

Explicit Resistance, Dissent, and Subversion in Derek Walcott's Poetry

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Abstract- Derek Walcott's poetry occupies a complex interstice between cultural inheritance and historical rupture, expressing resistance not through explicit political slogans but through intricate poetic techniques. This paper analyses Walcott's articulation of explicit resistance, dissent, and subversion in his poetry through the reconfiguration of colonial language, the critique of imposed histories, and the redefinition of Caribbean identity. Walcott does not completely reject Western literary traditions; instead, he uses and changes them to make a counter-discourse that questions imperial authority from within its own aesthetic frameworks. Poems like "A Far Cry from Africa," "The Schooner Flight," and "Ruins of a Great House" show that the author is still interested in the psychological and cultural effects of colonialism. Walcott's dissent is characterised by tension—between Africa and Europe, exile and belonging, anger and reconciliation—rendering his resistance both ethical and artistic. This study contends that Walcott's subversion is manifested in his rejection of binary positions; his poetry simultaneously resists domination and reductive postcolonial identities. Walcott creates a poetics of resistance that is very human, full of conflict, and long-lasting by using language mixing, irony, and historical revision.

Derek Walcott, resistance, dissent, subversion, postcolonial poetry, Caribbean identity

I. INTRODUCTION

Derek Walcott is one of the most important writers in postcolonial literature, especially when it comes to the Caribbean's history of slavery, colonialism, and cultural fragmentation. People often talk about Walcott's work in terms of identity and hybridity, but his poetry is also a strong place of resistance and dissent. Walcott's resistance is often subtle, hidden in form, language, and point of view, unlike revolutionary poets who use direct political language. His poetry contests colonial authority by destabilising established narratives, interrogating historical "truths," and reasserting the Caribbean

landscape as a realm of significance rather than marginality.

This paper examines how Walcott expresses overt resistance, dissent, and subversion in his poetry, concentrating on his approach to history, language, and identity. It contends that Walcott's resistance is not solely adversarial but transformative, aiming to reconceptualise the Caribbean subject beyond colonial dichotomies.

Opposition through Historical Reinterpretation –

One of the main ways that Walcott fights back is by rewriting colonial history. In *Ruins of a Great House*, Walcott looks at the crumbling remains of imperial power and shows how morally bankrupt it is beneath its beautiful buildings. The poem breaks down the romanticism of empire by putting literary references to Milton and Donne next to the harsh realities of slavery. This act of historical re-vision challenges the colonial archive, which frequently suppresses the suffering of the colonised.

A Far Cry from Africa also shows disagreement through emotional and moral conflict. Walcott declines to embrace a singular ideological position, opting instead to dramatise the trauma of divided allegiance. His pain—"I who am poisoned with the blood of both"—is a way of fighting back against colonial histories that demand purity, loyalty, and coherence. The poem goes against what nationalists expect by putting moral complexity at the front instead of heroic certainty.

Walcott's use of language is itself a subversive act. He writes in English, the language of the coloniser, but he changes it with Caribbean rhythms, images, and idioms. In *The Schooner Flight*, the character Shabine speaks in a creolised voice that challenges the authority of standard English. This linguistic

hybridity opposes colonial hierarchies that favour "proper" language over authentic expression.

Walcott doesn't turn away from European literary forms; instead, he uses them to add Caribbean content to classical structures. This strategy weakens colonial cultural dominance by showing that the colonised person can use and change the master's tools. This type of subversion goes against the idea that cultural legitimacy only comes from the imperial centre.

Dissent through the Poetics of Ambivalence - Walcott's dissent is important because it doesn't try to make things simple. His poetry frequently defies the expectation for explicit political alignment, embracing ambivalence as an authentic response to postcolonial reality. This position is inherently subversive, especially in environments that exalt ideological certainty. By putting doubt, contradiction, and personal grief at the centre, Walcott goes against both colonial oppression and postcolonial dogmatism.

In this way, Walcott's poetry is a kind of moral resistance. His dissent is not solely against external subjugation but also against the obliteration of individual intricacy. In Walcott's work, the Caribbean person is not just a symbol; they are a real person with thoughts and feelings that are shaped by history but not completely defined by it.

II. CONCLUSION

Derek Walcott's poetry offers resistance, dissent, and subversion in the postcolonial context. His work opposes colonial authority on political, aesthetic, and linguistic levels. Walcott creates a poetic voice that fights against domination while keeping moral complexity by changing imperial histories, breaking down linguistic hierarchies, and accepting ambivalence.

He refuses to make identity or history easier to understand; this is his most extreme act of resistance. He shows that the Caribbean experience is broken but creative, hurt but strong. Walcott's poetry gives back dignity to voices that have been silenced. His resistance lasts because it is human, based on conflict, memory, and the ongoing fight to speak the truth after the empire has fallen.

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