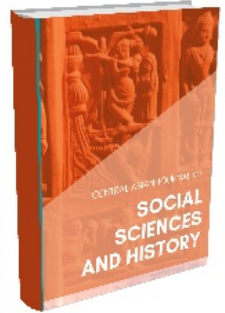


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Mimicry in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and J. M Coetzee's *Waiting for The Barbarians*

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ABSTRACT

Mimicry has become an important concept the postcolonial literature as it has been used to describe the ambivalent relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. In the postcolonial perspective, the colonized subject “mimics” the colonizer, by adopting his cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values. The result is never a simple reproduction of those traits; rather, it is a “blurred copy” of the colonizer that can be quite threatening. This is because mimicry is synonymous to irony and mockery, since it appears to parody the object it mimics. To Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, mimicry is one of two critical terms, along with “hybridity”, which are fundamental in postcolonial literature. According to him, after a long relationship with the coloniser the colonised has ambivalent feelings toward the coloniser: some good feelings, some desire for what they have, some bad feelings, and some repulsion at what they are. Although mimicry discloses ambivalence, representation through a metonymy of presence, and the threat of the partial gaze, there is “the potential for mimicry to be both resemblance and menace”, as “colonial authority ... destabilizes itself by the impossibility of replicating itself perfectly” (Bhabha, 86).

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The irony is that by mimicking the colonizer, comes the potential to reverse the gaze and to subvert the dominant colonizer. It is within this framework that this article envisages to investigate the various mimic instances used by characters in the novels under study. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, the study reveals that mimic characters in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* imitate their colonial counterpart as a means to both resist and assert their self on one hand, and on the other hand, mimicry is perceived through the ironic behaviour of those who call themselves “civilised”, and the paradoxical respond of those considered as “barbarians”.

Introduction

Mimicry has become an important concept in postcolonial literature as it has been used to describe the ambivalent relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. In the postcolonial perspective, the colonized subject “mimics” the colonizer, by adopting his cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values. The result is never a simple reproduction of those traits; rather, it is a “blurred copy” of the colonizer that can be quite threatening. This is because mimicry is synonymous to irony and mockery, since it appears to parody the object it mimics. To Homi Bhabha mimicry is one of two critical terms, along with “hybridity”, that are fundamental in postcolonial literature. According to Bhabha, the colonised, after a long relationship with the coloniser, has ambivalent feelings toward the latter: some good feelings, some desire for what they have, some bad feelings, and some repulsion at what they are. Although mimicry discloses ambivalence, representation through a metonymy of presence, and the threat of the partial gaze, there is “the potential for mimicry to be both resemblance and menace, as colonial authority ... destabilizes itself by the impossibility of replicating itself perfectly” (Bhabha, 86). The irony is that through mimicking the colonizer, comes the potential to reverse the gaze, to overturn the authority of power and to subvert the dominant colonizer. It is within this framework that this article envisages to investigate the various mimic instances used by characters in the novels under study.

The mimicry of the postcolonial subject is always potentially destabilising to colonial discourse, and locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of imperial dominance. This is evident in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*. In *The Lonely Londoners*, Mimicry manifests itself through two instances which include language use and dressing style.

Language Use

As mentioned earlier, Samuel Selvon is a Trinidadian, and to understand the linguistic evolution of this country, it is necessary to refresh one’s memory. Christopher Columbus, an Italian explorer who was navigating for the Spanish Crown, discovered the island in the 1490s. The island would later on be invaded by the Spanish and consequently became a Spanish colony, sheltering many slave traders. In the 1790s, the English invaded the Island on their turn and it became a British colony in the early 1800s. English then became the official language of Trinidad and Tobago although the majority of the population, the masses, were speaking Trinidadian Creole. This language (Trinidadian Creole or Trinidadian English Creole) is a mix of English and the other languages that came across Trinidad and Tobago. These languages include: Spanish, French, French Creole, Trinidadian Hindustani and Chinese. Based on what precedes, it is clear that many Trinidadians identify themselves through Trinidadian Creole language; they have the true feeling to belong to a community whenever they make use of this language.

The above explanation throws more lights on Selvon’s use of Creole language in *The Lonely Londoners*. Samuel Selvon himself is an immigrant who arrived London in the 1950s. He is therefore aware of the communication mode of the immigrants and their specificity. Meantime, to describe the London life of the immigrants Caribbean, with emphasis laid on their unemployment and poverty situation, Selvon makes use of two dialectal variations namely the Creole and the Standard English. In fact, the creole language is used as a form of resistance. This resistance strategy which runs through the text constitutes a veritable weapon for blacks who want to assert their identity. Moses observes that:

It ain't have no s— over here like “both of we is Trinidadians and we must help out one another.” You going to meet a lot of fellars from home who don't even want to talk to you, because they have matters on the mind. So the sooner you get settled the better for you. London not like Port of Spain. Don't ask plenty questions, and you will find out a lot. I don't usually talk to fellars like this, but I take a fancy for you, my blood take you. (21)

This first excerpt is a conversation between Moses, the protagonist, a Trinidadian who has been in England for about ten years, and Galahad (Henri Oliver), a Trinidadian who comes to London with the aim of improving his financial situation. They meet at the Waterloo Station and Moses agree to show the young immigrant the ins and outs of life in England, and counselled him. There is clear indication here of what the Trinidadian English Creole used by Selvon is all about. It appears like Standard English but when one observes very closely, one will find some irregularities compared to Standard English. These are features of the English Creole. As the excerpt portrays, the grammatical structure of the standard English is disrupted. This disruption can be interpreted as the disruption between the coloniser and the colonised. The colonised chooses to use its own form of the language despite the fact that he lives in the coloniser's country. He mimics this language imposed to him.

Throughout the novel, different characters of Caribbean descent use the Trinidadian English to express themselves and their feelings. One of these characters is Tolroy who remarks that:

It have people living in London who don't know what happening in the room next to them, far more the street, or how other people living. London is a place like that. It divide up in little worlds, and you stay in the world you belong to and you don't know anything about what happening in the other ones except what you read in the papers. Them rich people who does live in Belgravia and Knightsbridge and up in Hampstead and them other plush places, they would never believe what it like in a grim place like Harrow Road or Notting Hill. Them people who have car, who going to theatre and ballet in the West End, who attending premiere with the royal family, they don't know nothing about hustling two pound of brussel sprout and half-pound potato, or queuing up for fish and chips in the smog. People don't talk about things like that again, they come to kind of accept that is so the world is, that it bound to have rich and poor. (58)

The excerpt depicts Tolroy's disillusionment when he realises the realities about London. He notices that London is a city in which different social classes coexist. However, he finds it paradoxical that despite this social coexistence, “loneliness” still prevails. The creole language plays an important role to these migrants. It is comparable to a gem to which they hold on in order to feel as part of something or a member of a community. By mimicking the standard English, black characters reject the authority of that language and the cultural alienation which follows its acquisition. The English creole represents a membership card of the black community. And their use of this language therefore deconstructs British authority and enable them asserting an identity.

Another instance of mimicry that serves as resistance is when the narrator refers to Bart (Bartholomew) as he notes:

When Bart leave the hostel he get a clerical job and he hold on to it like if is gold, for he frighten if he have to go and work in factory—that is not for him at all. Many nights he think about how so many West Indians coming, and it give him more fear than it give the Englishman, for Bart frighten if they make things hard in Brit'n. If a fellar too black, Bart not companying him much, and he don't like to be found in the company of the boys, he always have an embarrass air when he with them in public, he does look around as much as to say: “I here with these boys, but I not one of them, look at the colour

of my skin. (47)

Moses castigates Bartholomew's behaviour towards other Trinidadians. To him, he is stingy and prefers to be seen as broke although Moses has secured a job for him. He lacks self-assurance and denies his own people as he prefers to convince people that he is a Latin American. His attitude towards his fellows is a mimicry of the attitude of the whites towards the blacks: "he always has an embarrass air when he with them in the public" (47), Moses points out.

Instances of mimicry through the use of Trinidadian English Creole are numerous in the novel, given that English Creole stands as a specificity, a trademark of the author in this novel. The language irregularities observed in the excerpts above, constitute a breach, a violation of the English Language; but at the same time, it is an asset, a feature used by a community (namely the Trinidadians), to belong to the greater community (the English-speaking community) although with their own specificities, so they can remain authentic and real. From this perspective, the Creole language is perceived not only as an authentic tool of community identity, which carries all the history, the burdens and the past of the people, but also, as a parody. This linguistic deviation debunks British culture which the English language represents. The blacks are proud of this language which conveys their aspirations and their identity; this is perceptible through Galahad who, during an appointment with a girl (Daisy) he meets, proclaims loudly and clearly his attachment to this language and the way he and his fellow countrymen speak it. In a dialogue between Galahad and Daisy, Galahad expresses his difficulty understanding the language they speak as he proceeds thus:

'Is that how you make tea?' she asked.

'Yes,' Galahad say. 'No foolishness about it. Tea is tea. You just drop some in the kettle. If you want it strong, you drop plenty. If you want it weak, you drop little bit. And so you make a lovely cuppa.'

... 'You get that raise the foreman was promising you?' Galahad ask,

'What did you say? You know it will take me some time to understand everything you say. The way you West Indians speak!'

'What wrong with it?' Galahad asks. 'Is English we speaking.' (77)

Daisy criticises Galahad's language choice when she claims not to understand what he says. Galahad immediately reacts to that criticism with a defensive attitude thereby showing his attachment to this language: "what wrong with it.... Is English we speak" (77). It is clear from this excerpt that Galahad does not want to pay any attention to Daisy's criticism because he is convinced the Creole English he speaks cannot be termed inferior to the Standard English. He assumes it and does not see any reason why he must abide by Standard English expression. The use of the Creole here shows a kind of protest to assert his identity.

Ultimately, Samuel Selvon's use of Trinidadian Creole English in this novel is definitely purposeful. The target purpose is to restore the people's identity in a hostile context where the priority is to seek well-being and better living. Undoubtedly, this language is also a form of resistance, an unwavering desire for the immigrants to preserve their identity, to keep in heart their fatherland, even if they have departed from it for in search for greener pastures. Mimicry seen through the use of this language is also a form of resistance since by speaking creole the black character automatically rejects British culture to preserve his own values.

Dressing style

language use is not the only form of mimicry that the novel uncovers. There are also some dressing habits that denote mimicry. Actually, some characters, through their dressing style mimic the British in an effort to integrate themselves in white community, but to no avail. One of them is Galahad who, as mentioned in the *The Lonely Londoners*, opts to dress up well as the narrator notes: “... for one of the first things he do after he get a work was to stock up with clothes likes stupidity, as if to make up for all the hard times he didn’t have something nice to wear” (69). He is one who pays great attention to what he wears and knows all the “smartest and latest cut” (71). He does not care about spending much on clothes as long as he is satisfied. However, by mimicking the English way of dressing Galahad intends to resemble them but fails to do so since the dressing rather ridicules him. The narrator remarks in a scene in which Galahad tries to seduce an English woman with her child, hence:

‘Mummy, look at that black man!’ A little child, holding on to the mother hand, look up at Sir Galahad. ‘You mustn’t say that, dear!’ The mother chide the child. But Galahad skin like rubber at this stage, he bend down and pat the child cheek, and the child cower and shrink and begin to cry. ‘What a sweet child!’ Galahad say, putting on the English accent, ‘What’s your name?’ But the child mother uneasy as they stand up there at the pavement with so many white around: if they was alone, she might have talked a little, and ask Galahad what part of the country he come from, but instead she pull the child along and she look at Galahad and give a sickly sort of smile, and the old Galahad, knowing how it is, smile back and walk on. (72)

This excerpt shows that despite the efforts he puts in, that is dressing like the English man, getting in contact with them and even using the English accent, Galahad is not accepted. Mimicry is observed at this level as Galahad imitates the English man’s ways but still to no avail. It is a mimicry of the British personality and a display of the hypocrisy that characterises the British.

Another character who mimics the British in the novel is Harris. He is an early model of what Naipaul calls a mimic man. He is described as one who likes the English customs: “... he does be polite and say thank you and he does get up in the bus and the tube to let woman sit down, which is a thing even them Englishmen don’t do” (95). He is one among the characters who speaks good English almost all the time: “Man, when Harris start to spout English for you, you realise that you don’t even know the language” (95). It shows that Harris does more than his fellows to be accepted by the British community. He is obsessed with earning respect and adopts English tradition to the maximum. He is more of a gentleman as the narrator realises:

And when he dress, you think he is some Englishman going to work in the city, bowler and umbrella, and briefcase tuck under the arm, with The times fold up in the pocket so the name would show, and he walking upright like if is he alone who alive in the world. Only thing, Harris face black. (95)

The excerpt from the quotation above, “Harris face black” is meaningful. It implies that no matter what Harris does to look like the British, or how much he loves their culture, he remains black and will never be considered as part of that community. Equally, there is Captain, a Nigerian immigrant who mimics British customs. He has nothing and is jobless. He likes to live like a wealthy person. He has “a greenstripe suit and a pair of suede shoes and he live in them for years” (32). He speaks good English like a gentleman. When he manages to hustle a pound, he “eating a big meal, belching, buying a pack of B and H, and he ready to face the world” (33). However, he is a pathetic imitation of the English man. From the above analysis, it can be observed that through the dressing style, the characters parody the British culture and life style and by so doing, they also portray their hypocrisy.

Unlike *The Lonely Londoners*, in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Mimicry is perceived in a broader sense. It involves the reference to the practice of imitation and the irony a given situation might cause. However, there are several instances of mimicry in the text.

At the opening of the novel, the indigenes are considered as "barbarians", the Magistrate explains:

For a few days the fisherfolk are a diversion, with their strange gabbling, their vast appetites, their animal shamelessness, their volatile tempers. The soldiers lounge in the doorways watching them, making obscene comments about them which they do not understand. (19)

However, these indigenes show how little they need to live happily. It seems the Magistrate envies their simplicity and at the same time feels pity for them as they do not know what is awaiting them. Hence, as the narrator points out:

Seduced utterly by the free and plentiful food, above all by the bread, they relax, smile at everyone, move about the barracks yard from one patch of shade to another, doze and wake, grow excited as mealtimes approach. Their habits are frank and filthy ... Aside from bread, sugar and tea are great novelties to them. ... they are happy here, indeed unless we chase them away, they may stay with us for ever. (19)

This is where the changing of attitude of the Magistrate towards the indigenes begins. The envy and this pity which he expresses will further turn into sympathy, then hatred against his Empire. He starts by opposing Colonel Joll's manoeuvres and wishes he was not part of the colonial agenda. He is ashamed of his people reasoning and attitude and is now dedicated to respect the indigenes' customs and culture. The Magistrate's attitude becomes ironic as he gradually changes side, standing for the people they previously identified as "barbarians". This attitude can be identified as mimicry because he considers he now sees his compatriots as real barbarians. The inhumane treatment the whites inflict on black indigenes is an act that, according to the Magistrate, can only be performed by barbarians. He even thinks of releasing the prisoners as the suffering they endure in the hands of Colonel Joll's becomes unbearable for him. He remarks in the novel that:

Into the daylight emerge the prisoners, blinking, shielding their eyes. One of the women has to be helped. She shakes all the time like old person, though she is young. There are some too sick to stand up. I last saw them five days ago (if I can claim ever to have seen them, if I ever did more than pass my gaze over their surface absently, with reluctance). What they have undergone in these five days I do not know. Now herded by their guards they stand in a hopeless little knot in the corner of the yard, nomads and fisherfolk together, sick, famished, damaged, terrified. (24)

This is what is left of the "barbarians" after their little experience in the hands of the Colonel. Their only offense is to be black and natives of the land. The elements of torture in this excerpt are numerous and provide a clear view of the type of person Colonel Joll is: he is merciless, ruthless, cruel and takes great pleasure in mistreating and torturing his fellow human beings. For him, pain is truth and "prisoners are prisoners" (22). This explains why he captures any black man and woman he sees and tortures them in his search for truth. The above quotation also reveals the cruel and barbaric attitude of Colonel Joll who is actually supposed to be civilised as compared to those he refers to as "barbarians", the black indigenes. It paints the ambiguous behaviour that can here be assimilated to mimicry: a civilised person acting in a barbaric way towards someone he calls barbarian.

In his growing denial of his own people, the Magistrate goes a step further by gradually falling in love with a "barbarian" girl. Meantime, the attitude of the Magistrate as he takes the "barbarian" girl under

his roof and offers her his protection is totally contradictory to what is expected of him as the guardian of the law of the Empire. He claims it is his private life but his people are not in support of the attitude. After having an erotic relationship with her, it becomes a ritual for him to wash, oil and massage her. That is how he starts to develop genuine feelings for the “barbarian” girl. At this level, mimicry is perceived in the treatment the girl receives from the Magistrate. In fact, the magistrate virtually becomes the slave as he treats with care the girl who, in normal circumstances, would be the Magistrate’s slave/servant and therefore would provide to the Magistrate the care she receives.

As days go by, the Magistrate is eager to know the cause of her infirmity. He questions her several times about the physical impairedness but she remains silent. He moves further to interrogate the guards who witnessed the torture she endured. They also remain silent. But one night, the girl opens up to the Magistrate explaining what happened to her and her dead father as the Magistrate affirms:

She speaks. ‘You are always asking me that question, so I will tell you. It was a fork, a kind of fork with only two teeth. There were little knobs on the teeth to make them blunt. They put it in the coals till it was hot, then they touched you with it, to burn you. I saw the marks where they had burned people.’ Is that the question I asked? I want to protest but instead listen on, chilled. ‘They did not burn me. They say they would burn my eyes out, but they did not. The man brought it very close to my face and made me look at it. They held my eyelids open. But I had nothing to tell them. That was all. That was when the damage came. After I could not see properly any more. There was a blur in the middle of everything I looked at; I could see only around the edges. It is difficult to explain. But now it is getting better. The left eye is getting better. That is all’. (41)

The barbaric and unhuman nature of the interrogators is explicitly described in the quotation above. Later on, an officer informs the Magistrate of a general offensive against the “barbarians”, to push them back from the frontier to the mountains. He is shocked and angrily takes their defence as he notes that: “They want an end to the spread of settlements across their land. They want their land back finally. They want to be free to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to” (51). He goes further by saying:

I will say nothing of the recent raids carried out on them, quite without justification, and followed by acts of wanton cruelty, since the security of the Empire was at stake, or so I am told. It will take years to patch up the damage done in those few days. But let that pass, let me rather tell you what I find disheartening as an administrator, even in time of peace, even when border relations are good. There is a time in the year when nomads visit us and trade. Well: go to any stall in the market during that time and see who gets short-weighted and cheated and shouted at and bullied. See who is forced to leave his womenfolk behind in the camp for fear they will be insulted by the soldiers. See who lies drunk in the gutter, and see who kicks him where he lies. (51)

This shows that the Magistrate has been observing the injustice done to the “barbarians” but reserves himself from commenting it in spite of his disapproval with it. He however observes that:

It is this contempt for the barbarians, contempt which is shown by the meanest ostler peasant farmer, that I as magistrate have had to contend with for twenty years. How do you eradicate contempt, especially when that contempt is founded on nothing more substantial than differences in table manners, variations in the structure of eyelid? Shall I tell you what sometimes I wish? I wish that these barbarians would rise up and teach us a lesson, so that we would learn to respect them. We think of the country here as ours, part of our Empire—our outpost, our settlement, our market centre. But these barbarians don’t think of it like that at all. We have been here more than a hundred years, we

have reclaimed land from the desert and built irrigation works and planted fields and built solid homes and put a wall around our town, but they still think of us as visitors, transients. (51)

This long monologue of the Magistrate clearly states his point of view regarding his people's behaviour. They might be tempted to believe he is unsound which is not the case. Actually, the fact that he hopes "barbarians" could stand and fight for what rightfully belongs to them is abnormal. It denotes a kind of irony, taking into consideration his status of magistrate for the Empire. He equally denounces the fact that the Empire has first of all seized the lands of the "barbarians" and now pushes them into the hinterland.

In the meantime, when the Magistrate is arrested as he returns the "barbarian" girl to her people, he requests for a trial as stated by the law. His request is turned down and he is kept captive. This is another evidence that the Empire fails to abide by their own rules and regulations. The Empire is more comfortable with evil treatments which Colonel Joll is an epitome. The cruelty of his actions is well illustrated in a scene at the Square where he returns with some captives and flogs them mercilessly as the Magistrate narrates:

Four of the prisoners kneel on the ground. The other eight, still roped together, squat in the shade of the wall watching, their hands on their cheeks. ... The Colonel steps forward. Stooping over each prisoner in turn he rubs a handful of dust into his naked back and writes a words upside down: ENEMY...ENEMY...ENEMY...ENEMY. He steps back and folds his hands. ... Then beating begins. ... The game, I see, is to beat them till their backs are washed clean. (105)

The scene even becomes more painful as the children watching in the crowd are terrorised by the cruelty of the brutality the prisoners receive. The magistrate once more notices that:

I watch the face of a little girl who stands in front of the rank of the crowd gipping her mother's clothes. Her eyes are round, her thumb is in her mouth: silent, terrified, curious, she drinks in the sight of these big naked men being beaten. ... A girl, giggling and hiding her face, is pushed forward by her friends. "Go on, don't be afraid!" they urge her. A soldier puts a cane in her hand and leads her to the place. She stands confused, embarrassed, one hand still over her face. Shouts, jokes, obscene advice are hurled at her. She lifts the cane, brings it down smartly on the prisoner's buttocks, drops it and scuttles to safety to a roar of applause. (105-106)

As the Magistrate watches the scene closely, he is shocked and cannot contain his emotions anymore. He shouts at the Colonel and the crowd standing there all his fury and anger at the injustice the prisoners/indigenes are victims of. He observes that their actions deprive those people of all their dignity. As a result of this intervention, he is severely beaten and injured. As a matter of fact, he "officially" bears the etiquette of martyr for his community and his attitude is considered shameful, for he is accused of defending the "enemy". The Magistrate's behaviour can be perceived here as mimicry for he is resisting own system. He now ridicules and castigates the system he was devoted to. However, he is taken back to jail and is later on left under officer Mandel's custody.

However, Mandel takes it as a mission to humiliate the Magistrate as he makes him perform some tricks to amuse himself and the others.

They call me into the yard. I stand before them hiding my nakedness, nursing my sore hand, a tired old bear made tame by too much baiting. 'Run,' Mandel says. I run around the yard under the blazing sun. When I slacken he slaps me on the buttocks with his cane and I trot faster. The soldiers leave their siesta and watch from the shade, the scullery maids hang over the kitchen door, children stare through

the bars of the gate. 'I cannot!' I gasp. 'My heart!' I stop, hang my head, clutch my chest. Everyone waits patiently while I recover myself. Then the cane prods me and I shamble on, moving no faster than a man walks. Or else I do tricks for them. (116)

Mandel's actions denote some mimicry. The irony of the situation is that the pains he inflicts on the Magistrate who is "civilised" like him, deserves to be inflicted only by a strongly-convinced barbarian.

After all the torture and humiliation suffered by the Magistrate, he is released to go and die somewhere. He becomes homeless and an observant of what the town has become. He witnesses the atrocities the soldiers commit as well as the laxity of Mandel towards the situation. What matters to him is his popularity and his admiration by his fellow men. The people feel uncomfortable and some decide to leave the town as a woman exclaims to the Magistrate: "... How things have changed! There was none of this commotion when you were in charge. All these strangers from the capital upsetting things! ... So many people have left" (127). It shows that she now believes the Magistrate was doing a great job, ruling the right way. She realises that there was need for them to be afraid of "barbarians". Actually, people did not live because they were afraid that "barbarians" would attack them. Instead, they are afraid of the soldiers who have taken control of the town and are terrorising them. In this light, the real barbarians are the soldiers. Moreover, schools have closed and the children now idle and play the whole day. They feel they no longer have a future there. Therefore, the inhumane and evil treatments the indigenes receive is attributed to their difference with the invaders/whites; difference in terms of complexion, custom or cultural background. Mimicry in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarian* exposes the paradox of those considered to be civilised and the irony of the "barbarians" who actually behave like civilised people.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, as observed in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, mimicry has many functions. From the characters' perspective, it is used as an adaptative strategy in the new environment and as a means to affirm one's membership in the community. This is the case in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. And in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, it exposes the evils and paradoxes of the colonising power in their so called "civilising mission". However, from the postcolonial angle, mimicry is a form of resistance which writers employ to interrogate binary oppositions and the Self/Other representations which metanarratives propagate. In *The Lonely Londoners* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, this resistance manifests itself through the English creole which black characters use to express themselves. It is also evident through their dressing style which aims at imitating the white. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, mimicry is perceived through the ironic behaviour of those who call themselves "civilised", the whites; and the paradoxical respond of those considered as "barbarians", the black population. Therefore, mimicry is not only used for mockery but also as an important tool to resist the controlling power.

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