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## Mimicry and the Native American ‘Other’: An Analysis of Speech and Language in Homi Bhabha’s Postcolonial Theory and Zitkála-Ša’ “The School Days of an Indian Girl”

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*This paper will address the sustained feeling of separation and delineation in Zitkála-Ša’s literature and Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial theorization, which discuss the difficulties of speech and language in a postcolonial context. I analyse the survival of Native American Culture during late nineteenth-century assimilation, in Zitkála-Ša’s ‘The School Days of an Indian Girl’, and evaluate Homi Bhabha’s ground-breaking research in employing colonial mimicry to usurp colonial power discourses. When former colonial subjects appropriate the colonizer’s language, psychological barriers such as perceived native cultural inferiority transpire. Adhering to an Anglo-American Education, Zitkála-Ša becomes victim to cultural shame and a consequent splitting-of-the self. Bhabha’s theory however, purports to provide a means of overcoming the barrier presented by cultural difference, by implying that imitation of a colonial language ensures camouflage-like protection for the colonial subject which in turn enables them to occupy a dual position in society that is both within their cultural heritage and the colonial environment of ‘civilization’. The extent, to which this is readily achievable, becomes contestable when read alongside Zitkála-Ša. I challenge the penetrable strivings of Bhabha’s theory, by revealing the flaws in his deconstructionist postcolonialism. My examination of power discourses in each text identifies cultural assimilation as an invisible barrier.*

*“For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”*

- Audre Lorde

Emerging in 1978 with Edward Said’s founding text, *Orientalism*, postcolonial criticism undermines the previously held notion of universality made on behalf of canonical Western literature and thought, by revealing the latter’s disregard of cultural difference. Within postcolonial literature, theory and lived experience, separation and distinction between cultures can be both visual, in terms of racial difference, and invisible, where colonial forms of racism embodied by cultural prejudice and perceived inferiority pervade. This paper will argue that reading Zitkála-Ša’s “The School Days of an Indian Girl” (1921), from a postcolonial perspective, reveals how, whilst the act of mimicry can subvert colonial authority, colonial ambivalence means speech will reinforce ‘otherness’. Colonial ambivalence refers to the ambiguity and Janus-faced regard that transpires between the colonizer and the colonized, whereby the colonizer considers the colonized individual inferior yet exotically ‘other’ and therefore desirable. In turn, the colonized views the

colonizer as corrupt yet enviable. The separatist adjective ‘other’, deems both object and individual as distinct, and in a postcolonial context draws a line between cultures, predominately in terms of historical geopolitical differentiation between a colonising nation and its colonial subjects.

For Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the foremost adversities behind postcolonial ‘otherness’, are speech and language. Upon asking, “can the subaltern speak?”, Spivak proposed that speech and silence are determined by the history of power relations and colonial discourse, in that the ‘subaltern’, traditionally becomes victim of an “injunction to silence” (2003 25 and 61). Speech is indicative of power, whilst silence is synonymous with marginalization. The history of power relations, signified by colonial imperatives of political domination, determines who can speak and who cannot, and for Spivak, *must* be broken.

Homi Bhabha, with his theory of “mimicry,” suggests a means by which the colonized might disenfranchise themselves from the barriers that colonial discourse relations present and therefore end their silence (122). In employing a post-structuralist methodology to colonial and postcolonial texts, Bhabha identifies the contradictory and shifting nature of the ideological struggle from which the power relation of colonialism is based. For instance, he posits that mimicry undermines colonial discourse by revealing its inherent contradiction. However, in its application, the success of Bhabha’s argument and methodical understanding is contestable. This is because the cultural hybridity established by the act of mimicry serves to further reinforce difference. Indeed, this paper will demonstrate how, when read alongside Zitkála-Šá text, mimicry’s endless pirouettes of irony ultimately lead to an entrenchment of colonial oppression rather than liberation from it.

Born to the Yankton Sioux tribe, Zitkála-Šá (also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), based “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” on her experience attending the White’s Manual Institute in 1888, a Native American boarding school (Terrance 621). In the autobiographical tale mimicry occurs via the process of cultural assimilation Zitkála-Šá goes through whilst at the school. The rhetoric of Native American assimilation is contextualized by Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle school, another Native American boarding school that Zitkála-Šá later taught at from 1897 to 1898. In the infamous slogan addressing his approach to colonial education, Pratt declared “Kill the Indian and save the man!” (260). Zitkála-Šá’s autobiography problematizes education as a form of assimilation when her narrative replicates the

psychological impact and subsequent struggle for identity experienced as a result of indoctrinated cultural hybridity. In the text, colonial education is seen as a form of marginalization whereby the forced assimilation of Native American children into American culture produces a liminal existence.

Mimicry is a response to the tension between the progression of the colonial relationship and the imperial power's desire for domination. The imitative process, "emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies" of "ironic compromise" for the individual caught between "the synchronic panoptical visions of domination [and] the demand for identity" (*The Location of Culture* 122). Mimicry is both an expected behavioural pattern, whereby the colonial power intentionally tries to reproduce in their subjects' forms of behaviour *they* consider to be 'civilized', and it facilitates colonial usurpation for the 'subaltern' figure. Inspired by Jacques Lacan's assertion that "the effect of mimicry is camouflage...it is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background," Bhabha's understanding suggests that mimicry is an opportunistic pattern of behaviour (121). Lacan qualifies mimicry as a form of protection by suggesting that a visual difference renders the colonized prey to colonial oppression. The use of 'mottled' further reveals the imperative of cultural assimilation in that an individual must present themselves in opposition to their ethnicity. As such, the object of desire and key to survival is 'whiteness'. In particular, George P. Landow claims that colonial power is a transhistorical force, where Eurocentric condescension towards the historically colonized individual occurs in a postcolonial setting. A postcolonial experience, by definition, signifies imperialist resolution and political agency. However, for Landow, the linguistic geopolitical qualifier is deceptive. This is because, in many so-called 'postcolonial' settings, "nothing has changed"; colonial power discourse resonates whereby knowledge and superiority still remain inextricably associated with the European (Landow). This suggests that historical notions deriving from colonial legacy, concerning the superiority of the white man as an embodiment of civilization, continue to influence power relation after former colonies gain independence.

In the context of this postcolonial power relation, mimicry refers to the process in which a member of a colonized society imitates and acquires the colonizers' culture. Zitkála-Šá expresses her initial penchant for colonial mimicry when she severs ties with her Native American tribal identity. For instance, she leaves her "mother's dwelling" where she has grown up "roaming freely and

happily...on the Dakota plains,” to attend boarding school (Zitkála-Šá). Stan Juneau notes that “educational policy... required that boarding schools were to be located far away from Indian communities” so to ensure “absorption of Indian youth into the mainstream of American life” (19-20). For Witmer, physical cultural removal resulted in the “loss of unique Indian qualities and cultural identities” and thus facilitated colonial education’s role as a consolidation of institutional indoctrination and a re-figured colonial power in the form of an “ideological state apparatus” (Witmer, xiv; Althusser, 85). In “going East with the missionaries,” Zitkála-Šá identifies herself subject to the “attempt to educate Indigenous [peoples] in the Western paradigm” that took place in nineteenth and early twentieth century America (Harvard Educational Review). Zitkála-Šá finds herself at a federal boarding school, where she is taught to copy the “civilized,” in the hopes of gaining access to the “white man’s respect” (Zitkála-Šá). In being taught to adapt to non-indigenous customs by learning the English language, she acquires mastery of the colonizer’s culture. The unfamiliar structure that immediately upon “reach[ing] the school grounds” she fails to successfully identify as anything other than the “upward incline of wooden boxes,” becomes recognisable only once Zitkála-Šá has adopted the English language and consequently, “learned afterwards to call [it] a stairway.” Thus, in the text, boarding school is a “civilising machine” that provides Zitkála-Šá with a setting in which to enact colonial mimicry.

The fact that mimicry is possible, reveals the duplicity of colonial discourse because of the ambivalence between the colonial power’s perception of the colonial Other as inferior and the ability of that colonial Other to master the ‘civilised’ languages of the colonial power. As Bhabha notes, “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (Bhabha, 126). This assertion demonstrates how Bhabha considers mimicry to bare promise in its capacity to undermine colonial power dynamics. Mimicry can become an unintentionally subversive tool in that the slippage it produces, the act of imitation rather than incarnation, creates ambivalence. In particular, Bhabha expresses that “in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage” (122). The term ‘slippage’ refers to “an indeterminacy [where] mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal.” “Its excess, its difference,” Bhabha states, is “a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes

power.” The fact that it is possible for the colonized to mimic the coloniser, despite colonial notions concerning the inferiority of the former, undermines colonial power. When ‘whiteness’ becomes replicated, the very ideological premise determining that which makes ‘whiteness’ and the characteristics synonymous with its superiority, in comparison to the colonized individuals who exist outside of this qualification, unravel. Appropriated ‘whiteness’ and its customs suggest that ‘whiteness’ as the dominant “strategy of authority” is merely a concept and not a fixed attribute belonging exclusively to the colonizing culture (Bhabha, 129). Therefore, by copying the colonizer, the colonized exposes the hollowness of colonial power.

Indeed, Bhabha states: “under [the] cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part- object that radically devalues the normative knowledge of the priority of race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them” (130). Zitkála-Šá’s deauthorization occurs when, upon entering an “oratorical contest,” she is awarded “first place.” Here, the fruits of her English-language-labours reveal the duplicity of a colonial power discourse. Despite having successfully been civilized by the “iron routine” of a school system centred around “learn[ing] the white man's ways,” Zitkála-Šá exhibits her dominance by beating “orators from different colleges in our State” who most assuredly do not originate from among her Native American “people.” There is an inherent irony to a colonial ideology that works by exerting dominance over and implying the inferiority of one culture, for then that very culture so in need of civilizing, to surpass expectations of language ability and academic capability set by the colonial standards.

The effect of colonial usurpation as imagined by Bhabha, however, comes at a cost in “The School days of an Indian Girl.” The later can be elucidated by the historic context of Native American assimilation via colonial education. For instance, when white Americans exerted their dominance by dictating that Native American culture needed to be “civilized,” and the “lifestyle, beliefs, and philosophy [that] differed from those of the Europeans,” disregarded, colonial subjects were also moulded to fit the colonizer’s “racism and ethnocentric perspectives” (Carney, 19; Harvard Educational Review). As mentioned previously by Witmer, civilization necessitates the process of cultural erasure, leading to a ‘loss of unique Indian qualities and cultural identities’. In particular, Zitkála-Šá recounts how upon arriving at the School, Native American children were made to undergo the traumatic experience of

having their hair cut. Zitkála-Šá describes the feeling of “the cold blades of the scissors against my neck” and how she “cried aloud, shaking [her] head all the while.” The “anguish” experienced at hearing “them gnaw off” the “thick braids” reflects the cultural disregard with which children are subjected to (Zitkála-Šá). Her upset culminates in the line; “and now my long hair was shingled like a coward’s!” (Zitkála-Šá). This exclamatory simile illustrates the significance of the act of “disowning culture” (Zitkála-Šá).

Timothy S. Zahniser contextualises the significance of hair length within a Native American culture when he explains that “tribes have traditionally worn long hair as a symbol of moral and spiritual strength” (228). As “hair was sacred, and to cut it involved a complicated procedure,” Zitkála-Šá’s ‘gnawed’ braids render her not only alienated from her indigenous identity and its practices, but devoid of the “spiritual protection” it ensured (Zahniser, 228). Therefore the ‘anguish’ at losing her cultural uniqueness results in Zitkála-Šá’s statement, “then I lost my spirit” and the metaphor explaining, “for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.” For Terrance, the hair cutting scene produces “a mis-recognition of self, jarring [her] subjectivity” (623). Identifying as a member of a new hegemony- that is, the *anglicized* Native American- she consequently “faces an unrecognizable version of herself” (623). In being rendered part of a dehumanising “system of subject formation - a reform of manners,” Zitkála-Šá mourns the erasure of her Native American heritage derived from the educational institution’s disregard of her cultural identity.

Although there is no doubt about the extent of distress such assimilation causes the individual, as it does so evidently with Zitkála-Šá, the cultural erasure which the mimicker must experience as a result of mimicry, *further* illustrates the process by which the form of camouflage can undermine colonial force. Mimicry is a process where the colonized constructs a cultural persona that identifies them as similar to the coloniser. It is advantageous for an oppressed individual to partake in this process as Suzuki claims that some willingly “endorsed Native American assimilation to and acceptance of white culture for survival or out of necessity” (161). Suzuki documents how even in journalistic endeavours, Native American periodicals “as a practical goal...also attempted to educate their peoples for survival in white-dominated society” (161). When perceived inferiority complexes, which the colonizing culture feed back to the colonized, subsist, such insecurity necessitates a

means by which to operate within a world where power relations will continually deem one culture as subordinate to the hegemony. During colonial mimicry, the colonized strives to distance themselves from their original identity in order to align themselves as close as possible to the colonizer's preferred identity. If the distinction can be easily replicated by the colonized, a.k.a. the far 'inferior' culture, then differentiation no longer serves as a way to distinguish between those who define *themselves* as civilised and those who are thought to be uncivilized. Mimicry, in a sense, appears to close the gap between the two; fusing the interpretative differentiation.

In essence, the accessibility of the characteristics held as exclusively belonging to the colonial power and, by extension, providing the justification for colonial power dynamics, are learnt and consequentially rendered unessential. By this line of thought, those characteristics attributed to the colonized culture have also been acquired, or within a geopolitical sense, forcefully and violently attributed. Therefore, mimicry operates according to "terms of cultural engagement whether antagonistic or affiliative, [and] are produced performatively" (Bhabha, 3). As the activity is essentially an enacting that both imitates and reflects the displayed characteristics of the colonial powers, it is worth contextualising performativity within Derrida's mediations. Considered to be one of the founding fathers of poststructuralism, the critical framework within which Bhabha conducts his postcolonial examination, Derrida explains how the "performative," traditionally speaking, tends to be tied up with questions concerning "the values of truth" and its "oppositions of" falsehood ("Signature Event Context" 322). In adopting Derrida's line of thought, mimicry destabilises the symbolic expression of power within colonial discourse and exposes it as an artifice. When an artifice can be used to acquire a cultural characteristic perceived to symbolize exclusivity and superiority, that very component that establishes them as exclusive, becomes unstable. The replicability that mimicry relies upon and operates by is that which *specifically* threatens colonial authority.

In discussing the theory of mimicry, Ilan Kapoor states: "It is difficult to see how prejudice...can maintain itself if its artifice and contingency are exposed, no matter who does the exposing" (566). Regardless of Kapoor's theorization, the disruption of authority produced by mimicry means that the performed civility directed according to the colonizer's standards is rejected by the coloniser in order to restore power dynamics. This results in only a "partial" and thus incomplete



proliferation of belief systems concerning the inferiority of the colonial Other (Bhabha, 123). In continually changing the standards of 'civility', acceptance becomes impossible for colonized individuals. The colonial imperatives of political domination continue, whereby the colonized will fail to be recognized as anything other than subordinate. As such, it is the colonized's very desire to differentiate themselves from the 'other' that ironically differentiates them from the colonizer. In this respect, a "partial presence" occurs because the colonized is dependent upon colonial discourse for its representation. Mimicry *can* therefore, "not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but [become] transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject" (Bhabha, 123). The 'fixed' position to which Bhabha refers, is the "impossibility of the Other," and the 'impossibility' refers to how the subversion of colonial discourse power actually leads to disempowerment (128).

Colonial discourse derives from the desire for a recognisable other that is "almost the same, but not quite," in that the colonizer aims to improve the colonized, but only at the extent of retaining a subject of difference (Bhabha, 126). Indian education reforms in the 1830s illustrated what Bhabha articulates as the colonial anxiety and "challenge of conceiving of a 'reformed' colonial subject" (124). For instance, Macaulay's 1835 'Minute on Education' relays a preference for "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (359). Bhabha's observations of Macaulay's 'Minute Men', notes its potential for "a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English" (125). The advantage of producing the new 'class' of men, is not only to establish a workforce who can undertake the task of educating the rest of the population, but includes the assertion that the English language to Macaulay was pre-eminent among Indian languages. In enforcing this view, Macaulay intended to cement England's dominance, as he went on to state; "I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (394). Dismissing the relevance and even acknowledgement of alternative cultures, Macaulay in India is operating within the colonial discourse power dynamic, where mimicry can be used to further negotiate and enforce the colonizer's aims.

Within an American context, providing Native Americans with education was a way to further territorial aims of the "ideological regime of westward expansion"

(Suzuki167). In particular “the U.S. government viewed Indian tribes as barriers to westward expansion” and so “removal, assimilation, Christianisation, and education in the form of vocational and agricultural training became standard government policing in dealing with Indians” (Harvard Educational Review). Here, the colonial education thus cemented partition of “the fixed boundary between two races,” and did not, as advertisements suggest, distinguish differentiation (Suzuki 166). According to Pratt, colonial education was well-intentioned, whereby it sought to provide social mobility within the individual. Pratt in 1879 explained the purpose of Native American education as benefitting the individual’s “own welfare” as “children should have the same education that the white man has, that they should speak his language and know just how the white man lives, [to] be able to meet him face to face without the help of either an interpreter or an Indian agent” (qtd in Witmer 4). However, when mimicry inadvertently reinforces the ‘other’ by implying the need for colonial assistance, colonial education becomes a demoralizing invention.

Zitkála-Šá experiences hostility as a result of undermining colonial authority, when despite having successfully capitalized on the tools that education has provided her with during the ‘oratorical contest’, Zitkála-Šá is confronted by “slurs against the Indian that stained the lips of [her] opponents.” The display of prejudice that she qualifies as “worse than barbarian rudeness,” represents how mimicry is a sign of double articulation. By double articulation, I refer to the duality and divided meaning of signs, where mimicry is, for the colonized, a “strategy of reform” that aims at “visualising power,” but “is also the sign of the inappropriate...which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power,” (Bhabha 123). Despite becoming a “proud owner of my first diploma,” college life does not lead to Zitkála-Šá’s successful assimilation. Instead, it causes her, she writes, to “hide myself in my little room in the college dormitory,” so as to avoid “the scornful and yet curious eyes of the students” who determine her as unwelcome. For Maria Paniccia Carden, Zitkála-Šá addresses the difficulty of learnt colonial discourse, when the text “suggest, conflicted delineations of ‘race’ disrupt (white) linguistic categories and binary oppositions coded to signify the desirable and deserved dominance enjoyed by the (white) speaker of the dominant language” (60). Carden explains how the ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality reiterates how the coloniser will always find a way to view the colonised as different and thus “trapped” within the arbitrary signifier of inferiority (61).

The line describing how Zitkála-Šá deliberately “ventured upon a college career” only to find herself comforted by “a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice,” demonstrates how, despite achieving success according to the colonial standards of English language and subsequent academic pursuit, her identity as a Native American sees her barred from admittance into the Anglo-American culture. In “scarcely” obtaining “a real friend,” she discovers that “several of my classmates [kept] at a safe distance” (Zitkála-Šá). Therefore, despite physical removal from her indigenous setting and subsequent repositioning and imitative cultural appropriation, Zitkála-Šá remains an outsider; she remains trapped within her position of the colonized, as complete entry and acceptance into the colonizer’s cultural arena remains impenetrable.

Brett Nicholls claims that within Bhabha’s mimicry, there exists, what he calls the “problematic of communication,” whereby “the slippage of signs - is a general condition that ‘is no respector [sic] of persons’, slaves or masters” (19). Nicholls states that consequently, “it is difficult to see how this problematic benefits the native yet at the same time thwarts the process of domination” (19). In Zitkála-Šá’s text, mimicry is clearly not mutually exclusive with the desire for acceptance and Franz Fanon explicates this position by explaining how the rejection of the “mother-tongue,” although aiding cultural assimilation, in that it acts as an erasure of difference, ultimately condemns the colonized. The use of colonial language reinforces the colonized individual’s initial position, as “[a] man who has a language,” Fanon suggests, “consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language” (127). Due to the fact that language historically was used as a tool of the oppressor to establish the colonized as inferior, the colonized, in disregarding their ‘mother-tongue’, performs that which oppressed them. In particular, within a school setting, “the education of Indian children thus emerges as the power to rule and conquer the native race” (Suzuki 178). The colonized is coerced by the oppressor into identifying themselves as inferior. Therefore, if cultural assimilation entails the self-induced erasure of cultural identity, mimicry is, in Fanon’s opinion, a process of marginalization.

Cultural hybridity occurs as a result of an “assimilation of contraries,” where the fusion of the colonized with the civility historically attributed to the colonizer, not only serves to reveal the ‘other’, but creates a liminal identity (Bhabha 305). The hybridity incurred by mimicry produces a constructed cultural identity where

hybridisation acts as a signifier for difference. Bhabha quotes Freud to illustrate the experience of the individual involved in the act of mimicry, by reiterating; “their mixed and split origin is what decided their fate” (127). Using Freud’s logic, Bhabha suggests that mimicry problematizes colonial surveillance. Caught between their original cultural identity and their performed cultural identity, the mimicker inhabits an ambiguous presence. In occupying an identity as a “cultural ghost” (115), a term D.K. Meisenheimer uses to refer her cultural disintegration, Zitkála-Šá deems herself “neither a wild Indian nor a tame one” (Zitkála-Šá). She is neither comfortable within her Native American identity nor her performed Anglicized Native American identity. For example, “this deplorable situation was the effect of my brief course in the east,” which she discovers one summer holiday to have altered her relationship to her indigenous setting and culture. The once familiar “western country” now appears “strange” and uncanny (Zitkála-Šá). For Freud, the uncanny recounts a disruption of the familiar (5), and according to Simon Ortiz, Native Americans experience such a reality because they have “altered their fundamental culture” by succumbing to the “different linguistic and education systems” that “forsake their native selves” (10).

What becomes disrupted for Zitkála-Šá, is her tribal congruity, which is illustrated through her connection to nature. The “indigenous understanding,” that Paula Gunn Allen identifies as a distinctively Native American “matter of fact,” is characterised as “not a matter of being ‘close to nature’,” but that “the Earth is, in a very real sense, the same as ourselves” (191). So when Zitkála-Šá laments how “even nature seemed to have no place for me,” Native American culture and her subsequent identity have been defamiliarized by Euro-centric educational demands. Her initial cries experienced when first separated from her family; “oh, I want my mother and my brother Dawee!”, once alienated from the ‘east’, become replaced by “many schemes of running away from my [home] surroundings” (Zitkála-Sa). Unable to strictly adhere to either culture and avoid split initiatives, the mimicker is not easily defined. Zitkála-Šá’s liminal existence renders her “thus, homeless and heavy-hearted” intent of forever leading a “life among strangers.” For instance, although operating within the white man’s world, Zitkála-Šá, remains a racial outsider, physically and ethnically incongruous within a setting permeated by “pale faces” who “watched [her with] such rude curiosity.” In perceiving herself a ‘curiosity’, the autobiography communicates the fact that, whilst mimicry can subvert colonial

discourse, inherently racist colonial beliefs are more difficult, if not impossible, to overcome and defeat. As such, mimicry does not successfully dismantle the colonial education's ideological racism.

Despite subverting colonial logic with her competition win, Zitkála-Šá illustrates most profoundly the failings of Pratt's aim and promise that cultural assimilation via education "will take away their prejudice against the whites and take away the prejudice of the whites against your [Native America] people," upon describing how she "laughed no more in triumph when thus alone" (qtd in Witmer 15). Being left outside of the colonizer's admittance despite, her "little taste of victory," Zitkála-Šá ends the text contemplating how, "in my mind I saw my mother far away on the Western plains, and she was holding a charge against me." She is neither completely *in* nor completely *outside* of either culture; she exists *between* each world. Ultimately, language becomes a tool of the oppressor to keep the colonised subordinate, whereby in appropriating the colonizer's culture, the colonized suggests the necessity of adherence to the 'civilising machine' of the colonial education system, thus reinforcing colonial power.

Upon evaluation, although Bhabha successively reveals the contradictions associated with the colonial power discourse, his theory fails to demonstrate how the concept of the "transcendentally signified," does not exist ("Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 279). The 'transcendentally signified' refers to the "fixed...origin" of meaning, that poststructuralism claims to be untrue (279). Poststructuralism explains how the universe exists in a state of radical uncertainty, where meaning and subsequent deviation from a known centre has been displaced by a state of "freeplay," or, an "interplay of absence and presence" (294). In deconstructing the notion and dynamics of colonial discourse, Bhabha inadvertently provides fixed landmarks by which to measure a text against his logic of mimicry. These margins have not been deconstructed, but instead suggested. For instance, the fact that a postcolonial dialogue is possible between the notion of mimicry and Zitkála-Šá's "The School Days of an Indian Girl" implies that the instability of postcolonial language can be used as a margin by which to measure the notion of mimicry. This observation radically undermines Bhabha's theory as it demonstrates how his logic, when applied to a literary text, reveals how mimicry does not

sufficiently provide a solution for the challenges associated with language and speech in a postcolonial setting.

Indeed, Kapoor identifies poststructuralism as a school of thought intended to fault the “emancipatory politics for positing a stable and rational agent that can free itself from necessity/constraint” by instead insisting upon the existences of “an unstable and not always rational agent” (561). As such, for Kapoor, although Bhabha’s “postcolonial agency...device” is “compelling” in its formulation (577), one of colonial mimicry’s technical vulnerabilities includes the way Bhabha makes the possibility of “agency...robotic” (570). By ‘robotic’, Kapoor implies Bhabha’s theory to be instructional, providing guidelines to adhere to. Bhabha establishes a centre by which to suggest that meaning is stable, thus contradicting his own poststructural framework, especially when the constructed cultural identity produced within the act of mimicry, determines the mimickers’ marginalization. Bhabha ultimately demonstrates how despite employing subversive techniques, a fundamental truth concerning the human condition exists within postcolonial theory.

To conclude, whilst mimicry makes speech and language possible, the Janus-faced attitudes towards the colonized leads to the production of a mimicry that presents itself in the form of menace as opposed to liberation. In answering Spivak’s question of “can the subaltern speak?” mimicry suggests that discourse can be made possible when it exists independently from the desire for admittance. As such it is only possible for the ‘subaltern’ to speak by remaining the ‘subaltern’. This is because mimicry reinforces difference between Suzuki’s ‘two races’ and thus marginalization, due to the way subversive technique ruptures colonial logic, as opposed to consolidating with it. Zitkála-Šá’s autobiography demonstrates how the mimicker’s native culture and language are threatened by the acquisition of language and knowledge. The process of cultural assimilation that takes place ironically alienates her. Therefore, in reading “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” a postcolonial understanding of mimicry, speech and language, appear to be synonymous with a neo-classical power discourse.

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