

المقاومة المعرفية في شعر والكوت الكاريبي المتعلق بالعابرة للوطنية

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Epistemic Resistance in Walcott's Caribbean Poetics of Transnationalism

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ملخص الدراسة

يدرس البحث الحالي الى كيفية انتقال الارث الاستعماري للعبودية والانتقال الثقافي الى مساحة تركيبيية ثقافيا للتصدي الواعي لما بعد الاستعماري شعر الاغتراب ديريك والكوت. وتحديا لمناهج مابعد الاستعمارية التقليدية المنحازة التي تؤكد اما على اصلاح وطني او التقليل من المواطن العالمي الهوية ، تتناقش الدراسة ان ولكوت اسس اسلوبا شعريا مضادا من خلال الاستحواذ وزعزعة الخصائص الثقافية والاجتماعية واللغوية، بالاضافة الى المدونات التاريخية الاستعمارية وسوء تفسير الدين تاريخيا فضلا عن رسم الخرائط ايضا. ومن خلال تحليل دقيق لمجموعة شعرية مختارة لوكوت، تكشف الدراسة كيف ينسج والكوت الممتلكات الاستعمارية

ليشكل منها اداة شعرية مضادة لتكون شكل بديل للذاكرة، وفي نفس الوقت تتسم بالنقد الابداعي العالي. كما ان شعر والكوت يرفض كلا من تعريفات المؤسسات وقيود العرقية للهوية الافرو-كاريبية ليعيد بنائها بدلا من ذلك مرتكزا على الهجائن الممزقة لما بعد الاستعمار اللتي تشكلت من خلال التهجير التاريخي، والعبودية الاستعمارية، ولغة المستعمر. اضافتا الى ذلك، تسعى هذه الدراسة للكشف عن كيفية نقد والكوت شعريا بتاريخ المركزية الاوربية، مؤكدا على فشلها في تسجيل الالام الاستعمارية الاصلية اللتي وقعت على المستعمرين؛ وردا على ذلك، يظهر الشاعر الذكريات المحطمة والمكبوتة والارشيف التاريخي المهمل من خلال تجميع الذاكرة والخيال النقدي. وبالإضافة الى ماذكر، فان امتلاك والكوت من اشكال ادبية اوربية اسست منهج مؤثر للتعبير عن ما بعدالحدود الوطنية الكاريبية، التغرب، الشتات، الالم السعتماري من دون التخلص من الخصوصية و الخصائص المحلية. وتختتم المقالة بان شعر والكوت لا يشكل فقط تجربة ثقافية تركيبية، بل تداخل معرفيا عميقا في الارث الاستعماري الاقليمي.

Abstract

The current article, applying a discourse-based interdisciplinary comparative postcolonial approach with transnational orientations, examines how Derek Walcott's diasporic poetry transcends the colonial legacy of slavery and cultural dislocation into a culturally syncretic arena of self-conscious postcolonial resistance. Challenging biased traditional postcolonial approaches that emphasize either on nationalist recovery or cosmopolitan dilution of identity, this study argues on how Walcott, via appropriating and subverting metropolitan epistemological institutions, constructs a counter-poetic method. Through close analysis of Walcott's, *A Far Cry from Africa* (1962), *The Sea is History* (1978), and *Forest of Europe* (1986), this study demonstrates how Walcott sews such colonial properties to form a counter-poetic device that operates as an alternative form of memory, simultaneously critical and highly creative. In addition, the study endeavours to demonstrate how Walcott poetically criticizes the Eurocentric historiography, emphasizing on its failure to properly register authentic colonial pain inflicted upon the colonized; in response, he surfaces suppressed broken memories and neglected historical archives through re-membering and critical imagination. Moreover, Walcott's appropriation of European literary forms constructs an efficient approach for articulating Caribbean transnationality, diaspora, exile, and colonial pain without erasing regional specificity or local traits. The article concludes that Walcott's poetry constitutes not merely a Caribbean culturally syncretic experience



but a profound epistemological intervention into the colonial legacy of the region.

1.Introduction: Preliminary Colonial Knowledge and Caribbean Marginalization

Conceptualising contemporary Afro-Caribbean identity as an entity derived from a genetically inherited cultural ancestry essence should not be a valid theoretical perspective since it is an instant outcome of the violent legacy of colonial slavery. Within such a particular context, identity does not represent something that can be recaptured or identified as singular; rather is a mobile collection of fractured selves, a byproduct of a contested, hybridised, and transnational consciousness which is articulated through various cultural expressions. The current study tends to demonstrate how diverse legacies of colonial slavery are not merely remnants from a colonial past but actual bleeding contemporary wounds that dynamically define the contextual conditions in which Afro-Caribbean identities are constituted upon.

The economic legacy of colonial activities in the Caribbean extends to the contemporary era, as colonial plantation policies in the region are established upon the bedrock of economic dependency of the colonised lands to their associated metropolises. Although colonialism in its traditional sense is abrogated and not practised anymore, much of the Caribbean's contemporary economies, fuelled by a limited form of production diversity such as agriculture and tourism, depend on imperialist markets. This way, colonialism has economically dispossessed the Caribbean islands, leading the region to global socio-economic and even intellectual marginalisation. The environmental and spatial aspects of colonial policies in Caribbean islands and their settlers are also still vividly visual. Land exploitations under colonial materialistic agendas, imposed upon the colonised, led to radical socio-ecological alterations and a demographic change of the region. In this regard, Mintz (2012) states that "The history of plantations, particularly in their association with regions of the erstwhile colonial world, has been one of terrible environmental destruction" (p.218). This environmental legacy intersects with contemporary concerns such as human-nature reciprocation, climate vulnerability, and the way these phenomena further put human life and identity under the shade of its complexities. Afro-Caribbean identity is an entity that is formed in an instant correlation with this concept, originating from the plantation sites.

Regarding colonial plantation system as the triggering genesis of the Afro-Caribbean identity formation, one should recognize that colonial establishment of those labour fields was not merely a colonial economic



venture, but also a system that altered social dynamics and spatial relationships to a whole different dimension where new identities were consequently synthesized. Dealing with the enslaved Africans as commodities carrying out the labour tasks, plantations created a significant break with their pre-existing identities through removing individuals from familial, territorial, and linguistic associations. Despite of plantations incapacibilities of creating a complete cultural void, it caused vast deficiencies, leading to the formation of new forms of interconnectedness between Africans of different ethnicities under the pressure of external forces; an ethnic recombination that later resulted in creolized social structures in the region. Mintz (2012) names “slavery and plantations in particular” as the main reasons of appearing such creolized societies (p.191). On the other hand, Simmons-McDonald and Robertson (2006), in this regard, suggest that “mixing of slaves was subsequent to the formation of the language and could have been only a sufficient and not a necessary condition for creolization” (p.8). Hence, Afro-Caribbean identity springs from enforced proximity and collision of the pre-existing African identities of diverse ethnicities and a process of adaptive reconstruction to which new creole identities were created as a negotiated process of displacement.

Considering language as the mightiest communication vessel, the colonizer imposed the metropole's standard language upon the colonized. Such linguistic imposition, embedding the hidden colonial agendas, intended to create colonial authority within every segment of daily communications. However, the appearance of Creole linguacultural forms drew a language-related resistant line and relatively broke the authoritative figure of the colonizer. Drawing on this matter, Beushausen (2021) believes that appearance of “nonstandard dialects, and anti-language varieties such as slang, represent crucial aspects of identity and a demarcation in response to standard language ideologies generally associated with the European languages imposed by former colonizers” (p.7). Therefore, concept of language for Afro-Caribbeans is not simply defined as a means of communication. Afro-Caribbean identity is expressed through Creoles, hybrid and often broken languages of the European countries. Contemporary adaptation of Creoles by the native Afro-Caribbeans, as descendants of African slaves, is a manifestation of both creative self-expression and also a historically extended course of resistance to survive (Beushausen, 2021, p.11). From a postcolonial standpoint, Creole languages should not be considered inferior to their European counterparts, rather should be taken as intellectual innovative



counter-courses, reflecting historical experiences of being displaced, trying to adapt, and struggling to fit in new contextual settings;

This adaptive cultural reconstruction leads to the formation of new colonially driven societal hierarchies. Race as a codified system of value placed European identity at the peak and the African-driven identities at the bottom; a systematic racial preference from a Eurocentric gaze that prioritized the white over others in terms of culture, knowledge, and even humanity. Commenting on the European epistemological background Alleyne (2002) states that “the colour hierarchy which came to be so typical and characteristic of these Caribbean societies had already existed in the mentality of Europeans prior to the establishment of slave societies in the Americas” (p.82). Such racial preferability of colonial structures is even extended to the post-colonial time, affecting the live experiences of the Caribbeans, extending to the fringes of contemporary ethnocentric discriminations. Afro-Caribbean identity is, thus, forged through critical engagement with these hierarchies, resulting in the assertion of Black consciousness as a cultural and political necessity. The concept not only reverses the colonial tendencies toward racial hierarchy and colonial preferability, but also unsettles it through its original approach to the notion of identity as a dynamic site of struggle rather than being a fixed and predefined entity.

Due to such epistemological aspects of colonialism, the landscape of postcolonial identity becomes even more intricate. Prioritizing European systems of education, colonial discourse marginalized African and indigenous epistemologies. This epistemic process of colonization imposed not only external frameworks such as systems of education upon the colonized, but practically attempted to reconstruct the way that colonial subjects approached their surroundings and perceived themselves either. Therefore, in response, Afro-Caribbean identity is constantly in a state of decolonizing knowledge and retrieving substitutional epistemologies while disapprovingly questioning the validity of the inherited colonial structures. Decolonization of such structures and values is a voluntary act of neither complete nor linear, operating within a state of ambivalence where both colonial and local epistemologies coexist in constant eroding stance of dispute and tension. In this scenario, ambivalence is not a sign of weakness or instability, rather echoes a transitional state or an epistemologically-oriented metamorphosis, towards self-recognition.

Furthermore, memory is another essential concept mediating with the negotiation of the Afro-Caribbean identity that is rooted in historical slavery as an active practice of colonization. Such colonial practices in



the region have seriously damaged the linear notions of ancestry, creating an impossible state of accessing to the original roots of the settlers living in the West Indies islands. However, this vacancy has led to a productive orientation of cultural memory, operating through re-construction rather than taking a retrieving stance; “memory that extends beyond European colonization and turns away from Eurocentric capitalist heteropatriarchy” (Beushausen, 2021, p.2). To do so, essential cultural fragments such as artistic expressions, oral traditions, and ritual practices are being recollected and pieced together to mend the broken mirror of the lost historical identity; or as Benitez-Rojo (1996) puts it together “reuniting the fragments of [the] dispersed identity beyond the confines of the Plantation” (p.210). Therefore, it is safe to say that, the post-colonial Afro-Caribbean identity is constituted as a result of constant tension between the absence of a historical origin and the re-collection of the memories from the past; what seems to be a dynamic procedure of creating meaning out of reconstruction rather than simply retrieving it; a state of “self-reconstruction” that “speaks of successful negotiations, creative hybridity and productive assimilation within a Caribbean adopted homeland, effected largely through a major global force of sustained cultural interaction (Rahim & Lalla, 2009, p.199).

Equally important are the psychological dimensions of such approach to identity creation. The impacts of slavery also have created long-lasting and profound emotional effects on the post-colonial subject such as alienation, fragmented sense of belonging, and a state of double-consciousness. The Afro-Caribbean experiences two worlds when creating their identities. They simultaneously experience their cultural heritage stored in their collective memory, as well as, the architectural structures and values imposed upon them by those in authoritative positions who are under the influence of colonial hegemonies in the region. Adapting such a dual psychological perception of existence, Afro-Caribbeans have created an identity demonstrating both adaptive and critical qualities correlating with their contextual condition. Such mental state, associated with post-colonial subjects, could function like a double-edged blade and should not be considered as an absolute bless or curse. For instance, these qualities go in parallel with creativity and resilience, creating new life perspectives leading to productive ambivalence; a grand and exceptional quality that has long placed the Afro-Caribbeans in a globally recognized position artistically. This double-edged intellectual duality extends to the revisiting boundaries of criticism of the colonial heritage, by the Afro-Caribbean subject, since the constitutes of the



European culture could not be entirely accepted or rejected without questioning by an individual of a hybrid mind.

Reflecting on such legacies of colonization on the Caribbean islands, Derek Walcott's poetry is crucially important as a live documentation of human sentiments. Afro-Caribbean identity should be explored and interrogated through a consideration of the legacy of colonial slavery and its contemporary after-effects. Walcott's poetry echoes this matter as an active force in its redefinition rather than as a given and granted history. His poetry represents a poetics of reconstruction based on the insight of fragmentation as a source. Being a Caribbean himself, Walcott is a poet of hybridity, and in his literary works European literary traditions are integrated with a range of Caribbean vernacular forms. Such experimentalism in poetry is an instant outcome of his ambivalent qualities, leading him to question the authenticities and imagining a whole new identity to substitute the one imposed on his nation by the colonial institution.

2. Walcott's Transnationalism and Poetics of Epistemic Resistance

When one entitles a poet, like Derek Walcott, a seminal voice in Caribbean and global poetry, it must be clarified that such entitlements should go a farther way than listing a long series of his literary production or his state of winning a Nobel prize in poetry. In other words, calling Derek Walcott an international voice, one should recognize how his poetry has altered our viewpoint towards life and existence in general via answering a wide range of questions such as, what actually inspired him into the creation of such grand literary works; who is Walcott essentially as the creator of the works; what poetic policies has he applied in his compositions; in or under what socio-cultural and historical contexts the works are being created; and how the answers of all such questions correlate to each other. Walcott's cultural production is an instant outcome of intertwined intersection and loud turmoil of a past colonial tradition practiced, colonial legacies as post-colonially could be observed, and a wide range of decolonial tendencies in his region. Walcott has managed to create an international recognition for the Caribbeans via cultivating an original form of Caribbean poetry reciprocating with the global literary forms without dealing with them as superior; a poetic tradition that is founded upon the post-colonial Caribbean traumas, associating them with the region's landscapes, and expressed through his colonially wounded language. On the other hand, Walcott as an occasionally contested poet has never intended to satisfy those with Eurocentric views and rationality and this has put him in a controversial position; an uncomfortable situation that actually pushes critiques into



initiating post-colonial discursive investigations against him. This illustrates that his literary works actually matters more than a Nobel-prize-given venture by the imperially influenced institutions.

Walcott's poetry is conglomerated around the question of colonial practice of slavery. Such inclination is not to present a pitiful or victimized mournful nation but rather, using colonialism and slavery as demonstrative hooks, to cling his poetry upon as sources of generative inspiration. In his poetry, Walcott rejects advocating the colonially encouraged fixed, pure, and unbroken nationalist frameworks, rather, as Islam and Sharma (2025) believe, are more inclined to tackle on "fractured and contested concepts". Neither denying the colonially caused socio-cultural fractures, nor letting them to paralyze him, Walcott constantly lives in an arena of tension. In other words, cultural hybridity has placed him in a critical position where he can neither ignore a colonial history that highly influenced his very contemporary existence, nor blindly accept all aspects and rationales of it. "The ambivalence that inheres in his particular situation has fostered a comparative frame of mind, one that searches out connections wherever it can" (Terada, 1992, p.2). Therefore, Walcott instead of orienting his effort on finding clear-cut answers to the contradictions of postcolonial identity, his ambivalent questioning mind revisits, imagines, re-collects, and pieces together to create an artistically productive personality. Drawing on this matter Baugh (2018) asserts that "paradox and contradiction is one aspect of the self-image that Walcott projects and pursues. His poetry especially is an imaginative self-exploration and self-creation, a fiction and drama of himself" (p.5).

Accepting all the identity complications it follows, Walcott applies English language, the colonizer's language, as his creative medium, rather than taking a fanciful romantic orientation and using a pre-colonial African language that is actually strange to him. As an adept poet, Walcott instead appropriates the language and transforms it into a regionally familiar form; a process that involves in orientation of the language with the Caribbean sensibility, rhythms and syntax. Such language appropriation through creolization is being tackled by Kalyana (2018) believing that Walcott through "blending English with Creole, challenges conventional linguistic norms, emphasizing the importance of preserving indigenous voices. This linguistic experimentation mirrors the broader quest for identity within a diverse and evolving cultural landscape". Hence, employing appropriation is not a mere coincidence in Walcott's case, rather is stablishing a creative field out of the language of the colonizer. Bending and breaking of the metropolitan language is an



experimental manifestation, referring to the hybridity imposed upon the Caribbean due to colonialism. This deliberate linguistic manipulation, applied by Walcott, attempts to destabilize the colonially proposed hierarchy, suggesting that certain forms of English language have more legitimacy over the ones located at the margins. Through creating a discourse, founded upon stylistics caused by language manipulation, Walcott expresses a complete state of legitimacy of his creole while emphasizing on the historical crimes imposed on his nation by the English-speaking people.

Walcott's hybrid orientations, not only is reflected through his formal orientations and application of language, but also foreshadows his literary traditions, being profoundly intertextual. In his literary works, he constantly alludes to gigantic European literary figures such as works by Shakespeare, Dante, Homer, Eliot, and Yeats, yet not as an obedient student but equal and a part of his existence (Bloom, 2003, pp: 85-95). Considering such orientation as creatively productive rather than focusing on anxieties from a colonial past, Bloom (2003) believes that Walcott's composition of *Omeros* is not a Caribbean adoption of Homer rather is an adept and authentic form of it, tackling Caribbean concerns and colonial thematic orientations (p.109). Similarly, McConnell (2025) believes that Walcott's *Omeros* attempts to revisit Homer from a Caribbean postcolonial lens, focusing on an anti-chronological and simultaneous reading of the work (p.3). This anti-chronological tendencies of Walcott's poetry resembles a greater deal of objection towards the colonial narration of history; positioning Caribbean art in a unique dominant stance of self-approval, where to shine within an international level and does not beg for permission as a latecomer. Shedding like on this, in one of his seminal essays entitled *The Muse of History* (1974), Walcott strongly rejects authors who are enslaved by the muse of history that only inspires "recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves, or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters" (Friedman, 2024, p.2). Caribbean history, due to its colonial background and slavery, has lost its linear conventional sense of history as one could observe in the history of England or France. This why, Walcott is inclined to approach history from a critical, imaginative, and even to some extent, subjective perspective. Despite of registering such colonially-caused brokenness, Walcott's poetry is not an elegy or a mournful lament, but rather a systematic act of creating a post-colonially productive and creative cultural arena; moving between collective history and individual memory while wearing remnants from the past into a present sense of continuity.



It is just as important to Walcott that he experiments with various poetic forms as it is that he treats with a range of postcolonial themes, revealing his special concerns with the cultural matrix of Caribbean identity. He has experimented poetry in diverse traditional forms such as sonnet, epic, ballad, and terza rima, in not really conventional ways as are commonly applied by the Europeans. Through non-traditional application of these forms, Walcott reveals how to use the already established forms creatively in order to explore both extra-Caribbean materials and the region's post-colonial concerns. The constructed tension between the confined European poetic forms and Caribbean fluidity in Walcott's poetry oscillates constantly, revealing a deep-rooted concern on how established modes of expression can be adopted in the light of history and culture specific to Caribbean. This methodological orientation towards inconvenient application of conventional forms has both aesthetic and ethical dimensions, closely interlinking the poet's ideology with his aesthetics and poetic policies. Walcott continually rejected superficial reading of the Caribbean literature, acknowledging the risk of confining the Caribbean experience to a set of thematic inclinations; instead in his poems like *A Far Cry from Africa* (1962), *Names* (1976), and *The Schooner Flight* (1979) problematizes a deeper state Caribbean fractured loyalty and ethical burden of hybrid ancestry without supposing any superficial denouement.

Derek Walcott is one of the most celebrated and yet contested figures in both Caribbean and global literature. Walcott's verse is internationally recognized and has become a subject of wide international criticism since it breaks free from all national confinements; simultaneously preserving its provincial taste, rejecting to become an agent of abstract universalism. Rejecting such abstraction, his poetry is inspired by the Caribbean mythology, oral history, geographical landscapes, and his nation's collective memory that suffers from colonial traumas. Walcott's poetry embeds such particularities within larger concerns with memory, identity, and representation that are transcultural. Registering the conflicted inheritance of colonialism within language, form, and intertextuality, Walcott inverts cultural loss into literary gain.

3. Analysis of Selected Poems

Despite Walcott's profound tendency towards projection of diasporic experiences in his poetic endeavours, his literary venture is not confined into a mere representation of the notion, rather extends to the borders of sustained negotiation of the qualities in which the epistemological boundaries penetrate through diaspora and construct a whole intelligible entity out of it. Walcott's *A Far Cry from Africa* (1962), *The Sea is*



History (1978), and *Forest of Europe* (1986) are exceptional literary manifestations of colonial representation through which the poet establishes an intricate critique of the quality in which ideology, discourse, and hegemonic knowledge production reciprocate to create a fertile discursive ground for violence naturalization and historical rupture obscurity to further impose subjugation and marginalization upon the colonized. Aligned with his poetic policies, Walcott's counter-poetics is characterized by opacity, fragmentation, and transnational circulation, discarding either consolations of a predetermined and definitive identity or an absolute cultural synthesis. Therefore, transnational identity, as Walcott approaches the concept, is not a mere celebratory entity, rather is fluidly fluctuating upon the turbulent waves of the sea of history while being anchored to irreducible contradictory conditions caused by cultural and linguistic dislocations. Therefore, despite of his provincial tone, not only one should consider Walcott as merely a Caribbean poet, playwright, essayist, or even a seminal literary figure of the region, but rather in an actual sense, he is one of the greatest contemporary thinkers associated with theories reflected upon diasporic subjectivity projected through his literary venture.

At its most instantaneous stage of representation, Walcott recognizes colonial practice through imposing dependency employing the medium of force and violence. In *A Far Cry from Africa*, fifth and sixth lines of the second stanza "The Violence of beast on beast is read/ As natural law", Walcott resorts on a significant epistemological justification employed by the colonizer to naturalize colonial practice due to its necessity (Walcott, 1992, p.17). In the respective lines, the poet has deliberately used the passive phrase of "is read" instead of 'is studied' to indicate how serosity of an active violent act could be reduced into a passive reporting form, demonstrating metropole's employment of its linguistic aspects for the sake of euphemism and their psychological comfort after a post-criminatory phase. Colonial discourse functions as a fully self-conscious entity and is determined not to describe what is happening in Africa as an act of violence. It recodes and transforms the Mau Mau anti-colonial uprising resembling a zoological action, rather than being an anti-colonial reaction. Under such colonial manipulation of reality, framed by the definitive Eurocentric glossary, the colonized is derived from its political qualities and categorized as a sabotaging material obstacle on the path of meeting the ultimately defined colonial goals. Such materialistic approach of colonialism towards brutalizing the subjugated as a material entity is further justified from the metropole's bureaucratic gaze, in seventh and eighth lines of the first stanza, stating that "Statistics justify



and scholars seize/ The salients of colonial policy” (Walcott, 1992, p.17). These lines are instant manifestations of the dynamics hidden within lexicons and the quality in which they are sequenced to carry the bureaucratic load of colonial agenda. “Statistics” subvert the inflected pain and the agony of the colonial subject into a range of passive reporting digits and figures to the colonizer’s sight, and “salients” reduce the colonizer’s sense of responsibility toward the harms caused to the colonizer as a result of a military tactic employed out of necessity. In this context, portrayal of “scholars” and “statistics” within a single frame depicts the process of colonial knowledge production in which provides to later credibility of colonialism as policy and its military implementation on the ground. This way, Walcott stretches his finger of blame towards the entire administrative, academic, and historicist aspects of modern Eurocentric epistemology of perceptualizing imperialism and its never-quenching material thirst.

Such critical Walcottian approach to representation adopts even a more intensified tone when the poet tackles on the fundamental assumptions of Eurocentric historicism in his poem *The Sea is History*. Inaugurating his poem with rather an interrogative form, in the first two lines of the introductory stanza, Walcott reflects on a whole indifferent sceptic gaze from the outsiders who are irrelevant to the Caribbeans and their actual context; “Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs? / Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,” (Walcott, 1992, p. 364). Surprisingly, the interrogatory voice demands for empirically tangible sites of historical memorial; an enquiry from the speaker that unconsciously reveals his Eurocentric standards and materialistic perceptions towards history and culture. Walcott’s response to such a deliberately demeaning enquiry, in the third and fourth lines of the introductory stanza, is both destabilizing and displacing; “in that grey vault. The Sea. The Sea / has locked them up. The sea is History” (Walcott, 1992, p364). Walcott through the repetition of the word “sea”, a mesmerizing element of musicality to the lines to emphasis on his message, intends to shed light on the fact that sea is a historically registering witness to the Caribbeans’ stolen identity that no colonial entity is powerful enough to stand in a rivalry position against it; a registered history that no colonial language would be capable of its documentation.

Yet, sea’s documentation of colonial archives differs from the defined Eurocentric historicism, since the bureaucratic approach of traditional historicism is not as capable as the sea to store and register the unbearable inflected pain imposed upon the colonized. Furthermore, sea is a “grey vault” that is not accessible to those who are irrelevant to colonial pain of



the Caribbean nation. When the poet further writes, in the concluding line of the seventh stanza and the introductory line of the eighth stanza (Walcott, 1992, p.365); “the ocean kept turning blank pages / looking for History”, he directly invites the European tradition of historiography into a fierce challenge against the sea; exposing its incompetency of reflecting factual history when engaged with the suppressed realities of the Middle Passage. This incomplete book of history, composed by the colonizer, intentionally skips certain “blank pages”, not because nothing of significant value has happened there, but for such pages are tangible manifestation of an archive that could not be written or read within the colonial epistemology. Reading the last line of the ninth stanza of the poem, the lexicon “foaming” foregrounds Walcott’s further destabilizing the colonial agency and its epistemology as whiteness is widely believed to be associated with clearance, transparency, and even truth, but the white foam of the sea is merely a superficial thin layer covering a bottomless and volatile dark sea. Examples of such paradoxical inversions are bountiful in Walcott’s poetry and intend to create an anti-discourse current stream in relation to the colonial epistemology placing the white race at the highest peak of an existential hierarchy.

The poet, in the last two lines of the second stanza, and the introductory line of the third stanza, further intensifies his postcolonial critique through revisiting Bible from a Caribbean gaze, emphasising on the close resemblance between the Middle Passage and Exodus; “Then there were the packed cries, / the shit, the moaning: / Exodus” (Walcott, 1992, p. 364). Adopting a biblical tone, employing further Caribbean appropriation on it to serve of a Walcottian cause, the poet attempts to revisit the book of history and fill in the “blank pages” with scenes of abjection and the unbearing inflicted pain upon the human by the pharaohs’ of the age. Approaching to the Bible from such an extraordinary desacralized standpoint, Walcott attempts to draw line on diverse existential issues such as occidental hypocrisy and its double-standards in correlation with human dignity comparing to the scripture that has long been abused and placed at the “brutish” epistemological service of colonialism. Here what Walcott does is not a desacralization of the Bible as a whole sacred entity, but rather revealing a historical scandal of misinterpretation of the book by a whole school of abuse. Consequently, the brief and fast-fading enchantment of liberation, as in lines “jubilation, O jubilation-/ vanishing swiftly/ as the sea’s lace dries in the sun” is abruptly intervened with the bitter slap of Walcott’s reality as “that was not History, / that was only faith” (Walcott, 1992, p. 366). From the repetition of the word “jubilation”, mimicking a liturgical chant, any



critical mind could simply infer the ironical intention of the poet and his scepticism towards any colonially-granted liberation and freedom. In these lines, poet intends to present how colonial ideology confine faith and belief under its umbrella to further transforming them from merely symbolic affirmations into colonially materialistic gains.

Similarly, in his poem *Forest of Europe*, Walcott (1992, pp: 375-378) challenges the Eurocentric confinements of spatiality and its colonial representing abstractions. In his line “so desolate it mocked destinations”, Walcott challenges the structural approach towards a definite notion of space as empirically measurable and potentially navigable. However, subjects of marginalisation and exile would have an entirely contradictory orientation towards such a tendency. Subjects of such qualities, as exile and marginalisation, are conditioned to a spatial characterisation that would resist any empiricist definition of space. In such conditions, landscapes become exclusive, uninterpretable, and untranslatable to those who do not share mutual contextual background to the Caribbean poet. Walcott, manoeuvring on this instability, marginalises the marginaliser; an exotic contextual trait that bestows ‘defamiliarity’ to his poetic venture. Walcott’s textual portraits, as “lines / ruled on these scattered manuscripts of snow”, take significant positions in his poetry since they emphasise such instabilities. In respective lines “snow” is metaphorized as a manuscript, founding the voice of the voiceless, that is doomed to thaw upon a white slate of snow. In this context, the action of writing is an ephemerally short-termed one since done both in a spatially extraordinary condition and also encrypted upon a medium that is not supportive to maintain permanently.

Walcott’s ambivalent personality and his sharp critical mind clearly sense how hegemony functions within an ideologically-driven structure and the devices through which they fuel colonial legitimacy and its potential dynamics. The line “Statistics justify” in *A Far Cry from Africa* clearly demonstrates how an empiricist approach to humanity and rendering a range of statistical reports, from a Eurocentric point of view, can simply “justify” the necessity of a brutish violent act. Through such a process, the casualties are simply numbers, countries are springs of natural resources, and people are material subjects to invest in. Adopting a different standpoint, Walcott’s *The Sea Is History* hegemony is tackled through the lens of post-colonial mimicry; “them each rock broke into its own nation” (1992, p.367). Despite sharing the same colonial background, same pain, and same contemporary wound, Caribbeans after receiving their so-called independence, as materially depleted regions yet highly dependent on the metropole, formed fractured nation-states which



would comply with the colonial policies and practices. These small nation-states structurally became the exact replicas of their colonial past that one struggled to get rid of; a condition of post-colonial socio-political and spatial disturbance demonstrating that independence shall not entail epistemological detachments. Negotiating the inevitably profound impacts of empirically-driven hegemonies and the way they could structure a highly materialistic gaze towards natural landscapes, in his poem *Forest of Europe*, Walcott portrays “the Thames and Neva rustling like banknotes”. This time, Walcott reverts the spell of colonial materialist hegemony upon the metropole through representing the Thames and the Neva as merely material entities of no other significance. This is how the colonial policy has historically treated Caribbean landscapes, and expressing his view of the Thames and Neva as “banknotes” is a profound representation of the way colonial hegemonies breed further materialist approaches towards nature, disregarding the fact that it is located in a colony or at the center of the metropole.

Such a critical and wide spectrum towards existence could not be acquired simply by a flat mono-dimensional personality. It is derived from Walcott's transnationalism, fuelled by his fractured identity caused by ambivalence that has led to the poet's awakened conscience and his compassionate tone, as it is echoed from the following lines from *A Far Cry from Africa*;

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands
Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again
A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,
The gorilla wrestles with the superman.
I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein? (Walcott, 1992, p.18)

Derived by his critical mind and compassionate fractured loyalty, Walcott structures a counter-epistemology anchored to the medium of poetry. Walcott's employment of the European prosody should be approached as a strategic and uniquely appropriated vase, rather than being a mere colonial heritage to the poet. Application of sharp rhymes and tight meter in Walcott's *A Far Cry from Africa* creates a percussive condition, resembling what the poet describes as a “tightened carcass of a drum”. Not only does such an employed musicality intensify the thematic tendencies of the poem, but it also echoes the inner emotional state of mind of the subject, suffering from a fully awakened conscience rooted deep into his double-consciousness; an existential state that Walcott



describes as a condition of being “divided to the vein”. Walcott’s outer world is as fractured as his psychological state of mind. From Walcott’s point of view, history has become incompetent because of all its blank pages; a colonial institution that is profoundly under the influence of an abused religion. Walcott’s tendency to such orientations becomes even more critical in his *The Sea Is History*, where the poet’s extended biblical allusions and references, such as “Genesis”, “Exodus”, and “Lamentations”, transform his verse into a ritually documented imagined history of a wandering nation. This way, Walcott does not intend to fill the blank pages of a history that is already written from the colonial gaze towards the Caribbean cause, but he actually re-constructs his own version of Caribbean history from the scratch; a history that not only rejects historical linearity, but actually encompasses an innately chaotic construct that essentially is synthesised by fragmentation, recurrence, and sedimentation. On the other hand, in the *Forest of Europe*, Walcott, as a person sharing a transnational identity, expresses what he observes outside the veil of exile and isolation through an attained empirical metropolitan tone. He notices how metropole’s language sounds like “the gutturals crackle as decaying leaves” and “freezing consonants turned into stone”. This is how freezing-cold and breaking-hard the voice of displacement, exile, and isolation is to Walcott.

Being one of the central concerns of Walcott’s counter-poetic, the theme of a colonially-disturbed and unresolvedly-fractured identity is tackled in his poem *A Far Cry from Africa*, being referred to as a contaminating poison by the poet;

I who have cursed

The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live? (Walcott, 1992, p.18)

This ever-unresolved condition of a hybrid identity essentially contradicts those critical approaches believing in an absolute synthetic product out of colliding opposite forces. The line “I who am poisoned with the blood of both” (1992, p.18) is an instant manifestation of the fact that hybridity is not a resolved or harmonious state of a tense conflict. From Walcott’s lines, it is inferred that the identity that is contaminated by such an upsetting poison is doomed to live a restless life forever. Hybridity as an essential and life-orienting aspect for Walcott is portrayed as a profound



and intricate condition of being that, like blood, is “divided to the vein”. Subsequently, referring to the open-endedness of hybridity, the poem concludes with a set of questions, the most important of which states, “... how choose/ Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?” (1992, p.18). The poet cannot make a determinative answer to this case, since he certainly is indebted to both, not knowing if he should “Betray them both, or give back what they give?”. In such a tense context, language takes such an essential position, resembling an arena of contradiction, since the poet uses the language of the metropole, as his anti-colonialist poetic medium, to curse colonialism and its injected poison into the veins of the contemporary postcolonial subject; “I who have cursed/ The drunken officer of British rule, how choose” (1992, p.18).

Simultaneously, such an identity that is marked by rupture could not be a stranger to a fragmented history and disjointed registration of past events. *The Sea Is History* has a similar inclination towards recollecting broken pieces of memory;

but the ocean kept turning blank pages

looking for History.

Then came the men with eyes heavy as anchors
who sank without tombs,

(Walcott, 1992, p.365)

The result is what Walcott presents as;

Bone soldered by coral to bone,
mosaics

mantled by the benediction of the shark's shadow,

(Walcott, 1992, p.364)

These lines by Walcott portray a surreal collage of how the remnant bones of his Caribbean ancestors are being both preserved and distorted, creating a mosaic of history throughout the Atlantic coral reefs, extending from Africa to the Caribbean islands. They also echo how history for Walcott is a conglomerate of staggered yet dynamic memories and landscapes rather than a long narrative of past events. Memories that create Walcott's history are not a set of passive incidents; rather are dynamic, meaning that they are being appropriated through imaginative labour. This procedure of re-membling creates a self-conscious, creative and critical stronghold that could be penetrated by no colonial entity or passive nostalgic pulse. Reconstruction of identity in the *Forest of Europe* adopts a more transnational tendency;



From frozen Neva to the Hudson pours,
under the airport domes, the echoing stations,
the tributary of emigrants whom exile
has made as classless as the common cold,
citizens of a language that is now yours, (Walcott, 1992,
p.376)

Flowing across diverse geographical sites “From frozen Neva to the Hudson pours” (1992, p.376), transnationalism and its associated identity is not confined to African territories or the forest of Europe. Such movement constructs a grid of correlating existential network that naturally transcends the linearity of a national identity and all its confining limits. Furthermore, Portrayal of Osip Mandelstam grounds a transhistorical aspect connecting diverse experiences of living in diaspora as a mutually shared circumstance. Redefining identity in relation to language rather than a confined geographical site is being neatly tackled in the lines “citizens of a language that is now yours”. Yet this language is not a confining element for a transnational identity, but rather a simple and mere means of articulation to carry the heavy load of sentiments on it within a diasporic context. The expressive phrase of “tributary of emigrants” reflects a consistent condition of exile, movement, and displacement that apparently never intends to end.

Ultimately, Walcott's approach to transnationalism is a manifest state of denial towards both the rigidity of nationalism and the rootless imperialistically advocated globalism. He has always emphasised that post-colonially established nation-states are just as dependant to the West as their previous colonial forms used to be to their metropolises. On the other hand, socio-political and even cultural institutions in such nation-states are run under mimicry, trying to create a replica of their colonisers out of themselves. These replicas, which are trying to be seamless or perfect versions, could never compete with their original version of the metropole, and this condition leads to an ultimate state of fragility and dependency. On the other hand, a globalised identity is achieved under the condition of suppressing diverse national voices and their assimilation into homogeneity. Walcott, encouraging local voices and their uniqueness being reflected in his poetry “Kikuyu”, “Port Royal”, “Oklahoma”, transcends his poetic policies into a grand cultural matter, preventing superficial abstractions. Simultaneously, his allusions to diverse global socio-cultural and geographical landscapes, such as Mandelstam, Spain, Oklahoma, and the Bible, construct a reciprocatively correlational grid of



entities that each acquires a deeper level of meaning linking to another; a reciprocating network of meanings through which Walcott negotiates complexities of transnational identities in diasporic conditions.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, Walcott's poetry is a type of epistemic resistance that uses memory, hybridity, and poetic reconstruction to reinterpret the Caribbean's colonial past. Through a fierce, interrogating poetic structure initially assembled from metropolitan cultural institutions, Walcott transcends Caribbean verse into a constructive arena of self-conscious resistance: a unique form of resistance in which the ruptured realities of diaspora are ambivalently painted into a collage of identity rather than recovered through inhibitive nostalgia. For Walcott, Afro-Caribbean identity cannot be defined institutionally, since such an existential entity rejects racial confinement as well as dilution into a cosmopolitan form; instead, it is established upon the bedrock of postcolonial fractured hybridity, constructed out of displacement, slavery, and the inherited colonial language. Examining a set of selected poems reveals how colonial properties are appropriated by Walcott and reassembled into a counter-poetic device—a substitutional form of memory that is both creative and critical. Walcott's poetry fiercely confronts Western and Eurocentric notions of history for their failure to archive the authentic, real pain inflicted upon the colonized, and for neglecting the colonized as a historical entity; he instead suggests foregrounding suppressed, fractured memories and colonially undermined historical archives to magnify lost voices through critical re-membling and imagination based on ambivalence and reasonable doubt. Finally, by appropriating European literary forms, Walcott deploys an effective methodology for approaching Caribbean transnationality, diaspora, exile, and colonial pain—without reducing their regional specificity and unique local traits.

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