

## Walcott's Notion Of Mimicry In The Play *Pantomime*

**Koustav Neogi.**

M.Phil scholar, English Department  
Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University  
Cooch Behar, West Bengal

### **Abstract**

Colonizer always tries to dominate the colonized. But he somehow forgets his dependency upon colonized. He wants to prove his superiority all the time but he forgets it is the colonized who makes the works easy for master. Though the colonizer believes in the theory of mimicry to prove the colonized as other, inferior but he forgets that mimicry can't give proper result. Through the mimicry the colonizer doesn't want to make him eligible but to make him understand his needs. If the colonized obeys to mimic it can't be perfect and as a result the lessons of the master becomes the object of irony. Even sometimes after being skilled about the matters of the colonizer, the colonized mocks the colonizer by that lesson. So the mimicry and class hierarchy are not good idea for human beings. The dominance and forcing should be banished.

**Key Words:** Colonizer, Colonized, Mimicry, Other, dominance

### **INTRODUCTION**

Dereck Walcott is a post-colonial writer who has challenged the idea of colonialism through his play *Pantomime*. The colonizer never desires that the name of the colonized comes in the same bracket with him. Therefore he always notifies the 'other' as ambiguous, dirty, savage. But Walcott has the desire to change these things. He wants to bring forth the idea that master can't be able to get his superior identity unless he has slave. Walcott even tries to locate many things of Eurocentric world which are not good and the native people are very much aware about that. Through the play *Pantomime*, Walcott wants to make it clear that the colonizer's rough behavior towards colonized is purely wrong. To prove that he takes the help of a notion, namely 'mimicry'.

In the essay "The Other Question" Bhabha has coined the term 'mimicry'. It is a concept which proclaims that both colonizer and colonized wants sameness from the 'other' at the same time there should be some difference. For example in *The Tempest*, Prospero wants that Caliban

should learn his words not to make him educated like him but to make him understand his orders. On the other hand, Caliban wants to learn Prospero's words not to be educated like him but to abuse Prospero, his master by the same words, taught by his master. Bhabha sees the colonizer as a subject who speaks in "a tongue that is forked" and creates a mimetic representation that "emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge (Bhabha 85)." On the other hand his analysis is largely based on the mimicry as colonial ambivalence. Through the colonizer tries to create a very good strategy by which he can produce dominance and authority over colonized, but his dependency upon colonized does not remain secret because of the concept 'mimicry' by which it is proved that both colonizer and colonized is inter-dependent upon each other. Colonizer even needs the negation of the 'other' to produce his superiority.

In the play *Pantomime*, Harry Trewe plays the role of a 'master' and Jackson plays the role of a 'slave'. Harry wants to do "pantomime" where he wishes that he will be Robinson Crusoe and Jackson will be Friday. In other words Harry wants to remain as a colonizer, where as he wants to produce Jackson as a colonized. But Jackson asserts that he doesn't want to be colonized. But Harry insists him by stating that it is nothing but a play for pleasure. According to Bhabha master is not master without slave. By producing the colonized as 'other' colonizer produces his superior 'self' identity, which is somehow related with Bhabha's concept of 'productive ambivalence'. Without Jackson, Harry can't prove his superiority. Harry wants to prove his authority over Jackson by giving Jackson the role of colonized. In the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, Robinson maintains his dominance, superiority, mastery upon Friday. The same superiority Harry wants to maintain in the "pantomime". In other words Harry wants to prove his superiority by producing Jackson as other through the "pantomime" which will be based on the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. As a result Harry wants to depend on the negation of the 'other', which is one kind of 'mimicry'.

Jackson is trying to show the flaw of Eurocentric world. He therefore mimics the language of colonizer. I think Walcott has consciously done this to show that though master wants sameness from slave for his own benefit but that can't be perfect. The language which the colonizer wants to teach to the colonized is being misinterpreted by the colonized sometimes. As a result the language of the colonizer becomes the object of farce. This is found in the play *Pantomime*, when Jackson said- "Mr. Trewe, your scramble eggs is here! (Creole accent) you hear, Mr. Trewe? I here wid your eggs! (English accent) (Branch131)." Jackson here tries to mimic the English language, which is the language of the colonizer but he uses the grammar wrongly. I think Walcott consciously creates this to show that any particular language is not superior. While speaking he also hybridized the "Creole" accent with it to show that every

person is habituated with his own language which would not be the issue of condemn. Rather his own language will be privileged even when he mimics other language.

Colonized Jackson is mimicking and mocking Harry, the colonizer frequently to show the flaw of the colonizer. But at one point of time Harry gets the chance to give reply. He satirizes the colonized Jackson by the words- “Attempted suicide in a Third World country. You can’t leave a note because the pencil break, you can’t cut your wrist with the local blades... (Branch132).” Harry wants to locate the poor condition of the native country and he wants to prove that the native country is still stereotyped as ‘other’.

Harry is now mimicking the “parrot” by saying- “Heinegger, Heinegger (Branch 133).” He is parroting German philosopher Martin Heidegger, the famous person of the Eurocentric world to locate the superiority of the colonizer. But Jackson, the slave is not uneducated. He knows Heidegger very well. But he does not believe that talking in English is a work of superiority which the colonizers believe. In other words Jackson believes that any particular language doesn’t prove superiority. That’s why he said- “Language is ideas Mr. Trewe (Branch 133).” Jackson also believes that it is not right when some non-white is trying to mimic the language of the white and feels inferior by his own language. As a result Jackson wants to justify his point by indicating the mimicking of the “parrot”- “this pre-colonial parrot have the wrong idea (Branch 133).”

When Harry mentions the example from the novel *Robinson Crusoe* that “Crusoe had a parrot, didn’t he? (Branch 133)” he indicates it to Jackson. He wants to proclaim that slave rather is bound to mimic the language of the master rather colonized. But Jackson is a kind of person who knows something about post-colonialism. He therefore denies to mimic Friday by telling that “Mr. Trewe, you are a truly, truly stubborn man. I am not putting that old goatskin hat on my head (Branch 133).”

Jackson is very much conscious about manner. That’s why he is ordering his master to put on pants- “so when you put back on your pants. I will serve your breakfast (Branch 134).” But Harry, the colonizer is not worried of being uncivilized, naked. But here the colonized is concerned about prestige issue. Master does not want to be ‘sophisticated gentle’. He is therefore least bother about this thing. But when Harry asks Jackson what is his most concerned issue, Jackson replies- “Manners, sir. Manners (Branch 135).” He is therefore mimicking colonizer at the same time mocking the manner of Eurocentric world. Here we also find the alteration of master-slave relationship. Where the master doesn’t care too much about manner, but in spite of being slave Jackson feels that “manner” is one of the prime issues.

Jackson does not want to remain colonized any more. It is found when he wants that Harry should mimic him- “Robinson obey Thursday now. Speak Thursday Language. Obey

Thursday gods (Branch 138).” He does not even want to say the name of “Friday”. It is his one kind of ‘strategy’ by which in spite of mentioning the name of “Friday”, he wants to play the role of colonizer. In other words he wants to subvert the colonizer-colonized relationship. But the colonizer, Jackson is least bother to learn the language of the colonized, Jackson- “If you want me to learn your language, you’d better have a gun (Branch 139).” It means that Harry knows Jackson does not have enough capability to be master. “Gun” here represents the weapon of master.

Jackson believes that one day things will be changed and there will be alteration of colonizer-colonized relationship, that he mentions through his song- “But one day things bound to go in reverse,/ With Crusoe the slave and Friday the boss (Branch 140).” Jackson, in spite of being slave is trying to break the ‘herd morality’ where in the *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon and Vladimir can’t able to break it. They were suffering from ‘dependency complex’. Also Jackson reminds Harry that he is mimicking the colonizer, Harry. He is now ready to give reply by the lesson of his master to the master- “For three hundred years I served you....I did what you did, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib...that was my pantomime (Branch 138).” He reminds his master that his master should not expect best things from because he is mimicking and mimicking can’t be perfect- “And I don’t see any reason why you have to call my acting silly. We suppose to improvise (Branch 141).” He is even mocking the habit of the colonizer by pointing out that- “...like most white people, you either don’t fush it, a part I forgot, or just wipe your hands fast fast or not at all... (Branch 154)”

When Jackson continuously forces Harry for the alteration of the “pantomime” and locates the problem of Crusoe, rather the colonizer by which he satirizes Eurocentric world, Harry becomes angry. That’s why he allows Jackson to be free, but Jackson makes him understand on him. In other words Harry understands that master is dependent on slave. Harry confesses that the loneliness forces him to act - “I daresay the terror of emptiness made me want to act. I wasn’t trying to humiliate you. I meant nothing by it (Branch 148).” After continuation of attack and counter attack for so long at last both of them decides to start a healthy relationship because both of them understands their dependency upon other and enjoys the moment with drinks. This moment is somehow related with Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of ‘carnival’, which indicates the moment when there is no distinction between colonizer and colonized.

## CONCLUSION

There is no woman figure present in the stage (apart from verbally) of the play *Pantomime*. It symbolizes destruction because women are the product of creation. By this thing, I think Walcott wants to destruct the rough relationship between colonizer-colonized. He tries to bring a harmony between colonizer-colonized. He wants to produce a healthy relation between

different classes like Girish Karnard who wants to bring a harmony between different classes, castes in the play *The Fire and the Rain*. Walcott wants to locate that ‘mimicking’ is not the perfect idea. Both the persons who wants the mimicry from the ‘other’ and who mimics ‘other’ do not get fruitful result. We can’t be perfect when we mimic others. So it will be nice if people would forget about class and love other from heart. Then the world will definitely be amazing.

## REFERENCES

1. Bhabha, Homi. *Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1995.
2. Ed. Branch, William B. *Crosswinds: An Anthology of Black Dramatists in the Diaspora*. United States: Indiana University Press, 1993.