

**CRISIS OF HYBRID IDENTITY IN DEREK
WALCOTT'S
"THE SCHOONER FLIGHT"**

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Abstract

This paper deals with "The Crisis of Hybrid Identity in Derek Walcott's " The Schooner Flight"". Identity can be defined as the perception of one's self which permits individuals to identify where and with whom they fit socially, thus it encourages questions like "Who Am I? What am I? Who are you? What are you?". In the twentieth century the issue of national and regional identity takes on great importance in Caribbean poetry . Derek Walcott, among many others have attempted to define the particularity of individual nations or of the Caribbean region as a whole, creating a meta-narrative of identity and a peculiar "Caribbean discourse". The paper focuses on the longest and most representative poem of Derek Walcott's poetry " The Schooner Flight". This poem which is concerned with the search for identity is about a West Indian sailor called Shabine. He is a man of the folk who serves as Walcott's mask since he is of mixed European and African blood, like Walcott himself. He can also be taken as representative of the West Indian people as a whole rather than just of his alter ego Walcott for he embodies a variety of racial and ethnic admixture. By introducing his celebrated statement of identity "I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,/ and either I'm nobody or I'm a nation" (CP,346),

Shabine stakes a claim not only for himself as individual, but also for the West Indian people; that they are certainly a nation, and a people in the true sense of the word.

The conclusion sums up the findings of the research.

The Caribbean region has been colonized for so many years. Colonizers exploit its fortunes as well as abuse its people. They reduce them to mere slaves. They don't treat them as humans. As a result, the Caribbean people begin to revolt against colonization. They demand independence and freedom. Political leaders and writers hold the responsibility of tackling the issue of national consciousness. They start urging Caribbean people to revolt and never submit to the colonizers. As a Caribbean man who lives the suffering of his people, Walcott begins to write about his Caribbean island and its people. He writes about his people's search for identity.

A West Indian Poet, essayist, artist, and playwright ¹, Derek Alton Walcott was born with his twin brother, Roderick in Castries, the capital of St. Lucia on January 23, 1930.² He was from a middle class protestant "mullatto" family.³ He was racially "divided to the vein" because his grandfathers were a Dutchman from Saint Martin on his mothers' side and an Englishman from Barbados on his fathers' and they were white and wealthy whereas his grandmothers were poor and primarily of African descent. He was a Methodist and thus his religion was a minority because the dominant religion in St. Lucia was Catholicism.⁴

Walcott's father died when he was only one but Harold Simmons ⁵, a folklorist, his fathers' friend took care of him, he became in many respects a father for him. Edward Baugh writes that "it was [Simmons],

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more than anyone else, who inspired Walcott to love and care for the common people, as he had opened the eyes of Walcott and St Omer and others, like the amateur photographer Leo St Helene, to the beauty of the St Lucian countryside." He taught Walcott not only painting but also encouraged his interest in poetry, and also brought Walcott's poetry to the attention of Henry Swanzy^{6,7}

Walcott studied at St. Mary's College of St. Lucia.⁸ He applied for a scholarship to Oxford and Cambridge but was denied because of his weakness in math. For a few years he taught as an assistant master at St. Joseph's Convent, and then in 1950, he won a Colonial Development and Welfare scholarship, which allowed him to attend the University of West Indies.⁹

He took the B.A degree in 1953 and an influential turning point came to his life when he was invited to write a play to mark the "inauguration" of the political Federation of the West Indies in 1958. This development in his career led to a new kind of a creative achievement and to a new sensibility in his emotional and domestic life.¹⁰

In 1981, Walcott was appointed professor of creative writing at Boston University, where he had been teaching on a part time basis for years. After graduation, Walcott moved to Trinidad and made his living as an art critic, then he moved to New York for a year and studied theatre at the Jose Quinter's acting school in 1958, after that he returned to Trinidad. In 1991, Walcott was given the Order of the Caribbean Community. In 2009, he withdrew his candidacy as a leader for an appointment as professor of poetry at Oxford University.¹¹

His genius showed itself early and caused him to be regarded as something of a "prodigy".¹² At eighteen he published his first book of poems, *25 poems*. At 20 he founded a theatre company called the St. Lucia Arts Guild, which produced his play *Henri-Christophe* that year. In 1959 he founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop for which he wrote and directed plays. In 1981 he received a Mac Arthur "Genius" fellowship and despite his journeys to America and other countries he remains rooted in the West Indies. He has said he sees himself as a "castaway": "a person who has to work out his destiny on an island." In 1990 Walcott produced what is considered his masterpiece *Omeros*. Throughout his career Walcott has produced 17 books of poetry, eight books of plays, and two essay collections.¹³

Derek Walcott in Omila's Thounaojam's view, is the most important poet and playwright in the West Indies writing in English. Throughout his work he explored the paradoxes and mysteries of life as a West Indian artist. His established work begins with *In a Green Night: Poems 1948-1960* which is published in 1962.¹⁴ The publication of Derek Walcott's *In a Green Night* 1962 marks a turning point in history of West Indian poetry, at once for liberating it from "a simple, mindless romanticism,

a weak historicism, over-rhetorical protest and sterile abstraction." According to Robert D. Hamner, this work is a remarkable attempt by a West Indian to come to terms with a tangled cultural heritage which offered both the vision of the unbearable brutality and the promise of rich variety. It represents a major step forward in Walcott's verse.¹⁵

This work is followed by *Selected Poems* in 1964, *The Castaway* and *Other Poems* in 1965, *The Gulf* 1970, and his autobiographical

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book-length poem entitled *Another Life* 1973 followed by *Sea Grapes* 1976 and *The Star Apple Kingdom* 1979. Walcott has published two books of plays in America four of his earlier plays are *The Sea at Dauplin* 1954, *Ti Jean and His Brothers* 1958, *Malcochon, or The Six in the Rain* 1959, and *Dream on Monkey Mountain* 1970 have been collected in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* 1970. He has two plays *O Babylon* and *Joker of Seville* published in one volume.¹⁶

one dominant factor in the achievement of Walcott as a West Indian poet is that the themes and styles of his poetry relate closely to the circumstances of his birth place and environment and to the fact of being West Indian despite his commitment to the standard English. His development as a poet takes the form of homecoming and the significance of this form in his poetry is that it relates his work centrally to the wider concern with origins in West Indian poetry.¹⁷ Edward Hirsch states that:

The force of exultation and celebration of luck, along with a sense of benediction and obligation, a continuous efforts of memory and excavation, and a frightening duty to a fresh language and a fresh people, have defined Walcott's works... He

has been a poet of a great verbal resources and skills engaged in a multifaceted struggle to submit his native Caribbean culture as successor to Eden.¹⁸

Alexander Irvine argues that "questions of history, language, and identity interfere his poetry from its very beginnings, and his eventual turn to the epic form seems inevitable since it is through the epic that poetic identity assumes a national stage and thereby a powerfully collective assemblages of enunciation."¹⁹

Personal suspension of the pressures is the important theme in Walcott's poetry. Walcott's necessary theme is Walcott, the pursuit and delineation of a fictive character based on an actual person named Derek Walcott. The self-portrait emerges as an interplay between the man's recognition of weakness and deficiencies in himself and recognition of ideal strengths, values and virtues, by which he seeks to determine himself.²⁰

Walcott is a poet of affirmation, a writer who thinks that the job of art is to exceed history and rename the world as he says in "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory," " For every poet, it is always morning in the world. History is forgotten, insomniac night; History and elemental awe are always our early beginning, because the fate of poetry is to fall in love with the world, in spite of History."²¹ His writing reveals an appreciation of Caribbean's natural environment. In his early works, Walcott was no less determined than his contemporaries in responding to issues of history and identity foregrounded by the antecedent colonialist discourse.²²

Although he writes in "metropolitan" standard English, there are instances of Creole in his poetry. His use of Creole is complicated because the language situation in his homeland is unique and the decision to use or to avoid Creole was politicized. French-based Creole is the language of rural areas, where the population is black, Catholic, and poor while English was the language of towns because it was the language of British administration and law, and so it is the language of nearly all the island's protestants and nearly all St. Lucians of mixed racial heritage.²³ During his childhood he spoke English at home and learned metropolitan French at school as a foreign language.

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The language of his education was English. He would have heard his island's French-based Creole everywhere, and certainly understood a great deal of it, but he was prohibited from using it. It was the language associated with the Catholic rural poor, not the class to which his family belonged. But after World War II, in Walcott's late adolescence, an increasing sense of national identity precedes the movement toward independence, and in that atmosphere he had even more reason to think of "Creole" as "his" language, one of the languages of his people and country.²⁴

In Jamaica where he studied at the University of West Indies, Walcott witnessed the beginnings of a move toward linguistic insularity as a feature of the politics of independence, there was a Creole continuum which is characterized by significant divergences from standard English in lexicon, syntax as well as pronunciation.²⁵Edward Glissant contends, a Creolization should describe not a static "category" of identity "half way between pure extremes" but the "unceasing process of transformation" through which people create a collective sense of identity from multiple cultural sources.²⁶Seamus Heaney, Walcott's close friend and a fellow poet remarks upon the "sumptuous authority" of Walcott's use of language. Many commentators, pointing to the facility with which Walcott invokes West Indian dialect and vocabularies, also commend adept incorporation of "Creole" into his poetry. John Theime affirms, Walcott "moves easily across illusory linguistic, literary, and social fault-lines" with his use of both standard English and Creole. Walcott develops " a complex pluralistic aesthetic that spans the Caribbean linguistic continuum and its social and cultural correlatives"²⁷

Thus he has discarded neither his Caribbean heritage nor his British Education.²⁸

Walcott has been known as a major literary force throughout the English-speaking world and the Caribbean. He has received a Rockefeller Fellowship, the Guinness Award for poetry, A Guggenheim Fellowship, the Royal society of literature's heinemann award, and a John D. and Catherine T. Mac Arthur foundation award. In 1992 he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature.²⁹

His unique voice in poetry, drama and criticism is shaped by his position at the crossroads between Caribbean, British, and American culture and by his interest in hybrid identities and diaspora.³⁰ The term "hybridity" occurs in postcolonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler- invaders dispossess native peoples and force them to "assimilate" to new social patterns. It may also occur in later periods when patterns of immigration from the metropolitan societies and from other imperial areas of influence continue to produce cultural "palimpsests" with the post-colonized world.³¹ In the Caribbean, "hybridity" lacks viability as a cultural model for the postcolonial relation, according to Homi Bhabha who believes that hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities, it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal(that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority. Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects.³²

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The effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions. Through "hybridization", new identities are constructed which are both resistant and compliant, which use tropes and selectively adopt values of the colonizer to construct a third identity, an identity described by Bhabha as "third-space" or "in-between". In *The Location of Culture* 1994, Bhabha tries to find a proper location for the confrontation of two cultures in the post-colonial period and points out that this in-between space for the impact of two cultures is called hybridity.³³

Whereas the term "diaspora" " does not simply refer to a geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory, and home which such displacement produces".³⁴This concept is derived from the Greek verb "speiro" which means "to sow" and the preposition "dia" which means "over." This concept is understood fully in the context of Jewish dispersal and is defined as "a group of that suffered traumatic event which lead to the dispersal of its members". Robin Cohen in 1997 argued that the meaning of diaspora has been extended as "there are other peoples abroad who have also maintained strong collective identities[and] are settled outside their countries of origin but were not necessarily victims of persecution". According to Cohen there are types of diaspora these include trade diaspora, victim diaspora, labor and imperial diasporas, and cultural diasporas. Cohen puts migrant groups from the Caribbean region together in a single "cultural diaspora" this is due to the fact that the inhabitants of the Caribbean have collective experiences of colonization and descended

from other diaspora groups as the African, Indian, and Chinese diasporas.³⁵

Walcott's long narrative poem, "The Schooner Flight" from *The Star-Apple Kingdom*, 1979, is concerned with the search for identity. *The Star-Apple Kingdom*, as in *Sea Grapes*, is closely informed by the mature vision and aesthetic realized in *Another Life*. This volume shows Walcott's intensive engagement with the political and public scene in the Caribbean.³⁶ Walcott's genius not only his stature as a major poet become evident in this volume. It shows his ability to renew himself, to refresh his imagination, and to re-discover the myth of his life and his culture.³⁷

Brathwaite praised the poem as Walcott's "first major nation language effort." In 1989 Walcott said "well, when I finished The Schooner Flight, I thought that maybe I had done something." "The Schooner Flight" appeared in three different forms before its inclusion in *The Star-Apple Kingdom*. Walcott began the poem in 1976, when he was in affair with Norline Metivier, later to become his third wife. The first printed version is *Massachusetts Review*, winter 1977, which Walcott has described as "a work in progress about the travels of a West Indian sailor called Shabine, the St. Lucian Creole name for a mulatto." The second version is *The MR* version, which provided a full account of Shabine's personal circumstances at the time of his departure. The third version is *Chants of Saints*.³⁸ From this version, the title, *The Star-Apple Kingdom*, comes to be known. Shabine says "I had no home,/ and no destination but the star- apple kingdom/ of that branched sky from which meteors are shaken/ like full fruit."³⁹ These revisions move from "standard to Creole", as Walcott makes

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Shabine increasingly credible as a man of the folk, as sailor whose "common language go be the wind" (CP, 347). They also imply Walcott connecting Shabine's personal troubles to "a collective West Indian sorrow." Shabine decides that as he writes the poem, "each line must be soaked in salt of the sea".⁴⁰

"The Schooner Flight" is a "self-portrait and life-summary" of its narrator-protagonist, the sailor-poet Shabine, who serves as Walcott's mask.⁴¹ It tells the story of a sailor leaving his home for a voyage to reach a far outer goal.⁴² His voyage onward is interrupted with memories and visions of the past. "The Schooner Flight" begins in "*medias res*." It also folds together local history, that it is the impact of European and African in the Caribbean, and the racial mixed colonial society and mythic history of the voyage as shaping, "redemptive ordeal". The crux of this poem is history, narratives and understandings of the past.⁴³ In this poem, Walcott unites a "vernacular tradition with his high eloquence" so that the reader believes that his persona, Shabine, is both a common man and a speaker of poetry.⁴⁴

C.G.O. King says that Shabine, is a richly suggestive persona deriving from Walcott's personal origins and ethnic admixture. He serves as a representation of Walcott's self-searching confrontation with the shades of his ancestors. He represents what King called the "mulatto consciousness."⁴⁵ Walcott uses the voice of Shabine to symbolize the Caribbean struggle for a historical and cultural identity. Throughout the poem, Shabine depends upon memories to create an identity for himself as a Caribbean man.⁴⁶ Throughout shabine, Walcott shows the cultural, political, and historical realities which have created

him. Shabine tells his story of how he left his home in Trinidad in "vain search for one island that heals."⁴⁷

"The Schooner Flight" is divided into eleven sections. The first section which is entitled "Adios, Carenage", begins at dawn, with Shabine's departure from his home, his sleeping mistress and his island; as he gets into the taxi that is taking him to his departing ship, the driver recognises him:

'This time, Shabine, like you really gone!'

I ain't answer the ass, I simply pile in

the back seat and watch the sky burn

above Laventille pink as the gown

in which the woman I left was sleeping,

and I look in the rearview and see aman

exactly like me, and the man was weeping

for the houses, the streets, that whole fucking `(CP,345)

The above lines dramatize Shabine's own feelings, an objective correlation for expressing Walcott's own feelings about the islands of the Caribbean. This show his love for the physical beauty, for the streets, houses and domestic attachment. In leaving his house, he has left an entire way of life behind him. He weeps for his island.⁴⁸ The moment of leaving for him is a kind of death. His neighbor looks at him as if he were not there. The double meaning of the driver's "really gone" and by his own view of his reflection in the mirror of the past as that of another man, an old self still visible but no longer alive. His home now is "sea rippling like galvanize" below "the nail holes of stars in the sky roof". In his discussion of "The Schooner Flight", Ned Thomas writes: "flight suggests escape from what Conrad's called "land entanglements".

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Shabine tackles the impossible past "amnesia", the "annihilation of history", that it is if his departure is a form of death, it is also a form of rebirth.⁴⁹ Shabine introduces himself:

I taking a sea bath, I gone down the road.
I know these islands from Monos to Nassau,
a rusty head sailor with sea-green eyes
that they nickname Shabine, the patois for
any red nigger, and I, Shabine, saw
when these slums of empire was paradise.
I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
I had a sound colonial education,
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation. (CP,346)⁵⁰

Because Shabine is of mixed European and African blood, like Walcott himself, he can be taken as representative of the West Indian people as a whole rather than just of his alter ego Walcott, and not even just of that particular group of West Indians as well. He represents a variety of their racial and ethnic admixture. By introducing his celebrated statement of identity "I have Dutch, nigger and English in me, / and either I'm nobody or I'm a nation" (CP, 346) Shabine stakes a claim not only for himself as individual, but also for the West Indian people; that they are certainly a nation, and a people in the true sense of the word.⁵¹ By describing himself as "either I'm nobody or I'm a nation" Shabine proposes identification with "Odysseus", the ancient sailor of the Mediterranean who also named himself as "nobody", and stakes out a claim for his particular Caribbean identity "Dutch, English, African".⁵²

Although the literal return is impossible, Shabine's "either I'm nobody or I'm a nation" shows that he carries his love with him, and he never stops seeking some form of reunion with what he has left behind. Walcott carries with him a West Indies of the spirit through his racially mixed heritage and his knowledge of the island from "Monos to Nassau" (CP, 346). His spirit becomes as flying insect "if loving these islands must be my load,/ out of corruption my soul takes wings" (CP,346). Shabine states clearly that his abandoning of Maria Conception, his mistress, doesn't mean that he will forget her.⁵³ As a lover, Shabine imagines himself bound to a dead past, he looks back to Maria Conception like "a mourner fixed at graveside, grieving for a body which will not be glorified." (CP, 346).⁵⁴

He also swears by "stars" and his "mother's milk" that he has never stopped to care for the family he left to follow his affair with Maria:

I loved them, my children, my wife, my home;

I loved them as poets love the poetry

That kills them, as drowned sailors the sea. (CP,347)

Love for him is unsustainable emotion, involving a choice between being killed by love's object or abandoning it. What he labors to maintain and bring forward, in the end destroys him, just as the sea, the medium of the passage, drowns the sailor in the end. Leaving his love behind, the sailor-poet confronts two destructive forces which he linked to his love, which are the voyage and the poem. The voyage can be taken as a metaphor for writing the poem, in this way it becomes not a source for oblivion but instead a source for transformation, a way of recovering what has left behind. It is also a way of reworking the

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past. He gives a promise that every line of his poem will be "soaked in salt of the sea" (CP, 347).⁵⁵

He continues with his promise to write the poem in the "common language" which is the "wind." Ned Thomas says that "it must reflect a commitment to the salted vigour of ordinary speech." By choosing the "wind" to be his "common language", Shabine appeals to a Romantic poetics in which the power of language is grounded not in convention but in nature itself, and in which the play of the wind on an "Aeolian harp" supplied an analogy for poetic inspiration. Shabine's "common language" is higher than nature itself, the renewing source that the corrupt language of Trinidadian politics no longer respects.⁵⁶

In the second section which is entitled "Raptures of the Deep," Shabine gives his reasons for leaving the island, these reasons are both public and private. On the one he shows his disappointed and disgust about the condition of society, the corruption of values and of politics. On the other hand, he shows his condition as being torn apart between love of his wife and children and love of his mistress, and feeling guilty about it.⁵⁷ This section moves back and forth between Shabine's anger at Trinidadian corruption and his troubles with Maria Conception.⁵⁸ When Shabine dives for "salvage" through a sea, a he see the sea:

... so choke with the dead
that when I would melt in emerald water,
whose ceiling rippled like a silk tent,
I saw them corals: brain, fire, sea-fans,
dead-men's-fingers, and then, the dead men.
I saw that the powdery sand was their bones

ground white from Senegal to San Salvador

(CP,34)

The water in which the living try to swim, is choked with dead. The sea which appears to contain a human past becomes a place of visionary insight. What Shabine as bits of sand or coral are in fact bones, spread along the "sea-lanes between the Caribbean and Africa". Those dead are not only Shabine's ancestors as a Caribbean man but also his ancestors as poet. The passage echoes Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.⁵⁹

Shabine's memory of his family is connected to the memory of the dead men found in the previous lines. The line, "dead-men's-fingers, then, the dead men" seem parallel to the phrases, "salt seeking salt" and "flesh of my flesh!" (CP, 349). This connection actually shows Shabin's inability to separate his own cultural identity from his other identities that is, his identity as a father, a husband, an adulterer, and a fisherman.⁶⁰

When Shabine's dives into the depth of the sea, he sees a vision of God, and a voice tells him "Shabine, if you leave her, if you leave here I shall give you the morning star" (CP, 349). When he tries to forget Maria conception, he tries other women.⁶¹ Elaine Slavery has argued that Walcott's women are either "seductive or threatening", that's why when he left his mistress he tries other women, only to find that he couldn't be well with them. Shabine's first and last love is the sea, and for him the generative power of the sea is personified in women, as a result he cannot forget women.⁶²

By the end of section two Shabine still hopes for some unifying perspective:

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Where is my rest place, Jesus?

Where is y harbour?

Where is the pillow I will not have to pay for,

And the window I can look from that frames my life? (CP,350)

He still wishes to replace the domestic stability he is about to desert, to took some other window as he once looked from that of his home. The "window" represents a narrative angle of vision, a point of view from which his life looks whole "framed" and collected like a painting, rather than like a desperately improvised series of isolated decisions. He wishes also to have a stable and fulfilling sexual relationship, if the "harbour" is taken as a sexual metaphor, Shabine would like to share a "pillow" with someone who does not charge for it. The "harbour" also refers to the harbour of some new homeland, with its own anchorage to replace the one at Carenage.⁶³

The third section entitled "Shabine Leaves the Republic" represents Shabin's catalogue of failed hopes. He lost his faith in the revolution as well as his faith in his woman's love, Maria Conception.⁶⁴ This section starts with Shabine's declaring " I had no nation now but the imagination." Walcott in an interview (1990) has commented on Shabin's statement, saying:

You could take this to mean that the nation of the imagination would be a nation in which the temperament and the spirit of the poet would enter the spirit of the politics.... This other nation we are talking about is the nation that acts imaginative evly in the higher sense of the imagination. And in the way that the imagination creates a work of art, a nations ideal should be a work of art.... [I]t is inevitable to have a flawed nation, but the effort to create a nation as if it were an act of

imagination would be more creative than the repetition of the usual clichés and conduct. Shabine is not going that far with his statement. I am simply saying that if I have no nation but in imagination, the artist is left out of the nation and therefore his recourse is to an imaginary nation which is his nation, his imagination. So by disaffection, he has become an artist.⁶⁴

In this section, the social collides with the personal. Like Walcott's Shabine's "mulatto identity" places him between "the white man" who "chain my hands and a apologize, 'History'" and the Black who said "I wasn't black enough for their pride" (CP,350). He finds himself trapped in a dualism not of his own creation. It is history is personified as a white planter in a "tropical suit" and his "crab-like movement", "sideways and backward" (CP, 348), takes his to go ahead into the future.⁶⁵ Shabine wants and even needs a narrative about the past, but "History" didn't give him what he needs, as a result Shabine declares the double loss of faith "I no longer believed in the revolution/ I was losing faith in the love of my woman" (CP, 347). Shabin's hope for communal and individual renewal declined.⁶⁶

In "The Flight Passing Blanchisseuse" which is the fourth section, the schooner passes along the northern coast of Trinidad, it passes the fishing village of Blanchisseuse. Shabine's last look at Trinidad a sense of comfort, nature and culture interferes with each other. This scene proposes that "paradise" survives beside the "slums of empire". The natural and the human interpenetrate and sustain each other, lighthouse and star start making friends,
down every beach the long day ends,
and there, on that last stretch of sand,

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on a beach bare of all but light,
dark hands start pulling in the seine
of the dark sea, deep, deep inland .(CP, 351–52)

In this scene "beach bare of all but light" the corruptions of culture are removed. A harmonious whole is formed from the interference of nature and culture. Lighthouse and star are in harmony with each other. In this scene Shabine sees an ideal image of the island, which is unspoiled by the "things that would make a slave sick/ in this Trinidad, the Limer's Republic" (CP,348).⁶⁷

"Shabine Encounters the Middle Passage" is the title of the fifth section. In this section Shabine encounters several reminders of his personal and historical past. Whenever he tries to escape from history, history rises before him and reminds him of its cruelties before let him pass. Shabine sees "fog coil from the sea" bringing visions of ghost ships and their crews. The first visions are warships, ruled by " great admirals, / Rodney, Nelson, De Grasse"(CP, 352). These figures participate in the Caribbean battles between England and France for controlling the islands and maintaining colonial influence over profitable slave plantations. The visions of warships is linked to the visions of " slave ships".⁶⁸

The white eighteen century seaman, Walcott writes, was called " Shabine in Status". In the moment of vision, Shabine feels that he is a part of an endless cycle of ships and sailors:

like this round world was some cranked water wheel,
every ship pouring like a wooden bucket
dredged from the deep; my memory revolve
on all sailors before me, then the sun

heat the horizon's rim and they was mist. (CP,352-353)

When the ghost ships sail through and past the flight, Shabine transmits his mind back to the past he shares with them: "my memory revolve on all sailors before me." When the sun comes over the horizon, the war ships vanish, and a second vision follows.

Next we pass slave ships. Flags of all nations,
our fathers below deck too deep, I suppose,
to hear us shouting. So we stop shouting. Who knows
who his grandfather is, much less his name?

Tomorrow our landfall will be the Barbados. (CP,353)⁶⁹

Shabine's vision brings him closer to the "depth of the sea"(CP,361) which inspires him to sing by the end of the poem. Whereas the ghost ships are described in full details with their "rusty eyeholes like cannons" and bodies so emaciated that "you traced their bones/like leaves against the sunlight", the inhabitants of the slave ships are not described at all. They remain "below decks" invisible and inuadiable.⁷⁰

The appearance of slave ships turns the war-ships into fog. They have no name, simply referred to them by "flags of all nations." The slave ships remain "buried, unseen, unnamed". The anonymity of these lineage contrasts with the full description of the war-ship passage or even with the particularized description of grandfather History "la parchment Creole with warts like an old sea bottle, crawling like a crab ... cream line cream hat". Unlike the transparent English admirals, the slave ships are profound and substantial, an evidence gained from Shabine's inability to saw "those below decks". Although fathers are not seen but everything around them indicate their presence. Shabine's ability to have access to history despite history's denial became

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apparent in this section. He succeed not in knowing the name of his grandfather, but in envisioning a history which doesn't require names to figure parenthood.⁷¹

"The Sailor Sings Back to Casuarinas" is the title of the six section. In this section, Shabine still struggles with that pain. He pauses for a meditation on colonial naming. The trees "on the low hills of Barbados" may be called " cedars, cypresses, or casuarinas" while to an outsider names do not differ, one name is as good as another "we live like our names and you would have/ to be colonial to know the difference" (CP,353)

You see them on the low hills of Barbados
bracing like windbreaks, needles for hurricanes,
trailing, like masts, the cirrus of torn sails;
when I was green like them, I used to think
those cypresses, leaning against the sea,
that take the sea-noise up into their branches,
are not real cypresses but casuarinas.

(CP, 353)

In Shabine's attempt to reconcile land and sea, culture and nature, those appear to have a symbolic role in this attempt. The trees "take the sea noise up into their branches". For Walcott naming is important to indicate the "Adamic New World Poetics." The act of naming the natural into the cultural domains interacts with each other, so that the choice of a name gives a hint about the consciousness of the namer, and the degree to which it has become "Adamic" by " exorcising the pain of history words contain"

(CP,354).⁷² Knowing the historical pain contained in the words, Shabine realizes that one had "to be colonial to know the difference" to love those trees with an inferior love, and to believe: "Those casuarinas bend like cypresses, their hair hangs down in rain if we live like the names our masters please, by careful mimicry might become men".

(CP, 354)

As a namer, in this section, Shabine responds to the natural forms confronting him; he no longer believes that his love is inferior, and he no longer wishes to turn the casuarinas into cypresses. Like the human inhabitants of the island casuarinas are imports, coming from Australia and the pacific islands, and became familiar parts of the landscape in Barbados and St. Lucia. For Shabine calling those trees by their right name means he claims them as one's own.⁷³

As Walcott's mask, Shabine's role becomes obvious in the "The Flight Anchors in Castries Harbor" which is the title of section seven. This section is addressed to Anna, Walcott's fictional name for his beloved in *Another Life*, Andreuille Alcee. Shabine tells her that once he loves her, he loved the whole world "when the stars self were young over Castries,/ I loved you alone and I loved the whole world" (CP,354). This section is an example of the way in which Shabine's flight keeps leading him back to his personal and historical origins. The words of his departure to Anna reaffirm their association even as he takes leave of her:

I have kept my own
promise, to leave you the one thing I own,

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you whom I loved first: my poetry.

We here for one night. Tomorrow, the *Flight* will be gone.

(CP, 354)

He promises his beloved to leave her something that he loved so much which is poetry. He also tells her that he will stay with her only for one night " we here for one night. Tomorrow , the flight will be gone" which can be analyzed literally as well as metaphorically. The literal meaning is that the flight sails in the morning whereas the metaphorical meaning is that the flight is a metaphor for life, this life is like a journey which ends in one night.⁷⁴

In section eight which is entitled "Fight with the Crew," Walcott has written the voice of the critics in the figure of Vinci. The critics are motivated by Shabine's use of "Creole." They still tend to connect the use of "Creole" with limited education and narrow emotional scope. On the basis of that supposition they find such a character is unbelievable, "only illiterate peasants speak Creole." They ridiculed him for writing poetry.⁷⁵ Vinci is a cook from St. Vincent, St. Lucia's immediate neighbor to the south. He is a mulatto with "red skin and blue eyes" as opposed to Shabine's "sea-green eyes." He considers poetry "unmanly and disgraceful" thus he starts criticizing Shabine for writing it, he "start mincing me like I was some hen/because of the poems" (CP,355). He steals the notebook that Shabine uses to write poetry, selects passages that are about Shabine's regret for leaving his family because these show him to be weak, and dependent upon women, and starts reading aloud for the rest of the crew: " O my children, my wife" (CP,355). At first Shabine begs him to give him the notebook back but he refuses,

then Shabine responds by throwing the knife, he passes a test of "virility" and so puts an end to the conflict:

suppose among men

you need that sort of thing. It ain't right,

but that's how it is. There wasn't much pain,

just plenty blood, and Vincie and me best friend,

but none of them go fuck with my poetry again.

(CP, 355)

In this part Shabine shows himself as a "man's poet" nobody dare to criticize his poetry and poems anymore, and he and Vinci became friends.⁷⁶

In section nine which is entitled " Maria conception and the Book of Dreams" Shabine puts himself with the antagonists of progress " dreams, prophecy, and poetry" simply because he sees progress as "history's dirty joke." (CP, 356). On the night the flight passes Dominica, Shabine had a dream in which he sees himself among Caribs who leap in the ocean rather than submitting to the enemy "drown at last/ in big breakers of smoke"(CP,358). His drowning foreshadows the storm that will destroy the crew in section ten. It is also a form of rebirth. After this dream, Shabine is freed from his obsession with history, his longing for Maria, and his final " rest place" that will resolve the tensions of his life. Shabine's poetry and authority as prophet comes from dreams and madness "all you see me talking to the wind, so you think I mad" he says, but those who think so are themselves "mad people". His dream gives him a responsibility which is to give voice to his island and to the grief of its people. He promises to defeat the ministers and businessmen " I shall scatter your lives like a

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handful of sand, I have no weapon but poetry and the lances of palms and the sea's shining shield." (CP, 356).⁷⁷

"Out of the Depths" is the tenth section. This stanza which is the climax of the poem starts with a quotation from the Bible "Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice! Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.". What comes after this is the story of Jonah : a story about how one may be swallowed up by the sea's maw and yet survive." (CP, 358).⁷⁸ The storm of this section releases the accumulated tensions of the poem. The coming of this storm is indicated by the restlessness of the sea creatures :

A stingray steeplechase across the sea,
tail whipping water, the high man-o' wars
start reeling inland, quick, quick an archery
of flying fish miss us. (CP,358)

Shabine says "Be Jesus, I never see sea got so rough/ so fast!
That wind come from God back pocket!"(CP, 358). The storm was taken by Shabine as a judgment for his desertion of his family and his mistress " I have not loved those I loved enough"(CP,358). Shabine is secured from the storm because of his faith "I from backward people who still fear God" (CP,359) since Shabine is saved by faith, then the flight's captain, a black Christ, is his savior who by heroic struggle redeems him from a deserved death:

But if that storm had strength, was in Cap'n face,
beard beading with spray, tears salting the eyes,
crucify to his post, that nigger hold fast
to that wheel, man, like the cross held Jesus. . .

(CP,359)⁷⁹

"After the Storm" is the title of the eleventh section which describes a state of calmness on the sea and within Shabine himself " there was no more storm." (CP, 360) In this section Shabine becomes a wiser man, he has learned to live without happiness, and to accept "uncertainty, yearning, and transience without asking for more": " I wanted nothing after that day" (CP,360). He achieves some sort of peace as he transforms his passion for Maria into a more "pantheistic, disinterested love":

I saw the veiled face of Maria Concepcion

marrying the ocean, then drifting away

in the widening lace of her bridal train

with white gulls her bridesmaids, till she was gone. (CP,360)

His sexual desire for Maria has transformed into perceiving her as "presiding spirit of the sea" and his wish to have a "resting place" has transformed into a desire for the healing of the islands. Shabine himself had never expected to reach such a "detachment" "there'd be no rest, forgetting./ is like telling mourners round the graveside/ about resurrection, they want the dead back" (CP,364). By the end of the poem, he has learned that "resurrection" is not a "fable" told in order to comfort the mourners but it is something true which he has actually experienced in surviving the storm. By the end of the poem, Shabine doesn't want anything for himself but he wants more for his island and his people. He asks the rain to "make these islands fresh/ as Shabine once knew them" and he asks for his poetry to give " voice to one people's grief"(CP,360).⁸⁰

Rie Tereda sees Shabine pulling " his perspective as far back as it can go to a nearly posthumous distance". Shabine speaks his blessing

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to the islands he left behind from that distance, a distance from which those islands, if " all different size" begin to share generic features, even to look alike:

Open the map. More islands there, man,
than peas on a tin plate, all different size,
one thousand in the Bahamas alone,
from mountains to low scrub with coral keys,
and from this bowsprit, I bless every town,
the blue smell of smoke in hills behind them,
and the one small road winding down them like twine
to the roofs below ... (CP,360)⁸¹

Shabine by the end of the poem reaches a conclusion in which he says that the rest of his days are to be " the flight to a target whose aim we'll never know,/ vain search for one island that heals with its harbour/ and guiltless horizon" (CP,361). His last line "Shabine sings to you from the depth of the sea" suggests that his home now will be the ship and the harbor.⁸²

Conclusion

After suffering and enduring pain, Shabine becomes a wiser man. He learned to live with sorrow without any sort of happiness and to accept "uncertainty, yearning, and transience without asking for more." He no longer needs something for himself but he needs more for his island he wants his island to return fresh as he once knew. He wants his poetry to give voice to his island and its people that he

loved them. He accepts the ship and the harbour to be his home. Walcott wants to immortalize his island through his poetry. He wants to make known. He gives it a voice. Wherever he travels, he can't forget it. His island inspired him. He hopes that it stays afresh forever.

Notes

¹Penny Woollard, "Derek Walcott and the Wild Frontier: The Ghost Dance" (University of Essex) ,49th parallel, Vol.23 (summer,2009),1.

²Paul Breslin, Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott (University of Chicago,2001),11,12.

³Laurence A. Breinger, Creole Language in the Poetry of Derek Walcott, Callaloo , Vol.28, No.1, Derek Walcott: A special Issue (winter,2005)

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3805521> (accessed:10/3/2013) 31,32.

⁴Paul Breslin, 2011,11,12.

⁵Harold Simmons was born in 1914, he doesn't complete his education after high school. Simmons " epitomized" the romantic idea of the artist. Simmons argued for the necessity of " a distinctive West Indian art". He insisted that art could not be called art unless it springs from people, "unless it records those things felt and experienced". He believed strongly in the unity of West Indian culture. He wrote essays about West Indian traditions of collaboration and self-help, about any aspect of local history and tradition that caught his interest. In 1966, he committed suicide. Paul Breslin ,14.

⁶Henry Swanzy was born in near Cork, Southern Ireland on 14 June 1915, when he was only five he left Ireland for England, and although

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he eventually established a successful career as a literary producer and editor with the BBC he always felt as he put his Irishness, that is his difference, Griffith, Glyne A., "Deconstructing Nationalism: Henry Swamy, Caribbean Voices and the Development of West Indian Literature" *Small Axe*, No. 10, Vol. 5, No.2 (September,2001),1,2.

⁷Paul Breslin,13,14.

⁸ Edward Hirsch and Derek Walcott, "An Interview with Derek Walcott", *Contemporary Literature*, Vol.20, No.3 (summer,1979)
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1208293> (accessed:16/12/2012), 279.

⁹Sara Constantakis, David J. Kelly (eds.), *Poetry for Students: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Poetry*, Vol. 34 (Gale, Cengage Learning,2010), 113.

¹⁰Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, (University of West Indies: Jamaica,N.D),472,473.

¹¹Sara Constantakis,113.

¹²Edward Baugh and Derek Walcott, "Caribbean Quarterly" (December,1992)<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23050366> (accessed:8/11/2012),xiv.

¹³Edward Baugh, "Derek Walcott: Selected Poems", (New York, N.D)2,3.

¹⁴Edward Hirsch and Derek Walcott,279,280.

¹⁵ Omila Thounaojam , "Understanding Hybridity in Derek Walcott's In a Green Night", *Assam University, Silchar*, Vol.III, Issue I, (March, 2012),2.

¹⁶Edward Hirsch and Derek Walcott,279,280.

¹⁷ D. S. Izevbaye, "The Exile and the Prodigal : Derek Walcott as a West Indian Poet", *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol.26, No.1/2 (March–June 1980) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40653401> (accessed: 9/11/2012),7.

¹⁸Edward Hirsch and Derek Walcott,109.

¹⁹Alexander Irvine, " " Betray Them Both or Give Them What They Give? Derek Walcott's Deterritorialization of Western Myth", *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, Vol.4, No.1, (Fall–2005) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40986176> (accessed:16/12/2012),123,124,125.

²⁰Edward Baugh , "Ripening with Walcott", *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol.23, No.2/3 writers and writing (June–September,1977) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23050427> (accessed:16/12/2012) 84.

²¹ Edward Hirsch and Derek Walcott,110.

²²Isidore Okpewho, "Walcott, Homer, and the "Black Atlantic"", under " Research in African Literatures",Vol.33, No.1, (spring,2002), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820928> (accessed: 16/12/2012),31,32.

²³Laurence A. Breinger, "Creole Language in the Poetry of Derek Walcott", *Callaloo*, Vol.28, No. 1, *Derek Walcott: A special Issue* (winter,2005) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3805521> (accessed:10/3/2013),31.

²⁴*ibid*,31,32.

²⁵ *Ibid*,32.

²⁶Charles W. Pollard, "Travelling with Joyce: Derek Walcott's Discrepant Cosmopolitan Modernism", *Twentieth Century Literature*,Vol.47, No.2, (Summer,2001) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/82784> (accessed: 16/12/2012),201.

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²⁷Jason Lagapa, "Swearing At not by History: Obscenity, picong, and Irony in Derek Walcott's Poetry", *College Literature*, Vol.35, No.2(Spring,2008)

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/251154495> (16/12/2012),104,105.

²⁸Harold Bloom(ed.) ,*Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Derek Walcott*,(Chelsea House publishers,2003),53.

²⁹Derek Walcott and George B. Handley, "Interview with Derek Walcott", *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, Vol.4, No.1, (fall,2005) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40986174> (accessed:8/11/2012) 25.

³⁰ Edward Baugh, *Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature: Derek Walcott*, (Cambridge University Press,2006)

³¹ Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths, *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*(London: Routledge,2003),183.

³²Rudyard J. Alcocer, *Narrative Mutations, Discourses of Heredity and Caribbean literature* (Routledge,2005),12.

³³Omila Thounaojam ,2

³⁴Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory And Practice In Postcolonial Literature*,2nd ed., (London: Routledge,1989),217,218.

³⁵ Janine Rose," Diaspora, Identity, and Community: Caribbean Immigrant Organizations in the Greater Toronto Area(GTA)" (York University) Janiner@ Yorku.Ca, 2,3.

³⁶Patricia Ismond,225–226.

³⁷Derek Walcott and Peter Balakain,174.

³⁸Paul Breslin,189,190.

³⁹Edward Baugh,2006,113.

⁴⁰Paul Breslin,189,190.

⁴¹Edward Baugh,2006,7.

⁴²Poetry Chronicle,Collected poems by F.T.Princes; The Star–Apple Kingdom by Derek Walcott; Blue Wine by John Hollander; All I Can Say by Geoffrey Hollow way; Designing Woman by Pamela White Hades; Uncertainties and Rest by Timothy Steele; Loving the Days by John Witte; For the Body by Marilyn Nelson Wantek; Praise by Robert Hass; A Door to the Forest by Jon Swan; Stained Glass by William Mills; The Face Behind the Face..., Review by Richmond Lattimore, The *Hudson Review*, Vol.32,No.3 (Autumn,1979)

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⁴³Mary C. Fuller, "Myths of Identity in Derek Walcott's " The Schooner Flight", Vol.5.2–3(1995–96),323.

⁴⁴Paul Breslin and Robert Hamner,eds. 36,37.

⁴⁵Edward Baugh, Derek Walcott(University of the West Indies: Jamaica),471.

⁴⁶Jaime C. Tung,14.

⁴⁷Dennis Walder, "Either I'm Nobody or I'm a Nation: Writing the Fruits of Uncertainty", the *Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol.27, The politics of Postcolonial Criticism(1997) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3509135> (accessed:16/11/2012),101,102.

⁴⁸ Mark A.Mc watt,1607,1608.

⁴⁹ Paul Breslin,195.

⁵⁰F. T.princes,etal,442.

⁵¹Edward Baugh,2006,109

⁵² Mary C.Fuller,322,323.

⁵³Paul Breslin,196.

⁵⁴Mary C.Fuller,326.

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- ⁵⁵Paul Breslin,196,197.
- ⁵⁶Ibid,197,198.
- ⁵⁷Edward Baugh,2006,110.
- ⁵⁸Paul Breslin,201.
- ⁵⁹ Mary C.Fuller,324,325.
- ⁶⁰ Jaime C.Tung,40,41.
- ⁶¹Paul Breslin,198,199.
- ⁶²Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*(University of the West Indies:Jamiaca),103.
- ⁶³ Paul Breslin,199.
- ⁶⁴Ibid,202.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶Ibid,200,201.
- ⁶⁷ Mary C.Fuller,327.
- ⁶⁸Paul Breslin,202,203.
- ⁶⁹Ibid,203.
- ⁷⁰ Mary C.Fuller,329,330.
- ⁷¹Paul Breslin,204.
- ⁷²Mary C.Fuller,330.
- ⁷³ Paul Breslin,204,205.
- ⁷⁴Ibid,205,206.
- ⁷⁵Ibid,206,207.
- ⁷⁶Paul Breslin and Robert Hamner,(eds.), *Callaloo*, volume 28, number1, winter 2005, special issue: Derek Walcott 36,37.
- ⁷⁷Paul Breslin,207,208.
- ⁷⁸Ibid,197,209,210.
- ⁷⁹Mary C.Fuller,332.

⁸⁰ Paul Breslin,210–212.

⁸¹ Mary C. Fuller,335147–Ibid,212–214

⁸² Paul Breslin,210–2

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