

John Gay's *Polly*:

Oscillating Multiple Identities of Gender, Race, and Empire*

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[ABSTRACT]

This paper aims to investigate John Gay's experimental way of Homi K. Bhabha's mimicry addressing multiple identities in *Polly* (1729). Whereas the highwayman Captain Macheath enjoys London's low life in *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), in its sequel *Polly*, now Macheath's spouse, Polly Peachum emerges as the true heroine claiming her love and virtue in the West Indies. Gay represents identities enmeshed with piracy, slavery and colonization while considering the possibilities for remaking identities in a colonial setting. Conspicuously by ways of disguise —costume, mask, and role-re-

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존 게이, 『폴리』, 정체성, 흉내내기, 정형화, 중층결정, 젠더, 인종, 제국, 호미 바바, 가야트리 스피박

versal— almost every character in the play raises issues of gender, nation, and racial transgressions that is, in Gayatri Spivak’s notion, overdetermined within the New World.

In *Polly*, Gay’s staged characters seem to deny their given identities upon gender, nation, race, and empire while strategically crossing and shifting the boundaries from one to another stereotypical images and roles; Polly, a virtuous white woman, wears trousers to turn into a courageous young pirate man; Macheath, a white indentured servant, paints in a black face to be the black leader of the pirate crew under the name of Morano; native Indians embrace the ideals of virtue, honor, and decorum to play the noble and civil colonized more resemblant to Europeans. Thus, from such masquerades, the play expresses that without entirely depending on gender, race, nationality to place the character, the identities can be mobile and instable always in the process of being made from difference and sameness; and the incongruity of identity resulting from the staged and the true nature inherent in the characters. However, by the offstage death of Macheath and the expected marriage of Polly and Indian Prince at the end of the play, *Polly* reveals that even though Gay uses mimicries to provide a new opportunity to rethink the construction of identities, he is not able to advance further a new fundamental transformation of identity.

1. Introduction

After its great hit and theatrical sensation of his first ballad opera, *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), John Gay already began working on its sequel,

Polly (1729). Due to *The Beggar's Opera's* portrayal of London's low life through a highwayman and womanizer, Captain Macheath, audiences would expect this new ballad opera to be his second notorious adventure in London. However, surprisingly enough, Gay's blueprint for *Polly* lies in the West Indies.¹⁾ Gay sets his sequel in the New World; moreover, he stages a series of adventures of a female protagonist Polly Peachum, Macheath's loveable wife. In search of Macheath, Polly arrives in the West Indies, where her husband has been transported as an indentured slave. Finding herself being sold as a concubine for the wealthy planter Mr. Ducat instead of Mrs. Ducat's servant, she escapes from the Ducats by dressing herself as a youth and then joins a pirate crew of Morano. Not recognizing her own husband's disguise in blackface under the alias of Morano, Polly helps a prisoner, the Indian prince Cawwawkee and later assists the Indians in capturing Morano. By putting Macheath to offstage death and Polly to an Indian prince's hands at the end of the play, Gay presents multiple identities in the New World concerning nation, race, and gender that complicate slavery, piracy, and colonization. *Polly's* characters appears as what Gayatri Spivak might find it as a subject influenced by complex system of overdetermination, the convergence of gender, class, and race. Explaining the debate on Sati, the rite of widow self-immolation, Spivak points to a female subject, or the figure of the women is constructed within "the race-class-gender overdeterminations of the situation"

1) Unfortunately, the anticipation of the performance was hardly met with London audiences since the Lord Chamberlain banned *Polly* to be performed. Instead of production on the stage, Gay printed 10,500 copies of the play and earned quite a fortune. For further information about *Polly's* publication, James R. Sutherland traces the bibliographical history focusing on the play's pirate editions during Gay's lifetime, and Calhoun Winton explains the play's stage history.

(1999, 303). It can be said that the widow is caught by British imperialism and patriarchy that either the subject or object status is imposed upon the white men or the Indian men but not herself. By deconstructing the characters overdetermined by gender, class, race, and nation, Gay attempts to rediscover identities; however, he certainly does not challenge to the political use of identities caused by overdetermination. Instead, he chooses to mark on the economical use of identities upon individual interests, avarice, and immorality in the colonial project.

In the light of the satirical tone in *The Beggar's Opera*, Gay maintains his tone in *Polly* as well, especially with the allusion to Britain's imperial project in the New World. Whatever Gay attempts to explore under the colonial setting, his cast of transported criminals, buccaneers, plantation owners, civilized native Indians, cross-dressing heroine, and blackface hero indeed have invited critical attention from many literary scholars. Albert Wertheim argues that while Gay locates the West Indies as "a warm atmosphere in which the vices of England can thrive and grow large" (1990, 206), he exposes "the surface romance of colonial expansion to its true and sordid economic underpinnings" (1990, 203). Robert G. Dryden sees that Gay extends London's "ubiquitous corruption" to "an equally corrupt and commerce-centered British empire" (2001, 540) in *Polly* and signals "England's relentless acts of colonial appropriation" as "acts of piracy" (2001, 543). Furthermore, Dryden observes that Gay's use of Macheath's blackface is to draw "a subversive figure" (2001, 546) who "represent[s] resistance to colonial authority" (2001, 551). In this similar vein, Peter R. Reed advances an argument "highlighting the problems of theatrically imagined race and class in the colonial Atlantic world" (2007, 248). In a register of Karl Marx's concept of a "lumpenproletariat," Reed reads Morano's

crew as a rebellious underclass challenging social disorder and oppression.²⁾

However, John Richardson and Jochen Petzold demonstrate a somewhat oppositional approach to the play's colonial project. Richardson, focusing primarily on slavery, avoids reading *Polly* as "a straightforward anti-slavery text" (2002, 20) by arguing that the text offers "the duplicitous mental habits" in which "both approaches and avoids slavery" (2002, 21). In Petzold's reading of *Polly*, the play "criticizes colonialism on its surface level of character discourse" (2012, 108) but its main criticism targets corruptions in London rather than in the West Indies. *Polly*, indeed, contains Gay's satirical comment upon colonialism and the emerging capitalist economy, including corruptions in domestic and colonial society, yet it does neither suggest any alternative to the British imperial project, nor does it downright refute it. However, Gay, in fact, examines colonial representation in colonial places. Through costume, mask, and role-reversal, the play may serve to question received notions of gender, race, culture, and nationality of peoples since the characters conflate either roles or stereotypes they have been made to embody.

In this paper, I argue that *Polly* suggests Homi K. Bhabha's mimicry as

2) Although Reed argues that *Polly* demonstrates "race and class in rebellious Caribbean revolt, with blackface functioning as a primary marker of the Atlantic underclasses" (2007, 242), it is difficult to see Morano's crew as wholly rebellious underclass led by a black chief. First of all, Morano's crew of pirates aims to make profits through piracy rather than champion against the social structures of class and race. Next, even though Reed considers Morano's blackface as a signal of class resistance and racial emancipation, Morano does not represent the whole community of black populations. Once Morano unmask, his true identity as a white man might thwart the rest of black slaves in the crew to think that they are again abused by racial superiority of whiteness. Moreover, his blackface heavily relies on his rights and power of being a white man.

a tool to explore a manifestation of different identities in the West Indies so that Gay effectively undermines any attempts to fix the characters with stereotypical images of gender, race, culture, or nation. As Bhabha puts it, “mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask” and appears as resemblance and menace to colonial authority (1994, 126). The ambivalence of mimicry —“almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 1994, 123) — not only reproduces “its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha 1994, 122) but transforms into “an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence” (Bhabha 1994, 123). As Bhabha equates “partial” with “incomplete and virtual,” this interpretation hints that identity is constructed upon interrelation in an ostensible way, which offers mimicry a practical and helpful strategy of reconsidering the binary system of identity. In *Polly*, Gay inputs various disguises: a woman dressed in a male garb, a white man masquerading a black man, and indigenous people embodying European ideals of virtue, courage, and honor. Through their disguises as a man, black, or European, Gay questions the constructs of the identities so possessed by differences of gender, sexuality, culture, nation, and race, which divide one from the others. Although the characters are based upon binary opposition between “man” and “woman,” “black” and “white,” and “European” and “savage,” the play apparently criticizes that identities are stable, authentic, and natural and notes that any differences concerning the identities cannot be either determined or controlled.

Furthermore, this paper suggests that these performances in the play illuminate the vision that Gay imagined where gender, race, and nationality are brought out of the frames to be reduced to relatives, rather than absolutes, while also displaying the constitutively incomplete, open, and unsettling identity of each character. By focusing on the uncertainty and im-

mutability of identities, this paper argues that although mimicry ridicules the identities established by many binary opposites, it does not disrupt the colonial system and attack colonial power relations and British ownership of the colony. Even Gay uses mimicry as a means to examine identities; there is no clear sign that he thought about whether such mimicry had the power to subvert the colonial power structure. He rather chooses to be silent upon the colonial establishment in the West Indies so that Polly engages with more mimetic representation in the New World.

2. A Cross-dressed Female Body in Flux

While Macheath waits for his death sentence in the Newgate prison, he counsels Lucy and Polly, rivals for his love, “to Ship yourselves off for the West-Indies, where you’ll have a fair chance of getting a Husband a-piece; or by good Luck, two or three, as you like best” (3.15. 67, *The Beggar’s Opera*).³⁾ His remarks foreshadow the West Indies not only as the next stage of *The Beggar’s Opera* but also as an archetype of promising land to start a new life. Moreover, since marriage enables women to change their social status and offers a new surname, his suggestion of re-marriage and polyandry underscores the point that the colonies enables women to socially resettle and obtain a multiplicity of identities.⁴⁾ As if

3) All quotes from *The Beggar’s Opera* and *Polly* will be indicated and followed by act, scene number and the number of pages.

4) Moreover, Macheath’s advice of allowing polyandry in the West Indies shows that the West Indies would be somehow morally corrupted and lawless place. It is notable that the West Indies was considered to be a penal settlement where many criminals in Britain transported.

the West Indies is a site to mend one's former life, Gay deploys *Polly* in the New World and transports some main characters of *The Beggar's Opera*. In doing so, he continues to inscribe the realities of the old world, thus, portraying West Indies not as a virgin land of new opportunity but as a combined space of two worlds.

With the opening line, "Though you were born and bred and live in the Indies, as you are a subject of Britain you shou'd live up to our customs" (1.1.83), the play indicates that inhabitants are to follow British customs in the West Indies no matter who they are and where they come from. Whereas the colonizer Mr. Ducat was born and raised in the Indies, he is fully aware that he has to live up to British customs. Interestingly, perhaps he is another "descent of the mimic man" (Bhabha 1994, 125). In Bhabha's words, Mr. Ducat could be regarded as "the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English" (1994, 125). However, it is noteworthy that Mr. Ducat experiences being English just to guarantee his being Anglicized:

Ducat. As I have a good estate, Mrs Trapes, I would willingly run into every thing that is suitable to my dignity and fortune ... As to conscience and musty morals, I have as few drawbacks upon my profits or pleasures as any man of quality in *England*; ... Madam, in most of my expenses I run into the polite taste. I have a fine library of books that I never read; I have a fine stable of horses that I never ride; I build, I buy plate, jewels, pictures, or any thing that is valuable and curious, as your great men do, merely out of ostentation.

(1.1.84)

Although Gay may criticize English men's "ostentation" of affluent wealth with regards to "the materialism and conspicuous consumption that capitalism breeds" in England (Wertheim 1990, 199), Mr. Ducat surely aims to keep up to as "any man of quality in England" by having English modes of goods, luxuries, and taste. Yet his blind imitation of "great men" in England reveals his willingness and anxiety to be and act exactly as an English man. He never reads the books in his library, rides horses, or likes his possessions, all of which are against his taste; nevertheless, he is anxious enough not to fall behind the British customs whatsoever.⁵⁾ However, by mimicking England's habits, Mr. Ducat's pursuit of resemblance to an English national identity serves to reinforce the play's mimetic representation.⁶⁾ Like Mr. Ducat following English fashion, in *Polly*, Gay dramatizes the colonial setting as a mimetic place to portray the codes and systems of gender, race, and culture strikingly similar to the old world.

In line with Mr. Ducat's industry in the slave market to maximize profits, Mrs. Trapes maintains her business back in London trading young women to the plantations to "mend [her] fortune" (1.1.83) and "have superfluities" (1.1.84). Over mercantile transactions and slavery, Gay's *Polly*,

5) Gay introduces "new social role like the Creole" by the figure of Mr. Ducat in *Polly* (Canfield 2001, 46). Creole is a descendant of white European settlers born and brought up in one of the colonized countries. His way of imitating British custom could be another way of romanticizing colonization and British colonial power and claiming his birthright to his mother country. However, Ducat's aspiration to emulate British customs can reflect the reality of not being able to recognize as true British men, as well as a lack of belonging, so his obsession with English fashion can end in vain.

6) In locating the West Indies as a sort of hybrid and mimetic space, Gay operates a double vision, as Bhabha terms mimicry as "almost the same but not quite," that both accommodates and dissects colonial representation (1994, 123).

as Wertheim and J. Douglas Canfield have noted, reproduces “the corruption and materialism of England” (1990, 199) while reflecting “the archetypal topoi of English imperialism” (2001, 48). Apart from setting the New World with England’s capitalistic and colonial practice, it is important to know that Trapes and Ducat’s profit-making capitalizes on women’s sexual service in which female body is enmeshed and circulated in the economic and social sphere of reproduction and exploitation. Furthermore, female body contributes to the construction of female identity. Mr. Ducat’s comment upon Polly’s body “as legally my property, as any woman is her husband’s, who sells her self in marriage” (1.11.100) denotes that female body is involved in the marriage market as well as in the slave market as a property. Moreover, his further statement, “you shall either contribute to my pleasure or my profit and if you refuse play in the bed-chamber, you shall go work in the fields among the planters,” emphasizes that the female body constitutes female identities fixed as wife, mother, worker, prostitute, and mistress for men’s practice of either sexual “pleasure” or economic and social “profit” (1.11.101). Thus, by connecting slavery with marriage, Gay displays the women’s realities restricted to traditional female identity based on female body in terms of economic and social and along with colonial aspect. He also adds that much of the process of imperialism contributes to Polly’s multiple overdetermined positions.

With particular regard to “woman’s body and the landscape as valued space” (Canfield 2001, 48), the first act evokes the realities of women as an object in value:

Ducat. But, dear Mrs *Dye*, a hundred pistoles say you? Why, I could

have half a dozen negro princesses for the price.

Trapes. But sure you cannot expect to buy a fine handsome Christian at that rate. You are no us'd to see such goods on this side of the water. For the women, like the cloaths, are all tarnish'd and half worn out before they are sent hither. Do but cast your eye upon her, Sir; the door stands half open.

(1.6.93)

When Mr. Ducat negotiates Polly with Mrs. Trapes, her estimated price equivalent to “half a dozen negro princesses” insinuates that race and color are crucial determinants of a women’s value. Polly’s whiteness predominates over the blackness of “negro princesses,” fixing her price to “a hundred pistoles.” Though racial difference plays a significant role in Polly’s value, however, the scene concentrates more on the women’s commodification regardless of religion, race, and color. While Polly waits for her new employer Mr. Ducat in a hall under the guidance of Mrs. Trapes, she is watched and secretly put up for sale at the same time. Just like a slave auction, the more Trapes recites Polly’s body parts —“a shape,” “a curious pair of sparkling eyes,” “lips,” “complexion,” and “colour” (1.6.93-4) —, the more her bidding price rises along with Ducat’s following voyeuristic inspection, thus turning Polly into a desire of object and commodity. Even though Polly’s ransom costs more than the black woman’s, white women are no different from the black women since race, color, age, religion and perhaps even chastity are irrelevant when objectifying the female body.

The commodification of women also leads to reconsider the body as a base of female identity in the New World. In the middle of negotiations with Ducat, Mrs. Trapes makes an interesting remark on Polly’s body re-

garding her chastity: “She was never in any body’s house but your own since she was landed. She is pure, as she was imported, without the least adulteration” (1.6.93). Not only does Trapes count Polly as “imported” product but also see her as a faultless woman “without the least adulteration” transforming her married body into purely innocent virgin despite the fact that Polly’s body is literally in prostitution of Trapes. Simple enough is Trapes’ excuse of Polly’s marital status: Polly has “landed” the New World. Together with Polly, as soon as those “tarnish’d” and “half worn-out” (1.6.93) English women cross the Atlantic, they become “a fresh cargo of ladies” (1.1.84), which indicates that once they take the first step on the colonies, the colonies help them to renew their lives, and have “fresh” bodies; therefore, the colonies emerges as the rehabilitative site where body becomes flexible.⁷⁾ This notion of power of rehabilitation and body in flux would suggest that women are no longer going to be oppressed by the ideas of sex and gender. It is unclear Gay actually thinks of the West Indies as a site of a new opportunity for women or men, but he clearly criticizes the belief of the renewable site as too unrealistic and even absurd that his Polly has no choice but to redress herself as a man escaping from the continuous reality of women being in the traditional figures she has to keep up with. By putting Polly into a male dress, Gay shifts the fixed body into mobile one, after which he attempts to explore fluid gender identity.

As Polly hunts her run-away husband in trousers, she outstandingly plays the other male part. Just as Ducat refers to women’s tongue to “pyrates” that make women “at war with the whole world” (1.8.95), Polly,

7) Ironically speaking, those English women’s transformation of virgins can be viewed as proof of race dominance over gender in the colonies.

shifting herself to “a young fellow ... to join [pirates], to rob the world by way of retaliation,” speaks in pirates’ tongue (2.5.121). Like the pirates’ declaration of war against the whole world, so does Polly profess, “an open war with the whole world is brave and honourable” (2.5.121).⁸) In her disguise as “a mighty pretty man” (2.5.121), she is more decisive, brave, and clever than many other men in the play. Polly kisses Morano’s wife Jenny Diver when Jenny doubts her manliness; during her imprisonment to Morano and his gang of pirates, Polly escapes with the Indian prisoner Cawwawkee by bribing the guards with partial compensation; after joining the combined forces of Indians and planters, she enthusiastically fights the battle and leads them to victory by capturing Morano. This transformation of Polly can be proof of subverting the beliefs about natural or fixed images of female sex and gender. It is true that Polly remarkably appears to be a real man by mimicking men’s act of piracy, exploration, and battle; however, her resolution right after wearing the male clothes stresses the incongruity of acting the person and being the person: “with the [male] habit, I must put on the courage and resolution of a man” (2.1.110). Despite the men’s clothes, Polly still needs to acquire a courageous and resolute masculine behavior in order to become a man, which suggests that being the person can be different from just playing the person, and furthermore claiming that identity in this regard undergoes somewhat a performative act through a set of gendered behavior and a sexual

8) Hacker’s declaration on war against the world, “What can be more heroic than to have declar’d war with the whole world?”, confirms that women and pirates are in the same boat (2.5.120). It is noteworthy that both women and pirates are the ones who are at war with the world, suggesting they stand in a marginal place where they have to assert their rights and powers to order and enact their values to the society.

difference. Identity seems less secure and unstable in this staged aspect of identity. This somewhat theatrical identity suggests the impossibility of a complete imitation of the real self.

Gay ultimately criticizes identity formation by a system of binary sex and gender based on nature and behavior, thereby developing a condition of identity under which distinctive personal traits exist and function together to constitute identities. Gay finds Polly's foremost values in "very virtue and integrity" which may act as another possibility of building her own identity (1.11.101). Polly is such a paragon of virtue that none of her people can stand. When she resists sex, Ducat calls her behavior "unnatural" (1.11.100), of which Gay makes her virtue and moral integrity as inherently exceptional characteristics compared to "natural" behaviors of other women. Like many critics who point out Polly's virtue, it might be viewed as a conventional quality of women that usually renders their action. On the other hand, by employing "Machiavelli's dictum that it is much better always to appear virtuous than always to act virtuously" (2012, 355), Petzold argues that her virtuous actions may not seem as morally sound but rather a deceit and hypocrisy according to Gay's theatrical tactics to develop the plots and encourage sympathies for her. Yet, whether Polly's love of virtue and honesty can be read as a prominent feature of feminine behavior or as Gay's satiric strategy of morality, the play works to locate virtue in her identity that keeps her motivated and alive to act.

Even though Gay targets the idea of a fixed identity governed by the sex and gender system, ironically, his reconstruction of identity takes on the familiar alignment of Self/Other. In order to enact her inclined virtue, Polly needs to have her counterpart, or to be more precise, her Other, a figure who will set Polly in "recognizable forms of male or female iden-

tity” (Dugaw 2001, 195). As soon as she finds out her other half in Macheath’s absence, she rather chooses to be “like a troubled ghost [that] shall never be at rest till [she] appear[s] to him” (1.5.90). Interestingly, the male costume enables the heroine to preserve her integrity and virtue towards Macheath, while disguising them at the same time so as to allow herself to stand as seemingly a ghost and to find another match to claim her identity. Cawwawkee is the one who has “the potentials for a new union” and her new Other (Canfield 2001, 56). When the captive prince sings “Virtue’s treasure / Is a pleasure, / Cheerful even amid distress” quickly followed by her words, “My heart feels your sentiments, and my tongue longs to join in ’em”, Polly repeats the song as a duet (2.11.135). By the duet of virtue, Polly establishes her identification with Cawwawkee bound by virtue that she, dressed as man, imposes her roles and places in the Indian camp and even in the colonies. In *Polly*, the heroine attempts to build her identity in love and virtue, but unfortunately, her inclined virtue has to depend upon others to do so, therefore causing Polly to face a crisis of identity by the time she loses her dependency upon her counterparts.⁹⁾ From the very beginning, Polly proclaims her own purity and virtue, but ironically, she can only follow and enact her natural inclination of virtue with the male Others. After she learns of Macheath’s death, the shrill cry of “Support me!” shows that her very identity still needs to be generated through an engagement with the supporting Other (3.15.159). By deconstructing the rooted identity upon sex and gender,

9) What I mean by a crisis of identity is a difficulty that comes from not being able to define herself in her own personalities. As Polly establishes her identity conforming around the identity of her partner, Gay problematizes Polly’s, or perhaps, generally speaking, women’s development of identity that grows and mutates based on the male partner.

Gay's identity building exposes its vulnerability and instability in reliance on the Other that poses a troubling challenge for defining identity in relative terms.

3. Across the Bounds of Savage "Other"

For Spivak, as a subject position results from multiple determinations, such as gender, race, nationality, political agenda, and intellectual background, identity can be bound to stand out by more important determinants in some cases (Spivak 1999, 299-303). As *Polly* comments on sexual and gender differences within the identity, it also draws attentions to racial differences. Obviously, in relation to issues of racial difference, the play is connected to colonial discourse. However, Gay is not as conscious as Spivak that his use of characters remains caught up in the hierarchies of political and cultural relations.

Since "the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (Bhabha 1994, 101), "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (Said 1979, 7) is pervasive enough that the colonized have been viewed as brutal, foolish, lustful, and immoral in need of the colonizers' colonial project of civilization and Western enlightenment. In contrast, the colonizers have been known as stereotypical images of duty, loyalty, justice, and benevolence that elaborate their identity by practicing the colonial project. Whereby race signs as an index of cultural authority and moral superiority,

in representing native Indians, Gay, however, denies the taken-for-granted conduct of the colonized in *Polly* and instead stages “parodic reversals of civility and barbarity” (Frohock 2017, 156) between the Indians and the Europeans according to racial differences. Instead of appearing as “meer downright Barbarians” (2.8.127), *Polly*’s Indians position as noble savages embracing the principles of honor, bravery, sincerity, and justice. When the Indian king Pohetohee converses with Ducat, he insists on the Indians’ principles: “How different are your notions from ours! We think virtue, honour, and courage as essential to man as his limbs, or senses ... How custom can degrade nature!” (3.1.139). Thus, “Gay uses the motif of the noble savage to expose and criticize the vices of his European characters—pirates and planters alike— thus effectively reversing the prototypical portrayal of indigenes as savage ‘other’ to European civilization” (Petzold 2012, 111).

Gay uses his pirate characters to ridicule the colonial eagerness of civilizing indigenous people in the West Indies. When Morano interrogates the captive Indian Cawwawkee to figure out the state of the rival camp and the hidden treasure’s whereabouts, Cawwawkee’s refusal to answer provokes the pirates to civilize the Indians: “We must beat civilizing into ’em, to make ’em capable of common society, and common conversation” (2.8.127).

Jenny. We have reason to be thankful for our good education. How ignorant is mankind without it!

Capstern. I wonder to hear the brute speak.

Languerre. They would make a shew of him in *England*.

Jenny. Poh, they would only take him for a fool.

Capstern. But how can you expect any thing else from a creature, who hath never seen a civiliz'd country? Which way should he know mankind?

Jenny. Since they are made like us, to be sure, were they in *England*, they might be taught.

...

Jenny. Without doubt, education and example can do much.

(2.8.127-8)

Assuming Cawwawkee's defense as rude misbehavior, the buccaneers agree upon the necessity of civilizing the Indians by "good education." By calling the Indian prince "brute" and "creature," the pirates emphasize the power of education that can turn the Indians into "civil" mankind. In doing so, they even fashion themselves as a sort of educators and proud English people who would likely be a proper model for the Indians. The pirates' idea of education is heavily based on a cultural stereotype to mark Indian men's barbarity with foolishness and cultural authority or superiority over the racial difference. However, suppose their civilizing mission is to educate the foolish Indians. In that case, Gay undermines their superior position by applying the trope of the noble savage, blurring the racial and cultural border between Europeans and non-Europeans and further mocks their education in England. It is ambiguous what Jenny meant by "our good education" here. Most pirates are criminals back in London driven by self-interest and greed to make a fortune; piracy, robbery, fraud, gamble, pickpocket, and prostitution might be at the center of their "good education". Therefore, what possibly can the Indians learn since their education has nothing to do with civilization but wrongdoing?¹⁰) For the virtuous Indians, it would be "unnatural" and "a very vulgar education"

(1.11.100) to follow the pirates' education and example.¹¹⁾ Right after their conversation, Polly instead laughs at the nonsensical aspect of the pirates' attempts to civilize the Indians: “[aside] How happy are these savages! Who would not wish to be in such ignorance” (2.8.128). By referring to the pirates as “savages”, she reverses the traditional equation of the Indians with savage others and points out how ignorant and insolent the pirates' behavior is. One could argue that her word of “savages” indicates not the pirates but the Indians. If Polly's “savages” refers to the Indians, Polly still appreciates the fact that the Indians have been lucky enough not to learn from the awful education by the pirates. Moreover, since Gay's text directs her lines to speak “aside” (2.8.128), the pirates are not supposed to hear her whisper, which means that it concerns Polly's true feelings of disgust towards the pirates that she must hide from them. Through Polly's commentary upon the pirates, Gay satirizes the pirates' judgment about others by the stereotypical image and their pride as the civilized subjects who are eligible to enforce the English codes and manners in the West Indies. Therefore, the Indians' role-reversal makes Gay criticize the colonial subject's justification for civilizing others and destabilize its authority through racial difference.

10) In a similar vein, Petzold also claims that Gay parodies civilizing mission by “equating education and corruption, again highlighting the moral depravity of the European characters” and extends his satire to London society in general by applying a pastoral tradition (2012, 112).

11) Ducat is the actual one who states “vulgar education” to Polly when she rejects his sexual advance: “you belye your country, or you must have had a very vulgar education. 'Tis unnatural” (1.11.100). Ironically, from Ducat's understanding, the education that she had makes Polly “unnatural” whereas the English pirates think education makes the indigenous Indians “natural” people. However, it is noticeable that education aims to assimilate the people with any differences in British society.

Gay's Indian characters draw parallels between English characters. In sharp opposition to his immoral English characters, Gay depicts the indigenous natives as idealistic figures of virtue. Reading *Polly* along with Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of Bees* (1714), Richard Frohock discusses that Gay envisions civil societies built by virtue and vice through the lens of Mandevillian as it relates to *Polly*'s two contrasting groups of characters: "although Gay's imaginary Indian society resembles Mandeville's virtuous hive, Gay posits Indian virtue triumphs, but only in a limited sphere, while English vices continue unabated at home and in the colonies" (2017, 157). Frohock is undoubtedly correct to regard the Indian's purely virtuous society as mere fantasy highlighting the importance of the inevitable practice of private vice in the society. However, his reading oversimplifies Gay's distinctions of those characters between vice and virtue. Although the Indians' virtuous and courageous behavior looks respectable and admirable, Gay further develops the moral and benevolent Indians as a contrast and a similar type to the corrupt and vicious Europeans.

In terms of the Indians' alliance with the plantation and slave owners, the play complicates the identity of the Indian characters intended to be virtuous, good, and civilized. It may be right to note that "although allied with the planters, [the Indians] share no common ideological ground with the colonists, and interactions between the two groups seem therefore limited to their ad hoc military union" (Frohock 2017, 156-7). However, Noelle Chao offers a different perspective on the Indians' complicity with the planters. Beyond the military union, the Indians and the colonists are both interested in maintaining economic and political sovereignty in the West Indies that "by siding with white colonists and slave owners like Ducat, Gay's Indians signal their willingness to tolerate —and even adopt

— European systems of exploitation” (Chao 2010, 313). As Chao rightfully observes, “the Indians are active participants in a global system of corruption”; surprisingly enough, they endorse slavery, one of the major economic activities of the colonial process, to sustain their power over the island (2010, 309).¹² At the end of the pirates and black slaves’ joint rebellion, the Indian king Pohetohee nonchalantly takes the slaves as the planter’s property: “Let the chief have immediate execution. For the rest, let ’em be restor’d to their owners, and return to their slavery” (3.15.159). Pohetohee’s orders upon returning the black slaves to their plantations indicate that he counts the slaves as an item of economic value. The alliance between the Indians and the English planters is built on mutual interest. By one side defending slavery while others strengthening military forces, they “are equally imperial in their greed for ownership of lands, wealth, and domination of peoples” (Dryden 2001, 551). When the king takes away the slaves’ freedom, his statement also calls to mind the conception of racial difference, which is extended to the Indians as they attempt to secure ascendancy over the slaves by their brownness. With this troubling implication of racial superiority from the Indians, their complicated colonial partnership with the English planters makes it possible to approach all their good acts as a calculated pretense that “Gay presents his Indians as eerily moralizing, ambivalent figures” (Chao 2010, 314). In this regard, Gay’s depiction of Indians exposes resemblances between the English and

12) By focusing on the music in *Polly*, Chao disagrees to read the Indians alone to be virtuous figures: “the Indian characters come to function as hybrid figures in an emergent global empire” just as a song works as “a hybrid figure of communication” (2010, 310). She asserts that, “Gay used ballads and ballad opera to establish musical theater as the form best suited to challenge the efficacy and morality of Britain’s imperial project” (2010, 316).

marks hierarchies of colonial relations between the blacks and the Indians, in fact revealing the colonial power structures.

Like the benevolent father Pohetohee, his son Cawwawkee adheres strongly to virtue and honor, yet the son acts very similarly to the selfish English merchant. While the king and Ducat discuss the imminent war with the pirates in Act III, Ducat expresses his reluctance on being part of the battle: “Besides, Sir, fighting is not our business; we pay others for fighting; and yet ’tis well known we had rather part with our lives than our money” (3.1.138). Contrary to the Indians, his words certainly explain that Ducat unwelcomes any business of risk-taking and any heroic action. Unless it is associated with profits, he would not take his action in person but rather scouts others to do so. Nevertheless, his use of mercenary and practical mind resonates with the earlier talk between Polly and Cawwawkee:

Polly. Had you means of escape, you could not refuse it. To preserve
your life is your duty.

Cawwawkee. By dishonest means, I scorn it.

Polly. But stratagem is allow’d in war; and ‘tis lawful to use all the
weapons employ’d against you.

You may save your friends from affliction, and be the instrument
of rescuing your country.

...

Cawwawkee. I have no skill. Those who are corrupt themselves know
how to corrupt others. You may do as you please. But whichever
you promise for me, contrary to the European custom, I will
perform.

(2.11.135-6)

When Polly urges Cawwawkee to escape, he immediately rejects her plan in “dishonest means” (2.11.135). However, as soon as he learns that a war compromises all dishonesty and corruption, he let Polly do whatever she pleases and wishes to act strictly against the European custom. His chosen performance is intriguing because it resembles Ducat’s hiring soldiers for profits and self-preservation. The prince unloads dirty work onto Polly while expressly associating his performance with the honorable deeds in an effort to keep his virtue and honor. In this sense, Cawwawkee is no different from Ducat being businesslike and cunning that disrupts the characterization of the Indians as virtuous or good, subtly reminiscent of Europeans in the play. Thus, the representation of the Indian characters serves a dual purpose. On one level, the Indians can be more virtuous and honorable than Europeans to criticize the notion that race is a signifier of cultural and moral authority. On another level, they are operating dramatically similar to the Europeans that obscure the idea of identity or nature fixed upon difference.¹³⁾ Through the ambivalence of Indians, Gay articulates that identities are always unstable and partially represented, challenging against defining them through their cultural, national, and racial categories. Moreover, just as Indians’ treatment of slave trade is ambiguous, the play withholds critique of the Indians and reveals they are also in charge of reinforcing the colonial establishment.

13) Spivak would definitely argue that the representation of virtuous and noble Indians is “legitimation by reversal” (1999, 399) and criticize the play for displaying Indians in a Eurocentric light by justifying the colonial attitude. However, as the Indians turn out to be not quite as virtuous and noble might seem, I argue that Gay points to the irony inherent in the characters through the discrepancy between the represented and misrepresented and attempts to show the characters constructed in multifaceted way.

4. White Skin Underneath the Black Mask

Compared with his charming and heroic presence in *The Beggar's Opera*, Macheath, by masking as the conspicuous black Morano, is the most unsatisfying and complex character in *Polly*. In much of *Polly*, his passivity and timidity were unwelcome to those audiences who were used to unscrupulous and free-spirited libertine and outlaw Macheath in the first ballad opera. Whereas Frantz Fanon's black men are made to be white in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Gay's white man willingly chooses a black mask, which can be introduced as "an early—perhaps the first—instance of self-conscious racial mimicry on Atlantic stages" (Reed 2007, 248). Focusing on the name Morano, which echoes maroon, a group of resistant escaped black slaves from the European plantation owners in Suriname and the West Indies, Reed points out Macheath's blackness "as a sign of his rebellious class position" against political and colonial authority in the colonial society (2007, 243). On the other hand, as Winton remarks that Gay "makes something, but not much of Morano's blackness" and "uses his blackness only as disguise" (1993, 141), Macheath seems to take his blackness on account of the convenience of the disguise to have a new identity in the West Indies. However, his black face is not as simple as it looks by resistance or mere convenience. Morano's position is hard to locate with a particular role exclusively since he is a white colonist and a black maroon at the same time. In this sense, ironically, he vacillates between marginal positions of slave/black and authorial ones of colonial/white. It is indeed this ambiguity that visualizes Gay on Macheath. Moreover, with this hybridity now Macheath or Morano presents, Gay explicitly demonstrates that there is no complete representation of identity

since one's identity cannot represent the whole group.

Certainly, it is notable that Gay sets the prime reason behind Macheath's transformation as a black man as his love for Jenny. Since Morano has entirely buried the former self in order to desire only one woman, we can say that "Morano's marriage to Jenny . . . is a marriage neither for profit nor for power" but love (Dryden 2001, 541). However, more significantly, what Gay illustrates is that once the notorious unfaithful womanizer has transformed into a faithful black man by the simple change of color. As Morano's pirate crews have observed, Morano is too dependent on Jenny that his crews even find the mistress as "a clog to his ambition" (2.2.113), begging him to stay out of her:

Vanderbluff. For shame, Captain; what, hamper'd in the arms of a woman, when your honour and glory are all at stake! While a man is grappling with these gil-flirts, pardon the expression, Captain, he runs his reason a-ground; and there must be a wounding deal of labour to set it a-float again.

(2.4.118)

The right-hand man Vanderbluff scolds his tamed captain. To Vanderbluff and the rest of the pirates, the captain has lost control and power governed by Jenny's sexuality. On the other hand, as his crews think it excessive and ashamed of, his faithfulness denotes a power relation hidden in Morano's marriage, which seemingly poses Morano colonized to Jenny.¹⁴⁾

14) Aside from the power relations, Morano's loyalty towards Jenny can be understood as his desperate cry from not revealing his whiteness in the West Indies. Since Jenny is the only one who knows Morano's real identity as a white man, he clings to Jenny to confirm and recognize his true identity.

The whiteness serves as a racial superiority that Jenny has gained commands and authority over Morano.

According to Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, who traces the representation of blacks in the English stage from the renaissance to the long eighteenth century, the blacks are an outward manifestation of sin, ignorance, and otherness as “black is the color of the damned, the lost” in the Christian tradition (1987, 3). Known for lascivious conduct concerning the linkage of blackness to sexuality, most staged blacks are presented with legible signs of brutality, evil, and debauchery. However, what we see in *Polly* is the faithful black man who expresses his inherent sincerity and love towards his beloved wife. In this manner, through the representation of Morano, Gay attempts to display a different and new aspect of blacks against stereotypical images and then the white man who reveals his true self beyond his given social images of a prodigal man. Apart from his notoriety of immorality, Macheath might be a faithful man. So interestingly, although mimicry can imitate a person, it can fail to build a person’s thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. Although the play is not entirely free from the notion of the blacks dominated by the authorial relations coming from the color of race, Gay clearly elaborates that either blackness or whiteness cannot be served as a mark of one’s identity. From Morano’s ambivalent images through changing the color, Gay indicates that the perceived images cannot form or represent one’s identity. However, identity cannot escape the connection between white/black and the power structures of superiority.¹⁵⁾

15) Gay might have reflected the reality that the English public would have felt uncomfortable watching the interracial marriage. Therefore, while kisses are made between Jenny and assumed young pirate Polly, Morano and Jenny never make a

When Macheath disguises Morano by changing the color, it does not mean that he has ultimately become the black man. As from the pirate Culverin's compliments on his chief Morano, the chief had been "train'd up in *England*" and "in manners and conversation, tho' he is black, no body has more the air of a great man" (2.2.112-3). For Culverin, Morano is unlike any other typical black people. Beyond his supposed racial difference, the chief is a sophisticated person and has been well bred in England, indicating his inability to hide his whiteness. In this respect, his blackness is somewhat nebulous. He rather contains ambivalence of both whiteness and blackness. By showing that Macheath cannot be completely black even in disguise, Gay rather clarifies that the disguise does not result in a complete transmission of identity.

It is noteworthy to see that although whiteness is covered, the innate nature of Macheath persists through Morano. From the beginning of the play, a native informer first introduces Morano as "a Negro villain, ... who in rapine and barbarities is even equal to [Macheath]" (1.12.103). The black chief is comparable to the white man Macheath. Considering the fact that Morano's notoriety and viciousness are equivalent to Macheath's, "Morano ... is speaking very much in character as Macheath" (Petzold 2012, 117) that it looks like he fails to hide his true self behind the mask. In this respect, Cawwawkee seems the one who sees thorough Morano's disguise. At the scene of Morano's interrogation of his captive Cawwawkee, the imprisoned Indian addresses Morano as "*European*" (2.8.128) twice. What he meant by calling Morano "*European*" is that Cawwawkee already notices Morano as the actual European Macheath; or

kiss or touch each other.

on the other hand, he criticizes a black slave who pretends to be European colonials. Although Morano's blackness makes him a member of a band of Africans, his performance and values originate from his whiteness that it is challenging to place Morano as either the European pirate or the black slave he is meant to be. Ironically, the disguise of the black mask functions not only to conceal but also to reveal the presence of the white skin that results in presenting Morano's ambiguous identity. His radical mask demonstrates the limits of representation of the identities built upon fixed images; but it could also imply that there is a composite nature of identities standing on the grounds of cross-racial and cross-cultural rather than binary opposites. Therefore, Morano/Macheath is not locked "into an in-between space permanently" (Dryden 2001, 551), but blurs the boundaries between the fixed and the spontaneous. Through the interplay of the black slave and the white pirate, Gay presents the hybridity of identity, emphasizing the impossibility of a complete representation of the identities.

Morano keeps his disguise in black face even when he approaches the scaffold. It is controversial why Morano chooses to remain silent about his true identity and maintain the disguised identity of a black captain until the end of the play. Reed finds his choice as a symbolic class rebellion, and Dryden thinks of it as a reflection of his "culturally marginal position" in the colonial society since "he has become a black pirate, a face of resistance in more ways than one" (2001, 540). However, quite to the contrary, Macheath's choice to be hanged as Morano comes neither from his blackness nor marginal position, but his hybrid identity. Of course, if he drops his disguise, he would get a lesser sentence and return to his former life as a white colonizer; however, once he is back to his original self, he has to deny the past of Morano and his self-created identity because

there would be a low chance of fairly judging his past life like his abrupt death sentence brought to justice without an official trial. By reprimanding the king's abrupt death sentence, Morano provides a fragile court system whereby law does not apply to everyone: "This sentence indeed is hard. Without the common forms of trial! Not so much as the counsel of a Newgate attorney! Not to be able to lay out my money in partiality and evidence! Not a friend perjur'd for me! This is hard, very hard" (3.11.152). Although every individual has the right to access the court, as in Morano's case, black people are excluded from getting a fair trial or even an actual one. Therefore, Morano points out a colonial reality where the political authority dominates the justice system and interferes with individual identity.

For the black like Morano, the past cannot be eliminated or corrected but only fabricated or managed from the colonial relations. He chooses to endure the injustice of being the black man and waive the white man's benefits to preserve his hybrid identity. On the circumstances of constantly distinguishing himself between the perceived character of Macheath and his self-created character of Morano, he no longer wants to sustain his life but to die as Morano himself. In addition, Morano is a transgressive character who "now inhabits a position both inside and outside of the black/white binary opposition" unbounded with law, custom, social order, political relations, and any other cultural codes (Dryden 2001, 541). His unusual presence could be troublesome and even threatening in the long term when it comes to those native Indians and British colonials who control access to power and wealth in the West Indies. Since both parties share the vested rights and run the colonial establishment together, Morano's hybrid identity is indeed problematic in raising questions of col-

onial order operated by binary opposition of race and culture. Therefore, for the sake of retaining their colonial authority and temporary agreed peace, Morano is ought to be executed. Through the pivotal moment of Morano's death in the play, when he can be interpreted as a voice of criticism to conventional construction of identity and hybridity, Gay demonstrates how difficult it is to construct one's self outside the social context and the power relations.

5. Conclusion

Gay ends his work by putting all characters back to their old life except for Macheath's off stage. Both Indians and the British colonials return to their peaceful state. Polly takes off men's clothes and is about to marry the Indian prince Cawwawkee. Although all things seem fairly settled, this conservative ending perhaps pokes that identities cannot deviate so easily from fixed values of gender, sex, race, and stereotypical image through mimicry. Mimicry in itself is a powerful tool for subverting the practice of colonial representation. However, since the characters unmask themselves and are back to their usual positions, it is necessary to verify the validity of mimicry, which remains influenced by the power relations such as white and black, or the colonized and the colonials that still is binary opposition.

Nonetheless, in terms of identity, Gay would surely have been sensed that "the stereotype is a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive" (Bhabha 1994, 100). It is significant that by creating the mimetic stage of *Polly*, Gay attempts to or-

chestrate multiple identities by registering diverse ways of mimicry as a means to deconstruct notions of stereotypical identity built upon gender, sexuality, race, culture, and nationality. Almost every character in the play performs, namely through costume, make-up, and role-playing: Polly wears men's clothes to transform into a young white pirate, Macheath paints himself to become a black man, the native Indians behave as Europeans under the principles of virtue, justice, and honor. Whether consciously or unconsciously, those disguised characters undergo the collision of identities between the old familiar ones and the new different ones that it is precisely this instability of identities that Gay argues in *Polly*. Identities are incomplete, mobile, changeable, and destabilized regardless of gender, sex, race, and culture presented as fundamental elements of identities.

With or without disguise, Polly will still be Polly. The fact that Polly remains Polly tells that there is no exact definition of identity since identity itself may not be so absolute and perfect. When Cawwawkee asks her to marry, Polly makes no response but leaves the stage, suggesting that she is reluctant to be defined as either an English white woman or a to-be-Indian Princess. As a woman who would likely have her own identity upon virtue, it is unusual for her not to accept the virtuous Indian man's proposal. But her exit is comparable to Morano's death. Like Morano, who chooses his exceptional identity without locking himself within more widespread stereotypical images and social roles, Polly no longer wants to put herself in the individual identity derived from social relationships. By this unresolved ending, Gay's work ultimately poses a question about the essence of one's identity amidst numerous identities stemming from varied mimicry methods. Although Gay does not come to

a clear conclusion about his idea of the essence of identity, he dismantles multiple identities within the characters to navigate individual identity out of social context through *Polly* and prefigures various “forms of men” (3.11.151) in the foreign spaces of the West Indies. Gay, as a dramatist himself in acknowledgement of actors performing multiple identities depending on what roles they play to display differences and a widespread stereotypical images in excess, provides an opportunity to diversify the fixed identities in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Even if it is hard to tell whether he is against or supportive of colonial practices, just as the play’s portrayal of slavery and allies of two colonial powers show, the play does not claim itself as a text of anti-colonialism. However, obscuring any notions of fixed racial or sexual identities, the play reckons that interests and certain transactions would run the colonial relationships.

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 초 록

존 게이의 『폴리』

— 젠더, 인종, 그리고 제국의 다양한 정체성의 진동

정 경 서*

이 글은 존 게이의 『폴리』에 등장하는 인물들의 다양한 정체성을 호미 바바의 모방 개념을 통해 탐구한다. 게이는 첫 발라드 오페라 『거지 오페라』에서 남자 주인공 맥히스가 런던을 누볐다면 후속작 『폴리』에서 맥히스의 아내 폴리는 그녀의 남편을 향한 사랑과 헌신을 주장하기 위해서 인도제도를 헤맨다. 게이는 이 작품에서 해적과 노예제, 식민 문제와 얽힌 정체성을 다루는 한편 그와 동시에 식민지 환경 내에서 새로이 정체성을 만들 수 있는 가능성에 대해 모색하고, 의복, 가면, 역할 전환 등의 흥내내기를 통해 극중 거의 모든 인물들이 가야트리 스피박의 관점에서 중층결정된 젠더, 국가, 그리고 인종 문제를 제기하고 있다.

『폴리』에서 등장인물들은 젠더, 국가, 인종 및 제국에 의해 주어지는 정체성을 거부하고, 그로부터 파생되는 고정적인 이미지와 역할의 경계를 전략적으로 넘나들고 이동하는 것처럼 보인다. 바지를 입은 도덕적인 백인 여성 폴리는 용감한 해적 청년으로 서인도 제도를 누비고, 농장에 계약 노동자로 고용된 백인 남성이자 죄수 맥히스는 흑인으로 변장하여 모라노의 이름으로 해적 무리를 이끌며, 야만스럽고 무자비하다고 여겨지는 인디언 원주민은 용감하고 도덕적이며 오히려 계몽된 유럽인과 더

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답아 있는 문명화된 식민지인으로 등장한다. 이처럼 이들은 기존의 주어진 혹은 고정된 정체성 모습에서 벗어나 있다. 그리하여 극은 정체성이 단순히 이분법적인 범주의 차이와 동일성에 따라 결정되고 구성되지 않을 뿐만 아니라 가변적이며 언제든지 유동적으로 재구성될 수 있음을 제시한다.

그러나 한편으로는 변장, 역할 전환에 따라 인물들의 실제 모습 또는 본모습과 만들어지고 연기하는 모습의 괴리를 보여줌으로써 계이는 한 개인의 정체성이 기존의 형성 체계에서 벗어나 오롯이 홀로 정립될 수 없는 한계점 역시 시사한다. 비록 이들의 흉내내기는 자신의 외양을 바꿀 수는 있지만 이는 단편적 또는 일시적에 불과하며 이들은 다시금 자신의 원 정체성으로 돌아오게 된다. 결과적으로 작품은 맥히스/모라노의 무대 밖 죽음과 변장을 벗은 폴리와 인디언 원주민 왕자와의 애매한 결혼 약속으로 결말을 모호하게 처리하는데, 이러한 석연치 않은 결말은 작가가 한편으로는 흉내내기를 통해 정체성의 본질에 대한 접근이 가능함을 보여주나 그 이상의 정체성에 대한 근본적 전환까지는 사고하지 않음을 알 수 있다.