

# Aspects Of Jungian Psychology: A Study Of Derek Walcott's Dream On Monkey Mountain

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## **Abstract:**

The evident connotation of the term post-colonial is that it attributes to an era coming after the end of colonialism. The remnants of colonialism can still be perceived in the postcolonial period, for colonialism unleashed an immense wound on the psychology, culture and identity of the once conquered people. The current situation of once colonized people is attributed to colonialism which has accorded a set of problems including identity crisis, displacement and mimicry. In this social turmoil the oppressed have lost their native selves. The present article focuses only on the concept of "dream," and the present article, which acknowledges and reflects on some of the main relevant interpretations (all about dreams), tends to add that the identity, and thus the destiny, of a (colonized) nation is also shaped by its collective unconscious which belongs to the psychic heritage of all members of the human family.

**Keywords:** Post-Colonial, Psychic Heritage, Identity.

## **Content:**

Like Freud, Jung viewed the psyche as consisting of a number of separate but interacting systems. The three most important of these were the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. According to Jung, the ego represents the conscious mind, as it comprises the thoughts, memories, and feelings of which a person is aware. The ego is largely responsible for the sense of identity and continuity. Carl Jung's foremost contribution to myth criticism is his "theory of racial memory and archetypes." In developing this concept, "Jung expanded Freud's theories of the personal unconscious, asserting that beneath this is a primeval, collective unconscious shared in the psychic inheritance of all members of the human family" (Guerin et al., 1985, p. 176). J

After the independence of India, we entered a realm of literary curiosity and critical spectrum. Since then, postcolonial studies has

emerged as an important branch of literary studies. After the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), it became a matter of great interest to view critically how the Western literary discourse describes the non-European cultures and their natives. A brutal kind of misrepresentation has been underlined in categorizing the native, to use Hasting's words, "as an alien 'other,' not part of the universal culture of the West" ("Historical"). Hence, a dire need was felt to re-read critically the classical works of English literature. Many such works like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) have been re-interpreted "as examples of the imperialist discourse in English literature" (1). Thus, the present scenario of literary studies has undergone a radical change of emphasis in which most of the canonical works of English literature are being scrutinized by postcolonial critics. Along with their literary merits it is also a matter of immense interest for the critics to survey their imperialist

inclinations and how these texts have contributed in the justification of imperialist rule.

Edward Said has underlined in his book *Orientalism* (1978) that the entire empire of colonialism stood on the ideology of creating hierarchies and their sustenance by making the native feel ashamed of its own existence. During the colonial age, the Western world created a hierarchy which put Westerners at a way more privileged position to the colonized to separate the two in order to legitimize their superiority over the colonial subjects. Western colonization was founded upon binary oppositions such as “the colonizer and the colonized, the Occidental and the Oriental, the civilized and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the underdeveloped” (Prakash, 3). It can be inferred from the above statement that the West has not only undermined the people and the culture of the colonial countries but has also glorified its own mission of imperialism by creating certain stereotypes.

Postcolonial discourse usually refers to a mode of resistance against the culture that has colonized the subjects and provided them with a colonial legacy that they are not able to shake off completely. The adverse effects of this legacy can be seen in the emergence of problems like hybridity, identity-crises, displacement and mimicry. Thus, an attempt can be made to make the term “postcolonial” more comprehensive by referring to the observation of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin:

The term should be used to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by

European imperial aggression.  
(2)

*Dream on Monkey Mountain* is one of the best-known plays of Derek Walcott. Its first performance was held in 1967, at the Central Library Theatre in Toronto, Canada. Walcott received an Obie Award after its first performance New York City in 1971. It is one of the most performed plays of Walcott, which is in the form of an allegory, concerning racial and cultural identity. He here gives voice, to his earlier concerns regarding the struggles of Trinidadian peasants. As far as the form of the play is concerned, Walcott has made some significant changes. Here, in a poetic way, he proposes a psychological cultural investigation and the desire for freedom. He follows the same pattern in his other play *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*. He takes into consideration the issue of Caribbean cultural identity and fuses it with a wide range of cultural inter-texts.

The opening of the play is with a mime which combines dance, movement and song in order to bring to the foreground its main themes. Through mime, a lament sung by a storyteller and chorus is introduced which presents to the readers play's central character, Makak. Thus, before starting the narrative action of the play, Walcott creates an oral folk context for the drama. Thus, the play *Dream on Monkey Mountain* falls into the category of dream plays popular during the twentieth century. This feature of the play connects it with similar works written by playwrights like the Swedish playwright August Strindberg, the Irish dramatist John Millington Synge and Soyinka. Derek Walcott himself defines, “the play is a dream, one that exists as much in the given minds of its principal characters as in that of its writer, and as such, it is illogical, derivative, and contradictory. Its source is metaphor and it is best treated as a physical poem with all the subconscious and deliberate borrowing of poetry” (Walcott, *Dream on*

Monkey Mountain 290). Therefore, it becomes imperative to examine the significance of dreams in the play which paves way for a better understanding of the play.

As in a dream, there is a resistance in the play to description and interpretation and thus it is replete with multiple meanings for different readers. The narrative of the plays features Makak who is an old black charcoal burner. He comes to town and gets drunk. Corporal Lestrade, who is a mulatto guard and is the custodian of law and order at that time, arrests Makak and takes him to prison. The play has a dream scene of a mock trial in which Makak is being accused by Lestrade for getting drunk and damaging the premises of a local salesperson. Moreover, in another dream series, Makak is shown as the crowned king in the exotic land of Africa with his wives, his warriors, and the masks of pagan gods. There is also another mock trial in which many renowned Western personalities like Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Ptolemy, and Dante are charged for neglecting other races and sentenced to death by African tribes. In this way, Lestrade pays his tribute to the western world. He proudly shares his black inheritance and declares his loyalty to Makak. Thus Makak is set free from his accuses and can go back to his native place with a strong sense of identity.

Dream on Monkey Mountain can be described as a kind of political allegory of the condition of the blacks both in the postcolonial world in general and in the Caribbean in particular. Blacks are set off from their roots. Makak, the central character of the play, is burning with a desire to return back to Africa as a part of his dream. It is interesting to note the source of the dream. It is described by Makak himself when he tells about a white woman, who also represents the white mask produced by two other characters of the play, Lestrade and Moustique. When Makak sees a vision in the prison of the white Goddess, Lestrade says, "My

Lord, is this rage for whiteness that does drive niggers mad" (Walcott, DOMM 228). Many writers have examined the modes in which oppressive ideologies destabilize personal identity and even sometimes lead to madness. It seems ironic that the source of 'back-to-Africa' idea originates from a white person.

Makak's journey is not a single whole rather it bears the echoes of some legendary leaders. The echoes of Haile Selasse can be noticed in the character of Makak: he is compared to the Lion of Abyssinia and who is claimed to be answerable only to God. Emperor Haile Selassie's complete name was "His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, King of Kings and Elect of God". These days the followers of the Rastafari movement consider Haile Selassie I as God incarnate. This Rastafari Movement belonged to Jamaica where in the 1930s "back to Africa" movement under the influence of Marcus Garvey became popular. There Haile Selassie I is hailed as the Black Messiah who can lead the natives of Africa and the African Diaspora to freedom. A comparison can also be drawn between Makak and Christ. Some similar incidents join them together like two robbers follow him in prison, and on Easter Sunday he looks forward to resurrection. Prison cell symbolizes both life and colonial rule. Moustique is urged by Makak to leave everything and accompany him. Even the sick Josephus is cured by Makak who motivates him to believe. Moustique also tells the peasants that Makak "breathe resurrection" and he is "God's messenger" (Walcott, DOMM 251). Moreover, the wonder stories related to Makak, and the doubts people encounter about him, are suggestive of Gospel accounts. In addition to this, Makak is accompanied by two thieves both in prison and in his escape to Monkey Mountain as Christ on the cross. Souris changes his faith under the influence of Makak. Whereas Tigre remains outside with his vision of souls tormented in hell, Makak tells Tigre:

MAKAK. Think, Tigre, money in not what you want. I know now you cannot reach that rainbow weighted like scales with your bags of fool's gold. (Walcott, DOMM 303-304)

Echoes of Gandhi can also be found in the play:

WIFE. They say he is on a long walk, going through every village, on his way to the sea, looking across to Africa, and that when he get there, God will tell him what to do. [She sings a hymn. The others join her, working] (Walcott, DOMM 303-304)

The Monkey Mountain where Makak lives is mentioned in the Prologue as “volcanic”. A volcano can be defined as an unpredictable, hiding violence, and suppressed energies that will one day blow it free. Makak’s in his dream echoes these hidden energies and tries to give them form and substance in such way that neither the criminality of Tigre or Souris nor the oppressive mentality of the Corporal can give. Makak constantly emphasizes that his dream is not only a dream whereas others describe it as a bad dream. Corporal addresses certain charges against Makak which clearly include “incitement to rebellion” (Walcott, DOMM 224-225). Even though Makak himself announces that it is “better to die, fighting like men, than to hide in this forest,” (Walcott, DOMM 242), *Dream on Monkey Mountain* does not support revolution in its confined political sense. The play is a clear expression of the central concerns of Walcott’s attitude to the political, racial and psychological problems in his postcolonial world. What is Walcott’s perception about colonialism, racism, oppression is clearly manifested in the play. According to him, the solution does not lie in politics, instead “The future of West Indian Militancy lies in art” (“What the Twilight Says” 18).

It seems as if the dream in this play primarily belongs both to Makak and to collective ambiance of the entire plot. At the same time as Makak’s dream of Africa is presented, Makak has been shown remembering a dream in which a white Goddess takes care of him at the same time when his dream of Africa is presented. Notwithstanding, he abandons this dream by harshly cutting the head of the woman with an African sword. This sacrifice is a clear expression of a strong reaction against a fantasy life which is miles away from reality.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Walcott takes the task of interpreting the nature of Caribbean identity. Colonialism has been a crucial factor in damaging the human soul and humiliating the lives of the natives of this particular region. However, it is not productive to take flights of fancy as Makak dreams of regaining his African roots. In the epilogue of the play, Makak is left free, whereas Western civilization dies a death of sacrifice. Apart from this, revenge and hate are insignificant factors to Walcott.

The setting of the play is on an unknown island somewhere in the West Indies. The period is also unspecified. It can be assumed to be similar to the time in which the play was written. In the same fashion, the location of the action of the play is both real and imagined. The play begins and ends at the same location – the prison run by Corporal Lestrade – which is the most real place in the play. There is a strong defense of the English law done by Lestrade but paradoxically the same law is employed to abuse justice when Lestrade tries to maintain a mechanical justification of Makak’s readiness to face the trial. Lestrade discourses about the necessity to have a pistol to maintain order. He longs to have someone who can challenge the law and can contradict him. In Makak’s dream, the action begins from his residence on Monkey Mountain to a village road where he cures a sick person and then the action shifts to the public marketplace

before he could return to the jail. After Makak's escaping along with two other black prisoners namely Tigre and Souris he spends time in the forest before going to a most unreal setting where he becomes a king. All these changing settings hint towards Makak's journey which incorporates his real existence, which is harsh, to reach self-awareness and finally back to a reality where he becomes a better person.

The opening scene of the play is set in a prison. The prologue of the play which introduces us Makak "is itself a ritual, presided over by Lestrade. All present, except the bewildered Makak, know how to play their roles in it, having been taught them by long experience with the colonial code" (Breslin36). What Makak goes through in the prison is an epitome of the mental tortures caused by colonialism. He is recently arrested for getting drunk and destroying a local cafe for imagining himself to be the King of Africa. Tigre and Souris attempt to contest Lestrade when he arrests Makak. This infuriates the corporal and he calls them equal to animals. Corporal Lestrade, who is a mulatto, becomes a representative of the complicity of certain elements that the black community shares with the colonizers. Otherwise, he should stand by the side of other blacks. He ridicules three black prisoners:

CORPORAL. Animals, beasts, savages, cannibals, niggers, stop turning this place to a stinking zoo! (Walcott, DOMM 216)

He addresses black people a clan of apes:

CORPORAL. In the beginning was the ape, and the ape had no name, so God Call him man. Now there were various tribes of the ape, it had gorilla, baboon, orang-outan, chimpanzee, the blue-arsed monkey and marmoset, and God looked at his handiwork, and saw that it was good. For some of the apes had

straighten their backbone, and start walking upright, but there was one tribe unfortunately that lingered behind, and that was the nigger. Now if you apes will behave like gentlemen, who knows what could happen? (Walcott, DOMM 216-217)

Makak urges the Corporal to set him free from the prison. He has some hidden money to offer him for his release. Makak has no idea that Souris and Tigre are after his money. They encourage him to kill the Corporal. Motivated by them, Makak draws a knife and kills the Corporal. But the Corporal astoundingly returns back to life and begins to chase Makak for revenge.

It can be seen that at the very centre of *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is a search for and acceptance of one's own identity, as at the beginning of the play when Makak is questioned by the Corporal Lestrade about his real name, he does not know much about himself. *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is a powerful critique of "the various ways in which racism defines an unlivable identity for oppressed people, an identity that pushes toward madness" (Hogan, 45). At different instances, Walcott deals with this theme explicitly. For example, he obtains the epigraph for part one from Sartre's prologue to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*: because of "always being insulted" the self becomes "dissociated, and the patient heads for madness" (Walcott, DOMM 211). On the other hand, there is a dialogue between the mulatto Corporal Lestrade and Basil; Lestrade here asks: "My mind, my mind. What's happened to my mind?" and Basil replies: "It was never yours, Lestrade" (Walcott, DOMM 297). It suggests that his mind never belongs completely to him because it was always affected by the pre-defined categories of racism. Similarly, his identity has always been a matter of dispute for it was a definition of him given by others.

The dream reaches its climax in the form of parody and pantomime in Act Two Scene Three known as the 'Apotheosis scene.' The device a dream-within-the-dream has been used in this scene. The Corporal has invoked the statues and they celebrated at the end of the previous scene, they begin to appear again. The scene is introduced by the Chorus giving it a shape of a collective fantasy. In this scene, the Chorus referred as "the tribe" which seems to take on a communal African identity. Makak is sitting on his throne and the Chorus sings and dances in his praise. As Makak's humility in calling himself only a shadow enrich his glorification as the "inventor of history". On the one hand, Walcott ridicules Caribbean mimicry of European standards; on the other hand he makes fun of the African Movement. The evidence of it is the portrayal of Corporal Lestrade who earlier was a staunch defender of "Roman Law" (Walcott, *Dream* 219), and later became an advocate of "tribal law" (Walcott, *DOMM* 311).

There are many historical Western personages referred to as "accused" – such as Aristotle, Plato, Shakespeare, Ptolemy, Tarzen, Sir Francis Drake, Sir Cecil Rhodes, and Dante. The crime they have all been charged with is said to be their whiteness but in some cases the crime becomes more specific. For instance, both Sir Cecil Rhodes and Sir Francis Drake are thought to be pro-colonialist of archetypal type. Many considered Sir Francis Drake a pirate who was also an English Privateer, navigator, slave trader, and politician in the Elizabethan age. On the other hand, Sir Cecil Rhodes was considered to be a politician born in Britain who also had business in South Africa. He has a firm faith in colonialism and became the colonizer of the state of Rhodesia. This country has been named after him. In fact, all of the "accused" here in some way or the other have contributed to repress black people. They did it either by appropriating their own culture or excluding the black from official versions of history or by exploiting them economically.

The final tone of experience differentiates Makak and the Corporal. Makak's experience is acceptance of his original identity but the Corporal's tune remains the same. As he was at the beginning, he emerges again as the same colonial administrator. What this suggests is that the idea of accepting hybrid origin and identity is a matter relevant to all Caribbean people:

CORPORAL. Niggers, cannibals, savages! Stop turning this place into a stinking zoo. Believe me, old man [Unlocking the cell], it have no salvation for them, and no hope for us. (Walcott, *DOMM* 323-324)

Makak ultimately denies accepting the mask of the white apparition which is represented by the Corporal. The Corporal's last realization is, "Here is a prison. Our life is a prison." However, what Makak realizes at the end of the play is very different from Corporal. The play ends with Felix Hobain's/Makak's realization:

MAKAK. [Turning to them] God bless you both. Lord, I have been washed from shore to shore, as a tree in the ocean. The branches of my fingers, the roots of my feet, could grip nothing, but now, God, they have found ground. Let me be swallowed up in mist again, and let me be forgotten, so that when the mist open, men can look up, at some small clearing with a hut, with a signal of smoke, and say, "Makak lives there. Makak lives where he has always lived, in the dream of his people." Other men will come, other prophets will come, and they will be stoned, and mocked, and betrayed, but now this old hermit is going back home, back to the beginning, to

the green beginning of this world. Come, Moustique, we going home. (Walcott, DOMM 326)

Thus, Makak's whole speech, at the end of the play, is a powerful critique of the idea of a return to Africa as for him, the Caribbean land becomes the real home. He, now, considers it "the green beginning of this world".

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