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Dream, Delirium, Psychological Effects, And Decolonization: Makak Through Walcott's Postcolonial Vision

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Abstract

Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* explores the psychological and spiritual decolonization of the colonized mind through the staging of the dreams and delirium, particularly in the experience of Makak and his surreal dream journey. The non-linear episodic structure mirrors the disorientation of the colonized mind and reflects the fractured identity of Postcolonial subjects. Ultimately, Walcott's play shows that the true liberation involves embracing one's cultural root, memory, and also myth to claim psychological and spiritual freedom.

Keywords: Derek Walcott, Colonization, Decolonization, Dream, Delirium, Psychological Effects of Colonization, Postcolonial identity

Introduction

"মুক্তি কোথায়? চিন্তার মুক্তি চাই, আত্মার মুক্তি চাই"

("Where is freedom? I seek the freedom of thought, I seek the freedom of the soul")

- Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore's reflection on *Mukti* as the liberation of thought and soul perfectly echoes Makak's internal journey through dream and memory. The Postcolonial text, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* depicts the colonial discourses regarding the black. Walcott has vividly presented the suffering of the black in his play. The inferiority of the black is explicitly reflected in which the White is superior and the Black is less human beings. Thus through his play Walcott explores the decolonization of the mind through the staging of the dreams and delirium, particularly in the experience of Makak. As he also reflects the same in his *A Far Cry from Africa* –

"How can I turn from Africa and live?"

Discussion

Analysis of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* stands as one of the most intricate dramatizations of the colonial psyche in Caribbean literature. To understand the depth of Makak's transformation, it is essential to examine how Walcott constructs a theatrical space where dreams, hallucinations, and historical memory converge. The play refuses a linear, conventional storytelling structure; instead, it drifts through a series of visions that operate simultaneously as personal therapy, cultural allegory, and political critique. This deliberate structural fragmentation reflects the splintered consciousness of colonized individuals whose identities have been shaped—often violently—by external definitions of race and civilization. Walcott's choice to situate Makak's journey primarily in the realm of the subconscious is significant: it is within this interior territory that the effects of colonial domination take root, and it is also here that decolonization must begin.

At the centre of Makak's psychological struggle is his ambiguous relationship with Africa, which functions as both a geographical symbol and a repository of ancestral memory. Walcott does not present Africa as a literal homeland to which Makak can return in a physical sense. Instead, Africa exists as a dreamscape—a projected image of dignity and origin that counters the humiliation he experiences in colonial society. This imagined Africa echoes what many postcolonial theorists identify as the longing for an "authentic" self, a version of identity untainted by colonial interference. Yet the Africa Makak encounters in his visions is not purely liberating. It is idealized and mythic, a construct shaped as much by colonial absence as by cultural memory. This duality is important: Makak's dream reveals both his desire for empowerment and his vulnerability to illusions created by his own wounds. Walcott thus avoids romanticizing Africa, presenting it instead as part of a complex psychological mechanism through which Makak negotiates his worth.

The figure of the white goddess functions as an embodiment of the colonial ideal that Makak has absorbed over a lifetime. Her beauty, radiance, and purity are not meant to represent any individual white woman; rather, they symbolize the seductive power of colonial imagery. She stands for everything Makak has been taught to revere: whiteness, refinement, and the promise of being seen as human according to colonial standards. His fascination with her exposes the internalized racism that Fanon identifies as central to the psychology of the colonized. Makak's self-hatred is not merely emotional but structural—rooted in a system that has consistently valued whiteness while degrading Black bodies and culture. His eventual renunciation of the goddess signals a critical shift in his consciousness: he begins to detach his self-image from colonial validation. The moment marks the rupture of the colonial gaze, allowing him to imagine a self that does not depend on external approval.

Corporal Lestrade's role further complicates this dynamic. As a mulatto authority figure who polices Makak with hostility, Lestrade exemplifies the internal divisions created by colonial hierarchies of colour. He enforces colonial power not simply because he is commanded to do so but because he derives a sense of identity through his proximity to whiteness. His cruelty toward Makak is a form of mimicry—what Homi K. Bhabha describes as the desire of the colonized to imitate the colonizer while never becoming fully accepted. Lestrade's position reveals how colonial systems sustain themselves not only through physical force but also by turning members of oppressed groups into agents of their own subjugation. His shifting behaviour throughout Makak's dream, oscillating between domination and confusion, reflects his own fragmented psyche. Lestrade, too, is caught in the in-between space of postcolonial identity: neither fully empowered nor fully oppressed, neither white nor Black in the rigid terms of colonial classification. The characters Tigre and Souris introduce another dimension to the dream narrative—rebellion. They embody the raw, unstructured energy of resistance that exists beneath the surface of colonial societies. However, Walcott does not portray them as heroic revolutionaries. Instead, their presence in Makak's visions is chaotic, mischievous, and unpredictable. They represent the instinctive desire for freedom that often emerges without ideological grounding. Through them, Walcott suggests that liberation is not only a political act but also an emotional and instinctive response to oppression. These figures challenge Makak to confront the suppressed parts of his identity that colonial rules have taught him to fear or reject.

Walcott's use of ritual elements deepens the transformative nature of the play. The dream sequences incorporate motifs of cleansing, rebirth, and ancestral invocation, turning the narrative into a kind of psychological ceremony. Makak's journey resembles a ritual descent into the underworld, where he must confront symbolic representations of fear, desire, and memory. This ritualistic structure echoes Caribbean cultural traditions influenced by African spirituality, where dreams and visions often serve as channels for ancestral communication. Walcott draws on this heritage not to replicate traditional forms but to emphasize the cultural memory that persists within the colonized mind despite centuries of suppression. Through ritual, Makak reconnects to a sense of belonging that colonial history attempted to sever. The episodic movement of the play—from prison cell to forest, from courtroom to mythic Africa—reflects the instability of a consciousness wrestling with both trauma and hope. The stage becomes an extension of Makak's mind: chaotic, fluid, and uncertain. In this sense, Walcott dramatizes not only the symptoms of colonial psychological damage but also the process of healing. Makak's shifting identities—criminal, king, prophet, wanderer—illustrate the effort to piece together a coherent sense of self. The play suggests that identity in a postcolonial world is not discovered all at once but assembled through constant negotiation between memory, cultural inheritance, and lived experience.

Walcott's presentation of community also plays a crucial role in Makak's transformation. While much of the play focuses on his internal journey, his return to the physical world underscores that personal liberation is incomplete without communal reintegration. Makak does not emerge from his vision as a triumphant hero; rather, he reclaims a sense of ordinary humanity. This return to everyday life challenges romantic notions of liberation as grand or dramatic. For Walcott, freedom is grounded in the rediscovery of dignity, recognition, and cultural continuity within one's own community. The simplicity of Makak's final acceptance—his acknowledgment of his name, his identity, and his home—suggests that healing lies not in escaping reality but in transforming one's relationship to it. Moreover, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* uses dream, myth, and ritual not merely to depict escape from colonial oppression but to reveal how deeply such oppression affects the imagination. Makak's visions expose the psychological labyrinth created by historical violence, yet they also illuminate pathways to recovery. Walcott's play therefore occupies a unique place in postcolonial literature: it does not solely critique colonial power, nor does it simply celebrate cultural roots. Instead, it presents the decolonization of consciousness as a difficult, fragmented, but profoundly necessary process through which individuals and communities can reclaim their sense of self.

Kelly Baker Josephs in her article asserts that *Dream on Monkey Mountain* can be read as a fantasy shaped by the hallucination of an old woodcutter who has a vision of returning to Africa. Makak, a poor, elderly, black man living in a Caribbean village, undergoes a surreal psychological journey after being imprisoned for a minor offense. His delirious visions including his transformation into an African King and his encounter with a White Goddess symbolize a struggle to reconcile his fragmented Postcolonial Identity. These dream-like situations enable Makak to confront the effects of colonialism on his self-image, most notably his internalized self-hatred and longing for whiteness. The white Goddess, for instance, represents the colonial ideal and Makak's eventual renunciation of her marks a critical step in reclaiming his Black identity.

"In my dreams, I was a king, crowned with the crescent moon" - Makak

The use of dreams and hallucinations allow Walcott to blur the lines between reality and fantasy, emphasising how deeply colonial ideology penetrates the subconscious. By staging Makak's dream quest as a symbolic journey through history, myth and memory, Derek Walcott dramatizes the psychological violence of colonization as well as the possibility of healing. Frantz Fanon, whose ideas were influenced by Jean Paul Sartre, observes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, a colonized person must constantly be aware of his image, jealousy protect his position.

Fanon's background as a psychiatrist is also relevant here to understand the psychological effects of colonialism. Additionally, his experience with Aimé Césaire reflects Margaret Majumder's thought that although there are connections between Fanon and Césaire, Fanon creates a new perspective on race, culture and nation that challenge simplistic categorization of his thoughts. Though Hank Aaron argues that the way

Fanon uses violence in his *The Wretched of The Earth* is not the correct way to *On Violence*. However, in Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain,* Makak's final acceptance of his African heritage and his return to his community suggest that true liberation lies in embracing one's cultural roots.

"They told me I was nothing. But I have dreamed. I have seen myself" – Makak

Furthermore, the non-linear narrative structure of the play mirrors the disorientation of the colonized mind and reflects the fractured identity of postcolonial subjects. Through Makak's vision, Walcott critiques both colonial oppression and the internal division within the oppressed. As Homi K. Bhabha asserts in *The Location of Culture* that postcolonial identity is formed in the Interstitial Space between cultures. Dream sequences are the central to the episodic structure and thematic depth which Walcott uses not merely as fantastical elements but as metaphors for internal struggle and transformation. Corporal Lestrade, a mulatto officer represents the colonized enforcer of imperial values, policing Makak with violence, mockery and mimicry- "You black apes, you savage."

Meanwhile, Tigre and Souris, two prisoners, appear in Makak's dream as the figures of rebellion which is a part of postcolonial tradition. Walcott, therefore functions as ritual healing - a journey into the unconscious where the legacy of colonialism can be confronted and exercised. This is what Makak undergoes: a mythic, dream filled journey that ultimately leads to spiritual rebirth. His final return to the community signals not only his personal redemption but a symbolic act of communal and cultural renewal - "I am Makak, I am me, I am free"

Here we also find some similarities with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth* and many more.

"Colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: 'Who am I in reality?' " - Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Walcott uses the surreal and subconscious not just as literary techniques but as the essential tools for dramatizing the mental and spiritual process of decolonization. Dream on Monkey Mountain is thus not merely a political statement instead a deeply poetic and psychological exploration of how colonized individuals can claim their sense of self through introspection, memory and myth.

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