. A wife who loves me, and my god, 100 guinea fees before I’m forty.

Consolation for what?

As of the year AD 1884, I, Freddie Treves, have excessive blessings. Or so it seems to me. (Pomerance 2)

From the very beginning of the play, London of the late nineteenth century is introduced as the Empire and throughout the play the issue of superiority of London in comparison to its colonies, such as Congo, Khartoum, Niger, Ceylon and India is repeatedly mentioned. Larson believes that *The Elephant Man* begins “in radical politics, it ends in metaphysics and in between it directs questions of aesthetics and ethics against show business, theatrical illusion, and all kinds of imitative performance from language learning to orthodox religious discipline and the imitation of Christ” (335). But no critic has scrutinized the political aspects of the play from Bhabha’s point of view and the ‘menacing mimicry strategy’ in the Third Space.

In contrast to the very first scene of the play, in which Gomm foreshadows Treves’ future with “an excellent consolation prize” (Pomerance 2), Ross, the manager of the Elephant Man, hawks John Merrick as “a despised creature without consolation”(Pomerance 3). In sharp contrast with the previous description of Treves’ prosperity and good condition, Merrick’s condition is described as desperately deplorable. The only difference between Merrick and Ross, his cruel manager is his deformed body which causes him to be treated as the inferior Other and thus to be ruled by him who thinks that he is superior and has the right to treat him as he likes. Merrick is a toy in the hands of Ross who makes money from a freak.

From Ross’ viewpoint, Merrick has “no hope nor expectation of relief” (Pomerance 3):

In every sense his situation is desperate. His physical agony is exceeded only by his mental anguish, a despised creature without consolation . . . To live with his physical hideousness, incapacitating deformities and unremitting pain is trial enough, but to be exposed to the cruelly lacerating expressions of horror and disgust by all who behold him—is even more difficult to bear . . . For in order to survive, Merrick forces himself to suffer these humiliations, I repeat, humiliations, in order to survive, thus he exposes himself to crowds who pay to gape and yawp at this freak of nature, the Elephant Man. (Pomerance 3)

Ross is playing his role as the absolute power in the presence of the Other, Merrick. Ross gazes at the Other from top-to-bottom position and humiliates him. Based on Bhabha’s theories, the colonial relationship continues in the Third Space and the one way relationship between the colonizer and the Other, in which the colonizer is the absolute power does not last; however if it is called relationship at all as Huddart maintains: “when the relationship between self and other seems to be one of domination, the fact that there is a relationship at all suggest that domination is not total” (2006, 46).

For Ross, Merrick is not intimidating: “but nothing to fear”, he tells Treves, once. In his very short-term relationship with the Other, Ross considers himself as the absolute power and does not assume any power for the Other. Ross calls Merrick “bloody donkey”. For Ross, Merrick plays the role of a “capital” and a tool of making money. He tells Treves who has gone to visit the freak show: “we—he and I—are in business. He is our capital, see. Go to a bank. Go anywhere. Want to borrow capital, you pay interest. Scientists even. He’s good value though. You won’t find another like him” (Pomerance 4). Thus, based on Bhabha’s ideas, Ross’s relationship with the Other is doomed to failure, as it practically happens.

When Treves, for the first time, sees Merrick in the freak show, he addresses Ross: “this sign’s absurd. Half-elephant, half-man is not possible. Is he foreign?” (Pomerance 4). But later on, Treves, the colonizer, sees Merrick, the Other, from the Third Space in which no party has the absolute power over the other. In other words, the intimidating colonizer is also intimidated by the Other and the identities of both the colonizer and the colonized are mutually constructed. In the Third Space, the viewpoint of the colonizer is not from top-to-bottom, or the superior stance. While lecturing about Merrick’s disability—Pomerance incorporates Treve’s memoir of Merrick written in 1923, in which he describes Merrick’s hideous deformity—Treves scientifically refers to his beauties as well: “the right arm was of enormous size and shapeless. It suggested but was not elephantiasis . . . The other arm was remarkable by contrast. It was not only normal, but was moreover a delicately shaped limb covered with a fine skin and provided with a beautiful hand which any woman might have envied” (Pomerance 6).

Unlike Treves, Ross undermines the Others; he looks down on them. In his freak show in Brussels—where his colonial relationship with Merrick is terminated for good—he fools all the freaks and calls them the pinheads, the morons and Queens of the Congo. He ridicules the freaks in Brussels Fair for holding a portrait of Leopold, as the stage direction says, and for celebrating Leopold’s fifth year as King of the Congo. He ironically calls Leopold the King of Congo as he considers himself as the king of all these freaks, since he is English. Ross calls Congo, “Land of darkness” (Pomerance 8). For Ross, London is the superior land and thus should dominate the

world.

Merrick in Brussels Fair is a tool in the hands of Ross and at the same time he portrays a happy future for himself when he thinks of the money he gains. In other words, he is trying to establish a two way relationship with Ross and enters the Third Space but Ross ignorantly exerted his absolute power over Merrick and consequently leads the colonial relationship to its termination. Merrick in Brussels Fair talks with other freaks, the pinheads. Merrick, the Other, explicitly expresses his fears and desire to other freaks: "at home they chased us. Out of London. Police . . . In Belgium we make money. I look forward to it. Happiness, I mean" (Pomerance 9). Talking to the freaks and getting no reaction from them, he sympathizes with them and for him, the freaks are Others. Without knowing them as they really are, Merrick projects his own problem on them: "little vocabulary problem, eh? Poor things. Looks like they put your noses to the grindstone and forgot to take them away" (Pomerance 9). Merrick in Brussels is robbed by Ross who called him indecent, a liability, a flop and an imbecile. Merrick and Ross' colonial relationship is terminated when Ross, exerting his absolute power over Merrick, sends Merrick back to London. Ross exploits Merrick thoroughly; he robs all Merrick's money and disparages him as much as he can.

Based on Bhabha's theory, in a colonial relationship both the colonizer and the colonized are dependent on each other for the continuation of the relationship and thus none has the absolute power over the other. In the colonial relationship between Ross and Merrick, Ross is not able to understand his dependence on Merrick and thus he ignorantly breaks the relationship which is beneficial for him. Later on, becoming aware of the true nature of colonial relationship, he pleads Merrick to work for him but Merrick, the Other, does not accept to work with the colonizer who does not know the norms and codes of ruling the Other.

Throughout the play, there are many references to the colonized areas of Europe. The conductor who brings Merrick from Brussels to London explains to the policeman how people confront Merrick: "they wanted to rip him to pieces. I've never seen anything like it. It was like being Gordon at bleed in Khartoum" (Pomerance 13). These references to Congo, India, and Khartoum reinforce the role of Merrick as the Other. Gordon was the Other in Khartoum; though the people of Khartoum were the Other for Gordon, too. Merrick, though he is English, is different from other people because of his terribly ugly deformity; thus he is treated as the Other.

Merrick's arrival in London for the second time and being rescued by Treves in the nick of time is the beginning of the mutual relationship between the Other and the colonizer. In the presence of the difference, the Other, their identities are mutually constructed and the Other is shaped by and also shapes the colonizer. Furthermore, in this mutual relationship, it is not only the Other who is intimidated by the English people but he is also intimidating them. Merrick, the Other and the English people are communicating in the Third Space in which no party has priority over the other.

In the Third Space, the Other tries to become the same as the colonizer and the colonizer also tries to make the Other the same but based on Bhabha's theory the colonizer desires to make the colonized almost the same. As Bhabha maintains: "colonial discourse wants the colonized to be extremely like the colonizer, but by no means identical" (Huddart, 2006, p. 40). Huddart well represents this ambivalent situation: "the play between equivalence and excess makes the colonized both reassuringly similar and also terrifying" (2006, p. 41). That's why the colonizer does not desire to make the colonized quite the same.

The colonizer desires the reformed recognizable Other as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite. As Bhabha expresses, the Other can be a resemblance and a menace. The colonizer desires to make the Other almost the same but not quite the same. If the Other becomes quite the same, it means that the apparently authentic identity of the colonizer is imitable, on one hand, and on the other hand, it will be a threat for the colonizer to encounter its colonial double with quite the same power. Thus the "Mimicry Strategy" proposed by Bhabha is the colonial desire for having a reformed but recognizable Other.

While Merrick is with Treves in the London Hospital, Treves is searching for a person to accept to nurse Merrick, the Other, but seeing Merrick's horrible disorder no one accepts to take care of him. Treves asks Miss Sandwich who has experience in missionary hospitals in the Niger and Ceylon to nurse and educate Merrick, to make him almost the same as the other people. Before seeing Merrick, Miss Sandwich assumes that she can surely do the job since she has experience of nursing the weird tropical diseases, or as she says: "the many and the awful scourges our Lord sends" (Pomerance 16). Merrick is truly the embodiment of the Orient, he has a weird identity in the eyes of the Western people and is treated as the Other and when the Occidentals get close to him, they get confused and do not know how to cope with him.

Before seeing Merrick, Miss Sandwich, the colonizer, compares Merrick's deformity to the Africans'; in other words she compares the disorders of the East with that of the West and as a Western woman she gives priority to

the “civilized” West. Wedeen sarcastically states that in “colonial and modernization discourses people have to move up the evolutionary ladder and become more ‘civilized’ before they can be free” (2013, p. 869). She tells Treves: “Let me put your mind to rest. Care for lepers in the East, and you have cared, Mr. Treves. In Africa, I have seen dreadful scourges quite unknown to our more civilized climes. What at home could be worse than a miserable and afflicted rotting black?” (Pomerance 17).

Miss Sandwich believes that appearances do not daunt him and that’s why she goes outside the confines of London seeking help. But as soon as she sees Merrick, she cannot control herself and escapes. Following mimicry strategy, by now, the colonizer has not been successful to make Merrick the same as other people. Scene seven of the play is entitled: “The English Public Will Pay for Him to be Like Us” (Pomerance 19). But it is not only the English people who desire to make Merrick the same as other people but Merrick himself does his best to become the same as others. In this scene Bishop How approaches the Other, Merrick but he also cannot help him. Merrick, as the Other, tries to become the same as Bishop How. Thus approaching Merrick, Bishop How appreciates Merrick for his religious nature: “once I’d grasped his speech, it became clear he’d certainly had religious instructions at one time” (Pomerance 19).

Bishop How tries to justify the ‘mimicry strategy’ the English heads employ to make the Other in India, Ireland, Africa, or Khartoum almost the same:

Bishop: . . . Yet, Mr. Gomm, consider: is it science, sir, that motivates us when we transport English rule of law to India or Ireland? When good British churchmen leave hearth and home for missionary hardship in Africa, is it science that bears them away? Sir it is not. It is Christian duty. It is the obligation to bring our *light and benefices to benightedman*. That motivates us, even as it motivates Treves toward Merrick, sir, to bring salvation where none is. Gordon was a Christian, sir, and died at Khartoum for it. Not for science, sir. (my italics, Pomerance 21)

As Bhabha stipulates, the colonizer desires the Other to become almost the same and as Bishop also refers to, this is this colonial desire which motivates Treves to help Merrick, the Other, and educate him to make him almost the same as the other men. Bhabha proposes that this colonial desire is practiced in the Third Space in which both the colonizer and the colonized or the Other have power over each other and this is exactly the cause of the colonizer’s intimidation from the Other. The Other is the resemblance and the menace for the colonizer, then. The intimidating power of the Other is very well articulated by the colonizer, Treves, in his conversation with Gomm. The colonizer is intimidated by the Other if it becomes quite the same. In other words, if the Other becomes quite the same, it becomes the ‘colonial double’ for the colonizer, as Bhabha calls it, with the same power and thus intimidating:

Gomm: Well, Jesus my boy, now we have the money, what do you plan for Merrick?

Treves: Normality as far as is possible.

Gomm: So he will be like us? Ah. (*Smiles.*)

Treves: Is something wrong, Mr. Gomm? With us? (Pomerance 21)

Thus, Gomm’s smile can be interpreted in two ways: from a colonizer’s point of view, its identity is authentic and thus inimitable; thus Gomm may mean that it is impossible that Merrick, the Other, can imitate them fully and becomes like them and thus a menace for them. Or this is a bitter smile with which Bishop foreshadows the impending menace of Merrick’s improvement in making himself quite the same. However the second interpretation is more viable when Treves’ anxious response is interpreted as the emblem of the confirmation of Gomm’s threatening foreshadowing.

Getting instructions from Treves, Merrick is improving and is getting the same as the people with whom he has interaction. Very much like Eliza in Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* who is educated by Higgins, Merrick is imitating Treves even in speaking. Merrick ridiculously repeats what Treves tells him. When Porter and Snork are fired by Gomm for gazing at Merrick, Merrick wants to commence criticizing Gomm’s action that Treves intervenes and reminds him that, “if we want to properly be like others,” we must obey rules (Pomerance 24). Merrick mechanically repeats whatever Treves tells him and also admonishes Merrick that if he does not obey rules and if he does not follow them, he will lose his safe status. Therefor as Bhabha defines, the Other is intimidated by the colonizer who has assured the Other that it is the colonizer which is the cause of the Other’s improvement and that the colonized is dependent on its supporter and on the other hand, the Other intimidates the colonizer by its improvement and becoming the same as the colonizer, or becoming its colonial double.

Merrick is intimidated by Treves who may throw him out of the safe place he is living in if he does not obey the colonizer’s rules. Merrick is dictated to repeat Treves’ each sentence while at times he ridiculously gets

befuddled and does not know the meaning of what he is reciting. Dasht-Peyma maintains that colonizers usually impose their language onto the colonized, “coercing colonized people to speak the colonizers’ tongue” (2009, p. 47). Gilbert and Tompkins, in their well-known book: *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, argue that some colonized subjects either abrogate the formal registers of the imposed language or some others employ words to a different purpose, this way they resist and try to “decenter the European hegemonic powers embedded in an imposed imperial language” (pp. 165-166).

Gaze is a crucial issue in a postcolonial reading of this text and it plays an important role in this play. Merrick, though he is English, is treated as the Other in his homeland and is gazed at. Merrick is a deformed English man who is gazed at from a superior stance by his own countrymen. But the colonizer may look at the Other from two different perspective. It may look at the Other from the superior stance or, like Gomm and Treves, it may take the parallel stance and gazes at the Other and in return is gazed at by the Other. Being in the Third Space and following the colonial mimicry desire, Gomm and Treves try to make Merrick almost the same; they desire that Merrick is not gazed at and is not humiliated and undermined by the other people. Gomm fires Will and Snork who gaze at Merrick and Treves justifies it this way:

Treves: Of necessity Will will find other employment. You don’t want crowds staring at you, do you?

Merrick: No.

Treves: Then Mr. Gomm was merciful. You yourself are proof. Is it not so? (*Pause*) Well? Is it not so? (Pomerance 27)

It is not only the colonizer who desires to make the Other almost the same but, as Bhabha states, the Other also wants to become the same. Treves explains to Mrs. Kendal, the actress, that he aims to lead Merrick “to as normal a life as possible”; in other words he wants to well responses to Merrick’s desire of becoming like the others. Treves says: “he [Merrick] loves to meet people and converse. I am determined he shall . . . they [women] have always shown the greatest fear and loathing of him. While he adores them of course” (Pomerance 28). Treves asks Mrs. Kendal to hide her true feelings towards Merrick and treat him like other men. Treves wishes: “It will be the day he becomes a man like other men” (Pomerance 29).

Encountering Mrs. Kendal is a turning point in Merrick’s life. Mrs. Kendal, like Gomm and Treves, looks at Merrick from the almost parallel viewpoint. Making sketches for a model of St. Phillip’s church metaphorically starts from this part of the play. The more the model is completed, the more Merrick becomes the same and thus the more he is accepted as the same. Merrick talks about his dreams of becoming the same as the other people to Mrs. Kendal. He appreciates Mrs. Kendal for her courage to get close to him and for her endeavor to understand Merrick as he is not as she likes to see him. What Merrick tells Mrs. Kendal about Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* is very telling of the way he desires other people treat him. Merrick loves Mrs. Kendal because she treats him and sees him almost as he is and not as what she wants him to be.

3.1 Merrick and Rumi’s Parable of “The Elephant in the Dark Room”

Merrick objects to what Romeo did. “If I had been Romeo” he says, “I would not have held the mirror to her breath” (Pomerance 33). He contends that people should not judge or evaluate one another as they desire. He condemns the way people project their fears and desires onto the other people. Merrick opposes the way Romeo treats Juliet: “does he take her pulse? Does he get a doctor? Does he make sure? No. He kills himself. The illusion fools him because he does not care for her. He only cares about himself. If I had been Romeo, we would have got away” (Pomerance 33). Thus Merrick opposes to the colonizer’s illusion of understanding the Other. They are living with their illusions about the Other not what the Other is truly. This is exactly the way the Western people see the East. The Oriental is enigmatic for them and from their viewpoint they ostensibly delineate and evaluate the Other but it is not truly what they presume it to be.

This part of the play is very reminiscent of Rumi’s parable of “The Elephant in the Dark Room”. In this parable Rumi displays some Hindoos who exhibit an elephant in a dark room but as the room is too dark to permit them to see the elephant they all feel it with their hands to gain an idea of what it is like. one feels its trunk and declares that the beast resembles a water pipe; another feels its ear and says that it must be a large fan; another its leg and thinks it must be a pillar; another feels its back and says that the beast must be like a great throne. According to the part which each feels, he gives a different description of the animal. Rumi in book III of *Mathnavi* says:

Comparison of the sensual eye to the
hand of one that felt the elephant.

The eye of outward sense is as the palm of a hand,
 The whole of the object is not grasped in the palm.
 The sea itself is one thing, the foam another;
 Neglect the foam, and regard the sea with your eyes.
 Waves of foam rise from the sea night and day,
 You look at the foam ripples and not the mighty sea.
 We, like boats, are tossed hither and thither,
 We are blind though we are on the bright ocean. (p. 181)

The way the colonizer looks at the Other is very similar to what Rumi depicts in his parable. It is truly what Merrick opposes to; Merrick condemns the colonizer's projection of its desires and fears onto the Other. Thus far as the colonizer does not look at the Other from the same status, it cannot grasp what the Other truly is. Rumi says: Each interprets my notes in harmony with his own feelings,

But not one fathoms the secrets of my heart. (Rumi, 2001, p. 3)

All the characters look at Merrick and his world from their own points of view; though entering the Third Space, some of the characters try not to gaze at him from a superior standpoint, on one hand, and on the other hand, they try to make Merrick almost the same as themselves. However, ultimately, as they have predicted, this colonial mimicry strategy functions as a menacing policy for them.

In the mutually beneficial relationship between Treves and Merrick, Merrick is becoming almost the same and Treves is also getting famous. Treves tells Merrick: "we are in the papers. Look. They have written up my report to the Pathological Society" (Pomerance 34). From then on, Treves receives famous guests such as the Duchess, the Countess, Lord John and Princess in his hospital to see Merrick and his church model. Princess points to this very mutually beneficial relationship between Treves and Merrick: "You are a credit to Mr. Treves, Mr. Merrick. Mr. Treves, you are a credit to medicine, to England, and to Christendom. I am so very pleased to have made your acquaintance" (Pomerance 37). Thus both Treves and the Other, Merrick, depend on one another. Huddart articulates: "colonialism is marked by a complex economy of identity in which colonized and colonizer depend on each other" (2006, p. 2).

Merrick believes that to approach him people should first understand him and should not see him as they desire to see him. Referring to his church model, Merrick explains how he builds the model after getting to true understanding of the church. Furthermore, he believes that his attempt at becoming the same as other people is vain and it is just an illusion, as he calls it, of becoming the same. However Treves encourages Merrick not to withdraw but to continue his endeavor to get to his goal of becoming like other people. Referring to Plato's parable of the cave, Treves try to convince Merrick that all people are copies and not original. This way, he tries to persuade Merrick to imitate others and follow his goal till he reaches it:

Merrick: I did not begin to build at first. Not till I saw what St. Philip's really was. It is not stone and steel and glass; it is an imitation of grace flying up and up from the mud. So I make my imitation of an imitation. But even in that is heaven to me, Mrs. Kendal.

Treves: That thought's got a good line, John. Plato believed this was all a world of illusion and that artists made illusions of illusions of heaven.

Merrick: You mean we are all just copies? Of originals?

Treves: That's it. (Pomerance 38)

Like the Hendoos and the elephant in the dark room of Rumi's parable, all the characters ludicrously perceive and appreciate Merrick from his or her viewpoint and nobody sees him as he is. Pomerance satirically depicts the comic relationship between the colonizer and the Other. Satire, Rabb argues: "examine[s] national, historical, or ethnic identity . . . [it] bring[s] objects of fear or danger into our midst by blurring the distinction between the broom and the dirt it sweeps, between us and them, or self and other" (2007, p. 582). Huddart maintains that "mimicry is also a form of mockery, and Bhabha's post-colonial theory is a comic approach to colonial discourse" (2006, 39). In scene XII of the play, all the characters find Merrick the same as herself or himself. "The Other is not something outside or beyond the self, as the traditional Cartesian perspective would have it; rather, it is deeply implicated in and with the self" (Türkkan 2011, p. 369). Merrick is all of them but not himself. It is worth mentioning some of them:

Mrs. Kendal: Well. He is gentle, almost feminine. Cheerful, honest within limits, a serious artist in his way. He is almost like me.

...

Duchess: I can speak with him of anything. For I know he is discreet. Like me.

Treves: How odd. I think him curious, compassionate, concerned about the world, well, rather like myself, Freddie Treves, 1889 AD. (Pomerance 39-40)

Fanon also asserts that:

Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed. (2008, pp. 168-169)

Thus, Merrick has assimilated himself so much that each character sees him like herself or himself; besides they become aware of their own identities in the presence of difference or the Other. In other words, identity finds meaning in the presence of Merrick, the Other. Culler believes: “even the idea of personal identity emerges through the discourse of a culture: the “I” is not something given but comes to exist as that which is addressed by and related to others” (qtd. in Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 206). Thus, in the presence of other, everything finds meaning; Derrida believes: “what we take to be meaning is really only the mental *trace* left behind by the play of signifiers. And that trace consists of the differences by which we define a word” (qtd in Tyson, 2006, p. 253).

Near the end of the play, Ross comes back to get Merrick back to the Fair and Freak Show but Merrick cannot tolerate him anymore. Merrick confirms that he is a man like others: “I am a man like others, you want me to return?” (Pomerance 53). Ross—who is surely categorized among the traditional colonizers who think that they are the absolute power and thus unable to establish a mutually colonial relationship with the Other—humiliates Merrick again and claims that Merrick is not still a man like other people since he does not have a wife. But Merrick, who is seemingly becoming quite the same as other men, disavows Ross’ claims:

Ross: Had a woman yet?

Merrick: Is that what makes a man?

Ross: In my time it’d do for a start.

Merrick: Not what makes this one. Yet I am like others. (Pomerance 53)

Thus, Merrick is becoming the cause of menace and intimidation for Treves, Gomm and others who does not dare to encounter their colonial double with quite the same power.

Therefore, mimicry strategy Treves has employed makes Merrick as powerful as Treves and Treves cannot tolerate it. Treves encounters his colonial double, Merrick, the Other, who becomes quite the same through Treves’ instructions. When Treves dismisses Mrs. Kendal, Merrick exerts power on Treves and protests to Treves and criticizes his action. Merrick blames Treves and based on the instructions Treves’ has given him, he proves that Treves, the colonizer, is an opportunist who disavows his own sayings and manipulates the rules and standards as he likes. He defeats Treves with his reasoning. Merrick is playing the role of Treves’ colonial double:

Treves: There are still standards we abide by.

Merrick: They make us happy because they are for our own good.

Treves: Well. Not always.

Merrick: Oh.

Treves: Look, if you are angry, just say so.

Merrick: Whose standards are they?

Treves: I am not in the mood for this chipping away at the edges, John.

Merrick: That do not always make us happy because they are not always for our own good?

...

Treves: Well. I. About Mrs. Kendal—perhaps I was wrong. I, these days that is, I seem to. Lose my head. Taking too much on perhaps. I do not know—what is in me these days. (Pomerance 56-57)

In Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory the colonial stereotypes discussed in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, are deconstructed. In the mutual and complex colonizer-colonized relationships proposed by Bhabha, the Other has the opportunity to gaze at the colonizer from the Third Space and consequently the stereotypes formerly describing the colonizers as the source of power are deconstructed. Intimidated by Merrick—the Other—Treves dreams of Merrick who is lecturing about him in his sleep. Now Merrick has quite the same power as Treves' power at the beginning of the play when he is lecturing about Merrick. In the Third Space "the colonized returns the colonizer's gaze", Huddart (2006, p. 45) states. Merrick is gazing at Treves and exerts his power over him. It is surprisingly at this point of the play that the Merrick's condition is getting deteriorated. Treves well depicts Merrick's condition: "quite inescapable that as he's achieved greater and greater normality, his condition's edged him closer to the grave. So—a parable of growing up? To become more normal is to die? More accepted or worsen? He—it is just a mockery of everything we live by" (Pomerance 64).

4. Conclusion

Thus, becoming quite the same is not only a menace for the colonizer but, as Bhabha maintains, the Other also resists to becoming quite the same for it does not want to completely lose its identity. As Bhabha argues, in *The Location of Culture*, "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (1994, 122). Thus as Bhabha maintains, the Other shows its resistance by imperfect imitation or by too perfectly imitating the colonizer. Merrick, employing the later strategy, surprisingly reflects each character's identity. Merrick too much assimilates himself with the other people's desires. He so perfectly imitates the people whom he desires to resemble that he is taken as a menacing colonial double by the characters, particularly by Treves who has instructed him and done his best to make him the same, following colonial mimicry strategy. The more Merrick becomes the same, the more his condition is deteriorated and gets closer to death. Furthermore, the more Merrick becomes the same, the more he becomes threatening for the colonizer who is unaware—like the Hindoos of Rumi's parable—of Merrick's true identity.

In other words, every character in the play sees Merrick from his or her own point of view and nobody tries to see Merrick as he is. Therefore, what makes Merrick's death is truly his excessive endeavor to become quite the same while he is unaware that if he does not follow the colonial rule—what Ross also does in a different form—it leads to the termination of the colonial relationship. Besides, all the characters and especially Treves who is Merrick's instructor, are responsible of his death since none of them has tried to know Merrick as he is and all of them project their desires and fears onto the Other and employing colonial mimicry strategy they ignorantly make the Other quite the same in their imagination so much that they all see themselves in Merrick. Thus assuming Merrick as the colonial double, Treves gets intimidated and it is also reflected in his dreams. Treves, in his conversation with Bishop, delineates the situation as such:

Treves: He [Merrick] is very excited to do what others do if he thinks it is what others do.

Bishop: Do you cast doubt, sir, on his faith?

Treves: No, sir, I do not. Yet he makes all of us think he is deeply like ourselves. And yet we're not like each other. I conclude that we have polished him like a mirror, and shout hallelujah when he reflects us to the inch. I have sorry for it. (Pomerance 64)

At the end of the play, when the colonial relationship is at the brink of termination—for trespassing the colonial rule in which the reformed recognizable Other is desired and not the Other who is quite the same—Treves confesses that science can no longer serve as 'consolation' for him. However, it was previously foreshadowed by Gomm at the beginning of the play. He confesses that he has been ignorant, though he is an extremely successful Englishman. So by trespassing the mimicry strategy they make Merrick lose his identity and become so quite the same that, like a mirror, he reflects each character's identity and he does not get to his goal of becoming almost the same as other people. It not only leads to his deterioration but it mistakenly intimidates Treves, his instructor, so much that his fears from the colonial double with the same power is reflected in his dreams in which he sees Merrick at his position while he is lecturing on Treves. Huddart maintains that, "colonial authority is menaced by the colonized to the extent that it utterly depends on the colonized for its sense of itself" (2006, p. 61).

Despite Merrick's confession to Ross that he is the same as other people, he never reaches his dreams. He wants to be like other people but actually by becoming quite the same as others; he loses his identity and he is everybody except what he desires to be. When Merrick dies, Treves tries not to describe Merrick from his own point of view anymore; in other words, getting experience from the menacing mimicry strategy he no longer wants to make the Other quite the same but tries to understand it as it is not as he wants it to be:

Gomm: Wouldn't add anything else, would you?

Treves: Well. He was highly intelligent. He had an acute sensibility; and worst for him, a romantic imagination. No, no. Never mind. I am really not certain of any of it. (Pomerance 70)

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