

**GOVERNMENT ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE,  
KOVILPATTI – 628503  
PG DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
STUDY MATERIAL FOR II B.A ENGLISH  
CARIBBEAN LITERATURE  
SEMESTER - III, ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21**

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**UNIT I - POETRY**

**A FAR CRY FROM AFRICA**

- **Derek Walcott**

Derek Walcott's "A Far Cry from Africa" expresses how he is torn between "Africa and the English tongue he loves". Derek Walcott often described himself as a "mongrel"; both grandmothers were African and both grandfathers were European. He hated the English culture but loved the English language and empathized with the Irish for they were also the victims of colonization.

In "A Far Cry from Africa," Walcott does not express all aspects of British and African culture; instead he focuses only on the brutal history of both. He is "poisoned with the blood of both," and he is torn between the two horrific options of a bloodied Africa or the attacker that is England.

In order to effectively colonize another's land, the colonizer's culture has to become so widely spread and deeply embedded in the colonized land's culture so that the native people will begin to accept that they are inferior to the colonizers. In "A Far Cry from Africa," Walcott ironically describes how he rejects the British culture – the colonialist ideology – but accepts the British language as superior.

"A Far Cry from Africa" uses metaphors to describe the death and destruction and inhumanity that have occurred in both Africa and Europe. As half-European and half-African, Walcott was privileged to bear both horrible histories. The full-blooded natives' desire was to look and behave like the colonizers. Derek Walcott uses his genetic hybridity and cultural hybridity to express the extremity of his unhomeliness.

**JUDAS**

- **Mervyn Eustes Morris**

The poem, "Judas" was written by Mervyn Eustes Morris a Jamaican poet. Morris usually stresses upon the importance of nation and its language through his verse. He wants to redefine the aspect of Jamaican culture and their creole language. In the first stanza Morris describes the master gave Judas a mocking smile. But actually Christ simply smiled at Judas, but in these lines Morris has exaggerated the smile into a mocking smile. The word 'mocking' seemed to be the striking word and therefore the poet wanted to highlight the "mocking glance" of the master.

The poet explains the Judas feeling of being partial by his master who had given the priority for John to sit in his right. This was again the poet's partial feeling even in his own homeland by the colonizers. He has said that the truth which is in the side of colonised is always complicated in the foreign eyes. He also says the colonizer is the "knowing judge of man" in the sense whatever they say is believed by the world.

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On the whole the poem 'Judas' by Mervyn Morris is nothing but a representation of history by the point of view of the victim. He had deconstructed the real and the past i.e. deconstructing the already existing ideas. Also he wanted to say that the colonised people's ideas and life thoughts are not accepted whereas the colonisers' ideology, life and thoughts were accepted. The poet uses the word 'master' and 'lord' for Christ in order to avoid the religious conflict. Though he describes the pathetic condition of the 'colonised' people in the poem the comparison used in this poem is quite controversial however the poet tried to escape of controversies through his careful selection of words and diction.

### **BLACK WOMAN**

**- Nancy Morejon**

The poem, "Black Woman" deals with the concept of black identity and the concept of female identity. It describes the experiences of black Cubans and particularly black women throughout the nation's history, as told through an unnamed black female narrator. The poem begins by alluding to the voyage across the sea as slaves were transported from Africa.

The poem is not a typical tale of a slave who longs to return home. In fact, Morejón actively rejects that narrative. Its original title was "Mujer Negra" and the poem was translated by William Little. The whole poem talks about how the life of one Black Woman began and ended in a new country. It is written in the first person narrative.

The poem begins with the black woman trying to retrace the memories she had at the time she was being deported. She recalls how she still remembers the foam of the sea. They had forced her from her home and she was taken into the sea. She could still see the first seagull which she spotted. The woman claims that she had not forgotten from where she had come. Coming to a foreign land the woman regards herself to have reborn as she worked like a dog.

In the second stanza of the poem the woman tells about how she was brought in a slave market in a "public square". She tells how she even had a son with her and he was not given a name. Soon the man who brought the black woman was killed by an "English lord".

In the third stanza she describes her life after the death of "His Grace". The black woman was once tied upside down and beaten up as well as lashed. Then she accounts how she paddled her way through the river and settled down in a place where she built barracks herself. The poet claims that at this point she even sang to the "natural beat of the nation's birds". She proclaims that she rose in rebellion.

The fourth stanza of the poem tells about how the black woman had seen the bones and touched the bones of those other slaves who were forced into the foreign land just like she was. The narrator believes that she had forgotten her way back home. She wonders if she had come from Guinea or Benin or Madagascar or Cape Verde. The woman worked much hard in this new land. In the fifth stanza she tells how she built her own place in this new land and made it her own.

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She further illustrates how she had attained her freedom at the stockade and how she had once rode with Maceo's cavalry.

At the conclusion of the poem we learn how the woman came down from Sierra along with all her descendants and put an end to the capitalist and the lean bourgeois. She proudly states that it is now their time to “hold and create”. She tells that nothing is beyond their reach. She ends the poem by saying that equality has been upheld finally and thus communism shall prevail evermore in this new land.

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**UNIT II - POETRY**

**ANANSE**

**-Kamau Braithwaite**

Ananse is a trickster spider which often pranks and even takes human shapes. It is one of the primary characters in West African and Caribbean folklore. The poem has been divided into two parts.

In the first part, Ananse thinks and memorizes the native culture of his country which once existed but has been lost now. In the second part, Ananse weaves and recreates the lost culture by binding past stories, cultures, words, songs of Africa and thus like God, he brings the dead African culture to life. In every stanza, Ananse changes its form and presents something different.

In this poem, the poet has tried to challenge the canons of language set by colonialists. He challenges these rules by breaking away from them. He believes that the culture which had been destructed by the colonial powers can be regained only by rejecting the rules of language set by colonialists.

The very title of the poem “Ananse” depicts this deviation. The correct spelling of this word in British English is “Anansi”. However, the poet deliberately chooses the word “Ananse” to show his revolt. In this poem, we find the concept of “Orature” or oral literature which can only be understood by listening to it. The past culture of Africa had their literature in oral form which was meant to be heard. This concept does exist in this poem. The meaning of the poem lies in the sound of the poem or in other words the form of the poem gives its meaning.

The break away from the set rules can be found in the poem. The use of Ananse as the narrator, creator, and breaker signify the power of an African, who can recreate his culture, reject the colonial culture and rise to the status of God (of Colonialists). Thus we find a revolt against the domination of culture (of Colonialists) through the use of language in the poem.

**HALF CASTE**

**- John Agard**

Half-Caste is a derogatory term for a person who is of mixed race. The speaker begins the poem by excusing himself for being half-caste. He provides countless examples of the positive sides to being half-caste.

Half-Caste is composed of four stanzas. The word “caste” is associated with the word “purity”; therefore, it is easy to assume that “half-caste” is a derogatory term for someone who is in some way impure, and in this case, that means they are not of one single race.

Agard also employs sarcasm in his first stanza, seemingly apologizing for being of mixed race. In fact, he is lauding the fact that he is “half-caste. “He is obviously very passionate about this topic, and he feels the need to rush in order to fully defend himself as a half-caste.

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The second and third stanzas are filled with metaphors: Agard compares being half-caste to black and white piano keys making a symphony and Picasso mixing reds and greens to create his masterpieces. He demands to know what the person asking him means when he says “half-caste.”

Agard compares the English weather to being half-caste, saying the mix of sun and clouds in the sky are always present in England. His anger really shows in this example, using the word spiteful when discussing how the clouds sometimes seem to not want the sun to be visible.

Agard uses an allusion to further his point in his third example. The speaker asks the person to whom he’s speaking if Tchaikovsky, a famous Russian composer, created half-caste symphonies because he mixed the black and white keys of the piano as he wrote his masterpieces. In the third stanza, the speaker takes an inward glance at himself, telling the reader that because he’s only “half,” he can only listen with half his ear, offer half a hand when someone needs help, and dream with his eyes only half closed.

In the final six lines of the poem, Agard says he is only half a human being who casts only half a shadow, but the other person in the poem can come back tomorrow with his whole self—his eyes, ears, and minds. He spits these words vehemently at the person who dares to assume someone of mixed race is in some way lesser. Agard tells that his race is not his full story—there is so much more to him than what one sees at first glance.

## **THE CARPENTER’S COMPLAINT**

**-Edward Baugh**

The Carpenter's Complaint was written by Edward Baugh. It reflects the feelings of a carpenter who is mourning the death of his friend. The poem talks about how the carpenter had once built even the house that his friend lived in. The carpenter is said because his friend's son, the “Mawga foot” boy had decided to give the wealthy and fat Mister Belnavis the task of building a casket for his father instead of giving the work to the narrator. The narrator considers Belnavis to be an idiot who does not know the difference between a chisel and an arse. He calls him a big bellied crook. The “Mawga foot boy” only chooses Mister Belnavis because he is a big shot and hence the boy thinks that his coffin will be better in quality.

The carpenter tells that this decision by his son's friend makes him hurt and mad. Suddenly the drunken narrator tells Miss Fergie, the bartender, about how his friend was much talented to hold a drink. He remembers that once when his friend was so drunk he had fallen to the ground but soon stood up dressed himself and wore a hat neat on his head. He then smoothly walked on home. He proudly calls his friend a “water- bird”.

The carpenter talks about how pride is important to every individual. He is puzzled why he was good enough to build his friend a house but not a coffin. He even goes on to tell that he would have even built the coffin for free. In the end the carpenter scolds the “Mawga Foot boy” for not

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knowing better despite being educated in a university. The narrator ends the poem by saying how this deed had “burnt” him.

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**UNIT III - SHORT STORY**

**SUMMER LIGHTNING**

**-Olive Senior**

The story “Summer Lightning” tells of a young boy living with his aunt and uncle, who is given a small garden room to play in. It is his secret and private room until an old man who stays with his family a few weeks every year “for nerves” arrives, and as the story evolves we learn that the old man has vulgar intentions for the boy. This simple story explores religion; the perception of Rastafarianism in particular, as the aunt both feared and respected one of the characters, Bro. Justice.

Bro. Justice approached the boy’s aunt out of concern for the boy’s safety and she “took it as an occasion to lecture him about his appearance, his manners, his attitude...and heard nothing of his mutterings of “Sodom” and “sin”. Bro. Justice’s warnings could have also been ignored because the old man was probably a wealthy, white man, thus exploring the theme of status, and how injustices are ignored depending on a person’s colour, wealth and class. Senior uses a powerful use of symbolism in this story; the only character that has a name, Bro. Justice is used as a representation of Rastafarian culture, as well as justice.

Senior illustrates the theme of relationships, allowing the message to be so much more powerful, as it is a clear glimpse of the society, seeing all the irrationalities and inequalities without bias. All of her characters are unique, and the reader becomes easily attached, cheering when they are victorious and sharing in every loss and pain.

**INTHE NIGHT**

**-Jamaica Kincaid**

“In the Night” is written by Jamaica Kincaid. It is about the life of night soil man and his family. The soil men walk in the night time. Night soil men are the people who collect the human excrement collected at night from toilets of cesspool, especially for use as fertilizer. They come and go walking on the damp ground in straw shoes.

The night soil men can see a man walking in trees. It is not a bird. It is a woman who has removed her skin and is on her way to drink the blood of her secret enemies. It is she who has left her skin in a corner of a house made out of wood. It is she who is reasonable and admires honey bees in the hibiscus. It is a woman, as a joke, brays like a donkey when he is thirsty.

At night, they hear different types of sounds such as sound of a cricket, sound of a church bell, sound of house creaking and many to mention. The rain falls in different places. Mr. Gishard is standing under a cedar tree which is in full bloom, wearing that nice white suit. He holds a glass full of rum that he had in his hand shortly before he died and looks at the house in which he used to live. The people who now live in the house walk through the door backward when they see Mr. Gishard standing under the tree. In the dream the speaker can hear a baby being born. And she sees



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all of the physical appearance of the baby. The baby and the narrator talk to pastures. The baby is eating green grass with its soft and pink lips. The narrator's mother blames that she made the bed wet. Her mother changes the bed sheet. She is in the night in her dream.

The Jablesse, a person who can turn into anything goes up in the mountains and gallivant. A Jablesse always tries to look like a beautiful woman so one should be careful when they see a beautiful woman. Jablesse is different from man because of his eyes which shine like lamps.

The narrator's father i.e. a night soil man is very nice and very kind once while running to catch a bus, he fell and broke his ankle and had to spend a week in hospital. This made him miserable. What he likes to do most is to sit on a big stone under a mahogany tree and watch small children playing play- cricket. He always reads botany books and knows a lot about rubber plantations and rubber trees. The narrator, her mother with everybody loves the night soil man who is very handsome.

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**UNIT IV - FICTION**

**HALF A LIFE**

**-V.S. Naipaul**

Half a Life begins by starting off with the life story of Willie Chandran's dad, in India. Willie Chandran's father was part of an affluent family with positions high up in the government, starting from when his grandfather first landed a job working for the king, which was then succeeded by that grandfather's son, which was finally supposed to be succeeded by Willie Chandran's dad. However, Willie Chandran's dad was not content with this bland life of government work in the tax office, despite the numerous promotions he was receiving on the basis of his father's name. He was even supposed to be married to the daughter of the principal at an extremely prestigious school. This too meant nothing to him. What really mattered was the independence movement taking place across the country, led by Mahatma Gandhi. Heeding the calls of Mahatma Gandhi, Willie Chandran's dad decided to break from his family's heritage and married a poor woman of low caste. This leads to the birth of Willie and his sister Sarojini.

This union led to a life of regret for Willie Chandran's dad and Willie. He grew up ashamed of his family background and despised his father for his character. Willie loved his mother but soon even that relationship started to distance itself. At 18, struggling with his sense of who he really was, he leaves India for London on a scholarship to study at a University. It was a scary life for him, completely foreign to the life he was used to. Willie had to change all his habits and manners, and makes himself more snobbish and pompous to fit the style of behaviour at the University. He was also confounded with a new sense of freedom and used that freedom to explore himself. Willie gains confidence and a few friends like Percy Cato, who try to help him conquer his own self-doubt through sexual adventures. He often falls for the girlfriends of his friends and is often agitated and unsure of himself. Throughout this process he captures the art of writing and publishes a book, a collection of short stories he wrote.

After months, Willie finally gets a response from a fan, a woman named Ana, and falls in love with her. Ana makes him feel confident and secure as she accepts him for who he is. Willie doesn't have to hide his background or personality and with no better option after his scholarship terminates, he marries Ana and moves to the Portuguese colony in Africa where Ana's grandfather had established a mighty estate house through his wealth.

When Willie arrives there, he knows he made a mistake. This life with Ana is not for him. But he stays for 18 long and tumultuous years. Willie learns the language there and takes his role as head of the estate. He and Ana are in love but slowly we see this love wither away. They become friends with the nearby estate owners and seem like a great couple but a rift is slowly opening up between the two of them.

Willie once more tries to find himself through his friends and various sexual adventures. It started off as a one-time thing but Willie slowly begins to repeatedly visit the places of pleasure. Even this leaves him feeling haunted and empty. He tries to go to the port city nearby and find something meaningful in his life but there is nothing there for him. A new couple move in near Willie and Ana's estate house and Willie falls in love with the woman who moved there, Graca.

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He makes love to her many times but never sees her again after the guerrilla fighters kill Graca's husband. Life is unsteady and nobody knows how everything will pan out because of the war. Willie and Ana now sleep in separate bedrooms, but they do talk. Finally, at the age of 41, Willie slips on the front steps of the estate and in the hospital, tells Ana he wants a divorce. He felt like he had done nothing in his life, and lived a life that was not his own.

### **Characters**

#### **Willie Chandran**

Willie Chandran is the main character in the book. He was born in India to a brahmin father and a poor mother. He struggled in his childhood with the shame of his parentage and fled India to find his true identity. Willie studied in London on a scholarship and experienced many new freedoms, including sexual freedoms, in an effort to erase his self-doubt and create confidence in himself. He struggles with his role in life and is persistently unsure about love, often falling into unsure relationships. He moves to a Portuguese colony in Africa but after years of living there, he still feels as if he has done nothing in his life. He is married to Ana for 18 years.

#### **Ana**

Ana is a small, frail woman who is described as being bony and tiny. She is of Portuguese and African descent and falls in love with Willie after reading his novel. Ana decides to allow Willie to stay with her at her estate home, which was created by her wealthy grandfather. At first she really loves Willie, but we see Willie drift away from her and cheat on her, but she does nothing due to her timid character.

#### **Percy Cato**

Percy Cato is a Jamaican student on a scholarship at the same university Willie is attending. He is tall and strong and his father was a worker on the Panama Canal. He befriends Willie and explains to Willie that sex is a brutal thing. Percy also has friends at a club in Notting Hill and frequently takes Willie with him there to party. Eventually, their friendship withers and we find out that Percy moved back to Jamaica.

#### **Sarajini**

Sarajini is Willie's sister. Her life was insecure during her childhood because nobody wanted to marry her, and her father worried that her only way to leave their home of squalor would be to have an international marriage. Sarajini finally does marry an older German man who was touring Germany and moves with him to Germany. She worries for Willie a lot and often writes long letters to him questioning his actions, acting almost like a mother. She is a small, stout, dark woman.

#### **Roger**

Roger is an up-and-coming lawyer who quickly becomes fast friends with Willie after they have a BBC podcast together. Roger is cheerful and happy and meets Willie once or twice a week to talk and have lunch. Roger also has a serious and methodical side to him, which can be described as his lawyer's side. He has a girlfriend named Perdita.

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### **Perdita**

Perdita is Robert's girlfriend, even though she wants them to marry. She is tall and plainlooking and often makes Robert nervous and tense. There is a lot of tension between the two of them because she desperately wants them to marry, but Robert is not ready to do so.

### **Serafina**

Serafina is a strong-headed girl from Colombia with an attitude. She arrives at the party at Roger's house and proves to be a very colorful and even angry character. Serafina despises her romantic partner and often eyes the other men at the party.

### **Major Themes Family Background**

Family background is a huge theme in the novel. We primarily see its importance at the beginning of the book, when the book is focused on Willie Chandran's dad and his earlier life. Willie Chandran's dad was part of the brahmin heritage and had a family that was high-ranking in the government, which would have secured him an easy job. However he rejects that family background because he doesn't want it to define him and his life.

Willie decides to marry a poor woman who is from a low caste, which leads to the family background that Willie has. Willie is constantly ashamed of his family background and what his father did, which affects him by creating animosity between him and his father. This family background also makes Willie want to flee India, which he does by going to London on a scholarship.

Throughout the entirety of his college stay, Willie makes up his family background because he is scared of his true family background. This not only creates instability in his character, but it makes him constantly nervous at the thought of maintaining all the lies he has created.

### **Identity**

Identity is a huge theme in the book and can be found represented throughout almost every chapter in the novel. Identity is the reason Willie Chandran's father rejected his own family and married a woman of low caste. He wanted to do something worthwhile in the country, like follow the independence movement, and thus forge a new identity for him.

Willie wants to create a new identity for himself as well and escapes his home in India to get rid of the identity of his childhood that was tainted by his father's actions. Later in London, Willie tries to make a new identity in the university. He lies about his family and says he is from an ancient Christian settlement in India. Willie does this to inject confidence into his identity and separate his identity from that of his father's.

Willie also engages in sexual adventures to once more form a sense of confidence in his identity and distinguish the differences between him and his father. Finally, we also see the theme of identity in Ana and Willie when they move to Ana's estate house in the Portuguese colony in Africa. Both of them live there for many years, trying to form new identities for themselves and

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change their perspective on who they are. At the end, both feel as if they have not forged new identities and must go on separate paths to once more find themselves.

**Sexual Freedom/Desire**

Sexual freedom is a large part of the novel that manifests itself while the book takes place in England as well as when the book takes place in Africa. It is an important part of how Willie Chandran changes throughout the book and develops as a character. In London, he has a sexual freedom he never had back at home and wants to use this freedom to eradicate his self-doubt. Willie goes through many different adventures, starting with Percy Cato's girlfriend. He often goes for the girlfriends of his friends and finds it hard to get a girl on his own. Eventually, his sexual frustrations lead him close to hiring a prostitute and his inexperience further mentally drains him. However, he does find Ana and is able to comfortably express himself sexually when he is with her.

After staying in Africa for a while, Willie's passion for Ana fades but his sexual freedom only increases. The estate manager shows Willie the places of pleasure and although he is unwilling at first, Willie eventually falls into this sort of life. It is unclear if there was any motive for Willie to do this other than sexual pleasure. Willie later falls in love with Graca, a needy wife of a new neighbor, and makes love to her many times. This sexual freedom and desire eventually tears Willie from Ana and their marriage ends.

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**UNIT V - DRAMA**

**DREAM ON MONKEY MOUNTAIN**

**-Dereck Walcott**

Derek Walcott has described *Dream on Monkey Mountain* as a “dream” that “exists as much in the given minds of its principal characters as in that of its writer.” The play concerns Makak’s belief in an unseen force (a white goddess) and the power of his imagination to will unnatural events to happen, it is appropriate that readers, too, should be asked to suspend disbelief in the improbable. Walcott asks his audience to accept the pleasures and possibilities for personal growth available to those who, like Makak, have given themselves over to an irrational force.

Many events in this play do not make sense in naturalistic terms. Characters such as Moustique die and then return to life with a renewed sense of purpose. The sick are healed by the humblest of men, Makak, an old charcoal burner who first appears in a prison for drunken conduct and petty thievery. A cabinetmaker named Basil turns out to be a figure for death itself. These strange occurrences must be accepted at the outset if the play’s symbolic meanings and political function are to emerge. The absence of naturalistic content also allows readers to pay attention to the beautiful lyricism and the rhythms of the West Indian dialect known as patois.

The play’s ritualistic style is related to the system of belief held by many of the characters in the play. These characters, who live in the village near Monkey Mountain, accept on faith the healing powers of Makak’s magic. Walcott, therefore, creates an analogy through the style of the play between the villagers’ belief in Makak’s healing function and the significance of a nativist theater in enhancing the meaning and value of the lives of Caribbean villagers. Although the play does not, finally, portray a revolution against the colonial regime by the impoverished followers of Makak, the play’s style and setting do acknowledge a distinct Caribbean culture. In this sense, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is a radical political statement that affirms the cultural autonomy of Walcott’s native Caribbean islands.

Like the setting, the play’s characters are presented in a stylized manner. They embody different, often ambiguous, responses to living under the yoke of colonialism. Many of the villagers, Moustique and Tigre among them, deny the mysteries of their own customs. They do not believe in Makak’s dream vision of descent from a line of ancient African kings. Moustique and Tigre are, for most of the play, interested only in how they can turn the phenomenon of Makak’s healing powers into their own economic profit.

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**Characters Makak**

Makak, “an old Negro,” the hermit of Monkey Mountain. Sixty years old and ugly, he was named for the macaque monkey, which he resembles. He is by trade a wood-gatherer and charcoal burner, but in his dream he is also the king of Africa, following the instructions of an apparition of a beautiful white woman. Partly mad, partly possessed, and partly drunk, he possibly dreams the entire play in Lestrade’s cell, after a night of drunkenness in a local tavern. He is arrested for stealing coal and for disorderly conduct.

In an elaborate allegorical configuration, Makak is the Christ figure at the beginning of his public life, performing miracles, collecting followers, and leaving behind exaggerated stories of his wonders, both betrayed and believed, as the Lion of Africa who will lead his black brethren back to Africa, but only after killing their “whiteness.” He experiences a sort of apotheosis when he kills the “white” woman who haunted him into this religious and political mission.

**Corporal Lestrade**

Corporal Lestrade, a mulatto guard of the town jail, “doing the white man’s work” in jailing and questioning Makak but finally “confessing” to his blackness in the final apotheosis. At first cruel in the use of his power, he forces the villagers into hypocritically agreeing to his absurd statements and pursues Makak to “hunt” him like an animal. The name of his rank suggests his allegorical function as the body of Christ/Makak. Stabbed and left for dead during the breakout, he follows Makak into the mountains, delirious from his wounds’ gangrenous infection, and is converted to the African “faith” of Makak. In the epilogue, he is a merciful jailer who frees Makak, releasing him to the care of Moustique.

**Moustique**

Moustique, a friend to Makak and a partner in the charcoal business. He is a black man who walks with a limp from “a twist foot God give me.” An allegorical composite of all the disciples, he was found drunk by Makak and saved from dissolution. Nonreligious and moneyconscious, he disguises himself as Makak to exploit the people but is discovered and killed by the angry mob. At the apotheosis of Makak, he returns from the dead to be judged and to die again. In the epilogue, he remains a true friend to Makak after he awakes from his dream in the cell, leading him away, back to his mountain.

**Tigre**

Tigre, a young black thief, is in jail when Makak is arrested. He breaks out of jail and follows Makak to Monkey Mountain, ostensibly to follow Makak to Africa but actually to steal his

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money. When he tries to force Makak to lead him to the money, the corporal kills him with a lance. He represents the thief who was damned in the allegorical parallel.

**Souris**

Souris, “the rat,” is another black thief. He is a partner in Tigre’s breakout and equally eager to get Makak’s money. Later, he is converted to Makak’s African Zionism. He represents the thief who was saved.

**Basil**

Basil, a young man, is not only a carpenter but also a charcoal seller, and thus an alter ego of Makak. He is a figure of doom and enlightenment who appears mysteriously from time to time, a nemesis and judge for all the characters.

**The Apparition**

The Apparition, a beautiful white woman, is “like the moon.” She entices Makak into his religious proselytizing and is beheaded as a sacrifice at the apotheosis of Makak. She represents the “Roman law” of white Western history.

**Basil**

Basil is a black man (or perhaps apparition) who appears when death is imminent for someone in the scene. Wearing a dark coat and hat, he is described by some as a cabinetmaker. Basil also plays a constant role in Makak's journey after he reaches Monkey Mountain. He compels Corporal Lestrade to confess his sins, resulting in Lestrade's personal epiphany. When the scene shifts to Africa, Basil reads the list of the accused.

**Josephus**

Josephus is the sick man who is healed by Makak. He suffers from a fever without sweat until Makak saves his life.

**MAJOR THEMES**

Walcott’s primary theme in many of his plays and in his beautifully crafted poetry is the dichotomy between black and white, between subject and ruler, and between the Caribbean and European civilizations present in his culture and ancestry. This last theme, which he has described as “one race’s quarrel with another’s God,” is mirrored and reflected in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*.

In the play, Walcott explores the question of how a colonial people living under the rule of Western Christianity and English law can affirm its own leaders, its own dialect, its own spiritual



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beliefs, and its own relationship to an origin in Africa that remains remote even from its own experience. Walcott's sense of divided loyalties, his ability to see the world through the eyes of the ruled and the ruler, is evident in his ambivalent portrayal of Makak.

Makak, after all, has his hallucinatory vision during a night in prison, where he is sleeping off the effects of a drunken night. His relationship to Africa as a source of his feelings of power is, by itself, problematic. This source of nobility is illusory and is as distant from the current affairs on the streets of the village as are the original homes of the European rulers. The conflict for many characters in the play becomes the struggle to overcome doubts about their own sense of what is valuable and powerful, and to see in the least among them, Makak, the best possibilities of the self.