

Kevin Jared Hosein's trinidadian creole and its location

Kevin Jared Hosein'in Trinidad Kreolü ve konumu

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at locating the significance of Trinidadian Creole in the literary works of Kevin Jared Hosein. Trinidadian Creole, a language rooted in the history of colonisation and slavery, serves as a medium through which Mr. Hosein resonates the themes of identity, resistance, and cultural hybridity. Considering postcolonial theories, including those of Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, this study inspects how Hosein's use of Trinidadian Creole challenges the dominant linguistic hierarchies and disturbs the colonial power structures. Through close textual analysis of selected works, such as the "Passage" and "Hiranyagarbha," this research examines how Trinidadian Creole remaps the Caribbean stories confronting the grand narratives and European universals.

Key Words: Trinidadian Creole, Postcolonialism, Relocation, Subaltern, Mimic Man, Third Space

ÖZET

Bu makale, Kevin Jared Hosein'in edebi eserlerinde Trinidad Kreolü'nün önemini tespit etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sömürgecilik ve kölelik tarihine dayanan bir dil olan Trinidad Kreolü, Bay Hosein'in kimlik, direniş ve kültürel melezlik temalarını yankıladığı bir ortam görevi görmektedir. Homi K. Bhabha ve Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak'ınkiler de dahil olmak üzere sömürge sonrası teorileri göz önünde bulundurarak, bu çalışma Hosein'in Trinidad Kreolü kullanımının baskın dil hiyerarşilerine nasıl meydan okuduğunu ve sömürgeci güç yapılarını nasıl bozduğunu incelemektedir. "Geçit" ve "Hiranyagarbha" gibi seçilmiş eserlerin yakın metinsel analizi yoluyla, bu araştırma Trinidad Kreolü'nün büyük anlatılar ve Avrupa evrenselleriyle yüzleşen Karayip hikayelerini nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Trinidad Kreolü, Sömürge Sonrası, Yer Değiştirme, Alt Sınıf, Taklitçi Adam, Üçüncü Uzak

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1. INTRODUCTION

Though from time immemorial “the relationship between the slaves and their masters was both exploitative and intimate, with slaves depending on their masters for basic needs while also becoming confidants and essential figures in their lives” (Hezser, n.d.), the colonial master threw the master-slave relationship a different dimension and rigidly bifurcated between two binary codes: order and obey. “Hegel’s master seeks recognition from the slave, [and] the colonial master seeks only work. The Hegelian slave, Fanon argues, differs from the colonial slave because the former eventually gains self-consciousness and freedom through labor, while the latter seeks to be like his master—that is, he seeks to be white—and is thus unable to find liberation through labor alone (Hogan, 2018, 16).”

The romantic view of colonial masters and their native land helped the colonized people imagine a fantastic master-self not only infected the mass but also the educated as well: for example, Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote “I sigh for Albion's distant shore,/ Its valleys green, its mountains high;/ Tho' friends, relations, I have none/ In that far clime, yet, oh! I sigh / To cross the vast Atlantic wave/ For glory, or a nameless grave! (Haq, 2004).” On the other hand, the servant tries to justify the code prescribed by the master and it's the duty of the slaves to follow exactly in order to please the master and return the favour.

The long process of servant self portrays the image of mimic man that can be amply seen in the literature. Some of them are Friday in Daniel Defoe's “Robinson Crusoe” and Lakunle in Wole Soyinka's “Lion and the Jewel”, Lucas Beauchamp in the “Go Down, Moses” by William Faulkner, Mustafa Sa'eed in the “Season of Migration to the North” by Tayeb Salih, Nicolas Garrigan in the “The Last King of Scotland” by Giles Fodan etc.

The slave self in the making took a huge time. Education played a vital role to embody a true slave self. The minutes of Macaulay, for example, created a genre that promoted “Education should create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (National Archives of India, n.d.).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism functions as an initial outline for framing how colonial powers constructed and therefore misrepresentation of colonised peoples and cultures. This lens analyses how Kevin Jared Hosein's use of Trinidadian Creole challenges and subverts these colonial narratives, offering a reverse perspective on Caribbean identity and history.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of third space and mimicry is used to explore the complex interplay of cultures and identities in the Caribbean context. Bhabha's jargons emphasise the fluidity and hybrid nature of postcolonial identities and colonial hegemony.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s idea of subaltern provides an insight into the marginalized voices and perspectives that are often silenced within the dominant discourses. This framework is applied to analyse how Hosein's use of Trinidadian Creole sounds in the larger arena of colonial power and reflects the subaltern voices.

Moreover, it also borrows the ideas from Tagore, Adorno proving the authenticity of mother tongue or national language.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper follows a qualitative research method. To collect information, it depends on many secondary sources like books, research articles, interviews, magazines etc. For citation and documentation, it follows the guidelines of APA 7th.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Though it was hard to relocate his own position, Caliban, somehow, tried to encounter the language he was taught by the master Prospero himself. Master Prospero possibly could not predict that the language he taught his slave to listen to his commands would come back as a boomerang and try to rid⁴ his skin with red plague. Caliban learnt english⁵; not English. Caliban, which might be a corrupted word version of Carribean, learnt creole in which Mr. Hosein wants to narrate his literary work. In an interview, he expressed that–

I want to tell our Trinidadian stories with our Trinidadian Creole, entangle it with our Trinidadian history, colonial, post-colonial, everything. My stories and Trinidad are interlocked. They are one and the same. I am indebted to this island and its diversity of people and culture and geology and compliments and insults and paradoxes and pains (Hosein, 2021).

In other ways, Master Crusoe's Friday⁶ was very much smooth functioning and management friendly. Once he was saved by Robinson Crusoe and repaid his life-debt assisting a lifelong service. On the process, Mr. Crusoe released *The White man's Burden*⁷: thus taught him English and made him Christian. On the process of living on the lonely island, "... Robinson Crusoe... becomes an architect, ... a shipwright, a farmer, a tailor, and a clergyman ... true prototype of the British colonist, as Friday is the symbol of the subject races (Smith, 2020)."

Friday, potentially the initial nonwhite character depicted with realism, individuality, and empathy in the English novel, possesses immense literary and cultural significance. If Crusoe epitomises the inaugural colonial mindset in fiction, then Friday symbolises more than merely a Caribbean tribesman; he embodies the entirety of the indigenous populations across the Americas, Asia, and Africa, who would subsequently endure oppression during the epoch of European imperialism. Robinson Crusoe said "... for never man had a more faithful, loving, sincere servant than Friday was to me; ... his very affections were tied to me, like those of a child to a father; ... he would have sacrificed his life for the saving mine... soon convinced me that I needed to use no precautions as to my safety on his account (Defoe, 1920: 277)".

A neutralised interpretation can be found in the movie "Robinson Crusoe" cast by Pierce Brosnan as Robinson and William Takaku as Friday. Robinson saved Friday and taught him the basics of English within six months. However, when Crusoe tried to convert him to Christianity, Friday refused, and an argument started. Consequently, Friday distanced himself from Crusoe. Feeling the absence of companionship, Crusoe tried to reconcile with Friday. After reuniting, the two set a trap for the tribe of natives who previously tried to sacrifice Friday. Once they arrive, Crusoe lights a

⁴ Means damage or destroy in Shakespearean English.

⁵ Commonwealth English was not capitalised.

⁶ We do not know the original name of Friday. It is also given by Mr. Crusoe.

⁷ "The White Man's Burden", a poem by Rudyard Kipling, calls the aboriginal people "half devil and half child (Kipling, 1914: 94)".

fuse leading to a load of gunpowder; however, Skipper, the corgi, chases after the lit fuse and also dies in the explosion. At Skipper's funeral, Crusoe gains a deeper appreciation for Friday's religion. Here, the interpretation has been completely altered. The movie reinstalled the Defovian narrative and prioritised the aboriginal values in which the very postcolonial idea is deeply rooted.

Crusoe later decides they must leave the island because the native tribe is preparing to attack. Friday suggests the possibility of New Britain as a destination. He explains he cannot return to his home island because he is considered dead as a sacrifice, and going to New Britain is not viable because Europeans enslave his people. In their conversation, Friday learns "Master" is not Crusoe's real name but a sign of enslavement, leading him to leave Crusoe once more. To reject Mr. Crusoe as a master shows a great determination of own originality. Friday returned again and shook hands with Crusoe and therefore became friends. Thus, the cinematic narrative turns the master-slave relationship into friendship (Hardy & Miller, 1997).

Again Lakunle tries to impress Sidi, the village girl who could not figure the Biblical metaphor out used by anglo-maniac Lakunle. And therefore Sidi rejects his marriage proposal. Lakunle who does want to pay bride-price is the ideal product of Macaulay's minutes that solely created western taste. On the other hand, Sidi is not foolish enough to be flattered with sugar coated words like "Sidi, my love will open your mind/ Like the chaste leaf in the morning ..." or "my heart/ Bursts into flowers" keeps her originality (Soyinka, 1962: 9).

Caliban, on the other hand, conspires with two other characters, Stephano and Trinculo, to overthrow Prospero and take control of the island. They even plan to murder Prospero. Caliban sees Prospero as an oppressor who has enslaved him and treats him cruelly, so his desire for revenge is driven by a desire for freedom and autonomy.

Friday, a happy fellow living with his new name and identity, is a slave both mentally and physically. Lakunle is a free slave who follows the western norms. Friday didn't complain about Robinson Crusoe. Caliban, therefore, is a more powerful character than Friday as he raised voice though he was marginalized, lost social status, lost mother tongue. And yet the tragic end of Okonkwo surpasses all the characters like Caliban, Friday or Lakunle. He is the proverbial character who says "I would rather die than dishonour." Nothing is more dishonouring than slavery. Thus, Okonkwo rejects the third space in which Caliban-Friday-Lakunle is living.

To extend the argument further, the paper locates Kevin Jared Hosein's space as well. He tries to establish Trinidadian Creole that targets the established narratives and thereby encounters and challenges against the establishment.

5. DISCUSSION

(1) Mr. Hosein's challenging project to retell his Trinidadian stories in Trinidadian Creole locates and relocates some major issues in which colonial resistances sustain and develop. The narrator of the story "Passage" experienced a tremendous journey that broaches and includes many a postcolonial idea that triggers and challenges the universals and the grand narratives of Europe. The story "Passage" starts in a pub where the narrator Yessir was incited by Stew's wanderlust that treasured him with such fantastic stories that made him one of the most important persons who could incessantly share his stories with his friends in the late evening after-office-pub-gossip. One of the stories experienced by Stew got everybody's attention: a forest woman, not more than thirty

that at first all the curious listeners mistakenly took her as the folkloric *La Diabliesse*.⁸ But the narrator Yessir, a middle aged scientific officer of the forest department, interpreted the story differently as he was serving the department for nineteen years, which made him experienced in identifying family, genus, species, dentate, palmate, serrate, lobate etc. Yessir being very adventurous in his youth ... “climbs and rappels as a lad... braved Gasparee Caves enough times to remember... bathed with the turtles in Matura and scaled moras in Salybia (Hosein, 2018).”

Yessir followed Stew's map and reached the hut situated in the middle of the forest where the young woman was found. But the story of Stew hardly matches with Yessir's. Yessir's story does not stop with “half-naked woman” and “headless doll nailed to a tree” seen from a long distance; rather he became a part of the story after staying with the family for a few days. While watching the hut from a distance, he dared not go closer as near to the hut he found a child skull that easily sensed him the story of cannibal. Yessir suddenly fell down and became unconscious. When he regained his senses, he found eight eyes watching him: an old man, a young woman, and two boys. Though the family took care of his injuries and treated with a civilised manner, his mindset could not let him forget the sight of the human skull. After a conversation, he came to know that they were waiting for the “Second Coming” and still they held the oldest belief in non-academic sense. It was then clear to Yessir that the doll hanging with rotten cloth in the trees symbolises the image of crucifixion (mimic Jesus's bowed head). Yessir safely returned home. After some days on the Television, Yessir saw the family in the forest arrested and handcuffed. Yessir easily understood that he shared his experience with his pub-friends. And Mano's wife was a social worker who tried to rescue the children lest they should be—though wrongly understood—burnt in the pyre. “The crime was cremation without a permit.” In their defence, the old man uttered—“rite O passage”⁹, nobody cared to understand the fact.

Here, the idea of subalternism activates. First, the family lived far far away from the urban society and thus their language is not understandable either. They have their voice when the old man uttered “second coming” or “rite O passage” and yet they cannot reach the commoners' attention. They believed in the return of Jesus Christ with primitive ideas. As time has progressed, the concept has evolved, making it more complex to grasp the essence of the forest family in a straightforward manner. Yessir came to know from the conversation with the old man and his family that they were waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. Yessir knew the truth and yet remained silent as he might fall in trouble with the police investigation.

The story can be examined from two angles: the geographical setting of the forest family, and Yessir's perspective by which we would be able to trace his original location and grounds.

The subaltern idea in the story revolves around the marginalised and voiceless individuals who exist on the fringes of society, often ignored or disregarded by those in positions of power and privilege. This is exemplified through the characters of the old man, the woman, and their two boys living in the forest. They are portrayed as living a primitive and unconventional lifestyle, disconnected from mainstream society, and their actions are met with suspicion and misunderstanding when they come into contact with the protagonist and others (Maurya, 2022).

Despite their isolation and lack of social status, the family maintains their own values and beliefs, which are misunderstood and judged by those who encounter them. The old man's explanation of their scars as part of a rite of passage highlights their alternative worldview and challenges

⁸ *La Diabliesse* embodies the timeless cautionary tale of the dangers of succumbing to temptation and the sinister allure of beauty concealing darkness (The Rum Ration, 2020).

⁹ Rite of passage, ceremonial event, existing in all historically known societies, that marks the passage from one social or religious status to another (Alexander & Norbeck, 2023).

conventional norms. However, their way of life ultimately brings them into conflict with the authorities, leading to their arrest and incarceration.

The protagonist's attempt to engage with and understand the forest family reflects a broader theme of power dynamics and the complexities of social interaction. While he initially views them with curiosity and fascination, his involvement ultimately leads to unintended consequences and the family's downfall. This highlights the precarious position of marginalised individuals in society, who are often subject to exploitation and manipulation by those with more power and influence.

But he discovered something new. He was a man of western education and adapted the norms and cultures of Europe. Thus, he thought he was in the segment of western space. But he is neither in theirs or his; then what space he belongs therefore in the third space. Bhabha identified the location and did not put the position of the third space. Third space does not assert whether it is centre or periphery. Here, the paper targets Yessir's position and cultural location in which he stands. Though he believed he was in the centre, he found his position slipped away and stayed where it was. If Friday, an ideal slave; Lakunle, a perfect mimic man; Caliban, a subaltern protestor, then what Yessir is. Yessir did not know either, but finally he discovered his position. He is still in the position in which the family of the forest lives. They could utter words though none could understand them. On the other hand, Yessir could not even take his stand and remained passive.

Yessir's internal conflict and moral dilemma after witnessing the family's arrest exemplify the complexities of the third space. He grapples with the tension between his duty as a citizen to report illegal activities and his empathy towards the marginalised family. Yessir's silence reflects his negotiation of competing cultural and ethical imperatives, highlighting the fluid and contingent nature of identity in the third space.

(2) The narrator of the story "Hiranyagarbha" goes through a magic journey that he experienced with his friend Yadav in the Caroni Swamp, a mangrove forest popular for fishing and pastime. It looks commensurate with King Midas' gold story. One unlucky morning, they found the mangrove roots from which gold was leaking through into the lime-green water of the swamp. Whoever touches the roots turns into gold. Tilapias, scarlet ibises, fiddler crabs, herons, catfishes etc. all were floating with half or fully gold-coated bodies. The scenery of dead piled bodies horrified both the narrator and Yadav. Out of curiosity, Yadav dipped his bare hand and touched the roots. He felt warm. But his hand turned into gold as well. A group of doctors, a team of university researchers and scientists knew nothing for sure. Before nightfall, it began to spread and turned Yadav's neck into gold that damaged the cartilage in his windpipe and he died. But the thing did not stop over there. An American TV show Paranormalists appeared to make an episode on the mysterious death of Yadav. As usual, they came to Caroni Swamp so that they could make it viral and popular to the western audience. They took the incident very lightly. Before reaching the spot, they named the episode "The Tropical Swamp Thing: Exposed!" No sooner had they reached the tree roots than they began to feel the womb throbbing in the dark forest of Trinidad. All of the American TV crews got terrified and began to utter the name of Jesus.

The idea of "Hiranyagarbha" challenges the western narratives which one was established to rule and dominate the colonized people. Achebe confessed the fact and said "We lived at the crossroads of cultures" (Achebe) and therefore there is no way to go back. Kevin Jared Hosein has surely realised the fact that they cannot go back. That's why, he did not try to go back and showed no intention to dig into the past; rather he tried to start afresh in which he is going to write his own narratives. And his narrative depends on his own language. If it is creole, then so be it. Rabindranath Tagore allegedly emphasises on practising art and literature in mother tongue. He said "Mother tongue is like mother's milk" (Bhattacharjee, 2022) which is definitely a metaphorical argument by which Tagore shows the motherly relationship between a person and their native language. Mother's

milk is essential for nourishment and survival to her child and the mother tongue provides us with the foundation of communication, understanding, and cultural identity. This analogy underlines the deep connection and comfort that individuals feel when communicating in their native language, as it is something inherently familiar and nurturing, much like the care and sustenance provided by a mother. This type of sensitive comment on mother tongue can easily make someone believe the overconfidence of Tagore on his nationalistic view. But he said in his childhood memory that “My third brother used to say that I ought first to get a good foundation of Bengali and only afterwards to go on to the English superstructure” (Tagore, 1945: 14). So, the statement neutralises that he respects every language and promotes multilingualism.

Odysseus’ fidget to return to Ithaca, taking an example from Western Canon, at least asserts that the Western grand narrative does not want its hero to be settled somewhere else as “the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell, 2004, 28).” And even the goddess of wisdom Athena, for example, pleads to Zeus “But my heart breaks for Odysseus,/ that seasoned veteran cursed by fate so long –/far from his loved ones still, he suffers torments/ off on a wave-washed island rising at the centre of the seas” (Homer, 1999: 79). Thus, he returned though it took two decades. But Kevin’ Yessir or the unknown narrator of *Hiranyagarbha* had no option to go that further as they had lost their way in the quagmire of slave politics. Telemachus was waiting for Odysseus. None is waiting for the black African in the deep forest.

That’s why, they have to settle the debate of going back to the beginning and move forward with the very little thing they possess. Therefore, Kevin chooses his Trinidadan Creole, a mixed language of different types of European colonizers. It is such a language that has no holy books or prophets that claims to be sent from the heaven; rather it is the man made language that carries a deadly legacy of torture and sufferings and yet they have adapted it with their own and expressed the feelings of a human being that such a divine language like Sanskrit, Latin or Arabic carries. Shakespeare might mockingly call them caliban and yet the language of caliban—in which usually Kevin writes—begins to get attention from the corner of the world and tries to project a philosophy that needs to establish its own narratives. Another important thing we must keep in mind is that Caribbean Creole is the mother tongue of Kevin Jared Hosein. So, it is his intellectual stand like Rabindranath Tagore or Edward Said. Said put it this way:

Languages of course are always national-Greek, French, Arabic, English, German, and so forth-although one of the main points I am making here is that the intellectual is obliged to use a national language not only for obvious reasons of convenience and familiarity but also because he or she hopes to impress on the language a particular sound, a special accent, and finally a perspective that is his or her own (Said, 1994a: 27).

Edward Said’s book “Culture and Imperialism” also highlights the nuanced role of intellectuals within oppressed communities. Said argues that while intellectuals may identify with the struggles of their own people, their loyalty should not be blindly tethered to nationalist sentiments. Instead, they should maintain a critical stance, even toward their own nationalistic movements, in order to uphold principles of justice and equity (Said, 1994b).

Naipaul and Walcott predominantly wrote in English, although they occasionally incorporated Trinidadian Creole in the dialogue of their characters to capture the authenticity of the local speech patterns. In contrast, Kevin’s approach seems to prioritise the exploration and celebration of Trinidadian Creole itself as a distinct linguistic and cultural entity. Rather than using it sparingly as dialogue or for local colour, Kevin might dig deeper into the nuances and complexities of Trinidadian Creole as a primary mode of expression in his writing. This approach could provide a

more intimate and immersive portrayal of Trinidadian culture and identity from within the framework of the language itself. It would be a departure from the more traditional Trinidadian literature in English, offering a fresh perspective that embraces the richness and vibrancy of Creole language and culture.

“A Far Cry from Africa” (2007) by Derek Walcott, for example, shifts focus to his own mixed heritage, feeling torn between his African roots and his European education and upbringing. He grapples with the sense of betrayal and guilt for not being able to fully align himself with either side of the conflict. Ultimately, the poem highlights the complexities of identity and the lasting impact of colonialism on personal and cultural identity (Walcott, 2007). But Kevin did not hesitate to decide that Hiranyagarbha would reshape the future world in the Trinidadian swamp forest.

In terms of mapping Trinidadian Creole, Kevin's approach involves embracing the nuances and complexities of the language and culture without necessarily fitting it into predefined categories or spaces. Instead, he might explore Trinidadian Creole on its own terms, acknowledging its rich history, influences, and evolving nature. This approach could lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the language and its cultural significance. Kevin's perspective might offer fresh insights into Trinidadian Creole that go beyond traditional linguistic frameworks, allowing for a more holistic and dynamic representation of the language and its speakers.

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