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The Deconstruction of the Subject and Power: A Foucaultian and Kristevan Reading of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*

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Abstract

My paper explores the topic of identity deconstruction in Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. The problem which I have chosen to study puts the main character of the play, Brutus Jones in the spotlight. The goal of the study is to examine his character development as well as his regression throughout the story from the perspective of power relations and the shift from the position of the speaking subject into total linguistic regression and loss of speech.

While examining the protagonist, the main thing that interests me is how a seemingly complete character descends from a position of power to disintegration on a psychological level, which eventually leads to the deconstruction of his perceived identity. This destruction is not only present on the level of the story (losing social status, wealth and authority, suffering the consequences of unchecked power), but also on the level of the human psyche (struggle with guilt, fear, existential crisis, running from the past, and insanity).

In my analysis I rely on Michel Foucault's essay "The Subject and Power" to position Brutus Jones's ascent to power and to decode how he managed to practice his authority for a long time, but also to show why it was impossible for him to maintain his status. I also employ Julia Kristeva's views on the speaking subject and its role within the system (in this case, a system created by Jones himself) and the crisis incurring with the loss of speech.

I. Introduction

In my paper, I aim to explore the identity deconstruction of Brutus Jones in Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. I have always been interested in the way characters are shaped and developed in a story. However, what intrigues me to an even greater extent is when the development of a character changes to the worse. That is the reason I am interested in the main character's ascent to power, in his maintenance of power as well as in his downfall. My goal is to examine Jones's journey throughout the play from the perspective of power relations and also from the perspective of speech, more specifically, its disappearance.

My analysis relies on Michel Foucault's essay entitled "The Subject and Power" and Julia Kristeva's "The System and the Speaking Subject". The play revolves around authority, power and the disintegration of the individual who wields them. I am primarily invested in the way the subject operates, develops, as well as deconstructs itself. Therefore, with both Foucault and Kristeva being among the main representatives of subject theories, I choose them and their works for assistance over the course of my analyses. On the one hand, Foucault's theory provides valuable insights on the way power dynamics and relations exist within the play. On the other hand, after a certain point in the play, there is no more discourse, dialogue, monologue or in fact, any form of language on stage. Kristeva's perspective puts forward the ways in which the subject manifests or expresses itself when language disappears.

My hypotheses consist of the next propositions. First of all, I am curious as to how power dynamics depicted in *The Emperor Jones* align with Foucault's view on power and its effects on subjects. I believe that Foucault's ideas will prove to be harmonious with the power systems found in the play. I also attempt to ultimately explain what elements lead to the loss of authority and to the deconstruction of the main character from a Foucaultian perspective.

Regarding the disappearance of language and linguistic regression in the play I intend to reveal their cause through the lens of Kristeva's take on the speaking subject. I believe that by the application of "The System and the Speaking Subject", this phenomenon becomes explicable. I also highlight the way this regression relates to the deconstruction of the character.

My paper starts with an overview of each study that make up the theoretical foundation. Then I go on to present the applicability of the said studies in the analysis of O'Neill's play. This is followed by the analyses and ultimately, I conclude my study by showcasing the findings of the

Foucaultian and Kristevan analyses, as well as the direction my research may take from this point on.

II. An overview of the theoretical foundation & method

II.1. An overview of Foucault's "The Subject and Power"

In his essay entitled "The Subject and Power", Foucault takes the analysis of power beyond the framework of institutions and extends it to the ways in which power functions at the level of individual subjectivity. Although Foucault has become deeply involved with the question of power, in this essay, the theme of his research is the subject.

In the beginning of his essay, Foucault specifies the objective of his research, which is to examine and "create a history of the different modes by which [...] human beings are made subjects" (Foucault 1982, 1). Foucault deals with three means or modes of objectification which eventually transform a human being into a subject.

The first mode includes inquiries, which strive to entitle themselves with the status of being a science, for example the objectification of the speaking subject in the fields of linguistics or philology. Another example would be the productive subject, who works "in the analysis of wealth and economics" (Foucault 1982, 1). Additionally, it is also possible to objectivize the fact that there are living beings. This happens in the field of sciences such as biology or natural history.

The second mode in which Foucault studied the objectivizing of the subject is what he calls "dividing practices". In this case, the subject can be objectivized by means of two options, processes. The first one is that the subject becomes divided inside himself, while the other one is that it becomes divided from others. Foucault offers us three examples: "Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the 'good boys'" (Foucault 1982, 2).

Last but not least, Foucault also aims to investigate how individual human beings undergo a process of turning themselves into subjects. For instance, in the realm of sexuality, people come to perceive themselves as its subjects.

Later, Foucault goes on to present the argument that the role of philosophy is not only to prevent reason from overstepping the limits set by what is experienceable but also to keep an eye

on the possible powers of political rationality, which oftentimes can prove to become excessive. There exists a relation between rationalization and excessive political power practices. The study suggests a new economy of power relations, resistance to power being its starting point. Foucault believes that examining the antagonisms of certain power relations helps to better understand the features of the respective power relation. In order to gain a better understanding of this idea, let us take a look at the examples given by Foucault himself:

For example, to find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity. And what we mean by legality in the field of illegality. And, in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations. (1982, 4)

Although it may seem counter-intuitive at first, this approach can certainly prove to be useful in developing a more profound idea of how power relations work than simply analyzing it from an internal perspective.

After establishing the method of analysis regarding power relations, the essay attempts to define the common elements in different kinds of oppositions, struggles against contemporary manifestations of authority. Foucault finds that these struggles are transversal, meaning that they are not limited to any particular form of government, country, even though they might appear and grow sooner if certain conditions are met. The goal of subjects struggling against being submitted to authority is ultimately to gain back control over themselves. These efforts also seem to be immediate in the sense that subjects tend to confront occurrences of power in which they are directly involved individually instead of seeking out the bigger picture and trying to overthrow the core source of their subjugation. As Foucault puts it into words: “They do not look for the ‘chief enemy’ but for the immediate enemy” (1982, 4). The endeavors also target to assert individuality and reject restrictions (which sabotage connection with other people and individualization) imposed on them, thus challenging the government’s control over the individualization of the subjects. Interestingly, the resistance put up by the subjects also goes against qualification, expertise, competence, and knowledge. This only happens if they are associated with power, understandably, because these powerful and privileged qualities can be used to violate the interests of the subjects. Therefore, it is important to point out the fact that it is not the qualities themselves

that are challenged but the way they function when tied to authority. Lastly, the struggles represent a refusal of any administrative attempt to determine the individuality of the subject. They also disregard the abstract concepts and oppressive systems which ignore the importance of individual identity.

All in all, these struggles are not aimed at concrete institutional powers, representatives or groups. Instead, they represent a rebellion against the technique with which authority is practiced. According to Foucault, the word “subject” has two meanings. One of them is to be subjected to another person through means of control and dependence. The other meaning is being bound to one’s own identity by self-knowledge or conscience.

The essay categorizes the above-mentioned struggles into three groups based on what they struggle against more specifically. The first, most obvious one is directed against forms of domination, be they ethnic, social or religious. The second one is trying to combat different forms of exploitation which distances a person from the work and its results that they produce. The third one fights against subjection itself, whether that is submission to someone else or being tied to themselves. Throughout the history of humanity and civilization, it is not difficult whatsoever to find instances of these types of struggles. Whether they appear separately or mixed together, one of the three gains a greater significance compared to the rest even though it does not stand alone, the other two forms of power have not disappeared. For example, in today’s society, struggle against subjugation of subjectivity is the prevailing one even if forms of excessive dominance and exploitation of people are still present and pose threats and problems to our society. Foucault argues that the reason for the emphasis on subjective submission is because of the existence of the state as a political structure. He demonstrates the contrast between “pastoral power” which focuses heavily on the importance of individuality (although it has lost most of its efficiency) and the modern state which reigns over the individuals. It tries to combine sovereignty and individuality and that is the aspect that society is trying to refuse.

Discussing the way power is exercised, three types of relationships are presented, which are power relations, objective capacities and relationships of communication. These categories constantly overlap with each other. Power relations refer to the dynamics between its participants. Their behaviors and actions manipulate one another. Objective capacity includes the capability of exerting enough force over subjects to change them, use them and if needed, destroy them. Communication plays a vital role in the transmission of information through language and this can easily have an effect of asserting dominance and power.

Foucault inquires into the nature of power, which is essentially “a way in which certain actions modify others” (1982, 12). Although it is assumed to exist, in itself, power as a matter of fact does not exist. “Power exists only when it is put into action” (1982, 12). Consent of parties can be a context in which power is maintained but it is not a necessity. It is also possible to subjugate subjects through brute strength and violence. However, whether one uses violence or consents and volunteers, these are merely tools which can be used to practice power. Foucault defines the exercise of power “as a mode of action upon the actions of others [...]” (1982, 14). This includes the component of freedom. If a subject is not free (they cannot behave in several ways, their actions are constrained, lacking possibilities), it is not possible to talk about a power relationship (slavery, for instance, cannot be considered to be a power relation). But freedom disappears once power is practiced, which means that direct confrontation between the two is impossible. Consequently, freedom is a precondition of power because it has to exist for power to function. There is a complex interaction in the relationship of power and freedom which necessitates that freedom refuses to submit itself to power. At the core of power dynamics, there lies the insistence on freedom. The concept of “agonism” is proposed, which represents a relationship that is characterized by mutual provocation and constant confrontation.

Foucault establishes the next five points which are required to be taken into consideration when the analysis of power relations is at stake. First and foremost, the system of differentiations allow power to be exercised. Wealth, economic and social status, privileges, legal and traditional distinctions are all elements that power dynamics rely on. The second point consists of the types of objectives which the authorities are in pursuit of, such as wealth, keeping positions or sustaining privileges. Thirdly, it is also important to consider the means of bringing power relations into being, which may involve a wide variety of methods, such as military intervention, verbal persuasion, setting up surveillance systems. The fourth point calls attention to the forms of institutionalization while the fifth focuses on the degrees of rationalization.

Towards the end of his essay, Foucault elaborates the way power and strategy relations intertwine. He describes the three ways in which the word “strategy” is employed:

First, to designate the means employed to attain a certain end; it is a question of rationality functioning to arrive at an objective. Second, to designate the manner in which a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks should be the action of the others and what he considers the others think to be his own; it is the way in which one seeks to have

the advantage over others. Third, to designate the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the opponent of his means of combat and to reduce him to giving up the struggle; it is a question, therefore, of the means destined to obtain victory (1982, 17).

Strategy encompasses ways of achieving end goals, designating the way a partner in the relation behaves and influencing the perception of others regarding his own actions while the end goal is to render any possibility of struggle from the adversary's side. In the endeavor of shaping potential actions of others, power relations strive to avoid direct confrontations while power struggles attempt to gain the upper hand and evolve into power relations themselves.

II.2. A brief summary of Kristeva's "The System and the Speaking Subject"

Julia Kristeva's "The System and the Speaking Subject" is a landmark study in the field of linguistics which greatly contributes to literary theory as well. According to Kristeva, language is not simply a means of communication.

First, we have to understand what semiotics the disparity of research. Semiotics has discovered that there exists a social law, a symbolic dimension, which is expressed through signs and symbols and every social practice is the expression of this law. In her work, Kristeva argues that every system, be it political, social or economic, is a system of signs and symbols, one might as well say, a language, which constructs and shapes a transcendental subject which employs it.

This transcendental subject exists within the system, as an abstraction, outside of the empirical, experienced world. The system does not take the physicality of the speaking subject into consideration. It ignores the fact that the subject is a physical body (having instincts, desires etc.), a social consciousness and also a subconsciousness at the same time.

The speaking subject is a divided one, the process of speaking is heterogenic. The active, speaking subject always breaks, violates the system in one way or another. The system can only speak of such practices that subserve it if the semiotic is "so obedient to the necessity for social communication as to be inseparable from sociality" (Kristeva 1975, 2). The semiotic disrupts this principle, goes against the symbolic order by introducing elements which cannot be subjected to it. The system is incapable of explaining and coding practices which deviate from its own. For example, games, enjoyment, poetic language, insanity, music, dance, rites – these all free

themselves from the code, the system, they undermine it since they are not merely tools of sociality. The system cannot grasp anything that does not belong to the social contract.

The speaking subject is forever changing. It is capable of renewing the order in which it is trapped. However, if the speaking subject was the one to create the order, then once it moves away from it, the code collapses because it lacks the ability to sustain itself without this given subject.

II.3. Applicability of the theories in the interpretation of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*

Most of Eugene O'Neill's works are written in a different style. *The Emperor Jones* is one of the playwright's first experimental plays in which he deals with the problems of his contemporary society, such as racism, colonialism, and other political issues. O'Neill also likes to present various social classes struggling and being pushed into despair by factors which are beyond their control.

Previous studies published on *The Emperor Jones* have mainly explored the play's depiction of racism, identity, individuality, colonialism, national trauma and existential themes. For example, Susan H. Smith conducted an analysis of the play based on Ruth Leys' in *Trauma: A Genealogy* and Cathy Caruth's in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* in order to highlight how O'Neill presents racism differently from the usual ways this issue had been approached and discussed by his contemporaries, and how the national traumas are embedded in the main character but also extended to the audience through the use of theatrical means. Another remarkable mention would be Michèle Mendelssohn's journal article entitled *Reconsidering Race, Language and Identity in "The Emperor Jones"*, in which he takes a look at these components in the play. There are also studies preoccupied with the role of nature in the play. For example, Sezgin Toska, in his article entitled "An Analysis of Nature as an Actant in *The Emperor Jones*", examines O'Neill's play from an ecocritical perspective, which includes analyzing the different interactions that take place between humans and non-human elements within the world of the work.

Although my paper does also touch upon the above-mentioned themes, it mainly focuses on approaching these themes from specific Foucaultian and Kristevan perspectives. I am primarily preoccupied with language through analyzing the play using Kristeva's "The System and the Speaking Subject." Power dynamics are addressed using Foucault's "The Subject and Power." I place emphasis on the deconstruction of Brutus Jones' identity mainly from these perspectives.

More heavily researched themes, such as race or racism will only be of secondary importance compared to the disappearance of discourse or the relationship between authority and those subjected to it. Meanwhile, the main focus will be on how these elements contribute to the deconstruction of the identity and subject positions of the main character over the course of the play.

On the one hand, applying Foucault's theory, we gain a deeper understanding of power dynamics through analyzing the relationship between Brutus Jones and those subjected to his authority. The Foucaultian perspective offers insight into Jones' character as someone who practices authority and into how the inhabitants of the island qualify as subjects that can be dominated as well as into the way their behaviour is shaped during the emperor's rule. Despite Jones' temporary success in authority, he himself is aware of the fact that his reign will come to an end eventually. When moments of resistance emerge against him, cracks in his system of power are revealed.

On the other hand, applying Kristeva's views proposed in "The System and the Speaking Subject" helps in recognizing that the power system created and sustained by Jones is a code/sign-system to which he himself is also subjected. Being the one who created the social hierarchy, he plays a vital role in keeping it intact. As soon as he is not part of the equation, the whole system built by him crumbles. This is also signaled by a change in the order of language, or, in fact, its disappearance. Since Jones is no longer capable of sustaining alongside his power system, the code/sign-system due to factors and crises such as his instinctive escape, his past traumas and subconscious resurfacing; he slowly deconstructs this system, abandoning it completely by the end (thus, the disappearance of discourse on his part).

III. Analyzing Brutus Jones's deconstruction in *The Emperor Jones*

III.1. Power and authority dynamics applying Foucault's "The Subject and Power"

Eugene O'Neill's iconic play, *The Emperor Jones* unfolds within a colonial setting, blooming with explorable power dynamics, subjectivity and struggles. Through the lenses of Foucault's "The Power and Subject", my analysis strives to discover the way Foucault's theory and the power systems found in the play align with each other. This includes the way Jones

exercises his authority, the way he affects those subjected to him, and the way resistance and struggle is depictable in the play's world.

Foucault talks about five points which are demanded to be taken into consideration when analyzing power relations. The first point he highlights is the system of differentiations, which indicates that power dynamics rely on distinctions between the participants on the level of economic status, social status, difference in knowledge, privilege, legal or traditional background. Before taking a look at how Jones maintains his power, it is important to establish the way he achieves his status. Regarding his case, when applying the first principle of the Foucaultian power analysis, it can hardly be said that there is a distinction in economic or social status between Jones and the inhabitants of the island he has come to dominate. Jones used to be a pullman porter who got into prison after murdering another black man because of a dice game. He escaped to an unknown island in the West Indies. It is evident, that he did not have any social or financial advantage, neither had he superiority when it came to legal or traditional background. In Jones' case, the distinction that helped his rise to power lied within the difference in knowledge and information, given the society and civilization he originated from. Even though he was of low social status back in the United States of America, he still experienced the way in which a superior civilization functions and practices its power over its subjects. He himself was being subjected to it and struggling against it, for example, because of his race, which in the Foucaultian theory falls into one of the three types of struggles: against forms of domination (social, ethnic, religious – in this case, the form of domination is specifically ethnic). He developed abilities superior to the natives on the island. Jones himself takes pride in this aspect of his superiority:

Ain't I de Emperor? De laws don't go for him. [*Judicially.*] You heah what I tells you, Smithers. Dere's little stealin' like you does, and dere's big stealin' like I does. For de little stealin' dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin' dey makes you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' Fame when you croaks. [*Reminiscently.*] If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same fact. And when I gits a chance to use it I winds up Emperor in two years. (2001, 4-5)

When Jones landed on the island, it was Smithers who was willing to take him in and offer him a job. Make no mistake, Smithers' intentions were nowhere near good and Jones was aware of this fact. Although Smithers did give Jones a start, he still used and exploited him by taking

advantage of his situation and later also taking advantage of Jones's success (when Jones became emperor, he paid Smithers back for his initial help, and Jones also overlooks his illegal trades). For a short while, Jones was subjected to Smithers but he did not seem to be resisting it actively yet. The turning point came when a native of the island attempted to shoot Jones but his gun misfired. Jones, who up until that point had always been under submission, instantly took the opportunity to escape and turn the tables. He announced that he was protected by superior powers and could only be killed by a silver bullet (the bullet fired at him before was made of lead). This can be considered a way of struggling against power. And it aligns perfectly with one of Foucault's observations regarding the antagonisms of power relations: that the subjects fighting against being pushed into submission do it for the sake of gaining authority and power themselves. Jones did that too excessively when he used his perceived invincibility in order to not only take back control over his situation (dependence on Smithers) but to also become an emperor reigning over the inhabitants.

Foucault also presents three types of relationships when discussing the exercise of power: power relations, objective capacities and relationships of communication. In this case, relationships of communication are at play. Jones let a false information spread among the natives, deceiving all of them. His superior knowledge prevailed through trickery. He exercised power through the only advantage he had over the native people even when he was not in a position of authority. The definition of the exercise of power – “a way in which certain actions may structure the field of other possible actions” (Foucault 1982, 15) – describes Jones's act with great accuracy. He managed to influence the actions of the natives and make them fear him.

I would also like to apply the third employment of the word “strategy” here: “to designate the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the opponent of his means of combat and reduce him to giving up struggle” (Foucault 1982, 17). The soon-to-be emperor, Jones designated a winning strategy while being in a confrontational situation (he just avoided a gunshot) through depriving his opponents of their means of combat by exploiting their superstitious nature (declaring that he was protected by a charm and could not be harmed unless a silver bullet was used, which the natives did not have access to). Thus, he successfully reduced them to give up struggle as they did not attempt to check or defy the truth value of Jones's announcement. This is the first encounter between Jones and the natives with Jones being the one who practices power and the natives being the ones in submission, subjugated to his authority.

Taking Foucault's second point in the analysis of power relations into consideration (the types of objectives which the authorities and powers are in pursuit of), it is time to define what Brutus Jones' objective was after he acquired the position of power. Foucault gives us several examples of the potentially pursued goals: "the maintenance of privileges, the accumulation of profits, the bringing into operation of statutory authority, the exercise of a function or of a trade" (1982, 16). Here is a passage in which Jones himself answers this question:

SMITHERS [*With curiosity*]: And I bet you got yer pile o' money 'id safe some place.

JONES [*With satisfaction*]: I sho' has! And it's in a foreign bank where no pusson don't ever git it out but me no matter what come. You didn't s'pose I was holdin' down dis Emperor job for de glory in it, did you? Sho'! De fuss and glory part of it, dat's only to turn de heads o' de low-flung, bush niggers dat's here. Dey wants de big circus show for deir money. I gives it to 'em an' I gits de money. [*With a grin.*] De long green, dat's me every time! (2001, 4)

It is not difficult to deduct the motive and objective of the emperor. As he makes it clear, he is not interested in the fuss and glory that come with his title. It is also unlikely that his objective is the maintenance of privileges or bringing into operation exercises of functions, trades or statutory authorities, because he is not interested in upholding his position for the sake of it. He sees it as a mere tool. Jones has a clear goal, which is to accumulate as much profit as possible during his reign, until there are no more goods to rob his people of:

SMITHERS [*Grinning*]: But, meanin' no 'arm, you been grabbin' right and left yourself, ain't yer? Look at the taxes you've put on 'em! Blimey! You've squeezed 'em dry!

JONES [*Chuckling*]: No, dey ain't all dry yet. I'se still heah, ain't I? (2001, 4).

Brutus Jones intends on staying on the island for as long as possible in order to gain as much money as he can. All he does in return is nothing but put up a great show in front of the natives, playing the emperor. He plans to escape as soon as his power system fails. This brings us back to the notion of "strategy". This time, I look into the first and the second employment of the word. The first use of the word, "to designate the means employed to attain a certain end; it is a question of rationality functioning to arrive at an objective" (Foucault 1982, 17), is reflected in the

play by Jones's cunning plan. The end that Jones wishes to attain is to go to a more developed country and living a comfortable life, making good use of the wealth he has built up through exploiting the natives. The means he uses revolved mainly around violence and fear (I discuss the means of bringing power into existence in the next paragraph). The second employment of the word "strategy" – "to designate the manner in which a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks should be the action of the others and what he considers the others think to be his own; it is the way in which one seeks to have the advantage over others" (Foucault 1982, 17) – is reflected by the fact that Jones is aware of the temporariness of his rule. He foresees that the natives will eventually rebel against him and so, he has already devised his route of escape and he has made the necessary preparations considering different scenarios that may happen during the rebellion. For example, he loads his revolver with a silver bullet in case he gets caught so that he can commit suicide using it, thus keeping up the myth he has created. He predicts his opponents' possible moves with great efficiency. He does commit one fatal mistake despite his correct predictions, that is, underestimating his opponents, his subjects.

The third point of the Foucaultian analysis on power relations asserts the examination of means of bringing a power relation to life:

according to whether power is exercised by the threat of arms, by the effects of the word, by means of economic disparities, by more or less complex means of control, by systems of surveillance, with or without archives, according to rules which are or are not explicit, fixed or modifiable, with or without the technological means to put all these things into action. (1982, 16)

As I have mentioned before, in *The Emperor Jones*, the means of exercising power are heavily constructed upon violence and implementing fear. I propose taking a closer look at a few of the examples given by Foucault. The first example he offers is the threat of arms. In the play, indeed, there can be found for example, firearms which are used to assert dominance:

JONES [*His hand going to his revolver like a flash—menacingly*]: Talk polite, white man! Talk polite, you heah me! I'm boss heah now, is you fergettin'? (2001, 6)

In this case, Jones has a revolver ready and he is not hesitant to use it in order to reassert and remind Smithers that he is no longer subjected to him but the other way around. Another instance of practicing power through the means of a weapon is when Smithers uses his whip in order to scare the woman he encounters in the palace.

The next example Foucault mentions is the effects of the word. The quotation above also contains such an element. Jones orders Smithers to watch out for his attitude and to keep it polite. But this is not the first occasion that Jones does this. He has also used the persuasive effect of communication when he announced himself invulnerable. Language is an efficient tool because it has the ability, if used well, to manipulate thoughts. Jones knows this, that is why he also has not spared the effort to learn the language of the island's inhabitants.

Economic disparities mean the unequal distribution of income. Since Jones's objective is no different than exploiting his subjects for their economic goods, this way of exercising power is the most important one to him without a doubt. He also assists Smithers in his trades which are strongly questionable from a legal standpoint, giving him an unfair advantage. On the other hand, surveillance systems do not seem to be present in Jones's system of power. On the day of the rebellion, it is Smithers that has to warn him about the impending attack on him. The woman has also been caught by Smithers but other than her, everyone was able to slip away without notice to prepare for the attack.

The fourth aspect of analysis put forward by Foucault is the forms of institutionalization. Jones's power system takes on the form of an empire with him being its emperor. Consequently, he holds all the power in the system, leaving no one to stand up to him. There is a court mentioned by Smithers, however, they do not contribute much to the empire besides drinking and enjoying their privileges, therefore it is safe to render them as insignificant. Although there is supposedly a legal system since there are laws, they are also applied unjustly and have no relevance if the emperor wishes it to be so:

JONES: Ain't I pertected you and winked at all de crooked tradin' you been doin' right out in de broad day? Sho' I has and me makin' laws to stop it at de same time! [*He chuckles.*]
(2001, 4)

The fifth and the last pillar of the Foucaultian analysis of power systems consists in the degrees of rationalization. In this regard, the power dynamics are adequately adjusted to the given

situation. Since violence and the infliction of fear prove to be effective methods of stabilizing the power dynamics, they enable the power system to remain intact for quite a while. The only aspect where rationalization is lacking is the system's defense in the case of a high caliber of resistance, but that is understandable, given Jones's objective. He never wanted to maintain his status forever.

In the second half of this chapter, I examine the struggles against Jones's system of power in order to better understand it. I focus on what caused and contributed to the failure of the power dynamics established by Jones.

Foucault states that power can be exercised only over free subjects and only as long as they are free. Freedom and power have a complicated relationship since they are both mutually exclusive, meaning that where power is practiced, freedom cannot exist. At the same time, freedom is a condition for power to be exercised through its ability to refuse submission. The relationship between the two ends up being a constant struggle against one another. Freedom no longer exists essentially, instead, it becomes an agonism. The subjects on the island were free as in they showed their negative attitude and refusal to submit (for example, it is openly known of Lem, who is a native chief, that he hates Jones)

Jones strives to maintain power while avoiding to destroy his subjects in a direct confrontation. This is because that would make it impossible to exploit them any longer. This aligns with Foucault's idea that "there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom" (1982, 14). In Jones's system, all three types of struggles are possible, because he exercises ethnic domination, exploitation and subjection. The most prevalent one among these is exploitation. It is no question that Jones practices a form of power which is excessive. This results in the fact that sooner or later, different ways of resistance will emerge.

To start with, the second common element in anti-authority struggles – "The aim of these struggles is the power effects as such" (Foucault 1982, 4) – points to the goal of the natives, who want to take power back into their control since the excessive authority implemented by the main character is uncontrolled.

The third principle of struggles – "In such struggles people criticize instances of power which are closest to them, those which exercise their action on individuals. They do not look for the 'chief enemy' but for the immediate enemy" (Foucault 1982, 4) – is crucial. I believe that Jones makes a mistake when he decides not to distribute any significant authority, lacking a necessary hierarchy which would distance him from becoming the immediate enemy of the people. Since he is in charge of all the power, even if other characters do carry out unjust actions (for example

Smithers), Jones practices his authority unfairly on those characters as well. Therefore, it does not pose the natives any difficulty to look for the main cause of their subjection.

Reviewing the process of the struggle, the rebellion, offers a more profound understanding of what is happening. The first sign is the disappearance of everyone. Then, a sound of drums becomes audible from the distance. The “tom-tom” sound plays a significant role in carrying out the rebellion. It creates tension, it is a kind of psychological warfare that can also be interpreted as a struggle against cultural domination. The natives’ superstitious culture allows them to fight Jones on a spiritual level. They perform rituals in order to fight Jones’s charm and they have also gotten silver bullets. The moment Jones enters the forest, the power relations he has established up until that point become disrupted. The forest symbolizes a space outside of his influence and with it, his character also becomes more and more deconstructed as he progresses. A parallel can be drawn between his position in the power system and his character. As long as he is the one exercising power, his identity is stable, well-formed, almost invulnerable. Once he abandons his role in the power relation, he becomes who he has been before, a subject. His memories of past struggles against power resurface in the form of fears. The roles change, the natives become the ones who exercise power. Their way of influencing Jones’s actions (aka exercising power over him) is by reintroducing the element of fear in him. Up until that point, Jones has always been fearless, since he has been all-powerful. After losing his authority, he becomes vulnerable (silver bullet – the revolt uses the threat of arms as a means of bringing their favored version of power relation into being). The natives use the sound of drums, the “tom-tom” sound in order to convey fear towards Jones. This aligns with Foucault’s idea of relationships of communication “which transmit information by means of a language, a system of signs, or any other symbolic medium” (1982, 10), which in this case are the drums. The sound they make generates fear in Jones that is growing with the intensification of the sound and the increasing rhythm. It starts at a normal rate of pulse beat at first (representing Jones’s calm behavior) and then it gradually accelerates, aligning with Jones’s state of alertness and panic.

As John is trying to make his escape, his uniform gets damaged progressively which can be interpreted as a representation of his loss of power and his return to being a subject. He eliminates each of the fears that manifest before him with his bullets eventually ending up with none. This is the point when the natives win. Their strategy to attain the death of Jones has worked. They have managed to do what Jones had done before to them, which is to choose the winning

solution in a confrontation and “to deprive the opponent of his means of combat and to reduce him to giving up the struggle” (Foucault 1982, 17). Jones, thus, dies by the hands of the natives.

The strategy Jones has designed was flawed because, as I have mentioned before, he underestimated his enemies. He could not predict the efficiency of the tools that are now used against him. When he is put under pressure, he is unable to carry on with his escape correctly (he gets lost in the forest, even though earlier he has insisted that he knows it inside and out). The deconstruction of his character and his status by the reawakening of his subconscious fears shows the connection between power relations and character shaping.

III.2. Interpreting linguistic regression through Kristeva’s “The System and the Speaking Subject”

In this chapter, I discuss the disappearance of dialogue and language in the play through the lens of Kristeva’s “The System and the Speaking Subject”. In the course of this discussion, I also shed light on the relation between this phenomenon and the deconstruction of Jones’s identity. As I have already highlighted in the Foucaultian analysis, communication plays a vital role in the play, in constructing, destroying and changing power systems. Language and discourse, however, also take part in the deconstruction of the subject and the system created by it.

Kristeva argues that every system (political, economic, or social) is a system of codes and symbols, which posits a transcendental subject. The system founded by Jones is no exception, with him being its transcendental subject. The speaking subject is divided (conscious, unconscious) while the process of speaking is heterogenic, thus, the active speaking subject always breaks the system apart by implementing practices that undermine it.

In the overview, I have talked about the fact that the speaking subject may shift and has the capacity to renew the system and its orders in which he himself is trapped. I have also mentioned that if the creator of this system is taken out, then there is no way for the code-system to be sustained any longer. If the subject shifts, then it has to destroy the code. In the play, it is Jones who posits himself as a transcendental being and creator of the standing social system. He has also created a signifying code system which he operates and so, accordingly, when he shifts and steps out of it, the order which he has established can no longer exist. This results in the progressive disappearance of discourse. Jones’s use of language (or its minimalization) reflects the tension between the semiotic (drives, emotions) and the symbolic dimensions of the language (structured

communication, in accordance with societal norms, with his code system). Biological operations such as instinctive flight, the outbreak of memories and of subconscious thoughts and fears are all practices which violate the order of the code, Jones being the one who destroys his own system of codes by his escape through the forest (with the abandonment of his status, he also leaves behind the system which is unable to function without him).

After this point, the heterogeneity of signifying processes is observable. The play presents numerous practices which all violate the society and social order set up by the emperor. For example, throughout his escape, his subconscious thoughts cannot be expressed by words, they are shown as beings hallucinated by Jones (congo witch-doctor, crocodile, auctioneer, planter, prison guard, Jeff, little formless fears). He relives his past experiences through his subconsciousness. One of the most important signifying practices defying the code and its order is the “tom-tom” sound because it is present right from the moment when the social order and the code system start to fall. It is the first sign that the system has been weakened and is about to crumble. Other order defying practices besides the drums but within the rites that the natives indulge in while preparing to attack include dancing and casting spells:

SMITHERS: The blacks is 'oldin' a bloody meetin', 'avin' a war dance, get tin' their courageworked up b'fore they starts after you. (2001, 11)

SMITHERS: And they're there 'oldin' their 'eathen religious service—makin' no end of devil spells and charms to 'elp 'em against your silver bullet. [*He guffaws loudly.*] Blimey, but they're balmy as 'ell! (2001, 11)

There is a relationship between the deconstruction of the system and the regression of Jones's character. Since Jones shifts from his position of upholding the code system, he also becomes unable to operate adequately while wrestling with his sense of identity in the forest because he is not able to adjust and resolve the challenges he is faced with without his system. He is destroyed alongside the system by the deviant signifying practices.

There is also shift in Jones's identity which occurs while he is navigating through the forest. Before his attempt to escape, as an emperor, Jones can be considered the transcendental subject or ego who creates a signifying code system and operates it. This transcendental subject is also caught up in the order of its own system and is part of it as an abstraction. This abstraction, however, is “cut off from its body, its unconscious, and also its history” (Kristeva 1975, 3). Additionally, unlike

Kristeva's speaking subject, the transcendental subject is undivided. This description fits Jones's character (while he is in his position of power) as he is unbothered by his history and focuses only on the present and the future, he is perfectly capable of thinking rationally and is not under the influence of the desires or instincts of his physical body, and he ignores his unconscious.

On the other hand, as I have mentioned before, the notion of the speaking subject acknowledges the duality of the subject as a divided one. This is accomplished by:

The types of operation characteristic of the two sides of this split; thereby exposing them, that is to say, on the one hand, to biophysiological processes (themselves already inescapably part of signifying processes; what Freud labelled 'drives'), and, on the other hand, to social constraints (family structures, modes of production, etc.). (Kristeva 1975, 3)

This means that all the elements neglected by the transcendental being are resolved in the case of the speaking subject. In the forest, Jones suffers a transformation and becomes a speaking subject. This fact becomes evident if we apply the definition quoted above. Jones becomes exposed to biophysiological processes. This includes the biological needs of the subject that can no longer be ignored. In the second scene of the play, this new characteristic of Jones is hinted at when he says to himself: "Gorry, has I got to go hungry into dem woods—all de night? ... I'se hungry, I is! I gotta git my feed. Whar's my strength gonna come from if I doesn't?" (2001, 13). This is probably the first time in a long while that Jones has to be concerned about a triviality such as food.

Jones's history also comes back to haunt him (in a discourse with Smithers, while Jones still depicts himself as a transcendental ego, he uses his past to threaten Smithers; this also highlights how indifferent he is towards his past, using it as a mere tool) which means he is no longer cut off from it. This happens by means of his subconscious, which forces the subject to acknowledge it, thus making it impossible for him to exist as a transcendental one any longer. While being the emperor, Jones presupposes himself as a transcendental being but once he steps out of his system, he transforms into a speaking subject. Without the system, he ceases to exist as a transcendental ego. At the same time, since the surfacing of his subconscious is a transgression of the order because it is not possible to verbalize it, Jones loses his ability to use language. This is the way in which the disappearance of dialogue and language within the play becomes explicable.

IV. Conclusions

The analysis of *The Emperor Jones* through Foucault's "The Power and Subject" demonstrates the alignment between the power dynamics found in the play and the essay's take on power relations. The examination of power relations in accordance with Foucault's five points has revealed the complexity of Jones's relation to power and has explained the different aspects of his ascent and maintenance of the power position. For example, his superiority in knowledge acquired through exposure to more advanced civilizations coupled with his use of violence and of persuasive language enable his domination to come to life. Foucault's principles have also been useful in identifying the weaknesses of Jones's system of power, which become apparent when the resistance decides to act. It can, therefore, be said that Foucault's ideas work harmoniously with the power systems depicted in O'Neill's play.

Through the Kristevan reading, the analysis has revealed that the disappearance of discourse is a result of the breakdown of Jones's social order and code system. Kristeva emphasises the role of language and discourse in both undermining power systems and constructing them. Jones being the transcendental subject of the system and its creator as well, holds great responsibility in its failure which eventually contributes to the deconstruction of his own character, since Jones's escape marks the beginning of his end. The order he has imposed on the island's inhabitants is easily disrupted and overtaken by practices outside of this very order. Ultimately, the analysis highlights the intertwined nature of language, subjectivity and power dynamics in the play, all the while illustrating the way the regression of discourse reflects the crisis of Jones's identity along with the downfall of the systems created and run by him.

Overall, on the journey of exploring the subject's, Brutus Jones's identity deconstruction, my analysis has succeeded in confirming the truth value of the hypotheses (alignment between the power dynamics depicted in the play and Foucault's study on power systems and their subjects, reason for loss of authority and deconstruction of Jones's character, reason for linguistic regression and confirming the relation of this to the deconstruction of the subject) and in providing a clear picture on the changes that take place in the power systems as well as in the subjects present within the world of O'Neill's play, utilizing the theoretical background supplied by experts of subjectivity. In the chapter of the overview, I have presented the main points of their studies, highlighting the

ones which are most relevant from the topic's point of view. Although the analyses were successful, I believe they can be further improved.

There are still countless ideas that could be explored in both the Kristevan and the Foucaultian reading. For example, Foucault also discusses what he calls "pastoral power". A comparison could be made between this very special form of power and the power system that appears in the play or I could also draw a comparison between the modern state as explained by Foucault and Jones's self-declared empire, putting the institutional nature of power into the spotlight, while keeping Foucault's suggestion in mind: "I wish to suggest that one must analyze institutions from the standpoint of power relations, rather than vice versa" (1982, 16).

In Kristeva's case, further discussions and the introduction of the terminology proposed by her (semiology/semanalysis, genotext, phenotext) could contribute to the furthering of my research.

By continuing to interrogate the complexities of subjectivity, identity and power in *The Emperor Jones*, I hope my future research will uncover further aspects of the play and subjectivity construction, the subject's relation to power and the speaking practices employed by such a subject.

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