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common  
concern  
regarding  
colonialism  
in the writings  
of Frantz Fanon  
and Derek Walcott  
Tatiana Tagirova

## ABSTRACT

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**DEREK WALCOTT'S PLAY DREAM ON MONKEY MOUNTAIN (1970)** is read in light of some of Frantz Fanon's theoretical formulations on colonial relations proposed in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The paper discusses the colonial regime under which Makak, Moustique, Souris, Tigre live as the one that makes realization of their dreams impossible. As a result of this oppressive social system, the colonized become Fanon's so-called divided subjects who are condemned to live in an inauthentic, neurotic condition. Despite the dreams of liberty that the characters have, they are unable to fulfill them due to a complex love-hate relationship with the imperial power.

**Keywords:** Imperial power, African roots, love-hate relationship, cultural identity.

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DEREK WALCOTT AND FRANTZ FANON are two intellectuals whose work emerges from different national and cultural backgrounds, but who share common concerns regarding colonialism. Fanon's theoretical formulations on colonial relations proposed in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* illuminate an understanding of Makak, the main character of *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, a colonized black subjected to a marginalized existence. Like his friends Moustique and Souris, he is a victim of a hegemonic racist European discourse that strips him of his Afro-based cultural roots and condemns him to exist in an inauthentic, neurotic condition. Oppression of the colonized by the colonizer and the colonized rebellion against it, a collective search for identity on behalf of the colonized, and the colonized inability to return to their African heritage are some of the ultimate areas of Walcott's affinity with Fanon.

Makak, a charcoal burner and a member of the oppressed race who has internalized the values of the colonizer, liberates himself through an acceptance of both African and European cultures as important parts of his identity. As a result of a subjection to the European stereotypes imposed on him, he forgets his real name.<sup>1</sup> One night a white goddess appears in his dream, tells about his royal ancestry in pre-colonial Africa, and urges him to cleanse himself of an inferiority complex. Following this, he makes an imaginary

journey to Africa where he becomes a king and a healer who is able to return a dying man to life. In his dream the corporal, a middle class representative who in real life defends the values of the colonizer, is miraculously restored to the fullness of his blackness. He is the one who insists that the beautiful white woman who encourages Makak's search for his roots is "the white light" that paralyzed his mind and persuades him to kill her.<sup>2</sup> When Makak follows the advice of the corporal and beheads the white goddess, he awakens up as a liberated person. Even though the killing of the white woman symbolizes his rejection of the white race as the one superior to his own, he doesn't seek to assert blackness as an opposition to whiteness. Instead, he destroys the illusions of white or black masks and liberates his consciousness through an acceptance of both races.

*Dream on Monkey Mountain* deals with the problem of black identity, questions negritude, and reconstructs the lived experience of Caribbean people from a liberating point of view. The play responds to the same types of problems as Fanon's work and raises the same type of issues that were raised by him.<sup>3</sup> There is no doubt that Fanon influenced Walcott's later works and gave him the analytical tools to go further in the direction in which he was "already proceeding."<sup>4</sup> As Tejumola Olaniyan accurately notes in *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance*, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is "a particularly illuminating instance of Walcott's mulatto aesthetics" and "a poignant dramatization of the refusal of debilitating definitions of the self and the concomitant self-reappreciation by the dominated in the Caribbean."<sup>5</sup> Walcott's work is indeed "the narrative of liberation," the narrative "liberated from mythical closure."<sup>6</sup>

It is appropriate to situate *Dream on Monkey Mountain* in the revolutionary theory of Fanon, and it is not a coincidence that the names of Walcott's main characters are associated with animals [Makak, Tigre, and Souris]. This choice shows readers that they are Fanon's oppressed individuals described in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil...

At times this Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms.<sup>7</sup>

The corporal refers to Tigre and Souris as "animals, beasts, savages, cannibals, niggers" and instructs them to "stop turning this place to a stinking

