

“Whiteness Hidden in Shades of Blackness”:

A Psychoanalytic Fanonian Reading of Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman*

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Abstract

White society’s reduced and otherized representation of the African American has always presented a challenge to African-American writers, historians, and intellectuals who wanted to write Black people into existence, present their repressed, excluded, or subordinated history, culture, and social milieu, and re-tell their many other stories. Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was a theorist who framed the issue of race in ‘sociogenic’ rather than ‘biocentric’ terms. His contribution lies in showing how such arbitrary constructs as ‘White’ and ‘Black’ predetermine our way of seeing but not truly seeing one another. When Blacks are seen solely in terms of racial stereotypes, they become “flat” images based only on ideologized ‘epidermal inscriptions’ whose actual humanity is denied, potentially leading to a lack of self-esteem and an ‘inferiority complex.’ This paper examines one of Amiri Baraka’s famous plays, *Dutchman* (1967), from a Fanonian perspective to explore the troubled relationship between the colonizer (White) and the colonized (Black). In *Dutchman*, Baraka espoused his unapologetic blackness together with his determination to identify, call out, and wage a battle against racial injustices. Both Baraka and Fanon examine violence, sexual exploitation, and discrimination that Whites have perpetuated on blacks, and the two writers’ intention was to awaken audiences and inspire change thereby ending the cycle of prejudice and discrimination against Blacks.

Keywords: Baraka- Fanon- inferiority complex-- myths of black sexuality

Introduction

“It always startles us to find folks thinking like ourselves. We do not really associate with each other, we associate with our ideas of each other, and few people have either the ability or courage to question their own ideas.” (Du Bois, “Of the Ruling of Men” 39)

Amiri Baraka’s ‘Revolutionary Theatre’:

A prolific American writer and father of the Black Arts Movement, Amiri Baraka (1934-2014) has been undoubtedly one of the most prominent American writers of the 20th century (Marable 2). Part of the “anti-White” militant theatre in the 1960s”, a theatre which produced a generation of African American historians, scholars and writers who critically studied and reclaimed African American history, cultural traditions, and belief systems, Baraka succeeded to inspire a generation of young artists to stand up, speak out, demand that stages and literary magazines reflect experiences of African-Americans. In *Masterpieces of 20th-Century American Drama*, Susan Abbotson asserts that the Black Arts Movement “assisted in the development of African American theater. . . to build a sense of community, and bring to light the concerns of African Americans around the country.”(12). Moreover, Baraka’s legacy has influenced young playwrights such as Suzan-Lori Parks(1963-), Tarell Alvin McCraney (1980-) Jeremy O’Harris (1989-), and Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (1984-) to name but a few.

In 1964, Baraka wrote the controversial and Obie award-winning play *Dutchman* enabling him to become a widely-recognized African American writer. Additionally, he has written other plays such as *Black Mass* (1965), *The Baptism* (1966), *The Toilet* (1967), *Slave Ship* (1967), *Home on the Range* (1968), and *Four Black Revolutionary Plays* (1969) that initiated the Black Theatre in New York City. Moreover, Baraka founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School in Harlem in 1964, and started the Spirit House in Newark, which was an alternative performance venue in 1965. Baraka’s last play, *The Most Dangerous Man in America* (W.B. Du Bois), premiered at New Federal Theatre in New York in 2013. He taught and lectured at many colleges and universities till he died in Newark in 2014.

Baraka studied at Rutgers University where he suffered from racial segregation, then at Howard University where Blacks caught in the web of racial prejudice as well. In his 1966 manifesto, “The Revolutionary Theatre,” Baraka eschewed the values of the western canon and advocated for a theatre that spoke to, for, and about black audiences. In it, he called for a new black theatre that embraced change in both content and form. Furthermore, Baraka revolted against stereotypical images imposed on Blacks, asserting that the main goal of his theatre is to “attack anything that can be accused and attacked- - . because it is a theatre of victims”(Home 211). Discussion of Baraka’s treatment of violence requires attention to the historical context in which his work is situated. Black citizens were disenfranchised, disregarded, and despised, and faced physical, systemic, and psychic violence in many forms, making the main task of a black writer not only to “envision an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of black Americans” (Neal 257) but also “to aid in the destruction of America as [Baraka] knows it”(Gray 665). As suggested by Baraka’s “Revolutionary Theatre,” his plays showcase violence (physical and/or psychological) and reveal a deep investment in the fight for black liberation, ongoing concerns with social order, the complications and contradictions of interracial relations, and the need for social justice. Baraka refers to Black characters in his plays as “victims”, whose functions are to help audiences to “understand that they are the brothers of victims, and that they themselves are victims”(Baraka 210). He also goes to assert that “what we show must cause the blood to rush, so that the prerevolutionary temperaments will be bathed in this blood, and it will cause their deepest souls to move”(Baraka 213).

Baraka’s *Dutchman* is regarded as one of the most important plays of the Black Arts Movement. In *The Autobiography*, Baraka states, “I had gotten the title from *The Flying Dutchman*, but my main “emphasis upon the sailing ship as a central organizing symbol”(cited in Baker 110). In the original myth *The Flying Dutchman* is a ship, carrying a slave cargo between West Africa and America in the 17th century, doomed to eternal sailing without finding a safe home as “retribution for the crimes of its crew”(cited in Cardullo; Nelson, 53-54). Likewise, Baraka uses to transform the historical, endless sailing by the Dutch ship into an underground subway with a black crew oppressed by whites, unable to escape the confines of the vessel/subway. It also means that the conflict between black and white will not be easily resolved and will ‘sail’ endlessly unless huge efforts made to save this disturbing relation.

According to Baker, *Dutchman* could be “a somber metaphor for race relations in the 1960s”(111), and a play that “engages and encapsulates some of the tensions and thoughts around approaches to dismantling and creating better lives for African Americans”(Davidson 27). The play features two characters Lula (a white woman) who represents the “spirit of America” and Clay a young black boy “trying desperately to be a man”(Hurst 53). Throughout the play Lula attempts to tempt him with a possible and forbidden sexual encounter, who agrees to take Lula to a party. They banter and tease one another, with Lula referring to Clay as a “well-known type,” compromising himself to fit into white society. Clay becomes resentful and loses his composure, angrily lashing out and revealing himself to Lula. When he makes the mistake of showing her his repressed hatred of America, she stabs him twice in the heart and orders the passengers on the train to throw Clay’s body out. When another black male passenger boards the subway, Lula smiles at him and is ready to repeat the routine.

Frantz Fanon and African American Literature:

Fanon was one of the most important anti-colonial thinkers of the 20th century and now on into the 21st. He is also regarded as the “specter haunting the postcolonial world” (Vergès 578) whose writings include not only psychoanalysis but also psychiatric practice as well. This means that Fanon not only draws freely on Marx, Nietzsche, Jung, Lacan, and Hegel but also on “the best resources of a variety of disciplines to focus closely on a specific theme.”(Pithouse 1). In this sense, Fanon remains essential in postcolonial theory in general and African American literature in particular for a number of reasons, chief among them his focus on the interior lives of the colonized, and his insights, theorizations, and reflections on revolution, nationalism, violence, and racism that remain relevant today because the very conditions he diagnosed remain with us till the present time.

Moreover, Fanon’s books address issues of power and racism that are critical to the thematic and stylistic development of African American literary and political writing. However, this paper will only adopt two of Fanon’s major books: *Black Skin, White Masks* (1953) (henceforth referred to as *BSWM*) whose argument anti-Black racism has constituted a world in which Blacks have to act as white to gain recognition, and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) (henceforth referred to as *Wretched*) which eventually becomes ‘a bible’ of the black

liberation movement, and for other Black nationalists and revolutionaries. Poets and playwrights like Baraka, H. Rap Brown(1943-), Nikki Giovanni(1943-)and Sonia Sanchez(1934-) share Fanon’s withering view of white society as a morass of asinine racism and utter moral corruption.

There are a great number of thematic links between Fanon and African American writers. Apart from the most obvious ones- the question of alienation, the persistence of the color line, the experience of being black, and the quest for dignity in the face of dehumanizing injustices- there are other compelling similarities worth highlighting. For one thing, numerous African American writers grapple, much as Fanon, with the question of how to understand the mechanisms of oppression. The topic has been part of African American literature from its early beginnings- from William Wells Brown (1814-1884) to Harriet Wilson (1825-1900) and Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)- to its modern-day expressions in writers such as Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965), August Wilson (1945-2005), and Toni Morrison(1931-2019). Historically speaking, Fanon himself was interested in African American literature by making references to Richard Wright (1908-1960), and James Baldwin (1924-1987), and later he had a significant influence on African American literature of the post 1960s such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and other luminaries who were undoubtedly interested in portraying the cruel and pervasive racism of White America in their works. Xavier Guegan argues that Fanon’s *Wretched* served as an inspiration for “the independent movements around the globe-including the Black power movement in the United States.”(168). Hence, it is common to draw parallel between, for example, Wright’s (*Native Son* 1940) and Fanon’s fifth chapter in *BSWM* “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” or between James Baldwin’s literary essays and the palpable rage and effect one finds coursing through many of Fanon’s writing on colonialism.

Like all the towering figures of African American writers, Fanon is a realist who attempted to reveal people’s struggles within a massively unjust social system with no real promise that will end any time soon. In the words of Fanon himself “My true wish is to get my brother, black or white, to shake off the dust from that lamentable livery built up over centuries of incomprehension”(BSMW xvi). In other words, Fanon remains an intellectual touchstone “has a strong contemporary echo”(Sartre vi). Another common issue is the question of how to deal with the anger that is the result of constant debasement and brutalization.

Fanon never hid his unrelenting rage against colonial oppression and racism. To the contrary: the very first sentence of *BSWM* points out that an “explosion” must be expected. This prophetic passage bears a striking resemblance to the opening lines of Langston Hughes’s poem *Harlem* (1951):

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

Or does it explode?

Indeed, the question of the impending explosion resonates throughout African American literature. This theme is pushed to the forefront, time and time again, by writers such as Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka, and James Baldwin, who repeatedly speaks of a looming “explosion,” most notably in his masterpiece *The Fire Next Time* (1963). In the section below we examine how relevant some of Fanon’s critical thoughts to Baraka’s *Dutchman* including “inferiority complex”, “desire for whiteness”, and “myths of black sexuality and violence”. The paper ends in a conclusion showcasing the affinities between Baraka’s *Dutchman* and Fanon’s major works.

Inferiority Complex and Desire for Whiteness in Baraka’s *Dutchman*

“I believe that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex. I hope by analyzing it to destroy it.”? (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 88)

To Fanon, colonialism is such an all-encompassing project that it leaves no part of human existence untouched; it sequesters the colonized in the category of race; they are colonized because they are racially inferior. In Fanon’s colonizer/colonized binary, the European/colonizer, who has both the power and the upper hand, defines himself as superior and the black/colonized as less than human or inferior. The Black/colonized internalizes this negative image of himself and his race, tending to believe that the values and definitions of the European/colonizer are superior. Blacks have no existence, no being in the world

except in terms of race and in relation to Whites. Such a total condition of subjugation penetrates the very being of Blackness, conditioning both bodily behavior and the psychic condition. It is this abject reduction of Blackness to the hell of non-being that Fanon spotlights as its psychological condition. As a result the Black feels a sense of what Fanon mainly calls “inferiority complex”.

According to Fanon's argument, he analyzes Dominique-Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, originally published in 1950, in which he argued the colonized people had "a dependency complex", a need and desire for authority that pre-dated colonization. Mannoni focuses on the psychological dependency and he assumes that it is the colonized who are to blame, not the oppressive and capitalist system. In contrast, Fanon insists that the psychological state of the colonized is a social product of material conditions caused by the violent colonial system. He, therefore; proposes a social psychiatry to examine the inferiority complex of Algerians as emerging from their cultural and socio-historical context. Simply put, Fanon wants to make clear that part of the violence of European extraction in the colonies is to produce in the colonized a feeling of inferiority, achieved through violence, colonial administration and education. He states that if one of his patients is overwhelmed by the desire to be white, then it is the result of living in a society that makes such a complex possible, one that consistently proclaims the superiority of whiteness.

To Fanon the black man wants to be seen as white. On one hand, black people do not want to behave like their own fellows, while on the other hand, they will always be seen as black objects and never measure up to white others in everyday life. This mental and intersubjective split contributes to existential crises that lead to a widespread sense of inferiority in black individuals, families, and communities. In their interesting article “Blackness Colorism, and Epidermalization of Inferiority in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Color Struck: A Fanonian Reading of the Play.*”, Farshid Nowrouzi and Mahshid Mirmasoomi argue that Fanon

Believed[that] racism would eventually cause an inferiority complex in black-skinned subjects who found themselves unable to effect any alteration in the discriminatory status quo; in other words, the white dominators would gradually compel blacks to internalize the

negative stereotypes of their skin color which portrayed blackness as the symbol of vice and depravity. (65)

Fanon’s theory of a Black inferiority complex begins with the premise that colonialism is a ‘psychopathological system’ that inevitably produces mental disorders both in the colonized and the colonizer. Since the white gaze objectifies them, Blacks learn to see themselves only as objects-not as free human subjects with the capacity to shape themselves, their relationships, or their social worlds. Fanon expresses the pain of being objectified to be

Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. Their attention was a liberation, running over my body suddenly abraded into nonbeing, endowing me once more with an agility that I had thought lost, and by taking me out of the world, restoring me to it. But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart.(BSWM 109-10)

Here, Fanon describes how he, a Black boy in Martinique, was born as a subject with the desire to make sense of the world and live as a dignified human being. Once he enters into the white world, however, he and Black people around him become objects, ‘nonbeings’ with Black skin, trying to please colonizers by putting on white masks. No matter how righteous his rage or rational his reason, he cannot prevent his selfhood from being broken into pieces and replaced by another alienated, and inferior colonized and nonbeing self.

In Baraka’s *Dutchman*, Clay’s problem is that, in Fanon’s terms, he is “white than the whites”(Wretched 93). Under colonialism, Black people tend to lose all sense of self because white masters do not recognize them as fully-human subjects. To cope with this existential anguish, Black people begin to wear white masks in their encounters with the white world, and try to imitate or accommodate white people while sacrificing their dignity and solidarity with other Black people in the process. They become disconnected from Black culture and Black identity, producing what W.E. Du Bois calls, in his famous book *The Souls of Black Folk*, “double consciousness”, meaning the blacks look at themselves through the eyes of others (the whites), while feeling like outcasts in their own communities.

“Double consciousness” is simply defined a psychological rupture within racialized subjects, in which those with black skin must wear white masks as a condition of entry into society, looking at oneself through the eyes of the white gaze. As Bois put it, “I found myself on the outside of the American world, looking in.” But not looking in from afar. He looks in from within, since he is part of the culture, at the same time as he looks in from without, since the culture excludes him. It means that Bois has consciousness of himself as “American,” but to embrace it he must negate his blackness; he has consciousness of himself as “Black,” but to embrace it he must negate his Americanness. It is as if he experiences a constant state of war between these two enduring states of consciousness. But whereas Du Bois wants black and white selves within U.S. society to merge, Fanon believes that ‘double consciousness’ leads to an internalized ‘inferiority complex’ among the colonized that perpetuates the dehumanizing colonial system.

The similarities between Fanon’s *BSWM* and Du Bois’ “double consciousness” are clear. African Americans often have to swallow their feelings and smile in interactions with white people, making them feel inferior, insecure, and conflicted about themselves and their relationships with others. But while Fanon argues that this leads to ‘psychopathologies’ that can only really be cured by ending the colonial system, Du Bois suggests that social and political reform can help Black folk reconcile their “twoness” and become first-class citizens in the U.S. Fanon and Du Bois also agree that “the color line” is worldwide, not just local or national, and that healing psychological alienation requires systemic social and political change. But while Du Bois, for most his life, believed that African Americans could achieve political and social equality within the U.S., Fanon was adamant that only total decolonization and revolution could significantly improve the lived experiences of black people around the world.

When Baraka’s *Dutchman* opens, Clay sits alone and only “his seat visible”(1). Lula then gets on the train acting as if she sees nothing. To Lula, Clay is, in Fanon’s view, a man living in ‘a zone nonbeing’. Baraka’s describes *Dutchman* as a “confrontation between two people, between two symbols”(The *Autobiography* 277), or in Fanon’s reading it could be a relationship between colonizer and colonized. In the play, Lula represents the colonizer who rides the subway looking for the wayward, rebellious colonized as she maintains the repressive structures of white supremacy. As a colonizer Lula always sees Clay

as a “murderer”, “a ghost of the future”, (*Dutchman* 5). This is best evident when Lula tells him that he only does is to “run your mind over people’s flesh”(*Dutchman* 2).

Clay, the colonized, is a 20-year-old educated black who has bought into the values, tastes, and definitions of the ruling white society. In college, he thought “I was Baudelaire”(*Dutchman* 5). Since he is anxious for success in America, he perpetuates the white/black binary by seeking to emulate the ideas and culture of the oppressors. To escape association with blackness, Clay dons a white mask because he “seeks refuge by looking for acknowledgement of some kind from and within the alien, white culture.(Nayar 9)

That said, Black people try to act like the white to escape feeling of being seen a minor race. The mask signals the impossibility for the Black subject to ‘see’ himself, to ‘speak’ for and to himself, without mediation by the racist gaze and voice. Returning to the scene with Y a Bon Banania, a scene where the Black subject looks at himself and sees his ears exploding, the Black subject is invaded a constant circulation of racializing images, discourses, artifacts, technologies and looks, and is dispossessed from the possibility of knowing himself for himself, or to exert full consciousness. The mask might symbolize the ‘shell’ mediating black subjects’ relationship with themselves, but the issue is not only about how/if the Black subject can have full access to himself without the mediation of race; it is also about how the white subject can stop ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing’ Black subjects through the mask, the master code of race.

There is a very telling scene in *BSWM* in which the Black subject goes to a movie theater and says ‘I am waiting for me’. He knows that representations of him on screen will be stereotypical and injurious and give him nausea; that scenario has been predetermined for him. Race produces a fixed scenario that will fulfill white expectations and thereby serve to reproduce white order. What is the task of the white audience with regard to changing the scenario? Is the white audience not also wearing a mask, full of expectations for the Black character? Can the white audience cease to wear this mask and really ‘see’ the Black subject? Fanon leads us to interrogate the mask as the interface that structures racialized relationships of power.

In *Dutchman*, Lula knows who Clay is, “you’re a well-known type” because she has produced/defined him. She calls him a “would-be Christian”, an

“Uncle Tom”, and “just a dirty white man.”(*Dutchman* 8). Lula refers to his avoidance of his repressed identity as a potentially violent, colonized black man, while Clay’s way of living is a way of controlling the violence within him, a way of concealing repressed anger towards his oppressor for denying his humanity. To test Clay, Lula goads and tempts him, ferreting out potential rebellion, and, as with Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, Clay explodes, becoming aggressive and releasing his murderous aim for his oppressor, seeking sanity and psychological liberation.

Bird [Charlie Parker] would’ve played not a note of music if he just walked up to East Sixty-seventh Street and killed the first ten white people he saw. Not a note! . . . A whole people of neurotics, struggling to keep from being sane. And the only thing that would cure the neurosis would be your murder . . . If Bessie Smith had killed some white people she wouldn’t have needed that music. She could have talked very straight and plain about the world. No metaphors. No grunts. No wiggles in the dark of her soul. Just straight two and two are four. (*Dutchman* 9)

Clay begins losing his temper and becomes aggressive with Lula by “slap[ping] her as hard as he can, across the mouth” and tells her to “shut up and let me talk”(*Dutchman* 9). Not only he does threaten Lula but also he begins to threaten all the people inside the train for knowing “nothing but luxury”. He says it “takes no effort” from him to murder her and “squeeze” her “tiny ugly throat” (*Dutchman* 9)

It is clear that what Clay wants from Lula is to just let him be whatever he wants because it is none of her own business. Throughout the play, Clay imitates the white man by “wearing a three-button suit and striped tie?”(*Dutchman* 5). In this respect, Lula reminds him that he is acting like people whom he should be “feel oppressed by”(*Dutchman* 5). Henry C. Lacey suggests that assimilation is Clay’s ‘tragic flaw’, adding that Clay’s problem is that he “chooses a life of self-denial”(36). In other words, Clay intentionally murders his own black identity by just imprisoning himself to white standards.

From the very beginning of the play, Clay tries just to fulfill his own physical desires and the dream of becoming a member of the white community through his assimilation and imitation of the whites’ way of life, seems to be

willing to humiliate himself and bear Lula’s insulting racial remarks. The sense of inadequacy and insecurity in the colonized’s/black man’s psyche results in violence, a form of self-assertion. Like Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, Clay also accidentally kills the symbol of his oppression and becomes sane and psychologically free. Clay knows the murder of his oppressor can make him sane and psychologically free of his neurosis, but he, like early Bigger, controls his inner violence, but after he reveals himself to Lula, and to sustain the oppressive structures of colonialism or white supremacy, she violently kills him, and eventually the crew drags Clay’s body down the aisle. “The meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature,” notes Fanon is a relationship “[marked by violence.” (*Wretched* 36). Then she waits for the next colonized black man to get on the subway so she can again begin her temptation routine. At the end of the play, it appears that she will continue on her journey of destruction of the other.

Myths of Black Male Sexuality in *Dutchman*:

As previously mentioned, the negative images of the Black men are deeply rooted in the culture of White American society, hence serving the aim of accounting for the subjugation and oppression of Africans. These stereotyped images “of being black”, Manning Marable notes, “is our inability, as men and as people of African Descent, to define ourselves without the stereotypes the larger society imposes upon us, and through various institutional means perpetuates and permeates within our culture”(70). In *Women, Race and Class*, Angela Davis writes of the United States, “The myth of the Black rapist has been methodically conjured up whenever recurrent waves of violence and terror against the Black community have required convincing justification.”(97). Likewise, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, as early as 1893, was assiduously revealing how the fear of sexual violence from Black men towards White women was often mere pretense to use violence and terror to lock newly freed blacks out of economic competition. In ‘The Red Record’, Wells- Barnett argues that

With the Southern white man, any relationship existing between a white woman and colored man is a sufficient foundation for the charge of rape. The Southern white man says it is impossible for a

voluntary alliance to exist between a white woman and a colored man, and therefore, the fact of an alliance is a proof of force.

That means any relationship between Black and White is a failure because “the black brute stereotype applied to any and every black man, assuming that he had uncontrollable lusts that he would violently act upon with any nearby white woman if the opportunity presents itself”(Miller). George T. Winston notes that

When a knock is heard at the door [a White woman] shudders with nameless horror. The black brute is lurking in the dark, a monstrous beast, crazed with lust. His ferocity is almost demoniacal. A mad bull or tiger could scarcely be more brutal. A whole community is frenzied with horror, with the blind and furious rage for vengeance.(108-109)

Similarly, David Pilgrim shows that

The ‘terrible crime’ most often mentioned in connection with the black brute was rape, specifically the rape of a white woman. At the beginning of the twentieth century, much of the virulent, anti-black propaganda that found its way into scientific journals, local newspapers, and best-selling novels focused on the stereotype of the black rapist. The claim that black brutes were, in epidemic numbers, raping white women became the public rationalization for the lynching of blacks. (53-54)

In *BSWM* Fanon identifies two diverging forms of racism within Western thought: ‘anti-semitism and negrophobia’. In the first case, the Jew is represented as a danger primarily on an ‘intellectual level’, and is therefore attacked because of his historical, cultural and religious identity. In the second, the Black male is perceived as a threat on ‘a corporeal level’, and he is accordingly assailed by virtue of his alleged dark and primitive instincts. Fanon states:

If you want to understand the racial situation psychoanalytically, not from a universal viewpoint, but as it is experienced by individual consciousness, considerable importance must be given to sexual phenomena. Regarding the Jew, we think of money and its derivatives. Regarding the black man, we think of sex. . . [hence] for

the majority of Whites the black man represents the (uneducated) sexual instinct.(*BSMW* 115)

Dissecting the myth of Black male sexuality, Fanon concludes that it is as a way for the colonizer to ‘justify his endeavor as a civilizing mission’(*BSWM* 120). According to this narrative, the European colonizer has been bestowed with the arduous burden of spreading reason, culture and enlightenment to backward people who have no history, governed solely by beastly passions and genital desires. Fanon goes on to argue that this myth serves to rationalize the colonizer’s actions. Recognizing on some level that the colonizer’s history of slavery, exploitation, and repression puts him in a position of guilt, he fashions the colonized as the quintessence of cruelty and barbarity.

In his interesting article “Flaying Dutchman” Matthew Reborn discusses how “sexuality is threatening and leads to castration by white society”(804). In other words, gender and the sexuality of the colonized are important components to the “daily coating” colonialism requires to underwrite its most heinous practices or “became the primary justification for lynching”(Wood and Donaldson 12). But what does Fanon think of the relationship between colonial violence and ideas about Black male sexuality? Fanon might be read as saying there exists in the “cultural unconscious” a fear of Black men as “virile, animalistic, and amoral walking genitalia” and because of this fear we must police, incarcerate, or lynch them. We must protect our civilization from these brutes and since they are already less than human, they are not deserving of the same moral considerations we show ourselves. We might conclude the problem is that people are acting upon these myths and beliefs they hold, though “Everyone *knows* it isn’t. . .”(*BSMW* 113).

Simply put, what Fanon proclaims, “the Negro is fixated at the genital” in the white colonizer’s imagination (*BSWM* 183). The colonizers constructed endless narratives about the black man as eternal rapist. The fear of “the black phallus” has always been one of the prime lies that enable the brutality of white power. In other words, the mind of the colonizer operates out of fear and it has a pragmatic function to control and kill all that is in opposition to the pervasive infiltration into another culture’s space. The Second scene of the play opens with Lula hugging Clay’s arm. She gives sexual overtures to Clay in her talk and behavior, and imagines a sexual meeting between them where they “can stand

together, sipping our drinks and exchanging codes of lust”. She then continues arousing his feelings saying “we’ll go down the street. . . eating apples and winding very deliberately toward my house.(*Dutchman* 6)

And then she asserts after time of dancing and games, “the real begins”.

LULA: [Grabbing for his hands, which he draws away] Come one, Clay. Let’s rub bellies on the train. The nasty. The nasty. Do the gritty grind, like your old rag-head mammy. Grind till you lose your mind. Shake it, shake it, shake it, shake it. *Dutchman* 9)

As Fanon writes that “white women. . . invariably see the black man at the intangible gate leading to the realm of mystic rites and orgies, bacchanals and hallucinating sexual sensations.”(*BSMW* 116). Lula tells Clay to “Forget your social-working mother. . . and let’s knock stomachs(*Dutchman* 8). Clay replies by warning her he will rip her “lousy breasts off” because she does not know anything except what’s there for you to see” and calling her a “great liberated whore”(*Dutchman* 9).

The white men in Fanon operate in the same way they are alluded to in *Dutchman*: as the looming threat that has in fact created these identities of “White woman” and “Black man” and poured in all of their sexual and power anxieties into this imagined relationship. Both Fanon and Baraka know how loaded this pairing is, and both explore it in different way, but towards similar ends. Both writers see in this pairing a sexuality and potential for violence that is at once taboo and anticipated: the white male fear that the white woman would prefer the black man because of the stereotype he himself (the white male) created that depicts the Black male as an impressively endowed sexual beast. Baraka and Fanon take this issue quite seriously and explore two key angles we rarely delve into deeply: the white male violence that this pairing supposedly justifies, and the irony that it was invented by the same people who claim to hate it. In Fanon’s words, “reality invalidates all these beliefs which are based in the imagination or at least in illogical reasoning”(*BSMW* 113).

In *Dutchman*, of course, it goes another way, but towards the same end: the white woman begins by harassing the Black male character making it impossible for him to ignore her. She then plays into the stereotype of finding

Black men sexually irresistible but then, as both he and we the audience discover at the end, it is only to lure him into a trap, to murder him. Both Baraka and Fanon attempted to make clear that the origins of all this mess comes straight from the minds of those who profess to detest it-white men.

Conclusion:

“For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man.”(BSMW 82-83)

Fanon’s work, while written decades ago and speaking to previous historical events, is a universal anger and a fury against oppression in general, and it also provides us with attitude toward and tools for dismantling domination, injustice, and racial discrimination that remain applicable to our contemporary world and in the future. In other words, as long as there is white privilege, the continued oppression of the underclass, and the persistent injustice in the legal system, the work of Fanon will always be relevant.

Fanon is a great companion philosopher with Baraka’s *Dutchman*. First, both Fanon and Baraka, in Fanonian terms, “lived in a racist society” and both have felt its dark side, and suffered from discrimination and racism in their lives. As Fanon did, Baraka’s approach is to identify racism as externally-derived; he also reveals the perils of internalizing racism. Both writers highlight the ‘complex’ as the site of a perpetual psychological struggle against external nuances and internalization of anti-black racism. Second, like Fanon, Baraka asserted that Black violence, which he believed constituted an important aspect of reclaiming and remaking the self, is the only way to become actionable and equal. In other words, they proposed that violence must be used in self-defense, raising the question: can violence be used as a form of self-defense against exploitation as well as social and cultural annihilation of the colonized? Fanonian violence, and the same can be applied to Clay in Baraka’s *Dutchman*, is self-defense, because colonized subjects marked as “racially other” are barred from the notion of the self. Fanon’s concern regarding the impossibility of dehumanizing another without dehumanizing yourself still applies, both in American society and in other societies around the world. The main challenge posed by Fanon to successive generations is to adopt his commitment to human values and to rebel against exploitation and oppression.

Through *Dutchman* Baraka tries to show side by side the psychological reality of the Black young man, and reflects Black people’s spirit in their fight against oppression. Baraka used violence to confront the white oppressor and psychologically liberate Clay, whose revolt encourages his audience to react actively and defeat the racial yoke. Baraka’s *Dutchman* is fueled by an underlying anger and violence that he felt constituted the necessary ingredients for producing a fiercely-uncompromising black theater, purposefully written and designed to upset White audiences as well as unite African-Americans to demand better treatment. Baraka’s underlying aim was to provoke a rebellion among African-Americans whom, he believed, still need to cast off the psychic yoke of slavery, thus reclaiming both their unique heritage and securing their rights in a white-dominated society that continues to attempt to restrict, or, worse, enslave its ethnic groups. Clay, in *Dutchman*, is answering the question raised by Fanon in *BSMW* “what does the black man want?”, saying the black man wants to “. . . let me be in the way I want.”(*Dutchman* 9). *Dutchman* successfully mirrors the issue of racial discrimination and its turbulent impact on society. Fanon and Baraka shared dreams of a future in which the colonized could finally breathe in full, unlike the martyred black George Floyd.

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“البياض المتواري خلف السواد”

قراءة فرانزفانونية نفسية لمسرحية هولندي للكاتب أميرى بركه

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المستخلص:

يناقش هذا البحث مسرحية الهولندي للكاتب الأفروأمريكي أميرى بركة (1934-2014)، من منظور أفكار الطبيب النفساني والفيلسوف السياسي فرانز فانون (1925-1961) الذى ظهر في خمسينيات وستينيات القرن العشرين. ويتخذ من تيمة المعاناة والاعتداءات العنصرية التي يتعرض لها أصحاب البشرة السمراء عبر تاريخهم الطويل في الولايات المتحدة محورا مركزيا. ومن ثمّ يعتمد الباحث في قراءته على بعض أفكار فانون؛ مثل: عقدة الدونية ومنطقة اللاوجود التي تعاني منها الشخصيات ذوات البشرة السوداء في المجتمع الأبيض. أو كما أشار لها فانون بالعلاقة بين المستعمر والمستعمّر، وكيف تحاول الشخصية السوداء الرئيسية في المسرحية أن تتأثر وتتخلص من الاعتداءات العنصرية للمستعمر كخطوة نحو تحرير نفسها. عليه يسعى البحث إلى استقراء وتحليل مدى العلاقة المتشابهة بين أفكار كل من بركة وفانون، والتي ارتأت أن العنف هو الملاذ الوحيد، وأن ما يحدث لا يمكن تمريره وغض الطرف عنه، وأن استمرار ذلك – لا محالة – مُفض إلى عواقب وخيمة.

الكلمات الدالة: المسرح الأفروأمريكي - فرانز فانون – أمير بركة- عقدة الدونية- منطقة اللاوجود.