

**Questioning the Poetics of Relation and Home in Selected Works of Derek Walcott  
and Dennis Brutus**

**A thesis submitted by Nche Andzeuh Joan in the fulfilment of the requirement for  
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**I Nche Andzeuh Joan hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 2 January 2020**

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## ABSTRACT

My thesis brings into Relation (Glissant, 2010) the poetry of Derek Walcott from St Lucia and Dennis Brutus from South Africa. Through the central question how might Relation, evident in the writings of Walcott and Brutus, serve as a poetic medium in constructing notions of Home and revising concepts of the human? In the wake of colonialism and slavery, my concern lies with how Walcott and Brutus' poetry functions to offer spaces that re-present humans and landscapes that have historically been portrayed as marginal. Using a comparative and post-colonial approach, I offer a reading of the poets' literary representations of their societies with reference to slavery on the plantation in the Caribbean and segregation in apartheid South Africa, to highlight a delinking (Mignolo, 2011) from past servitude and a re-constructing of the present. I suggest in chapter one that each poet in the poetic construction of his society engages with issues of displacement and exile to revise notions of Home. In chapter two, I show how through landscape painting each poet praises the beauty of Home and relates man with the landscape as a means towards the reclaiming of place. In chapter three, I explore the poet's use of the imagery of the wound to uncover the past and heal historical injuries while in chapter four the poets embrace a cross-cultural poetics to offer a particular assertion of Home and belonging. Drawing from Edward Said's counter writing poetics and Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, I argue for a relational poetics that considers the multi-racial nature of the regions under study. Focusing on Glissant's Creolisation theory, I conclude that this process of a new beginning and an openness in Relation to others are necessary for appreciating the poets' shared humanist poetics and their representations of post-independence assertion of identities in their societies.

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## INTRODUCTION

The central argument in this thesis is that through their poetry, Derek Walcott and Dennis Brutus similarly strive to give a voice to their communities, at times through a fragmentary landscape, to negotiate the haunting forces of slavery and colonisation that have shaped their history and their lives. I argue that by this means both poets establish a poetics of Relation<sup>1</sup> and Home.<sup>2</sup> Their poetics is centred on the wound of history or the colonial wound which informs a poetics of relation developed through their writing. Walcott highlights this wound in his Nobel Lecture using the image of a broken vase:

Break a vase, and the love that resembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars.<sup>3</sup>

These ‘white scars’ are the result of colonial violence, the Trans-Atlantic tearing of people from Africa – their original homeland – to the New World. The wound is also ongoing and open though it has potential to heal. Walcott and Brutus’ personae might be said to be suffering from the post-traumatic disorder of slavery and colonialism. This trauma finds credence in what Cathy Caruth describes as the ‘inherent latency within the experience itself.’<sup>4</sup> Caruth suggests that the historical power of trauma is not just in the repeated experience after its forgetting, but that it is through this forgetting that it is experienced.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the aftermath of a traumatic experience is so overwhelming that it ‘disrupts previous ideas of an individual’s sense of self and the standards by which one

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<sup>1</sup> Relation is capitalised in this thesis to reflect Glissant’s use of the term referring to the development of his particular ideas about poetics. Where it is written in small letters, it is about a relational poetics.

<sup>2</sup> My use of Home in this thesis is in relation to Carl Phillips’ idea that we are all unmoored and Home is a contested space that needs to be negotiated due to our fluid identities. Caryl Phillips’, ‘A New World Order’, *Wasafiri* 16.3 (2001), pp. 39-41 (p. 41).

<sup>3</sup> Derek Walcott – Nobel Lecture. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2020. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1992/walcott/lecture/> [accessed 27 May 2020], n.p.

<sup>4</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

evaluates society.’<sup>6</sup> It is this distortion of a people’s humanity that my selected poets seek to address in their poetic writings. As Kevin Newmark proposes, ‘The trauma thus requires integration, both for the sake of testimony and for the sake of cure.’<sup>7</sup> I argue that through the unveiling of historical trauma, each poet provides opportunities for those in ‘the wake’<sup>8</sup> of that history as Christina Sharpe argues it to unburden the pain of the past.

The regions of St Lucia and South Africa, from where these poets hail, have experienced distorted historical pasts triggered by hegemonic colonial values. Slavery on the plantations, oppression, discrimination, and apartheid are the scars that form the core of both poets’ writings. As a result, these poets do not yearn to restore the past in its primal state; rather, they use the pieces of their shattered histories as starting points in the realisation of fresh starts or new beginnings. I propose that poetry becomes a space via which these poets can question and restore their sense of identity and that of their region.

I turn to the Caribbean and South African regions not only because both have experienced some form of slavery and colonisation, but also because they lay claims to societies whose cultures are underwritten by a complex relationship between white, black, brown and Asian people precisely because of their history. Also, Walcott and Brutus’ poetry sustains a constant leitmotif of resistance to imperial domination and the afflictions resulting from this history. They experience what Sharpe characterises as the ‘afterlife of slavery’:

living in the wake as people of African descent means living...the time of slavery and the afterlife of slavery; in which black lives are still imperilled

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<sup>6</sup> Michelle Balaev, ‘Trends in Literary Trauma Theory’, *Mosaic* 41.2 (2008), pp. 150-165, (p. 150).

<sup>7</sup> Kevin Newmark, ‘Traumatic Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and the Shock of Laughter’ in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 236-255 (p. 153).

<sup>8</sup> Christina Sharpe, ‘Black Studies: In the Wake’, *The Black Scholar* 44.2 (2014), pp. 59-69 (p. 60).

and devalued by racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago.<sup>9</sup>

It is this racial calculus that reduces people to sub-humans that Walcott and Brutus seek to challenge. More importantly, their resistance to this status as Robert F. Reid-Pharr notes, also shows ‘their self-conscious articulation of counternarratives of human subjectivity in which enslaved and colonized persons might be understood as both historical actors and proper subjects of philosophy.’<sup>10</sup> I add that as subjects of philosophy, black and racially mixed people also should be recognised as having attributes of reason, morality, self-consciousness and being a part of a culturally established form of social relations such as kinship, ownership of property or legal responsibility that contribute to making one a person or a human. Thus, Walcott and Brutus’ poetics questions the idea of treating black people as inhuman and, even more strongly counters the various sustained theses that equate blackness with not being human.

To trace this inhumanity resulting in the colonial wound of history, I will juxtapose the history of both St Lucia and South Africa when reading the poetry of Walcott and Brutus. As far as St Lucia is concerned, Sampson Jerry argues that the military conflicts between the Dutch, British, Spanish, and French resulted in St Lucia’s falling alternatively under British and French control fourteen times, before being ceded permanently to Britain in 1815.<sup>11</sup> Apart from the French, English and Dutch, the island was also peopled by inhabitants from other areas of the continent such as Asia and Africa. Jerry states that ‘with the abolition of slavery in the mid-nineteenth century, the colonies turned to

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<sup>9</sup> Christina Sharpe, ‘Black Studies: In the Wake’, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> Robert F. Reid-Pharr, *Archives of the Flesh: African America, Spain, and Post-Humanist Critique* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Sampson Jerry, *History of St Lucia, Caribbean Island, History of an Era: People, Economy, Government, Travel* (Abidjan: Sonit Education Academy, 2016), pp. 96-97.

imported indentured labour from India, China, and the East Indies...'<sup>12</sup> This scramble by imperial powers over far-flung territories is reflected in Walcott's *Omeros*, where the poet metaphorically represents the colonial battle between Britain and France over the island of St Lucia with the characters of Helen for the island, and Achille and Hector for Britain and France, respectively.

In South Africa, imperial domination was ushered in by the Dutch East Indian company. However, when Britain made its appearance in 1795, South Africa became a settler colony through the importation of British settlers into South Africa.<sup>13</sup> British rule in the early period of their settlement in South Africa enabled apartheid to later gain ground in the region. This is because, in the years 1899 and 1902, the British defeated the Boers in the Anglo-Boer wars and 'placed the Boer men, women and children in their own camps, and set up other camps for African women and children while African men were pressed into service in the British army or in the mines.'<sup>14</sup> I argue that such a segregated system (of) delineated areas of occupation resulted indirectly in racial discrimination and apartheid in South Africa.

This segregated system of living is noted in Nancy Clark and William Worger's assertion that 'the policy of segregation generally separated races to the benefit of those of European descent to the detriment of those of African descent.'<sup>15</sup> It is this practice, formalised and implemented as apartheid that Brutus decries in his poetry. For example,

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<sup>12</sup> Sampson Jerry, p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2004). p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 21.

In 'Waiting (South African Style): 'Non-Whites Only,'<sup>16</sup> the speaker describes his wish to buy some 'postage stamps'<sup>17</sup> and how 'an ordinary girl'<sup>18</sup> at the counter 'surveys'<sup>19</sup> him with disdain for 'my verminous existence.'<sup>20</sup> The title of the poem brings home the reality of segregation; meanwhile, the girl's attitude expresses the normalised practice of racial discrimination in South Africa.

Edward Said argues that underpinning both racism and colonialism are ideological formations that certain people and territories desire and require domination.<sup>21</sup> Said adds that 'the vocabulary of classic nineteenth -century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as inferior or subject races, subordinate peoples, dependency, expansion, and authority.'<sup>22</sup> I posit that such ideologies have had far reaching effects, including the questioning of the self, physical and psychological trauma which result in the poetic pain of history that this thesis seeks to unravel. In 'The Arkansas Testament,'<sup>23</sup> Walcott brings to bear the fact of racism in America and questions his presence in that environment. This also suggests that the poet relates to the people in the American South in terms of racism and the legacy of slavery, which comes out forcefully in the images found in the poem. Jason Lagapa notes of Walcott's writing:

Fayetteville landscape, which includes a memorial cemetery for confederate soldiers, and his interactions with local residents, ("a cafeteria / reminded me of my race. / a soak cursed his vinyl table / steadily, not looking up") suggest that Walcott's battles are not physical but mostly cerebral, a reckoning of how the past bleeds into the present.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dennis Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1973), p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Brutus, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), p.8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987) pp. 104-117.

<sup>24</sup> Jason Lagapa, 'Swearing at —not by —History: Obscenity, Picong and Irony in Derek Walcott's Poetry', *College Literature* 35.2 (2008), pp. 104-125 (p.122).

I consider Lagapa's assertion to be salient, especially in terms of his emphasis on the past as having a bearing on the present. This links strongly to one of my objectives in this thesis, which is to show how both poets strive to give a voice to their landscape and its people as they present characters who struggle to survive the pain of history. In effect, they journey to the colonial past to construct the present.

Following Said's emphasis that imperial domination was based on the idea that the other was considered as inferior or subject races, I argue that this also undergirded racism in South Africa and white supremacist thoughts evident in the words of Alfred Milner, the British governor of the newly acquired South African colonies, who stipulated that it was 'the just predominance of the white race'<sup>25</sup> to be in control of the black race. I argue that through this statement, the South African white minority apartheid government bestowed upon themselves the right to brutally massacre black South Africans who resisted racial domination. This is shown in Brutus' 'The Mob' where a white crowd attacks those who are protesting the Sabotage Bill on the steps of the Johannesburg City Hall.<sup>26</sup>

The above as it is discussed in this thesis, forms part of the deep wound of the past. This historical affliction is most evident in the plantations where forced labour was the norm. Plantation slavery during the colonial era was ushered in by the establishment of sugar plantations and gold mines. These were forms of forced labour in the regions of St Lucia and South Africa, respectively. Jerry notes that

as sugar cultivation increased and spread from island to island – and to the neighbouring mainland as well—more Africans were brought to replace those

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<sup>25</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 48.

who died rapidly and easily under the rigorous demands of labor[sic] on the plantations, in the sugar factories, and in the mines.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, plantation slavery was instituted across the entire Caribbean islands as it served as a major source of income for the imperial powers. In Walcott's *Omeros*, an example of plantation labour and hardship is offered by Warwick, the narrator's father, who tells him that 'hell was built on those hills'<sup>28</sup> as he describes the women who climbed with heavy baskets of coal on their heads for 'one copper penny.'<sup>29</sup> Warwick talks of their suffering as they 'climbed the / infernal anthracite.'<sup>30</sup> It is in this light that Glissant refers to these spaces where the Caribbean enslaved peoples experienced suffering as 'so many incredible Gehennas (hell).'<sup>31</sup> He, indicates however, that these were the places where people came together, as in '[T]he Open Boat,'<sup>32</sup> to form what is today the Caribbean or 'a beginning whose time is marked by these balls and chains gone green.'<sup>33</sup> In essence then, despite the sufferings on board the slave ship, a new beginning was forged out of such catastrophe. Thus, the image of a 'ball and chain gone green' also represents a fresh start and a new knowledge for the Caribbean, especially celebrated in its diversified people and culture. Joan Anim-Addo describes this space as one that 'might allow the possibility of fathoming our relatedness made inescapable through slavery.'<sup>34</sup> Thus, the colonial affliction of the history of slavery, though a fatal event, provides the occasion to

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<sup>27</sup> Sampson Jerry, *History of St Lucia*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Glissant, p. 5-9.

<sup>33</sup> Glissant p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Joan Anim-Addo, 'Towards a Post-Western Humanism Made to the Measure of Those Recently Recognized as Human, in *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Reconstellating Humanism and the Global Hybrid* ed. by Mina Karavanta and Nina Morgan (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 250-273 (p. 262).

celebrate a relation between races. It is this that makes up what is today the Caribbean, and it is this relational aspect that Walcott celebrates as part of his poetics.

The relational experience on the Caribbean plantation also occurred in South Africa. Plantation labour in South Africa was occasioned by the then British governor, Milner, who ‘facilitated the importation of 60,000 Chinese indentured labourers in 1904. These men, who accounted for one-third of the mines’ workforce...were subjected to much more stringent forms of discipline and control.’<sup>35</sup> These Chinese indentured labourers also constitute part of the minority population who suffered discrimination under apartheid. Aside from these indentured labourers, the black African population experienced worse conditions under the 1911 Mines and Works Act that restricted African employment to menial and unskilled jobs, while reserving the most skilled jobs for the whites.<sup>36</sup> Brutus portrays this socio-political and economic landscape in ‘Under me’, a poem describing the landscape of Kimberley<sup>37</sup> and the reality of hardship and forced labour in the mines. I argue that it was these scars of hardship and oppression that nurtured the rise of African resistance towards slavery and the demand for equal rights for all peoples, through a relational poetics as Brutus advocates in his poetry.

As former British colonies, both St Lucia and South Africa inherited colonial legacies, which are evident in the writings of Walcott and Brutus and form part of their poetics. Key elements of these poetics include: the metaphor of the wound, an incorporating of classical and medieval forms (meter and stanzas), an evident hybridity in the use of language, counter discourse or writing back, praise and protest poetry. The central

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<sup>35</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> A historical town noted for its mining industry and mining museum.

research questions that I address are how does the wound of history enable the negotiation of a sense of place and identity, and how might both poets' poetry be brought into dialogue? The poetry of Walcott and Brutus, I suggest, is involved in a cross-cultural dialogue that speaks to a Relation and involves the 'Other.'<sup>38</sup> What this implies is that both poets move towards equal but divergent paths, which including an appreciation of the Other as part of oneself, and simultaneously, the recognition of the difference of the Other. In addition, the poetics of both are concerned with centring historically underprivileged and oppressed peoples of their regions. I argue that in doing so, they discard the ideas of centre and margin in their postcolonial world. I suggest that both poets and their people could be said to be at risk of subjugation, discrimination and even death. Like Sharpe, cited above, Shona N. Jackson advances the idea that thinking about risk requires us:

to rethink blackness in terms of the broad and complex forms of subordination across time and within and outside nation-states...thinking risk demands we look at blackness across the diaspora and acknowledge not just black subordination but those historical and social moments in which blackness is articulated with and through settler and other forms of colonial power.<sup>39</sup>

The black body, according to Jackson, has been subjected to risk across time through slavery and racial discrimination due to imperialism. The regions of St Lucia and South Africa are examples of areas that confirm Jackson's idea of blackness as risk, given the subjugation experienced by black bodies in settings such as the sugar plantations, the mines, and the 'tribal reserves'<sup>40</sup> in St Lucia and South Africa, respectively. These complex forms of subordination as Jackson reveals are not only evident through the

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<sup>38</sup> Anywhere this is capitalised, it would be in relation to the post-colonial or Said theorising of the binaries of 'Self/Other.'

<sup>39</sup> Shona N. Jackson, 'Risk, Blackness, and Postcolonial Studies: An Introduction', *Callaloo* 37.1 (2014), pp. 63-68 (p. 64).

<sup>40</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 50. In 1951, the government, by establishing separate embryonic governments for Africans in the rural areas under the Bantu Authorities Act (No. 68), bolstered the fictitious claim that the true home areas of Africans were in their tribal reserves.

physical infliction of pain on black bodies, but also involves ideological formations that continue to underwrite the idea of black people as inferior. Furthermore, although there has been a ‘dismantling of the great colonial structures,’<sup>41</sup> using Said’s words, imperialism ‘lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.’<sup>42</sup> These are the practises that play an instrumental role in the marginalisation of the black, brown and Asian peoples. I consider this study as an attempt towards what Reid-Pharr suggests as ‘the reinvention of the *Studia* in a manner that would allow for the articulation of the deeply embedded white supremacy that so firmly establishes...European intellectualism.’<sup>43</sup> Reid-Pharr’s idea proposes the need to subvert ideologies that continue to hold black bodies under subjugation as Jackson also offers above. In this vein, I argue that Walcott and Brutus’ poetics debunks these structures that have silenced and to some extent continue to silence the peoples of their regions. They do so by giving a voice to the landscape and their people, especially through vivid representations and a writing of resistance to forms of debasement and misrepresentations.

Underpinning my consideration of Walcott and Brutus’ poetics is Said’s notion of how the classical nineteenth-century gave rise to resistant cultures in which ‘many of the most interesting post-colonial writers bear their past within them—as scars of humiliating wounds,... as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a new future.’<sup>44</sup> Highlighting this, I describe Walcott and Brutus’ writings as an act of giving a voice to the dispossessed people of their regions. In this regard, the past becomes a necessary evil

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<sup>41</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Said, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Robert F. Reid-Pharr, *Archives of the Flesh: African America, Spain, and Post-Humanist Critique*, p. 154.

<sup>44</sup> Said, p. 34-35.

to be dealt with and confronted. Similarly, Glissant's idea of a *Poetics of Relation* as 'a poetics that is latent, open, multilingual in intention, directly in contact with everything possible'<sup>45</sup> opening ways to consider the Self as related to the Other. It emphasises how 'each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.'<sup>46</sup> My aim is to foreground the impact of this 'Relation' in the writing of multiracial societies such as South Africa and St Lucia - which is in this study emblematic of the Caribbean, as explored by Walcott and Brutus. I am also interested in showing how each poet values difference, negotiates identity, and celebrates diversity in their poetry as a means of healing the colonial past. These two poets are brought together also for reasons beginning with the biographical.

Derek Alton Walcott was born in 1930 in Castries, St Lucia. He was a progeny of both white and black ancestries with grandfathers who were whites, and grandmothers, who were blacks.<sup>47</sup> Walcott has made frequent reference to his mixed ancestry in his poetry, particularly in 'A Far Cry from Africa' in which he questions: 'I who am poisoned with the blood of both, / where shall I turn, divided to the vein?'<sup>48</sup> Although such ambivalence with his origin could be deciphered in how some characters such as 'Achille and Philocetete'<sup>49</sup> question their sense of place, it is also portrayed in his writing as a celebration of a creolised ancestry, a reflection of the eclectic nature of Caribbean society, and as one form of the poet's cultural aesthetic that is examined further in this study.

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<sup>45</sup> Glissant, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Glissant, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> John Theime, *Derek Walcott: Contemporary World Writers* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press), p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Derek Walcott, 'A Far Cry from Africa', in *Collected Poems: 1948-1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, pp. 3-325.

Walcott was raised by his mother, Alix Walcott who had a great influence on him. She ‘... made certain that they had time to pursue intellectual and artistic interest.’<sup>50</sup> Thus, Alix ensured that Walcott followed in the footsteps of his father who had himself,

a library including a set of complete works of Dickens, read English classics and modern novels, wrote verse, was a draughts-man and a watercolourist. He ordered books for the Castries Carnegie library which his children would later consult.<sup>51</sup>

Consequently, Walcott was exposed to both the English classics and the modern literature of his time. Apart from the above classic influence seen in Walcott’s writings, there was also on the other hand, the Creole influence. Alix Walcott is known to have spoken ‘English with an impeccable British accent’<sup>52</sup> on the one hand, but also, on the other, ‘spoke Creole and took an interest in local culture. It is in this vein that Walcott grew to love both the Creole and Standard English Languages as confirmed in *The Bounty*: ‘my love for both wide as the Atlantic is large.’<sup>53</sup>

Walcott also had the influence of his father’s close friends, such as ‘Harold Simmons, who taught Walcott and St Omer painting, was also a folklorist, one of the first educated St Lucians to take the island’s vernacular culture as worthy of serious study.’<sup>54</sup> It is as a result of this influence that Walcott writes a West Indian epic, *Omeros*. In it, he chooses for his characters, the local inhabitants who speak the folk idiom or vernacular, and even names one of them St Omer. Simmons’ influence on Walcott was not only limited to a father figure, but ‘he opened the eyes of Walcott...to the beauty of St Lucian

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<sup>50</sup> Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 2000), p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce King, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 33.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Breslin, *Nobody’s Nation: Reading Derek Walcott* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 13.

Countryside... and encouraged the boy's interest in poetry.'<sup>55</sup> This is particularly reflected in Walcott's vivid description of the St Lucian landscape through imagery examined in this thesis as Walcott's centering of his people and articulating the beauty of the island.

In an attempt at centering his people through what I refer to as a relational poetics, Walcott in the early nineteen-seventies was upset with the black power revolt which brought the island's racial and ideological tensions to its peak.<sup>56</sup> His rejection of racial division is continuously seen in his push towards 'a more liminal, cosmopolitan conception of his identity,'<sup>57</sup> an element that is noticeable in the works selected for this study. Walcott spent his years commuting between Boston and Trinidad, and finally St Lucia in the later part of his career, particularly seen in his collection *The Arkansas Testament*<sup>58</sup> where certain poems expose a nostalgia for home and a desire to belong not only in St Lucia but also in other places which through affiliations, has become part of his identity.

In comparison, Dennis Vincent Frederick Brutus was born on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1924 in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), in the capital town of Salisbury, today called Harare, to Francis Henry Brutus and Margaret Winifred Bloemetjie.<sup>59</sup> Like Walcott, Brutus has both black and white origin. Interviewed about his ancestry, Brutus advances that 'my parents were both what are legally called coloreds, which is not an unusual situation in South Africa, because the Dutch settlers...encouraged intermarriage as a way of penetrating society.'<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Breslin, *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Arkansas* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> Craig W. McLuckie, 'A Biographical Introduction to Dennis Brutus' Art and Activism' in *Critical Perspectives on Dennis Brutus* (Colorado Springs: Three Continent Press, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Such a system however became outlawed as 1950, since the Mixed Marriage Act prohibited blacks and whites to be married.<sup>61</sup> In Brutus' recollection, his mother gave him a sense of an ancestry:

She talked of the days of slavery and that her mother...my grandmother has in fact known slavery, may have been a slave herself...She was of African descent, but of mixed descent also: an English family called Webb apparently. And my maternal grandfather had been the deliverer of the post...my mother told me that her mother recalled the memories of the time when slaves were tied to the large wheel of the ox wagon and whipped.<sup>62</sup>

Brutus grew up in Port Elizabeth in a segregated area for 'coloreds.'<sup>63</sup> In the wake of imperialism, Britain established reserves in South Africa and Brutus notes that his neighborhood and other reserves were 'one of the first in the entire nation where there was an actually segregated housing schemes like a project, for coloreds, that separated them from Africans—blacks, if you like.'<sup>64</sup> This scheme was also extended within the domain of education given that Brutus went to a 'coloured'<sup>65</sup> school which was basically one of the abandoned 'whites' old school.'<sup>66</sup> Upon completion of junior school, Brutus won a scholarship, which enabled him to complete the last two years of high school. While at Paterson High school, he began writing poetry in competition with his brother Wilfred; he also initiated and edited a student newspaper called *The Patersonian Spectator*.<sup>67</sup> These early activities contributed greatly in enhancing his career as a poet.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Craig W. McLuckie, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim, *Poetry and Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., A derogatory term used in apartheid South Africa to describe peoples of mixed descent.

<sup>66</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim, p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> McLuckie, p. 3.

When Brutus took up teaching as a senior English master at his old school, Paterson High School<sup>68</sup>, he noticed that the differences between black and white pupils' education that had existed before were even more noticeable with the introduction of apartheid in 1948.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Brutus started challenging apartheid in education and sport. He did this successfully through the use of his pen as editor of the *Education News*, a journal of the branch of the Teachers' League in Port Elizabeth which became a voice for the local radical position on education.<sup>70</sup> He writes about this in his collection *A Simple Lust* as how he thwarted 'their sporting prowess.'<sup>71</sup> While trying to escape from South Africa through Mozambique, he was shot in the back right through his chest and handed over to the South African security police.<sup>72</sup> The wound that the poet sustained represents so much more than a physical wound. It has also come to metonymically embody the wounds of history, displacement and exile which permeate his life and poetry.

Brutus' father, like Walcott's, had a great influence on him as he too quoted Shakespeare, Tennyson's 'Lady of Shallot' and from Robert Browning 'with great articulateness and care, with a sense of rhythm and meter.'<sup>73</sup> Other than his father's influence, Brutus was also influenced by poets such as John Donne and W.H Auden. Simon Lewis posits that 'the combination in Brutus of Donne's prophetic voice and his erotic voice grounds the public/private simultaneous statement in a spiritual or metaphysical foundation.'<sup>74</sup> I propose that such a simultaneous statement is noticeable in Brutus's use of conceit in his appreciation of both land and woman to signify home, as well as his 'transforming the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim, p. 27.

<sup>70</sup> Sustar and Karim, p. 31.

<sup>71</sup> Dennis Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 90.

<sup>72</sup> McLuckie, p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> McLuckie, p. 40.

<sup>74</sup> Simon Lewis, 'Dennis Brutus and the Station of Exile', *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Crossroads*, 3.1(200), pp. 49-66. (p. 55).

Audenesque personal lyrics into resistance poetry'<sup>75</sup> as Lewis suggests, Brutus returned to South Africa where he continued writing and speaking out against neocolonialism or what he refers to as post-postcolonialism, until his death on 26 December 2009 at the age of 85 in Cape Town South Africa.<sup>76</sup>

### **Situating Walcott and Brutus within their Literary and Historical Contexts**

Different literary movements in time have influenced Walcott and Brutus' poetry. Writing within the backdrop of the Harlem Renaissance, Claude McKay is known as one of its great poets whose early poetry may have inspired Walcott. David Goldweber asserts that McKay is known as 'a man of contradictions, involved by turns with atheism, homosexuality, Islam, Soviet Communism, and Marcus Garvey's Black Nationalist Movement.'<sup>77</sup> I argue that the Black Nationalist Movement's stand for a preservation of a distinct black identity might be considered radical in contemporary writings. For example, Goldweber indicates that McKay showed belligerence, sorrow and hatred for western civilization and rage against Christianity in poems such as 'Enslaved' and 'If we must die', where he blames the 'Christian west' for ravaging the 'Black land' and imagines a war between blacks and whites.<sup>78</sup> This binary division continued in most literary movements well after McKay, fuelling the search of an identity for black people within the prevalent violence of the nineteenth century. It is the desire to preserve the community and its value from diminishing. I suggest that what Walcott and Brutus draw from this movement is the idea of empowering not only the distinct black communities, but an inclusive community of people of mixed racial heritage.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> David Goldweber, 'Home At Last: The Pilgrimage of Claude McKay', *Commonweal* (1999), pp. 11-13 (p. 11).

<sup>78</sup> David Goldweber, p. 12.

Closely associated with the Negro Movement of the Harlem Renaissance was the Negritude movement initiated by prominent figures such as W.E.B Du Bois, Leon Damas, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Frantz Fanon. This movement can be considered a springboard of inspiration to the selected poets under study. Although this theoretical movement is mostly understood in terms of blackness, Senghor makes it clear that ‘the point here is less the colour of the skin than the warmth of the soul.’<sup>79</sup> In his poetry, *Cahier d’un Retour au Pay Natal*, Aimé Césaire<sup>80</sup> uses the concept of Negritude for the first time. Emile Snyder posits that in this long epic, dramatic and lyric poem, Césaire’s painful memories began to emerge especially when he remembers his mother working late at night to improve the family earnings in ‘I am even awakened at night by / those tireless limbs.’<sup>81</sup> Snyder argues that Césaire’s writings focus on the idea of home particularly when he interrogates:

How do you accept, act upon, transform such a past if not by trying to raise the good drunken cry of revolt? How do you validate your existence, record for yourself and for your posterity a plot of land if not by trudging back along the ancestral path to return to the source...Africa?<sup>82</sup>

These questions are salient existential problems of the speaker’s search for identity and have contributed a great deal in the search for home by black poets and communities. However, Césaire and the negritude questioning on how to attain this selfhood is problematic because the solution lay in a return to Africa as the source instead of resolving to relate to the new land.

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<sup>79</sup> Léopold Sédar Senghor, ‘Negritude’, *Indian Literature* 17.1 (1979), pp. 269-273 (269).

<sup>80</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land / Cahier d’un Retour au Pay Natal*, trans. by Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard (Eastburn: Bloodaxe Books, 1995).

<sup>81</sup> Emile Snyder, ‘Aime Cesaire: The Reclaiming of the land’ *The Dalhousie Review* (1974), pp. 720-732, (p.721).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

It is this idea of a back to Africa movement that the Jamaican poet Louise Bennett debunks in her poetry, which is traditionally rooted in the Jamaican oral tradition, a Mento-derived characteristics that make for a warm tone, and rely on a recurrent cast of characters.<sup>83</sup> According to Eric Doumerc, abrogating the back to Africa movement in 'Back to Africa', Bennett creates a dialogue where Miss Lou takes the common sense view that if everybody in Jamaica or Europe went back where their ancestors were from, utter shambles would follow as articulated in 'back to Africa Miss Matty? / Yu noh know wha yih dah-she? / Yuh haffe come from some weh fus, / Before you go back deh?'<sup>84</sup> I argue that this oral tradition and the use of creole have a significant role in postcolonial poetics particularly relevant to the Caribbean and can be readily seen in Walcott's poetics. However, Bennett's use of Creole might be seen to reflect her specifically Jamaican context whereas Walcott intersperses this tradition within his work through code switching. Thus, Walcott pays allegiance to his divided nature- African, European and the Caribbean.

Following Bennett's popularising of a Mento-derived characteristics, Kamau Braithwaite takes this further by using a video style form in his poetry. Kelly Baker Josephs describes Braithwaite's poetics as a piling up of style, a mosaic of aspects of different cultures such as Caribbean, African, Ameridian, American as well as a combination of the different literary, historical and sociological discourses.<sup>85</sup> For example, in 'X/Self xth letter', Josephs notes how a caliban persona allows the poet to writes to his mother from his new place or perspective:

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<sup>83</sup> Eric Doumerc, 'Louise Bennett and the Mento Tradition', *A Review of International English Literature*, 31.4 (2000), pp. 23-31 (p. 25).

<sup>84</sup> Eric Doumerc, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> Kelly Baker Josephs, 'Version of X/Self: Kamau Brathwaite's Caribbean Discourse', *Authurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, 1.1 (2004), p. 2.

Dear mumma  
Uh writin yu dis letter  
Wha?  
Guess what! Pun a computer  
Kay?<sup>86</sup>

The above format, as Josephs writes, serves as a form of resistance and concealment of a people's cultural value. I link this to Glissant's idea of the 'detour' which suggest ways of incorporating and hiding the former culture within the structure of the new. In this vein, I propose that Braithwaite's work, like Walcott's, is excavating existing cultural links between the Caribbean Islands and generating new ones, especially through language. However, I have chosen to focus on Walcott's poetics in this thesis because by virtue of his identifiably racially mixed nature, Walcott writes and speaks from a point of experience as a creolised individual in the New World.

In the South African context, the creolised identity or the ruse of 'detour' is shown in Keorapetse Kgositsile's poetry. Tsitsi Jaji describes Kgositsile as a South African poet laureate and ANC activist who lived most of his life in exile in America and highlights how African American musical style of Jazz and soul greatly influenced his poetry.<sup>87</sup> Jaji advances that:

by drawing on diaspora music, particularly Jazz and Soul, Kgositsile's poetics of purposeful distortion figure solidarity as a dynamic performance of rhizomatic improvisational Relation rather than a rigid state of rooted monotoned unison<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Kelly Baker Josephs, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> Tsitsi Jaji, 'Sound Effects: Synaesthesia as Purposeful Distortion in Keorapetse Kgositsile's Poetry', *Comparative Literature Studies* 46.2 (2009), pp. 287-310 (P. 288).

<sup>88</sup> Tsitsi Jaji, p. 289.

I note particularly in Jaji's statement Kgositsile's articulation of a rhizomatic relation between Jazz and soul to emphasise the idea of a totality that can be found in difference similar to what Glissant explores in his *Poetics of Relation*.<sup>89</sup> As an example, Jaji indicates that Kgositsile's 'Manifeto', makes a direct reference to Black American music, and a pan-African song of mourning for Malcom X and Patrice Lumumba, a vow to continue the struggle alongside Mandela who had been jailed in 1964. Meanwhile in 'Time', Kgositsile expresses the constructed and oppressive urban landscape of South Africa. From Jaji's suggestions, I deduce that Kgositsile's work created a platform for literary resistance made possible through the idea of relation which can be seen, too, in Brutus's poetry.

Unlike Kgositsile's great romance with the African American Jazz form, Mazisi Kunene who was known for his epic poem *Emperor Shaka the Great*,<sup>90</sup> wrote all his poems in the Zulu language which were later translated into English. Fleeing into exile like Brutus in 1959, he helped fuel the anti-apartheid movement in Britain.<sup>91</sup> Sandile Ndaba asserts that 'Kunene draws on Zulu's cultural and oral tradition... uses images and symbols from Zulu myth and culture to convey his message.'<sup>92</sup> For instance, in 'Encounters with the Ancestors', Ndaba writes that Kunene suggests that the ancestors are an embodiment of traditional cultures and are sources of direction for contemporary time as 'we must follow the direction of their little finger / Where begins the story, the beginning of seeing...'<sup>93</sup> Here, Ndaba conveys that the ancestors are the origin of the community.<sup>94</sup> I propose that

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<sup>89</sup> Glissant's idea of unity in totality is reflected in his chaos-monde, the beauty of order in disorder. *Poetics of Relation*, pp. 197-202.

<sup>90</sup> Mazisi Kunene, *Emperor Shaka the Great* (Heinemann African Writess Series, 1979).

<sup>91</sup> Sandile C. Ndaba, 'Visionary Commitment in Kunene's Ancestors and the Sacred Mountain, *Alternation* 6.1(1999), pp. 78-81 (74).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Sandile C. Ndaba, P. 76.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Kunene's work provides a starting point from where contemporary poets such as Brutus and Walcott draw their inspiration of a journey to that ancestral past in order to forge different futures.

Another poet who draws from her Afrikaans language to depict the landscape of South Africa is Antjie Krog. Louise Vijoën asserts that Krog considers her poetry as material body where the landscape is often represented as human bodies, a move which enables her to depict her country, South Africa as a physical and political entity with a distinct history of conflict.<sup>95</sup> In the volume *Kleur Kom Nooit Allen Nie*, Vijoën argues that Krog represents South Africa, as a body and then links it to portray those bodies which have been tortured or wounded throughout history. From Vijoën's analysis, I argue that Krog's writing like Brutus's might be said to follow the tradition of the metaphysical poets who explored the use of conceits through ingenious comparison. However, writing from a white Afrikaner's perspective, Krog's is not really able to express the afflictions suffered by black people – like Brutus – who experienced a bullet since she cannot know what it feels like to be South African of mixed descent.

A profound poet who comes close to conveying some of Brutus' poetic ideas is the exiled Arthur Nortje, who was himself a student of Brutus. Jacques Berthoud notes that Nortje's verse is mainly concerned with self-pity resulting from loneliness in exile and general discrimination<sup>96</sup> although poem like 'Waiting' exhibits a number of stylistic procedures associated with modernist rhetoric such as:

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<sup>95</sup> Louise Vijoën, 'I have a body, therefore I am': Grotesque, monstrous and abject bodies in Antjie Krog's poetry, (2014), <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308023453>> [accessed 15 March 2019] n.p.

<sup>96</sup> Jacques Berthoud, 'Poetry and Exile: The case of Arthur Nortje', *English in Africa* 11.1(1984), pp. 1-14.

lexical ambiguity, narrative juxtapositions, metaphoric density, intertextual allusiveness and emancipation from iambic meters, they are mostly confessional lyrics that could be associated with the post-Romantic Europe.<sup>97</sup>

These confessional lyrics and particularly Nortje's loneliness in exile are reflected in these lines: '[Y]ou yourself have vacated the violent arena / for a northern life of semi-snow / it is not cosmic immensity or catastrophe / that terrifies me: / it is solitude that mutilates me...'<sup>98</sup> I argue that contrary to Brutus' poetry that seeks to protest the hideous activities of the apartheid government, Nortje's rather mourns his solitude in exile. Drawing from the above literary background, my selection of the poets for this thesis is based on the idea that their poetry reflects an eclectic mix of both traditional and contemporary forms, and relates to the current existential discourses of diaspora, race, identity, home/belonging and exile. Underpinning my analysis of their poetics are the theoretical ideas of two postcolonial theorists, Glissant and Said as discussed below.

### **Review of the Literature / Defining a Comparative Approach to Both Poets' Writings**

This review is divided into two parts. The first focuses on my theoretical framework, which is based on selected concepts in Said's *Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism*, and Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*. The second part of this review discusses some major critical threads already examined by critics in the poetry of Walcott and Brutus. This part is further sub-divided into three sections: negotiating the poetics of belonging, landscape representation, the view of the past, resistance and the struggle for survival. These all serve to shed light on the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

I draw from Said's theorising on the binaries of Self and Other to show the unacceptable ways by which the West has ideologically classified some humans at the centre, while

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<sup>97</sup> Jacques Berthoud, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

others are relegated to the periphery. Said refers to this as Orientalism, ‘a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident.”’<sup>99</sup> Although Orientalism was particularly based on the relationship between the aforementioned two, and even though this theory does not cover the scope of the Caribbean Other, who was even considered a lesser other to the African other, I am using Said’s idea to discuss the move towards decolonising cultural and ideological formations of the Self and Other which ensured that the Europeans were always the self and the Africans, people of mix descents and Asians were always the other. As Reid-Pharr argues, this involves ‘the task of confronting and dismantling the structural and ideological legacies of white supremacy and capitalism,’<sup>100</sup> which I am painfully aware will die hard, but I nevertheless propose are apparent in the poetry of Walcott and Brutus.

Hence, my interest in Said’s notions points to concerns with cultural and political patterns of being in the world designed as a norm by the West. Thus, such an overwhelming presence is to show its (Western) superiority or civilization over the Other. As Said argues, ‘European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.’<sup>101</sup> Patterns notably recognised in relation to the other extends to the regions of St Lucia (Caribbean) and South Africa where the subjugation of a people is based on the idea that European identity and culture is superior to all other cultures and peoples.

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<sup>99</sup> Edward Said, ‘Orientalism’, in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, eds., Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 24-27 (p. 25).

<sup>100</sup> Robert F. Reid-Pharr, p. 175.

<sup>101</sup> Edward Said, ‘Orientalism’, p. 25.

From a political angle, Said discusses the idea that ‘the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony.’<sup>102</sup> I note that Said’s ‘complex hegemony’ can be read from the philosophy that the dominant power dominates culturally diverse societies through the manipulation of the culture of those societies particularly in its beliefs, values, and mores. Therefore, their imposed ruling class view becomes the acceptable cultural norm, which is universally accepted. This relationship might be described as a ‘European-Atlantic power over the Orient.’<sup>103</sup> Such superiority positioning ‘puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.’<sup>104</sup> In this way, there is hardly any form of reciprocity and ‘Relation’ between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other.’ Following Said’s note on the absence of any reciprocity and Relation between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’, I argue for a relational poetics in reading the poetry of Walcott and Brutus, as both emphasise the importance of a ‘Relation’ that enhances freedom, stability, and cultural relation in their regions. This ‘Relation’ might also include ‘the conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories.’<sup>105</sup> In other words, theirs might be referred to as a counter poetics or what Said describes as the *voyage in*.<sup>106</sup>

Other than entering the discourse of Europe and the West, Said discusses how building on the past enables a construction of the present. Said articulates how the past has continued to exert enormous influence on the present even after the dismantling of ‘the

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<sup>102</sup> Edward Said, p. 26.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 260.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

great colonial structure.’<sup>107</sup> Consequently, Said suggests that ‘even as we must fully comprehend the pastness of the past, there is no just way in which the past can be quarantined from the present.’<sup>108</sup> This is because ‘Past and present inform each other, each implies the other and, in the totally sense ideal ... each co-exists with the other.’<sup>109</sup> Thus, I argue that Walcott and Brutus draw from the past to construct the present. Their past is underpinned by slavery, colonialism and apartheid, traces of which are recurrently seen in the present, in what Said describes as imperialism. It is necessary to continue this discourse with a clear understanding of the difference between colonialism and imperialism as two ideologies representing the past and the present, respectively. Said asserts that

imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.<sup>110</sup>

Having set this definition, one can be sure that ‘in our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.’<sup>111</sup> Although Said was writing from his time and I acknowledge that things have changed, certain systems and structures remain. These cultural spheres as mentioned earlier includes making differences between those considered to be at the centre and those considered to be at the margin. I assert that Walcott and Brutus’s writings serve as a lens through which they bear witness to the different imperial and cultural practices as highlighted by Said, to testify how the past (colonialism) might be used as a starting point in constructing the present (imperialism), as well as the future. Moreover, colonialism

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<sup>107</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Edward Said, p.2.

<sup>110</sup> Edward Said, p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

and imperialism as events of the past have shaped and enhanced a better understanding and the difficulties of the present age. I underline Said's idea of 'scars of humiliating wounds'<sup>112</sup> to discuss the notion that both Walcott and Brutus use the metaphor of the colonial injuries of slavery in their poetics as a source of renewed strength in constructing ideas of home.

Furthermore, post-colonial writers do not only mix with the discourses of the West nor do they only appropriate some conventions of colonial cultures, but also theorise ways of dealing with each other. To this end, I draw on Glissant's theory of Relation, which refers to the non- hierarchical principle of unity and of equality, and emphasises respect for the Other as different from oneself.<sup>113</sup> The notion is significant to this thesis because it emphasises the ideas of identity as constructed in relation and not in isolation. I am particularly focusing on how Glissant's images of the slave ship and the plantation expose the wound of history; and how/whether the rhizome-identity could be an appropriate process in underscoring his theory of Relation.

Glissant's image of '[T]he Open Boat' symbolises the genesis of a place and a people<sup>114</sup>. This image as used by Glissant takes us back to the period of the transatlantic slave trade when the ship was anchored at the shore, to visualize the slave ship transporting Africans to the New World. I describe this image of the 'Open Boat' further as a metaphor of the womb, impregnated on the coast of Africa and transported to the Caribbean. Sanyu Ruth Mulira describes it as 'the incubator of Caribbean Culture'<sup>115</sup> which I suggest matures

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<sup>112</sup> Said, p. 34-35.

<sup>113</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 190.

<sup>114</sup> Glissant, p. 5.

<sup>115</sup> Sanyu Ruth Mulira, 'Edouard Glissant and the African Roots of Creolization', *Ufahamu: Journal of African Studies*, 38.2 (2015), pp. 115-128 (p. 116).

over time, giving birth to a *Poetics of Relation*, where ‘each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the other.’<sup>116</sup> These relations, encounters, and experiences on the slave ship were full of pain and clamour described as one of the petrifying experiences, ‘being wrenched from their everyday, familiar land, away from protecting gods and a tutelary community.’<sup>117</sup> This is exacerbated by the ‘many incredible Gehennas’<sup>118</sup> they experienced crossing the ocean.

Glissant invites us to visualise these scenes he calls hell where ‘two hundred human beings crammed into a space... (Also) Imagine vomit, naked flesh, swarming lice, the dead slumped, the dying crouched.’<sup>119</sup> These experiences of the abyss on the slave ship do not end there for ‘it quickened into this continuous/discontinuous thing: the panic of the new land, the haunting of the former land, finally the alliance with the imposed land, suffered and redeemed.’<sup>120</sup> In the preceding lines, the ordeal of the new world included the struggle to create a home on alien soil. However, through these various unpleasant experiences, the pain and clamour, the wounded people came together in a network of exchanges and ‘wove this sail,’<sup>121</sup> which is today the Caribbean.

Stanka Radovic asserts that Glissant’s slave ship could also be defined as a ‘generative matrix’ that produces an indissoluble link between disconnected peoples.<sup>122</sup> It is through the exchange and shared experiences of these disconnected peoples that a culture of Relation is born. Consequently, the significance of Glissant’s image of the slave ship to

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<sup>116</sup> Glissant, p. 11.

<sup>117</sup> Glissant, p.5.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Glissant, p. 7.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Stanka Radović, ‘The Birthplace of Relation : Edouard Glissant’s Poétique de la relation’, *Callaloo* 30.2 (2007), pp. 475-481 (p.475).

my thesis is underwritten by the actions of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, and their impact on the regions of St Lucia and South Africa. The marginalisation, oppression, and subjugation of black people on the plantations in St Lucia and South Africa have their roots in the transatlantic slave trade. Walcott and Brutus write against this backdrop; their poems echo a clamour against marginalisation of the black bodies and a call for unity in diversity in their regions.

When Glissant writes of the ability to ‘wove this sail,’<sup>123</sup> as in constructing a home in the New world, I suggest that he seeks to advance the theory that once docked in the New World, enslaved Africans devised ways to knit together the fragmented pieces of their past and the outcome was another culture that would define them in the New World. This is made possible through their ‘shared knowledge’ of slavery, their coming together and their experiences on the slave ship. It is this relation between people from different areas on the slave ship that triggers my idea of a relational poetics which is drawn from Glissant’s idea that identity is not limited to the root, but rather exists in relation to others. He brings this out clearly through the image of the rhizome, an idea borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari<sup>124</sup> to describe the rhizome as ‘an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently.’<sup>125</sup> Thus, I argue that the rhizome suggests multiplicity that is entwined in a relationship with the Other, an openness to affect and to being affected by others. In this case, the image of the rhizome symbolises freedom in relation. I argue that such a freedom in relation can only succeed when those (races) involved value the difference of the Other without questioning.

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<sup>123</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p.7.

<sup>124</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 1988).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

Another image that describes this tale of relation is the plantation. Glissant asserts that such an ‘enclosed place’<sup>126</sup> laid the basis ‘for present-day modes of Relation.’<sup>127</sup> It was possible to create relations within the plantation set up and for information to pass on from one plantation to another although ‘each plantation was defined by boundaries whose crossing was strictly forbidden, impossible to leave without permission.’<sup>128</sup> As Glissant argues, it was within these spaces of ‘domination and oppression, of silent or professed dehumanisation, [that] forms of humanity stubbornly persisted.’<sup>129</sup> I assert that as frequently as the slaveholders tried to stop slaves from moving from one plantation to the other, or to carry out acts of violence to show that the slaves were lesser humans, these paradoxically gave rise to forms of resistance such as the ability to continue using their original languages as a means towards asserting their identities. Glissant writes that this ‘oral expression, the only form possible for the slaves, was discontinuously organized[sic]’<sup>130</sup> as they persisted. Thus, it is here that the Creole language formed its stronghold and is visibly seen in Walcott’s writings. It is here that multiculturalism has its root, where the meeting of cultures is most clearly seen.

Unlike Walcott, Brutus does not use any other language except Standard English. This does not mean that he is monolingual. Yet Glissant’s idea of an enclosed place might be applicable in the South African context, where the black, the ‘coloured’ and Asian people were restricted from movement into and out of cities unless they were in possession of a pass. Nancy Clark and William Worger write that such restrictions became known as

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<sup>126</sup> Glissant, p. 65.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Glissant, p.64.

<sup>129</sup> Glissant, p. 65.

<sup>130</sup> Glissant, p. 68.

‘influx control’<sup>131</sup> that ensured the establishment of enclosed areas such as the creation of townships, principally in the Bantustan. From these ‘impossible apartheid,’ to quote Glissant, ‘the deepest voice cries out’<sup>132</sup> against discrimination and segregation which I discuss in depth in chapter one of this thesis.

Drawing from Glissant’s idea of the ‘many incredible Gehennas’<sup>133</sup> and his call for us to visualise this hell experienced by the black humans crammed onboard the slave ship, I suggest to link this to trauma theory as another supporting framework relevant to my thesis. The significance of this theory lies in what Cathy Caruth described as post-traumatic stress disorder which denotes

a response, sometimes delayed, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, possibly also increase arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event)<sup>134</sup>

These different responses to a stress event in the past depict episodes in the poetry where they are repeated and through flashbacks and numbness to the present which might be considered painful. As Irene Visser writes, ‘trauma is thus defined as the painful remembering of an experience which is itself need not be painful.’<sup>135</sup> Paradoxically, I argue that the act of remembering lay bare the fresh wounds of the past. If poetry is ‘capable of lending even this traumatic disintegration of experience, for those that can read it, the weight of an actual experience,’<sup>136</sup> then the act of remembering itself depicts a trauma whose effect is contained through the act of remembering. As Caruth suggests,

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<sup>131</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 23.

<sup>132</sup> Glissant, p. 74.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> Irene Visser, ‘Trauma theory and Postcolonial Literary studies’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47.3 (2011), pp. 270-282 (p. 273).

<sup>136</sup> Kevin Newmark, ‘Traumatic Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and the Shock of Laughter’, p. 237.

‘the traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess.’<sup>137</sup> It is in this vein that I concur with Visser that ‘for a postcolonial reconfiguration of trauma theory therefore, its history is a crucial aspect.’<sup>138</sup> I suggest that the history underpinning the poetic writings of Walcott and Brutus is fraught with trauma because it is a fragmentary and shattered past which requires more care in piecing together. My aim of using this theory is to show how through Walcott and Brutus’ exposition of traumatic characters, the underlying objective is to express the triumph over this adversity and how these protagonist harness their individual experiences of trauma as a means to recreate their identities and those of their people. Hence Caruth adds that ‘trauma can make possible survival, and on the different means of engaging this possibility through the deferent modes of therapeutic, literary’<sup>139</sup> especially through poetry as this thesis will show. Thus, ‘the trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site.’<sup>140</sup> I advance that the force of this requires our attention as ‘trauma thus requires integration, both for the sake of testimony and for the sake of cure.’<sup>141</sup> As with the aftermath of slavery and slave victims, I posit that it is ‘an address that attempts to speak out from a crisis that is not yet over.’<sup>142</sup>

To the question of a revision of home, relational belonging and the wound of history, I show that the effects of trauma does not only lie in the pain experienced at the site of its occurrence, but the necessity to understand the onset of these pains in order to construct a new beginning. A critical reception of Walcott and Brutus’ poetry follows.

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<sup>137</sup> Caruth, p. 5.

<sup>138</sup> Visser, p. 274.

<sup>139</sup> Cathy Caruth, p. 10.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Newmark, p. 153.

<sup>142</sup> Newmark, p. 156.

## Negotiating the Poetics of Belonging

In their writings on the suffering experienced by Walcott's characters in *Omeros*, Maria Cristina Fumagalli and Peter Patrick<sup>143</sup> assert that Walcott re-contextualises bodily conflicts as social, political, and spiritual struggles that powerfully recall a historical, cultural, and finally a moral structure informed by the Rastafarian concept of *sofrin*.<sup>144</sup> They argue that many of Walcott's personas in *Omeros* can be seen as the narrator's alter egos, who experience suffering and go through a similar healing experience as the narrator.<sup>145</sup> As an example, these critics posit that when Philoctete enters the bath that Ma Kilman prepares for him, he journeys back to mother Africa in an indirect but affecting and effecting way. Similarly, Achille's healing experience is characterised by a (spiritual) return to Africa. This seaman, according to them, arrives in Africa after walking along the bottom of the sea, following the 'skipping of a sea-swift.'<sup>146</sup> Fumagalli and Patrick consider that, for Achille and Philoctete, Africa is both a spiritual mother and a healer.

Aside from this bodily struggle for healing, Fumagalli and Patrick also identify a language struggle, which is vividly depicted at the beginning of *Omeros* when Philoctete's voice launches Walcott's native epic: 'This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes.' Fumagalli and Patrick argue that such a brief speech enables Walcott to both elevate and give eminence to the oral culture of the Caribbean from the outset of the poem.<sup>147</sup> As they suggest, this oral tradition is reflected in the poet's use of Creole. I assert that the Creole language is important to this thesis as it depicts the many instances in which the poet

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<sup>143</sup> Maria Cristina Fumagalli and Peter L. Patrick 'Two healing narratives: suffering, reintegration, and the struggle of language', *Small Axe* (2006), pp.61-79.

<sup>144</sup> Fumagalli and Patrick p.62.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Fumagalli and Patrick, p.67.

<sup>147</sup> Fumagalli and Patrick p.65.

celebrates the folk cultures of his region. In addition, the healing of Walcott's personas signifies an attempt to negotiate a sense of place in the Caribbean island that has become home for the poet and the people of St Lucia. Furthermore, I add that Fumagalli and Patrick identify a daily struggle that involves the function of memory to recall not only the lost African tradition, but also a language that the gods can best understand, and of which Ma Kilman whispers during her search for the herb.

Besides the celebration of folk culture, Walcott's poetry offers a venue through which the self can be redefined. Rowan Ricardo Phillips'<sup>148</sup> central idea is focused on the relationship between poetry and the idea of nation. He suggests that poetry comes from the Latin word *Poiesis*, which means "making" and nation from the Latin word *nasci* or the French word *naître*, which means "to be born."<sup>149</sup> Phillips argues that poetry is the building of a nation. In this light, Phillips reads Walcott's protagonist Shabine in *The Schooner Flight*<sup>150</sup> as one invested with the Adamic process of naming and self-definition. This Adamic process is an attempt at self-defining, giving one a new identity in 'I'm just a red nigger who loves the sea... / I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me.'<sup>151</sup> Phillips describes this relationship between poetry and nation as a "parthenogenetic" event which involves a simultaneous situation of making and of being born.'<sup>152</sup> Phillips further suggests that Shabine's decision to leave the republic in order to rely on his imagination presents the power of poetry to grant the possibilities of recollection and repetition.

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<sup>148</sup> Rowan Ricardo Phillips 'Derek Walcott: Imagination, Nation and the Poetics of Memory', *Small Axe* 6.11 (2002), pp. 112-132 (p. 115).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Derek Walcott, 'The schooner Flight,' *Collected Poems 1948-1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986).

<sup>151</sup> Phillips, p. 115.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

Thus, Walcott's lines in Phillips words are 'a recollection of a past trauma—that fractured, alienated consciousness recognizing its fracture—but also a repetition of a complaint—the complaint of being nobody's national.'<sup>153</sup> Phillips' analysis is that such recollection and repetition provide the victims of time and circumstance with the creative process of image-making. The significance in Phillips' writing is his notion that the poetics of memory entails a mediation between recollection and repetition. I am interested in his conception of poetry as another form of repetition, not only a complaint about a traumatic past, but also providing the possibility for self-identification, as evident in the poet's Adamic role. This is relevant to my thesis specifically in terms of the idea of the poet's ability to define himself within a place. This idea will be explored further in chapters One and Two.

From the above analysis, self-definition requires the ability to recognise and relate to the Other. Victor Figueroa <sup>154</sup> states that Walcott, in his poetry, has evolved from the ontological question 'who am I?' to 'how do I relate to my neighbour, to the other facing me?' He places this change within the framework of what Glissant terms the other's 'opacity', which involves an acknowledgement of the Other's 'irreducible difference'.<sup>155</sup> Figueroa posits that Walcott is preoccupied in his mature work with examining the possibility of an alliance between different ethnicities and cultures, and questioning unequal and unjust Relations within power structures, rather than articulating identity.<sup>156</sup> Despite this, Figueroa finds uncertainty in this alliance, as evidenced by Major Plunkett

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<sup>153</sup> Rowan Ricardo Philips, p.121.

<sup>154</sup> Victor Figueroa, 'Encomium of Helen: Derek Walcott Twist in *Omeros*', *Twentieth Century Literature* 53.1 (2007), pp. 23-39 (p. 25).

<sup>155</sup> Figueroa, p. 25.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

and the narrator's description of Helen when they face the dilemma of whether or not they can 'relate to the other islanders in an equitable manner that relinquishes the privileges of old colonial authority or social advantage.'<sup>157</sup> Hence according to Figueroa, Walcott's personas, Major Plunkett and the narrator, present Helen within a narrative that justifies her status as political and sexual possession.

Considering the above, Figueroa concludes that *Omeros* can be regarded overall as the chronicle of a failure with regards to its initial project of illuminating the true nature of the islanders. My view differs from Figueroa and in this regard, I argue that the narrator's description of Helen is justifiable: firstly, the narrator considers himself an outsider, having been away from the island, his homecoming fills him with a sense of estrangement; he wonders if he could ever be accepted again by the islanders. Hence, he presents the island from the perspective of an alienated artist as a first step towards being re-integrated into his society. Secondly, I argue that as *Omeros* comes to an end, Plunkett changes his narrative of the island (Helen) as a sexual possession for a true representation of people who work hard to earn a living. I read this as the speaker's success in debunking the misrepresentation of his people. Despite our differences in perception, Figueroa's idea that the poet focuses on asserting identity through a Relation with the Other aligns with my aim in this thesis. His use of Glissant's concept of opacity is also relevant to this thesis because it stresses the need to accept the difference in others without creating a hierarchy. I relate this to the regions of St Lucia and South Africa whose people must form synergies between races.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

Negotiating a sense of place, belonging, and self-defining are aspects that Brutus critics similarly examine in his poetry. Romanus Egudu reads Brutus' poems as an attempt by the poet to define himself and his people. Thus, he considers the speaker in 'The Sounds Begin Again,' as responding to the interplay of the socio-political situation in South Africa and his personality as a victim under the regime.<sup>158</sup> Egudu considers it incumbent upon the poet to react to the social problems of his country and he argues that the poet is in a state of mental agony and so devises a mental weapon for a counterattack.<sup>159</sup> This mental agony, according to Egudu, is partly caused by the harsh realities of harassment, arrest, imprisonment, and with the poet's concern for the suffering masses. Moreover, these events in Egudu's view, touch the mainstay of the mind as 'investigating searchlights / patrols like snakes... / hissing their menace to our lives.'<sup>160</sup> Egudu indicates that as a response to the menace, the poet does not use a gun, but rather the 'venomed arrows' and 'glinting spear' of his poetry.<sup>161</sup>

Egudu's analysis is significant to this study for it indicates not only the personal pain suffered by the poet, but also how the poet uses his poetry to combat the pain, reassert his sense of place and raise awareness in relation to a community. In commenting on Egudu's idea of a 'glinting spear', I suggest that Brutus might be said to use his poetry as a way of discrediting the dominant, oppressive system and giving a voice to its victims. The aim is the poet's desire for peace and co-existence between fragmentary groups in the region of South Africa. Thus, there is hope that the day will come when these complexities of

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<sup>158</sup> Romanus Egudu, 'Pictures of pain: The Poetry of Dennis Brutus,' in *Aspects of South African Literature*, ed. by Christopher Heywood (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976), pp.132-144 (p. 132).

<sup>159</sup> Egudu, p.132-144.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

race and identity will be resolved. This is important as it answers one of the questions in this thesis regarding how the poet addresses the complexities of race and identity.

Similarly, Daniel Abasiékong describes Brutus' poetry as a counterpoint to pain and oppression. He points out that Brutus uses a range of imagery that expresses his vigour, integrity, defiance, and hopefulness towards a struggle for belonging.<sup>162</sup> Abasiékong observes that these qualities are impressed upon the reader by the appealing force of the poet's intellectual capacity, the brilliant intensity of his language, and his modulation of rhythm.<sup>163</sup> Thus, Abasiékong asserts that in a typical Brutus poem, the opening lines hold in embryo the central motif of the piece and build up with images that argue, describe, expound, analyse and illustrate the stated motif. For instance, in 'This Sun on This Rubble After Rain', Abasiékong argues that the poet does not tell us about oppression, but rather presents an image of oppression so that we hear its sound as bones that 'crunch' beneath the jackboots and see it in action as it forces them into 'sweat-tear-sodden slush'.<sup>164</sup>

I would also add that Brutus' use of imagery is relevant in indicating how the poet uses poetry as a space not only to affirm a speaker's sense of place, but also to express his need for a society that should respect and value the differences in others. This is translated too in the way that the poet represents and paints his landscape. Such representations, paradoxically disgusting and beautiful; also have the intention of either celebrating its beauty or criticising its exploitation, as discussed in the next section.

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<sup>162</sup> Daniel Abasiékong, 'Poetry and applied: Rabearivelo and Dennis Brutus', *Transition* 23 (1965), pp. 45-48 (p. 45).

<sup>163</sup> Abasiékong, p.46.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

## Landscape Representation

My argument here is that one of the key elements of Walcott and Brutus' poetics of relation and home is to be identified in their representation of landscape. George Handley discusses how Walcott's titular poem *The Bounty* is a focus on the poetics of environmental renewal.<sup>165</sup> Handley stresses that Walcott's nature is not a representation of the eternal garden; nor is it the inevitable victim of human destruction. Instead, it becomes a symbol of 'an always ending, always dying present that paradoxically makes poetic language potentially always new and new futures always possible.'<sup>166</sup> To illustrate this paradox, he states that Walcott's lines 'My mother lies / near the white beach stones, ... / yet the bounty returns each daybreak, to my surprise / to my surprise and betrayal, yes, both at once,'<sup>167</sup> tell of the uncertainty where nature represents the possibility of a continuation of meaning, that is life after death but, at the same time, represents the perpetual end of meaning. Also, Handley points out that it is such uncertainty that draws Walcott to nature and fuels the fire of his poetry.<sup>168</sup> If poetry can force a 'rose out of sand,' then this implies that poetry 'brings into relation the immaterial and material worlds, words and things, life and death, commemoration and mourning, the timeless and timely,'<sup>169</sup> according to Handley.

I posit that such ambiguity in nature that Handley identifies in Walcott's poetry, enhances my idea of a fresh start through negotiation with the elements of nature to be found in the poetry of Walcott and Brutus. This inexorable shift in nature might seem eternal, but it provides the poet with the ability to form new perceptions of what his landscape

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<sup>165</sup> George Handley, 'Derek Walcott's Poetics of the Environment in the Bounty', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 28.1 (2005), pp. 201-215 (p. 202).

<sup>166</sup> Handley, p. 202.

<sup>167</sup> Handley, p. 210.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Handley, p. 212.

represents. Furthermore, I suggest that the uncertainty and the paradoxical nature of his landscape is a true reflection of the realities of the poet's landscape. It is an island whose natural elements, such as the sea, serve both as a source of food and as a source of healing to its inhabitants. However, the sea is also destructive as evident in hurricanes. Walcott illustrates this in *Omeros* when he writes about the lives of local fishermen such as Achille and Philocetete,<sup>170</sup> as well as when he writes of the destructive nature of hurricane.<sup>171</sup> To that end, poetry becomes the medium via which the poet is obliged to depict realities and give them a voice. This idea will be further examined in chapter two of this thesis.

Similarly, in *A Postcolonial Sense of Place and the Work of Derek Walcott*, Handley discusses the role of the poet in establishing a sense of place. He considers the poet as the one who speaks about and represents the relation between nature and culture, which has presumably already taken place.<sup>172</sup> He questions how the New World subject can manage the chaos of a cultural breakdown and of the reconstruction in order to create home in an alien soil. He asks whether or not these new forms of cultures from European colonialism and native American and African cultures have the capacity to nurture tradition within a particular landscape?<sup>173</sup> Drawing from Glissant's idea of a cross-cultural poetics of intermingled histories, spread around each other,<sup>174</sup> Handley argues that 'for the Caribbean subject, landscape is, of course, only part of the environment that defines place.'<sup>175</sup> To elaborate on this, he draws on Walcott's 'The Sea is History,' where the poet questions the empty pages of the sea: 'where are your monuments?'<sup>176</sup> In the face of a

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<sup>170</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 17.

<sup>171</sup> Walcott, p. 57.

<sup>172</sup> George B. Handley, 'A Postcolonial Sense of Place and the Work of Derek Walcott', *Oxford University Press* 7.2 (2000), pp. 1-23 (p.4).

<sup>173</sup> Handley, p.8.

<sup>174</sup> Handley, p. 9.

<sup>175</sup> Handley, p. 14.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

denuded historical account or its illegibility, Handley proposes that Walcott explores another possibility, which involves ‘summoning forth these same forces of nature to be his ally in the creation of a future.’<sup>177</sup> The significance of Handley’s essay for my thesis lies in his articulation of the poet’s desire in asserting a postcolonial sense of place. This idea aligns with my own of a relational poetics, wherein people from everywhere might relate and the fragments of the past can be pieced together. Thus, this enhances the poet’s use of his imagination and creativity in giving a voice to his landscape and its people.

Likewise, Robert Hamner argues that the poet needs to draw from his or her surroundings to assert himself or herself. He commends Walcott’s ability to incorporate apparently disparate cultural elements in his writing. According to Hamner, that Walcott’s conviction is supported by the fact ‘that art must be thoroughly grounded, and the artist in an emerging society has a profound obligation to give expression to a society that has not yet created its own authentic voice.’<sup>178</sup> Thus, Hamner posits that Walcott, like most St Lucians originating from a separate ethnic origin and finding themselves in a strange land, must come to terms with complex origins.<sup>179</sup>

Taking his example from Walcott’s *The Bounty*, Hamner describes the collection as a celebration of life. As a life that is expansive, transcending human distances in place and time, it closes with advice to the exiled Oedipus to accept the quiet obscurity of a specific place.<sup>180</sup> Hamner reads Walcott’s juxtaposition of a disparate world and his allusion to Oedipus as the possibility of those in the New World adjusting to their banishment and

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<sup>177</sup> Handley, p. 15.

<sup>178</sup> Robert Hamner. ‘Introduction: Out of the Ordinary, Derek Walcott’, *Callaloo* 28.1 (2005), 1-6 (p. 2).

<sup>179</sup> Hamner, p. 3.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

he discusses how this has proven to be rife with artistic potential.<sup>181</sup> This artistic potential, according to Handley, is seen in how Walcott negotiates the mixture of St. Lucia's languages, ranging from British and West Indian Standard English to the local French Creole vernacular. Thus, he is doing justice to his countrymen, as well as making his work accessible abroad.<sup>182</sup> Hamner's study is relevant to my thesis as it celebrates the ability of the poet to negotiate complex origins. I argue that Walcott's allusions to classical literatures and characters reflect the composite elements of the Caribbean landscape. What is more, the poet's insertion of Creole in his work will be discussed further in chapter four of this thesis as one of the defining features of the cultural landscape of St Lucia, which the poet seeks to valorise.

Leaving the St Lucian environment behind, Daniel Cross Turner asserts that there are several mythical metamorphoses in Walcott's poem that cross over into matters of ethnic history and identity, expanding the traditional borders of the American South.<sup>183</sup> Turner draws his example from the title poem, 'The Arkansas Testament', where the poet-speaker is in Fayetteville, Arkansas. He is faced with questions of racial and national allegiance at a time when the poet was considering taking on U.S citizenship.<sup>184</sup> Turner asserts that the various forms of metamorphoses, such as:

the decomposing bodies of the confederate dead, Saul's spiritual transformation to Paul on the road to Damascus, the hybrid shapes of centaurs and other creatures drawn from myth, as well as elements of nonhuman environment taking on sentience... These diverse transmogrifications exceed boundaries between modernity and primitivism.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Daniel Cross Turner, 'Modern Metamorphoses and the Primal Sublime: The Southern/Caribbean poetry of Yusuf Komunyakaa and Derek Walcott', *Southern Quarterly* (2011) pp. 52-69 (p. 61).

<sup>184</sup> Turner, p. 61.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

Turner advances that these artifices and nature, races and nations, combine the strands of Southern, Caribbean, African, and Native American histories.<sup>186</sup> I consider these combinations of elements relevant to my thesis at this point. I suggest that there are no unique cultures or singularities in the cultures represented in Walcott and Brutus' poetry. These co-mingling strands of objects and people in the American South brings back memories of slavery but also show an example of Walcott's celebration of the different veins that make up his Caribbean heritage, which is further developed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Brutus' South African landscape, like Walcott's, is simultaneously described by critics as beautiful but scarred by apartheid assaults. Isaac Elimimian examines how Brutus' use of imagery depicts his landscape and expresses his love for the land of South Africa in its entirety. He posits that the poet has a panoramic view of the ills that pervert his land and is concerned with the intolerable situation of his country under the apartheid government.<sup>187</sup> For example, when reading 'This Sun on This Rubble After Rain', Elimimian notes that Brutus reveals the white South African government's exploitation, mismanagement and misappropriation of the land through images such as 'rubble' and 'debris.'<sup>188</sup> To this end, the poet, as Elimimian argues, must speak out about the abuse of his landscape although Brutus' land on the other hand 'has a physical attractiveness of womanhood: beautiful and elegant, sensual and sensuous, charming and gracious.'<sup>189</sup> This essay is relevant to this thesis because it echoes Walcott and Brutus' poetics of

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Isaac Elimimian, 'Remembering Apartheid: The Poetry of Dennis Brutus', *Studies in Education* 14 (2014), n.p.

<sup>188</sup> Elimimian, n.p.

<sup>189</sup> Elimimian, n.p.

centralising the marginalised. I read this as a form of resistance in that it is defiant to any exploitation of the speaker's landscape (woman) and its people.

By comparison, Lindfors shows how Brutus employs female images to describe his landscape and to express his love for South Africa. Lindfors calls it an 'ambiguous idiom'<sup>190</sup> and 'double-breasted love lyrics,'<sup>191</sup> which allow the poet to make a political statement and an erotic statement in one breath.<sup>192</sup> Lindfors argues that throughout Brutus' career, he has shown fondness and efforts at possessing his land in both a lyrical and an erotic sense. Although his land represents a beautiful woman who is sometimes cruel and treacherous to him, his love has remained ardent towards her.<sup>193</sup> For example, in 'Nightsong: City', Lindfors illustrates that Brutus' poem is set in an urban landscape that is restless, violent, fearful, angry, but also relaxing, 'breathing', and sedative.<sup>194</sup> Lindfors adds that such quiet tenderness serves as a counterpoint to the city's noisy nocturnal activities and, in this way, it speaks of the possibility of a steadfast love in a degraded threatening environment.<sup>195</sup> I agree with Lindfors' idea of a steadfast love amidst violence and suggest also that this argument emphasises the poet's stubborn determination and his struggle to speak on behalf of his people. He decries discrimination, marginalisation and violation, whilst seeking justice for his beloved homeland.

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<sup>190</sup> Bernth Lindfors, 'Dennis Brutus and the Lay of the Land', *Routes of Roots* (1998), pp. 481-491 (p. 483).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Lindfors, p. 482.

<sup>194</sup> Lindfors, p. 484.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

Aside from the physical representation of the landscape, there are aspects of a psychological landscape, as Bede M. Ssensalo<sup>196</sup> portrays in Brutus' *Letters to Martha*. Ssensalo asserts that 'all art is biographical in that it is inspired by the artist's own personal life,'<sup>197</sup> as it is in the case of Brutus. Ssensalo discusses that *Letters to Martha* 'relived and described his prison experiences very vividly.'<sup>198</sup> The first of this psychological trauma, according to Ssensalo, is revealed in the sexual assault by inmates.<sup>199</sup> Ssensalo argues that writing this terrifying poetry leads Brutus to question, 'To what desperate limits are they driven?'<sup>200</sup> Coupled with that, Ssensalo indicates that these experiences are so horrible that the poet's prisoners seek mental escape, as 'One wishes for death,' others sought escape through insanity, while another 'sought escape / in fainting fits and asthmas / and finally fled into insanity'<sup>201</sup>

It might not be completely accurate to posit that all art is biographical, although Ssensalo justifies that it is the Western writers who can afford to write art for art's sake. Although I am aware of the difficulties of separating Brutus, the poet, from Brutus the speaker, it would be unfair to focus on his background whilst losing sight of his art. However, Ssensalo's critique interests me in its appraisal of the trauma caused by the apartheid government to its victims. This is because it buttresses the idea of a failed Relation between the apartheid government and the blacks and mixed races in South Africa. In a nutshell, the critics in this section paint a picture of disgruntlement, misrepresentation, exploitation, but also show the valorisation of the beauty of both regions: South Africa and St Lucia. I assert that to preserve the beauty of each poet's landscapes, there is a need

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<sup>196</sup> Ssensalo Bede, 'The Autobiographical Nature of the Poetry of Dennis Brutus', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 8.1 (1977), pp. 130-142 (p.130).

<sup>197</sup> Bede, p. 130.

<sup>198</sup> Bede, p. 133.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Bede, p. 135.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

to resist stereotypes, misrepresentations, socio-political malpractices and discriminations, as other critics reveal in the subsequent section.

### **View of the Past / Resistance and the Struggle for Survival**

Lorna Hardwick examines the ambivalent relationship between classical texts and postcolonial literatures in English with special reference to the works of Walcott and Seamus Heaney.<sup>202</sup> Hardwick reads Walcott's *Omeros* within the framework of post-colonial literatures, which has as one of its defining features the 'awareness of and resistance to continuing colonialist attitude,' and adds that this 'aspect relates not only to political and imperialist ideologies but also to cultural forms and pressure.'<sup>203</sup> In this regard, she contends that Walcott's classical allusions are tools that reject the idea that post-colonial writings function solely as telling the story of the colonised, the victims, and the afflicted. Hardwick argues that although the poet includes the voice of the colonised, this does not limit its scope or register. For these 'classical referents help both to recreate and to communicate the pain of history. In so doing, they can also cauterize the wound, thus enabling regeneration and the growth of new creativity.'<sup>204</sup> For example, in Walcott's *Omeros*, Hardwick points out that the poet's use of a plurality of classical figures, texts, and conventions is intended to formulate and then displace dominant messages in the poem.<sup>205</sup> Hardwick identifies that Philoctete's wound and the rusted anchor that causes the wound 'links the wound to the sea empire which left behind cultural and psychological puss and corrosion.'<sup>206</sup> This double awareness of past and present enables a space not only for the awareness of the origin of the African diaspora, but also provides a similar analysis of the cultural memory of the African past.<sup>207</sup> This critique,

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<sup>202</sup> Lorna Hardwick, 'Classical Texts in Post-Colonial Literatures: Consolation, Redress and New-Beginnings in the Work of Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 9.2 (2002), pp. 236-256 (p. 236).

<sup>203</sup> Hardwick, p. 240.

<sup>204</sup> Hardwick, p. 242.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

Hardwick posits, is ‘a necessary part of the process of transformation which is to enable new cultural forms and processes to emerge.’<sup>208</sup> Thus, Walcott’s fragments are diasporic, and the shards are transplanted to energise the work.

I assert that these allusions or plural consciousness in Walcott’s poetry, where the poet recognises the past and its victims, precludes the surrender to nostalgia or the corrosive poison of the psychology of affliction. This energises new beginnings and achieves a type of redress, which is significant to this study. These referents to classical tradition and culture reflect the Caribbean’s multicultural identity (and how the poet stitches it together) and provides a space where Relation is negotiated.

Furthermore, Emily Greenwood <sup>209</sup> discusses the importance of Walcott’s use of the past continuous tense and the temporal adverb ‘still’ to mean that works of art live on even in the absence of mortal generations. Greenwood argues that ‘these adverbs establish subtle and unobtrusive relationship between present and past.’<sup>210</sup> This means that the present and the past do not have a straight linear relation because any such idea advances the colonial ideology of the new world as being ‘belated and secondary.’<sup>211</sup> Greenwood posits that in ‘A Latin Primer’ from the collection *The Arkansas Testament*, Walcott addresses explicitly the antagonism between the classical past of Europe and the present world of the Caribbean.<sup>212</sup> Greenwood states that the persona’s impasse is precipitated by

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Emily Greenwood, ‘Still Going On: Temporal Adverbs and the View of the Past in Walcott’s Poetry’, *Callaloo* 28.1 (2005), pp. 132-145 (132).

<sup>210</sup> Greenwood, p. 132.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Greenwood, p. 140.

his circumstance as a Latin master or a mouthpiece of colonial discipline<sup>213</sup>. Hence, Greenwood indicates that

this impasse / silence is finally broken by the apparition of the frigate bird, which points the way to a meeting of worlds, cultures and civilizations, where the patois name ciseau-la-mer (sea scissors) provides a native metaphor that transcends the bird's Latin name: *Fregata magnificens*.<sup>214</sup>

As far as this thesis is concerned, I substitute Greenwood's use of the word 'patois' for the word Creole, a feature used by Walcott to give voice to the cultural landscape of St Lucia. Greenwood's work is applicable to this study, specifically her idea that the native metaphors open the way for mutually enriching the dialogue between the cultures of the Greco-Roman past and the cultures of the Caribbean. This idea is comparable to Hardwick's assertion that classical referents could help to cauterise the past to enable regeneration and creativity. I suggest that opening a dialogue between the past and the present provides an arena for negotiation between the fragmentary past and the contemporary New World. This is given further analysis in chapter four of this thesis.

By contrast, Jahan Ramazani asserts that Walcott resorts to the past by using the wound metaphor to signify slavery and colonialism.<sup>215</sup> He writes that 'Walcott takes up the postcolonial poetics of affliction he once condemned, anatomizing the wounded body of Caribbean history through Philoctete, who is injured by a rusted anchor.'<sup>216</sup> He states that Philoctete is a synecdoche for general loss, injury, and impotence that must be healed for the island to be set in order.<sup>217</sup> In this regard, Ramazani asserts that Walcott uses the scar

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Greenwood, pp. 140-141.

<sup>215</sup> Jahan Ramazani, 'The Wound of History: Walcott's *Omeros* and the Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction', *Modern Language Association* 112.3 (1997), pp. 405-417 (p. 406).

<sup>216</sup> Ramazani, p. 406.

<sup>217</sup> Ramazani, p. 410.

to symbolise a cultural confluence in the Americas without obliterating its severe past.<sup>218</sup> This hybridized trope, according to him, is exposed in the poet's intertextual ancestry in dealing with the wounds of personas including: Philoctete, Plunkett, Hector, Achille, Helen, Maud, and the narrator himself.<sup>219</sup> Again, he maintains that the wound in *Omeros* 'memorializes the untold suffering of African Caribbean peoples, yet as a trope, it poeticizes pain, compares this particular experience to others, and thus must either mar or deconstruct experiential uniqueness by plunging it into the whirlpool of metaphoric resemblance and difference.'<sup>220</sup> This implies that, by making allusions to classical literature, Walcott mars the uniqueness of the Caribbean experience.

Ramazani's view that Walcott takes up 'the postcolonial poetics of affliction'<sup>221</sup> is accurate but in addition, I propose that Walcott's poetics is not primarily that of distress but also that of restoration. I argue that there is a difference between acknowledging that a people have suffered due to their painful history and repudiating postcolonial sullenness in the past. Walcott does not engage a poetics that limits itself to a remorseful complaint about the past. I consider that Walcott rather uses the past as a starting point for negotiating the elements of the past and the present, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three. One can also add that making comparisons with classical literatures, as Walcott does in his poetry, does not mar the originality of his work. It instead reflects the true composition of the poet's landscape. Notwithstanding these disagreements, it is worth noting Ramazani's symbolic analysis of the wound metaphor as relating to cultural hybridity, as well as his idea that the suffering of the afflicted is not only unique to the Caribbean although there might be differences in these experiences. I find this significant

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<sup>218</sup> Ramazani, p. 411.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ramazani, p. 415.

<sup>221</sup> Ramazani, p. 406.

given that the foundation of my thesis compares the works of Walcott and Brutus in relation to the poetics of the wound. Additionally, it is a poetics that includes personas who can be described as victims of imperial domination. The scars they bear are metaphoric of those sustained during colonialism.

Contrary to Ramazani's take on the poet's view of the past as burdensome, June Bobb in *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott* asserts that Walcott confronts the trauma of the historical misrepresentation of the Caribbean and its people, and develops a poetics of resistance as an antidote to personal and communal pain.<sup>222</sup> She argues that Walcott is concerned with the ambivalence of history that is fraught with different fragments.<sup>223</sup> Bobb opines that in an attempt at reconciling these fragments, the poet uses the persona of an alienated artist in a struggle to come to terms with the dualities of the past in order to fashion a future.<sup>224</sup> She examines Walcott's past as being problematic because 'he conceives of personal past unhabituated by his ancestors, both European and African, and a regional mythic past unhabituated by the presence of all the region's people's.'<sup>225</sup> She then holds that attempts at reconciling these dualities of the past and the present bring forth the poet's imaginative creation of a creolised self that can fit more easily into the Caribbean.

Thus, Bobb concludes that Walcott builds from the detritus of colonial history in reconstructing notions home. He does so by bridging the gap separating the past and the

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<sup>222</sup> June Bobb, *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998), p. 18.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Bobb, p. 35.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

present, and projects a future wherein the ‘myths’<sup>226</sup> and ‘fables’<sup>227</sup> of his people, instead of being seen as the ‘halting inarticulation of the simple,’<sup>228</sup> will assume their rightful place in the world’s literatures because ‘[T]hese fables of the backward and the poor / marbled by moonlight, will grow white and richer. / Our myths are ignorance theirs is literature.’<sup>229</sup> Bobb’s work is a monograph and the most pertinent study to this thesis as it brings out vividly Walcott’s poetics of a new world and the fashioning of a new culture through a cross-cultural awareness or double consciousness of a region whose history is fraught with fragments of a distorted past. I agree with Bobb’s view that Walcott’s poetics is full of ambivalence. This ambivalence explains the complexities of bringing these fragmentary cultures together. It is this that Glissant refers to when he writes of ‘composite cultures’ in the Caribbean.<sup>230</sup> Finally, Bobb’s work provides a guideline through its comparative approach of Edward Braithwaite and Walcott’s poetics which provides me with a framework to better analyse Walcott and Brutus’ poetry.

In using the persona of an alienated artist, as Bobb writes, some critics too have taken Brutus to task on his use of the troubadour image to resist the apartheid system. Tanure Ojaide holds that Brutus consistently uses the trope of the troubadour in his poems to describe the speaker as one who loves and fights for his mistress.<sup>231</sup> This image that is transplanted from medieval European times to modern times, according to Ojaide, represents the non-white poet in the apartheid society of South Africa.<sup>232</sup> He suggests that the poet is a troubadour who fights for a loved one against injustice and infidelity in his

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<sup>226</sup> Bobb, p. 40.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 91.

<sup>231</sup> Tanure Ojaide, ‘The Troubadour: The Poet’s Persona in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, *Ariel*, 17.1 (1986), pp.57-69 (p. 56).

<sup>232</sup> Ojaide, p. 56.

society. In this regard, he describes Brutus as a spokesman for the oppressed and who at the same time exposes the brutality of the regime.<sup>233</sup>

Ojaide argues that the poet does not distance himself from the oppressed because he is one of them. Thus, he uses words that describe his predicament and that of the other inmates in the prison, for example, phrases such as ‘one cushioned the mind,’<sup>234</sup> and ‘later one changes... / seeks the easy way out.’<sup>235</sup> As a spokesman, Ojaide indicates that the poet does not only expose the sufferings of the inmates, but also highlights the brutal nature of the regime: a system that is ‘more terrible than any beast / that can be tamed or bribed.’<sup>236</sup> Ojaide explains that the reason for the poet’s chronicle of such suffering is to embarrass and discredit the establishment on the one hand, and inspire the oppressed non-whites on the other hand.<sup>237</sup> I concur with Ojaide’s point of view and intend to develop it further in showing how such acts of resistance are an attempt by the speaker and his people to assert themselves within a place. This is only possible through a relational poetics, one that entails reconciliation and negotiation between the different races that make up the entire region.

In a similar manner, Rose Folli points out that many of Brutus’ poems reveal the speaker as the ‘erotic revolutionary.’<sup>238</sup> This is because Folli sees in Brutus’ speaker one who is passionately concerned about ‘our land’s disfigurement,’ a land that is ‘trafficked and raddled... by gross undiscerning occupying feet.’<sup>239</sup> Folli describes Brutus’ erotic

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<sup>233</sup> Ojaide, p. 57.

<sup>234</sup> Ojaide, p. 58.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>238</sup> Rose Folli ‘Dennis Brutus: Erotic revolutionary’, *English Studies in Africa*, 39.2 (1996), pp. 17-26 (p. 18).

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

revolutionary personality from three perspectives. Firstly, the speaker is concerned about the living conditions of the ‘non-whites,’ the ‘dispossessed’ under the apartheid system. That is why in ‘Train Journey,’ he tells of children lacking physical and spiritual nourishment, children who are robbed of their birth-right to play and be carefree.<sup>240</sup> Secondly, he points out that the poet-persona’s revolutionary and public voice is articulated in most of his poems where he urges the oppressed to resist and fight for freedom in the spirit of the fallen heroes<sup>241</sup> because it is ‘[B]etter that we should die, than that we should lie down.’<sup>242</sup> Thirdly, although there is hunger and brutality, Folli argues that Brutus’ poems uphold elements of survival, hope, and a resilient spirit to commit oneself ‘to the assertion of human value, of human dignity.’<sup>243</sup> Significant to my study is Folli’s standpoint about Brutus’ commitment and resilient spirit in asserting the dignity of his people. These are people who have been refused their dignity as humans and reduced to the level of sub-humans.

### **Key Terms and Terminology**

This thesis compares the poetics of Walcott and Brutus, and in this context, I will use Theodore Sarbin’s assertion that poetics is ‘a word that calls up images of a person creating, shaping and moulding multidimensional stories... fashioned by means of spoken and written language.’<sup>244</sup> I also connect Sarbin’s definition with Elleke Boehmer’s assertion that poetics ‘might be taken to refer... to the creative principles underlying... form.’<sup>245</sup> From these definitions, I argue that it is from the perspective of a person moulding, shaping and creating their stories that I read Walcott and Brutus’s poetry as attempts at bringing together fragments of a distorted past to construct the

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<sup>240</sup> Folli, 19.

<sup>241</sup> Folli, p. 22.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Folli, p. 25.

<sup>244</sup> Theodore Sarbin, ‘The Poetics of Identity’, *Theory and Psychology*. 7.1 (1997), pp. 67-82, (p. 67).

<sup>245</sup> Elleke Boehmer, ‘Questions of Postcolonial Poetics’ in *Postcolonial Poetics 21<sup>st</sup> Century Critical Readings* (Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 19-38 (p. 26).

present that represents their respective homes. In addition, these fragments are brought together and made possible using poetic meter, metaphor, imagery in both poets' art.

In relation to 'belonging' and 'home,' I draw from Caryl Phillip's assertion that 'these days we are all unmoored. Our identities are fluid. Belonging is a contested state. Home is a place riddled with vexing questions.'<sup>246</sup> To define home as a place of one's birth and part lived experience is indeed a complex construction for various reasons, not least the idea of conflicting (and many) identities. However, my interest lies in how postcolonial writers strive through poetry, to reconstitute a sense of home and self within spaces referred to as peripheries. Belonging and home are inextricably linked. If one feels comfortable in a place, one belongs and can safely call it home. In the context of the Caribbean, it is fitting to accept Phillips' assertion that belonging is a contested state. This is relevant in the sense that identity is not constructed from a homogenous ontological point of view, but rather from a heterogenous perspective. This is not however to say that geographical spaces are not meaningful or compelling as is the case of South Africa. Again, this should not be dismissed as merely nostalgic 'but as a revisit of traditional sites of identity construction in order to challenge the myths of identity that such sites were previously made to support.'<sup>247</sup> Such myths include the idea of original roots as being one's place or home, an idea that this thesis does not deny but accepts other possibilities of being in the world that are not limited to original or single roots. Of particular significance is Mounir Guirat's assertion that 'to belong, then, is to open up a space for one's voice through interrogating established and biased cultural hierarchies, to prove

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<sup>246</sup> Caryl Phillips, 'A New World Order', *Wasafiri* 16.3 (2001), pp. 39-41 (p. 41).

<sup>247</sup> Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), p. 3.

one's worth and feel valued and recognised in spite of one's difference.'<sup>248</sup> Guirat articulates once more the idea of accepting others irrespective of their race. While my thesis eschews absolute origin and territorial claim as aspects that define self and place/home, it is also recognises those multiracial societies such as South Africa where a majority of its 'Black'<sup>249</sup> folks still feel displaced within its environment. As Paul Gready asserts, 'home for the exile is an imagined country created through layers of memory, nostalgia, and desire.'<sup>250</sup> It is in this vein that Walcott and Brutus put on pages their aspiration and dreams about home as monumental examples of lasting memories. Other post-colonial terms that are salient to this thesis includes: language, hybridity, misrepresentation, Self/Other, centre and margin as discussed below.

The postcolonial field has undergone some circuitry as to whether its writings embody form besides its well-known thematic preoccupations. Aside from incorporating popular tropes of postcolonial text, such as, 'writings as a means of border-crossing, or coming to terms with the loss of empire, or forging migrant pathways in the once-imperial metropolis, or of asserting cultural or national movements,'<sup>251</sup> this thesis also seeks to overtly discuss those poetic terms that underpin postcolonial writings. For example, the English language has become a versatile language especially as it can take unto itself elements from other local languages that are appropriate in describing a place. Two ways in which this versatility might be seen is in what Ashcroft et al. refers to as a

continuum of intersection... in which...regional English varieties may introduce words which become familiar to all english-speakers, and on the

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<sup>248</sup> Mounir Guirat, *Politics and Poetics of Belonging* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), p.2.

<sup>249</sup> I am capitalising black in this context to reflect the Black consciousness use of the term to include non-whites ('Coloured' and Asians).

<sup>250</sup> Paul Gready, 'The South African Experience of Home and Homecoming', *World Literature Today*, 68.3 (1994), pp. 509-515 (p. 509).

<sup>251</sup> Elleke Boehmer, P. 22.

other, the varieties themselves produce national and regional peculiarities which distinguish them from other forms of English.<sup>252</sup>

The versatility in language signifies that language is not inherent given that what has become known as Standard English garnered its force by borrowing widely from other languages. As Ngugi wa Thiongo asserts, 'language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world.'<sup>253</sup> Thus, in postcolonial writings, language is read as one of the most potent features of a people's culture. Whilst Wa Thiongo's concern about why 'any writer (would) become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues'<sup>254</sup> may seem plausible, it is a veritable reality that the English language is still useful today due to 'the linguistic plurality of modern African states'<sup>255</sup> and therefore serves as a lingua franca.

Because language also serves a metonymic function in postcolonial poetry, I consider Chinua Achebe's assertion that the linguistic plurality of modern African states now suggests that the reason the English language and other 'alien languages are still knocking about (is) because they serve an actual need.'<sup>256</sup> Thus, Achebe proposes that such a need lies in national unity and communication to a vast majority of people who probably speak different mother tongues.<sup>257</sup> It is in this light of a national unity in language usage that Ashcroft contends that 'the post-colonial text brings language and meaning to a discursive

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<sup>252</sup> Bill Ashcroft et al. p. 39.

<sup>253</sup> Ngugi wa Thiongo, 'The Language of African Literature', in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 263-267 (p. 267).

<sup>254</sup> Ngugi wa Thiongo, p. 264.

<sup>255</sup> Chinua Achebe, 'The Politics of Language', in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft and others (London: Routledge, 2006), pp 268-271 (p. 271).

<sup>256</sup> Achebe, pp. 270-271.

<sup>257</sup> Achebe, p. 270.

site in which they are mutually constituted, and at this site the importance of usage is inescapable.<sup>258</sup> In this vein, I suggest that although the poets under study use the English language, it is an English that is appropriated, and its intelligibility is reflected in its site of usage. It is my view that this metonymic function of language in post-colonial writings provides an attempt to abrogate the centrality of the 'English Language.' Arguably, post-colonial writers use language to signify difference while employing a sameness that enables it to be understood.<sup>259</sup> In this way, the un-translated words, the sounds and the textures of language can be held to have the power and presence of the culture they signify.<sup>260</sup> This is particularly shown in Brutus' poetics where he coins certain words to describe the events of his time.

Moreover, Ashcroft notes that 'language is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins with language.'<sup>261</sup> Thus, one can assert that the colonial educational system did not recognize the presence of other languages but rather maintains the language of the coloniser. However, these languages continue to exist despite the punishment that followed if they were used. Edward Kamau Braithwaite states that 'a complex process took place when European languages encountered African languages.'<sup>262</sup> This process led to what he has termed 'nation language', a language that does not follow the pentameter in poetry but rather relies

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<sup>258</sup> Bill Ashcroft, 'Language and Transformation', in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft and others (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 277-280 (p. 279).

<sup>259</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 50.

<sup>260</sup> Ashcroft Bill et al, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* p. 51.

<sup>261</sup> Bill Ashcroft, 'Language', in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 261-262 (261).

<sup>262</sup> Edward Kamau Braithwaite, 'Nation Language', in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 281-284 (281).

heavily on the calypso form.<sup>263</sup> It is this form that has developed into what is now called the Creole language and which Walcott uses sparingly in his poetic writings.<sup>264</sup>

Another term that is relevant to this study is hybridity and synchronicity. Brathwaite defines this ‘cultural action or social process’<sup>265</sup> as ‘creoli[z]ation.’<sup>266</sup> In Brathwaite’s view, this process began ‘when the slaves were branded, given a new name and put under apprenticeship to creolized slaves. During this period the slaves would learn the rudiments of his new language and be initiated into the work routines that awaited him.’<sup>267</sup> The outcome of such a process was socialisation. However, Brathwaite regrets the idea that this process produced such ‘mimic-men.’<sup>268</sup> It is significant to note that Brathwaite’s creolisation process might be considered a productive point for a society’s take off in creating relations with one another as a form of adaptation within a place.

However, Brathwaite does not consider that mimicry can be read as part of the process of this cultural growth. To that end, Homi Bhabha offers a ‘Third Space’, the ‘inter’- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between, the space of entre – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.<sup>269</sup> In Bhabha’s ‘third Space’, relation and negotiation are not only limited to binary poles such as master/servant, Self/Other, but open to a wider community from different backgrounds. Thus, Bhabha advances that ‘by

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<sup>263</sup> Edward Brathwaite, pp. 281-282.

<sup>264</sup> Walcott’s use of Creole is particularly noticeable in his plays such as *Dream on Monkey Mountain* and *The Sea at Dauphin*. This might be because the theatre provides an opportunity for oral performance than poetry.

<sup>265</sup> Edward Kamau Brathwaite, ‘Creolization in Jamaica’, in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft and others (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 152-154 (p. 153).

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences’, in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft and others (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 155-157 (p. 157).

exploring this hybridity, this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.’<sup>270</sup> Bhabha’s ‘Third Space’ might also be read as the Creolisation process given that it is a space of occult instability, a phrase he borrows from Frantz Fanon<sup>271</sup> to describe the constant changes of objects and people in the Caribbean islands.

Against these backdrops, Ashcroft et. al. advance that ‘hybridity in the present is constantly struggling to free itself from a past which stressed ancestry, and which valued the pure over its threatening opposite, the composite.’<sup>272</sup> Similarly, Boehmer explains that the prominence of hybridity as a postcolonial figure could be explained by the idea that ‘it necessarily involves cross-border or transcultural reference and hence may appear to relate to more audiences, cross- culturally.’<sup>273</sup> It is in this light that Jahan Ramazani posits that through hybridisation, poets create forms that embody their experience of living between the discrepant cultural worlds of the global North and South. Contrary to Boehmer and Ramazani’s focus on hybridity, albeit their invaluable contributions in dealing with the fragmentary nature of their contexts, I argue that the present experience in the Caribbean today, as well as South Africa better fits Glissant’s description of ‘composite cultures.’<sup>274</sup> This complex mix has given birth to the idea of creolisation, a process of defining identity through a relation with everything possible.<sup>275</sup> Such a mosaic characteristic of post-colonial cultures stands in contrast to European syncretic thinking

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 183.

<sup>272</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, p. 34.

<sup>273</sup> Elleke Boehmer, p. 26.

<sup>274</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 91.

<sup>275</sup> Glissant, p. 89.

of history, ancestry and the past as epistemic points of reference for any society. Thus, identity as a process of becoming is shifting and not static.

I posit that the poetry under study is written in a creolised form not only in terms of language but also in form. Both poets attempt to weave together disparate sounds and myths deposited by history to create a unique form. Ramazani advances that the postcolonial ‘poem often mediates between western and non-western forms and perception, experience, and language to reveal not only their integration but ultimately the chasm that divides them.’<sup>276</sup> In addition, there is an attempt at or evidence of a common approach to mythmaking. Boehmer describes this as ‘redreaming the world through local myth, or weaving myths of the past for the postcolonial present.’<sup>277</sup> This is important in giving marginalised peoples the opportunity to fashion their own world on their own terms.

Finally, the polarities of Self/Other and Centre/ Margin account for the continuous misrepresentation of formerly colonised peoples. Gayatri Spivak questions European ‘much-invoked’ oppressed subject (woman), whose survival is metaphorically expressed as ‘white men are saving brown women from brown men.’<sup>278</sup> She argues that ‘if, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.’<sup>279</sup> Such misconstruing of the cultural values of a people and the assumption by European intellectuals of their knowledge of the ‘Other’

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<sup>276</sup> Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago and London: The Chicago University Press, 2001), p. 18.

<sup>277</sup> Boehmer, P. 29-30.

<sup>278</sup> Gayatri Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 28-37(p. 33).

<sup>279</sup> Gayatri Spivak, p. 32.

is classified by Spivak as an ‘example of ideological epistemic violence.’<sup>280</sup> My understanding of such a violence lies in the idea that the colonialist abolition of the ritual wherein the woman mourns her husband through death by fire violates her rights as a ‘good wife’<sup>281</sup> relatively to the culture of the place. Although my thesis is not concerned with the marginalisation of women, Spivak’s notion of the subaltern is applicable to the displaced Caribbean and black South African population. Her questioning of the subjective role of the woman provides a good starting point evidencing the erroneous misrepresentation of colonial subjects. In the context of this thesis, I suggest that Spivak’s evocation of violence shows the limits of western discourse in comprehending disparate cultures. I propose Glissant’s idea of the need to accept the opacity of the ‘other.’<sup>282</sup> That is, the need to embrace the difference of the other even without understanding it. I also concur with J. Maggio’s assertion that: ‘the best a Western critic (citizen) can do is open up the way he/she listens and understands...to translate the non-Western—is to try to understand all actions as a form of communication and to construe such communication on its own terms.’<sup>283</sup> These are the key terms that theoretically undergird this thesis and align with ideas discussed in the chapters that follow.

Drawing from the above, my thesis, which questions the poetics of relation and home, addresses the following questions: How might Relation, evident in the writings of Walcott and Brutus, serve as a poetic medium in constructing notions of home and revising concepts of the human? How do the selected poets confront and represent the complexities of the diaspora and exile, and capture multiple cultural identities in poetry?

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Édouard Glissant, p. 189.

<sup>283</sup> J. Maggio, “‘Can the Subaltern Be Heard’?: Political Theory, Translation, Representation and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’, *Alternatives* 23(2007), pp, 419-443.

How do the poets write the realities of leaving a home(land) behind even as they construct / articulate a poetics of belonging?

### **Methodology**

The research method used in this study comprises of a comparative approach in analysing the poetics of Walcott and Brutus. My analysis will be applicable to firstly, what is distinct and similar in their poetry, and secondly, textual explication and the critiquing of selected poems. I consider this approach to be appropriate because it provides an in-depth analysis of their poetry which hails from different regions. It also brings together two poets who might be considered quite different to uncover 'Relation' between the two. The analysis will consist of a comparison of poetic form and the teasing out of relational poetics. The discussion will begin with Walcott, followed by Brutus for reasons of prominence on aspects of home, identity, and Relation in their poetry.

The works selected for this study includes Walcott's *The Arkansas Testament*, *The Bounty*, and *Omeros* and Brutus' *A Simple Lust*, *Stubborn Hope* and *Letters To Martha*. The importance of these texts lies in the criticism they have attracted, and which provides me with the opportunity to position my contribution through a comparative analysis. I shall draw from published interviews that shed light on the selected poetry. Nicholas Walliman and Scott Buckler<sup>284</sup> assert that although interviews 'can be problematic whereby a respondent may say one thing and their body language reveals...something else,' in this instance, they however 'engages with the respondent... the centre of attention and [provides] greater depth of information.'<sup>285</sup> The places of interest to this study includes the island of St Lucia and the region of South Africa which might be held up as

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<sup>284</sup> Nicholas Walliman and Scott Buckler, *Your Dissertation in Education* (London: Sage, 2008), p. 180.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

monumental areas depicting the consequences of imperial rule, racial discrimination and cultural multiplicity.

### **Parameters**

Chapter One focuses on a 'Revision of Home in the Poetics of Walcott's *Omeros* and Brutus' *A Simple Lust*.' I interrogate what it is that the selected texts tell about how each poet confronts and represent the complexities of diaspora and exile. I raise the question as to whether space and time can be separated and whether the past is really in the past or is continuous in the present. I draw from Said's assertion that 'even as we must fully comprehend the pastness of the past, there is no just way in which the past can be quarantined from the present.'<sup>286</sup> In this vein, both poets resist discrimination and the burden of the past. I engage both poets in their spaces of renegotiation, where they gather the broken fragments of their regions and reconstruct them afresh. Thus, Walcott and Brutus do not focus on their colonial past, but rather they engage with it in the struggle for survival. I explore how Walcott's poetics entails a celebration of the folklore and the culture of the people through an epic narrative form to debunk misrepresentations and stereotypes; his use of a loose hexameter terza rima as a creolised form; and centralising his characters through hybridised symbolic objects that emphasise the idea of interconnections between people. I connect this with Glissant's idea that Relation has a huge impact on the full meaning of identity because identity 'is no longer linked... to the sacred mystery of the root. It depends on how society participates in global relation.'<sup>287</sup> In the case of Brutus' South Africa, I explore how the poet's strategies involves the use of iambic trimeter in some poems to convey a rhythmic pattern of violence masterminded by the apartheid police, his use of praise and lyric poetry as a form to outright protest and resist against discrimination of the Other, and the assertion of his people's identity. Thus,

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<sup>286</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.2.

<sup>287</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 141.

both poets' speakers are seen to express a relentless effort to assert themselves within their communities.

Chapter Two, titled 'Landscape Representation and the Claiming of a Worldly Identity in Walcott's *The Bounty* and Brutus' *A Simple Lust*,' builds on the intricate diasporic ideas of chapter one to show how these are represented through physical, political, and psychological landscapes. This chapter questions how Walcott and Brutus write their landscape and capture multicultural identities in poetry. I refer to Said's idea of the necessity to 'give emphasis and voice to what is silent and marginally present or ideologically represented.'<sup>288</sup> My focus is to emphasise the need for postcolonial writers such as the poets under study to counter the (mis)representation of the Other through vivid images of individuals and landscapes. I also allude to Glissant's idea that the scale used by Western thought must be dismantled or 'displaced all reduction'<sup>289</sup> in order to show how both poets, through their physical representation, appeal to the visual and sensuous images of sight, sound, and silence; olfactory images of smell and taste; and tactile images of touch to bring to life the realities of their landscapes. I argue that the Caribbean and South African landscapes act as sources of inspiration for both poets to express ideas of Relation and to write about home. They imprint upon the mind of the reader the realities of poverty, dispossession, and suppression; providing spaces; for renegotiation and reconstruction in their poetry. Aside from bringing such realities to the fore, the beauty of each poet's landscape serves a poetic aesthetic of renewed hope, where one can re-imagine and create a new beginning. I also indicate that landscape painting via the poetry

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<sup>288</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.78.

<sup>289</sup> Édouard Glissant, p. 190.

examined reveals a site of political instability, eco-critical concerns as their landscapes are scarred with pollution and degradation.

Chapter Three centres on ‘The Poetics of the Wound in Walcott’s *Omeros* and Brutus’ *Letters To Martha*.’ Drawing from some of the wounded landscape painting in chapter two, this chapter combines past and present wounded images of each poet’s region to show how they create contemporary identities. I question whether a wounded landscape and its people might serve as a poetic construction of home. Using the metaphor of the wound, both Walcott and Brutus create characters that suffer afflictions caused by slavery and colonialism. Both poets also disfigure their characters and landscapes with wounds to repair historical injuries. Ramazani posits that these historical afflictions are indeed true of ‘black Caribbean literature and much of Third World Literature in general.’<sup>290</sup> To heal these wounds, each poet must take a journey back to the past to recollect the cause of the wound and devise ways of healing. Of relevance is Said’s interrogation: ‘how does a culture seeking to become independent of imperialism imagine its own past?’<sup>291</sup> I suggest that ‘like a Caliban, aware of and accepting his mongrel past but not disabled for future development.’<sup>292</sup> I also consider particularly Glissant’s focus on the ‘return to the sources of our cultures and the mobility of their rational content, to have a better appreciation of this disorder and to modulate each action according to it.’<sup>293</sup> Both poets’ poetics of the wound is a metaphor that represents the historical and cultural wounds, the love wound and the wounded dispossessed. The excavation of this trope, its translation and the acceptance of its meaning in the present, facilitates reconstruction. Therefore,

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<sup>290</sup> Ramazan, ‘The Wound of History’, p. 403.

<sup>291</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 258.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, P. 126.

these poets can be described as artists gifted with a significant poetic task in negotiating identity.

Chapter four is titled 'A Relational Poetics (of Belonging): Walcott's *The Arkansas Testament* and Brutus' *Stubborn Hope*.' I address how Relation as seen in the works of Walcott and Brutus might serve a poetics medium in constructing notions of home. Belonging is read from Glissant's concept of creolisation which demonstrates that henceforth it is no longer valid to glorify unique origins,<sup>294</sup> but to celebrate plurality in culture – an apparent nature of the Caribbean Islands. Thus, creolisation can be defined as a process of becoming, a transformation 'into something different, into a new set of possibilities.'<sup>295</sup> In this way, there is a loss of an original identity and a gain of a new composite culture. These composite cultures as evident in the poetics of Walcott and Brutus take the form of an appropriation of foreign concepts and personae. I discuss how both poets use images from classical, as well as local literature to abrogate and resist ideological representation and continuous subordination. Adlai Murdoch posits that representations 'as intrinsically deprived, benighted and inferior has been shown to be the typical pattern of coloni[z]ation process.'<sup>296</sup> I argue that these representations continue to express the dialectics of Self and the Other; it is this that Murdoch asserts as the stimulus that pushes the colonised to 'overcome through mimetic replication of the Other.'<sup>297</sup> That said, I describe Walcott's vivid description of race images in the poem 'The Arkansas Testament' as a form of resistance to the continuous prevalence of racism and the idea of the black man as a subject at risk in that setting. I also read Brutus' appropriation of the

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<sup>294</sup> Glissant. P. 15.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Adlai Murdoch, '(Re)figuring Colonialism: Narratological and Ideological Resistance', *Callaloo* 15.1 (1992), pp. 2-11 (p. 2).

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

trope of the troubadour from classical and medieval literature as a relational poetics. It is a move towards identifying and being open to other cultures although it is also a defiant tool against the ravishment of his beloved South Africa. Linked to this, I emphasise both poets' use of the double-entendre image of the female, which simultaneously represents beauty and the ills of the regions. Through figuring, this chapter exposes the complicated identity of the diaspora as evident in chapter one and paints a socio-cultural landscape whose images are drawn from both past and present, to the seeking of a relational and cosmopolitan identities.

### **Key Poetic Similarities between Walcott and Brutus**

Walcott and Brutus are not only different as poets, but they have had distinct critical reception by critics. Walcott's accolades culminated in the Nobel Prize in literature (1992); he is also well recognised internationally (more as an English than a Caribbean poet, however), Brutus, on the other hand, is more overtly political in his writings. However, I have decided to put them in dialogue particularly as they both emerge from societies that have experienced the debasing of humans to sub-human levels occasioned by slavery and apartheid. Consequently, their poetic writings express the need for meaningful cultural dialogue between races. Although in some ways steeped in the tradition of their former colonial masters, each appropriates colonial texts and canons as important sites of thinking about their own world.

Apart from a common colonial experience, the selected poets might appear to have been brought together for reasons based on their multiracial backgrounds wherein the idea of 'relation' presents itself most aptly. This is emphatically not the case. Paul Breslin certainly makes the point that 'Walcott's immediate grandfathers—a Dutchman from Saint Martin on his mother's side and an Englishman from Barbados on his father's—

were white and relatively wealthy, and his immediate grandmothers primarily of African descent and poor.<sup>298</sup> Walcott himself confirms his lineage: ‘I who am poisoned with the blood of both, / where shall I turn, divided to the vein?’<sup>299</sup> This quote indicates Walcott’s dilemma as far as his genetic allegiance is concerned. Such a conflict is reflected in Bruce King’s assertion that St Lucia is socially and racially complex especially as it was a military base from which part of its regiment stayed on and intermarried with St Lucians. King asserts, ‘there was mixing and whitening. A small but distinctive group was white, near white, or high brown, and British, along with the older French families.’<sup>300</sup> King and Walcott’s quotes are pointers to the poet’s mixed background but are not the primary reasons for this comparative analysis.

Similarly, Brutus on his part, stresses ‘...that my parents were both what are legally called “coloreds,” which is not an unusual situation in South Africa, because the Dutch settlers who landed in the 1650s encouraged intermarriage as a way of penetrating society.’<sup>301</sup> This mixed society described by Brutus resulted from the different European powers that settled in South Africa. Brutus can be said to be a fruit of this racial mix and it is from these different races: whites, ‘coloreds’ and blacks,’ that apartheid found a breeding ground in South Africa. The result was segregation and discrimination that led to continuous conflicts which are evident in Brutus’s poetry. While an event racial mixedness makes it possible to begin to establish a relational poetics, the reason for my choice of poets are more complex and are grounded much more in the apparent dissimilarity of their poetics than in any possible surface (biological) appearance.

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<sup>298</sup> Paul Breslin, *Nobody’s Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*, p.11.

<sup>299</sup> Derek Walcott, ‘A Far Cry from Africa,’ in *Collected Poems 1948-1984*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), p.17.

<sup>300</sup> Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>301</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim, *Poetry and Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader*, p. 23.

Central to my argument is that, though appearing to be very different, Walcott and Brutus use similar poetics which can be described as a new form of poetry, building on earlier types from the Medieval and Romantic periods, and experimental poetry to create greater possibilities of expressions. A typical feature used by both poets is the quatrain, a four-line form considered to be the most common verse form in Europe. While this form has a traditional rhyme pattern of abab, abba, the selected poets do not strictly follow this pattern. In Walcott's *The Arkansas Testament*, the first seven poems and more than half of the total number of poems in the collection are in the form of a quatrain, with almost all using the traditional abab rhyme scheme. For example, Walcott's 'The Lighthouse' has the traditional rhyme scheme abab in 'Bar' and 'star', and 'Oak' and 'joke', as evident in this stanza: at the New Jerusalem Bar. / I order a flask of Old Oak. / the crowd follows a different star / now, but with an old patois joke.<sup>302</sup> This poem focuses on an estranged homecoming, as the poet finds that nothing has changed although the crowd now follows a different zeitgeist or mentality which in this case, might be considered to be a change in the political structure of the island. As Edward Baugh<sup>303</sup> highlights in his analyses, most of the poems are not traditional ballads with ideas of evolution and progress but are plain speaking as opposed to oblique and densely layered utterances. They also use more free verse than formal verse, traditional metrics, and more informality than oratorical eloquence. Baugh adds that Walcott's sustained use of quatrain is based on the poet's 'insistence on the notion of poetry as discipline, a craft which one has to learn and work at'.<sup>304</sup> In addition, Walcott's flexibility in using the classical style and his own creative

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<sup>302</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 4.

<sup>303</sup> Edward Baugh, *Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature: Derek Walcott* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.176.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

style can be seen as another way of opening up to the many influences that reflect his multicultural Caribbean landscape.

Educated like Walcott in classical English verse in a colonial setting, Brutus attempts to compose multi-levelled lyrical poems that challenge his readers. Brutus' poems are lyric forms invested with many of the standard poetic conventions. He uses the quatrain form like Walcott, but Brutus does not strictly adhere to the rhyme pattern. Most of Brutus' quatrain rhymes are abca, which I suggest might be the poet's own way of breaking from the traditional ballad rhyme scheme and enhancing creativity in his work. His use of the quatrain form is intended to present clearly the disruptive nature of the apartheid regime. Unlike the traditional quatrain that consists of harmony and progression, Brutus' poetic tone and rhythm show a rather static situation. In 'The Sounds Begin Again,' Brutus shows a repetitive pattern of torture. Images of sounds in the 'siren', 'thunder' and 'shriek' run from the first line to the fourth line. The poem does not tell the reader that these sounds come to an end; rather, it is circular. Walcott and Brutus' allusion to the classical style is significant in this thesis in that it indicates how they strive to embrace the different strands of their multicultural societies. By this I mean each poet celebrates ideas of plurality rather than singularity in culture.

In addition, both poets use metaphors and imagery to great effect. Jeffrey Wainwright asserts that 'at the heart of metaphor, the vehicle which connects the subject of the utterance with the quality being evoked, is an image.'<sup>305</sup> In each poet's writing, vivid evocations of detailed descriptions through their use of imagery, similes, and metaphors

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<sup>305</sup> Jeffrey Wainwright, *Poetry: The Basics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 167.

are to be found. Firstly, both poets provide the reader with descriptive images that appeal to our senses of sight, hearing, taste, and touch. In Walcott's *The Bounty*, we find an example of the poet's use of imagery in these lines 'The blades of the oleander were rattling like green knives / The palms of the breadfruit shrugged, and a hissing ghost.'<sup>306</sup> The lines and the poem itself are examples of Walcott's homecoming poems, where he realises with remorse that he has abandoned the island and its people. These images, the personification of nature and the use of simile in the first stanza, expose the poet's conflicting selves in creating a balance between his sojourning abroad and his return home. John Thieme's assertion that, in *The Bounty*, like in Walcott's previous volumes, we find 'an Ishmael seeking the solace of a home which seems to elude him, even though he has no doubt it lies (within the Caribbean, and specifically in St Lucia of his youth).'<sup>307</sup> Through these images, I propose that Walcott does not only give a voice to the elements of his landscape, but also tries to become integrated within the landscape.

Brutus similarly like Walcott, appeals to our senses of sight and sound in 'At a Funeral' where the colours black, green, and gold are used. The poem is dedicated to all those who lost their lives fighting for justice in South Africa. Thus, the above colours are reminiscent of the colours of the African National Congress (ANC), whose members fought devotedly to bring down the apartheid government. One might argue that the above insignia shows Brutus' praise of the idea of a struggle for freedom. Joy Etiowo posits that in this poem, Brutus calls for revolutionary actions from the oppressed, and he asks them to 'Arise.'<sup>308</sup> This I argue is a clarion call for the fight for liberation. Furthermore, the image of the sunset in this poem provides a sympathetic background to the occasion. Acoustic images

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<sup>306</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 32.

<sup>307</sup> John Thieme, *Derek Walcott: Contemporary World Writer*, p. 192.

<sup>308</sup> Joy Etiowo, 'Modern African poetry and the legacy of Dennis Brutus', *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies* 3.1 (2014), pp. 117-125 (P. 118).

of ‘the bugled dirging,’ ‘Salute!’ with gunshots and ‘the brassy shout of freedom’ enhance the dehumanising violent response by the apartheid police, instrumental in shortening the lives of black South Africans. Such brevity of life is reflected in the metaphor of the ‘carrion books of birth’, which the black South Africans must carry with them as they move from one area to another. Moreover, the image of ‘tyranny scythes’ is shown as a mowing instrument, which is also a symbol of apartheid’s police brutality.

The image of the wound is also a particularly significant metaphor in Walcott’s poetics. In *Omeros*, Philoctete is described as ‘foam-haired’<sup>309</sup>, as someone who is unable to walk in ‘identical strides’<sup>310</sup> like the rest of the fishermen because ‘the sore on his shin’ is ‘still unhealed.’<sup>311</sup> We are also made to understand that the origin of this sore is ‘from a scraping, rusted anchor.’<sup>312</sup> Thus, Walcott suggests that its origin is the transatlantic slave trade. This is supported by Loretta Collins’s reading that ‘Philoctete’s wound symbolises the persistent rage over slavery... injured on one ankle by a rusted anchor, a subtle emblem of the middle passage.’<sup>313</sup> It is this pain of displacement that we find in almost all of Walcott’s characters. Yet he enables each one of them to overcome their pain. Breslin asserts that ‘by returning the wounded hero to the centre in his Caribbean epic, Walcott is interpreting from a postcolonial point of view, making the suffering, isolated, and allegedly “uncivilized” Philoctete as important as the warring heroes.’<sup>314</sup> It should be noted that, contrary to Homer’s character who is wounded and abandoned at the periphery, Walcott brings this character (Philoctete) to the centre in his epic. The significance of the wound metaphor and the healing process of the character in this thesis

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<sup>309</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 9.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Walcott, p. 10.

<sup>313</sup> Loretta Collins, ‘We Shall all Heal: Ma Kilman, the Obeah Woman, as Mother-Healer in Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*’, *Literature and Medicine* 14.1(1995), pp.146-161 (p. 153).

<sup>314</sup> Breslin, *Nobody’s Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*, p. 246.

lies in the centripetal positioning of Walcott's characters through the roles they play and how he gives voice to the humble subjects in the poem. In addition, Walcott uses metaphor in *Omeros* in various ways. Firstly, he uses the metaphor of the swift as a cultural symbol. We are told that the seed that produces the root that Ma Kilman uses in bathing Philoctete was transported by a swift, who 'had carried the strong seed in its stomach'<sup>315</sup> from Africa to the New World. This image enhances Walcott's cross-cultural poetics of reconciliation, which privileges the poet's piecing together of the different fragments of his cultural identity to assert himself in the New World.

Like Walcott, Brutus examines the pain of history through the wound metaphor. In his poem 'A Troubadour I Traverse My Land,'<sup>316</sup> the poet speaks of the wound sustained on his chest from the attack on him by the apartheid police. I analyse this metaphor from two perspectives: a scar on the chest sustained from the bullet and the pain of not being recognised and accepted in a place or home. The speaker traverses the landscape of South Africa fighting for justice, but he is eventually 'cast-off,' 'snaps off service' by a 'captor's hand.' As if this is not enough, instead of being 'adorned' on the 'breast,' he is decorated with 'the shadow of an arrow-brand.'<sup>317</sup> I propose that throughout Brutus' career as a poet, this image of the injury is a reflection of the sufferings of the black South Africans and those who are forced into exile like himself. Although this pain has partially healed with the collapse of apartheid, I argue that there is much to be done in terms of negotiating relations between the races in South Africa. The poet's witty use of the wound metaphor when he writes of 'no mistress-favour has adorned my breast / only the shadow of an arrow-brand'<sup>318</sup> suggest the wound sustained in the back through his chest as discussed

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<sup>315</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 238.

<sup>316</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 2.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

previously. This is salient in highlighting his scorn of the apartheid system. Other images and metaphors used by both poets include: the ant, the frigate bird, chains, and cockroaches. These will be examined in detail particularly in Chapter Three.

Instances of ambiguity in meaning are evident in Walcott and Brutus' poetics. They make simultaneous statements that express one thing and then another in the same breath. An example of this is seen in the images used to describe the landscape. Both poets consider and use the image of a woman to symbolise the region and, at the same time, use it to express its overwhelming exploitation and ugliness. For example, Walcott's metaphor of a woman is revealed in the fight between Achille and Hector. The poet asserts that their fight was over 'an old bailing tin / crusted with rust! The duel of these fishermen / was over a shadow and its name was Helen.'<sup>319</sup> This quote is problematic and might suggest sexual objectification and violence against women for it presents Helen as the island and, at the same time, as the woman with whom these fishermen are in love. However, I argue that the deeper meaning here is related to the two men fighting over the island. I posit that the poet allegorically represents England and France in the personalities of Achille and Hector, respectively. Worthy of note is the idea that what these men are fighting for is a shadow. This image might mean that their fight cannot be explained, or perhaps that they are fighting for something that they can never retain, something mysterious. In addition, I argue that the poet is being sarcastic when he refers to the island as a 'tin crusted with rust', for he is very aware of the sneer attached to the reason why a small island could merit such a fight, as well as the misrepresentations associated with the island.

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<sup>319</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 17.

Walcott's use of metaphor presents his island as being beautiful. As the narrator sits in the terrace of a restaurant waiting for his bill, his view of the island merges into a woman when 'the mirage / dissolved to a woman with a head-tie.'<sup>320</sup> The speaker is moved by her beauty and declares 'I felt like standing in homage to a beauty.'<sup>321</sup> However, this beauty is smeared by the touristic activities on the island. For example, Helen is happy as she anticipates and prepares to go to the Friday night festivities, whereas Achille is jealous and refuses to go. Walcott avows that Helen '...was selling herself like the island, without / any pain...'. John Figueroa states that

By metaphorically linking the island with Helen in the aspects of the new, the vibrating, the flying stars, as well as the pelvic self-selling, the author intensifies our involvement in the history and the fiction which have their value in being images of the real world.<sup>322</sup>

From Figueroa's statement emphasizing the aspects of the new through the image of Helen, I argue that Walcott transforms historical realities into a world of fiction as a means of righting the wrongs being done to landscape and people.

Similarly, Brutus use of ambiguity is shown in how he uses female imagery to criticise the socio-political landscape of his country. In 'Nightsong: City,'<sup>323</sup> Brutus uses symbolism, imagery, and similes to concisely depict actual events within the South African landscape. In this lyric poem, the poet uses what Bernth Lindfors<sup>324</sup> calls 'double-entendre', where he simultaneously addresses the land and the woman in one breath. The first stanza exposes this idea: 'Sleep well, my love, sleep well'.<sup>325</sup> In this line, the poet

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<sup>320</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 23.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> John Figueroa 'Omeros', *The Art of Derek Walcott*, ed. Steward Brown (Dufour: Seren Books, 1991), p. 201.

<sup>323</sup> Dennis Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p.18.

<sup>324</sup> Bernth Lindfors, 'Dennis Brutus and the Lay of the Land', p. 483.

<sup>325</sup> Dennis Brutus, p. 18.

reveals the social problems of his society at the same time. This was a period in which it was considered illicit for black people to have romantic relationships with white people. Brutus himself is a victim of this and Lindfors reveals this in an interview in which Brutus states that

...round about December of 1961 – having to write a Christmas card to someone with whom I'd had a love affair and it had just broken. Probably the most important event, in my life. It's had a lasting impact. Writing for her (she was white; our whole affair was illicit, and we could have gone to prison dozens of times.<sup>326</sup>

Given the poet's experience in such a repressive environment, he is inspired to write poetry that expresses love at two levels: one for the landscape and one for the woman. His abrogation of the marriage Act is a means of defiance against such a system that inhibits free relations with the Other.

Walcott and Brutus' poetics employ satire brought out through a verbal ironic twist aimed at exposing, denouncing, ridiculing, and holding up to scorn the socio-political systems of both regions. In Walcott's *Omeros*, Hector is lured by tourist 'lucre' and decides to trade his former vocation as a fisherman for '[T]he Comet, a sixteen passenger-van'<sup>327</sup>, which he uses to ferry tourists across the island. When he meets his end, the driver comments that Hector 'had a nice woman. Maybe he died for her,' and the narrator silently adds '[f]or her and for tourism,' and concludes that: 'He'd paid the penalty of giving up the sea / as graceless and treacherous as it has seemed, / for the taxi business.'<sup>328</sup> Walcott's satire is evident in his (sarcastic) remark that Hector died for Helen and for tourism. Anthony Carrigan advances the view that 'just as tourism degrades the natural

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<sup>326</sup> Bernth Lindfors, p. 483.

<sup>327</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*. P. 117.

<sup>328</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, pp. 230-231.

environments it celebrates; Hector emblemizes the process of (self-) “development” that ultimately consumes the very thing it aims to promote.<sup>329</sup> From Carrigan’s view, one might suggest that Walcott mocks the idea of abandoning a local business in pursuit of a touristic venture that is risky, although at the same time he depicts its growth and development.

Brutus’ poems are full of satire against the apartheid system. In his collection *Stubborn Hope*, Brutus exposes several instances of incongruity between what appears to be and its reality. For example, ‘In This Country’, Brutus writes that it is a place ‘where clear air flows,’ and ‘trees grow.’<sup>330</sup> Ironically, it is also a place that ‘festers hate in fetid wounds.’<sup>331</sup> These lines are indicative of the idea that in a landscape such as South Africa that has the feel and look of a healthy environment, it is rotten underneath due to apartheid insurgencies. Kontein Trinya holds that this discrepancy between what is ‘expected and what occurs would seem to imply that there is no sweetness in that sweet country; that the pains generated by that country are more keenly felt than the “cool and crystal stream” may be enjoyed.’<sup>332</sup> Drawing from Trinya’s statement, I propose that the appearance and expression of peace is an illusion. More such instances of satire will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, specifically in Chapter Four.

Through a relational poetics, Walcott and Brutus in their poetry enact a journey to the past through memory, to reconnect with the severed parts of their societies and rewrite

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<sup>329</sup> Anthony Carrigan, ‘Postcolonial tourism, island specificity, and literary representation: observations on Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*’, *Space and Culture* 13.2 (2010), pp. 154-163, (p. 158).

<sup>330</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Stubborn Hope* (Chicago: Three Continents Press, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> Kontein Trinya, ‘Mirrors of social paradox in the poetry of Dennis Brutus,’ <[https://www.academia.edu/.../Mirror\\_of\\_social\\_Paradox\\_in\\_the\\_poetry\\_of\\_Dennis\\_Brutus](https://www.academia.edu/.../Mirror_of_social_Paradox_in_the_poetry_of_Dennis_Brutus)> [last accessed 22 February 2018] p. 6.

their homes and histories. The complexities of their pasts, such as slavery in the Caribbean and apartheid in South Africa, serve as examples of each poet's sense of dispossession and disruption, emotions and life experiences that require serious acts and consolations, even reconciling, to some degree. Although these pasts might be painful and causes the poets' personae to appear pessimistic, both have often proven to have risen above this, in relatively clear expressions of positive futures. Hamner posits that 'Derek Walcott seizes upon the fragments at hand to demonstrate that something new can arise, like a phoenix, out of imperial ashes.'<sup>333</sup> King reads Walcott's work as an endeavour 'to begin afresh, to see life and history as an ocean which washes away the past and brings renewal with each wave and change in the tide.'<sup>334</sup> Rose Folli states that 'Brutus'... poems do not express a sense of a man broken or bitter, but rather of one who has triumphed over wickedness. He intends to fight for the inauguration of a society freed from pass laws, ... and all the evils of the Apartheid system.'<sup>335</sup> Thus, both poets strive to overcome the burden of the past and propose creative possibilities through poetry.

Their poetry expresses a poetics of belonging evident in the constant questioning of a sense of place in their poetry. I argue that their poetics relates pain and joy, of the landscape and its people. Linked to this, Paula Burnett indicates that Walcott's position as far as the Caribbean is concerned is not a return to Africa to ease the pain of displacement; rather,

what is needed is an unequivocal celebration of the Caribbean as home... the task is to demonstrate the incorporation of multiple traditions in the Caribbean location, mythified as the site of hybridity.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Robert Hamner, *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), p.2.

<sup>334</sup> Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, p. 3.

<sup>335</sup> Rose Folli, 'Dennis Brutus: Erotic Revolutionary' p. 23.

<sup>336</sup> Paula Burnett, *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 35-36.

By Comparison, Brutus' speaker is presented as one who experiences pain due to exile. However, it is this pain that serves as a source of inspiration to continue the struggle. Ojaide describes Brutus as 'both an alienated being and a spokesman for his people'<sup>337</sup> as 'he instils hope in his people, thus, contributing positively to the psychological upliftment necessary for a successful struggle.'<sup>338</sup> As spokesman and poet, he continues to (re)present the plight of those humans who are considered to be less than human.

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<sup>337</sup> Tanure Ojaide, 'The Troubadour: The poet's persona in the poetry of Dennis Brutus', p. 64.

<sup>338</sup> Tanure Ojaide, p. 61.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A REVISION OF HOME IN WALCOTT'S *OMEROS* AND DENNIS BRUTUS' *A SIMPLE LUST*

'If there was nothing, there was everything to be made. With this prodigious ambition, one began.'

Derek Walcott.<sup>339</sup>

'What I did was to go back to South Africa and put together— as I had done in sports— a combination of what already existed, without attempting to create anything new.'

Dennis Brutus.<sup>340</sup>

In exploring the reconceptualisation of Home, the question around which this chapter pivots concerns how the poets address the complexities of diaspora and exile. Ultimately, also how do they revise and revalue understanding of the black and brown human? Wael Salam and Othman Abualadas advance that 'since Trauma survivors never fully possess their impossible history, they often try or perhaps are forced to make sense of it.'<sup>341</sup> My focus is placed on showing how Walcott and Brutus use poetry as a space to express ideas of survival and belonging in landscapes where the cultures could be immediately described as composite. That is to say, along with Glissant, that 'composite cultures' result from landscapes whose construction 'did not result from a union of "norms" but, rather was built in the margins with all kinds of materials.'<sup>342</sup> Said posits that 'cultural experience or indeed every cultural form is radically, quintessentially hybrid, and if it has been the practice of the West ... to isolate cultural and aesthetic realms from the worldly

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<sup>339</sup> Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1998), p. 4.

<sup>340</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim, *Poetry and Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader*, p. 288.

<sup>341</sup> Wael Salam and Othman Abualadas, 'No "Separate Peace" for Ernest Hemingway's "Hard-Boiled" Characters', *IJALEL* 6.7 (2017), pp. 97-102 (p. 97).

<sup>342</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 91.

domain, it is now time to rejoin them.’<sup>343</sup> I am interested in such ideas of ‘rejoining’ and showing how these poets strive to negotiate the different fragments of their past in order to assert themselves in the present. This assertion, I argue, aims to engage with issues of alienation, displacement, migration and exile, and how constructing a poetics of identity is enabled by them. As such, this chapter aims to revise notions of home in poetry from two different regions: the Caribbean symbolised through St Lucia and South Africa. The chapter offers a close study of several classical and traditional poetic strategies, such as a loose hexameter terza rima form, the couplet form, the quatrain form and lyric poetry. In addition, the chapter also takes into critical account regional poetics such as the Creole language, traditionally not considered a poetic language, dramatic tales, hybridity, praise poetry, repetitions, metaphors, and other devices used by the poets, to evoke their unique culture and experiences. The primary texts concerned are *Omeros*<sup>344</sup> and *A Simple Lust*<sup>345</sup>. This chapter is divided into three sections: ‘Stubborn Hope: A Poetic Strategy for Struggle,’ ‘Exile and the Difficulties of Witnessing for Home,’ and ‘Resistance and Misrepresentation.’ I will use Walcott’s poems as a point of departure in analysing each section. This is because Walcott’s poems can be said to emphasise more the poetics of home / belonging / identity.

### **Stubborn Hope: A Poetic Strategy for Struggle**

This section focuses on how both poets consistently develop personas<sup>346</sup> who resist and survive the unpleasant conditions in their societies, hoping steadfastly for better days ahead. I demonstrate how the personas constructed by both poets highlight the need for change, not only through the celebration of cultural values and characters who survive,

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<sup>343</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 68.

<sup>344</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*.

<sup>345</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*.

<sup>346</sup> The poet’s persona or personas will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the different characters used by both poets in their poems. This will be replaced variously with other terms such as: speakers, characters, protagonists, and the poet.

but also through resistance to oppression and misrepresentation. I also offer evidence to show how the search for home becomes attainable through a bricolage of Old and New World materials.

Wendy Knepper argues that ‘bricolage’<sup>347</sup> is an improvisatorial, adoptive ruse in the face of the negative forces of colonization.<sup>348</sup> Knepper explains that bricolage has become a postcolonial strategy that can be seen to transform cultural disinheritance into a strategy of resistance, remembering, and creative self-determination.<sup>349</sup> I argue that such bricolage, expresses the need to work with the materials at hand and adapt to the changing economic, trade, or colonial context. Another term for these materials is expressed in what Glissant describes as ‘baroque.’ According to Glissant, ‘the baroque no longer constitutes a derangement, since it has turned into a “natural” expression of whatever scatters and comes together.’<sup>350</sup> Lastly, I indicate that reconciliation of the self is a step towards asserting oneself in an environment. Said writes that ‘post-colonial writers bear their past within them – as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a new future.’<sup>351</sup> In this way, the scars of colonialism provide a starting point to constructing the present and the future.

Walcott’s poetics of home comes out clearly from the outset of his epic poem *Omeros* where he narrates the lives of the fishermen who strive to survive and create an identity

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<sup>347</sup> A phrase taken from Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. by Doreen Weightman and John Weightman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 11.

<sup>348</sup> Wendy Knepper, ‘Colonization, Creolization, and Globalization: The Art and Ruses of Bricolage’, *Small Axe*, 21 (2006), pp. 84-85.

<sup>349</sup> Wendy Knepper, p. 82.

<sup>350</sup> Édouard Glissant, p. 91.

<sup>351</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 34.

for themselves on the island. In Book One, Chapter One, Section I, the narration takes an oral form, a traditional way of telling tales evident from the opening lines: ‘this is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes.’<sup>352</sup> Notable, also, ‘them canoes’ signifies at the outset a valuing of their traditional means of survival via fishing as well as the vernacular, Creole as in ‘them canoes.’. In addition, the lines are written in loose terza rima hexameter. Most sections in the book have twelve syllables per line. However, these lines do not follow the typical rhyme scheme pattern of a terza rima or a typical stress pattern of a hexameter form. Such a variation could be read as an eclectic form that reflects the heterogeneous nature of the island people. The lines sighted above also evidence the postcolonial poetics of language when Walcott uses the Creole of the island as a means to voicing and empowering the people and home. Another way of giving voice includes situating readers within the context and origin of the island. For example, the narrator indicates that the fishermen set out at ‘sunrise’ to fell trees which are later hewed into canoes because it is ‘the sea that feed us / fishermen all our life.’<sup>353</sup> Thus, the aquatic image of the sea serves both as a marker for the origin of the enslaved people through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, as well as a source of survival.

Walcott’s poetics is further revealed in the dramatic tale and folk ritual of felling trees wherein the fishermen drink a round of rum to instil in themselves courage to kill ‘the first god... a gommier.’<sup>354</sup> This exposes the islanders’ belief system in gods and the oral tradition and the value of narrating past events as a way of remembering a culture. Through this oral tradition or telling of tales, we gain an insight into the history of the island and how the first inhabitants were eliminated. According to Walcott, the root cause

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<sup>352</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p.3.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 5.

of the socio-political problems in the island could be linked to the extermination of the 'Aruac,'<sup>355</sup> the island's native people. Their place of extermination is described as: 'where the laurels were killed,' 'the laurier-cannelles.'<sup>356</sup> This metaphor compares the Aruac Indians to 'laurels,' an evergreen shrub, and the term also suggests the idea that Walcott praises the Aruac for their ability to resist, despite all odds. Hence, these laurels have become protecting gods although now replaced 'for a single God where the old gods stood before.'<sup>357</sup> To bring down these protective gods entails drugging oneself as an enhancer in order to undertake a challenging act. Thus, conscious of the murderous act of cutting down trees, the fishermen brace themselves as they 'pass the rum.' This episode alludes to the English verse drama by T S Eliot<sup>358</sup> which describes how the Knights get themselves tipsy in order to be able to murder Thomas Beckett, the Archbishop of Canterbury. My reference to this English literary work aims to emphasise the point that Walcott's poetics involves a hybridised intertextuality of cultures and norms that inform his Caribbean background that is already Europeanised.

Aside from folk narratives, hybridity too is one of the main poetics of postcolonial literature. Boehmer asserts that this could be explained by the idea that hybridity 'necessarily involves cross-border or transcultural reference and hence may appear to relate to more audiences, cross- culturally.'<sup>359</sup> One instance of this cross-cultural element could be seen when the poet makes an allusion to African myths figured in its gods and

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<sup>355</sup> 'Aruac Indians lived in St Lucia before being dispossessed when the French bought St Lucia in 1651 and, with their African slaves, began earnest colonization in 1746 (Bib:1, Bib: 3). Aruac Indians also lived by the lake of Maracaybo in Venezuela and, according to a collection of Spanish manuscripts, written between 1573 and 1575, these Aruac Indians were barbarous, living in huts and villages on the lake, and though not industrious, were very maritime, energetic fishermen (Bib:2).'

Aruac, *WikiOmeros-Wawrick Blogs*, Available at: <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/omeros/entry/aruac/> [accessed 28 June 2007].

<sup>356</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p.3-4.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> T. S Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935), p. 80

<sup>359</sup> Elleke Boehmer, p. 26.

its belief system on the one hand, and the belief in the Christian God on the other hand. For instance, Major Dennis Plunkett, an officer who fought in the war under Montgomery,<sup>360</sup> expresses his disgust with this mixed belief system. When he takes a trip around the island with his wife Maud after the storm and, as they approach ‘La sorcière’<sup>361</sup> which he calls ‘...the sorceress mountain,’<sup>362</sup> he associates it with Ma Kilman. His opinion of the sorceress is negative because he believes ‘...the village was darkened by their belief /in her as a *gardeuse*, sybil, obeah-woman / webbed with a spider’s knowledge of an after-life / in her cracked lenses.’<sup>363</sup> For Major Plunkett, such a practice is incredible, yet Plunkett’s view may be considered as an example of colonialist misrepresentations of the belief system of the island or people. Said writes that: ‘the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as inferior or subject races, subordinate peoples, dependency, expansion and authority.’<sup>364</sup> Glissant debunks such misrepresentation by emphasising the theory of difference. In doing so, he states that ‘I understand your difference, or in other words, without creating a hierarchy, I relate it to my norm.’<sup>365</sup> Glissant goes further and demands the right to opacity, which is understood as the ability to ‘communicate with what you do not understand.’<sup>366</sup> The right to opacity, therefore, enhances the theory of difference and upholds the need to build together whilst not seeking to fully grasp the other.<sup>367</sup> Contrary to this view is Major Plunkett’s annoyance that Ma Kilman, the obeah woman, ‘took Holy Communion / with Maud...’<sup>368</sup> I read Plunkett’s comment as a refusal to accept a contrary belief in relation to his own belief. I suggest, however, that the belief systems of the local people

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<sup>360</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 26.

<sup>361</sup> Walcott, p. 58.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 8.

<sup>365</sup> Glissant, p. 194.

<sup>366</sup> Glissant, p. 189.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 58.

underscore the religious diversity of the island in terms of its belief in a Christian God and its respect for African deities such as: the god of lightning Shango, the goddess of love Erzulie, the god of iron and war Ogun, and the Sky-God Damballa<sup>369</sup> It could be posited that these different gods provide a panorama of the different cultural values of the Caribbean island enriched by a blend of its African ancestry.

Furthermore, Walcott uses symbolic objects as a form that inspires hope in a bleak landscape. For example, like Thieme<sup>370</sup> and Heather Bradley<sup>371</sup>, I argue that the sea-swift is a symbol of hope and a source of memory to most of the characters in *Omeros*. When Achille brings down the laurel trees, ‘...he saw the swift / crossing the cloud-surf, a small thing, far from its home / confused by the waves of blue hills.’<sup>372</sup> Thus, the swift reminds Achille not only of his displaced status on the island, but also of his ability to reconnect with his past and present. The sea-swift’s presence instils hope in Achille and enables him to pray: ‘Tree! You can be a canoe! Or else you cannot!’<sup>373</sup> Seeing ‘the swift / crossing the cloud-surf, a small thing, far from home,’<sup>374</sup> Achille ‘made a swift sign of the cross’<sup>375</sup> before engaging in cutting down the laurel tree. Here the poet puns on the word ‘swift.’ The sign of the cross is symbolic or representative of the shape of the swift and reconfirms Achille’s stubborn hope. Bobb asserts that ‘Walcott presents both the old gods and their New World counterparts in a grand merger of the two worlds.’<sup>376</sup> Bobb’s assertion makes clear the idea that the indigenous belief system is composed of a belief

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<sup>369</sup> Derek Walcott, p. 53.

<sup>370</sup> John Thieme, *Derek Walcott: Contemporary World Writers*, p. 186.

<sup>371</sup> Heather M. Bradley, ‘The Sea Swift as a Symbol in Walcott’s *Omeros*’, from lectures in English 350: *Literature of the Caribbean* (Washington and Lee University, 1997), [www.postcolonialweb.org](http://www.postcolonialweb.org) [Last accessed 27 April 2017], n.p.

<sup>372</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 6.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> June Bobb, p. 201.

in a Christian God together with belief in the African gods and ancestors, as examined above.

In addition, the sea-swift is a unifying symbol between the Old and the New World. Walcott unites the different quests in *Omeros* with this reoccurring symbol that serves as a bridge of reconstruction in the island of St Lucia. I argue that the sea-swift represents the displaced people of St Lucia in its necessary negotiation between two cultures. Achille and the narrator are constantly being led by the sea-swift on their journey in search of their pedigree. On his voyage to Africa, Achille ‘... was lured by the swift...this mite of the sky-touching sea / towing a pirogue a thousand times her own weight with a hummingbird’s electric wings.’<sup>377</sup> On the other hand, the swift also accompanies the I-persona throughout Europe, when ‘he saw a sea-swift skim / the sun-harped water.’<sup>378</sup> I propose that both Achille and the I-narrator are led by the sea-swift on a journey of self-discovery and a uniting of the different cultures. Bradley advances the notion that ‘Walcott attributes the successful resolution of his question about hybridism to the symbol of unity linking the episodes in his novel.’<sup>379</sup> Bradley’s idea explains the reason why Maud’s husband, Major Plunkett, observes that the quilt ‘makes the blind birds sing’, which is an indication that although the birds lose their specific regional identities, they gain a type of national identity as they sing in unison. In this light, it can be argued that the sea-swift stitches together the lives of Walcott’s characters to create a St Lucian ‘immense quilt.’<sup>380</sup> Gregson Davis posits that Maud’s ‘expert stitching is a reminder of the etymology of the Greek rhapsodos (stitcher of tales)’<sup>381</sup> and calls it ‘ekphrasis’,<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 130.

<sup>378</sup> Walcott, p. 203.

<sup>379</sup> Heather M. Bradley, ‘The Sea Swift as a Symbol in Walcott’s *Omeros*’, n.p.

<sup>380</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 88.

<sup>381</sup> Gregson Davis, ‘Pastoral Sites: Aspects of Bucolic Transformation in Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*’, *The Classical World* 93.1 (1999), pp. 43-49, (p. 47).

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

which is a convention that enables the poet to convert Maud's work of art into a partial emblem for the poem as a whole. I would add that the quilt also represents the different fragmentary parts that make up the Caribbean. Thieme calls it '...a tapestry that unites the divergent strands of the Caribbean life...their consanguinity.'<sup>383</sup> In highlighting Thieme's idea, I also underscore that the sea-swift and the quilt serve as symbols that unite the different cultures on the island and, thus, construct a particular notion of home as multiplicity / plurality and its difficult history.

Walcott's poetics come out vividly in his use of praise poetry that not only defines but names an individual. In the concluding sections of *Omeros* Walcott uses the epilogue form to offer praise and closure in relation to what has been achieved so far. The epilogue suggests a hopeful note of contentment, evidencing characters who survive despite the suffering around them. Thus, Achille becomes 'the triumphant Achille, (because *sic*) / In the spread sein / the silvery mackerel multiplied the noise / of coins in a basin.'<sup>384</sup> These lines express the idea that Achille is now able to overcome the ordeal of his environment and seems to be thriving in his fishing business. We find him in the company of other fishermen, and we are told that 'his hands gloved in blood, moved to the other canoes / whose hulls were thumping with fishes'<sup>385</sup> to save them. I propose that Achille represents the image of becoming, or 'Creolization', which Glissant<sup>386</sup> describes as a process whereby the individual's relation is defined 'by their relation to everything possible as well– the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations.' Said describes this aspect of relation in terms of imperialism 'as an experience with crucial dimensions, that we must speak of overlapping territories, intertwined histories common to men and

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<sup>383</sup> John Thieme, *Derek Walcott: Contemporary World Writers*, p. 186.

<sup>384</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 324.

<sup>385</sup> Walcott, p. 324.

<sup>386</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 89.

women, whites and non-whites.’<sup>387</sup> Achille is seen to move from despair in the beginning of the text to an acceptance of his new world, looking to more prosperous days. In conversation with Walcott, Donald Bruckner discusses that Walcott sees the people of the island as becoming a noun in the sense that ‘it is something you watch becoming itself, and you have to have the patience to find out what it is.’<sup>388</sup> I argue that Walcott exposes what becoming a Caribbean person entails. From his writings, these are complex humans who survive, endure, and learn to live with memories that are deeply unpleasant and even dehumanising. Nonetheless, hope persists.

The poet sees ‘Achille, Afolabe’s son’ as a ‘quiet’<sup>389</sup> indigene who does not require a ‘passport’; nor has he ever ‘ascended in an elevator...since the horizon needs none.’<sup>390</sup> The narrator seems to compare his experiences abroad to that of Achille’s experiences at home. In this case, I juxtapose Achille’s successful experiences at home with the narrator’s restless odyssey around the world; I propose that the poet intends to portray an example of someone who struggles to assert himself within his given environment. This adds to Bobb’s assertion that ‘the Protagonist Achille, a simple fisherman, is engaged in the elemental struggle in the face of a not always benevolent Nature and a present world corrupted by History.’<sup>391</sup> However, Achille notes about himself that he ‘...was nobody’s waiter’<sup>392</sup> and thus marked a difference to other island dwellers who are lured by tourist attractions to the island.

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<sup>387</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 72.

<sup>388</sup> Donald Jerome Raphael Bruckner, ‘A Poem in Homage to an Unwanted Man’, in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott* (Boulder and London: A Three Continents Book, 1997), pp. 396-399. (p.396).

<sup>389</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 320.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> June Bobb, *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott*, p. 195.

<sup>392</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 320.

The poet suggests that, given Achille's love for the sea, if the protagonist is to meet his end, it '...will be a death by water.'<sup>393</sup> I foreground the view that Achille's attachment to the sea is symbolic of a connection between him and his ancestors, especially those thrown overboard during the transatlantic slave trade and those left behind in Africa. Glissant confirms that the sea serves as a crucial abyss, wherein many never escaped its torment, as they were taken 'straight from the belly of the slave ship into the violet belly of the ocean depth.'<sup>394</sup> Achille's attachment to the sea reflects Bobb's assertion that it is a '...struggle to control the burden of ...history and incorporate it into our collective sense of the future.'<sup>395</sup> Finally, apart from Achille's praise song, the narrator also praises the entire archipelago in: 'I sang our wide country, the Caribbean Sea. / Who hated shoes, whose soles were as cracked as a stone, / who was gentle with ropes, who had one suit alone.'<sup>396</sup> Walcott's representation of the entire Caribbean as a sea symbolises not only the historic period of slavery, but also the bountiful nature of his Caribbean island. It is significant that he glorifies the humanity of the island's poor who struggle to survive.

Despite choosing the lyric form for most of his poetry, Brutus, like Walcott, is concerned with representing the socio-political problems in his homeland. The lyric expresses the speaker's intense emotions towards love for home, while critiquing the dereliction of its landscape as a result of acute racism and colonial exploitation. In Brutus' poetry, the 'coloured' and black South African populations share a similar fate of poverty and negligence, just like Walcott's Philoctete and Achille. Brutus' poetics paint social realities as gruesome and as threatening to the stability of the land, leaving a section of the population extremely unsettled. Against this backdrop, Brutus uses his poetry as a

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>395</sup> Bobb, *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott*, pp. 219-220.

<sup>396</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 320.

space to give voice to his people and community and project their humanity. In ‘Nightsong: City,’<sup>397</sup> Brutus uses symbolism, imagery, and similes to concisely depict actual events within the South African landscape. It is with this lyric poem, (that Linfors<sup>398</sup> calls a ‘double-entendre’, where) that the poet simultaneously addresses the land and a woman in one breath. The first stanza exposes this idea:

Sleep well, my love, sleep well:  
the harbour lights glaze over restless docks  
police cars cockroach through the tunnel streets;<sup>399</sup>

The first line comprises an iambic trimeter, composed of three feet and three beats. The rhythmic pattern gives the poem its musical quality of a wave-like foreshadowing of the harbour. The poem presents a real, tense environment where the docks are restless, the phrase ‘glaze over’ which suggest or calls to numbness, a sedated gaze and the streets are closed tunnels. From the first line of the poem, the poet exposes the social problem of his society at the time, a period of apartheid in which the white coloniser forbade black South Africans, (as humans) to engage or express love relationships with white people. According to Clark and Worger, ‘the prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act (No. 55) of 1949 made marriages between whites and members of other racial groups illegal.’<sup>400</sup> Brutus himself the product of a black/ white union, declares himself a victim of this racial law. Linfors writes that Brutus ‘had an illicit love affair which would have landed him and his lover in prison countless times.’<sup>401</sup> The nature of this unstable socio-political reality is reflected in the temporal setting (in time) of the poem in which the docks are seen to be restless even as ‘the harbour lights glaze over’ the area. I posit that the image of light

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<sup>397</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 18.

<sup>398</sup> Linfors, ‘Dennis Brutus and the Lay of the Land,’ p. 483.

<sup>399</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 18.

<sup>400</sup> Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 51.

<sup>401</sup> Linfors, p. 483.

indicates that even light, amidst darkness, does not bring any hope onto the landscape. Another significant image used is that of a cockroach, as ‘Police cars cockroach through the tunnel streets.’<sup>402</sup> Here Brutus’ poetic is multivalent in meaning. Ogundele Wole describes the word-class shift of ‘cockroach’ from a verb to a noun as ‘the economy and condensation of a metaphor.’<sup>403</sup> This shift lends itself to some conceptions: the first might signify a plethora of police cars; the second could be a description of the slow pace of these cars to avoid apprehending its victims; and the third might epitomise the loathsome presence of the apartheid police. Finally, I might add the idea that cockroaches are often a hidden presence, hiding or staying out of sight and are also famously difficult to get rid of.

The speaker is also disgusted with the discrimination seen in the allocation of separate accommodation for Blacks and Whites. Clark and Worger state that ‘in 1950 the government divided the entire country into geographical areas based on race, the Group Area Act of (No. 41).’<sup>404</sup> This act gave the ‘government the power to proclaim an area as fit for occupation by one group.’<sup>405</sup> By this means, the white population lived in well-resourced areas, while the black population were relegated to the poorest areas. Brutus evidences this:

from the shanties creaking iron-sheets  
violence like a bug-infested rag is tossed.  
and fear is immanent as sounds in the wind-swung  
bell;<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 18.

<sup>403</sup> Ogundele Wole, ‘Politics and the Pastoral Ideal in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, *Commonwealth (Dijon)*, 14.2 (2009), pp. 49-60 (p. 52).

<sup>404</sup> Clark and Worger, p. 51.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 18.

The auditory images from the stanza are effective in describing the poor living conditions of the dispossessed populace. The ‘shanties’ suggest the poorly built houses or quarters of the accommodation areas allocated to Black people in their own homeland. The simile and image indicated with the description, ‘bug-infested’ suggests, on the one hand, that the apartheid system is like a predatory insect parasitically troubling the lives of innocent victims. On the other hand, the simile references the striking poverty of the habitation of areas that are for the Black South Africans, noting grossly unequal living conditions. Yet, the speaker is still able to maintain some calm in his tone. Linfors notes that, ‘the quiet tenderness serves as a counterpoint to the city’s noisy nocturnal activity. In this way, the poem speaks of the possibility of steadfast love in a degraded, threatening environment.’<sup>407</sup> I suggest that the incongruous juxtaposition of the persona’s soft tone against the threat of his environment serves to edify the perpetrators concerning the need for a meaningful dialogue on the relation between races. The sound effects used are essential, especially seen in the dissonance between the gentler rhythmical elements and the tense inference and connotation of the images. The effect is in portraying a very unstable society and the part it plays in the lives of the indigenous population. For example, Brutus writes that ‘...fear is immanent as sound in the wind-swung bell,’<sup>408</sup> and the noise from ‘creaking iron-sheets.’<sup>409</sup> These auditory images intensify the fear and resonate with the violence experienced by the people. They vividly invite the reader to share in the people’s pain, in another human’s suffering.

Linked to the above, ‘The Sounds Begin Again’ is comprised of three quatrains with the poet shifting in and out of iambic trimeter for rhetorical effect. It is filled with descriptive

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<sup>407</sup> Linfors, ‘Dennis Brutus and the Lay of the Land’, p. 484.

<sup>408</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 18.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

images of sound and sight, enabling the reader to visualize or imagine the torment that the black South Africans suffered under the apartheid regime:

The sounds begin again;  
the siren in the night  
the thunder at the door  
the shriek of nerves in pain.<sup>410</sup>

Brutus uses an iambic trimeter in the stanza above. The word choice is very economical and effective as each line contains six syllables in a rising duple pattern. The lines feel constrained on account of their brevity and regular meter. This effectively portrays an acutely constrained society. The sound produced by the police cars and other instruments is far from pleasant; it is rather one which paralyses the inhabitants. The use of the adverb 'again' illustrates that the sound is a recurrent aspect in the lives of the people. But this is at odd with the singular 'siren' because the repetition of the article 'the' signifies a pattern of continuous violence, similar to the use of the word 'again' which sets up a continuous plural activity, but the following lines refer these things as singular events. One might propose that this emphasises that systematic oppression, while a wider political atmosphere, is still made up of singular acts of brutality against individuals. I wish to highlight that the auditory images of 'sound,' 'siren,' 'thunder,' and 'shriek' are affective nouns that appeal to our sensory responses to fear and pain. They importantly highlight the tension prevalent on such a night of fearful sounds. In addition, as Folli suggests, 'the rhythmic sound of marching emphasises the persistent search for transgressors of law, and the nightmare of pursuit.'<sup>411</sup> In the second stanza, Brutus brings to life the excruciating pain suffered by the indigenous black South African population:

Then the keening crescendo  
of faces split by pain  
the wordless, endless wail  
only the unfree know

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<sup>410</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 19.

<sup>411</sup> Folli, 'Dennis Brutus: Erotic Revolutionary', p. 24.

The shift in the rhythm comes at the same time as the poem shifts its narration ‘Then the’ introduces a trochaic phrasing that really stretches and emphasises that ‘keening’ sound. With a trochaic foot established, the three-syllable word ‘crescendo’ falls a little awkwardly, its first syllable unstressed, and the rhythmic emphasis falling on the ‘scend’ part, in crescendo for the line. The spondee in ‘unfree’ really slows the line and draws rhythmical emphasis of a grim evocation of inner turmoil. I wish to emphasise the night as a (singing) night of sounds with qualities best found in ‘the wordless, endless wail’<sup>412</sup> of those brutally oppressed. Such unbearable pain is experienced only by those who have been denied freedom; however, they are virtually unseen because the space they occupy might be occupied by ghosts. A poetic effect of this might be referred to as negative affects considering that affects are ‘material, physiological things,’<sup>413</sup> and in Brutus’ context the unfree are very much invisible. Stressing the need for stability and peace at home, I emphasise how the poet’s writing empowers the victims of apartheid through his representation of their defiant attitude ‘over the sirens, knuckles, boots’.<sup>414</sup> This is significant in stressing the people’s continuous resistance to acute racial discrimination in the face of pain inflicted by the apartheid police.

As a poet who was schooled in the English tradition, like Walcott, Brutus shows his commitment to the works of Western literature as observed in the following lines: ‘importunate as rain / the wraiths exhale their woe.’<sup>415</sup> Brutus might be said to employ conceit which can be placed in dialogue with his ingenious comparison of the oppressed to ‘wraiths,’ to John Donne’s wit and force that is shown in ‘The Sun Rising,’ where

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<sup>412</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 19.

<sup>413</sup> Joan Anim-Addo, ‘Gendering Creolization: Creolising Affects’, *Feminist Review*, 104.1 (2013), pp. 5-23 (p. 6).

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 19.

Donne personifies the sun and calls it ‘Busy old fool, unruly sun, / why dost thou thus, / through windows, and through / curtains call on us?’<sup>416</sup> Donne therefore personifies and chides the sun for being an intruder in his bedroom that he shares with his lover. Brutus’ poem ends with ‘my sound begins again’, and thus merges the speaker’s sufferings with those of the black South Africans and simultaneously confirms the cycle of violence. While the South African white would further the idea of brutes and necessary brutalisation, Brutus renders victims of brutality as human. At the same time, the varied repetition of the first line at the end of the poem heightens the musicality of the poem. Additionally, the repetition of lines or phrases is a common aspect of oral tradition which, like Walcott, the poet also employs. I argue that the speaker’s sufferings are synonymous with those of his people; this explains why he exhales these specific woes through his writing. But also, his compulsion to represent those suffering as fully human against the debasing inhumane apartheid laid down laws for the black and ‘brown’ people of South Africa is evident.

I argue that Brutus’ poetry might be read as a poetics of dispossessed South Africans. Hamner’s describes the moment when dispossessed Caribbean people, in relation to ‘the progeny of aboriginals, slaves, indenture servants, explorers, colonists who have traditionally been Eurocentric society’s “other,” find their narrative voice’<sup>417</sup> in Walcott’s *Omeros*. A similar statement can be made about South Africa, given Brutus poetic concern with the black South African community and the indentured labourers similarly uprooted (from China and India) and placed in the plantations mines and in service to Europeans in South Africa. These groups of people and their offspring, like the black

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<sup>416</sup> John Donne, <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44129/the-sun-rising>> [accessed 01 January 2020].

<sup>417</sup> Robert Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), p. 15.

South Africans, were deprived of the right to home and land. The result has been extreme poverty and starvation and it is these groups to whom the poet gives a voice in his poetry. The poet makes it his duty to express their 'woes' through his works. Alternatively, as Said suggests, in post-colonial writings, the writer's '... work should be seen as sharing important concerns with minority and suppressed voices.'<sup>418</sup>

In 'Train Journey,' Brutus portrays the circumstances of children lacking physical and spiritual nourishment, robbed of their birth-right to play and to be free, especially as 'their empty hungry hands' are 'lifted in prayer.'<sup>419</sup> I argue that this poem must be read as a critique of a regime that reduces families by relegating them to degrading environments referred to as 'Bantustans'<sup>420</sup>, where they are dehumanised and can barely survive. The poet uses the image of the 'threadbare' to aptly signify the meagre, scanty, and poor nutritional levels of the black families in such spaces. The children there are described as having 'knees ostrich-bulbous on their reedy legs.'<sup>421</sup> Notably, it is due to starvation that their knees have become lean like those of an ostrich. Indeed, they protrude so much so that the poet describes them as 'bulbous.' Folli posits that:

the ghetto-like, non-family environment produces a rootless people, bewildered, without a sense of direction or identity. Due to these circumstances the South African blacks become an "imprisoned" people because of the very circumscribed lives decreed for them by the state.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 63.

<sup>419</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 49.

<sup>420</sup> A Bantustan also known as Bantu homeland, black homeland, black state, or simply homeland was a territory set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia), as part of the policy of apartheid. Clark and Worger write that 'the Bantu Authority Act (No. 68), bolstered the fictive claim that the true home areas of Africans were in their 'tribal reserves.' Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 52.

<sup>421</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 49.

<sup>422</sup> Folli, 'Dennis Brutus: Erotic Revolutionary,' p. 19.

Similarly, the people's dispossessed nature is rendered through a derelict landscape. 'This Sun on This Rubble After Rain' is written in sonata form consisting of an exposition, a development and a recapitulation. The entire poem describes a derelict landscape and expresses the persona's commitment and hope for his country's liberation:

This sun on this rubble after rain.

Bruised though we must be  
some easement we require  
unarguably, though we argue against desire.

Under jackboots our bones and spirit are crunch  
forced into sweat-tear-sodden slush  
-now glow-lipped by this sudden touch:

-sun-stripped perhaps, our bones may later sing  
Or spell out some malignant nemesis  
Sharpevilled to spearpoints for revenging

-but now our pride-dumbed mouths are wide  
In wordless supplication  
-are grateful for the least relief from pain

-like this sun on this debris after rain.<sup>423</sup>

More than once the poem shifts between iambic and trochaic phrasing. For example, there is a movement from the trochaic phrasing 'Sharpevilled to spearpoints' to 'but now our', 'In wordless' to 'our grateful.' Moreover, in the line 'sun-stripped perhaps' to 'our bones may later sing,' Brutus does not only shift the meter but also the syntax to emphasise it: 'our bones may later sing' instead of 'sing later' the standard English phrasing. The different stress pattern produces a lot of music in the poem which evidences a serious tone with the effect of generating emotions and enhancing the idea of brutality against other humans.

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<sup>423</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 9.

Notably, like those of Walcott's personas, the speaker in this poem expresses hope after a period of destruction of the landscape. In its song-like nature, the first stanza exposes the idea of being wounded under the metonymic jackboots of the apartheid regime. This idea is developed further to show that despite such treatment, these humans may one day sing and be grateful for the relief from pain 'like this sun on this debris after rain', as the last refrain indicates. The use of 'debris' and 'rubble' in the opening and closing lines of the poem are evidence of the rough fragments seen after a place is demolished and this is symbolic of the destructive force of the apartheid system both on man and on the land. Isaac Elimimian posits that, in this poem, the poet '...employs the words "rubble" and "debris" to describe the mass destruction and devastation of a topographical landscape... which the white South African government mismanaged, misappropriated or stole from the majority of South African people.'<sup>424</sup> I would like to stress that this majority represents the black South Africans, whose lands were seized while they were being forced to live in the Bantustans. It is significant that the image of the jackboots used in this poem depicts the apartheid police's use of their boots on black South Africans, which caused their 'bones and spirit' to be crushed. The relevance of this to the moment we are living now cannot be emphasised enough. Brutus is trying to tell his readers that **BLACK LIVES MATTER**. Egudu advances further that, 'The police in South Africa, however, remains a force to be reckoned with for it farther forth all the injuries done to victims of apartheid.'<sup>425</sup> Their brutality renders the oppressed speechless, especially as they are 'now glow-lipped by this sudden touch.'<sup>426</sup> Moreover, the poet indicates that, because the oppressed people's entreaties are not given due attention, '...our pride-dumbed mouths

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<sup>424</sup> Isaac Elimimian, 'Remembering Apartheid: The Poetry of Dennis Brutus', n.p.

<sup>425</sup> Egudu Romanus, 'Pictures of Pain: The Poetry of Dennis Brutus,' in *Aspects of South African Literature*, ed. by Christopher Heywood (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976), pp. 131-144 (p. 138).

<sup>426</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 9.

are wide / in wordless supplication.<sup>427</sup> The inclusive collective pronoun ‘our’ should be noted for its linking of survival with the most stubborn hope.

I also pay particular attention to the image of the sun, which I suggest is symbolic of the poet’s expression of hope after a storm:

-sun-stripped perhaps, our bodies may later sing  
Or spell out some malignant nemesis  
Sharpevilled to spearpoint for revenging<sup>428</sup>

It is my view that the above lines imply some optimism for future relief. The image of ‘Sharpevilled’ is used here as a verb by the poet. It refers to a township in South Africa where several massacres of the black inhabitants took place; it also symbolises all that is ugly and reprehensible in apartheid politics, pointing to the particularity of the dehumanising practices. Eunice Ngongkum posits that ‘it brings back memories of March 21, 1967 when 67 blacks and coloured people, protesting the pass laws, were shot dead by the South African police and several others wounded’<sup>429</sup> I am arguing that these pass laws represent brutal restriction in terms of movement, and might be considered synonymous with how the enslaved on the Caribbean plantations were prohibited from moving from one plantation to another. Yet as Glissant indicates, ‘within this universe of domination and oppression, of silent or professed dehumanization, forms of humanity stubbornly persisted.’<sup>430</sup> It is within such confinement and restrictions that the South African blacks’ protest for freedom ensued and would later take on firm roots to overthrow the evil apartheid system. I also link this to the situation in the island of St Lucia to indicate that Walcott’s characters, such as Philoctete and Achille, struggle to

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> Eunice Ngongkum, ‘The Concept of Place in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus,’ *Dilemmas* (2008), pp. 61-79 (p.70).

<sup>430</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 65.

survive despite the history of de-humanising constraints within their region. The struggle for survival is stressed by Glissant, who asserts that ‘their ordeal did not die; it quickened... finally their alliance with the imposed land, suffered and redeemed.’<sup>431</sup> This struggle and redemption is seen in both Walcott’s dispossessed islanders of St Lucia and Brutus’ South African blacks in the Bantustans.

Furthermore, Brutus’ poetics involves the piling of images to describe how the South African black and brown people live in dehumanising conditions. In ‘Somehow We Survive,’ the poet objectifies the natural world as images are used to convey the suppression and exploitation of man and land respectively. For example, the lines ‘Investigating search lights rake / our naked unprotected contours’<sup>432</sup> could both refer to the bodies of the black South Africans as well as the contours of the land. However, the speaker informs us that although the system tries to thwart their passions in the struggle against discrimination, their ‘tenderness’ has only been ‘frustrated’; it does ‘...not wither’ and ‘somehow we survive.’<sup>433</sup> I underscore that these statements more than express the human qualities of steadfastness and resilience by a people who continue in the struggle for justice. Egudu also articulates that ‘the fact that Brutus emphasizes his use of “tenderness” and not malice or even physical action as a fighting weapon does not mean he is not appreciative of the ugliness of his situation.’<sup>434</sup> By comparison, Ssensalo intimates that it is this tender love, more so than a few victories that Brutus recorded, that account for the source of his sustained strength in the struggle against apartheid.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 7.

<sup>432</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 4.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Egudu, ‘Pictures of Pain: The Poetry of Dennis Brutus,’ pp. 133-134.

<sup>435</sup> Ssensalo Bede, ‘The Autobiographical Nature of the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, p.140.

In highlighting the ways in which the speaker upholds the struggle under the regime through his persistent stand, I wish to also imply that the poet's conveying of images from nature, adds to his stance while describing the scrutiny made by the apartheid regime. Brutus uses the image of the ploughman and the land to respectively depict the apartheid government and the black South Africans as two opposing forces in South Africa. For instance, the system is painted as a ploughman who uses 'Investigating searchlights' to 'rake / our naked unprotected contours.'<sup>436</sup> The adjective 'naked' exposes both the nothingness and yet also everything that appears to be left of the black man in South Africa; it shows how vulnerable and unprotected he is in the face of the apartheid police and regime. Moreover, Ojaide underlines the idea that the poet's use of 'we' and 'us' establishes his 'spokesmanship' for the oppressed.<sup>437</sup> The people's subjectivity and helplessness in the face of brutality is evident in how the police's 'boots club the peeling door.'<sup>438</sup> Additionally, John Povey<sup>439</sup> asserts that this line 'explains the background of his (Brutus) existence and shows his capacity for vigilant journalism.' More than 'journalism', Povey's words are suggestive of the poet's role as a spokesman, and his ability to depict apt images that fervently describes the oppressed landscape and the dehumanisation of the South African blacks.

In decrying the deplorable living conditions of his people, Brutus uses biblical and secular allusions when he compares apartheid laws to 'monolithic decalogue' and '...fascist

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<sup>436</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 4.

<sup>437</sup> Ojaide, 'The Troubadour: The poet's Persona in the poetry of Dennis Brutus' pp. 55-69.

<sup>438</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 4.

<sup>439</sup> John F. Povey, 'Beneath the Knife of Love. The first Collection of the Poetry of Dennis Brutus—Sirens Knuckles Boots,' *Critical Perspectives on Dennis Brutus*, eds., Craig W. McLuckie and Patrick J. Colbert (Colorado Springs: Three Continents Press, 1995), p. 45.

prohibiting.’<sup>440</sup> These images show how the apartheid system, through its different acts, deprives the black South Africans of social amenities in South Africa:

over our heads the monolithic decalogue  
of fascist prohibition glowers  
and teeters for a catastrophic fall;<sup>441</sup>

What seems reassuring is the idea that this dictatorial right-wing, white supremacist system, as evident in the poem, is on the verge of a ‘catastrophic fall.’ Although it ‘glowers’ at its victims with discontent, it ‘teeters’ on its way to doom.<sup>442</sup> The reason for this impending doom lies in the undying spirit of the people in continuing the struggle.

The apocalyptic vision of the collapse of the system by the speaker is also captured in the poem ‘Above Us, Only Sky’, which describes the speaker in a flight over the Atlantic Ocean as he leaves South Africa:<sup>443</sup>

Above us, only sky  
below, cloud  
and below that  
cloud;  
below that  
sea;  
land is abolished,  
only the sky and air and light  
a beatific approximation  
achieved?<sup>444</sup>

The prepositions ‘above’ and ‘below’, and the nouns ‘sky,’ ‘cloud’, and ‘sea’ justify the title of the poem. In this poem, it should be highlighted that the speaker expresses hope for the future of his country. The lines ‘After this power / this conquest of brute reality’<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 4.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Taken from the footnotes of the poem in Brutus’ collection *A Simple Lust*, p. 96.

<sup>444</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 96.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

refer to the outrageous apartheid regime and his conviction that the regime will eventually crumble. Thus, he wonders ‘what can we not do / not abolish?’<sup>446</sup> The rhetorical question serves as a kind of encouragement for the struggle to continue with the hope that the brutal regime will crumble. Ojaide emphasises that ‘as a singing troubadour, he [Brutus] instils hope in his people, thus contributing positively to the psychological upliftment necessary for a successful struggle.’<sup>447</sup> The poem ends with an apocalyptic pronouncement:

Peace will come  
We have the power  
the hope  
the resolution  
Men will go home.<sup>448</sup>

Ironically, even go(ing) home is problematic for the oppressed, since their bodies must provide service away from their homes and families. Brutus too perhaps might be asserting here that men (women) divided are at odd with their nature. From the stanza, the poet seems to assert that the secret for a successful force is ‘hope,’ ‘resolution’, and ‘power.’ These are the forces of will that are needed to stand firm and continue the struggle. Although Bahadur Tejani interprets the above stanza as ‘an ethereal vision, achieved only in a vacuum.’<sup>449</sup> I would argue that it reflects the poet’s persistent hope and vision that the men will go home, even men in exile like himself.

This poem closes Brutus’s experiences at home and takes us abroad where the poet’s use of metaphors and images are suggestive of a man battered by the experiences of exile. Such continuous movements or journeys render Walcott and Brutus’ witnessing of home, a daunting experience as will be discussed further below.

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Tenure Ojaide, ‘The Troubadour: The poet’s Persona in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, p.61.

<sup>448</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 96.

<sup>449</sup> Bahadur Tejani, ‘Can a Prisoner Make a Poet? A Critical Discussion of Letters to Martha by Dennis Brutus’, in *African Literature Today* ed. by Eldred Durosimi Jones (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 130-144 (p. 143).

### **Exile and Neighbour: The Difficulties of Witnessing the Realities of Home**

Both Walcott and Brutus present personas that strive to overcome alienation due to enforced migration (Walcott) and/or political circumstances (Brutus). The question this section turns to is: how might a diasporic poet bear witness to the realities of his home(land) and what are some key meanings? I argue here that Walcott's movements in and out of St Lucia might be described as a form of forced migration occasioned by economic and cultural circumstances. This is based on Breslin's report that, as for Walcott's career, 'his likely future was that of an alienated teacher or newspaper writer living on a poor salary, complaining about provincial, colonial life, and corrupt local politicians.'<sup>450</sup> Such discontent with St Lucia's socio-political affairs led him to the diaspora which in turn satisfies his artistic career, but also leaves him feeling alienated and to some extent homesick.

In Book Two, chapter Twenty-One of *Omeros*, Achille reflects my understanding of the difficulties of witnessing the realities of home. Through poetic images, the poet brings to life Achille's alienation and disgruntlement as a local fisherman on the island. He feels estranged from his society because he considers that the developmental changes on the island, such as the 'hotels, marinas and discos,'<sup>451</sup> are responsible for 'the greed,' 'the noise,' and 'the transport'<sup>452</sup> on the island. Although these projects depict a society that is arguably progressing, the poet's narrator indicates that it is also destroying the natural environment, especially as 'Castries was corrupting him with its roaring life, / its littered market, with too many transport vans / competing.'<sup>453</sup> Bobb asserts that 'with the growing Capitalist influence, the evils of industrialized society encroach upon the lives of the

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<sup>450</sup> Breslin, *Nobody's Nation*, p. 31.

<sup>451</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 111.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Walcott, p. 231.

island people.’<sup>454</sup> The poet evidences this through Achille’s simultaneous reference to Helen the character and Helen the island. For example, the night is said to be ‘Helen’s night. / The night Achille dreaded above everything else.’<sup>455</sup> In this light, Helen represents Achille’s lover, but also the island, especially as Achille sees ‘her high head moving with the tourist.’ The alliteration used here is apt in asserting on the one hand, that Helen (Island) is the pride of his people, and on the other hand, that Helen (character) is too proud as an individual. Helen therefore represents the pride and beauty of his home as well as the dire need to keep her under checks from tourist exploitation. At this point, it is important to make a comparison between Walcott and Brutus’ use of what Linfors describes as an ‘ambiguous idiom’ and ‘double-breasted love lyrics’, which allow the poet to make a political statement and an erotic statement in one breath.<sup>456</sup>

Furthermore, Walcott’s use of metonymy brings to light his use of the ambiguous statement, above. For instance, when Helen takes her shower in readiness for her night, her towel is referred to as ‘Plunkett’s towel.’<sup>457</sup> Although this may seem to suggest that it is a gift offered her by Plunkett by virtue of her position as a servant in his house, implying sexual favours being expected as well, and it also suggests the encroachment of another culture on the island. This could be linked to ‘the DJ’s fresh-water-Yankee-cool-Creole’<sup>458</sup> which although it may seem ridiculous, it also portrays the cross-cultural and intercultural nature of the island people, and it suits Walcott’s purpose, namely that of giving them a voice. In addition, Achille brings to light the conflict between traditional and modern values seen in the poet’s description of how Achille ‘...grew nauseous with

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<sup>454</sup> June Bobb, *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Braithwaite and Derek Walcott*, p. 212.

<sup>455</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 110.

<sup>456</sup> Lindfors, ‘Dennis Brutus and the Lay of the Land,’ p. 483.

<sup>457</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 111.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*

jealousy, watching the thick / breadfruit leaves viciously darken as the cafes / switched their doors open...'<sup>459</sup> Although the breadfruit might represent an ambiguous image because it was implanted on the island as food for the enslaved, it has become appropriated as a staple food in the island. Thus, the breadfruit could be said to represent one of the cultural elements of the landscape whose importance is fast diminishing because of a more domineering light from the cafes. This diminishing value of things on the island is reflected in:

The sandy alleys would go and their simple stores,  
The smell of fresh bread drawn from its Creole oven  
Its flour turned into cocaine, its daughters to whores,<sup>460</sup>

The above stanza appeals to visual images of sight: 'sandy alleys', 'simple stores' and olfactory images of smell: 'fresh bread' and 'cocaine.' Here, the protagonist warns against the undervaluing nature of the island qualities. Feeling alienated from his environment, his land and lover, Achille decides to seek consolation in nature. So 'he would go and sit with the canoes / far up the beach and watch the star-crowned silhouette / of the crouched island'<sup>461</sup>. I propose that the island is 'crouched' because it is weighed down by tourism.

Feeling very unsatisfied, and in fury, Achille 'sailed south'<sup>462</sup> accompanied by Philoctete in search of 'some cove he could settle like Aeneas, / founding not Rome but home, to survive in peace.'<sup>463</sup> The poet's allusion to Dante's character Aeneas who in Greek-Roman mythology made several futile attempts to find home is very revealing of Achille's unsuccessful search for another home. In an epiphanic moment, Achille declares that: 'he found no cove he liked as much as his own / village, whatever the future brought, no inlet

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 112.

<sup>461</sup> Walcott, p. 111.

<sup>462</sup> Walcott, p. 300.

<sup>463</sup> Walcott, p. 301.

/ spoke to him quietly, no bay parted its mouth'<sup>464</sup>to welcome him. These lines express a firm resolution to adapt to his present home and his fishing area. A return to the island is further made possible when Achille and his companion encounter 'one whale-- "Baleine,""<sup>465</sup> a sea fish, that sends the ship, '*In God We Troust*, with its two men high off the shelf / of the open sea.'<sup>466</sup> The spelling of the ship's name reflects the creole language of the island. Fred D'Aguiar states that 'the misspelling which Achille insists on keeping [is] in obedience to his twin language (to French and English, patois and Creole).'<sup>467</sup> Drawing on D'Aguiar's idea of the vessel as a metaphor 'for spiritual quest and fulfilment',<sup>468</sup> I suggest that in this case, the spiritual quest is more of a search for an ancestral home. Thus, when by some invisible force, 'the bilge was bailed out, the sail/ turned home,'<sup>469</sup> Achille and Philoctete believe that this turbulence at sea and the forward push of the boat homeward to the island is a sign that they must go back home. In line with this, Bruckner expresses the idea that Walcott spends most of each year in Boston and that the poet confesses that when he returns home, 'he finds that the place, its people and its history overwhelm him.'<sup>470</sup> Additionally, Mary Lefkowitz reads Achille and Philoctete's return to the island as Walcott's objective to state that all those who are exiles like himself '...must return to a home whose character has changed over time, even to the point where we can no longer recognize it.'<sup>471</sup> Lefkowitz's view seems acceptable, it may even seem that Walcott intends for Achille and Philoctete to adapt and make meaning out of their presence on the island as a way of witnessing to the realities of the place. As Caruth posits: 'the inability to witness the event fully as it occurs, or the ability to witness

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 303.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Fred D'Aguiar, 'In God We Troust: Derek Walcott and God, *Callaloo*, 28.1 (2005), pp. 216-221 (p. 221).

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Donald Bruckner, p. 393.

<sup>471</sup> Mary Lefkowitz, 'Bringing Him Back Alive,' in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. by Robert D. Hamner (Boulder and London: A Three Continents Book, 1997), pp.400-403. (p. 401).

the event fully only at the cost of witnessing oneself.<sup>472</sup> Thus the inexplicable traumatic void is filled by exposing one's struggles and survivals as Achille and Philoctete do above.

Aside from Achille, Major Plunkett, the British expatriate, and his wife Maud also suffer the affliction of exile and alienation in different ways. When the reader meets them, they are sipping their drinks together silently and are seemingly estranged from each other for 'their silence / was a mutual communion.'<sup>473</sup> The narrator informs us that they have been married for twenty years and came to the island after the war with the hope of making it their home.<sup>474</sup> However, for Maud, 'sometimes...old longing descended on her / to see Ireland.'<sup>475</sup> This estrangement is compounded by 'the moisture rotting their library,' 'insects of any kind, / especially rain-flies,' and 'darkening monsoon.'<sup>476</sup> Walcott appeals to our senses of touch through tactile images of moisture to emphasise the burden and coldness, and this affective experience garners a sympathetic feeling in line with some of what the character feels. Maud, like Achille, portrays the restlessness living on the island. However, where Achille succeeds in accepting his island, Maud fails. Her demise results in her unwillingness to negotiate a place in the island, particularly as she never goes back to Ireland.

Plunkett, on the other hand, feels estranged from England and it now

'...seemed to him merely the place of his birth.'  
How odd to prefer, over its pastoral sites-  
Reasonable leaves shading reasonable earth-

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<sup>472</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 7.

<sup>473</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 25.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 29.

<sup>476</sup> Walcott, p. 61-62.

these loud-mouth forests on their illiterate heights,  
these springs speaking a dialect that cooled his mind  
more than pastures with castles! To prefer the hush

of a hazed Atlantic worried by the salt wind!  
Others could read it as “going to the bush,”  
but harbour after crescent harbour closed his wound.<sup>477</sup>

The stanzas indicate perhaps surprisingly that Plunkett prefers the natural world on the island to that of England, his native country. The use of parallelism in the line ‘reasonable leaves shading reasonable earth’ shows a contrast between the harmonious world of England to the uncontrollable outburst of nature in the island. This is further enhanced by personifying nature in ‘loud-mouth,’ and alliteration in ‘spring speaking.’ Although the landscape is portrayed as having an upsurge nature in the run-on lines in the second stanza from ‘to prefer the hush...’ to ‘the salt wind!’, these seem to work to the speaker’s advantage as the landscape ‘cooled his mind.’ Furthermore, Walcott makes use of end-rhymes that are interlocking to an extent. For example, sites / heights contrast the pastoral sites of Plunkett’s landscape to the illiterate heights of the island; mind / wind express the cooling effect Plunkett gets from the illiterate climate; and birth / earth is effective in locating the character’s place of origin. This rhythmic syntactic pattern could be said to emphasise the joy and the pain of exile.

Moreover, I argue that Plunkett’s desire to remain on the island comes with a price, given that ‘...harbour after crescent harbour closed his wound.’<sup>478</sup> Staying on the island and exploring it seems to be a means to attain his own healing, not only from the wound of the war, but also from the wound of the often-stereotypical perceptions that imperialists

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

like him conceive about the island. He then insists on carrying out his research about the island although he states that it is intended to give it ‘...its true place in history.’<sup>479</sup>

Furthermore, Plunkett negotiates a sense of place when he accepts the folklore of the island. The suffering of Maud’s absence makes, him seek Ma Kilman’s intercession. To ‘tell her something for me, please’<sup>480</sup> and to tell her ‘I am sorry that I caused her / all that pain.’<sup>481</sup> Ma Kilman then urges Major Plunkett to see that ‘she can hear you, just like in life.’<sup>482</sup> After speaking to the ghost of his wife, Plunkett ‘edged / a twenty-dollar bill under’<sup>483</sup> a ‘small saucer... near the bible.’<sup>484</sup> The poet brings together the saucer and the Bible to valorise that syncretic cultural mix of traditional religion and modern religion in the island. Thus, to create a sense of place on the island, Plunkett must not only accept Maud’s death, but must also accept the culture of the island and the people’s beliefs in both Christianity (the Bible) and the folk culture (the gardeuse). Like Achille, Plunkett must come to terms with himself and his surroundings, which is specifically seen when Ma Kilman reassures him that ‘she happy’<sup>485</sup> and in response, Plunkett says: ‘so would I be.’<sup>486</sup> Walcott writes that after this incident, Plunkett starts ‘taking orders / from her invisible voice’<sup>487</sup> and accepts his losses in the past, as he ‘...forgot the war’s / history that had cost him a son and a wife.’<sup>488</sup> He now feels more at ease with the men working on his farm and so ‘...he began to speak to the workmen / not as boys who worked with him,’<sup>489</sup> but as a people whose individualities had become well known to him. He also

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<sup>479</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 64.

<sup>480</sup> Walcott, p. 307.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Walcott, p. 309.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

partakes in common practices with them, one of which includes taking his ‘turn in the queue’<sup>490</sup> at the bank. Thieme posits that Plunkett’s odyssey, which includes the writing of St Lucian history, eventually leads him to achieve ‘a closer encounter with its folk culture as he visits Ma Kilman, seeking and receiving her help as a medium who can unite him with his dead wife.’<sup>491</sup> Giving St Lucia a true place in history, as Major Plunkett is determined to do, expresses one of the ways in which Walcott gives voice to the island and its people through art. He confirms this in an interview with Edward Hirsh, that ‘the only possible realization in the West Indies is art. I see no possibility of the country becoming unified and having its own strengths except in its art.’<sup>492</sup>

The narrator in the poem is another character who appears alienated and homesick. His sense of estrangement is reflected in Antigone’s assertion:

“I am tired of America, it’s time for me to go back home to Greece. I miss my islands.” I write, it returns-  
the way she turned and shook out the black gust of hair.<sup>493</sup>

The above stanza provides an instance of anguish for home while away from one’s country of birth. The speaker alludes to the Greek sculptress, Antigone who teaches the narrator the Greek name for Homer as ‘O-meros.’<sup>494</sup> Hamner asserts that Walcott depicts himself back in a hotel in St Lucia from whose balcony ‘upon hearing someone blow a conch shell in the village, he catches himself enunciating “Omeros,” the way he had once been instructed by a Greek girl.’<sup>495</sup> Notably, the poet does not limit the Caribbean relation to the English literary scenes but also to Greek literary civilization. This association is

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<sup>490</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 268.

<sup>491</sup> John Thieme, *Derek Walcott: Contemporary World Writers*, p.186.

<sup>492</sup> Edward Hirsch, ‘An interview with Derek Walcott’, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996), pp. 50-63 (p. 55).

<sup>493</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 14.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Robert Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed*, p. 147.

apparent in the speaker's reference to the sea image as he expands on the full meaning of Omeros:

and O was the conch-shell's invocation, *mer* was  
both mother and sea in our Antillean patois,  
os, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes<sup>496</sup>

The poet-figure appeals to the auditory image of sound in the 'conch-shell' and the aquatic image of the sea in '*mer*.' These images reveal the close connections between the island people and the sea. The sea is a reminder of the island's lost origin and it is a source of livelihood to the people. Apart from that, the sea has its Homeric associations with the island as the Helen of Troy from the colonial rivalry between England and France. Paula Makris asserts that 'Walcott deftly weaves the Caribbean and Greek elements of this image of the sea together. Although the word "Omeros" itself is Greek, it consists of words that have meaning in the St. Lucian dialect, all of which relate to the sea.'<sup>497</sup> However, the narrator indicates that his writing of a Caribbean history will be an epic poem not of 'kings floundering in lances of rain', but 'of fishermen cursing over canoes.'<sup>498</sup> Thus, his epic will divert from the norms of classical epic poetry whose heroes fight with sophisticated weapons such as lances, to fishermen struggling with their canoes. In doing so, Bobb asserts that 'Walcott assumes control, provides the direction and brings together the fragments of history and experience.'<sup>499</sup>

The narrator encapsulates his quest for home in seventeen rhyming couplets in which he expresses deep feeling of despair and loneliness:

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<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

<sup>497</sup> Paula Makris, 'Beyond the Classics: Legacies of Colonial Education in C. L. R. James and Derek Walcott', *Review Interamericana* 31 (2001), pp. 1-17 (p. 11).

<sup>498</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 15.

<sup>499</sup> Bobb, p. 194.

House of umbrage, house of fear,  
House of multiple air

House of memories that grow  
Like shadows out of Allan Poe

House where marriage go bust,  
House of telephone and lust

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House that creaks, age fifty-seven,  
Wooden earth and plaster heaven<sup>500</sup>

From the above example, I argue that the narrator could be in a battle against the different houses which he inhabits. He is an embodiment of a body that ‘creaks’ at age ‘fifty-seven’ with fear, displeasure, loss and failed marriages. Rachel D Friedman writes that though this section of the poem depicts the after effects of a particular event in the poet’s life, ‘it also becomes, much more broadly, a way for him to represent the nature of the larger crises that seek resolution in *Omeros*.’<sup>501</sup> As a ‘house of multiple air,’ the speaker represents different cultures and worlds especially as after this dramatic break in structure and tone, the speaker takes us to ‘the Dakotas’<sup>502</sup> where he compares the plight of American Indians to that of the Caribbean people. The end-rhymes of the couplet contribute to heightening the speaker’s sense of homelessness and gives vivid expression to his sense of loneliness. Although *Omeros* depicts characters who continue to search for a place throughout the text, it is fitting to suggest that the narrator come to embrace a more cosmopolitan idea of home in his assertion: ‘I do not live in you, I bear / my house inside me, / until your winters grow more kind / by dancing firelight of mind.’<sup>503</sup> On the other hand, there is the sense that his home is his body as well as the legacy of his island which he carries with him across the world.

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<sup>500</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p.173.

<sup>501</sup> Rachel D. Friedman, ‘Derek Walcott’s *Odysseys*’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 14.3/4 (2008). Pp. 455-480 (p, 661).

<sup>502</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 174.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid. p. 174.

From the above analyses, I propose that Walcott's *Omeros* highlights the effects of being away from home and how this fills the narrator with haunting feelings of nostalgia and, to a certain extent, makes it difficult to participate fully in constructing a notion of home. Similar feelings are also expressed in Brutus' poetry. Notably that one of the sources of Brutus' inspiration in writing poetry comes from his condition of exile from South Africa. Exile, to a greater extent, serves as a source of renewed energy and freedom in his writing although the pain of exile has taken its toll on the poet. In 'I Am the Exile', the speaker is tormented by the wound of exile:

I am the exile  
am the wanderer  
the troubadour  
(whatever they say)<sup>504</sup>

The stanza is written in dimeter and provides a very constrained rhythm for the poem. Although the speaker is in pain, the musicality of the stanza enables him to exercise restraint which lightens the mood of the poem. The metre places the musical emphasis on the nouns: 'the exile', 'the wanderer,' and 'the troubadour,'<sup>505</sup> so that they feel heavy, disconsolate, inadequate reflecting the predicament in exile. These nouns evoke outsider tropes of displacement but can also be seen to be literally true of the speaker's suffering state. Ojaide asserts that 'exile itself is a journey, a quest which corresponds to the wanderings of the troubadour.'<sup>506</sup> I add that it is a journey with the purpose to seek justice and freedom against apartheid. Although this poem might seem to imply that the speaker is pessimistic or lacks confidence, and that he is fighting a losing battle, the intention is

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<sup>504</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 137.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Ojaide, 'The Troubadour: The poet's Persona in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus', p. 63.

to continue to resist and to decry the inhuman maltreatment of black South African activists.

In addition, and noticeably, the speaker is haunted by feelings of alienation and exile; he sees himself as a slave who moves ‘...with abstracted pace / absorbed in planning, / courteous in servility,’<sup>507</sup> all meanings associated with slavery. The dynamics of Brutus’ lyric poetry are particularly clear in the speaker’s lament about exile. This might be compared to Walcott’s own poetry where such anguish of exile is evident when Walcott is speaking through a character. For example, Achille suffers from not only the pain of love (Helen), but also the pain of loneliness. Although Brutus’s persona is ‘gentle,’ ‘calm,’ and ‘courteous’ in servility, he still feels the pain of exile because:

...wailings fill the chambers of my heart  
and in my head  
behind my quiet eyes  
I hear the cries and sirens.<sup>508</sup>

The torment of being able to hear with the mind’s eye is overwhelming. I compare the sirens here to the sirens in ‘The Sound Begins Again’, which also express the torment of a human who is in want of a home. Egudu explains that ‘...this goes to emphasize the point that his pain is mental rather than physical.’<sup>509</sup> This is especially true because in the speaker’s head, ‘the cries and the sirens’ continue to re-echo even whilst he is faraway in another land.

Similarly, ‘I Am a Tree’ expresses the difficulties and pain of exile. As in the previous poem, Brutus uses several metaphors to describe his condition of anguish and torture:

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<sup>507</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 137.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

<sup>509</sup> Egudu, p. 134.

I am a tree  
creaking in the wind  
outside in the night  
twisted and stubborn:

I am the sheet  
of the twisted tin shack  
grating in the wind  
in a shrill sad protest:

I am the voice  
Crying in the night  
That cries endlessly  
And will not be consoled.<sup>510</sup>

The first line of each stanza is repeated with only a variation in the adjectives or metaphors that compare the speaker. Each line has four syllables which could be described as near dactylic. Thus, enhancing the rhythm of the poem. I refer to the poet's use of the 'I' pronoun to inform vividly the realities of life in his society. The constant repetition of the personal pronoun in all three stanzas informs the lyrical nature of the poem and emphasises the cruelty of the apartheid system and its psychological impact. In the first stanza, the image of the tree in the wind suggests that the persona is swayed from one place to the other against his will. Auditory images of sounds such as 'creaking in the wind,' 'grating in the wind,' and 'crying in the night,'<sup>511</sup> are effective in enhancing the sympathetic background of the speaker's expression of restlessness and loneliness in exile. Ojaide highlights that 'this partly humorous, partly pathetic voice is reminiscent of Don Quixote. It is Don Quixote before the windmill that is suggested in the various metaphors the poet uses to describe himself.'<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 106.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> Ojaide, p. 62.

Another metaphor used by the poet is that of ‘...the sheet /of the twisted tin shack... / in a shrill sad protest.’<sup>513</sup> I consider this line significant in that ‘the sheet’ that is in effect the roof of a home represents the idea of being torn apart from your loved ones and successfully conveys the image of the poet himself having gone into exile. It is also suggestive of the shanty quarters that were reserved for black South Africans. Jacques Alvarez Pereyre communicates that in these lines: ‘Brutus has described... the environment of his early years: a township in the suburbs close to Port Elizabeth inhabited by coloureds with modest income.’<sup>514</sup> In the last stanza, Brutus brings back his recurrent theme of the spokesman. It can be argued that ‘the voice’ represents millions of others who are voiceless, suffering and in pain under the cruel regime.

The speaker does not only refer to himself as a tree, a sheet of roofing or a voice, but also as driftwood. In ‘And I Am Driftwood,’ the speaker is on ‘an Algerian beach,’ and uses the image of floating wood to describe himself:

And I am driftwood  
on an Algerian beach  
along a Mediterranean shore’<sup>515</sup>

Contrary to the speaker’s constraint and ‘driftwood’ nature, there are those who ‘loll in their canal pool’<sup>516</sup> and are full of ‘sensual content.’<sup>517</sup> These descriptions expose the speaker’s existential questions about his sense of belonging and yearning for home. Also, there is a contrast between the speaker’s floating settlement and the seabird’s carefree and permanent settlement. This is because, despite ‘... the seabird questing / weaving away

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<sup>513</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 106.

<sup>514</sup> Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre, *The Poetry of Commitment in South Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp. 2-267. (p. 130).

<sup>515</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 141.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

and across,' it still '...has a place of rest — / though it may vary by season or by tide.'<sup>518</sup> One might suggest that these lines have the effect of heightening the speaker's sense of alienation and despair about the reality of his struggle for freedom. Also, a contrast can be made here between Walcott's sea-swift and Brutus' sea bird. Although they are both free to wander about, they are different in that Walcott's sea-swift consoles Achille and reminds the St Lucians of their cultural affinities. An example of this is when the poet mentions that the sea-swift bore the seed from Africa, the same seed whose herb is later used in healing the wound of history.

By contrast, Brutus' sea bird reminds the individual of a sense of grave loss and displacement on alien soil. Although the speaker feels more alienated given the appearance of the sea bird, he does not regret his efforts in overcoming this burden as 'I beat on the fierce savaging knowledge / rampaging through my existence / accepting the knowledge, seeking design.'<sup>519</sup> I propose that the phrase "seeking design" shows his efforts to give meaning to his existence by seeking ways to stop the inhuman practice of apartheid. Thus, making sense of his life in exile entails 'digging and dragging for meaning / dragging through the dirt and debris / the refuse of existence.'<sup>520</sup> These images strongly convey the possible meaningless nature of a life in exile. In this poem it is a life of 'refuse', 'debris', and 'dirt.'<sup>521</sup>

Aside from that, I highlight the poet's use of alliteration in the closing line of the poem: 'some sun-soaked plage',<sup>522</sup> plage, – a French word for beach, with sunny and beautiful

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<sup>518</sup> Ibid.

<sup>519</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 142.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> Brutus, p.143.

scenery, has no soothing effect on the speaker. This is further heightened by the lines ‘for I am driftwood / in a life and place and time.’ I note in this parallelism the effect of time that is lyrical and repetitive, and I connects it to the speaker’s constant use of the temporal adverb in:

And still I am driftwood.  
Still the restlessness, the journeyings, the  
quest,

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still the blind tides lunge and eddy,  
still we writhe on some undiscovered spit,<sup>523</sup>

The temporal adverb ‘still’ functions as anaphora and enhances the notion of immobility and an unchanged condition. The ‘blind tides’ are responsible for the persona’s state and in its blind nature ‘lunge[s]’ debris arbitrarily across the continent. The internal rhyme in ‘restlessness’ and ‘quest’ are effective in unifying the idea of loneliness, alienation and the constant search for home in this poem. Exile might seem wearisome, but the speaker is aware of the pleasures and luxuries that could divert his focus from the fight for freedom back home. In ‘I walk the English quicksilver dusk’, a one stanza poem that expresses in quick successions the speaker’s exiled tortures which are juxtaposed to the beauty of England:

I walk in the English quicksilver dusk  
and spread my hands to the soft spring rain  
and see the streetlights gild the flowering trees  
and the late light breaking through patches of  
broken cloud  
and I think of the island’s desolate dusks  
and the swish of the island’s haunting rain  
and the desperate frenzy straining our prisoned  
breasts:  
and the men who are still there crouching now  
in the grey cells, on the grey floors, stubborn  
and bowed.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Brutus, p. 142-143.

<sup>524</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 102.

There are run-on-lines with only a colon and a final full stop throughout the entire poem. This style which both resists and succumbs to the pastoral implies a disordered state of being and is suggestive of a particular variety of urgency in the speaker's message. The breakup phrases such as 'broken cloud' suggest disintegration. The notion of 'breasts', 'and bowed' might mean captivity and servitude. Although the speaker is said to enjoy 'the soft spring rain' and 'the flowering trees'<sup>525</sup> of England, his mind goes back to 'the men who are still there [in South Africa] crouching now / in the grey cells, on the grey floors, stubborn / and bowed.'<sup>526</sup> Thus, despite the idea that the beauty and leisure of England are very alluring, the poet must resist them for the sake of those back home, especially as 'her loveliness' is 'tainted by disease.'<sup>527</sup> This poem employs repetition through the conjunction 'and', the temporal adverb 'still', and alliterations in 'soft spring', 'late light', 'desolate dusks,' to emphasise the boredom of exile. Finally, the poet's use of sibilant sounds with high amplitude and pitch in words such as 'trees', 'frenzy', 'swish', and 'patches,' brings out the speaker's sense of agitation, loneliness and alienation in exile.

My reading here reveals the difficulties of living away from one's country, not only in terms of the persona's love for home, but also for those still struggling and fighting against the regime. Egudu has put forward the hypothesis that 'Brutus could not find rest in his exile...for him, the loveliness of England is tainted by disease,'<sup>528</sup> a disease that encouraged apartheid. Thus, the speaker is resolute, that 'I must be faithful to a land / whose rich years unlike England's lie ahead.'<sup>529</sup> This reveals hope at its best which is

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> Brutus., p. 104.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

<sup>529</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 104.

more vivid in: 'I must be dourly stubborn in my love / for an arid eroded dust-bowl of love.'<sup>530</sup> The comparison gives a paradoxical sense of what South Africa entails. It is eroded by its obnoxious apartheid laws, yet it is a bowl of love for the speaker, albeit a 'dust-bowl.' His stubborn love is likened to those of the men held in prisons back in South Africa, who are 'stubborn and bowed.'<sup>531</sup>

The preceding discourse exposes how Walcott and Brutus' personas triumph over feelings of exile, migration, and displacement. The different personas as presented by these poets are confronted by the difficulties of witnessing the realities of home because of the distance not just physical but psychological, as well as between the place they sojourn and their place of birth. Apart from issues of displacement, exile and alienation, ideological imperialism through continued discrimination and misrepresentations is a third disturbing feature in the poetry of Walcott and Brutus as discussed, below.

### **Resistance: Discrimination and Misrepresentation**

My focus in this final part of the chapter is to show how both poets use their art to debunk colonial misrepresentations, stereotyping, and discrimination in the regions of St Lucia and South Africa. Said refers to this type of resistance through writing as 'secondary resistance', which aims to place more effort into rebuilding a 'shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all pressures of the colonial system.'<sup>532</sup> In this vein, I posit that each poet uses poetry as an instrument of resistance to the forms of white supremacist ideology that hinders the assertion of oneself or fosters notions of Otherness.

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<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 252-253.

The Creole language serves as both a means of resistance and of preserving the distinct culture of Caribbean people. Glissant articulates that the actual poetics of this language ‘was what was deviant in relation to any supposed classicism.’<sup>533</sup> This might imply that one of the characteristics of the Creole language is its desire to divert from classical Standard English and assert its own complex standards. Braithwaite posits that ‘it is a nation language in the Caribbean that, in fact, largely ignores the pentameter.’<sup>534</sup> An example of the use of the Creole language in Walcott’s *Omeros* is evident when Hector and Achille exchange words as they fight over a tin: ‘I told you, borrow nothing of mine. You have a canoe, / and a net. Who you think you are?’<sup>535</sup> This quarrel continues as Hector accuses Achille of stealing from him: “‘Ous croire’ ous c’est roi Gros Ilet? Voleur bomme!” / “You think you’re king of Gros Ilet, you tin-stealer?””.<sup>536</sup> This dialogue highlights one of the rich cultural elements of the Caribbean landscape seen in terms of the use of the Creole language. The uniqueness of the St Lucian Creole language lies in its cultural affiliation to both French and English languages. John Figueroa asserts that Walcott ‘...was the first significant Anglophone poet to be willing to mix meaningfully greatly differing varieties and registers of language...to make meaning for pleasurable and insightful contemplation.’<sup>537</sup> Similarly, Bruckner suggests that the Creole language allows Walcott to ‘scatter hundreds of verbal jokes through his poems and plays.’<sup>538</sup> Additionally, it might be suggested that the poet’s use of humour in the above quote serves to lessen the pain experienced by his characters, whilst the dialogue brings the speakers to centre stage and enables them to assert themselves.

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<sup>533</sup> Glissant, p. 97.

<sup>534</sup> Braithwaite, ‘Nation Language’ in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, p. 282.

<sup>535</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 16.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.

<sup>537</sup> John, Figueroa, ‘Creole in Literature Beyond Verisimilitude: Texture and Varieties: Derek Walcott’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 25 (1995), pp. 156-162 (p. 159).

<sup>538</sup> Bruckner, ‘A poem in Homage to an Unwanted Mam’, p. 397.

The Creole dialogue serves as a useful tool for Walcott to resist misrepresentation of his characters' identities, and to represent a particular kind of asserting of oneself. For example, whilst gossiping with two women, the protagonist, Helen, tells them about her futile search for a job as a waitress in a white-person managed restaurant because '...both said the tables was full.'<sup>539</sup> The poet reveals that 'What the white manager mean / to say was that she was too rude, 'cause she dint take no shit / from white people...'<sup>540</sup> In trying to assert her personality, Helen comes across as being rude. Walcott's Helen metaphorically represents exploitation of the island and its people by colonialists, represented here as the white manager. In this respect, I would suggest that the economy of the island is not the only thing being exploited; the people are too.

Through humour and pathos, Walcott exposes more instances of exploitation. Helen continues her conversation and points out that: '... some of them tourist—the men / was out to touch local girls; every minute— / was brushing their hand from her backside...'<sup>541</sup> I argue that the reason Helen is unable to find a job is because of her unwillingness to be sexually assaulted. Her defiant attitude accounts for the loss of her previous job given that: '...she gets fed up with all their nastiness so she tell / the cashier that wasn't part of her focking pay, / take off her costume, and walk straight out of the hotel / naked as God make me...'<sup>542</sup> Walcott uses the image of nakedness to symbolise two things. Firstly, when Helen storms out with only her 'panty and bra', this could represent the sexual exploitation perpetrated by the tourist industry on the island. More importantly, it reflects a bold and defiant refusal to be objectified in the workplace and walking with only an underwear shows that she alone controls her body. Secondly, if she quits her job without

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<sup>539</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 33.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

<sup>542</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 33-34.

pay over sexual harassment it is an act of valid protest to refuse to degrade herself by collecting money in exchange for being assaulted.

As Helen storms out of the restaurant, she receives a great deal of abuse from a man who shouts “‘Beautifool! / More!’” but Helen retaliates: ‘So I show him my ass. People nearly die. / The two women screamed with laughter.’<sup>543</sup> Again, this is an act of control over her body as mentioned earlier. She will not be touched without consent, but she will expose herself on her own terms. In addition to an attempt of being sexually assaulted, Helen earns the name ‘Beautifool!’ I suggest that the beauty in ‘Beautifool’ is a description of the island’s beauty which, according to the man (tourist), is given to a fool who is unable to make good use of the advantages. It could be surmised from the above analysis that the poet like Helen finds such exploitation on the island to be unacceptable but renders his message in a light-hearted manner through dialogue and humour.

Furthermore, Walcott’s poetics involves a counter-discourse to the theory of the origin of a nation state. From the outset of the poem, Major Plunkett disputes the idea that the origin of the island is from a myth about a lizard. Plunkett finds it inconceivable that ‘the greatest battle / in naval history, which put the French to rout’<sup>544</sup> is based on ‘a creature with disposable tail.’<sup>545</sup> Finding this history ridiculous, he mocks its origin and curses:

“lounalo, eh? It’s all folk-malarkey!”  
The grass was as long as his shorts. History was facts,  
History was a cannon, not a lizard; De Grasse

leaving Martinique, and Rodney crouching to act  
in the right wind, lounalo, my royal arse!<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 92.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

Drawing on the above, Plunkett makes a historical allusion to Admiral Paul de Grasse, a French military naval officer who was defeated by the British naval officer, Admiral Rodney in the Battle of the Saints. By alluding to these historical figures, Plunkett is suggesting that the History of the island ought to be written around these already known colonial figures. I note that the poet's choice of words for Plunkett are very condescending and this could mean a critique of his personality as a colonialist. However, Plunkett's preconception about the history of the island changes later when he decides to give a true representation of the island people.

Ted Williams asserts that 'while Plunkett had earlier participated enthusiastically in the production and preservation of colonialist knowledge on the island'<sup>547</sup>, he realises that the colonialist writings that he now calls 'passionless books'<sup>548</sup> have marginalised the more essential knowledge of the island's beauty. Hence, Plunkett acknowledges imperialist misconstruction of the island and its people. As a result, he seeks to debunk such ideas when he asserts that, despite imperialist ideologies that paint these people as those '...resigned to living in garbage,' or 'drifting in numbed content /as the filth narrowed the drains,'<sup>549</sup> they are not what they have been portrayed to be. On the contrary, Plunkett realises that the inhabitants of St Lucia '... had not laid out / narrow-gauge pipes for buckets, but none for sewers.'<sup>550</sup> In relation to such misrepresentations, Bobb confirms that 'more than the actual battering they were subjected to, there was also a history of psychological attacks against their perception of self.'<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Ted Williams, 'Truth and Representation: The Confrontation of History and Mythology in "*Omeros*"', *Callaloo*, 24.1 (2001), pp. 276-286 (p. 280).

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 63.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> Bobb, p. 19.

Finally enlightened, Plunkett spells out the admirable qualities of the island people. One such attribute is that they ‘...had splendid habits / of cleanliness, compulsively sweeping yards dry / with palm-brooms.’<sup>552</sup> I advance that the poet through Plunkett celebrates the inhabitants’ clean nature especially as they use brooms to keep their surroundings clean. The inhabitants are also very hardworking for they ‘waxed their tables, flailed their beaten laundry on / the river-rocks,’ ‘...and they learnt quickly, good repairers of engines and are fanatical maids.’<sup>553</sup> An example of such a maid is Helen, whom Plunkett praises, commenting that she ‘... had kept the house /as if it were her own.’<sup>554</sup>

Although these attributes might seem acceptable, I question them from the perspective of the master/servant relationship. Plunkett seems to underscore the idea that the indigenous inhabitants are only good at being servants. This could be linked to Maud’s perception of servants as thieves, as shown when she accuses her maid, Helen, of stealing her yellow dress. The yellow dress stands for all that the empire took from the island and so carries a significant value as metaphor. In taking back the yellow dress, Helen seems to resist the empire’s encroachment on her territory.

The yellow dress is a significant poetic symbol used by Walcott. An instance worth exploring is when Achille puts on Helen’s yellow dress during the Boxing Day festival. Walcott writes that Achille ‘...strode like a prizefighter / on Boxing Day, carrying Helen’s yellow dress, .../ Helen helped him stuff the rags and align his breast.’<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 274.

Achille's cross-dressing exhibits the Caribbean carnival of melodrama and role-playing which celebrates the culture of the island. With the knowledge gained through his odyssey to Africa, Achille explains the origin of the Boxing Day festival dance:

At first she had laughed, but then, with firm tenderness,  
Achille explained that he and Philo had done this  
every Boxing Day, and not because of Christmas,  
  
but for something older; something that he had seen  
in Africa, when his name had followed a swift,  
where he had been his own father and his own son.<sup>556</sup>

Although this practice has its origin in 'something older', one can also note that Achille chooses to perform it the day after Christmas to celebrate the heterogeneity of his identity.

Srila Nayak writes that by performing this dance on Boxing Day, it is fitting to assert

that origins cannot be recovered in any sense of an authentic whole but reinvented in fluctuating guises and constructed memories as the Caribbean subject resists the complete loss of history due to slavery and colonialism.<sup>557</sup>

Thus, these memories could only be fragments of a once unified whole (Africa), but it is very much cherished and celebrated.

Achille's successful fight on Boxing Day might be attributed to Helen's yellow dress. The yellow dress is a symbol of their identity and it is important in asserting the character's sense of belonging in the community. Lizabeth Paravisini 'addresses the implication of class, cultural, and gender cross-dressings as an act of political appropriation that subvert the power relations in postcolonial societies.'<sup>558</sup> Thus, arguing that Helen and Achille's ownership of the dress does not only portray cultural identity, as

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<sup>556</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 275.

<sup>557</sup> Srila Nayak "Nothing in that Other Kingdom": Fashioning a Return to Africa in *Omeros*', *ARIEL* 44.2-3 (2013), pp. 1-28 (p. 24).

<sup>558</sup> Lizabeth Paravisini, 'Helen in Her Yellow Dress: Dressing, Undressing, and Cross-dressing in the Literature of Contemporary Caribbean', in *The Cross-dressed Caribbean: Writing, politics, sexualities* ed. by Bénédicte Ledent, and Roberto del Valle Alcalá (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2013), pp. 220-238 (p. 221).

they celebrate in the typical St Lucian colour (yellow) of sunshine and prosperity; it also implies their desire to resist any further appropriation of what truly belongs to the island. Plunkett even confirms this when he highlights that ‘the butterfly dress was hers’<sup>559</sup> (Helen’s) although the ‘...dress / had an empire’s tag on it, mistress to slave. / the price was envy and cunning. The big church, the / middens by cloudy lagoon, kids racing like piglets.’<sup>560</sup> These lines also summarise the ills of colonialism that Plunkett mentions earlier.

Thus, to make some reparation, Plunkett is resolved ‘...that what the place needed / was its true place in history, that he’d spend hours / for Helen’s sake on research...’<sup>561</sup> In conversation with Walcott, Bruckner describes Plunkett’s efforts as an attempt ‘...to expiate the historical respect paid to European colonial representatives by the rest of the population.’<sup>562</sup> In resisting colonialist misrepresentation, I argue that the speaker uses this process as a means of asserting himself. Said writes that this resistance is not only a reaction to imperialism; rather, ‘writing back to the metropolitan cultures, disrupting the European narratives of the Orient and Africa, replacing them either with a more playful or a more powerful new narrative style is a major component in the process.’<sup>563</sup>

Brutus also engages in abrogating Eurocentric misrepresentations of the indigenous black population in South Africa. Contrary to Walcott’s subtle form of defiance in his poetry, Brutus overtly protests against the apartheid government in his poetry. Notably the

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<sup>559</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 34.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>562</sup> Bruckner, p. 398.

<sup>563</sup> Edward Said, ‘Resistance, opposition and Representation’ in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by Bill Ashcroft and others (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 95-98 (p. 97).

brutality of the regime is current for Brutus while for Walcott, slavery is historical, though its afterlives remain visible. In addition, apart from using Standard English, Walcott also uses the Creole language as a form of subversion, while Brutus uses the English language but creates some words from it to suit his purpose. Bill Ashcroft asserts that ‘post-colonial writers who use the English language use it as a cultural vehicle via which the external world may be introduced to features of culturally diverse post-colonial societies.’<sup>564</sup> Drawing on this review, Walcott does not only use the Creole language as a form of resistance; it is also used to introduce his reader to the diverse cultural nature of his island. In the case of Brutus, using the English language in resisting racial discrimination reveals the notion that through this very practice, the inhabitants also suffer a repression of their own local languages.

Consequently, Brutus uses the colonial language as evidence of such repressions. His poetic resistance therefore includes his localisation of the English language in protest forms. An example of Brutus’ poetic resistance against apartheid is seen in ‘At A Funeral,’ an elegiac poem that focuses on the funeral of Velencia Mojambozi, who dies shortly after qualifying as a doctor. It is written in two stanzas of six lines, each aimed at making a political statement on how black lives are cut short by the brutal apartheid regime:

Oh all you frustrate ones, powers tombed in dirt,  
Aborted, not Death but carrion books of birth  
Arise! The brassy shout of freedom stirs our earth;  
Not Death but death’s-head tyranny scythes our  
ground  
And plots our narrow cells of pain defeat and  
dearth;  
Better that we should die, than that we should lie  
down.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Bill Ashcroft, ‘Language and Transformation,’ in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, p. 277.

<sup>565</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 17.

From the poem, the speaker laments not only the death of the woman, but also the loss of freedom, which ‘we’ equate to the black populace. Consequently, the speaker makes a clarion call to the oppressed blacks to ‘(a)rise! The brassy shout of freedom stirs our earth’ and to resist the oppressors for it is ‘better that we should die, than that we should lie down.’<sup>566</sup> This call is one that is loud and clear for the entire black South African population to unite in achieving freedom from the oppressors. Folli declares that ‘(t)he words “you”, “our,” and “we” create a sense of solidarity and common purpose, conveying the message of “Freedom or Death.”’<sup>567</sup> As is the case for many of Brutus’ poems, I suggest that this poem too, also highlights the speaker’s function as a spokesman, especially in the use of the subjunctive in addressing the people and himself. Also, of significance is Brutus’ use of end rhymes in these words ‘dirt / birth’ and ‘earth / dearth.’ This rhyming pattern creates points of musical emphasis that express a pathetic reality of the idea that the lives of the black South Africans are meaningless.

Moreover, the entire poem is full of sensual images of sight and colour, as evident in the following stanza:

Black, green and gold at sunset: pageantry  
 And stubbled graves: expectant, of eternity,  
 In bride’s-white, nun’s-white veils the nurses gush  
                   their bounty  
 Of red-wine cloaks, frothing the bugled dirging  
                   slopes  
 Salute! Then ponder all this hollow panoply  
 For one whose gift the mud devours, with our  
                   hopes.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Folli, p. 22.

<sup>568</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 17.

As seen above, the poem is set in a burial ground at ‘sunset’ and the reader is exposed to a ‘pageantry’ of the colours: ‘Black, green and gold.’<sup>569</sup> These colours represent the colours of the flag of the ANC (African National Congress), the South African black party that fought for freedom against apartheid. In an interview with William Thompson, Brutus gives some more insight into the significance of these colours, which he employs in this poem. According to him, ‘the resistance movement in South Africa has its own flag, as opposed to the state flag; the resistance movement’s flag is black, green and gold. The choice of those colors at the beginning of the poem is not an accident.’<sup>570</sup> The resistance movement justifies the poet’s revolutionary voice, which is essentially part of Brutus’ writings, and explains how he makes use of it effectively in this poem. Furthermore, other images such as ‘In bride’s-white, nun’s-white veils,’ ‘bugled dirging,’ ‘red wine cloaks’ are all ‘hallow panoply / For one whose gifts the mud devours, with our hopes’<sup>571</sup> are given explicit interpretation by Brutus:

In South Africa the nurses wear cloaks which are lined with bright red—the “red wind.” Other nurses at the funeral wore white, which echo the nuns in their habits “In bride’-white, nun’s -white veils.” And away back behind the hill in the cemetery on the edge of the ghetto there’s a Boy Scout with a trumpet, blowing the Last Post, “the bugled dirging.”<sup>572</sup>

I argue that these images used by the poet serve as a form of situational irony, given that the death of Velencia Majombozi is juxtaposed with the pomp and pageantry of the ceremony. It is ironic in that the apartheid system, which is responsible for the death of the doctor, allows a grandiose burial ceremony. Brutus ridicules this tokenism and describes it as a ‘hallow panoply.’ It also echoes a system that frustrates the blacks and forces them to carry ‘Carrion books of birth,’<sup>573</sup> another image suggesting that at birth,

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> William E. Thompson, ‘Dennis Brutus: An Interview’, *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 12.2 (1983), pp. 69-77 (p. 70).

<sup>571</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 17.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

the lives of the blacks are already ‘aborted’<sup>574</sup> by the carrion books or pass books that they are obliged to carry.

Similarly, ‘For A Dead African’ is about John Nangoza Jebe, who was shot by the police in a Good Friday procession in Port Elizabeth in 1956:<sup>575</sup>

We have no heroes and no wars  
only victims of a sickly state  
succumbing to the variegated sores  
that flower under the lashing rains of hate.

We have no battles and no fighter  
for history to record with trite remark  
only captives killed on eyeless nights  
and accidental dyings in the dark

Yet when the roll of those who died  
to free our land is called, without surprise  
these nameless unarmed ones will stand beside  
the warriors who secured the final prize<sup>576</sup>

In this ballad written in quatrains of three-stanzas, the speaker tells the story of a dead African, and praises all those who have died under the apartheid regime. The poet makes use of incremental repetition in ‘we have no heroes and no wars / We have no battles and no fighter,’<sup>577</sup> to emphasise the idea that the indiscriminate killings are not as a result of wars and battles, but as a result of hate crimes. In addition, the number of syllables for each line lie between 8 and 10 syllables. For example, the first lines of stanza one and two could be described as a rising duple of four beats each. Such a pattern provides for the sombre musical quality of the poem. It also retains a ‘spoken’ quality, a directness with which to carry its anger. The form allows for formal commemorative metrical elements, but refuses the pomp of too intrusive a music, in favour of a more vitriolic tone.

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<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

<sup>575</sup> Brutus, p. 34.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

On the other hand, the last two lines of stanza three, and the second and last lines of the same stanza could be described as a duple, rising metre or an iambic pentameter, as each line has five unstressed and stressed syllables. This eclectic usage of form gives Brutus's poetics its uniqueness as he does not maintain the traditional pattern of a ballad with a song-like iambic tetrameter or trimeter but includes the iambic pentameter whose flexible meter form produces the effect of an individual speaking voice, and at the same time displays a sense of heightened dignity.

Another poetic aspect is evident in the poem's distinctive imagery. For example, the 'variegated sores' of the black South African victims increase 'under the lashing rains of hate.'<sup>578</sup> I emphasise that the image of the 'lashing rains' reminds us of the image of a horseman lashing the horse with its reins to compel it to move forward. It is also the image of the masters (whites) lashing the slaves (blacks). I compare also the image of the night used in this poem with those used in the poem 'At a Funeral' to symbolise the hideousness of the apartheid system. This is because the night is described as 'an eyeless night' hidden from the view of others. On such a night, captives are killed and 'accidental dyings' are routine. I note here again Brutus coining of the word 'dyings' to reflect the use of language in his region.

The final stanza articulates some hope:

Yet when the roll of those who died  
To free our land is called, without surprise  
These nameless unarmed ones will stand beside  
The warriors who secured the final prize.<sup>579</sup>

From the tone of the poem, one can deduce that the poet is consoled by the idea that on what might be considered judgement day 'these nameless unarmed ones will stand beside

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

/ the warriors who secured the final prize.’<sup>580</sup> The alternating rhyme scheme *abab* indicates the regular pattern of the poem and fits its purpose of celebrating the heroic deeds of the dead Africans under the apartheid regime. In addition, I argue that the hailing of these fallen men serves as a source of hope for those still fighting. It is also a means of inflicting some psychological torture on the oppressors by reminding the perpetrators of their bestial acts.

Another means through which Brutus resists the apartheid government is by debasing a cultural celebration of victory in ‘Blood River Day.’ This poem is a critique of an annual event celebrating the victory of the brutal killings of black South Africans by white South Africans:

Every year on this day  
they drum the earth with their boot  
and growl incantations  
to evoke the smell of blood  
for which they hungrily sniff the air<sup>581</sup>

I argue that the image of ‘their boots’ to which Brutus returns to often, signifies the ongoing police brutality in South Africa. The drumming of the earth is proof of the disquiet that consequently fills the air as the black South Africans are killed. It is also a re-enactment of the act of colonial occupation, the repetition of the boot (a militaristic symbol) placing itself onto the ground over and over. Ngongkum discusses the view that ‘the poem suggests that apartheid is inhuman because it thrives on the destruction of lives.’<sup>582</sup> The ritual seems to suggest the hunger for more blood and evidently their actions, as ‘they hungrily sniff the air.’ This ritual can be described as animalistic,

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<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 77.

<sup>582</sup> Ngongkum, ‘The Concept of Place in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, n.p.

especially as they are said to ‘growl incantations / to evoke the smell of blood.’<sup>583</sup> These lines compare the oppressors to dogs and vampires. Indeed, the last line of the stanza confirms that their thirst for blood is the reason ‘for which they hungrily sniff the air.’<sup>584</sup>

In this chapter, I argue that Walcott and Brutus’ revision of home includes a desire by their speakers to rise above complexities such as migration, displacement, exile, and race that they explore. Through a poetic hybridised terza rima, quatrains, metaphors and imagery, Walcott and Brutus empower their poetic personae to subvert the dehumanising consequences of imperial domination and assert their humanity. To further enhance their poetics of home and relation, Walcott and Brutus represent in vivid terms their landscapes to show that relation does not end between fellow men, but also in a paradoxically beautiful and exploited environment which the next chapter will examine.

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<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### LANDSCAPE REPRESENTATION AND THE CLAIMING OF A WORLDLY IDENTITY IN WALCOTT'S *THE BOUNTY* AND BRUTUS' *A SIMPLE LUST*

'The breadfruit opens its palms in praise of the bounty,  
Bois-pain, tree of bread, slave food,'

Derek Walcott<sup>585</sup>

'How delicate the blossoms fall!  
Like gauze to clothe and swath my naked lands,'

Dennis Brutus<sup>586</sup>

This chapter addresses the question: how do Walcott and Brutus write their landscape and capture multicultural identities in poetry? Landscape representation in post-colonial literary writing is of crucial importance in identifying the poetic personae's sense of place and the self. In writing on place and displacement, Ashcroft and others assert that 'the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place'<sup>587</sup> underpins landscape aesthetics. Landscape representation is particularly important in appreciating the depth of the wound of history that forms the core of this thesis. As Ashcroft et al suggest, for the Caribbean writer 'a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, [and] the experience of enslavement.'<sup>588</sup> In contrast, for the colonised Africans, their decimated sense of place and self is the fault of 'cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial and cultural model.'<sup>589</sup> These two states of a destroyed or diminished sense of self can be seen

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<sup>585</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty* p. 3.

<sup>586</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 29.

<sup>587</sup> Bill Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practise in Post-Colonial Literatures*, p. 8.

<sup>588</sup> Bill Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, p. 9.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

in these literary case studies of the island of St Lucia and the region of South Africa respectively. Walcott and Brutus engage landscapes to evidence their socio-political woundedness, to celebrate the beauties of their physical, historical and cultural environments, and to abrogate colonial misrepresentation of their societies. Beyond these, the greater preoccupation of the texts are concerns that might be linked to identity, defined as one's sense of belonging in a place. Balaev argues that 'the role of place... functions to portray trauma's effects through metaphoric and material means.'<sup>590</sup> This implies that by situating the individual within the geographic space of the traumatic occurrence, the victim is enabled by the cultural context and social values to recollect the actual event and reconfigure self.<sup>591</sup> Also, I refer to Said's idea of the necessity to 'give emphasis and voice to what is silent and marginally present or ideologically represented.'<sup>592</sup> More importantly, post-colonial and postcolonial eco-critiques are of the view that landscape or the pastoral are underpinned with some ironic twist. (Re)presented landscape writing deploys European modes of the pastoral idyll only to deflate it to suit the context of the writing. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin put it,

Postcolonial pastoral will continue to mean very different things to different people... perhaps the only point of agreement might be the need to assert the political instrumentality of pastoral while retaining its capacity to ask fundamental questions about the nature of human rootedness, the possibility of reconciling place and placeness, and the need to find or at least imagine a dwelling-place in which human beings can both respond to and creatively refashion their relationship with the earth.<sup>593</sup>

This chapter focuses on three ways of reading the landscape: as psychological landscape, physical landscape and cultural/historical landscapes.

### **Psychological Landscape**

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<sup>590</sup> Michelle Balaev, 'Trends in Literary Trauma Theory', p. 149.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.78.

<sup>593</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animal, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2015), p.136.

Perspective on the psychological landscape affords the reader insight into how each poet paints haunting and gruesome images that cause psychological pain for their speakers. Be it through voluntary or forceful removal from a landscape, the result is an imbalanced individual. For example, in Walcott's poem entitled 'The Bounty', the speaker's grief alienates him from his landscape even while he celebrates the beauty of it. This poem is interpreted as Walcott's elegy for his mother, Alix Walcott, whom he mourns and praises through nature. From the beginning of the poem, Walcott alludes to Dante's 'The Hollow Men'<sup>594</sup> in Paradiso with the intention of explaining the bounty of nature. This bounteous aspect is also reflected in the terza rima structure of the poem, an allusion to Dante's style although many deviations from the strict form occur. Walcott's dead mother, metamorphoses into 'a rose from the sand', a metaphor that symbolises the beauty of his landscape. The rose also represents the power of his poetic art to force a rose out of a sandy landscape. Drawing from George Handley, 'Walcott's rose forced up from the sand is the poem itself, the words of commemoration and mourning that respond to his mother's death.'<sup>595</sup> Thus, these words or roses as Handley describes them, might be considered a poignant means by which the poet gives voice to his landscape.

In addition, the poet makes an allusion to Dante's 'thirty-third canto'<sup>596</sup> - that brings forth light 'with concentric radiance'<sup>597</sup> so much so that 'the breadfruit opens its palms in praise of the bounty.'<sup>598</sup> This classical allusion evidences a cultural landscape steeped in the tradition of western literatures and shows the diversified and complex nature of the speaker's island. Emma Trott advances that 'Walcott's self-conscious engagement with

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<sup>594</sup> Dante Alighieri & Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Divine Comedy*, (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1870), p. 156.

<sup>595</sup> George Handley, 'Derek Walcott's Poetics of the Environment in *The Bounty*', p. 211.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

other literary texts is an important part of his negotiation of personal and cultural history.<sup>599</sup> In this light, Walcott uses the image of the breadfruit to show his delight about a culture that becomes beautiful because of its relation and assimilation of other cultures. This image also serves as a reminder of the slave ship that anchored on the island. As Walcott puts it, ‘the breadfruit plants on the *Bounty* / will be heaved abroad, and the white God is Captain Bligh.’<sup>600</sup> These lines indicate that the *Bounty* is also the name of the ship transporting the slaves to the island under the command of Captain Bligh. Once docked on the island, the enslaved as well as the breadfruit are transplanted on the island. A. James Arnold et al. argue that this poem ‘sets up an important tension between the slave origins of St Lucian society and the hope for paradise the poet attributes to his mother.’<sup>601</sup> However, the introduction of the breadfruit<sup>602</sup> echoes the notion that:

The absolute prioritisation of one’s own species’ interest over those of the silenced majority is still regarded as being only natural. Ironically, it is precisely through such appeals to nature that other animals and the environment are often excluded from the privileged ranks of the human, rendering them available for exploitation.<sup>603</sup>

Hence, as a postcolonial poet, Walcott responds to the catastrophes of colonialism but also does not completely reject the romantic pastoral ideals. It is soon noticed that the seemingly torturous landscape is filled with images of radiant light and its bounteous nature. The poet evokes the sun’s light as his muse in giving voice to the landscape. This sensual image of light recalls the idea of creation and illumination of things anew on the island. Bruce King posits that ‘Light’ is an encompassing term for the light of the creation,

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<sup>599</sup> Emma Trott, ‘Creative Ecologies: Derek Walcott’s Postcolonial Eco-poetics’, *University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts*, 16 (2013), pp. 1-11(p. 2).

<sup>600</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 9.

<sup>601</sup> A. James Arnold, Hal Wiley, Alexander Coleman, Wendy B. Fans & Deborah Cohn, ‘Book Review’ *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, 32.58 (2012), pp. 78-85 (p. 78).

<sup>602</sup> Slave food, ‘which is what the English colonial apparatus was trying to bring to the planters when they transported the breadfruit from the Pacific to the Caribbean,’ Elaine Savory, ‘Towards a Caribbean Eco-poetics: Derek Walcott’s Language of Plants’ in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literature of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 86.

<sup>603</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, P. 5.

the light that illuminates the world, the light that illuminates art (especially painting) and the inner light of the divine in the artist and all humans.’<sup>604</sup> Elsewhere, the poet uses this light to describe his people as ‘The Light of the World.’<sup>605</sup> It is this light which shines forth from the island that enhances the poet’s ability to write his world into being. Walcott sometimes compares himself to God or the carpenter who, ‘with a panel of sunrise’<sup>606</sup> gives each stanza ‘their tilted shape.’<sup>607</sup> Similarly, in this poem, Walcott compares himself to the English peasant poet John Clare, who is driven mad by social injustice but is consoled by nature. Savory asserts that ‘Clare’s response to nature, although rooted in England, the imperial center, apprehends the connection between oppression of the poor by the wealthy and the eradication of the wild and self-reliant flora, something that is strongly relatable to Walcott’s employment of flora.’<sup>608</sup> Walcott alludes also to mad Tom, Edgar’s disguise in *King Lear*, who like Clare wanders the English countryside delighting in the praise of nature. I propose that the fate of these literary figures could reflect that of the speaker who is disturbed by his landscape when he exclaims: ‘I am moved like you, mad Tom, by a line of ants; / I behold their industry and they are giants.’<sup>609</sup> The ant metaphor serves a dual symbolic function – it evokes the disciplined labour of the St Lucians, and also the literal image of words strung out, antlike, on the page. Walcott arguably hints that he considers his poetic task laborious or intimidating through describing the ant as ‘giants’ in their duty. Christopher Benfey<sup>610</sup> notes that ‘this couplet sends us back to an already famous passage in *Omeros*, in which women loading coal are compared to a line of ants...’ I would posit that through foregrounding the islanders’

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<sup>604</sup> Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 604.

<sup>605</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 48.

<sup>606</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 9.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>608</sup> Elaine Savory, ‘Towards a Caribbean Eco-poetics: Derek Walcott’s Language of Plants’, p. 85.

<sup>609</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 4.

<sup>610</sup> Christopher Benfey, ‘Trouble in Paradise: Splendor and Sadness in Derek Walcott’s *The Bounty*’ [www.slate.com>arts>book>1997/07](http://www.slate.com>arts>book>1997/07) [last accessed 18 January 2018].

hardworking and enduring nature through the ant metaphor, Walcott reveals a determination to view everything on the island as a blessing rather than a burden.

In light of the above, the poet alludes to the biblical image of God as the provider of peace “‘In la sua volonta e nostra pace,’ / In his will is our peace. Peace in white harbours, / in marinas masts agree, in crescent melons / left in the fridge.’<sup>611</sup> In these areas, peace is identified and the idea of peace forms part of that bounty in the island. Moreover, although the speaker’s mother lies dead ‘near the white beach stones’ and John Clare lies ‘near the sea-almonds, / yet the bounty returns each daybreak, to my surprise, / to my surprise and betrayal, yes, both at once.’<sup>612</sup> These lines suggest that the poet finds it ironical that nature rejoices amid pain. Thus, there is beauty in ordinary things and even in death. Trott notes that such a tendency expresses the process of ‘nature’s recycling of material and rendering it anew.’<sup>613</sup> She also comments that the poet faces loss by his ‘engagement with poetic language and the natural world.’<sup>614</sup> Therefore, nature becomes a force that enables the persona to accept his loss. This comes out clearly in the poet’s use of alliteration in the following sibilant sounds: ‘the souls and sails of circling gulls rhyme’ and ‘stone shadow.’ The iambic rhythm beginning with ‘the’ gives the poem a soft and gentle mood, but it has a disturbing effect particularly as it suggests the idea of death in ‘souls’, ‘white wall’<sup>615</sup>, and the stony shadows of objects around. The effect is that the musicality of these phrases reinforces the idea of peace and harmony, which is enhanced by the lateral sound /l/ throughout although this mood is interrupted by the death of the speaker’s mother.

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<sup>611</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 4.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

<sup>613</sup> Emma Trott, p. 7.

<sup>614</sup> Trott, p. 8.

<sup>615</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 3.

The poet piles image upon image to reflect his state of mind and his concerns globally. In 'I cannot remember the name of that seacoast city', the speaker reflects on his own death, the 'so many deaths' and his own death landscape. The poem could be described as an elegiac poem, particularly because it includes the poet's 'own epitaph' at the close: 'So, for my *Hic Jacet*, my own epitaph, "Here / lies D.W. This place is good to die in." It really was.'<sup>616</sup> This epitaph clearly signals the poet's preparation for an impending death, given that his initials featured so unapologetically. In addition, the poem is written in 21 lines and only slightly reflects the fusion sonnet in terms of the optimistic and negative tone of the speaker. The greater part of the structure does not follow the pattern of a 21-line fusion sonnet. The negative tone of the poem provides evidence of a man tormented by the effects of time on nature. Nature seems to be fading away but for a watercolour that is on the wall:

...though it was dated,  
time races across its surface but nothing changes  
its motion, the tidal flats not clouded, the tiny  
figures in the distance, the man walking his dog...  
Now so many deaths, nothing short of a massacre  
from wild scythe blindly flailing friends, flowers, and grass,  
as the seaside city of graves expands its acre.'<sup>617</sup>

The 'wild scythe' image is a potent metaphor for death. The poet makes effective use of alliteration in 'flailing friends, flower, and grass' and the effect of this fluid rhythm is to emphasise swiftness of time passing. The fleeting time nature has a negative impact on the speaker as demonstrated in his inability to remember the name of the city. It also suggests the speaker's urgency to record the things endangered by time's transient nature before they permanently elude him. Breslin asserts that 'the need to remember, preserve, and cherish must contend with an awareness that much has been forgotten or simply

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<sup>616</sup> Walcott, p. 19.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

wiped away.’<sup>618</sup> In this case, all deaths, including that of the poet’s own mother have been wiped away, a fact he must accept.

The poet brings to light the physical and psychological landscape in this poem. Firstly, the speaker remembers a place he had visited during his travels in Europe and this place is ‘very French, determinedly witty, / it is near Dinard.’<sup>619</sup> He manages to preserve this memory through ‘a good watercolour’<sup>620</sup> that now ‘stands here on the wall.’<sup>621</sup> Inspired by the French impressionist painter Claude Monet, whose painting expresses one’s perception about nature, the speaker creates a painting. In this painting, he brings out the landscape and seascape. He expresses that ‘the tide went far out and the barred / sand was immense,’ and ‘the tidal flats not clouded.’<sup>622</sup> Walcott’s reference to the image of the sea, ‘the tide,’ suggests that ‘since it is the nature, so to speak, of colonial powers to suppress the history of their violence, the land and even the ocean become all the more crucial as recuperative sites of postcolonial historiography.’<sup>623</sup> This historiography is reflected in the poet’s allusion to France whose relationship to the island contributes to its culture. Proud of being part of this culture the speaker confesses: ‘I believe in Normandy or Brittany.’<sup>624</sup> In expressing the reason for incorporating cultures of the West in his writings, Walcott asserts that ‘the first thing about the Caribbean is that it doesn’t have just one essence or nature...it has different cultures simultaneously’<sup>625</sup> that beautifully make up the rich historical and cultural heritage of the island.

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<sup>618</sup> Paul Breslin, Derek Walcott’s ‘Reversible World: Centers, Peripheries, and the Scale of Nature’, *Callaloo* 28.1 (2005), pp. 8-24 (p. 17).

<sup>619</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p.19.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid.

<sup>623</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 8.

<sup>624</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p.19.

<sup>625</sup> Enriqueta Cabrera, ‘Derek Walcott: The voice of the Caribbean’, *Americas: Art Premium Collection*, 59.3 (2007, p), pp. 38-45 (p.43).

In addition, the image of the sea comes out again forcefully when the speaker mentions the ‘seacoast city’, recalling ‘the seaside city of graves’ that expands its acre’ as the ‘wild scythe’ flails friends, flowers and nature. The graveyard represents where the poet’s mother and friends are buried. The temporal adverb ‘Still’ which is capitalised emphasises the stillness of time. Emily Greenwood states that this temporal adverb ‘work in concert to create what I have called depth of field, and to add contours to the seemingly tenseless landscape of Walcott’s poetry.’<sup>626</sup> I argue that it also blurs the distance between the past and the present. By juxtaposing Europe’s (France) landscape with that of St Lucia, the poet shows his reader how the ordinary nature of St Lucia’s landscape reflects the old cultures of the West, especially France.

In her review of *The Bounty*, Noel Kopriva asserts that ‘Walcott’s goal seems to be one of reconciliation: to find consolation for death in art; to find, in tracing the differences between the Old and the New World, a love for both.’<sup>627</sup> Kopriva’s assertion is confirmed by the speaker’s statement that ‘the only art left is the preparation of grace’<sup>628</sup> and proposes his epitaph: “‘here lies / D.W. This place is good to die in.’” It really was.<sup>629</sup> Although Breslin believes that Walcott is implying that ‘even painting and poetry are losing their power to console,’<sup>630</sup> I suggest that the speaker’s assertion ‘I was inhabiting a postcard’ gives a contrary view. It suggest an inauthenticity about the image of the place. Thus, he resolves that there is every reason to accept the realities of the island and make it a place to retire.

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<sup>626</sup> Emily Greenwood, ‘Still going on: Temporal adverbs and the view of the past in Walcott’s poetry’, p. 141.

<sup>627</sup> Noel Kopriva, ‘The Bounty’, *The Missouri Review: University of Missouri*, 20.3 (1997), p. 218.

<sup>628</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 19.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

The desire to lay claim to a place expresses the speaker's desire not to forget memories of such a place as in 'Remember childhood? Remember a faraway rain? / Yesterday I wrote a letter and tore it up. Clouds carried bits under the hills / like gulls through the steam of the valley of Port of Spain.'<sup>631</sup> The poem begins with a rhetorical question and ends with a rhetorical question suggesting that the speaker's yearnings are not met. From the preceding lines, Walcott uses the simile 'like' to compare how the speaker's memory travels through different 'clouds' like the 'gulls' whose travels are empowered by the 'steam.' This evidences the speaker's ability to journey through memory to reconnect with the past. Breslin comments that 'retracing opens a new communication between present and past on terms other than either a nostalgic pretence of fully recovered origin or a fatalistic acceptance of narrative of dispersal and loss.'<sup>632</sup> Although the desire to remember comes with remorse as 'my eyes began to brim from all the old ills,'<sup>633</sup> the speaker is willing to reclaim his place by 'muffling the thunder / of a clouded heart while the hills dissolved in ruins.' This takes us back to the poet's statement in the first section of 'The Bounty' poems, where he acknowledges that in his island 'there is grief, there will always be, but it must not madden.'<sup>634</sup> This idea of muffling his clouded heart portrays the persona's determination to consider the ruins of his landscape as a starting point for a new beginning.

The image of the rain becomes a fitting representation of a new beginning. Thus, the rain, the sun, the river and the grass symbolise a rejuvenating landscape as these lines indicate:

This is how the rain descends into Santa Cruz,  
with wet cheeks, with the hills holding on to snatches of sunlight

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<sup>631</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 28.

<sup>632</sup> Breslin, 'Reversible World: Centers, Peripheries, and the Scale of Nature' p. 19.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

<sup>634</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 5.

until they fade, then the far sound of a river, and surging grass,  
the mountains loaded as the clouds that have one bright  
fissure that closes into smoke, and things returning to fable  
and rumour and the way it was once, it was like this once...<sup>635</sup>

The extract provides evidence of how the poet uses images to describe the cyclical nature of the island. The rhythmic repetition in: ‘the way it was once, it was like this once’ adds to the musicality of the poem and emphasises an identical landscape which is paradoxically blessed in terms of its beauty but ruined also by the destructive force of nature. The image of the rain is thus a metaphor that is destructive and could as well represent the old ills of colonialism that resulted in ‘the wet cheeks’ of the people and the island. As a result, the ‘hills’ which also represent the islanders, could only hold on to ‘snatches of sunlight’. These alliterations emphasise the idea that one must be content and hold on to what is left on the island.

The musicality of this poem is further enhanced by auditory images of sounds in the ‘far sound of a river’ and the ‘surging grass’ which express the profusion in nature and its power to soothe ‘all the old ills.’ Also, worthy to note is the poet’s use of full rhymes at the end of lines. Walcott employs clusters of similar sounds to great effect. For example, ‘rain/ Spain’ ‘under / thunder’, ‘hills / ills’, ‘sunlight / bright’, ‘smell / bell’ foster the rhythm of the poem. Of significance too is the use of ellipsis in ‘it was like this once...’ to inspire feelings of melancholy and longing and a reconstruction of a past full of ‘incredible errors’<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 28.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

Aside from the memories of Santa Cruz, the poet takes us to his birthplace in St Lucia where we hear ‘the sound of la Rivière Dorée, through the trees of Choiseul.’<sup>637</sup> Aparna Prem suggests that ‘while claiming the rains of Santa Cruz, the memory flows “through trees [of] Choiseul, St Lucia...’<sup>638</sup> Situating the reader in this location, he urges us to ‘remember the small red berries shaped like a bell.’<sup>639</sup> In this appeal to tactile images of taste and his use of simile, I argue that Walcott celebrates the fruitfulness of his landscape. In addition, these tactile images of smell are suggestive of his personal love for the natural elements. He expresses nostalgia for ‘the scent of hog plums that I have never smelled since’ and ‘a singed smell of / rose.’<sup>640</sup> These images of taste and smell highlight the speaker’s desire to claim and reclaim his landscape. Meanwhile, Prem explains that the image used in this poem such as ‘the symbols of the rain, trees and sea gulls reflect movement, travelling and interconnectivity that becomes the identity of the Caribbean replacing the historylessness.’<sup>641</sup> I link Aparna Prem’s notion of ‘interconnectivity’ with my idea of a relational belonging between people and landscape. Thus, the movement of the different races into St Lucia, creates for itself a divergent landscape where there is interconnectivity with not only the people but also with the different elements of nature. In this vein, the poet addresses the complexities of cultures on the island of St Lucia.

Prem’s notion of interconnectivity<sup>642</sup> as a relation between man and nature in an environment seem to me an appropriate description of Brutus’ desire for a relation between races in South Africa. The landscape can be understood as a mass of

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<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

<sup>638</sup> Aparna Prem, ‘Can you Genuinely Claim these?: Questioning Memory and Identity in Derek Walcott’s *The Bounty*’, *Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations*, 2.3(2014), 638-643 (p. 639).

<sup>639</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 28.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid.

<sup>641</sup> Aparna Prem, p. 639.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid.

interconnected societal tissues through which the cuts of racial divide have embedded centuries' worth of trauma in the psyche of its black population. In Brutus' poetry, the speaker is described as one in a state of mental agony. This agony is partly about the racially divided landscape of his region representing a present historical moment. The violent socio-political events in his region affect him not only physically but psychologically as well. In 'It is the Constant Image of your Face', the speaker expresses conflicting voices that evoke his love for his landscape as well as his love for another woman. The poem is written in a Spenserian form given the nine lines in each of its two stanzas – something which is in keeping with a learned colonial tradition. However, as a post-colonial poet, he diverts from this pattern, and does not follow the eight-line pentameter that precedes a single Alexandrine line in iambic hexameter. This is considered as a clear assertion of his maturity and independence as a poet.

In the first stanza, the speaker makes known the psychological torture he experiences. He reflects on the image of his lover accusing him of heart's treachery:

It is the constant image of your face  
Framed in my hand as you knelt before my chair  
the grave attention of your eyes  
surveying me amid my world of knives  
that stays with me, perennially accuses  
and convicts me of heart's-treachery;  
and neither you nor I can claim no loyalty –  
my land takes precedence of all my loves.<sup>643</sup>

Brutus' assertion, 'the grave attention of your eyes' expresses the seriousness of the act of treachery and the effects it has on his lover. Her eyes become a haunting force that stays with the persona and constantly surveys him in his 'world of knives.' The speaker's world of knives is a metaphor that alludes to the wounds sustained from the brutal nature of the apartheid system. Significantly, the poet-speaker does not only suffer physical

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<sup>643</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 24.

attack from the apartheid police, but psychological damage, as is evoked with the constant revisiting of this with his lover. Although the speaker recognises his romantic betrayal, he makes it clear that he perceives it as something inevitable. Thus, neither of them can plead excuses nor claim any loyalty in this affair since the cause of the struggle is worth more than anything. This emphasis is vividly brought out through the poet's repetition of the conjunction 'and' in both stanzas. Worth noting is the speaker's assertion: 'my land takes precedence of all my love,' which confirms his act of patriotism towards his country and land. In an interview, Brutus explains this duality of message and meaning. He asserts that:

what I'm doing is, first of all, the simultaneous statement to a person and about the country, but then, perhaps more interestingly, in talking about the country what I use is female imagery, the landscape is female and the relationship with it is almost sexual, that kind of intimacy.<sup>644</sup>

In the second stanza, however, the speaker pleads guilty and begs for a peaceful resolution:

Yet I beg mitigation, pleading guilty  
for you, my dear, accomplice of my heart  
made, without words, such blackmail with your  
    beauty  
and proffered me such dear protectiveness  
that I confess without remorse or shame  
my still fresh treason to my country  
and hope that she, my other, dearest love  
will pardon freely, not attaching blame  
being your mistress (or your match) in tenderness.<sup>645</sup>

The speaker addresses his lover and refers to her as the 'accomplice of his heart.' I propose that here, the speaker asserts that both he and his lover are complicit in the betrayal of his land. The reason he offers for this is the blackmail of his lover's beauty and the protection she offers him. In this instant, Brutus blurs his use of the persona in

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<sup>644</sup> Kevin Goddard, 'Dennis Brutus', in *Out of Exile: Interviews with Albie Sachs, Lewis Kosi, Mbulelo Mzamane, Breyten Breytenbach, Dennis Brutus, Keorapetse Kgotsitsile*, ed. by Kevin Goddard and Charles Wessels, (Grahamstown: The National English Literary Museum, 1992), pp. 67-77 (p. 72).

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

the sense that it may not be wrong to assume that the lover who provides him protection is his country / land. However, he makes it clear when he confesses his fresh treason to his land and hopes his other lover will forgive him in this act of competition for ‘being your mistress (or your match) in tenderness.’

Similarly, in ‘I am out of love with you for now,’ another love lyric, the poet-speaker suffers from unrequited love from his mistress (land). He expresses his disappointment and pain in having to dedicate his time and energy towards his love but is left in misery:

I am out of love with you for now;  
cold-sodden in my misery  
your contours and allurements  
cannot move me:

I murmur old endearments to revive  
our old familiar glow again  
—like sapless autumn leaves  
they rasp in vain.

You have asked too much of me:  
fond-fool, bereft I cling  
unloving, to remembered love  
and the spring.<sup>646</sup>

From the poem, the last words of each second and fourth quatrain has a regular pattern: misery /me, again / vain and cling /spring. This rhyme pattern abcb does not create any satisfaction but rather evident displeasure. The poet’s meter varies from stanza to stanza. From the first stanza, the stress of the I creates a slight pause of emphasis before the iambic rhythm comes in: I am OUT of LOVE with YOU for Now. In the second stanza, the first line is in iambic pentameter, the second line is in iambic tetrameter, the third line is in iambic trimeter and the last lines shrinks completely away with just two iambs: they

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<sup>646</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 41.

RASP in VAIN. In the third stanza, the iambic has been dropped for the first three words 'you have asked.' The line feels blunter and more direct. The speaker is 'getting real' now. I suggest that in this last stanza, Brutus uses iambic overall but the beginning 'You' occupies two beats, and so takes extra stress for emphasis before the three iambs of 'have asked too much of me.' Most significantly evident is the use of spondee in these phrases: 'cold-sodden' and 'fond-fool' - which creates a staccato effect in heightening the speaker's misery and chastisement for being affectionately foolish. The tactile image of wetness in 'cold-sodden' expresses a sense of uncomfortable emotional pain which causes the speaker to resist the seduction of the 'contours and allurements' of his lover. I argue that the speaker's body is no longer attuned to his lover (land) and the only way to bring back those feelings is to '... murmur old endearments to revive / our old familiar glow again.' This attempt however falters because of the endearments he employs '-like sapless autumn leaves / they rasp in vain.' Here the poet uses simile and auditory images of sound to compare the dead autumn leaves to the dead endearments of his landscape. The pain caused by unrequited love has led to the deadening feelings and passions that he previously had for his lover (land). Going from the trimeter in 'fond-fool, bereft I cling' to an iambic tetrameter in 'unloving, to remember love', gives the stanza a feeling of the ballad line. The last line feels like it is falling short because we were expecting another trimeter, but instead the line falls short. Brutus is being nifty here: he sets up musical expectations, but in each stanza, the poem shrinks down to the shorter lines. The effect is that each stanza dwindles, creates a musical sense of hopelessness.

Worthy of mention is the use of colons after the word 'me' in the first and last stanzas to show a list of his struggles and disappointments. Other than the colon, the different use of caesura in the middle and towards the end of the lines emphasises the formality of the poetic construction of the poem and creates variation in the rhythm of the poem. The use

of a dash in front of the comparative word 'like', gives us the opportunity to insert a word which could probably in this case, be a 'but'. This conjunction provides a possibility for the reader to understand that contrary to the 'old familial glow,' and sensation, the speaker now gets an irritating sound as 'they rasp in vain.' Barine Ngaage avers that these 'demonstrate the frustration of the poet and his momentary disassociation with his loved one, for he is only out of love for now'<sup>647</sup> as the struggle still continues.

Aside from the emotional and psychological torture, evoked in their poetry. Brutus and Walcott construct their personae in a nostalgic mode. Walcott urges his reader to 'Remember childhood' while Brutus writes:

I must conjure from my past  
the dim and unavowed spectre of a slave,  
of a bound woman, whose bound figure pleads  
silently,  
and whose blood I must acknowledge in my own:

fanciful wraith? Imagining?  
Yet how can I reconcile  
my rebel blood and protest  
but by acknowledgement  
of that spectre's mute rebellious blood in me?<sup>648</sup>

Through the psyche of the speaker, images and objects of the past are brought to the fore. The first line which reads 'I must conjure from my past' suggests the idea of invoking images from a tormented past. Given that this poem falls under the section *After Exile*, it is only fitting that the poet conjures the ghost of his past to continue the struggle through writing. The speaker deems it necessary to bring the past into the present because this 'spectre' is 'unavowed:' a word the poet uses to explain his idea of a haunting past, a ghost that preferably should be left buried. This ghost of his past represents a metaphor: 'a slave, / a bound woman, whose bound figure pleads silently.' Like the previous poem,

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<sup>647</sup> Barine Saana Ngaage, 'Style and communication in Dennis Brutus' *A Simple Lust*, *Journal of Linguistic Association of Nigeria*, 13.1 (2010), 177-183 (p. 180).

<sup>648</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 107.

the poet employs the spondee in the phrase: 'bound woman.' This produces a staccato effect that stresses the pain and weight of exile. Despite this pain, the speaker's memory provides a panacea which he can use to liberate this woman whose bound figure pleads in silence. Significantly, the image of the woman represents the speaker's physical and psychological landscape. This is justified by the idea that both are related in blood given that her 'blood I must acknowledge in my own.' The words 'silently' and 'mute' add bitter accents to a tortured psychological landscape. In noting the significance of silence in most of Brutus's poems, Kontein Trinya comments that:

the wordlessness... might seem to suggest, on the one hand, that the horror the poem reports is beyond words... on the other hand, the wordlessness... might also suggest the wordlessness or speechless astonishment not only of the victims being reported of but of the reporting poet himself.<sup>649</sup>

I concur with Trinya that the poet's speechlessness exposes not only the speaker's tortured landscape but also that of his entire community. The poem ends with the speaker seeking to reconcile the mute ghost of his past with the present when he questions: 'how else can I reconcile / my rebel blood and protest / but by acknowledgment / of that spectre's mute rebellious blood in me?' I link Brutus' desire to reconcile past and present experiences with Walcott's long goal of reconciling his ancestral life of slavery, and dispossession in forging a new present. Thus, Walcott calls on West Indians 'to take the fact of slavery, if you're capable of it, without bitterness, because bitterness is going to lead to the fatality of thinking in terms of revenge.'<sup>650</sup> Thus, in accepting the fact of slavery and brutality, Walcott and Brutus suggest a psychic healing in landscape.

Another instance of Brutus' projection of a psychological tortured landscape is:

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<sup>649</sup> Kontein Trinya, 'Musical Paradigms of Social Horror in the Apartheid Poetry of Dennis Brutus', *The Dawn Journal* 1.2 (2012), pp. 115-120 (p. 122).

<sup>650</sup> William Baer, *Conversations with Walcott* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), p. 114.

In the night, my mind  
memories lurk, and words;  
images so sharp, they slash the eyeball,  
clawed, or like tines;  
and words, jagged as cut cans  
lacerating my hands, and the corners of my mouth;  
so I hold off from them in the dark  
–recoil from their tearing and their balm  
–as one senses – half sees – pink nipples  
strain through some diaphanous allure.<sup>651</sup>

The poem might be described as a concretisation of the speaker's inner world of torture. He lays bare his psychological landscape of torture using images drawn from his physical landscape. The poem is set at night, a time suitable for recollection and the exposure of inner fears. It is during this time that 'memories lurk' in anticipation of being detected, recollected or brought to the speaker's mind. The memory brings forth 'words; and images so sharp, they slash the eyeballs, / clawed, or like tines.' These images express the idea that the words recollected by the mind are so sharp that they have the effect of inflicting pain on the psyche of the persona. Gessler Moses Nkondo writes that:

Brutus follows the mind back to where memory, no longer a solid context, splits into disconnected fragments and images, to a point where the language of thought and feeling falls away into words which are no longer supported by rational syntax. This is the child's universe distorted by violence and terror, existing wholly in its parts, in terrifying bits and pieces, the inner world of panic.<sup>652</sup>

Following Nkondo's assertion, it is plain to see how these distorted words become a sharp object in themselves, behaving in their function like the pointed end of a fork, 'tines' that scratches like an animal as they 'clawed' and attack or 'slash' his eyeballs. These words are also said to be 'jagged as cut cans' that are responsible for 'lacerating' or tearing 'my hands.' The alliteration 'cut cans' expresses the rapidity of the words that wounds the

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<sup>651</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 133.

<sup>652</sup> Gessler Moses Nkondo, 'Dennis Brutus: The Domestication of a Tradition', *World Literature Today* 55.1 (1981), pp. 32-40, (p. 39).

speaker's mind. Thus, these images represent the state of mind of the exiled South African blacks due to the cruelty of the apartheid government. Eri Morgan writes that the poet '...could not escape the terrors of his former life, and to Brutus, exile was often a mirror of his experiences in South Africa, as his poetry illustrated.'<sup>653</sup> Significantly, this exile condition is portrayed as tedium as attained through the use of end-stopped lines. The effect of this is to produce a monotonous rhythm that forces the reader to pay attention to the phrases that precede the pause.

Finally, worth mentioning is the idea that although the speaker is haunted by these images, he is determined to let them go by holding 'off from them in the dark' and recoiling 'from their tearing and their balm.' The incongruous juxtaposition of tearing and balm in these lines exposes Brutus' attachment to his land but also his frustration with it. He is bound to the memories and words that wound his psyche, but this also enables him to access a kind of freedom. The land, which stands for both his lover and the South African soil, is thus wholly responsible for the persona's pain, while simultaneously serving as a soothing balm for his wounds. Once in exile, however, the speaker recoils from this panacea. The question prompted by this behaviour is as follows: under this estrangement, how long can the speaker resist these allurements of his landscape? But as Morgan puts it,

the condition of exile has always been a difficult one. Yet while exile is among the saddest of fates, it has the potential to be liberating. The exile is at once nostalgic, homesick, and uncertain of his or her future while also free from whatever oppression drove them from home.<sup>654</sup>

Aside from the interior pain, of oppression and mourning expressed by both Walcott and Brutus' speakers, the poems are littered with evidence to show that their inward

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<sup>653</sup> Eric J. Morgan, 'His Voice must be Heard: Dennis Brutus, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and the Struggle for political Asylum in the United State', *Peace and Change* 40.3 (2015), pp. 368-394, (p. 373).

<sup>654</sup> Eric J. Morgan, p. 375.

expressions reflect outward nature and vice versa. In their respective works, I conclude that both poets seem to be making a further statement: Despite their painful and torturous landscapes, there is an inherent natural beauty that serves as a source of inspiration and rejuvenation for their people's daily survival.

### **Physical Landscape**

Walcott and Brutus' landscape poetics find avenues for dialogue between the self and one's place within an environment. Huggan and Tiffin describe it as 'a new pastoral ... that re-imagines identity as conditioned by a dynamic interaction between place and displacement.'<sup>655</sup> In this light, there is the depiction of a despoiled landscape that provides a record of centuries of a violent colonial history. Also, Jeremy Foster enunciates that landscaping is 'an ever-present topic in art and literature, and a recurring anchor of identity both in the minds of those who controlled the land and those dispossessed.'<sup>656</sup> In line with Foster's assertion, I argue that each poet interrogates whether landscape description could help mediate the construction of cultural identities. Although both poets romanticise their landscape, they do not eschew the historical and racial violence of its past. As Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey and others write: 'addressing the historical and racial violence of a region is integral to understanding literary representations of its geography.'<sup>657</sup> Thus, poetry for these poets represents the power of art to arouse a people's aesthetic sensibilities and responsibility in constructing spatial relations with others. For example, in Walcott's titled section *Parang*, the speaker in 'Christmas Eve' questions his sense of place within his landscape:

Can you genuinely claim these, and do they reclaim you  
from your possible margin of disdain, of occasional escape:  
the dusk in the orange yards of the shacks, the waxen blue-

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<sup>655</sup> Huggan and Tiffin, p.127.

<sup>656</sup> Jeremy A. Foster, *Washed with the Sun: Landscape and the Making of White South Africa* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>657</sup> Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renee K. Grosson, and George B. Handley, *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005), p. 2.

green of the breadfruit leaves, the first bulb in the kitchens—shape  
and shadow so familiar, so worn, like the handles of brooms  
in old women's hands? The small river, the crammed shop  
and men outside it, and the stars that nail down their day.  
in short, this affection for what is simple and known,  
the direct faces, the deprived but resigned ones  
whom you have exalted: are they utterly your own  
as surely as your shadow is a thing of the sun's?  
The sound rushing past the car windows, not the sea but cane,  
the night wind in your eyes like a woman's hair, the fresh  
fragrances, then the lights on the hills over Port of Spain,  
the nocturnal intimacies that stroke the flesh.  
Again, the night grows its velvet, the frogs croak  
behind fences, the dogs bark at ghosts, and certainties  
settle in the sky, the stars that are no longer questions.  
Yes, they reclaim you in a way you need not understand:  
candles that never gutter and go out in the breeze,  
or tears that glint on night's face for every island.<sup>658</sup>

The rhetorical questioning of one's sense of belonging in a place is aptly brought out from the outset of the poem. This questioning takes the reader on a journey in search of a home, prompting through arguments and a litany of images to attest whether the speaker truly lay claims to the place. It is an argument between the speaker and the self where he questions: 'Can you genuinely claim these, and do they reclaim you / from your possible margin of disdain, of occasional escape.' I argue that these lines expose an inner conflict within the speaker which could be described as a desire to possess a place although paradoxically escaping from it at the same time. In conversation with Ishion Hutchinson, Walcott asserts that 'I don't think we ever have complete homecoming. There is always a little extra left that we need to occupy, or something to contradict the elation of being home.'<sup>659</sup> Implied is the desire to attain a complete homecoming that the speaker seeks here. The setting in time is at 'dusk' suggesting the twilight nature of things slipping through the speaker's fingers. It also provides an appropriate background for the speaker

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<sup>658</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 26.

<sup>659</sup> Ishion Hutchinson, 'A voice at the Edge of the Sea: An Interview with Derek Walcott', *Virginia Quarterly Review* (2015), pp. 172-175 (p. 173).

to harness in exposing his landscape. For instance, the islanders live in 'shacks', although the breadfruit leaves are 'waxen-blue-green' suggesting the bounty of nature on the island. The persona notices that the 'shape and shadow' are 'so familiar', yet 'so worn, like the handles of brooms in old women's hands.' The image of a shadow portrays the transient nature of things and the simile is significant in indicating not only the depreciating state of things on the island, but also a neglect of the island by the powers that be.

Most of the spaces are very narrow albeit one could assume that relative to a small island, they should be contented with 'the small river' and 'crammed shop.' However, I argue that the speaker highlights these aspects to not only show his disappointment in the face of a dwindling economy, but also to establish a sense of place through naming. The synecdoche description of the people in phrases such as: 'direct faces', 'the deprived and resigned ones' are evidence of deprivation. Thus, they become the poet's source of inspiration not only for his writings but also for his desire to exalt them by giving them a voice.

Furthermore, the image of the night also suggests a time when 'the nocturnal intimacies ... stroke the flesh' and heighten the poet's longing for his island and his people. The night produces a very luxurious and desirable situation as it 'grows its velvet.' This intimacy is further underscored by auditory images of 'the sound rushing past the car windows, the frogs croak', to 'the dogs bark.' Feeling enthusiastic, the poet appeals to visual images of light by comparing the islanders to candles that never 'gutter even in breeze' and 'tears that glint on night's face.' The result is that they shine continuously amidst all the pain and difficulties. The speaker then identifies himself with the people

and provides a strong affirmation of his acceptance: ‘Yes, they reclaim you in a way you need not understand.’ Prem asserts that ‘rather than constructing the process of naming and claiming as a unidirectional practice, Walcott realizes the evident reclaiming that multicultural amnesiac roots do to the community.’<sup>660</sup> Prem’s idea suggests the possibilities of having a cosmopolitan identity if one embraces and accepts other roots. The poet’s acceptance is shown in nature’s harmony especially as ‘certainties settle in the sky.’ Another element of harmony is deduced from the alliteration ‘Fresh Fragrance’, which describes the odour of the night, and ‘the stars that are no longer questions’ to the speaker. These highlight the speaker’s journey from uncertainty to certainty about his sense of place.

Similarly, in ‘The blades of the oleander were rattling like green knives,’ the speaker continues to expose his inner conflict in his search for home:

The blades of the oleander were rattling like green knives,  
 The palms of the breadfruit shrugged, and a hissing ghost  
 Recoiled in the casuarinas—they are as alien as olives  
 The bougainvillea’s lips divided, its mouth aghast;  
 it was on an ochre road I caught the noise of their lives,  
 how their rage was rooted, shaking with every gust:  
 their fitful disenchantment with all my turned leaves,  
 for all of the years while theirs turned to mulch, then dust.  
 "We offered you language early, an absolute choice;  
 you preferred the gutturals of low tide sucked by the shoal  
 on the grey strand of cities, the way Ireland offered Joyce  
 his own unwritten dirt road outside Choiseul."  
 "I have tried to serve both," I said, provoking a roar  
 from the leaves, shaking their heads, defying translation.  
 "And there's your betrayal," they said. I said I was sure  
 that all the trees of the world shared a common elation  
 of tongues, gommier with linden, bois-campeche with the elm.  
 "You lie, your right hand forgot its origin, O Jerusalem,  
 but kept its profitable cunning. We remain unuttered, undefined,"  
 and since road and sun were English words, both of them  
 endowed in their silence the dividing wind.<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> Aparna Prem “‘Can you genuinely claim these?’: Questioning Memory and Identity in Derek Walcott’s *The Bounty*”, p. 638.

<sup>661</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 32.

The poem presents a dialogue where we find the accuser and the accused as if in a court of law. It depicts metaphors describing the displacement of the speaker vis a vis the displeasure of the vegetation (inhabitants). Through auditory images of sound, the poet exposes their fury: 'the blades of the oleander ... rattling like green knives / the palms of the breadfruit shrugged, / ... a hissing ghost recoiled in the casuarinas'<sup>662</sup> and on the lips of the bougainvillea 'gust'<sup>663</sup> of fear and horror could be deciphered. From line 1 to line 8, the poet presents a choir of foliage with a rhyme pattern ababcbcdc reminiscent of Dante's terza rima pattern, although the proceeding lines of the poem end with a very irregular pattern. Such a variation in style reflects the postcolonial nature of the work under study, best described as hybrid.

It is important to highlight the poet's use of spondee after successive unstressed syllables at the terminal position of lines one and two in these phrases: 'green knives' and 'turned leaves.' This spondaic pattern has the effect of reinforcing the suddenness and force and of the vigorous action of the vegetation's accusations. Aside from that, the personified images express the deep discontent and betrayal of the persona's 'turned leaves'<sup>664</sup> or a less concern towards the people with the result that their leaves 'turned to mulch, then dust.' Grey advances that 'the chief accusation of these rooted beings is not that the poet has absconded but that he has failed to represent them to the world, to turn them into text.'<sup>665</sup> From Grey's assertion, this explains why 'we remain unuttered, undefined,' as nature retorts the speaker.

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<sup>662</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 32.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid.

<sup>665</sup> Jeffrey Gray, 'Walcott's Traveller and the Problem of Witness', *Callaloo* 28.1 (2005), pp. 117-128 (p. 120).

The dialogue further exposes how both parties struggle to accommodate one another. According to the accusers (nature), the poet's persona should have accepted the language given to him when 'we offered you language early, an absolute choice,' you '... preferred the gutturals of low tide sucked by the shoal / on the grey strand of cities ...'<sup>666</sup> I argue that nature's accusation is based on the notion that the speaker's preference was rather for a language (Standard English), produced at the 'guttural' at the expense of the Creole language of the island. To defend himself, the speaker argues that: 'I have tried to serve both.'<sup>667</sup> But this explanation seems unsatisfactory and rather provokes 'a roar' from the accusers: 'And there is your betrayal.' Consequently, the leaves refuse any attempts at being painted in the shadow of another culture by 'shaking their heads, defying translation.'<sup>668</sup> Emily Greenwood asserts that 'Walcott's poetry has always dealt with the metaphor of the colony as a translation, a copy of an original located elsewhere on the map.'<sup>669</sup> Drawing from Greenwood's idea of translation, I suggest that the trees, which represent the St Lucian community, refuse to be voiced in a language bearing the seeds of an imperial culture. However, as Greenwood suggests, Walcott tackles this problem by 'embracing and acknowledging the role of imitation in his apprenticeship as an artist, but also stressing the newness of his poetry in relation to these same works of literature.'<sup>670</sup> Such a relation underlines a crucial aspect of this thesis, which underscores the need for a poetic dialogue among cultures as an enabling tool for a diversified landscape.

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<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> Emily Greenwood, 'Shades of Rome in the Poetry of Derek Walcott', p. 266.

<sup>670</sup> Greenwood, p. 266.

Furthermore, the idea of multilingualism is forcefully evident when nature rejects the speaker's idea that 'all the trees of the world share a common elation / of tongues.' In doing so, the idea of universalism is refuted in favour of multiculturalism in language. However, I assert that, this event presents one of the difficulties an exiled poet could face in representing the realities of home. S/He is caught between two traditions and the middle ground could be obtained by mediating between these cultures. In resisting the offer of a single Creole language, Walcott is refuting what Greenwood calls 'artificial monolingualism.'<sup>671</sup> Contrary to this stand, the St Lucian's nature considers the poet as being ungrateful, 'a dividing wind' whose 'right hand forgot its origin' and as a result 'we remain unuttered. Undefined.' The demand to be represented, to be given a voice, propels the poet to carry out this task of writing. Thus, for his 'right hand' to remember his origin, he must give back to the island its due by using not only the language given him, but also by performing that textual activity of representing them.

The poet celebrates the use of language and folk culture in 'Homecoming'. In this poem, the speaker's longing for reintegration in a place is expressed through nostalgia and allusion to a popular singer and cultural icon in Saint Lucia:

My country heart, I am not home till Sesenne sings,  
a voice with woodsmoke and ground-doves in it, that cracks  
like clay on a road whose tints are the dry season's,  
whose cuatros tighten my heartstrings. The shac-shacs  
rattle like cicadas under the fur-leaved nettles  
of childhood, an old fence at noon, bel-air, *quadrille*,  
*la comette*, gracious turns, until delight settles.  
A voice like rain on a hot road, a smell of cut grass,  
its language as small as the cedar's and sweeter than any  
wherever I have gone, that makes my right hand Ishmael  
my guide the star-fingered frangipani.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Greenwood, p. 268.

<sup>672</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 31.

He associates her voice with the ‘tints,’ the local colour of the landscape especially as it contains ‘woodsmoke’ and ‘ground-doves.’ Not only does she sing, she is ‘a country dancer’<sup>673</sup> with ‘gracious turns,’ an idea that underscores the culture of the island. Other cultural items are brought out through auditory images of the ‘shac-shacs rattle’ and ‘drizzling banjos.’<sup>674</sup> The speaker is proud of this folklore singer whose ‘voice like the rain on a hot road,’ serves the function of soothing the speaker’s pain caused by alienation from home. Antonia MacDonald-Smythe asserts that Sesenne’s song ‘confirms the enduring power of that space... she is the evocation of home...the muse who leads Walcott back to being the provincial Caribbean man.’<sup>675</sup> The word ‘voice’ is a synecdoche that signifies the impact of Sesenne’s music and dance within her community. Her voice represents not just hers, but the Saint Lucian landscape and its inhabitants.

The name ‘Ishmael’ is a biblical allusion and a metaphor of betrayal given the speaker’s travels and his failings to use the local images and language of the landscape as does Sesenne. The poet’s reference to these folk dances: ‘*quadrille*’ and ‘*la comette*’ reflect his Creole background and the naming of the landscape. Walcott uses language (French Creole), folk song, folk dance and folk festivals to give voice to his landscape. It is also a step towards being enfolded back into the community. He emphasises that although ‘its language as small as the cedar’s,’ it is ‘sweeter than any.’ This language which stems from the Anglo-French presence on the island is reflected further by two good natured rival societies: ‘wooden swords of the Rose and the Marguerite, their chorus.’ La Rose and La Marguerite are two societies in the island that commemorate Anglo-French heritage of the island. Their dance is symbolic of the warring colonial powers and has

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid.

<sup>675</sup> Antonia MacDonald-Smythe, ‘The Privileges of Being Born in ... a Backward and Underprivileged Society: Derek Walcott’s Prodigal Provincialism’, *Callaloo* 28.1 (2005), pp. 88-101 (p.99).

become a revered tradition of the island. By naming these dances and cultural groups, the speaker is seeking to relate to a place. I note that the quoted lines have fourteen syllables whereas most of the lines have between ten and thirteen syllables. The effect conveys the overflow of bounty in the island with its variety of diction and cultural celebrations.

Walcott's speaker continues to resolve his divided nature or the pain of in-betweenness of cultures in:

when the violin whines its question and the banjo answers,  
my pain increases in stabs, my severances  
from odours and roots, the homemade *shac-shac* scraping,  
the dip and acknowledgement of courteous country dances,  
the smoke I would hold in my arms always escaping  
like my father's figure, and now my mother's; let me  
for invocation's sacred sake, for the lonely hallowing  
of leaves and turning corners, come on the breaking sea  
around the sharp brown cliffs of Les Cayes, billowing  
breaker, the salt Atlantic wind; I hear a language receding,  
unwritten by you, and the voices of children reading  
your work in one language only when you had both.<sup>676</sup>

As in the previous poem where the multiple histories and cultures take the form of trees and accuses the speaker of betrayal, here the musical instruments assume a similar role. The poem is a lyric poem which expresses the speaker's state of alienation. This is heightened as 'my pain increases in stabs' due to 'my severance' upon hearing the whines of the 'violin', the 'banjo' and the '*sha-shac* scraping.' These auditory images are an apt description of the pain of severance from home. 'The violin, 'the banjo,' and 'the homemade shac-shac' are personified and could be said to be in conversation. Their dialogue is brought out through their auditory harmony that sends spirals of guilt and nostalgia running in the poet's head. I consider dialogue as a poetic style used by Walcott to question how one can relate to a place after being cut off from it.

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<sup>676</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 33.

The speaker feels alienated and through an elegiac mood he notices that the image of ‘the smoke’ keeps escaping from his hands ‘like my father’s figure, and now my mother’s.’ One is left with the feeling that the speaker is completely overwhelmed by feelings of loss. First, ‘my father’s figure, ... my mother,’ and now a home he is estranged from. Images such as: ‘the salt Atlantic wind’ and ‘the breakings sea’ highlight a turbulent homecoming as well as the alliteration in ‘father’s figure’ and ‘billowing breaker.’ Besides the turbulent nature of ‘the breaking sea’, it is also an image that reflects the communal and ancestral life of the island people. In her work, Lara Cahill-Booth declares that ‘the sea then is an important site of originary experience that reconciles Caribbean people to their environment and culture.’<sup>677</sup> One might assume that as the sea washes across the archipelago in ‘billowing breaker’, it binds Caribbean peoples in a confluence of cultures.

Furthermore, the question of language comes into play again when the speaker regrets the idea of not sufficiently giving voice to the language of the island as stated: ‘I hear a language receding / unwritten by you, and the voices of children reading / your work in one language only when you had both.’<sup>678</sup> The speaker’s fears include an overwhelming use of standard English language instead of Creole especially as ‘I can feel it dying and the growth / of all that besieges it, the courtly gestures of grace.’<sup>679</sup> If in *Omeros* Walcott’s father advises him to ‘cherish our island for its green simplicities,’<sup>680</sup> in *The Bounty* poems, his mother advises that he ‘writes of the light’s bounty on familiar things.’<sup>681</sup> I

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<sup>677</sup> Lara Cahill-Booth, ‘Walcott’s sea and Caribbean geomythography’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 49.3 (2013), pp. 347-358 (p. 347).

<sup>678</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 33.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 187.

<sup>681</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 16.

consider these familiar things as ordinary or what MacDonald-Smythe refers to as ‘Derek Walcott’s prodigal provincialism.’<sup>682</sup> She advances that Walcott finds elation in writing about the provincial because ‘to be provincial is to appreciate the simplicity of life as it occurs in the province ...and be content with living on what many would dismiss as the margins of society.’<sup>683</sup>

Significantly, at the end of the poem, the speaker comes to terms with his in-betweenness. He is no longer weighed down by a sense of guilt, betrayal or guilt for neglecting the Creole language of his island. He lays claim to both St Lucia’s Creole and standard English when he states clearly that:

The sun and the rain contend for the same place  
like the two languages I know—one so rich  
in its imperial intimacies, its echo of privilege,  
the other like the orange words of a hillside in drought—  
but my love for both wide as the Atlantic is large.<sup>684</sup>

The image of the sun and rain is a metaphor symbolising the Creole language and the English language. The use of ‘contend’ suggests a struggle between these cultures. I describe the poetics here as that of building bridges or uniting the often-conflictual Caribbean self in terms of multilingualism occasioned by imperial rule. Although one echoes privilege and the other echoes an image of ‘drought’, the speaker confesses that ‘my love of both is as wide as the Atlantic is large.’ Prem writes that ‘the pain of being at the border of two histories, in an endeavour to recreate an Adamic vision of the island, does not stop Walcott from re-emphasizing his love for both languages, English and Creole.’ I propose that such a vision to recreate warrants an assertion of both cultures in

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<sup>682</sup> Antonia MacDonald-Smythe, p. 88.

<sup>683</sup> MacDonald-Smythe, p. 89.

<sup>684</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 33.

relation. The poet highlights again in a simile the image of the sea which epitomises the confluence of these cultures in the Caribbean. As Breslin asserts, ‘it is the transatlantic peopling of the island that created the language conflict; a love that would reconcile it must be wide enough to connect the sundered shores.’<sup>685</sup>

Like Walcott, Brutus also seeks dialogue between the races in South Africa through landscape painting. His landscape is beautiful but also wounded by apartheid’s segregationist laws. His love for home is shown through vivid descriptions through images and metaphors that suggest his need for better relations with all the human and material facets of his country. This is most often conveyed through the image of a woman as a symbol of his beloved land evident in:

Let not this plunder be misconstrued:  
This is the body’s expression of need—  
Poor wordless body in its fumbling way  
Exposing heart’s-hunger by raiding and hurt;

Secret recesses of lovely desire  
Gnaw at the vitals of spirit and mind  
When shards of existence display eager blades  
To menace and savage the pilgrim[m]ing self:

Bruised though your flesh and all-aching my arms  
Believe me, my lovely, I too reel from our pain—  
Plucking from you these your agonized gifts  
Bares only my tenderness-hungering need.<sup>686</sup>

The lyrical poem is written in three quatrains and attempts to justify the reason for violence in satisfying the bodily needs. It presents a violent male who dominates the female under the pretext that it ‘is the body’s expression of need.’ The diction of the poem is ambiguous and thus lends itself to several criticisms. The poetics that Brutus deploys here is that of a shattered individual who is wounded by an act of brute force. These

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<sup>685</sup> Breslin, *Nobody’s Nation*, p. 279.

<sup>686</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 28.

fragmented individuals could be disentangled to represent the speaker on the one hand, and the rich mineral resources of the South African landscape (Woman) on the other hand.

In the first line of the poem, the poet upsets the iambic rhythm with the word 'Misconstrued.' The speaker might be said to be pausing for thought after the 'be', choosing the right word: 'misconstrued' then almost carries an ironic character, as if it being offered laden with subtext. The poet uses the word 'plunder' to express the idea that the resources of the land are robbed, and the population is called upon not to 'misconstrue' the act of robbing. This plundering results in 'Bruised ... flesh', 'all-aching ... arms' and 'reel from our pain'. Salient to this is the idea that the speaker and the land are not the only ones who are wounded. The perpetrators themselves are also wounded in their wants. Thus, their 'raiding' is justified by 'heart's-hunger.' The poet seems to opine that the regime is in want of love and considers filling this vacuum through raid and hurt. The alliteration in 'heart's-hunger' suggests a lack of love. The spondee effect on 'heart's-hun/ger' signals a surprise at the nature of such a hunger.

The second stanza evidences the lonely hearts of the perpetrators. For example, in the 'secret recesses' of their heart, one senses a 'lovely desire' of a lonely heart. To satisfy their loneliness, they 'gnaw at the vitals of spirit and mind.' These vitals could be compared to the natural resources or the sexually vandalised woman. Worth mentioning is the idea that the apartheid regime is described as 'shards.' Their broken nature is compared to 'eager blades' that are ever ready to 'menace and savage the pilgriming self.' The 'pilgriming self' metaphor itself underlines the speaker and the people's journey in search of themselves and a home.

In the final stanza, Brutus employs the image of the wound to depict the effect of exploitation on land and on man. These images include ‘bruise...flesh’, ‘all-aching my arms’ and ‘agonised gifts.’ Ngaage postulates that ‘these images evoke the image of a sexually brutalised woman and a vandalized natural environment, with its rich mineral reserved for an exclusive class of people.’<sup>687</sup> Drawing from Ngaage’s assertion, it is evident that the speaker and his lover (land) share the same pain deduced from his assertion: ‘believe me, my lovely, I too reel from our pain.’ Thus, the speaker consoles his land/lover that he too staggers from the draining of these resources but hopes to regain some energy by ‘plucking from these your agonised gifts’ so that it ‘bares only my tenderness-hungering need’ in order to continue the struggle to regain the land. The paradoxical phrase: ‘agonised gift,’ expresses a simultaneous love for the landscape and awareness of the pain of exploitation. I note that the last line of stanza two and the last two lines of stanza three are written in iambic pentameter. These intermittent iambic lines return the poem to a musical insistent, a rhetorical metre that persuades the reader of the harm done on the landscape.

In another three quatrains, the speaker continues to express his concerns for an exploited landscape:

Miles of my arid earth  
rasping dry as smoker’s cough and craving  
heat, hunger ache in your dusty haze  
sighing, heaving, tremulous;

all my seared eyes caress your miles –  
boulders that blister, scald and rust –  
ranging parched reaches of rutted sands;  
coax pastels from your dun and dust

and know the tenderness  
of these my reaching hands

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<sup>687</sup> Barine Saana Ngaage, ‘Style and Communication in Dennis Brutus’ A Simple Lust’, p.181.

can conjure moisture, gentleness  
and honey sweetness from your yearning hollows.<sup>688</sup>

From the stanzas, the speaker laments the dryness and unproductive nature of his landscape that is described as sucked dry by the activities of the apartheid system. The poet uses words such as arid and dusty to portray a dry landscape that is barren and lacking vitality. Like the previous poem, this poem echoes exploitation of the natural resources of the land. Brutus has carefully selected a constrained diction to emphasise how the landscape is abused. Except for the numerous suffixes attached to some of the words, it would not be wrong to assert that the poet uses many monosyllabic words such as ‘arid; ‘heat’, scald’, ‘rust’, ‘dun and dust’ to suggest a wounded and barren landscape’

This wounded landscape is noticeable in the poet’s syntactic usage of co-ordinating conjunctions in these phrases ‘cough and craving’, ‘scald and rust’ and ‘dun and dust.’ These stress the idea of a world full of violence and infuse vigour into the style by measuring the exact expression for his purpose. As the poet’s troubadour who is interested in exploring every nook and cranny of his landscape, the speaker notices the ‘boulders that blister’ and ‘parched reaches of rutted sands.’ In other words, the effect of the heat causes the rocks to become dry while the sand now forms furrows in the ground. I posit that the weathering of these rocks could signify the regime’s pressure on the South African landscape symbolically shown here using images such as ‘heat’ ‘scald’ and ‘parched.’ This pressure manifested through the exploitation of its natural resources is evident in the final line of stanza two as they ‘coax pastels from your dun and dust.’ Brutus’ double statement is seen in his use of words that provide several meanings. For

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<sup>688</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 36

example, the image of a dun suggests a gloomy landscape. Another explanation might be that the apartheid regime acts as a predator making insistent demands on the land.

Significantly, in the last stanza, the speaker reassures the land that his 'reaching hands / can conjure moisture.' This is salient in that it portrays the speaker's role as one who gives voice to his people and landscape by speaking about their plight and by seeking opportunities for a dialogue through his hand. The dryness of the landscape is such that it is left in 'hallows' of any 'gentleness and honey sweetness.' Thus, by using his hands, or his poetic writing, the speaker hopes to 'conjure' from the 'yearning hallows' of his landscape, 'moisture and honey sweetness.' In this way, a successful dialogue of Relation could fill this emptiness and moisturize the present barrenness of the landscape.

The poem has an irregular rhyme scheme - *abcd*. This contrasts with the last two stanzas which have a regular rhyme scheme and follows the pattern *abab*. This tighter variant takes the form of a traditional ballad poem given that it narrates the condition of life of a people and place. The tight structure of the poem is made possible using run-on-lines from the first and second lines of stanza one, as well as the first and second lines of the last stanza. These enjambments are effective in providing the poem with a fast rhythm allowing one the possibility to hurriedly read through to make sense of the poet's intended message.

Brutus' landscape has a tremendous effect of soothing the persona at moments of alienation. In 'Light, green-yellow luminescent, tender' the poet writes that the charm and beauty of his landscape sustains him throughout the period of exile. In the first quatrain, he appeals to visual images of light and colour as shown:

Light, green-yellow luminescent, tender,  
seeps through these deep foliaged weeping willows to  
filter streams and runnels of soft glow  
suffusing enclaves of green and sombre gloom,<sup>689</sup>

The visual images are in the 'light, green-yellow luminescent' at Zoo Lake: Johannesburg evident from the footnote of the poem. This area is noted for the beauty of its lake and public park. Here, the speaker meditates on the green vegetation of his South African landscape and watches as the radiant lights 'seeps' through 'these deep foliage weeping willows.' The willows are said to produce lance-shaped leaves with tough twigs. Hence, I argue that the 'weeping willow' represents the resilient nature of every black South African, who is rendered helpless due to apartheid laws and brutality but who is still, at the same time, strong like the twigs of the willow leaves. The emission of light also goes through 'streams and runnels' and in this way, overspread its glow in isolated areas within the landscape to reduce their 'sombre gloom.' According to Ngongkum, 'these visual images, in conjunction with the precedent colour terms, conjure up the magnificence of the natural environment made more beautiful by the falling light.'<sup>690</sup> The poet does not only appeal to aquatic images of brooks that produce a 'soft glow', but also indicates how both the visual images of light and water dispel darkness in the 'sombre gloom.'

The significance of these images of light and colour lies in the effect it has on the speaker as the two-last quatrains of the poem suggest:

and all my frantic and frustrated sorrow  
dribbles from me in a pith-central tenderness  
extracted by awareness of charm  
that graces this distraught and morning land.

Oh lacerating land that pulps out anger's  
rancid ooze from my resisting heart  
now, with this loveliness, you distill in me

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<sup>689</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 39

<sup>690</sup> Eunice Ngongkum, *Poetics of Revolt* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), p. 11.

a balm that eases and erases all my hurt.<sup>691</sup>

These images produce a soothing effect in the speaker given that feelings of desperation, fear and pain become ‘frantic and frustrated’ and ‘dribbles from me in a pith-central tenderness.’ The ‘pith-central tenderness’ describes the soft inner part of a tree. The tree stands for the resilient and tender nature of the South African blacks. In addition, it is significant in highlighting the poet’s tenderness even as he uses words to fight his battles against the apartheid government. It is a battle of love against his land’s disfigurement. This love for his country is sustained by the charm of his landscape because it is responsible for extracting from the persona ‘a pith-central tenderness’ so that instead of feeling ‘frustrated’ over a distraught and mourning land, he rather meditates on the charm that ‘graces’ the landscape. G. Douglas Killam asserts that:

Brutus experiment with art as a means of transcending the nightmare of colonial history..., art’s power not only to transcend, but to inscribe and elevate experience in monumental form. That his faith in poetry as something lasting and monumental is being tried is indicated in many of the poems.<sup>692</sup>

Killam assertion is important to this thesis because it relates to my idea of how nature’s beauty enhances the poetic sensibilities of Walcott and Brutus. Killam assertion ties with Walcott’s that ‘the only possible realisation in the West Indies is art. I see no possibilities of the country becoming unified and having its own strengths except in its art.’<sup>693</sup> Although this statement may be questionably pessimistic, the salient idea I draw from this is the possibility of a lasting art that gives voice to a people. For these poets, it is a beauty that could serve as a uniting force between divergent groups in their regions. The idea here is a faith in poetry as something that lasts.

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<sup>691</sup> Ibid.

<sup>692</sup> G. Douglas Killam, ‘A Simple Lust: Selection, Structure and Style,’ in *Critical Perspectives on Dennis Brutus* (Colorado Springs: Three Continent Press, 1995) p. 86.

<sup>693</sup> Edward Hirsch, ‘An Interview with Derek Walcott’, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, p. 55.

In the last quatrain, the poet uses chemical and processing images to show the effect of a beautiful landscape on the mind and body. These images are seen in ‘pulps out anger’, ‘rancid ooze’, and ‘distill me.’ So, although his landscape seems to be a ‘lacerating land,’ it is still capable of crushing out ‘rancid from my resisting heart.’ Ngongkum proposes that:

This poem, in the tradition of the baroque, expresses a desire for the hermetic retreat of the pastoral tradition, especially as the green world of the poem offers warmth and acts as healing unction to a soul conscious of the reality of South African strife and despair.<sup>694</sup>

In addition, I argue that the image of ‘rancid’ (which) appeals to our senses of smell and decay results from a brutal regime. These unpleasant and distasteful images of smell and taste could be eradicated by the ‘loveliness’ of the landscape that ‘distill(s) in me / a balm that eases and erases all my hurt.’ In so doing, the speaker becomes free from pain and hate while meditating on the beauty of the South African landscape. The struggle and fight for justice and equality between races in ‘relation’ becomes paramount in the poet’s poetics. The poem could be described as a syllabic verse given that most of the lines have ten to eleven syllables except for the second line of stanza two which has twelve syllables. Such a constrained structure stresses the beauty of the landscape in contrast to the torturous and restrictive nature of the speaker. Aside from the physical beauty and ills of each poet’s landscape, the cultural values occasioned by the political and historical events of its past are worth looking into as the next section evinces.

### **Cultural, Political and Historical Landscape**

In their poetic writing, Walcott and Brutus negotiate historical, cultural, political, and climatic landscapes. Both demonstrate their attitudes towards their region’s flora and fauna imported and imposed through colonial rule. Each poet scorns imperialism, tourist exploitation and environmental degradation. These poets also focus on the celebration of

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<sup>694</sup> Ngongkum, *Poetics of Revolt*, p. 12.

cultural values and diversity which underpin their region's exposure to outside influence. For example, 'Manet in Martinique', the last of the sequence poems titled *Six Fictions*, describes the cultural landscape of the Caribbean island by reflecting on the people, places and values of his extended past. The title of the poem includes the name of the island of Martinique, a French overseas region. Walcott employs architectural metaphor through the image of a French ship, an embodiment of all that is French. From the outset of the poem, the speaker indicates that the 'the teak plant' leading to where the ship is to set sail 'was as stiff as a rubber near the iron railing / of the pink verandah.'<sup>695</sup> The image of 'the teak plant', a large east Indian tree is a cultural symbol of the island. It is an embodiment of the island's cross-cultural history because the teak plant 'was translocated to several countries of Africa and central and South America during the past century.'<sup>696</sup> Its translocation is a symbol of the movements of people from Africa and Asia as well unto the Caribbean island. The speaker then leads us through 'an arch'<sup>697</sup> where we see 'a tenebrous, overstuffed salon'<sup>698</sup> and get a full picture of 'the usual sailing ship.'<sup>699</sup>

The images used are very gloomy and many of the objects are in a sorry state especially when the poet describes that the 'ship in full course through wooden waves, shrouds stiff with starch, dolefully tinted with cosmetic photos.'<sup>700</sup> These gloomy images justify Christopher Benfrey's assertion that this poem 'evokes ghost(s) of French culture inhabiting the island'.<sup>701</sup> The haunting images of this ghost are evident in the remnants

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<sup>695</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 54.

<sup>696</sup> Ole K. Hansen, Suchitra Changtragoon, Bundit Ponoy, Juan Lopez, John Richard, Erick D. Kjaer, 'World Translocation of Teak – origin of Landraces and Present Genetic Base', *Tree Genetics & Genomes* 13.87. (2017), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).

<sup>697</sup> Ibid.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid.

<sup>701</sup> Christopher Benfrey, 'Trouble in Paradise: splendour and Sadness in Derek Walcott's *The Bounty*', n.p.

of a dying empire such as: ‘pillows with tassels, porcelains, souvenirs like prose that had lost its bouquet.’<sup>702</sup> I argue that these objects do not appeal to the poet because he ‘felt an immeasurable sadness for the ship’s sails / for the stagnant silence of objects, the mute past they carry.’<sup>703</sup> The speaker’s reference to the past may sound ambivalent here because this mute past plays a significant role in enabling the speaker to reflect on the present. It is a present that needs re-inventing. Thus, the speaker does not place so much emphasis on the works of these prose writers: ‘Lafcadio Hearn’<sup>704</sup> ‘Flaubert’<sup>705</sup> and ‘Maupassant’<sup>706</sup> whose works seem to have lost their ‘bouquet.’<sup>707</sup> His sympathy for this ship is compounded by ‘the glimpse of Fort-de-France harbour’<sup>708</sup> that portrays the depth of French cultural and historical presence on the island.

Walcott is critical of French presence on the island when he considers that the harbour ‘was a false metropole / of Martinique,’<sup>709</sup> especially when he ‘sensed the salon, windows closed, was trying to recall / all it could of Paris.’<sup>710</sup> Martinique’s colonial heritage only gives one the semblance of Paris, but this is not real because once ‘turned from the wall’ where these objects are seen, there is a sense of ‘hollow with longing as the wall’s gilt-framed clipper.’<sup>711</sup> The simile here expresses the influence of French culture on the island and how it energises the poet’s persona to create a relation between past and present. I suggest that these architectural images reflect a combination of irony and gratitude for the New World’s mixed history of exploitation and democratic resurrection as Robert

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<sup>702</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 54.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Fort-de-France is the capital of France’s Caribbean overseas department of Martinique. Its major exports include sugar, rum, tinned fruits and cacao.

<sup>709</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 54.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid.

Hamner and Fiona Tolan intimate.<sup>712</sup> Thus, it is a celebration of Martinique's culture and a critique on post-colonialism.

In addition, the poet's description of the ship is not intended to show the beauty of the ship but rather the remnants of colonialism which despite its disadvantages, have contributed to enriching Caribbean culture. For example, in describing some 'cosmetics photos'<sup>713</sup> of 'a French family: bearded grandpapa and black-banned *grand-mère*,<sup>714</sup> Walcott uses both French and English in the words *grand-mère* and *grandpapa* to portray a Caribbean cultural background. I propose that the poet places both cultures in relation to enhance the rich cultural background of the Caribbean. Aside from that, the poet alludes to the poem 'on the wandering soul'<sup>715</sup> (*Le Voyage*) by Charles Baudelaire's,<sup>716</sup> quoting the line: 'Notre ame est un trois-mats cherchant son Icarie.'<sup>717</sup> Here, Walcott compares Baudelaire's wandering soul to the speaker's search for home like in the Greek myth of 'Icarie,' son of Daedalus who took flight to freedom with feathers crafted with wax.<sup>718</sup> The end-stop lines used in this poem are meant to slow down its speed to give a clear idea of the cultural and historical implications each line carries.

One way of bringing the wandering soul to rest is to accept the cultural mixed society offered by the landscape. In doing so, this shows the speaker's ability to move beyond the colonial problem especially in an appreciation of a hideous and bleak past whose

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<sup>712</sup> Robert Hamner and Fiona Tolan, 'Reviews', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 43.2 (2007), pp. 236-241(p. 237).

<sup>713</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 54.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid.

<sup>716</sup> Charles Baudelaire *Fleurs du Mal: Le Voyage À Maxime du Camp* (Paris: Poulet-Malasis et de Broise, 1857).

<sup>717</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 54.

<sup>718</sup> John H. Turner, *The Myth of Icarus in Spanish Renaissance Poetry* (London: Tames Books Limited, 1976), pp. 13-14.

beauty is enriched by the same bleakness. As Adam Kirsch argues: ‘Walcott moves beyond the colonial problem, acknowledging that the persona who sees a combat between home and exile is himself a fiction he is at home everywhere or possibly nowhere; he is a man speaking to men.’<sup>719</sup> Thus, in ‘A Santa Cruz Quartet’, Walcott celebrates the multiple ethnic heritage of the Trinidadian landscape. The poet begins by asserting that: ‘races, in this rich Valley, inevitable took root. / Cocoa-Spanish Santa Cruz, echoing possession and loss.’<sup>720</sup> This hybrid landscape is vividly shown to be rich in terms of the culture of the people and the fertility of the soil. The noun and adjectival phrase: ‘race’, and ‘Cocoa-Spanish Santa Cruz’ respectively express the idea of a diversified landscape with ‘races as varied as the cocoa pods in complexion.’<sup>721</sup> The image of cocoa, a raw material used in producing chocolate, is for Walcott an example to explain a mixed-race society. This composite society ignites in the speaker a sense of elation which, according to Marija Bergam is one ‘in which the author celebrates the multiplicity of races in the Caribbean by likening their astonishing variety to the cocoa pods in complexion.’<sup>722</sup>

The paradoxical use of the phrase ‘possession and loss’ takes us back in time to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the importation of indentured labourers to the plantations in the Caribbean. The poet describes this as a process whereby they, referencing the indentured labourers, ‘inevitably took roots.’<sup>723</sup> This implies that it was a process that could not be evaded. However, the significance of the poet’s paradoxical statement is to describe how such a loss has resulted in a new and beautiful culture. Bergam posits that Walcott’s use of vegetation imagery or what he calls transplantation ‘on the one hand..., points to the

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<sup>719</sup> Adam Kirsch, ‘Unphantasmal Peace: A Review of the Bounty by Derek Walcott’, *The New Republic*, 15 December 1997, p. 45.

<sup>720</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 71.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid.

<sup>722</sup> Marija Bergam, ‘Transplantations: Vegetation Imagery in the Poetry of Derek Walcott and Lorna Goodison’, *European Journal of English Studies* 16.2 (2012), pp. 113-124 (p. 117).

<sup>723</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 17.

history of violent removal and loss, it also symbolises the potentialities of creolisation.<sup>724</sup>

I argue that these potentialities is reflected in what Glissant refers to as ‘a limitless metissage.’<sup>725</sup> As Huggan and Tiffin put it:

The Caribbean is a fractured space in which the natural relationship between people and their environment was wrenched apart, not only by the brutality of plantation system, but also by the moment of discovery. [Thus,] Caribbean ecocriticism is charged with the task of negotiating the profound physical and psychological effects of this double fracture; but it is also charged, at the same time, with looking at the new relationships which, often loosely categorised under the rubric of creolisation, involve a complex hybridization of diverse cultural and environmental forms.<sup>726</sup>

Drawing from Huggan and Tiffin, the new relationships and complex diverse forms are particularly noticeable in the complex island of Trinidad as Walcott depicts in this poem.

The setting is in the rich valley of Santa Cruz. Arnold posits that: ‘Santa Cruz, is a fertile valley north of the Port of Spain in Trinidad.’<sup>727</sup> He further adds that ‘Trinidad has been

Walcott’s other home for decades now; and it is the home of his children and grandchildren.’<sup>728</sup> Thus, it suffices that Walcott celebrates the richness of his other home.

This richness is also reflected in the produce of its landscape especially with its ‘orchard of grapefruit’<sup>729</sup> that ‘hung easy and thick’<sup>730</sup> waiting for the time ‘when baskets would

bubble over with the harvest’s freight.’<sup>731</sup> To explain vividly the richness of the Santa

Cruz soil, Walcott takes us down memory lane to the days of old and invites us to imagine:

He writes:

Imagine the scythes of harvesters on the old estate,  
lit not only by the golden fruit but by the cocoa’s

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<sup>724</sup> Marija Bergam, ‘Transplantations: Vegetation Imagery in the Poetry of Derek Walcott and Lorna Goodison’, p. 114.

<sup>725</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 34.

<sup>726</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, p. 132.

<sup>727</sup> James Arnold and others, p. 79.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

<sup>730</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 17.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid.

lamps in their penetrable shade; imagine a Great House (not that great in scale, without a scrolled gate or a keeper's lodge, only a verandah with fretwork eaves, rocking chairs on the verandah) when evening egret left off tick-picking cows for the enclosing leaves, and close the book then, with the natural rhythm of its wings and our simplified past.<sup>732</sup>

From the excerpt, Walcott paints an image of what the 'Great House' used to be and do at the time of harvesting. The 'Great House' is an architectural metaphor representing the productive power of the island seen through its great production and harvest. The visual images of colour and light in 'the golden fruit,' and 'the cocoa lamps' respectively emphasise the rich culture of the Caribbean landscape. Although this house may not be great in scale or well protected with a scrolled gate or a keeper's lodge, it is nonetheless great in terms of its people, culture, beauty and production power.

Significantly, the poem also examines the notion of nothingness. The speaker mentions that at the end of the day, the evening egret only deposited 'tic-picking cows for the enclosing leaves and close the book.' This might suggest the idea that colonialism left nothing but decay. The leaves represent the leaves of pages in a book that closes with nothing significant to write about. It is thus the poet's duty to fill the blank pages of these leaves through voicing when he writes:

the snow-speckled trunks enduring the affliction  
of envy and hatred, a blight that time would remove,  
like the sorrow in the rich soil, until eventually  
their history dimmed and vanished into fiction.<sup>733</sup>

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<sup>732</sup> Ibid.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

From the quote, we are able to gather that the speaker is hopeful that despite the affliction caused by colonial slavery, the time will come when like the rich soil, they shall rise above this past that triggers sorrow. In this way, history will become more of a fiction because the people would have outgrown the wound of slavery. This process of growth could be described as the creolization process. Arnold writes that ‘Walcott could subscribe to this thought, which expresses the St Lucian poet’s view of the creolization process.’<sup>734</sup> Hence, it is a process of growth through acceptance and relation.

Finally, the creolisation process is further expounded in section two of ‘A Santa Cruz Quartet’ that begins: ‘Let these lines shine like the rain’s wires through Santa Cruz.’<sup>735</sup>

Here, another aspect of the creolisation process is shown in the poet’s valorisation of the Creole Language:

“So much o’fog, and it making so cold, dem scientist  
predict no surprise if it snow in the next fifty years.”  
Perhaps it is the fog that erases the sins  
of history, that no longer looks or sound foreign  
In the mouth of the valley, despite the visible echo  
of Spanish and French in roads in bright gusts of rain,  
and, when the rain passes, a shining language.<sup>736</sup>

The excerpt exposes the perennial problem of climate change and its effect on the island through the image of the fog. The speaker remarks that scientists predict this could cause snow in the years ahead. Jana Evans Braziel comments that given the Caribbean’s heir to histories of diaspora, slavery and dispossession, it ‘is the legatee to other violations: imperialist intervention, governmental corruption, treachery, tourist exploitation, and

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<sup>734</sup> Arnold and others, p. 79.

<sup>735</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 72.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

environmental degradation.<sup>737</sup> Thus, I propose that the speaker's ironic comment serves as a satire on imperialist intervention and tourist exploitation of the landscape. The visible presence of Spanish and French on the road metaphorically described as gusts of rain, is symbolic of a strong force, an inevitable downpour of post-colonialist presence on the island.

However, the speaker is optimistic that when the rain passes, a shining language will emerge. This language, burgeoning from the soil is one of the central motifs in Walcott's poetics. It is a local language that is more appropriate in locating the speaker's sense of belonging. Bergem advances that 'the ability to (re)name the objects in their environment, to master and adopt the colonial tongue, equals the possibility of rootedness.'<sup>738</sup> I liken the growth of this language to the flora and Fauna that rejuvenates after the rain. Walcott could be stressing the idea that despite the destruction brought to the island through colonialist intervention, there are possibilities for growth and one such growth is reflected in a language that is rooted in the landscape of the region. I assert that Walcott's simultaneous reference to death and rebirth in nature could be compared to Emma Trott's view that they are 'possibilities offered by the imagination's ability to redefine physical and psychic landscapes.'<sup>739</sup>

Like Walcott, Brutus represents instances of the poet's invocation of the South African cultural landscape. The celebration of African traditional values is one of such instances where the poet's aesthetic is evident. In 'Lutuli: 10 December 1961,' Brutus employs the

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<sup>737</sup> Jana Evans Braziel, "Caribbean Genesis" Language, Gardens, Worlds (Jamaica Kincaid, Derek Walcott, Edouard Glissant), in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005), pp. 110-126 (p.121).

<sup>738</sup> Marija Bergam, 'Transplantations: Vegetation Imagery in the Poetry of Derek Walcott and Lorna Goodison', p. 119.

<sup>739</sup> Emma Trott, 'Creative Ecologies: Derek Walcott's Postcolonial Ecopoetics', p. 4.

post-colonial poetics of praise poetry. Here, the poet celebrates the victory of an individual. Craig W. McLukie identifies Brutus' persona as chief Albert Lutuli, the Nobel Peace laureate for 1961.<sup>740</sup> This poem is a celebration of his role as both a traditional leader and as president of the ANC where he played an invaluable role in the fight against apartheid. He is attributed with the following qualities:

The African lion rouses in his shadowy lair  
And roars his challenge through the clamorous  
earth:  
Its billow blots all discords and all jars

Hippo and elephant and buffalo without dispute  
go lumbering to the drinking pools:  
but all the land he views he rules:

From here he pads on the sun-picked bone and brittle  
thorn  
sniffing the tawny skies of a new day:  
power ripples over him like the light of  
dawn.<sup>741</sup>

In the first stanza the poet metaphorically refers to Lutuli as 'the African Lion' who rises from its 'lair' and instils calm 'through the clamorous earth.' Here the poet refers to the role of African leaders in maintaining stability in their chiefdoms. Due to the African Lion's 'billow', peace is restored in the land as it 'blots all discord and all jars.' Brutus appeals to auditory images of sounds in these words: 'roars,' 'billow' and 'sniffing' to valorise traditional images of leadership and the cry for peace in an unstable apartheid environment.

Furthermore, Brutus deploys traditional African images especially Southern African images such as 'Hippo and elephant and buffalo' that 'without dispute go lumbering to the drinking pools.' In this quote, the speaker expresses the notion of communal living and the respect for individuals no matter their differences. Such a communal spirit stands

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<sup>740</sup> Craig W. McLuckie and Patrick J. Colbert, *Critical Perspectives on Dennis Brutus*, p. 21.

<sup>741</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 35.

in contrast to the divide institutionalised by the apartheid government through its laws of segregation and discrimination. Additionally, the speaker's reference to land in 'but all the land he views he rules,' portrays the value placed on land in the traditional South African landscape.

Finally, from the lion's position of authority, 'he pads on sun-picked bone and brittle and thorn.' This line describes the African leader's necessity to tread on dangerous grounds in solving disputes and in facing the apartheid's 'brittle thorn.' Through this comparison, I argue that Brutus brings to our understanding the notion that Lutuli's powers shine forth like the light of the dawn. In this regard, his role as a traditional leader and as leader of the ANC might be like that of Brutus which consists of bringing his people to the forefront. The rhyme scheme *abc* is befitting of a praise song poem.

In a composite cultural society as that of South Africa, Brutus draws from the classical tradition a historical and cultural trope to paint his landscape:

A troubadour, I traverse all my land  
exploring all her wide- flung parts with Zest  
Probing in motion sweeter far than rest  
her secret thickets with an amorous hand

And I have laughed, disdaining those who banned  
inquiry and movement, delighting in the test  
of will when doomed by saracened arrest  
choosing, like unarmed thumb, simply to stand siren

Thus, quixoting till a cast-off of my land  
I sing and fare, person to love-one pressed  
Braced for this pressure and the captor's hand  
That snaps off the service like a weathered strand:  
–no mistress-favour has adorned my breast  
Only the shadow of an arrow-brand.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 2.

In this Petrarchan sonnet consisting of an octave rhyming abba abba and a sestet rhyming abaaba, the speaker portrays himself as a troubadour fighting to rescue his mistress or the land. The poem is suggestive of a song against discrimination and defiance. In line with the Petrarchan sonnet, the octave exposes a problem: the strict laws of apartheid and its role in delimiting the movements of the black population. It also exposes the speaker's violation of these laws when he undertakes a risky venture to fight in defence of his land. He traverses his land exploring every part and 'probing' relentlessly into the socio-political instability of his landscape. He attributes to himself the image of a troubadour whose struggle is seen both on the socio-political and psychological levels. I argue that this image also represents a writer and a poet, someone who arouses the consciousness of his people.

The speaker goes through this exploration with a lot of enthusiasm and ecstasy 'exploring all her wide flung parts with Zest'. His love for home inspires him to examine, search and ask questions about his environment. Ojaide opines that from Brutus's individual experiences as a sage, philosopher and poet, he is familiar with his country and the world and uses the mask of the troubadour in his struggle to free the oppressed.<sup>743</sup> This quest is done with an 'amorous hand,' a description implying that his course of seeking freedom for the black South African is out of love. Mildred Hill – Lubin<sup>744</sup> argues that Brutus makes an association between his poetry and sex 'because the poetry is so closely connected to his 'course' that of seeking freedom which he considers as a basic need as making love.'<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>743</sup> Tenure, Ojaide, 'The Troubadour: The Poet's Persona in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus' p. 56.

<sup>744</sup> Mildred Hill-Lubin, 'Every Troubadour has a Mistress: the Image of the Female in Dennis Brutus's Stubborn Hope', *Critical Perspective on Dennis Brutus* (1995), 123.

<sup>745</sup> Mildred Hill-Lubin, p. 124.

As the poet's troubadour, one can deduce that his contempt for the apartheid regime is clearly brought out through a mockery of the system in: 'and I have laughed, disdainning those who banned / inquiry and movement,' and those who engage in 'Saracened arrest.' Significantly, Saracens are armoured cars used by the apartheid government against unarmed civilians. Egudu Romanus declares that all the factors that makes life unbearable are embedded in this poem: banning of 'inquiry and movement', 'saracened arrest', and the 'captor's hand', and it is against them that the poet takes to traversing, 'disdainning', and 'Quixoting.'<sup>746</sup> I assert that neither banning nor arrest has succeeded in hindering the poet-speaker's determination in the fight for freedom although instead of a 'mistress favour', he has rather received 'an arrow-brand'. Abasiokong Daniel<sup>747</sup> observes that the poet exposes himself as one whose wish and devotion to the fatherland has been aborted. On the other hand, Egudu adds that the poet's expression of love via the land is a stirring dramatization of his desire for love.<sup>748</sup> Thus, I sum up that the poet's questioning of relation between blacks and whites shows his love for Home and drives towards negotiation and reconstruction of the South African landscape.

Although Brutus borrows a medieval figure such as the troubadour, he uses it in a way that suggests the disenfranchised and marginalised black populace of South Africa are in quest of a lost home / land. I argue that the troubadour image is a cultural trope which has been appropriated by the poet to show the role of the African writer towards their community. Thus, Brutus does not fight for the love of a woman as the medieval knight does, but rather for the love of his country.

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<sup>746</sup>Romanus Egudu, 'Pictures of Pain: The Poetry of Dennis Brutus' p. 133.

<sup>747</sup> Abasiokong, Daniel. 'Poetry Pure and Applied: Rabearivelo and Brutus', P. 46.

<sup>748</sup> Egudu, p. 133.

Like Walcott, Brutus' landscape is informed by its colonial and socio-political past. The lyrical nature of most of the poems is sustained by a speaker's voice that articulates both a private and political statement about a hideous system locked up in the binary opposition of Self and Other. The speaker's love for home is displayed through courtly love, a tool via which he laments the failed relation among races and at the same time provides a space through which relatedness could be fashioned evident in:

I might be a better lover I believe  
my own, if you could truly be my own:  
trafficked and raddled as you are by gross  
undiscerning, occupying feet,  
how can I, the dispossessed, achieve  
the absolute possession that we seek?  
How can we speak of infidelity  
when, forced apart, we guess each other's woe?  
My land, my love, be generous to forgive  
my nomad rovings down the vagrant streets:  
return to me, sometime be wholly my own  
so you secure me entire, entirely your own.<sup>749</sup>

From the first two lines of this one stanza poem, the speaker expresses feelings of one who is bereft of love. This is seen in his plea to be truly accepted and his pledge to be a better lover if given the opportunity. I argue that Brutus' structure of the one stanza shows the urgency of his message. This includes the desire for freedom for himself and his lover who in this sense is metaphorically described as the land. Suffice to justify, this urgency for freedom for both the speaker and his land (lover) is vivid in the run-on lines: 'trafficked and raddled as you are by gross / undiscerning.' These lines are effective in increasing the speed of the speaker's message as well as the speed used by the oppressors in occupying the land. Thus, although he uses commas, semi-colons and questions marks, we still find the running on of a sense from one line to the next. Such an enjambment is intended to sustain the reader's interest to continue thinking about the speaker's main idea

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<sup>749</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 40.

of freedom and justice within the landscape of South Africa. In addition, it enables the persona to transmit multiple ideas about his landscape in a very short space of time. It also enhances the lyrical nature of the poem. Abdul R. JanMohamed advances that ‘the lyrical appropriation of the political world is designed not only to sublimate apartheid brutality but also to recreate the community that the Afrikaner government attempts to destroy.’<sup>750</sup> In addition, I emphasise on Brutus’ poetic as a use of conceit in this poem, when he equates the love between a man and a woman to the love between a man and his country. Hence, like Walcott who was greatly influenced by European literary scholars, Brutus too had a similar influence especially in his use of conceit which can be traced to the English poet, John Donne.

One focus in this poem is the speaker’s helplessness in the face of an overpowering force. He characterises the brutality of the occupying white oppressor using adjectives in these lines: ‘trafficked and raddled as you are by gross / undiscerning, occupying feet.’ These adjectives express the idea of illegal occupation that can be compared to the colonialist occupation of South Africa and the institution of apartheid by the Afrikaner government. The words ‘raddled,’ like ‘undiscerning’ are read as the senseless bruising of the speaker’s landscape. Worthy of note is the poet’s use of synecdoche where he describes the oppressor as ‘occupying feet’ to symbolise the apartheid government.

The consequences of forceful occupation are that one is rendered dispossessed or exiled. This is brought out vividly through the rhetorical question: ‘how can I, the dispossessed, achieve / the absolute possession that we seek? / How can we speak of infidelity /when,

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<sup>750</sup> Abdul R. JanMohamed, ‘An Introduction to Dennis Brutus’s Prison Poems’[http://www.disa.ukzn.ac/sites/default/files.../ALS%204\\_1\\_3\\_37.PDF](http://www.disa.ukzn.ac/sites/default/files.../ALS%204_1_3_37.PDF) [last accessed 25 June 2019] (pp. 1-26), p. 16.

forced apart, we guess each other's woe?' These questions continue to express the speaker's quest for freedom and his feelings of loneliness in exile. Huggan and Tiffin assert that:

the landscape tradition of South African poetry and the history of the farm novel both arguably belong to this vain search for reciprocity: between the colonial descendants of the first white European settlers and what remains a largely intractable, impenetrable land.<sup>751</sup>

It is this impenetrable land as suggested by Huggan and Tiffin that the speaker and other black and 'coloured' South Africans seek to reclaim. Towards the end of the poem, the poet vividly conveys the idea that his plea for understanding and forgiveness is towards his land to which he has been unfaithful due to his wanderings in exile. The images 'nomad roving' and 'vagrant street' suggest the idea that the speaker has no permanent home because he is a wanderer and a vagabond abroad. This is further heightened in: 'return to me, sometime be wholly my own / so you secure me entire, entirely your own.' These lines confirm the speaker's search for a home, a space where he can feel secure. Although the speaker's needs for possession may raise some gender uneasiness because of the male's desire to possess the female, it also on the other hand demands the female body to claim equal possession of the male body, to be 'entirely your own.'

Walcott and Brutus' poetic landscape, as evident above, involves a (re)presentation of both the private and socio-political landscapes of each poet's speaker(s). In the wake of colonialism, Walcott and Brutus' writing show its aftermath from the socio-political sufferings of individuals in chapter one to dilapidating albeit beautiful landscapes. The beauty of the landscape therefore becomes a soothing balm to a distressed mind. These landscapes are shown as recuperative sites for post-colonial and eco-critical writings. The inter-play of these criticism is to give voice to the often neglected and marginalised people

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<sup>751</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, p. 114.

and to decry the hideous crimes of colonial history that sometimes go unnoticed. These crimes can be referred to as the colonial wound of history which is examined in the proceeding chapter.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### A POETICS OF THE WOUND IN WALCOTT'S *OMEROS* (*WHAT THE TWILIGHT SAYS*) AND BRUTUS' *LETTERS TO MARTHA* (*THE DENNIS BRUTUS TAPES: ESSAYS AT AUTOBIOGRAPHY*)

'This wound I have stitched into plunkett's character.  
/ He has to be wounded, affliction is one theme /  
of this work, this fiction...'

Derek Walcott<sup>752</sup>

'The prisoners are literally assaulted... and the marks /  
they inflict, and I have seen them, are marks you carry for life.'

Dennis Brutus<sup>753</sup>

This chapter focuses on how Walcott and Brutus address the question of the colonial wound of the history of slavery and its afterlife in their poetic construction of home. I argue that the poetic telling of that wounded past is necessary and that the poets give voice to a history that shape our understanding of the human. I suggest that, through their literary representations, these poets construct their societies through imagery, central to which is the wound metaphor as an emblem of colonial slavery and segregation. Jahan Ramazani asserts 'that the inexpressible physical suffering of enslaved Africans is retained in the bodies of their descendants and that the pain still presses urgently for an impossible verbal release.'<sup>754</sup> These inexpressible physical sufferings also affect the individuals psychologically and causes trauma. Thus, 'traumatic experience is employed by the literary scholar as a metaphor to describe the degree of damage done to the

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<sup>752</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 28.

<sup>753</sup> Bernth Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography* (Suffolk: James Curry, 2011), p. 103.

<sup>754</sup> Jahan Ramazani, 'The Wound of History: Walcott's *Omeros* and the Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction', p. 406.

individual's coherent sense and the change of consciousness caused by the experience.'<sup>755</sup> It is in this light that Walcott and Brutus both use the wound of colonialism as an inescapable poetic device towards denouncing that hideous past. Thus, this wound image serves as a fundamental poetics in evidencing how each poet writes of the need to recognise those humans whose voices have been silenced due to marginalisation by a powerful Other.

Glissant asserts that 'identitarian mutual slaughters will not end until [some chosen] humanities have agreed to consider the identity of everyone, individual or groups, as both inalienable and changeable in its relation to the other.' Following Glissant, I argue further that the negotiation of difference is an important means towards an inclusive humanity. Thus, I read Walcott and Brutus' poetry as attempts at bringing together fragments of a distorted and wounded past to construct the present that represents their respective homes. The wound trope can be interpreted from different perspectives. Apart from evidencing physically wounded dispossessed personae, Walcott and Brutus extend the image to include love wounds, and historical/cultural afflictions. In analysing the poetics of the wound, the question this chapter addresses is: how does a wounded landscape and people serve a poetic writing of home?

### **The Wounded Dispossessed**

The inhabitants of the regions of St Lucia and South Africa can fittingly be described as the wounded dispossessed given a history of the severance from Africa and farmlands, slavery and apartheid respectively. I take my cue from Hamner, who argues that Walcott's *Omeros* is 'an epic of the dispossessed because each of its protagonists is a castaway in

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<sup>755</sup> Michelle Balaev, 'Trends in Literary Trauma Theory', p. 150.

one sense or another... they are transplanted individuals whose separate quest all centre on the fundamental need to strike roots in a place where they belong.’<sup>756</sup> In this vein, Walcott argues that ‘for us in the archipelago the tribal memory is salted with the bitter memory of migration,’<sup>757</sup> expressing the wound suffered as a result of being uprooted from Africa and also the need thereafter to migrate for better livelihood. In Walcott’s *Omeros*, almost all his characters suffer afflictions from the colonial wound of slavery. At the same time, the wound image is used as a significant poetic device to describe the resilient nature of Walcott’s characters, and the healing process of the island. The poet’s wounded personas vivify the horrors of colonialism, creating opportunities for healing and new beginnings. Ramazani posits that the wound trope which ‘is central to *Omeros* suits preconceptions of postcolonial writing as either victim’s literature or resistance literature... anatomizing the wounded body of Philoctete, injured by a rusted anchor.’<sup>758</sup> Hence, in the episode when Ma Kilman administers the herb on Philoctete’s wound from ‘a flask of white / acajou,’<sup>759</sup> the narrator informs us that Philoctete:

...believed the swelling came from the chained ankles  
of his grandfathers. Or else why was there no cure?  
That the cross he carried was not only the anchor’s

But that of his race,<sup>760</sup>

From the stanza, the wound is a symbol of the burden of the entire people of the island, brought about by ‘the chained ankles’ of colonialism. The metaphor of the chained ankles points to how the enslaved were tied together, while ‘the anchor’ represents the slave ship. In commenting on the ‘rusty anchor,’ Fumagalli and Patrick advance that ‘it is also the wound inflicted by tearing Africans from their homeland into New world slavery.’<sup>761</sup>

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<sup>756</sup> Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed*, p. 2.

<sup>757</sup> Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 41.

<sup>758</sup> Jahan Ramazani, ‘The Wound of History: Walcott’s *Omeros* and Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction’, PP. 405-406.

<sup>759</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 18.

<sup>760</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 19.

<sup>761</sup> Maria Cristina Fumagalli and Peter L. Patrick, p. 68.



the French word 'jamais' alongside the English word 'never', the Creole language offers the option of 'pas ka' as 'a means of inevitable hybridi[z]ation.'<sup>764</sup> Significantly, Walcott's use of language shows the enormous opportunity offered to him by the two colonial languages so that he can stretch and bend words to suit his purpose. The inverted commas and question marks are essential in marking the differences in language and in the dialogue. Walcott allows these characters to speak as a means of giving voice to their individuality and the essential role discovery they play in the journey of self-discovery and healing, in his epic.

The stanza also suggests the notion that the wound is a hybrid of sweet and sour juices. I concur with Walcott's assertion that:

I give the strange and bitter and yet ennobling thanks for the monumental groaning and shouldering of two great worlds, like the halves of a fruit seamed by its own bitter juice, that exiled from your own Edens you have placed me in the wonder of another, and that was my inheritance and your gift.<sup>765</sup>

Thus, the bitter juice of slavery and colonialism has produced for the Caribbean the joy of living in a racially mixed society.

Furthermore, aside from a wounded Philoctete, there is also a wounded flower. In reflecting on what herb is to be used to cure Philoctete's wound, Ma Kilman questions:

“It have a flower somewhere, a medicine, and ways  
My grandmother would boil it. I used to watch ants  
Climbing her white flower-pot. But, God, in which place?”

Where was this root? What senna, what tepid tisanes,  
Could clean the branched river of his corrupted blood,  
Whose sap was a wounded cedar's? What did it mean,<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> Kwaku Asante-Darko, 'Language in African Postcolonial Literature', *Comparative Literature and Culture* 2.1 (2000) pp. 1-7 (p. 4).

<sup>765</sup> Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 64.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*

The idea of a wounded cedar suggests that environmental injustice is not only done to humans but also to the environment. Thus, as Huggan and Tiffin argue, the overall trust of eco-critics ‘is that the righting of imperialist wrongs necessarily involves our writing of the wrongs that have been done – and are still being done.’<sup>767</sup> Hence, one way of righting this wrong is shown in Ma Kilman’s search for a ‘wounded cedar’ to heal a wounded shin. I propose that Walcott is trying to indicate the idea of a mutual relationship between man and his environment which must be revered. Worthy of note from the above quote is the idea that the tercet lines are not a straightforward hexameter. The first two lines have thirteen and eleven syllables respectively, instead of an exact twelve syllable of a hexameter. Also, the first two lines begin with an iamb, but this is not a smooth pattern for the rest of the lines. On the contrary, the last line of the same stanza shows a reverse pattern as it begins with a trichroic syllable ‘climb,’ followed by two iambs, thus, giving us a dactylic meter. These varied patterns suggest that the Creole does not follow the classical tradition meter rhyming. The different rhythm has the effect of incorporating the different fragments of people, language and nature on the Island. Also, it would not be wrong therefore, to rely on Braithwaite’s assertion that the Creole language is ‘a nation language in the Caribbean that, in fact, largely ignores the pentameter.’<sup>768</sup>

The use of rhetorical questions in both stanzas suggests a knowledge of a cure that is farfetched and requires spiritual intervention. Thus, Philoctete is puzzled too and questions: ‘where was the root?’ that ‘could clean the branched river of his corrupted blood’.<sup>769</sup> I argue that by his corrupted blood, Philoctete is implying that his ancestral

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<sup>767</sup> Huggan and Tiffin, p. 22.

<sup>768</sup> Braithwaite, ‘Nation Language,’ p. 282.

<sup>769</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 19.

lineage has been contaminated by this hereditary wound. More astonishing is Philoctete's interrogation whether the sap of this flower 'was a wounded cedar's?'<sup>770</sup> Philoctete's bewilderment highlights the idea that the sap, which is to be used for his healing, must be a sap that is as wounded as his wounded shin. He then questions further: 'What did it mean, / this name felt like a fever? Well, one good heft / of his garden-cutlass would slice the damned name clean / from its rotting yam.'<sup>771</sup> Philoctete's name is a modification of Homer's Philoctetes who is abandoned on the island of Lemnos because of his infested wound.<sup>772</sup> Thus, Walcott's Philoctete is right in suggesting that the name sounded like a fever. Ramazani suggests that 'Walcott refers to the colonially imposed name as a source of ancestral wound.'<sup>773</sup> However, instead of an abandoned Philoctetes, Walcott creates a Philoctete who obtains healing at the end of his epic.

Furthermore, the quote expresses Philoctete's struggles to sever himself from the rotting yam which represents colonial history. Walcott's image of a 'rotten yam' signifies an abhorrent aftermath of colonialism and slavery that must be repudiated. Philoctete's questioning the nature of this root brings to bear the idea of the question of roots. He seeks to question his identity given his removal from Africa as one of the sources of his sustained wound. This sensational pain comes off in actions such as: 'his face squinting' and 'clenching his head tight in both hands.'<sup>774</sup> In a fit of anger, 'he hacked them at the heel, noticing how they curled, / head-down without their roots, he cursed the yams: / "Salope! / you will see what's like without roots in this world?"'<sup>775</sup> These lines show Philoctete's anxiety and vexation about not having firm roots. By rendering the yam

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<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

<sup>771</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>772</sup> Sophocles, *Four Tragedies: Ajax Women of Trachis Electra Philoctetes*, trans. by Peter Meineck and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 189-252).

<sup>773</sup> Ramazani, p. 407.

<sup>774</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>775</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 21.

leaves rootless, Philoctete is trying to identify himself with the nature of plants whose roots are not permanent and rejecting the idea of a totalitarian root, as theorised by Glissant.<sup>776</sup> Although the pain of being torn away from one's source is overwhelming, Philoctete is determined to accept his fate by embracing the wound of history seen as we journey with him in this flashback:

Next he heard warriors rushing towards the battle,  
but it was wind lifting the dead yams, the rattle  
of a palm's shaken spears. Herdsman haieing cattle

who sets out to found no cities; they were the found,  
who were bound for no victories; they were the bound,  
who levelled nothing before them; they were the ground

He would be the soul of patience, like an old horse  
stamping one hoof in a pasture, rattling its mane  
or swishing its tail as flies keep circling its sores;<sup>777</sup>

In reminiscing the colonial battle that resulted in his injured nature, Philoctete hears rather the battle of the wind 'lifting the dead yams.' The palms symbolise the spears used in battles while the herdsman tend their cattle. Significantly, these actions or daily battles are not carried out with the hope of finding new cities nor to win victories but rather to maintain life, for a new beginning in the New World. Walcott writes that 'to the survivors, to all the decimated tribes of the New World who did not suffer extinction, their degraded arrival must be seen as the beginning, not the end, of our history.'<sup>778</sup> This new beginning starts with an innovative epic such as this. Hamner writes that the stanzas 'reveal the fissures, the fault lines in heroic tradition, that provided Walcott the opening to experiment with the epic form.'<sup>779</sup> So, instead of real battles and victories, Walcott presents the lives of the suffering poor and their ability to endure and overcome it.

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<sup>776</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 19.

<sup>777</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 22.

<sup>778</sup> Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 41.

<sup>779</sup> Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed: Derek Walcott's Omeros*, p. 43.

Thus, Philoctete states that he and his kin were not bound for any discoveries as they were rather found. He presents himself as the captured one who will not succumb to despair. Hence, he compares himself to a horse who can endure and wade off the offensive fly on his tail. Worth noting is Walcott's use of devices such as: repetition in the phrase 'they were the' and the word 'who', full rhymes in 'found / bound / ground' and 'battle / rattle / cattle,' to enhance the rhythm or musicality of the poem and to emphasise Philoctete's calm acceptance in bearing his pain. The auditory images from the 'battle, rattle and cattle' are effective in indicating that Philoctete's battles are ideological – a fight for an identity, as opposed to Homer's more classical epic battles. This explains why Hamner qualifies *Omeros* 'as a foundation epic, one that inscribes a people's rightful name and place within their own narrative.'<sup>780</sup>

Besides a wounded character, the island is itself wounded. From the later pages of *Omeros*, the island is described as one 'whose every cove was a wound.'<sup>781</sup> The image of the cove depicts a narrow island. One of the elements in this coastal inlet that depicts a wound are the trees:

Achille looked up at the hole the laurel had left.  
He saw the hole silently healing from the foam  
of a cloud like a breaker. Then he saw the swift

crossing the cloud-surf, a small thing, far from its home,  
confused by the waves of blue hills. A thorn vine gripped  
his heel. He tugged it free. Around him, other ships

were shaping from the saw. With his cutlass he made  
a swift sign of the cross, his thumb touching his lips  
while the height rang with axes. He swayed back the blade,

and hacked the limbs from the dead god, knot after knot,

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<sup>780</sup> Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed: Derek Walcott's Omeros*, p. 2.

<sup>781</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 249.

wrenching the severed veins from the trunk as he prayed:  
“Tree! You can be a canoe! Or else you cannot!”

The bearded elders endured the decimation  
of their tribe without uttering a syllable  
of that language they had uttered as one nation,

The speech taught their saplings: from the towering babble  
Of the cedar to green vowels of *bois-campêche*.  
The *bois-flot* held its tongue with the laurier-cannelle,

the red-skinned logwood endured the thorns in its flesh,  
while the Aruacs’ patois crackled in the smell  
of a resinous bonfire that turned the leaves brown

with curling tongues, then ash, and their language was lost.  
Like barbarians striding columns they have brought down,  
the fishermen shouted. The gods were down at last.<sup>782</sup>

From the section, Walcott uses the hole on the tree made by the fishermen as a metaphor with which to describe a wounded race. He refers to this action as the felling down of the ‘gods’, an image that is symbolic of the wounded and decimated indigenous native Americans during the period of slavery. It is important to highlight that the ‘thorn vine’ that grips Achille’s heel reflects the chains of slavery and the wounds it caused. Achille struggles to disentangle himself from this wound as ‘he tugged it free’ to survive the burden. Achille’s enduring nature is a gift, an inheritance from his ancestors, ‘the bearded elders’ who ‘endured the decimation’ of their race. These bearded and wounded ancestors are represented in the stanzas as the trees, a symbol of the protecting present of the Aruacs and a source of livelihood to the inhabitants who use them to create canoes. Walcott puns on the words ‘veins and vines,’ seen when the fishermen ‘hacked the limbs from the dead gods ... wrenching the severed veins.’ Thus, the vines of the trees are the Aruacs whose wounded-limbs produce blood and are referred to as ‘red-skinned logwood.’ Donald Edwin Barnard argues that ‘beyond the immediate physical similarity, this leads into the qualities of blood and wine, their relation to sacrifice particularly, and to vigour and

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<sup>782</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 6.

harvest.’<sup>783</sup> In another sense, I deduce that Walcott compares the sufferings of the inhabitants on the island to that of Christ especially when he alludes to ‘a thorn vine’ and ‘a thorn in the flesh.’ Therefore, as Christ’s suffering is believed to have brought healing to mankind, so too would the Aruacs and fishermen’s sufferings bring healing to a wounded island. Finally, Walcott makes apt use of rhymes. For example, there are perfect rhymes in foam / home, decimation / nation, made / blade which emphasise a wounded but healed island, slant rhymes in lips / ships, not / cannot, forced rhymes in lost / last, and assonance rhyme with the sound /ε/ in flesh /smell. These different rhythmic patterns make the poem easier to understand and enables the co-relation between the wounded ancestors of the past and the present wounded inhabitants of the present-day island.

In Brutus’ South Africa, the black population are physically and psychologically wounded due to apartheid laws and practices. One such experienced of woundedness is being stripped of familial lands. This is an offshoot of the 1913 ‘Native Land Act, restricting African ownership of land designated areas comprising 7 per cent of the country’s total land area.’<sup>784</sup> Thus, the native Africans are deprived of their traditional lands and their rights as humans. Brutus speaks from the margin of such a society. He is an example of that wounded dispossessed South African black shot from the back through his chest as he struggles to escape from the secret police.<sup>785</sup> Brutus was later sent to prison after this experience. It is from his prison experiences that one comes close to understanding some of the wounds suffered by inmates in the apartheid prison system from 1948 upward. Whilst Walcott’s characters become healed to a certain extent towards the end of *Omeros*, Brutus’ persona still hopes that peace will come at some point, and

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<sup>783</sup> Donald Edwin Barnard, ‘A Critical Edition of Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*’ (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2012), p. 12.

<sup>784</sup> Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, p. 22.

<sup>785</sup> Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 75.

that the psychological and physical wounds will be healed when the people become free from oppression.

In Brutus' *Letters to Martha*, instances are evident of a wounded people resisting the iron machinery of the apartheid law enforcement police. Said writes that one of the great topics of decolonising cultural resistance includes the need to 'restore[d] the imprison[ed] nation to itself.'<sup>786</sup> One way towards restoring the sense of oneness is to resist injustice. In 'Let Me Say it'<sup>787</sup> the speaker describes his region as an imprisoned nation that needs freedom from the clutches of the apartheid system especially in instances such as games where black South Africans are denied the right to participate. Brutus uses the image of the 'scar' to underscore the idea that in the process of wounding the oppressed, the perpetrators get wounded as well. In this poem, the speaker boasts of his success in thwarting the participation of South Africa and Rhodesia in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games.<sup>788</sup> This is especially stressed when the poet writes of 'their great New Zealand rivals / the Olympic panoply and Wembley roar,'<sup>789</sup> to express the beauty of this occasion, when to his delight, he used the political activities of SANROC (South Africa Non-Racial Association) to deprive the perpetrators of apartheid from participating in the games. In the first stanza, the poet declares 'let me say it /for no-one else may / or can / or will / or dare.'<sup>790</sup> The use of parallelism and repetition in the preceding lines emphasises and expresses the speaker's determination and fearlessness in his demand for freedom. The lines also state his role as a spokesman for South African non-whites

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<sup>786</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 259.

<sup>787</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Letters to Martha and Other Poems* (London: Heinemann, 1968), p.89.

<sup>788</sup> Kontein Trinya, 'The Poet as a Prophet: A Reading of Dennis Brutus,' [https://www.academia.edu/9846445/THE\\_POET\\_AS\\_PROPHET](https://www.academia.edu/9846445/THE_POET_AS_PROPHET) pp. 1-12 (p. 3) [accessed 23 November 2017].

<sup>789</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 89.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid.

evidently in the use of the ‘I’ persona. Although Tejani<sup>791</sup> questions whether Brutus ‘...really needs courage to say what he wants to say, so that he has to whip himself to such a tension before he can say it?’, I assert that he needed courage indeed, especially because this poem was written in 1966, only a year after the Olympic Games.<sup>792</sup> In addition, the lines express the speaker’s physical and psychological defiance in the face of a terrible beast. He is proud to say that he is responsible for the psychological torture because ‘I have lashed them / the marks of my scars / lie deep in their psyche / and unforgettable / inescapable.’<sup>793</sup> The marks are a constant reminder to the perpetrators of apartheid that change is needed. Ssensalo<sup>794</sup> suggests that Brutus ‘...uses sports, generally, and rugby in particular, as a moral and political vehicle to try to effect political change in South Africa’. This is brought out clearly in the following stanzas:

they who are artists in deprivation  
 who design vast statutory volumes  
 and spend their nights in scheming deprival

I have deprived them  
 that which they hold most dear  
 a prestige which they purchased with sweat  
 and for which they yearn unassuagedly  
 -their sporting prowess and esteem  
 this I have attacked and  
 blasted  
 unforgettably.

The diurnal reminders excoriate their souls<sup>795</sup>

I argue that the speaker is putting across the idea that just as the black South Africans are deprived from public activities through ‘scheming deprival’<sup>796</sup> by the white minorities, so too are the perpetrators now deprived; this ‘diurnal reminders excoriate their souls.’<sup>797</sup> In

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<sup>791</sup> Tejani, ‘Can a Prisoner Make a Poet? A Critical Analysis of Letters to Martha’, p. 143.

<sup>792</sup> Taken from the footnotes in Dennis Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 89.

<sup>793</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 89.

<sup>794</sup> Bede Ssensalo, ‘The Autobiographical Nature of the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, p. 138.

<sup>795</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>796</sup> Brutus, p. 89.

<sup>797</sup> Brutus, p. 90.

this regard, their ‘deprivation’ becomes a psychological wound, a daily reminder of their deprivation from the games. Ojaide asserts that this psychological fight is intended to make the oppressors feel guilty and embarrassed so as to restrain the inhuman policies of apartheid.<sup>798</sup> Brutus coins the word ‘unassuagedly’ to describe the extent to which the white South Africans ensured that they were at ease to the detriment of the non-white population.

The speaker takes pride in the deprivation of his victims because it is ‘that which they hold most dear... / their sporting prowess and esteem / this I have attacked and / blasted / unforgettably.’<sup>799</sup> By this action, the speaker posits that the white South Africans considered their pride wounded. Ssensalo confirms this when he articulates that:

Brutus’ victory was a blow against not just South Africa. It was a blow against Britain, France, the United States... and all those powers who have the nerve to say they are against South African racism and in the same breath turn around and arm the murderer to the teeth.<sup>800</sup>

The speaker is unstoppable in his own deprivation scheme particularly as ‘... they know I will do more.’<sup>801</sup> It is worth noting that the speaker is determined to continue the struggle in building a new South Africa that is free from racial discrimination. Such a constructive process could be realised if the races could exist peacefully together because ‘relation rightfully opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent.’<sup>802</sup> Brutus asserts that:

Whatever African experience and values it might assert which are peculiarly African, the one thing Africanness need not assert is exclusivity. I mean a knowledge of the other – e.g., Western – values and critical or aesthetic standards should not disqualify, still less debar one from a critical function of Africa.<sup>803</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> Ojaide, ‘The Troubadour: The Poet Persona in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, p. 60.

<sup>799</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 90.

<sup>800</sup> Ssensalo, ‘The Autobiographical Nature of the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, p. 139.

<sup>801</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 91.

<sup>802</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 19.

<sup>803</sup> Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 203-204.

In this way, Brutus speaks of the need for every South African to take a place in the world's culture while still bearing features of their origins and experiences. Similarly, Said proposes 'the breaking down of barriers between cultures as an alternative way of conceiving human history.'<sup>804</sup> Said thus importantly reminds us that 'culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriation, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures.'<sup>805</sup>

The prison environment deprives the inmates of their loved ones and of their duties towards the socio-political destiny of their country. In the postscript of his letters, Brutus exposes a speaker who lays bare his wounds of severance:

These are not images to cheer you  
-except that you may see in these small acts  
some evidence of my thought and caring:  
but still I do not fear their power to wound  
knowing your grief, your loss and anxious care,  
rather I send you bits to fill  
the mosaic of your calm and patient knowledge  
-picking the jagged bits embedded in my mind-  
partly to wrench some ease for my own mind.  
And partly that some world sometimes may know.<sup>806</sup>

The postscripts are numbered 1-6, and the above is the first of them in which the speaker gives added information on his prison status. He is very conscious that his words have the power to hurt. However, he writes for this same reason, that the wounded nature of words may pierce other hearts out there to see the evil of the apartheid government. The speaker asserts that for those South Africans living outside the confined walls of the prison, their experience is only a 'mosaic calm.' This is an image which suggests that the black South

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<sup>804</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 260.

<sup>805</sup> Said, p. 261-262.

<sup>806</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Letters To Martha*, p. 68.

Africans state of peace is in bits and pieces as well as their knowledge of prison life. This is because he is only able to draw from the 'jagged bits' in his mind with the intention of obtaining some relief from the pain he feels. Just as Walcott describes the fragmentary nature of his region caused by slavery, Brutus also writes of his landscape that is scarred by apartheid's brutal laws.

These conditions of deprivation and dispossession is heightened:

Even in the cosy days  
of "awaiting trial" status  
it was the deprivation  
and the need  
that one felt most.<sup>807</sup>

These needs are evidently unbearable and are described in letter 13 as 'crouching blows' whose remedy can only be obtained if 'one cushions the mind / with phrases / aphorisms and quotations / to blunt the impact.'<sup>808</sup> These conditions lead in-mates to sometimes wish for death:

One wishes for death  
with a kind of defiant defeatism  
  
wishing that the worst may befall  
since the nearly-worst has so often befallen:  
  
it is not a wish for oblivion  
but a pugnacious assertion of discontent  
  
a disgust at the boundless opprobrium of life  
a desperation; despair.<sup>809</sup>

Although the stanza suggests a wish for death, it is in defiant defeatism which implies wishing for the worst as a form of resistance. This idea comes out clearly in the word 'pugnacious' which underlines the concept that it is a wish to combat 'discontent' and not

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<sup>807</sup> Brutus, *Letters To Martha*, p. 62.

<sup>808</sup> Brutus, p. 63.

<sup>809</sup> Brutus, p. 87.

a wish to forget. The wish not to forget is itself a form of resistance against every pain and wound inflicted on the self in prison. The above poem is written in unrhymed couplet and filled with repetitions such as: ‘a disgust / despair’, ‘defiant defeatism’, ‘befall / befallen.’ These paired words also evidence the use of alliteration and internal rhyme in the short vowel sound [I]. These devices enhance the musical quality which suggest a readiness to fight and capture the nature of incarceration. Christopher Babatunde Ogunyemi asserts that ‘Dennis Brutus uses his poem not only to denote his prison experiences but to capture the phenomenon of captivity the people suffered.’<sup>810</sup>

The grim recognition of the speaker’s condition paves the way to an acceptance of the condition of life and the blessings accruing from it in letter 10:

It is not all terror  
and deprivation,  
you know;

one comes to welcome the closer contact  
and understanding one achieves  
with one’s fellow-men,  
fellows, compeers;

and the discipline does much to force  
a shape and pattern on one’s daily life  
as well as on the days

and honest toil  
offers some redeeming hours  
for the wasted years;

so there are times  
when the mind is bright and restful  
though alive:  
rather like the full calm morning sea.<sup>811</sup>

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<sup>810</sup> Christopher Babatunde Ogunyemi, ‘Salient Themes as Voices in African Poetry’, *The Belogradchik Journal for local History, Cultural Heritage and Folk Studies* 2,2 (2011), (p.241).

<sup>811</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Letters To Martha*, p. 60.

In contrast to Walcott, the above letter provides an example of Brutus's simplistic use of language which aims for clarity on not only the evil of prison life, but also, its re-shaping of the individual. Other than the experience of terror and deprivation, the speaker welcomes 'the closer contact and understanding' that accompanies the horrendous prison conditions. This close contact with 'compeers' in a multi-racial prison such as Robben Island, reflects Glissant's idea of Relation. He writes that 'relation links diversities and perceives and names differences and works persistently on our consciousness and revives our intentions.'<sup>812</sup> Thus, new knowledge is gained in association with the other. This knowledge also extends to a new 'shape and pattern' of the inmate's everyday life so much so that the 'honest toil' or labour is appreciated because it helps in 'redeeming hours.' Hence, the speaker looks on the positive side of prison life. The mind is said to be as 'bright and restful as 'the full calm morning sea.' This simile is salient in showing the acceptance of the prison condition and the need to make good out of it.

In reviewing the film 'Robben Island our University', Keyan Tomaselli and others advance that the former inmates and now actors:

...wanted to stress the other side of prison life, where adversity could be turned to advantage. Despite the often petty punishment meted out by the warders, and loneliness which often overcome a desire to think, these former prisoners argue in hindsight that time on the island had given them an opportunity to think, to discuss, to strengthen each other, to read and, above all to galvanise their political resources.<sup>813</sup>

I argue that the element of time in Brutus' prison literature is a piercing wound which remains a force to be reckoned with it through most of his letters especially when he refers

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<sup>812</sup> Édouard Glissant, 'In praise of the Different and of Difference', *Callaloo*, 36.4 (2013), 856-862, (p. 861).

<sup>813</sup> Keyan Tomaselli, Maureen Eke, and Patricia Davison, 'Transcending Prison as a Metaphor of Apartheid', *Visual Anthropology* 9 (2010), pp. 285-300 (p. 291).

to it as ‘wasted years.’ These wasted years are evidently brought out through the historical and cultural events of the time.

### **Historical and Cultural Wounds**

The historical and cultural wounds abound in the selected poetry due to the confluence of cultural groups in historical times. Major Plunkett is described as a British ex-patriate who settles on the island and makes it home after the fall of the empire. When we meet him, he ‘gently settles his Guinness’<sup>814</sup> and the speaker depicts him as drowning himself in a beer. The narrator asserts that he suffers from a wound in his head. Through a historical allusion, Major Plunkett articulates that he sustained the wound while serving under ‘Monty,’<sup>815</sup> the Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, a senior British Army officer who fought in both World Wars. Using Latin phrases, Walcott gives voice to the Major, who expresses the command for battle at the time of the war. For example, ‘Pro Rommel, pro mori’<sup>816</sup> which means actions in support for Rommel and in support of war, which in turn provides background information not only of a wounded Plunkett, but also of a wounded island with a wounded history. The character of Rommel, a German commander emphasises the ironic significance in a pride of war:

all history /in a dusty Beefeater’s gin.  
In a dusty Beefeater’s gin. We helped ourselves  
To these green islands like olives from a saucer,  
  
munched on the pith, then spat their sucked stones on a plate,  
like a melon’s black seeds. Pro honoris causa,  
but in whose honour did his head-wound graduate.<sup>817</sup>

From the stanzas, the Major voices the historical idea of imperialism especially in the metaphoric reference to olives as a symbolic description of the green nature of the

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<sup>814</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 24.

<sup>815</sup> Derek Walcott, p. 25.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid.

landscape of St Lucia ready to be consumed. I discuss that the act of eating the pith suggests an exploitation of the island's resources and its people. The simile compares olive seed to a melon's black seed and emphasises the idea that the juicy part of the island is being sucked away by the colonisers. The torturous wound in Plunkett's head leads him to questions about in whose honour such a 'pro honoris causa' was obtained. I suggest that Walcott's sustained use of Latin in the preceded phrase is intended to give voice to his inherited language through a colonial education system. Thus, 'this is the benediction that is celebrated, a fresh language and a fresh people, and this is the frightening duty owed'<sup>818</sup> despite its wounded history.

In a flashback Walcott exposes the idea that we are not only dealing with a wounded island but also wounded officers. In so doing, the speaker asserts that in the cause of inflicting pain on the island, the victimisers also sustain injuries. This idea is heightened with a macabre sense of humour:

...just keep yer bleedin' 'ead low!  
Scott was running to them, laughing, but the only thing  
  
funny about him was the fact that one elbow  
didn't have the rest of the arm. He jerked the thing  
from the stump, mimicking a Kraut salute; then, as  
  
his astonishing passes, he sagged down from the knees  
with that grin. And I turned to Tumbly and his eyes  
were open but not moving; then an awful noise  
  
lifted all of us up from the sand I guess  
I was hit then, but I could remember nothing  
for months, in causality.<sup>819</sup>

The realities of the battle ground are conveyed through the speaker's use of the personal pronouns 'I, he, him, us' to give a first-hand witness of the war over the island and a

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<sup>818</sup> Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 79.

<sup>819</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 27.

narrative sense of this epic moment. The reference to ‘a Kraut salute’, a derogatory phrase for a German soldier, justifies the setting – battle ground and the wound sustained. The image of a bleeding head, an amputee and the speaker’s own ‘hit’ are evidence of wounded bodies in a war over an island. Plunkett’s wound captures the poet’s motive for writing when he asserts that: ‘this wound I have stitched into Plunkett’s character. / He has to be wounded, affliction is one theme / of this work, this fiction...’<sup>820</sup> In fictionalising this character, Walcott suggests that the casualties of the war rest on both the perpetrators as well as the inhabitants. He therefore subjects these characters to some form of healing. For example, Major Plunkett seeks healing by trying to give the island a sense of place because: ‘Helen needed a history, / That was the pity that Plunkett felt towards her / Not his, but her story. Not theirs, but Helen’s war.’<sup>821</sup> The telling of this story is essential in the healing process of both the conquistador and the conquered. This is because ‘the common experience of the New World, even for its patrician writers whose veneration of the Old is read as idolatry of the mestizo, is colonialism.’<sup>822</sup>

The poetics of the wound becomes very glaring during Philoctete’s healing process with Ma Kilman, a woman ‘webbed with a spider’s knowledge of an after-life.’<sup>823</sup> Through this character, Walcott takes the reader on a journey of discovery and then spiritual and physical healing of wounds respectively. At the outset of the healing process, the reader is made to understand that the wounds suffered by the characters stems from history. Images of the wound includes the ‘cauldron’ which is to serve as ‘the medicinal bath’ for the wounded Philoctete, ‘the thorn’ that ‘waited for a black hand / to break it in bits and

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<sup>820</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 28.

<sup>821</sup> Walcott, p.30.

<sup>822</sup> Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 38.

<sup>823</sup> Walcott *Omeros*, p. 58.

boil its leaves for the wound / from the pronged anchor rusting in clean bottom-sand.<sup>824</sup>

The cauldron which Ma Kilman intends to use as a healing bath takes us back to the site of plantation slavery where these boiling pots were used in the sugar factories. The leaves of ‘the thorn’ are to be boiled in this bath. The thorn represents pain and suffering just like the pain on Philoctete’s shin, sustained from the ‘the pronged anchor’, the ship that transported the Africans to the New World. By virtue of this journey, Philoctete and the entire community incurred a wound that needs healing by ‘a black hand.’ The synecdochised ‘black hand’ represents that of the obeah woman, Mother-Africa, is the healer of a lost history and people.

Laurette Collins comments that ‘the wound becomes the visible site of the cultural and historical travesty. At the same time, acute and chronic pain serves the creative function of compelling society to initiate a search for relief for the individual.’<sup>825</sup> I argue that this search necessitates an excavation of the turbulent historical and cultural origins of the Wound and its healing process in *Omeros*. This healing journey begins when Ma Kilman goes ‘to five o’clock Mass, to la Messe’ where she participates in Holy Communion by receiving ‘the wafer.’ And then on her rosary, she is:

numbering her beads, she began her own litany  
of berries, Hail Mary marigolds that stiffen  
their aureoles in the heights, mild anemone

and clear watercress, the sacred heart of Jesus  
pierced like anthurium, the thorns of logwood,  
called the tree of life, the aloe good for seizures,

the hole in the daisy’s palm, with its drying blood  
that was the hole in the fisherman’s shin since he was  
pierced by a hook; there was the pale, roadside tisane

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<sup>824</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 235-236.

<sup>825</sup> Lauretta Collins, ‘We shall All Heal: Ma Kilman, the obeah Woman as Mother-Healer in Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*, p. 152.

of her malarial childhood. There was this one  
for easing a birth-breach, that one for a love-bath,  
before the buds of grass sugar-apples in the suns

ripened like her nipples in girlhood. But what path  
led through nettles to the cure, the furious sibyl  
couldn't remember...<sup>826</sup>

From the tercets, wounded images such as - 'the sacred heart of Jesus / pierced like anthurium', 'the hole in the daisy's palm', 'the fisherman's shin ... pierced by a hook' - expose the veritable need for an obeah's healing. Using a simile that compares the red distinctly shaped anthurium to the sacred heart of Jesus, Walcott appeals to visual images of the colour red which stands for the blood that oozes from a wounded heart, a figure made familiar through the colonial imposition of Christianity in the island. This biblical allusion to 'the holes in the daisy's palm' ties in with the fisherman's wounded shin, pierced by a hook. Walcott metaphorically compares the sufferings of Christ on 'the tree of life' on behalf of mankind, to the sufferings of the wounded Philoctete on behalf of his community. In this vein, I propose that both wounds function as a synecdoche for the collective sufferings of the community.

Ma Kilman recites on her beads the different herbs and flowers along with their uses, instead of the traditional recitation of the rosary and litany. While this might be interpreted as a form of naming, it also reflects a blend of both modern and traditional beliefs in healing through the mass and herbs, respectively. In this regard, Walcott writes that:

what remains in the archipelago is the fragmentation into schisms, the private cosmology of the wayside preacher. Every day in these islands the sidewalk blossoms with such victims, minds disfigured by their attempt to comprehend both worlds unless they create a heaven of which they are the centre.<sup>827</sup>

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<sup>826</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 236-237.

<sup>827</sup> Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 44.

From Walcott's assertion, I suggest that Ma Kilman creates a centre for herself by deciding to embrace both religions. Thus, Thomas Austenfeld posits that Walcott 'poetically combines the resolution of postcolonial suffering through African wisdom with Edenic vision.'<sup>828</sup> The irregular rhyme scheme of the stanza is salient in underscoring the complex mix of belief systems, Ma Kilman's difficulties of remembering and the tedious search for 'the nettles.'

The image of 'the nettles' and the 'pronged flower' are incredibly significant in this healing process. They are suggestive of wounded plants that must be used to heal a wounded fisherman. After her meditation at la Messe, Ma Kilman steps out into the 'early mornings of perpetual freshness, in which the bearded arms of the cedar held council.' The visual imagery of nature alongside the personification of nature, underlines the invaluable connection between man and his environment. It is in this light that Huggan and Tiffin argue that 'postcolonial ecocriticism preserves the aesthetic function of the literary text while drawing attention to its social and political usefulness, its capacity to set out symbolic guidelines for the material transformation of the world.'<sup>829</sup> The 'material transformation' of Walcott's characters is made possible as Ma Kilman seeks the plant which grows between the 'gnarled toes' of the cedar. It is a plant with a 'pronged flower' that 'sprang like a buried anchor; its windborne odours / diverted the bee from its pollen, but its power, / rooted in bitterness, drew her bowed head by the nose.'<sup>830</sup> This plant's

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<sup>828</sup> Thomas Austenfeld, 'How to Begin a New World: Dante in Walcott's *Omeros*', *South Atlantic Review* 71.3. (2006), pp. 15-28 (p. 15).

<sup>829</sup> Huggan and Tiffin, p. 14.

<sup>830</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 237.

survival is of utmost importance, hence it is protected by the cedar tree. Its resilient nature is given away by the odour it carries so much so that it sends away the bees from its pores.

Walcott takes the reader to the past through the image of a buried anchor, an image which calls to memory the slave ship as well as the 'the bight of Benin', one of the areas of slave origin in Africa. Although this is an irreversible site because the deeds of slavery cannot be undone, it must be revisited all the same as a means of revivifying the wound of history as a starting point for healing. Thus, 'the voice must grovel in search of itself, until gesture and sound fuse and the blaze of their flesh astonishes them. The children of slaves must sear their memory with a torch.'<sup>831</sup> Philoctete's healing and that of the community can only be obtained through a tedious search for the right herb. Ma Kilman undertakes this task by climbing the mountain. As 'she climbed hard up the rain-cracked path, the bay closing behind her / like a wound, and rested.' The image of 'the bay closing' signifies a wound's closure and the washing away of that pain of history. Her climbing leads her to a 'line of ants at her feet.' This image reminds her of the enduring nature of her ancestors and reinforces her strength on this journey.

The healing process begins spiritually and ends physically. As Ma Kilman 'scraped the earth with her nails' and 'as her screech reeled backwards / to its beginning', Philoctete could feel the impact given so that he 'shook himself up from the bed of his grave, / and felt the pain draining, as the surf-flowers sink through sand.' As an embodiment of Mother-earth, Philoctete felt healed where he laid the moment Ma Kilman's hands make contact with the earth. Collins writes that

for Walcott, healing demands a return to mother-culture, to an awareness of how women have preserved Afro-Caribbean traditions, to a memory of how

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<sup>831</sup> Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 5.

enslaved women carried their burdens, and to a spiritual sense of an ancestral Mother Africa. Ma Kilman, as ancestral mother-healer, comes to represent each of these contributions to island culture.<sup>832</sup>

It also evident that Ma Kilman herself inhabits the wound of her community especially when she avows that ‘there was no difference between me and Philoctete. One wound gibbers in the weeping / mouth of the sibyl.’ Her gibbering utterance is reflective of a wounded language severed from its source. After being physically cleansed and healed of his wound in Ma Kilman’s Cauldron, Philoctete is compared to a new creature:

as he stood like a boy in his bath with the first clay’s  
innocent prick! So she threw Adam a towel.  
And the yard was Eden. And its light the first day’s.<sup>833</sup>

The stanza echoes Walcott’s idea of a new beginning in the New World. A theme he goes back to time and again to appreciate the mixed blessings of the New World – the curse of being driven from one paradise into the arms of another paradise.<sup>834</sup> Austenfeld suggests that ‘the healing of Philoctete is the signal event in a group of poetic moments about to follow in quick succession in which Walcott suggests that his epic starts a New World.’<sup>835</sup> Thus, the New World poet creates this new beginning through a Relation between the African and Christian rituals in his contemporary world.

In another episode, Walcott makes a parallel analysis of the dispossessed St Lucians and the American Indians. While reflecting on his wounded love or broken marriage, the narrator states that ‘our contracts / were torn like the clouds, like treaties with the Indians.’<sup>836</sup> The narrator compares his failed marriage to the failed promise and treaties between the Indians and the American government and the result is ‘a land that was lost’

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<sup>832</sup> Laurette Collins, p. 148.

<sup>833</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 248.

<sup>834</sup> Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 64.

<sup>835</sup> Thomas Austenfeld, ‘How to Begin a New World: Dante in Walcott’s *Omeros*’, p. 15.

<sup>836</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 175.

and ‘a woman who was gone’<sup>837</sup> respectively. Jill B. Gidmark and Anthony Hunt comment that ‘either within or without the poem, it is obvious that Walcott has wounds of the spirit in general, wounds of personal loss, wounds that the writing of *Omeros* may have helped to heal.’<sup>838</sup> Thus, in reflecting on his wounded and lonely nature, the narrator takes the reader on a painful journey to a wounded past. Walcott discusses that to undertake a journey to the past is ‘to record the anguish of the race. To do this, they must return through a darkness whose terminus is amnesia. The darkness which yawns before them is terrifying. It is a journey back from man to ape.’<sup>839</sup> This journey becomes difficult too because of the differing settings exposed as the reader moves with Walcott from the island to the Dakotas, Europe and back to the island again. I comment that the fractured nature of these journeys reflects the composite and fragmentary nature of the Caribbean landscape.

Like Walcott’s narrators, Brutus’ personas suffer afflictions due to the power struggle in the apartheid prison system of Robben Island. Such a power struggle reflect racial conflicts outside the prison system. The poet writes to expose these problems as a means of seeking solutions for them. Hence ‘Brutus reaction to the tragedy of South Africa is... to heal and restore the life of the ordinary black South African and indeed the human race.’<sup>840</sup> In ‘Cold’, Brutus provides a descriptive picture of the prison culture and its wounded bodies:

Over head  
the large frosty glitter of the stars  
the Southern Cross flowering low;

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<sup>837</sup> Ibid.

<sup>838</sup> Jill B. Gidmark and Anthony Hunt, ‘Catherine Weldon: Derek Walcott’s Visionary Telling of History’, *CEA Critic* 59.1 (1996), pp. 8-20 (p. 10).

<sup>839</sup> Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 5.

<sup>840</sup> Emmanuel Amase, Kaan Aondover, Nwabudike Christopher, ‘African Literature and English Language: A Political Literary Discourse’, *International Humanities and Social Science Invention* 2.3 (2013), pp. 63-68 (p. 66).

the chains on our ankles  
and wrists  
that pair us together  
jangle

glitter.

We begin to move  
Awkwardly.<sup>841</sup>

The wound image is seen in the chains that bind the prisoners from their ankles to their wrists. Brutus speaks of this experience:

I was kept in a prison in Johannesburg after I had been shot in the stomach by the secret police, then put in a truck with about sixty other prisoners. We were chained together, hands and ankles, and put in trucks and taken to Robben island.<sup>842</sup>

The wound here signifies bondage, slavery and colonialism fostered by the apartheid government in its white supremacist policy that dehumanises and discriminates. Visual images of the star, the symbol of the Southern Cross that glitters and extends its light to the chains on the prisoners' ankles and wrists are painted. Through these images, the poet contrasts the imprisoned nature of the prisoners against the brightness of the star. I propose that nature is indifferent to the plight of the inmates in its frosty glitter. The repetition of the definite article 'the' and the adjective 'glitter' which appear three times in the poem, emphasises not only the prisoners' wounded nature, but also nature's indifference. Brutus set up a contrast in terms of the length of lines and in using a co-ordinating conjunction in 'the chains on our ankles' / 'and wrists,' to give a vivid picture of chains that run from the legs that are longer, to the arms that are shorter. Thus, he expresses the difficulty of walking which is made more apparent by the indentation of the word 'awkwardly.' As written on the page, 'awkwardly' evidences a picture of the prisoners' stumbling movements to Robben Island. Brutus asserts that 'awkwardness is

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<sup>841</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha and Other Poems*, p. 52.

<sup>842</sup> Bernth Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 162.

gracelessness, is being without grace, is being ungraceful, if one is graceless, if one is awkward, couldn't one also be, if without grace, forsaken by God?... the loss of grace – is the absolute depth of deprivation.<sup>843</sup> These statements show the dehumanising structure of the apartheid colonial prison system. The auditory images from the chains are harsh and heightened by the rhyming vowel [æ] and consonant [ŋ] sounds in the words: ankles and jangle.

The poet piles images upon images to convey a vivid description of the deplorable conditions and pain suffered by political prisoners:

the clammy cement  
sucks our naked feet

a rheumy yellow bulb  
lights a damp grey wall

The stubbled grass  
Wet with three o'clock dew  
Is black with glittery edges;

we sit on the concrete,  
stuff with our fingers  
the sugarless pap  
into our mouths

then labour erect;

form lines;<sup>844</sup>

Tactile images of touch are evident in the 'clammy cement,' an alliteration that brings to reality the unfriendly atmosphere for the inmates, as well as the 'damp grey walls', and the 'dew' on the grass. The prison is poorly kept so much so that the lighting system is such that it could cause blindness. The prisoners are psychologically wounded in their dehumanising state especially in having to sit on concrete and eat 'sugarless pap.' Brutus

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<sup>843</sup> Bernth Lindfors, p. 164.

<sup>844</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Letters to Martha and Other Poems*, p. 52.

articulates that ‘halfway on the journey, in a little town called Colesburg, we stopped for the night and were given porridge.’<sup>845</sup> The porridge here is almost placed in dialogue with the ‘sugarless pap’ the inmates must eat. This image portrays the dehumanising conditions of prison life for any black political prisoner in South Africa. Babatunde Ogunyemi expresses that ‘Denis Brutus uses his poems not only to denote his prison experiences but to capture the phenomenon of captivity the people suffer.’<sup>846</sup> In doing so, I suggest that Brutus gives voice to the plight of the political prisoners as a means of seeking solutions.

The poet uses concise diction which could be said to depict the constrained environment. The use of quotation marks in these lines: “things like this I have no time for; / they are worse than rats; / you can only shoot them”<sup>847</sup> aims to make a distinction between the speaker’s words and the direct speech of the Warder. This statement also reinforces the idea that the inmates are considered sub-human. Thus, Helize Van Vuuren argues that ‘Dennis Brutus’s ‘Letters to Martha...foregrounds disintegration of the self, or depersonalisation.’<sup>848</sup> Like Walcott’s wounded British expatriate, Major Plunkett, Brutus’s jailer is mentally wounded and morally depraved. In terms of style, Brutus’ varied stanzas (one line, two lines, three lines to four lines) portrays a variety of style, especially for a poet who has had the privilege to be exposed to the different traditions of writing, himself having been schooled in the English tradition.

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<sup>845</sup> Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 164.

<sup>846</sup> Christopher Babatunde Ogunyemi, ‘Salient Themes as Voices in African Poetry’, p. 241.

<sup>847</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 53.

<sup>848</sup> Helize Van Vuuren, “‘Labyrinth of loneliness’: Breytenbach’s Prison Poetry (1976-1985)”, *Tydskrif vir Litterkunde* 46.2 (2009), pp. 43-56 (p. 44).

In addition, the prison system is an architectural metaphor that instils fear in the speaker. In the first letter, the speaker expresses these wounds of fear, fear of the unknown world of prison life that awaits them:

After the sentence  
Mingled feelings:  
Sick relief,  
The load of the approaching days  
Apprehension –  
The hints of brutality  
Have a depth of personal meaning;

Exultation –  
The sense of challenge,  
Of confrontation,  
Vague heroism  
Mixed with self-pity  
And tempered by the knowledge of those  
Who endured much more  
And endure ...<sup>849</sup>

The above exposes the psychological torture experienced by inmates. They are filled with mixed feelings about the weight of ‘the approaching days,’ their apprehension of the kind of brutality they could experience. Amid these jumbled up feelings, the best thing to do is to take the challenge to confront them and to endure their sufferings. Brutus uses varied end-stop lines such as colons, semi-colons, dashes, comas and periods. Although these punctuations regulate the tempo and the rhythm, they are however inter-spaced by enjambments as seen in the first stanza. The effect of this is to emphasise the psychological pain and sufferings experienced by apartheid political prisoners. One gruesome moment that hint at the horror of prison life is reflected in letter 2 when:

One learns quite soon  
that nails and screws  
and other sizeable bits of metal  
must be handed in;

and seeing them shaped and sharpened  
one is chilled, appalled  
to see how vicious it can be

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<sup>849</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 54.

-this simple, useful bit of steel:<sup>850</sup>

The instruments of torture handed in are useful; the inmates use them to inflict wounds on each other as a means towards protecting themselves especially noticed when ‘these knives suddenly flash - / produced perhaps from some disciplined anus-’<sup>851</sup> Kalu Kalu Obasi examines that:

Brutus ... notes periods of hostility among in-mates, especially those who have been incarcerated for criminal offences, search for nails, screws; and other sizeable bits of metal to design dangerous weapons with which to seek revenge or exercise exuberance and power among the in-mates.<sup>852</sup>

Inflicting wounds therefore becomes a means of survival given that the speaker refers to these instruments as ‘useful bits of steel.’ The alliteration in ‘shape and sharpened’, and the internal rhyme in ‘chilled and appalled’ serve to heighten the fear and psychic traumatic pain in imagining ‘how vicious’ these instruments can be on ‘naked flesh.’<sup>853</sup> I propose that the poet’s form of writing is that of an unembellished prosaic nature, a choice which enables him to be straightforward in revealing the apartheid prison conditions.

In addition to the psychological wounds experienced by the inmates, the poet presents a series of descriptive episodes evidencing the wounded bodies of inmates:

In the greyness of isolated time  
Which shafts down into the echoing mind,  
Wraiths appear, whispers of horrors  
That people the labyrinth of the self.

Coprophilism; necrophilism; fellatio;  
Penis-amputation;  
And in this gibbering society  
Hooting for recognition as one’s other selves  
Suicide, self-damnation, walks  
If not a companionable ghost  
Then a familiar familiar,  
A doppelgänger

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<sup>850</sup> Ibid.

<sup>851</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 55.

<sup>852</sup> Kalu Obasi Kalu, ‘Echo of Poesy in South Africa’s Politics: Form and Resistance in Dennis Brutus’ “Simple Lust” and “Letters to Martha”, *English Linguistics Research* 6.4 (2017), pp. 25-37, (p.32).

<sup>853</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 55.

Not to be shaken off.<sup>854</sup>

In this fifth letter, the speaker reveals the effect of time and the horrors of sodomy, decay, dirt and enforced homosexuality. Time in prison is described using the colour grey to symbolise bleakness and grimness. Living in isolation wounds the mind and drives it to imagine the apparition of ghosts and whispers of horrors. Thus, Brutus presents the individual's thought pattern as complicated, which I have chosen to describe as a psychic disorder caused by a horrifying prison system.

The infliction of physical wounds through penis-amputation is perhaps the most horrific. I suggest that the adjectival use of a 'gibbering society' is an apt description of a wounded society. In this meaningless and fragmentary society, there is a desire to seek recognition and to create an identity of the self. I deduce from the quoted lines above that one such way of 'hooting' for recognition is to seek suicide, self-defamation and to create pictures in one's mind of 'a doppelganger' or what the poet describes as 'a familiar familiar' ghost. This repetition of 'familiar' enhances the haunting and lingering nature of these images. I suggest that the struggle for recognition by the inmates is as a result of the debased and wounded nature of their personalities in the setup prison structure. It is significant to underscore the poet's use of language. He appeals to auditory images such as: 'echoing', 'whispers' and 'hooting' to express psychological pain. In addition, Brutus uses rhetoric in his choice of words especially in 'coprophilism', 'necrophilism', and 'feliatio.' Aside from that, there are instances of where the language is colloquial. An example of this is in the last few lines of the stanza beginning 'suicide ... off.' These words give the poem a macabre effect. Nkondo writes that 'the half-amused, shoulder-shrugging tolerance keeps the rhetorical from becoming fustian while it gives a sardonic edge to the slang.'<sup>855</sup>

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<sup>854</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 57.

<sup>855</sup> Gessler Moses Nkondo, 'Dennis Brutus: The Domestication of a Tradition', P. 38.

I propose that this creates a balance between Brutus' simplistic and complex use of language to abhor the South African government. The extent of the inmates' wounded personalities is evident in the manifold and strange ways in which these prisoners seek escape and healing:

Two men I knew specifically  
among many cases:  
their reactions were enormously different  
but a tense thought lay at the bottom of each  
and for both there was danger and fear and pain –  
drama.

One simply gave up smoking  
knowing he could be bribed  
and hedged his mind with romantic fantasies  
of beautiful marriageable daughters;

the other sought escape  
in fainting fits and asthmas  
and finally fled into insanity:

So great the pressures to enforce sodomy.<sup>856</sup>

Like Walcott's characters who obtain some form of healing through an obeah woman, Brutus' characters do too, but in rather odd ways. For example, the speaker gives a report of two men he knew and how they sought healing. It is important to note that the 'I' persona gives first-hand information of the scenario and appeals to our participation and understanding of the tremendous pain suffered by inmates. Although these two men seek soothing relief for their wounds in different ways, 'a tense thought lay at the bottom of each / and for both there was danger and fear and pain- / drama.' The dramatic actions of these men are heightened by a parallelism of danger, fear and pain. One gave up smoking in order not to be bribed into homosexual acts while 'the other sought escape / in fainting fit and asthmas / and finally fled into insanity. Brutus' apt use of alliteration and the repetition of the voiceless fricative sound [f] are aimed at expressing the difficult,

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<sup>856</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 57.

frictional and suffocating prison environment. This is an example of what Chikwenye Ogunyemi describes as ‘the waste of human potential.’<sup>857</sup> Brutus avows that prisoners were rewarded for sexual assaults on political prisoners. Here is an example

of a young boy, no more than a schoolboy, who was first starved into submission, then in addition beaten to compel him to submit, beaten until he wept and cried, urinated and generally messed up his cell, but after this would continue to be starved to the point where he himself begged for sexual assault.<sup>858</sup>

From Brutus’s assertion, it is very clear that the prisoners are compelled by the security police to carry out actions of sexual assaults on each other. They are denied the right to choose how to express their desires and practise love in the way they see fit. Love for home and love for fellow humans are important concepts in Walcott and Brutus’s relational poetics. In whatever form this love is expressed, it nonetheless points to the idea of either a successful or failed Relation at home.

### **Love Wound**

Walcott and Brutus dive into the inner world of their speakers to expose wounds that they suffer as a result of unrequited love from a lover. At the same time, these wounds are as a result of oppressive control of a lover who symbolises the speaker’s home. In *Omeros*, the love wound includes the love of a lost home, loss of a loved one and a broken marriage. In Book One of *Omeros*, we are introduced to a fight between Hector and Achille, two fishermen on the island whose rage is over the love of a girl called Helen:

“Touchez-I, encore: N’ai fender chox-ous-ou, salope!”  
“Touch it again, and I’ll split your arse, you bitch!”  
“Moi j’a dire-‘ous pas

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Hector ran, splashing

In shallows mixed with drizzle, towards Achille,  
His cutlass lifted. The surf, in anger, gnashing

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<sup>857</sup> Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, ‘The Song of the caged bird: Contemporary African Prison Poetry’, *Ariel* 13.4 (1985), pp. 65-84 (p. 66).

<sup>858</sup> Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 105.

Its tail like a foaming dogfight. Men can kill

Their own brother in rage, but the madman who tore  
Achille's undershirt from one shoulder also tore  
At his heart. The rage that he felt against Hector

Was shame. To go crazy for an old bailing tin  
Crusted with rust! The duel of these fishermen  
Was over a shadow and its name was Helen.<sup>859</sup>

Hector's wild rage against Achille stems from a tin which he alleges Achille stole from him. The first three stanzas expose the narrator's concern with naming and language. Slave owners often gave their slaves names. Hence, by using these classical names, Walcott is making a statement against the wound of a violent imposition of slavery and consequently, the violent disruption of a people's sense of home and identity. On the other hand, these Homeric parallels also highlight the notion of intertextuality and pluralism that are part of the Caribbean landscape. Ramazani posits that the

wound and cure show Walcott not shedding but deepening his European interests as he explores his African commitments, putting into dialectical interrelation literary and cultural influences that would seem to be politically antithetical and becoming neither a Eurocentric nor an Afrocentric poet but an ever more multicentric poet of the contemporary world.<sup>860</sup>

The use of the French and English Creole depicts the multicentric, intertextual and cross-cultural nature of Walcott's poetics that Ramazani writes about. Although language signals another wound in terms of the displacement of its inhabitants from their ancestral homes, this wound has turned out to be a blessing in postcolonial writings. Walcott asserts that there is virtue in deprivation because

deprived of their own language, the captured and indentured tribes create their own, accreting and secreting fragments of an old, an epic vocabulary. From Asia and from Africa, but to an ancestral, an ecstatic rhythm in the blood that cannot be subdued by slavery or indenture, while nouns are renamed and the given names of places accepted.<sup>861</sup>

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<sup>859</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>860</sup> Jahan Ramazani, 'The Wound of History: Walcott's *Omeros* and the Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction', p. 411.

<sup>861</sup> Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p.70.

I align Walcott's statement of virtue in deprivation with the narrator's conviction that, 'this language carries its cure / its radiant affliction.'<sup>862</sup> The 'radiant affliction' indicates the paradox of a scarred but beautiful language. Ramazani opines that 'European languages inflicted on African Caribbeans can be turned from curses into blessings.'<sup>863</sup> By placing the French and English Creole side by side, Walcott echoes the postcolonial poetics of code-switching which Ashcroft<sup>864</sup> describes as an attempt by the polydialectal writer to make dialect more accessible. In addition, I suggest that code-switching might be a way to articulate the Creole Language of the island and in a way give voice to the people. Hector and Achille are a representation of France and Britain, two colonial powers whose rivalry over the island of St Lucia reflects the rivalry between Hector and Achille's love for Helen respectively. Through this rivalry, Walcott exposes another wound trope that causes Achille pain, so much so that his heart is said to be wounded by the tearing of his undershirt inflicted by Hector's cutlass. Achille's torn undershirt acts as a metaphor in relation to Hector's love for Helen. The tin is also a metaphor which the poet uses to symbolise the island / Helen. Their wish to possess Helen is expressed in their desire to be 'king of Gros Islet'<sup>865</sup> or to be a 'Logwood Heart.'<sup>866</sup> The significance of this metaphor lies in the function of Logwoods which were imported into the Caribbean and used by the British to dye cloth.<sup>867</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 323.

<sup>863</sup> Jahan Ramazani, 'The Wound of History: Walcott's *Omeros* and the Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction', p. 413.

<sup>864</sup> Ashcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 71.

<sup>865</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 16.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>867</sup> Victor Manuel Durán, 'Cultural connections in Belize', *Americas* 60.4 (2008), pp. 1-2 (p.1).

The love triangle between Hector, Helen and Achille is one of the most pivotal moments in Walcott's poetics. The love wound has a subtle and profound impact on the characters.

For example, Achille's afflictions run deeper when Helen leaves him for Hector,

Shortly after, she moved in with Hector. She moved  
Everything while he was fishing but a hairpin  
Stuck in her soap-dish. To him this proved

That she would come back. Stranger things than that happen  
Every day, Ma kilman assured him, in places  
Bigger than Gros Islet. When he walked up a street,

He stuck close to the houses, avoiding the faces  
That called out to him from doorways. He passed them straight.  
Gradually he began to lose faith in his hands.

He believed he smelt as badly as Philoctete  
From the rotting loneliness that drew every glance  
Away from him, as stale as a drying fishnet.

He avoided the blind man with his black, knotted hands  
Resting on the cane; he avoided looking at  
A transport when it approached him, in case, by chance,

It was Hector driving and should in case she sat  
On the front seat by him, the van that Hector bought  
From his canoe's sale had stereo, leopard seat.<sup>868</sup>

Achille is so weighed down by unrequited love for Helen that he loses confidence 'in his hands.' His hands metonymically reflect his occupation as a fisherman. I note that Achille's disappointment in love has a double significance: Helen represents both his lover and the Island of Saint Lucia. He is wounded too by the fact that he cannot adjust to all the changes taking place on the island. For example, Hector's 'Comet, a sixteen-seater passenger-van', stands in direct competition to his local fishing business. It also reveals a conflict between traditional and modern values in the poem and beyond it. Achille's traditional custom of fishing is subtly brought out through the image of his hands which are like those of 'the blind man with his black, knotted hands.' I emphasise

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<sup>868</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 116.

that the blind man mostly referred to as ‘Old St Omere, ... Monsieur Seven Sea,’<sup>869</sup> could be described as the keeper of tradition. That is why his knotted hands indicate the swellings obtained through several years of keeping at sea. His tight hold on the cane symbolises the importance he gives to nature, the wood that is used for hewing boats, and the cane that is used by the fishermen in ploughing the sea. At the same time, one can suggest that the image of the ‘stereo’ and the ‘leopard seat’ in Hector’s transport underscore the hybridised nature of the Caribbean island in terms of a Relation between tradition and modern values, African and Western civilisation.

In addition, the idea that Achille smells as badly as Philoctete, is intended to connect Philoctete’s wound on the shin to Achille’s wound of the heart. This is because Helen’s absence creates a vacuum that leaves him feeling lonely, just as the inhabitants take their glances off Philoctete’s ‘rotting’ wound. His wounded pride causes him to avoid the sight of the old man and Hector’s transport which reminds him of the shame of having lost Helen. However, Achille is reassured that he will recover what he has lost given that Helen’s ‘hairpin stuck in her soap-dish’ is an indication that she may return. This is an omen which Achille is sure will occur and Ma Kilman offers a cure for Achille’s wound by advising Achille not to be overwhelmed by his loss. Achille’s emotional moment is heightened by Walcott’s effective and rhythmic use of rhymes in: moved/proved, hairpin/happen, places/faces, and glance/chance.

Hector also suffers a love wound as he competes with Achille for Helen’s love. He quits his job as a fisherman for a transport van to win Helen’s love. The narrator describes his

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<sup>869</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 17.

van as a 'Comet'<sup>870</sup> that produces 'coiled tongues of flame'<sup>871</sup> from 'its sliding doors,'<sup>872</sup> and 'its fiery name'<sup>873</sup> that reflects the 'Space Age'<sup>874</sup> and 'its purring engine, part rocket, part leopard.'<sup>875</sup> The parallel description of the comet as: 'part rocket, part leopard' creates a balance between traditionalism and modernism. The voiceless plosive sound /p/ expresses the fierce, uncontrollable, inevitable nature of the 'Comet' and the island's hybridise nature. These descriptions of Hector's comet reflect an inner turmoil within him and inspire fear

as the old woman clawed the rosary in her purse  
and begged the swaying Virgin not to forget her  
at the hour of our death, and sudden silence

descended on the passengers and on Hector,  
because it was here he had stepped between Helen's  
fight with Achille. Why he had bought this chariot

and left the sea. He believed she still loved Achille,  
and that is why, through palm-shadows, the leopard shot  
with flaming wound that speed alone could not heal.<sup>876</sup>

Hector is insecure in his love for Helen. Thus, his van is described as a 'flaming wound' because he fears Helen still loves Achille. The adverb 'still' suggests the notion that this love between Achille and Helen is infinite, and it is this that deepens Hector's wound. I also note that a 'sudden silence' is experienced both by Hector and his passengers when they ride through the spot where Achille and Hector had their fight over Helen. Thus, the stillness of the temporal adverb 'still' echoes the idea of the circular motion of history or as Greenwood asserts, it 'stresses continuity with the epic (Homeric) past.'<sup>877</sup> The alliteration in 'sudden silence' emphasises the inevitable fate of Hector's death. His

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<sup>870</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 117.

<sup>871</sup> Ibid.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid.

<sup>873</sup> Ibid.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid.

<sup>875</sup> Ibid.

<sup>876</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 118.

<sup>877</sup> Emily Greenwood, "'Still Going On': Temporal Adverbs and the View of the past in Walcott's Poetry", p. 136.

rashness in this new business is referred to as ‘an Icarian future they could not control.’<sup>878</sup> Hence, this allusion compares Hector’s ambitious character to that of Icarus, son of Daedalus, who plunged to death as he dares to fly closer to the sun.<sup>879</sup> The poet-narrator advances that Hector’s reason for leaving the sea in favour of the Comet is because he needed a quick business that could heal his unrequited love. However, ‘speed only could not heal’ it. The run-on-lines of the first stanza reflect the speed of Hector’s van and the anxious woman praying with a rosary. This is interrupted by an abrupt caesura after death. The effectiveness of this is to show that the woman’s prayers about being remembered at ‘the hour of our death’ and the ‘sudden silence’, are premonitions of Hector’s death.

Helen’s wound stems from the rivalry between Hector and Achille for her love. Although she moves in with Hector, the narrator portrays her as still in want of Achille’s love as

At noon a ground dove hidden somewhere in the trees  
whooped like a conch or a boy blowing a bottle  
stuck on one note with maddening, tireless cries

it was lower than the nightingale’s full throttle  
of grief, but Helen, stripping dried sheets along  
the wire in Hector’s yard, the monodic moan

came from the hole in her heart. It was not the song  
that twittered from the veined mesh of Agamemnon,  
but the low-fingered O of an Aruac flute.

She rested the sheets down, she threw stones at the noise  
in that lime-tree past the fence, and looked for the flight  
of the startled dove from the branches of her nerves.

But the O’s encircled her, black as the old tires  
where Hector grew violets, like bubbles in soapy  
water where she scrubbed the ribbed washboard so hard tears

blurred her wrist. Not Helen now, but Penelope,  
in whom a single noon was as long as ten years,  
because he had not come back, because they had gone

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<sup>878</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 117.

<sup>879</sup> Susie Dent (ed), ‘Icarus’, *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrases and Fable*,

<https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/brewerphrase/icarus/0?institutionald=1872> [Accessed 19 August 2019] n.p.

from yesterday,<sup>880</sup>

Walcott describes Helen's wound as a hole in her heart. Auditory images of the 'ground dove' that 'whooped like a conch or a boy blowing a bottle' are used in parallel to 'the monodic moan' that 'came from the hole' in Helen's heart. The shrillness of the ground dove's cries are heightened by the apt use of alliteration in 'a boy blowing a bottle.' The monodic moan recalls the Greek ode sung by a single voice in a tragedy or a lament. The effectiveness of this allusion is to depict how Helen bemoans Achille's absence, particularly as this section precedes Achille's journey to Africa in search of his name and soul. Contrary to Agamemnon's death that is echoed by the sound of a bird, the ground dove bird's sound is a plaintive reminder of the 'O of an Aruac flute.' This reminder of her deracinated ancestors deepens the wound / the O / the hole in Helen's heart. To rebuff this wound of history from 'her nerves', Helen 'threw stones at the noise.' I note that this is a lyrical moment wherein Walcott's subtly merges Helen and the Island as one like Brutus does in his love lyric poems. The pain of the character is also the pain of the island. Walcott also compares Helen's sufferings to that of Penelope, Odysseus's wife who in Homer's poetry had to wait ten years for Odysseus to come back home<sup>881</sup>. I emphasise Walcott's use of time in this section as a predominant element that has the function of blurring the distance between past and present. The soapy water reflects this idea but more importantly, it proposes the notion that the island's history is not linear but fragmentary as the present can only be constructed 'from yesterday' or a to and from movement between past and present. I also highlight Walcott's use of auditory imagery in 'bubbles' and 'scrubbed' with emphasis on the repetition of an open-mid back vowel [ʌ] sound. In addition, Walcott coins the word 'whooped' to describe his landscape and to express the

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<sup>880</sup> Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 152-153.

<sup>881</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin Books, 1946).

sound of the ground dove, an image that symbolises motherhood. Her cry therefore is that of Helen / Island.

In Brutus' poetry, the wound of love comes through the speaker's description of a wounded landscape which simultaneously represents his home and his lover. Just as Walcott depicts the island of St Lucia as Helen, so too is Brutus' description of home in terms of a beautiful woman, wounded and exploited by the apartheid government. Brutus asserts that his poems are a fusion of two levels and refers to it as 'the fusion of political statement at one level with the private, emotional statement on another level and the same words functioning simultaneously for both purposes'<sup>882</sup> of moving from the external observation to the internal and finally a decision on how to accept and deal with it. In 'Nightsong: Country' the land / mother earth cries out and laments against injustice. Her cry merges with that of her beloved, the poet-speaker,

All this undulant earth  
heaves up to me;  
soft curves in the dark distend  
voluptuous-submissively;  
primal and rank  
the pungent exudation  
of fecund growth ascends  
sibilant clamorously:  
voice of the night-land  
rising, shimmering,  
mixing most intimately  
with my own murmuring-  
we merge, embrace and cling:  
who now gives shelter, who begs sheltering?<sup>883</sup>

The speaker describes his encounter with his beloved / mother earth as an 'undulant earth' suggesting the image of the sea that pulls him on with so much effort. The pain they both feel for their country is expressed in an overwhelming meeting where she 'submissively' spreads her 'soft curve' in a sensuously pleasing manner. Her beauty is not limited to her

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<sup>882</sup> Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 176.

<sup>883</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 47.

appearance but also evident in her fecundity, her fertility in the poignant ‘exudation’ of growth that utters a loud persistent outcry as a result of the wound sustained through exploitation.

The auditory image ‘sibilant clamorously’ intensifies the shrillness of the lament and pain experienced by both the speaker and his beloved. Brutus deliberately uses an adjective (sibilant) to modify an adverb (clamorously) to express the pain of his people and his lover. The speaker asserts that this affliction and suffering is mostly felt in the quietness of the night when the ‘voice of the night-land’ rises and ‘mixing most intimately / with my own murmuring.’ Nkondo examines that

the sense of unalloyed delight in love, spiritual is always present in Brutus’s poetry. it is true that whenever he writes of love he conveys in a masterly way the pleasure of the senses and the richness and beauty of the body. But there is almost always something breaking in, something sinister or ugly or mean.<sup>884</sup>

Although there is always a menacing force intervening at these odd hours of the night to disturb its peace, it is important to underline that it is also the only time when both lovers can embrace and console one another. However, the rhetorical question: ‘who now gives shelter, who begs sheltering?’ suggests the difficulties experienced by both lovers in seeking shelter in their own land.

The poem is written in fourteen irregular lines. Though this could be read as a sonnet, the language is quite simple and reflects the cultural setting of the South African landscape. Although this poem does not fit the traditional iambic pentameter of a patriarchal and Shakespearean sonnet, there are still some elements of the sonnet form. For example, the ninth line signals a traditional sonnet (volta), or a turn, when it introduces the voice of the night-land employing a different tone and mood. In addition, the first eight lines focus on

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<sup>884</sup> Gessler Moses Nkondo, ‘Dennis Brutus: The Domestication of a Tradition’, p. 33.

a problem, the wound of love and exploitation of the land. Here, the speaker uses the singular pronoun 'me' to combine his predicaments with that of his lover in one breath. But when he gets to the octave, he introduces the plural pronoun 'we' to signal a resolution when both seek comfort in each other's embrace. Thus, indicating again a change in his stance and mood.

A similar lament of pain and suffering is evident in 'Longing', whose title suggests the idea of severance. Here, the speaker yearns to be with his lover:

Can the heart compute desire's trajectory  
Or logic obfuscate with semantic ambiguities  
This simple ache's expletive detonation?

This is the wordless ultimate ballistic  
Impacting past Reason's, Science's logistics  
To blast the heart's defensive mechanism.

O my heart, my lost hope love, my dear  
Absence and hunger mushroom my hemispheres;  
No therapy, analyses deter my person's fission:

My heart knows now such devastation;  
Yearning, unworded, explodes articulation:  
Sound-swift, in silence, fall the rains of poison.<sup>885</sup>

The poem is written in an irregular tercet wherein the speaker questions whether logic, in its ability to obfuscate with semantic ambiguities, could possibly soothe the ache and loud explosion of the pain he is experiencing. The rhetorical question suggests that the wound of love cannot be expressed by language or by the individual's will to surmount the pain of a lost love. Thus, any attempt to use 'past Reason's, Science's logistics' to forcefully stop the heart's functioning is an irrational and futile attempt. Nkondo posits that this poem 'ignominiously acknowledges the huge irrelevance of individuality, of thought and will, beside the brutal biological coercion of sex.'<sup>886</sup> If the speaker considers that science

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<sup>885</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 46.

<sup>886</sup> Gessler Moses, p. 36.

and logic are inadequate in determining the heart's functioning, it is because he believes in something more supreme. This uncontrollable idea is love but it is, however, a wounded love because it is not given the opportunity to be consummated due to deprivation and imprisonment. This explains why the speaker cries out 'O my heart, my lost hope love, my dear.' The repetition of the possessive pronoun 'my' aims to emphasise the speaker's lost love. Also, the successive use of spondee in the phrase lost hope love highlights the idea of a wounded love and articulate the speaker's emotional instability. Nkondo adds that 'the power and the beauty of the body roused by sex comprise a subject of profound importance to Brutus.'<sup>887</sup> His body is therefore sick as a result of hunger for his beloved. Thus, the speaker's assertion of the 'absence and hunger' that fill his being highlights my idea of a wounded love as being deprivation of love. Such a wound is also shown in his split and disjointed self which no scientific therapy or analyses could prevent or heal.

The irregular rhythm of the poem is symbolic of the speaker's split and wounded nature. I suggest that the poem is predominantly written in a four-beat pattern. However, it does not keep to the regular duply or triple pattern. A poet schooled in the English tradition; Brutus only tries to maintain the four-beat metre that is the dominant form in popular oral poetry. The poem makes varied use of sprung rhythm which permits an indeterminate number of unstressed syllables in a line, hence, expressing the tone of seriousness and intimate emotional involvement. This is an example of Gerard Manley Hopkin's style whom Brutus acknowledges to have influenced some of his work.<sup>888</sup> Of significance too is the poet's use of line capitalisation. Although the incorporation of capitalisation is complicated, especially with the use of enjambment, it is however fun because it provides that feel of the old tradition that Brutus was exposed to. Additionally, the end-stopped

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<sup>887</sup> Ibid.

<sup>888</sup> Lindfors, *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 167.

lines enable the reader to pause and think about every line although these lines are capitalised. Furthermore, Brutus uses contracted forms or elisions in words such as: 'Reason's', 'Science's' and 'obfusc' to enhance a constrained number of syllables per line and to give the poem rhythm.

The above analysis builds from a wounded landscape in chapter two and has attempted to show how Walcott and Brutus navigate a wounded landscape through wounded bodies in the afterlife of colonial rule. These poets depict how the colonial wound of the history of slavery and apartheid expose a terrifying past but also offer opportunities for healing. From a psychological, to historical and love wounds, each poet reveals the effects of such scarring on every facet of the lives of the human lives. In exposing these wounds, each poet gives voice and humanity to people that have otherwise been considered non-humans. They continue to do so by not only borrowing prototypes from canonical texts, but also by complexifying the very tropes found in these recognisable literatures from the peripheries.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**A RELATIONAL POETICS (OF BELONGING): WALCOTT'S *THE***  
***ARKANSAS TESTAMENT* AND DENNIS BRUTUS' *STUBBORN HOPE***

'To have loved one horizon is insularity;  
it blindfolds vision, it narrows experience.'

Derek Walcott<sup>889</sup>

'I will be the world's troubadour  
If not my country's.'

Dennis Brutus<sup>890</sup>

The Caribbean and Southern African regions have experienced a differentiated form of dispossession that have rendered each community susceptible to the idea of a quest of identity and belonging in a place that they have till now call home or would otherwise be entitled to them. This chapter brings elements of the different chapters together as each poet celebrates the literal endurance of their people, the beauty and pain of the landscapes, excavation and healing of a wounded past. Out of these revisiting of place and history comes a poetics that knits the different fragments together. In putting these poets together, I show that there are overlapping strands of what might following Glissant's theory of Relation be called a relational poetics. This relation was formed as Glissant explains, at the belly of the slave ship.<sup>891</sup> It is not just relating to people, but that experience of having been dispossessed. In this light, bringing Walcott and Brutus together makes relational sense of what it means to have a shared experience of slavery and imperialism. This shared experience might also bear resemblance Caruth's idea that:

Trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the past of others but rather, within the traumas of

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<sup>889</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 79.

<sup>890</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 22.

<sup>891</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 5-9.

contemporary history, as our ability to listen through departures we have all taken from ourselves.<sup>892</sup>

Drawing from the above quote, I suggest that a relational poetics provide one of the means of departure from that painful past to a rediscovery of one's self through relation with others. Taking into consideration a further dimension of home, I posit that the poets' writings of home focus on a particular love of a specific geographical space. In this regard, there are questions about belonging which leads me to Said's idea of filiation and affiliation. According to him, filiation suggests the idea of national belonging, a geographical space or one's 'natal culture.'<sup>893</sup> Considering the insufficiency of this theory of filiation, Said goes further to propose the idea of affiliation - a literal form of representation, by which what is ours is good, and therefore deserves incorporation and inclusion in our programs of humanistic study.<sup>894</sup> Although this suggests a mode of belonging through literal incorporation, my main focus is on the idea of an equally shared belonging which counters the idea of coloniality. Thus, I turn to Walter Mignolo's idea of delinking from coloniality or decoloniality - a process that 'operates on pluri-versality and truth and not in uni-versality and truth'<sup>895</sup> because 'there cannot be only one model of re-existence.'<sup>896</sup> Drawing from this plurality in culture and mode of being in the world, I define that belonging in the works of Walcott and Brutus as based on new forms of identities undergirded by affinities, rather than essence in sites where there are multiple series of relationships that are never fixed and constantly in flux. Glissant suggests that contrary to atavistic culture that rely on genesis and the creation myth, composite cultures (Caribbean and South Africa for example) are aware of their creolised conditions that

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<sup>892</sup> Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memories*, p. 11.

<sup>893</sup> Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 16.

<sup>894</sup> Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 21.

<sup>895</sup> Walter Mignolo, 'Coloniality is far from Over, and so must be Decoloniality', *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 43(2009), pp. 38-45 (p. 41).

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*

accept plural genealogical narratives.<sup>897</sup> In this way, these poets use the words on the page – their poetry to create safe spaces for the definition of self and home shared with equal humans.

In this vein, the homogeneous description of home as a place of cultural purity gives way to a belonging based on fluid and multiple identities. As Guirat Mounir asserts, in situations where people are forced out of their homes or choose to migrate and put roots elsewhere, such homogenous associations with home are no longer attainable.<sup>898</sup> I connect the foregoing ideas of belonging with Glissant's notion of creolisation which he defines as the process of becoming, a transformation 'into something different, into a new set of possibilities.'<sup>899</sup> Thus, in this chapter, I address how Relation, as seen in the works of Walcott and Brutus, might serve a poetic medium in constructing notions of home. In effect, through their use of imagery, Walcott and Brutus propose a relational poetics that transcends Relations at home to include historical and diasporic identities.

### **(Figuring) Resistance as Metaphors: Reconciliatory or Anti-colonial?**

The articulation of resistance through figuring provides an essential device through which Walcott and Brutus can assert the essence of their speakers. I argue that in resisting cultural misrepresentations and asserting self, each poet's use of metaphor serves an invaluable function in expressing the human self and asserting one's place. As Mignolo puts it:

once you realize that your inferiority is a fiction created to dominate you, and you do not want to either assimilate or accept in resignation the bad lack [sic]

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<sup>897</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 1.

<sup>898</sup> Mounir Guirat (ed), 'Introduction' in *Politics and Poetics of Belonging* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), p. 1.

<sup>899</sup> Ibid.

of having been born equal to all human beings but losing your equality shortly after being born because of the place you have been born, then you delink.<sup>900</sup>

Delinking here furthers the idea of resistance to stereotypes as discussed in chapter one. Since this chapter is synthesising the different ideas thus far developed in each chapter, I highlight another dimension to resistance through metaphors as a means towards enhancing a shared poetics of belonging. My understanding of metaphor is taken from Rebecka Rutledge Fisher's use of the expressions 'Metaphor of being'<sup>901</sup> and 'metaphor of consciousness.'<sup>902</sup> She asserts that: 'metaphors of being are figurative expressions that convey one's sense of self, and they carry philosophical undercurrents.'<sup>903</sup> Additionally, 'metaphors of consciousness' underscore the idea of one's humanity and place in the world.<sup>904</sup> Thus, through figuring, each poet embeds their personae with images that are essential to voicing their relation to the world around them and enhancing their humanity. This aspect is sustained through the poet's ability to relate the dispossessed people with their landscape. As a poet-carpenter, Walcott presents in 'Cul de Sac Valley'<sup>905</sup> a speaker who, inspired by nature, shapes and gives voice to the world around him:

A panel of sunrise  
on a hillside shop  
gave these stanzas  
their stilted shape.

If my craft is blest;  
if this hand is as  
accurate, as honest  
as their carpenter's

every frame, intent  
on its angles, would

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<sup>900</sup> Walter Mignolo, 'Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: on (de)coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience', *Postcolonial Studies*, 14 (2011), pp. 273-283 (p.276). To delink is to discard ideas that the Anthropos or the 'other' dwell and think in the border. It is to be epistemically disobedient to such categories, p. 277.

<sup>901</sup> Rebecka Rutledge Fisher, 'The Poetics of Belonging in the Age of Enlightenment: Spiritual Metaphors of Being in Olaudah Equiano's Interesting Narrative', *Early American Studies: An interdisciplinary Journal*, 11.2 (2013), pp. 72-97 (p.73).

<sup>902</sup> Ibid.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid.

<sup>904</sup> Ibid.

<sup>905</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 9.

echo this settlement  
of unpainted wood.<sup>906</sup>

The poem has a rhyme scheme pattern abab, reflecting a traditional ballad. This alternating pattern is an example that suggests the desire of a 'relation' with every 'other' in the landscape. The alliteration stilted shape reflects the tight structure of this poem and the speaker's wish to represent his landscape and people with dignity. The conditional 'if' further highlights this task. The speaker wishes that his 'craft' could be as 'blest' as the local carpenter of the island. At the same time, his metonymic use of the word 'craft' symbolises the poet's work which, in using his hand, could accurately and honestly frame the angles of his 'unpainted wood.' I note here the freshness of the speaker's landscape which is echoed.

Significantly, as a local poet-carpenter, he draws his poetic resources from the local landscape:

as consonants scroll  
off my shaving plane  
in the fragrant Creole  
of their native grain;

from a trestle bench  
they'd curl at my foot,  
C's, R's, with a French  
or West African root<sup>907</sup>

To provide an honest representation of his settlement, the poet as carpenter shapes the consonants of the Creole of the island using his shaving plane. These consonants 'of their native grain' is composed of a 'C's, R's, with a French / or West African root,' an indication that the Creole has its origin in the French colonial rule and the languages brought from Africa through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. These consonants bring into

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<sup>906</sup> Ibid.

<sup>907</sup> Ibid.

relation the old and new world to refashion a unique culture. Again, as Thieme suggests, 'it is an odyssean composition which travels nervously across discursive boundaries, creating its own distinctive cross-cultural idiom as it does so.'<sup>908</sup> In other words, Walcott uses the 'fragrant Creole' of the island, a cross-cultural idiom, as a form of asserting oneself although the trees react differently:

Like muttering shale,  
exhaling trees refresh  
memory with their smell:  
*bois canot, bois campêche,*

hissing: What you wish  
from us will never be,  
your words is English,  
is a different tree.<sup>909</sup>

It becomes incumbent on Walcott to use the Creole of the island. This is heightened by the onomatopoeic images of sounds in 'hissing', and 'muttering.' However, this attempt is met with resistance through their 'muttering' and 'hissing what you wish / from us will never be, / ... different tree.' This language articulated by the trees is an appropriated English which they expect the speaker to use. The trees are thus in a form of dialogue with the speaker. Stan Smith writes that 'language here puts up its own resistance, refusing appropriation in a way which reflects Walcott's own relation to a world he has moved out of and can never wholly re-enter.'<sup>910</sup> I argue here that relation is not only limited to that old or ancestral world but also to other affiliations gained by virtue of the Atlantic crossing. Aside from that, the poet seems to suggest that what the island needs is not a complete appropriation into mainstream European cultures but rather a relational negotiation of cultural elements such as the Creole language and Standard English on the Island. The olfactory image of smell from the *bois canot, bois campêche* - the local

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<sup>908</sup> Thieme, *Derek Walcott: Contemporary World Writers*, p. 176.

<sup>909</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 10.

<sup>910</sup> Stan Smith, 'Darkening English: Post-Imperial Contestations in the Language of Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott', *Journal of the English Association* 43.175 (1994), pp. 39-55 (p. 50).

logwoods of the island - are the speaker's source of inspiration in painting his 'unpainted wood'. Cashman Kerr Prince posits that 'the very odour of the wood reminds the poet he is not crafting a poem of English wood. No yew trees here. Rather these trees, the *bois canot*, *bois campêche*, signify their Caribbean roots by their aroma, by their similarity to muttering shale'.<sup>911</sup>

Other notable metaphors used by the poet includes the image of a 'mongrel, a black vowel barking' seen in the second section of the poem:

In the rivulet's gravel  
light gutturals begin,  
in the valley, a mongrel,  
a black vowel barking,

sends up fading ovals;  
by a red iron bridge,  
menders with shovels  
scrape bubbling pitch,

every grating squeak  
reaching this height  
a tongue they speak  
in but cannot write.<sup>912</sup>

Here, the speaker and his people are compared to a mongrel, a dog of mixed breed whose 'gutturals' are referred to as 'a black vowel barking.' This mongrel metaphor represents the island people, a suggestion of their mixed backgrounds as well as the language they speak. This is an example of what a Caribbean becoming could mean in terms of reconstructing home from a fragmentary/fragmented history of slavery. This entails resisting and delinking from that painful past and creating a space for possible interrelationships. Glissant writes that 'we are not prompted solely by the defining of our identities but by their relation to everything possible as well- the mutual mutations

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<sup>911</sup> Cashman Kerr Prince, 'A Divided Child, or Derek Walcott's Post-Colonial Philology' in *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 170-191 (p. 175).

<sup>912</sup> Ibid.

generated by this interplay of relations.’<sup>913</sup> These inter-plays of, and with relations, might be seen in the mixed nature of the Creole language as well as the mixed racial nature of the island people. Thus, although the people speak the Creole of the island, it is far from being officially used in writing. Therefore, as a poetic duty, Walcott gives voice to this language as a means of empowering the people. Furthermore, the hill represents another metaphor that is associated with Sphinxes:

The row of Sphinxes  
that my eyes rest on  
are hills as fixed as  
their stony question:

Can you call each range  
by its right name, aloud,  
while our features change  
between light and cloud?’<sup>914</sup>

The sphinxes imagery points to the urgency of the speaker’s wish to be re-integrated within his community. Like the classical mythology of the Sphinx who sits outside Thebes<sup>915</sup> in readiness to kill whoever provides an incorrect answer to her riddle, the speaker suggests that he is in danger of death if he is not able to recall each range by name. Although he can only vaguely recall ‘a line of white sand’, the names eventually fit:

their echo: Mahaut!  
Forestière! And far,  
the leaf-horse echo  
of Mabouya! And ah!<sup>916</sup>

I describe the above as re-naming, a form of decoloniality to that which denies the identity of a person or landscape. It is an essential element in Walcott’s poetics that serves to enhance the speaker’s sense of place at home. The allusion to classical myth in ‘muttering

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<sup>913</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 89.

<sup>914</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 13.

<sup>915</sup> Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. by Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books), p. 161.

<sup>916</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 13.

shale’ and ‘Sphinxes’ show a form of mimicry which can be described as a creative act of borrowing for the sake of creating a new culture, that which embodies both old and new forms. In addition, Prince asserts that ‘this is not a servile imitation, however, but the invocation of a conceit from classical poetry in order to create it anew with speaking stones.’<sup>917</sup> The form of the poem includes lines consisting mostly of five to six syllables. This tight structure evinces Walcott’s idea of a finely crafted art that depicts his island. The end-stopped lines give a poetic and rhythmic effect to the poem and slows down the pace of the poem while also giving the reader enough time to take note of every feature of the speaker’s landscape. However, there is also evidence of enjambments. For example, the line: ‘from a trestle bench / they’d curl at my foot,’ maintains the poem’s tight structure and rhyme scheme. Moreover, Walcott makes use of the economy of words to sustain the musical nature of the poem’s alternating rhyme scheme pattern and to enable contracted forms such as: ‘carpenter’s’ so that it rhymes with ‘as’, ‘they’d’ and ‘revulet’s’ to maintain the number of syllables per line.

Walcott’s use of metaphor might be described as reconciliatory because they resist any idea of a single root in favour of multiple roots. This is what occurs in ‘A Latin Primer’ where the speaker relates with other literatures to find his voice. The frigate bird is the central metaphor for this task and represents the St Lucian patois Self. From the stanzas below, the speaker expresses the lack of a language with which to write his work:

I had nothing against which  
to notch the growth of my work  
but the horizon, no language  
but the shallows in my long walk

home, so I shook all the help  
my young right hand could use  
from the sand-crusted kelp  
of distant literature.<sup>918</sup>

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<sup>917</sup> Cashman Kerr Prince, ‘A Divided Child, or Derek Walcott’s Post-Colonial Philology’ p.176.

<sup>918</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 21.

These stanzas articulate the idea of no grounded literature in the island from which the speaker could ‘notch’ his own work except ‘the horizon.’ Aside from an exemplary literature, there is also the absence of any language. I contend that Walcott might be suggesting a relational poetics that has affiliations with other cultures and it is by this means that belonging is made possible. As a result, he must harness his colonial ‘distant literature’ and ‘sand-crusted kelp’ as well as that offered by the landscape to give voice to his fragmented region. I posit that the speaker’s assertion of ‘nothing’ indicates a gap that needs to be filled. Ben Jefferson addresses this when he writes that:

While the young Walcott may have seen the horizon or sea in terms of nothingness, their presence throughout his later poetry suggests that he came to see them in other terms. The vastness of the sky and sea has, in Walcott’s literature, come to represent possibility and invention without limitation.<sup>919</sup>

The frigate bird becomes the poet’s phoenix and it breaks that impasse of lack. Through its harmonisation of the classical and traditional world poetics, the bird creates a hybrid form and paves the way for a new beginning. Just as the phoenix bird burns itself after its life cycle and rises from its ashes to begin another life cycle, so too it is with the speaker and his people. It is a new life and relation born from the ashes of up-rootedness and slavery. Similarly, Catherine Douillet writes that ‘Walcott therefore posits the idea that the Caribbean people can find an uplifting liberation from the acknowledgement of the glory of their different cultural traditions, including Ancient Greece, Africa, and Europe.’<sup>920</sup> Thus, the different names associated with the frigate bird create the relation between past and present histories. It is called ‘Sea scissors’ or ‘ciseau-la mer’, a Creole name by the fishermen, although ‘Fregata magnificens’<sup>921</sup> is its Latin name and ‘Frigate

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<sup>919</sup> Ben Jefferson, ‘Contesting Knowledge, Contested Space: Language, place, and Power in Derek Walcott’s Colonial Schoolhouse’, *Theory of Science* 36.1 (2014), pp. 77-103 (p. 99).

<sup>920</sup> Catherine Douillet, ‘The Quest for Caribbean Identities: Postcolonial Conflicts and Cross-Cultural Fertilization in Derek Walcott’s Poetry’, *AmeriQuest*, 7.1 (2010), n.p.

<sup>921</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 23-24.

bird' is the English name. These names portray the different cultural voices that characterise Walcott's poetry. Baugh asserts that 'the patois name reflects the imaginative power of the people, a power rooted in their native environment. It sums up their capacity for metaphor, the sufficiency of their language to name their world.'<sup>922</sup>

The image of the sea plays a significant role in the speaker's search of himself within the distant literature:

Ploughing white fields of surf  
With a boy's shins, I kept  
Staggering as shelf  
Of sand under me slipped,

Then found my deepest wish  
In the swaying words of the sea,  
And the skeletal fish  
Of that boy is ribbed in me;<sup>923</sup>

Walcott employs the image of a sailor to describe his journey through 'the white fields of surf.' I argue that 'the white fields of surf' is a metaphor that describes the distant literature because I consider white as an image that represents western education. This journey through colonial education is presented as laborious and full of turbulence just like the waves of the sea and causes the speaker to stagger through the 'the shelf of sand.' The sea image takes us back to Glissant's 'Open Boat,'<sup>924</sup> that belly of the slave ship referenced above and described as the incubator that gave birth to relation. From this incubator and as Bobb posits, 'it becomes their sacred mission to use their new knowledge to shape the identity of their comrades in the New World.'<sup>925</sup> This new knowledge that is also gained through turbulence reflects the poet's troubling years of studying distant literatures and wandering through it to find his own voice. Jefferson advances that 'the

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<sup>922</sup> Edward Baugh, 'The Arkansas Testament' in *The Art of Derek Walcott* (Pennsylvania: Dufour Edition, 1991), p. 130.

<sup>923</sup> Ibid.'

<sup>924</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p.5-6.

<sup>925</sup> June Bobb, p. 199.

adult Walcott again travels outside of the classroom and to the sea in order “to find [his] voice.”<sup>926</sup> In addition, I argue that these troubling years are strongly suggested in ‘I hated signs of scansion’<sup>927</sup> because ‘they were like mathematics / that made delight Design.’<sup>928</sup>

This dislike for scansion is eventually resolved when:

Raging, I’d skip a pebble  
Across the sea’s page; it still  
Scanned its own syllables:  
Trochee, anapest, dactyle.<sup>929</sup>

Despite those difficult years of ‘scansion’, the speaker underscores that the influences are overwhelming because ‘it still scanned its own syllables: / trochee, anapaest and dactyl.’

Based on the above, I draw the conclusion that Walcott’s poetic writing is a hybrid of both the classical forms and the postcolonial forms. The temporal adverb ‘still’ suggests the idea that these traditions will continue to resound and remain in most works of art. As Greenwood advances, Walcott’s use of this adverb stresses the notion ‘that works of art persist in the absence of their authors, and that literature and the literary tradition continue, oblivious to mortal generations.’<sup>930</sup>

There are examples to show that these works of art continue to influence the speaker at later stages in life. Upon completing his studies, the speaker asserts that ‘I taught Love’s basic Latin: / Amos, amas, amat’<sup>931</sup> which was very estranging to his pupils as ‘the boys’ / heads plunged in paper / softly as porpoises.’<sup>932</sup> Thus, the subject did not relate to the needs of the pupils:

The discipline I preached

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<sup>926</sup> Jefferson, ‘Contesting Knowledge, Contested Space: Language, place, and Power in Derek Walcott’s Colonial Schoolhouse’, p. 101.

<sup>927</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 22.

<sup>928</sup> Ibid.

<sup>929</sup> Ibid.

<sup>930</sup> Greenwood, ‘“Still Going On”: Temporal Adverbs and the View of the Past in Walcott’s Poetry’, p. 132.

<sup>931</sup> Ibid.

<sup>932</sup> Ibid.

Made me a hypocrite;  
Their lithe black bodies, beached,  
Would die in dialect;

I spun the globe's meridian,  
Showed its sealed hemispheres  
But where were those brows heading  
When neither world was theirs?

Silence clogged my ears  
With cotton, a cloud's noise;  
I climbed white tiered arenas  
Trying to find my voice,<sup>933</sup>

The rhetorical question, 'But where were those brows heading / when neither world was theirs', interrogates the relevance of such a subject given that their 'lithe black bodies, beached, / would die in dialect.' This use of alliteration expresses elements of the Negritude idea of Black Consciousness and black creativity which, although essential, are limiting in its assertion of a single black identity.<sup>934</sup> The synecdochical use of 'those brows', is an apt description of the idea of in betweenness and border thinking. Hence both the speaker and his pupils must find their own voices within the 'white tiered arenas', another metaphor that is synonymous to 'distant literatures' and 'white fields'. Walcott's poetry therefore does not completely reject the distant literatures but uses them anew.

Thieme posits that:

the meter, metaphor and lexical juxtaposition – of Latin and francophone Creole, within the primarily English vocabulary of the poem – enact the linguistic intermingling of Walcott's mongrelized practice and again help to shape a distinctive cross-cultural, Odyssean idiom, which paradoxically is at the same time very here in the Caribbean.<sup>935</sup>

One might suggest that such intermingling is also made possible through Relation where both the island's name for the frigate bird as well as its Latin name is used.

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<sup>933</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 23.

<sup>934</sup> H. A. Murdoch, "Negritude." *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Roland Green, et al., Princeton University Press, 4th edition, 2012. < <https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/prpoetry/negritude/0?institutionId=1872>> [ Accessed 27 Aug. 2019] n.p.

<sup>935</sup> John Thieme, p. 177.

Like the previous poem, this poem is written in quatrains and has a rhyme scheme pattern abab. I argue that the alternating rhyme scheme shows a desire for Relation and a dialogue with the Other. Also prevalent are internal rhymes in tweed / seaweed, sand / hand, fronds / bronze, but / dusk, and assonance in ‘Amo, amas, amat.’ The varied uses of sound portray a speaker who is well grounded in the use of languages that estrange him from his people but which on the other hand, reflect a cosmopolitan identity and enhance a sense of belonging. The first three stanzas of the poem show Walcott’s use of spondee in these words: ‘long walk’, ‘sand-crusted’, ‘young right hand’, ‘foam’s fabric’ to emphasise his romance with and mastery of the English tradition.

Furthermore, in a sixteen-line vignette, ‘The Arkansas Testament’ depicts defiant metaphors of the speaker’s bold stand against racism and the black man at risk in the Southern USA. The images of place and time used in the poem are a pointer to this idea. Set in Fayetteville, Arkansas, the speaker confronts the past as he reflects on the ‘stone slabs of the forces / fallen for the Confederacy.’<sup>936</sup> The nature of the weather reflects the setting in time:

It was midwinter. The dusk was  
yielding in flashes of metal  
from a slowly surrendering sun  
On the billboards, storefronts, and signs  
along Highway 71,  
then on the brass-numbered doors  
of my \$ 17.50 motel,  
and the slab of my cold key.  
Jet-lagged and travel-gritty,

I fell back on the double bed  
like Saul under neighing horses  
on the highway to Damascus,  
and lay still, as Saul does,  
till my name re-entered me,  
and felt, through the chained door,  
dark entering Arkansas.<sup>937</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 105.

<sup>937</sup> Walcott, p. 106.

This chilliness of the weather is so intense that the sun is described as ‘slowly surrendering’ to it, an alliteration that provides a sympathetic background and allows the speaker to ground his moves towards decoloniality.<sup>938</sup> The idea of ‘jet-lagged’ suggests that the speaker is on a journey. This is justified by the biblical allusion to ‘Saul under neighing horses,’ an allusion that denotes the idea that the speaker’s journey might become a betrayal or reveal a dramatic self-discovery. King asserts that:

race and history in the united states suddenly seemed his problem. To become an American citizen, however, would mean accepting second-class status. Blacks in the United States are defined that way regardless of what they do. Also it would be a betrayal of St Lucia, it would mean saying he wrote about the people, but could escape to safety, he decided against it.<sup>939</sup>

I argue that the chained door has a double meaning. It may imply a door that is shut midway by chains; at the same time, it may also reference the speaker’s imprisoned self in Arkansas. If darkness enters Arkansas through the chained doors and if ‘evil was ordinary here as good,’<sup>940</sup> then Walcott may be proposing that darkness and evil inform each other in this city. The speaker’s refusal to take up US citizenship becomes a point of revelation when ‘my name re-entered me.’ Also, the allusion to Saul’s conversion further implies a revelation about the speaker’s duty to bring light to his landscape through his art. In this instance, I suggest that the speaker is delinking from global designs that place a black person at the periphery instead of a shared notion of belonging. As Thieme suggests, ‘the testament of the poem is an apostolic benediction which recognizes that it can do nothing to remedy the historic stripes and scars perpetuated in the American flag, but nevertheless strives through art to offer its own kind of enlightenment.’<sup>941</sup> This

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<sup>938</sup> An option to coloniality that finds common ground and vision for the future that practise global equality and economic justice, (Walter Mignolo, ‘Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)coloniality, Border Thinking and Epistemic Disobedience’, pp. 273-274).

<sup>939</sup> King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, p. 468.

<sup>940</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 113.

<sup>941</sup> John Thieme, p. 182-183.

enlightenment is to be found in the shared poetics of belonging that recognises the humanity of all races and negotiates spaces within geographical areas. Thus,

I decided to stay unshaven,  
Unsaved, if I found the strength.  
Oh, for my grovelling razor,  
to reek of the natural coward  
I am, to make this a place for  
disposable shavers as well  
as my own disposable people!  
On a ridge over Fayetteville,  
higher than any steeple,  
Is a white-hot electric cross.<sup>942</sup>

The desire is to ‘reek of the natural coward’ as the speaker articulates his determination to write of racism in clearer terms. Arkansas is by virtue of its history of slavery, a place where dispossessed Africans were maltreated and also where many settled after the abolition of slavery. The speaker’s refusal to make this place one of disposal signifies his decision not to be a part of a society that still subtly lives in its slave past. Jason Lagapa notes that Walcott ‘ultimately finds as the title of the poem suggests, the inner reserve to take a verbal stand, proclaiming art’s capacity for formal protest.’<sup>943</sup> Particularly disheartening are references such as: the ‘Trail of Tears’<sup>944</sup>, ‘the snakes coiled’<sup>945</sup>, ‘the pumps hissed with their metal mouth’<sup>946</sup>, ‘revolving red eye’<sup>947</sup> of the patrolling cars hunting its black victims, and the sign given by the toothless Sybil who warns the speaker to ‘stay black and invisible / to the sirens of Arkansas.’<sup>948</sup> All these images are similar to those that Brutus brings to memory in ‘The Sound Begins Again.’ In that poem, Brutus compares the cars of the apartheid police to snakes whose hissing sirens menace black South Africans. Interestingly, Walcott considers life for the black man in Arkansas to be

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<sup>942</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 108.

<sup>943</sup> Jason Lagapa, ‘Swearing at – not by – History: Obscenity, Picong and Irony in Derek Walcott’s Poetry’, p. 122.

<sup>944</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p.108.

<sup>945</sup> Walcott, p. 109.

<sup>946</sup> Ibid.

<sup>947</sup> Ibid.

<sup>948</sup> Ibid.

another form 'of apartheid.'<sup>949</sup> This is because 'any black out after curfew / could be shot dead in Arkansas.'<sup>950</sup> The idea of 'our passbook's open secret / in the hooded eyes of a cop,<sup>951</sup> is similar to Brutus' 'carrion books of birth,'<sup>952</sup> referencing the pass books which the black South Africans were forced by law to carry. This largely unrecognised dialogue between Walcott and Brutus depicts a failed 'relation' between people of different origins. As Glissant writes, to do so would mean to live 'in seclusion,'<sup>953</sup> a practise that each poet tries to debunk.

Although the poet-speaker acknowledges that 'there are things that my craft cannot / wield, and one is power,'<sup>954</sup> he is still convinced of the power of art to expose injustice:

this, Sir, is my office,  
my Arkansas Testament,  
my two cupfuls of Cowardice,  
my sure, unshaven Salvation,  
my people's predicament.  
Bless the increasing bliss  
of truck tires over asphalt,  
and these stains I cannot remove<sup>955</sup>

Like Brutus, Walcott could be described as a spokesman for the dispossessed people living in America and the Caribbean. Bobb writes that the poet has a messianic role 'for under his pen, the work of art becomes the medium that reshapes the world and reveal a new order... assumes control, provides direction and brings together the fragments of history and experience.'<sup>956</sup> That is why the speaker is willing to testify to the continuous discrimination against people of his race. His office, which is his writing, has the task to voice these predicaments and avoid the cowardice of shaving words for 'unshaven

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<sup>949</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 116.

<sup>950</sup> Walcott, p.112.

<sup>951</sup> Walcott, p. 116.

<sup>952</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 27.

<sup>953</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 201.

<sup>954</sup> Walcott, p. 117.

<sup>955</sup> Ibid.

<sup>956</sup> June Bobb, p. 194.

Salvation.’ He ironically blesses the ‘tires’ of patrol cars that ply the asphalt seeking its victims when it dawns on him that ‘what we know of evil / is that it will never end.’<sup>957</sup> Thus, Lagapa asserts that for Walcott, as a spokesman, ‘poetry enforces a connection between himself and the people of the south and forces a recognition of the legacy of slavery.’<sup>958</sup> The repetition of the pronoun ‘my’ gives a first-hand witness to the idea that ‘despite this democracy’s mandates’<sup>959</sup>, the ‘Southern street’<sup>960</sup> still ‘holds grey black men in a stoop.’<sup>961</sup> Other than that, the repetition displays the grim reality of life for the black person in Arkansas. The poem is divided into twenty-four sections with each stanza consisting of sixteen (except for the last stanza written in seventeen lines) irregular trimeter. It might be described as a near Quatern although the first line does not act as a refrain and not all have the quatern format (eight syllables per line). However, Walcott’s style is unique given that he does not separate the lines into quatrains although one might still assert that he makes extensive use of quatrain in this collection. The quatern gives him a space to write boldly but restrictively given the constrained number of syllables per line. I suggest that the limited number of syllables reflects the black person’s status of captivity and the limited opportunities offered him in Arkansas.

Like Walcott, Brutus also makes use of metaphors as a tool to resist the oppression and subjugation of one race by another. For example, in ‘Inscription for a copy of Road to Ghana by Alfred Hutchinson’, the metaphors of the road and the bird are very salient in defining the speaker’s sense of place:

Well, we have caged our bird  
and he has sung for us  
as sweet a song as any heard-  
time now, we freed our bird.

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<sup>957</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament* p. 116.

<sup>958</sup> Jason Lagapa, ‘Swearing at – not by – History: Obscenity, Picong and Irony in Derek Walcott’s Poetry,’ p. 122.

<sup>959</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 115.

<sup>960</sup> Ibid.

<sup>961</sup> Ibid.

Skylark or nightingale  
who cares beyond delight?  
for all birds fly a vagrant trail  
and the music cannot stale.<sup>962</sup>

The title of the poem is an allusion to Alfred Hutchinson, a South African writer, who following his acquittal from a treason trial, left South Africa for Ghana without a passport.<sup>963</sup> The reference to 'Road to Ghana' concerns a book written by Hutchinson explaining his experiences on this journey.<sup>964</sup> The metaphor of the road in this poem, expresses a journey in search of freedom and place. The phrase, 'we have caged our bird', implies that the segregationist in South Africa cages the black and mixed-race South Africans who try to oppose the system. Hutchinson is one such individual. His continuous opposition to apartheid's government policies produce for 'us / as sweet a song as any heard.' In other words, Brutus considers Hutchinson's writing to be a song against racial inequality. In the second stanza, the speaker compares Hutchinson to 'Skylark or nightingale' who sings beautifully although it does not have a permanent home but follow a 'vagrant trail' in their quest for place.

I also note that the music of these birds cannot be rendered 'stale.' These comparisons are a subtle representation of the lives of the black oppositional leaders who try to sing a song of oppression or sing through writing as Hutchinson and Brutus do. Although they are caged like birds, the song of freedom they sing will forever remain fresh. The musical quality of the poem is seen in the rhyming couplets of the last two lines of each quatrain. The poem, like Walcott's 'Cul de Sac Valley' is economical in its choice of words. Except

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<sup>962</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 1.

<sup>963</sup> Stephen Gray, 'Both sides of Alfred Hutchinson's Road to Ghana: An Immoral Love Story with Hazel Goodwin', *English Academy Review* 29.2 (2012), pp. 20-33 (p. 25).

<sup>964</sup> *Ibid.*

for the last but one line of the third stanza written in tetrameter, the entire poem is written in an irregular trimeter:

Out of the blue he dips  
unearned and unenslaved  
to brush with his wing our wondering lips  
and break our fingertips.

all life the timeless song  
will pierce the crash of life  
and if I call my bird for long  
“Phoenix” will I do wrong?<sup>965</sup>

Furthermore, Hutchinson is compared to a Phoenix, referred to, above, a magic bird that lives for several hundred years before burning itself and then is born again from its ashes. The significance of this lies in the stubborn nature of the poet-speaker who continues to sing his song of freedom like Hutchinson’s ‘timeless song’ that will pierce the crash of life.’ In other words, Hutchinson’s song sings of the oppressive life of the people. The rhetorical question emphasises the role of the bird that points the way to a new culture underpinned by freedom, engages and persuades the reader to understand why the bird needs to be considered a Phoenix, and to understand that the bird’s role transcends that of a mere ‘delight.’ Like Walcott’s Frigate bird that opens the way for the meeting of cultures, Brutus’s bird sings a song of freedom that entails reconciliation, shared belonging and mutual habitation between blacks and Whites in South Africa.

In ‘one guesses his occupation,’ Brutus uses ideological metaphor rendered through images of power to describe and satirise the apartheid system:

One guesses his occupation  
satchel and suit and pompous hat  
and the sheen of spurious smartness

What does he do and what is his polish?  
Then past the smoothness thrusts the truth:  
This is the upholder of the law  
(which is far from being the same as justice)

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<sup>965</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 1-2.

and so there is dignity and self-respect  
and callous boots to trample decencies

but this is not what rouses fear and queasiness:  
it is the sense of robot power with far beyond  
the deeper sense of power arbitrarily unleashed  
and this is the corruption at the vitals:  
the glazed ripeness of rotten fruit<sup>966</sup>

The incongruous juxtaposition in ‘the glazed ripeness of rotten fruit’ sums up the entire message of the poem. The speaker ridicules the deceitful appearance of the keeper of the law, an appearance that contradicts the ‘vitals’ of the body. He appears very lustrous and respectable whereas his essential nature is deeply corrupt. Thus, the poet makes a subtle description of the outward and inward nature of the apartheid police. This is conveyed through the metaphor of ‘power’ because the police are considered as ‘the upholder(s) of the law.’ In the first stanza, the speaker begins with a guess at what occupation such a personality who conspicuously wears a ‘satchel’, a ‘suit and a pompous hat’ could be. He questions the nature of his job and the reason for his glow. The rhetorical question engages the reader to participate in this quest of uncovering the real nature of this individual.

The tone of the poem is full of disgust because the speaker can judge that such radiance is not genuine because it is ‘the sheen of spurious smartness.’ Although the speaker finally settles for the idea that the individual is the upholder of the law, he also indicates that this ‘is far from being the same as justice.’ This is because contrary to the ‘dignity and self-respect’ of the job, the upholder of the law uses his ‘callous boots to trample decencies.’ This poem takes us back to an earlier discussion in Walcott’s ‘The Arkansas Testament’ wherein the Sybil warns the speaker to ‘stay black and invisible / to the sirens in Arkansas.’<sup>967</sup> Thus, Brutus’ defiant descriptions are in line with the overriding theme of

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<sup>966</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 19-20.

<sup>967</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 110.

protest poetry which ‘attempts to overthrow all manner of man’s inhumanity towards his fellow man. The essence is primarily for equity in the distribution of socio-economic resources and fairness in political responsibilities.’<sup>968</sup> The protest here is aimed at the apartheid policeman who represents a ‘robot power’ that uses ‘power arbitrarily’ and instils ‘fear and queasiness’ among the black population. Thus, the persona’s lustrous ‘ripeness’ is incongruous to the ‘rotten fruit’ that makes up the ‘vitals’ of his body. I argue that Brutus represents Glissant’s idea of an ‘echo-monde’<sup>969</sup> which through his ‘encounters with people of mixed blood, with Indians, with whites... it teaches...and inspires... with a sense of Relation.’<sup>970</sup> It is this affiliative belonging that he hopes to achieve through his protest poetics.

Linked to the above are fragmentary images of the speaker’s landscape in:

Shards

This is the image that coheres my world  
To a single shape, single sharp edge

and I see them in my mind  
the broken brittle edges,  
brick-red like broken tiles  
stuck in the moist black earth  
to border an unkempt garden<sup>971</sup>

In the first stanza the speaker paradoxically asserts that the broken pieces of his landscape ‘coheres my world / to a single shape, single sharp edge.’ I suggest that these images show the torturous and psychologically tormented world of the speaker. Wole Ogundele argues that ‘Brutus sees nothing to celebrate in the city and its civilization, but much fear and lament.’<sup>972</sup> The depiction of images such as ‘broken brittle’, ‘sharp-edge’ and

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<sup>968</sup> Joseph Ajogwu Onoja, ‘Examining the Effects of Protest Poetry on the Current Xenophobic Treachery in South Africa’, *International Journal of Academia*, 2.1 (2006), pp. 1-8 (p. 2).

<sup>969</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 202, ‘those who are oppressed represent, through their very resistance, the guarantee of such a future’ – echo-monde.

<sup>970</sup> Ibid.

<sup>971</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 30.

<sup>972</sup> Wole Ogundele, ‘Politics and the Pastoral ideal in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus’, p. 53.

‘blades’<sup>973</sup> exposes the idea of a wounded landscape and people, each with wounded bodies that are sharp to piercing points. Consequently, Brutus aims for an inter-dependent relationship between man and nature – a desire by man to live its human nature in a serene environment. The alliteration in the sounds /b/ and /s/ emphasises the sharpness of these bodies that are ready to pierce each other. However, as the speaker suggests, the wounded nature of the landscape ‘coheres’ not only his ‘world’, but also that of the people.

Significantly, the ‘shards’ metaphor lends itself to another figure:

- of lugubrious Job  
with his egregious comforters  
scraping the scabs  
and puncturing the pustulent excrescences  
of his inflicted loathsomeness<sup>974</sup>

Brutus makes a biblical allusion to Job who is an example of a dehumanising victimhood in a world of ‘shards.’ He seems to suggest that his landscape might be comparable to the ‘lugubrious Job’ who mourns: ‘my body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin in broken and festering.’<sup>975</sup> Once again the poet appeals to images of the wound - ‘scabs’ and ‘puncturing’ to signify a wounded landscape. These wound images discussed in depth in Chapter Three and summed up here assumes another focus which is to seek healing from colonial wounding so as to assert an identity in a place. The incongruous juxtaposition of Job’s ‘egregious comforters’ – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar’ and their advisory role of ‘scraping the scabs’ and puncturing the pustulent excrescences’ has the effect of revealing the excessively repulsive nature of the apartheid regime in its move towards putting races at loggerhead and dividing humanity.

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<sup>973</sup> Ibid.

<sup>974</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 31.

<sup>975</sup> Job 7.5.

Furthermore, in ‘Sharpeville’, the poet brings back memories of the Sharpeville massacre when the police opened fire against a crowd demonstrating against pass laws at the police station in the South African township of Sharpeville, Transvaal.<sup>976</sup> As Paul le Blanc suggests, Brutus ‘explained in verse and prose the necessity of opposing the regime and the system that had gunned down peacefully protesting men, women and children in Sharpeville in 1960.’<sup>977</sup> In this poem, the poet emphasizes the metaphoric significance of Sharpeville:

What is important  
About Sharpeville  
Is not that seventy died:  
Nor even that they were shot in the back  
retreating, unarmed, defenceless<sup>978</sup>

The first stanza exposes the wound of history, a significant image underpinning this thesis. This image, recalled earlier in this thesis, is seen in ‘they were shot in the back.’ This is heightened by the idea that these civilians were ‘retreating, unarmed,’ and ‘defenceless,’ thus, exposing the hideous nature of this crime against humanity. There is a need for a continued de-linking from such barbaric acts of inhumanity. Mignolo describes this as ‘their reclaiming the land and dignity that belongs to them.’<sup>979</sup> Therefore, what is important about this act is not the number of people killed but the cruelty of the act as described:

remember Sharpeville  
bullet-in-the-back day  
because it epitomized oppression  
and the nature of society  
more clearly than anything else;  
it was the classic event<sup>980</sup>

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<sup>976</sup> Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane, ‘Sharpeville and its Aftermath: The Novels of Richard Rive, Peter Abrahams, Alex La Gum a, and Lauretta Ngcoho’, *Ariel*, 16.2 (1985), pp. 31-44, (p. 30 & 32).

<sup>977</sup> Paul Le Blanc, ‘Dennis Brutus: Poet and Revolutionary’, *Critique* 38.2(2010), 335-342, (p. 336).

<sup>978</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 88.

<sup>979</sup> Walter Mignolo, ‘Coloniality is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality’, p. 43.

<sup>980</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 89

The speaker underscores that the importance of Sharpeville lies in the idea that it is a 'classic event' that 'epitomized oppression / more clearly than anything else.' Brutus stresses the need 'to remember' five times and the comparative word 'more' three times throughout the poem. The aim is to express the uniqueness of this gruesome act especially as 'nowhere is racial dominance / more clearly defined / nowhere the will to oppress / more clearly demonstrated.'<sup>981</sup> Ultimately, 'where the world whispers' such gruesome act, in South Africa, this is declared 'with snarling guns.' The clarion call to remember Sharpeville / Remember bullet-in-the-back day' begs for justice, relation and an end to such cruelty. Geetha Soundara asserts that 'Brutus was glad for the message that the obvious hatred of the incident tells the world, namely, the obstinate yearning for freedom from apartheid domination.'<sup>982</sup> Despite such pain, the poem ironically ends on the note to 'remember the dead / and be glad.'<sup>983</sup> Kontain Trinya advances that:

The emotional pungency of this poem derives from matching, very deliberately but apparently unfittingly, the emotion of gladness against that of Sharpeville sorrow. The terminal irony results from inappropriately relating (or juxtaposing) the two moods. In the repressive context of Apartheid, this form of indirection that avoids overt praise or censure makes great sense.<sup>984</sup>

In addition, Abasiokong explains that Brutus' words, such as 'sweat-tear-sodden slush' and 'Sharpevilled', have an original double-barrel coinage intended to shock the reader.<sup>985</sup> Abasiokong conveys that in the word Sharpeville, the first syllable is a pun that serves to carry with great economy the idea of the notorious Sharpeville outrage; it also serves as a driving force for the non-whites to whet their weapons in readiness for retaliation.<sup>986</sup> The structure of this poem is somewhat chaotic. There seems to be a

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<sup>981</sup> Ibid.

<sup>982</sup> Geetha Soundara Raj, 'The Stubborn Hope an Exile: A Study of Dennis Brutus Poems' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Madurai Kamaraj University, 2007), p. 39.

<sup>983</sup> Ibid.

<sup>984</sup> Trinya, 'Mirrors of Social Paradox in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus', p. 11.

<sup>985</sup> Abasiokong, 'Poetry Pure and Applied: Rabearivelo and Brutus', p. 46.

<sup>986</sup> Ibid.

deliberate attempt to use minimal punctuation. Barring the two end-stopped lines in the first and third stanzas, and the commas in the last line of stanza one, the rest of the poem is unpunctuated. I argue that given the broken nature of the speaker's society, his mind seems to wander in a nightmarish manner. This might also be a conscious effort to reflect his chaotic environment. In addition, the varied use of a couplet, a tercet, quatrains, a quintain and a sestet also reflects simultaneously a chaotic and a hybrid post-colonial society out of which might yet emerge a poetics of belonging. Apart from the idea of de-linking colonial designs, the poets show an attempt towards re-linking<sup>987</sup> with the legacies of colonialism and slavery in the peripheries, so to speak, that they were inhabiting.

### **Re-claiming Geographical Spaces**

This section turns to how Walcott and Brutus use images to relate to home. Both poets employ lyrical forms which give them the opportunity to talk about two things simultaneously. Of significant is the double entendre image or metaphor of the female that plays a salient role in lambasting the continuous imperialist exploits of land and people in post-independence societies. Their intention, it appears, is to save this beauty from impoverishment and ravishment. An example is Walcott's 'The Light of the World', a poem which King describes as Walcott's 'return[ed] to making art of the beauty of black St Lucian women.'<sup>988</sup> Here, the speaker is described as an alienated man who longs to be one with his landscape, an alluring beauty:

Marley was rocking on the transport's stereo  
and the beauty was humming the choruses quietly.  
I could see where the lights on the planes of her cheek  
streaked and defined them; if this were a portrait  
you'd leave the highlights for last, these lights  
silkened her black skin; I'd have put in an earring,  
something simple, in good gold, for contrast, but she

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<sup>987</sup> To relink means to re-exist with the legacies one wants to preserve in order to engage in modes of existence which one wants to engage, (Mignolo, 'Coloniality is Far from Over, So Must Be Decoloniality', pp. (40-41).

<sup>988</sup> King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, p. 469.

wore no jewelry. I imagined a powerful  
and sweet odour coming from her, as from a still panther,  
and the head was nothing else but heraldic.  
When she looked at me, then away from me politely  
because any staring at strangers is impolite,  
it was like a statue, like a black Delacroix's  
Liberty Leading the People, the gently bulging  
whites of her eyes, the carved ebony mouth,  
the heft of the torso solid, and a woman's,  
but gradually even that was going in the dusk,  
except the line of her profile, and the highlit cheek,  
and I thought, O Beauty, you are the light of the world!<sup>989</sup>

The above depicts the idea of reclaiming geographical spaces with a view towards a shared identity. Walcott uses the metaphor of the transport to represent St Lucian society. He gives a detailed picture of the condition of the society, one described as paradoxically beautiful and pitiful. Sitting in a transport or bus that runs between Gros-islet and the Market, the speaker imagines the 'ebony' beauty of this woman. With Marley's song rocking in the background, the beauty 'was humming the choruses.' The visual images of her beauty such as the 'silkened ...black skin', her head as 'heraldic', 'white of her eyes', and 'the carved ebony mouth' are images of the beauty of home portrayed through a strong black woman. The speaker's elation about the beauty of his people and landscape explains the reason he ascribes them the title 'the light of the world.' Contrary to this beauty is the post-colonial impoverishment of his landscape especially with:

the litter of vegetables after Saturday's sales,  
and the roaring rum shops, outside whose bright doors  
you saw drunk women on pavements, the saddest of all things,  
winding up their week, winding down their week.<sup>990</sup>

The depressing conditions of the place and people after Saturday's sales gives a general picture of the suffering poor on the island. These alliterations: 'Saturday's sales', and 'roaring rum' emphasise the pitiable conditions of his people. The use of parallelism in the lines 'winding up their week, winding down their week' creates rhythm and builds up

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<sup>989</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p.49.

<sup>990</sup> Ibid.

to the climax of how these same conditions are reminiscent of past experience when: ‘the shadows quarrelled for bread in the shops, / or quarrelled for the formal custom of quarrelling / in the electric rum shops.’<sup>991</sup> The metaphoric description of St Lucia’s inhabitants as shadows is effective in depicting how post-colonial conditions have reduced them to nothing less than a reflection of themselves, and as such, stripped them of their individuality. Terada Rei posits that ‘Walcott underscores the fragile temporal development of St Lucia by depicting women at various stages of their life, moving from the beauty to drunk women on pavements.’<sup>992</sup> Although the poet individualises the old woman, she is also a metaphor of the sufferings of the people:

An old woman with a straw hat over her headkerchief  
 hobbled towards us with a basket; somewhere,  
 some distance off, was a heavier basket  
 that she couldn’t carry. She was in a panic.  
 She said to the driver: “Pas quittez moi a` terre,”  
 which is, in her patois: “Don’t leave me stranded,”  
 which is, in her history and that of her people:  
 “Don’t leave me on earth,” or, by a shift of stress:  
 “Don’t leave me the earth” [for an inheritance];  
 “Pas quittez moi a` terre,” Heavenly transport,  
 Don’t leave me on earth, I’ve had enough of it.”  
 The bus filled in the dark with heavy shadows that  
 would not be left on earth; no, that would be left  
 on the earth, and would have to make out.  
 Abandonment was something they had grown used to.<sup>993</sup>

The old woman is an emblem of the poet’s subtle critique of the post-colonial condition of the people. I propose that Walcott metonymically uses the role of the woman to represent the community. Thus, her ‘heavy basket’ is symbolic of the burden of the people - a burden that is lighter when shared in communion. Thus, she calls out earnestly to the driver ‘Pas quittez moi a` terre, Heavenly transport ... / I’ve had enough of it’ in mixed Standard English and French Creole reflecting the diction of the inhabitants. Aside from

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<sup>991</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 50.

<sup>992</sup> Terada Rei, ‘Derek Walcott and the Poetics of Transport’, *Postmodern Culture* 2.1 (1991), pp. 1-17 (p. 8).

<sup>993</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 51.

this mixed register, the poem straddle between informality and oratorical eloquence, more of a conversational tone that evinces negotiation between two parties. I argue that this hybrid register is apt in depicting a speaker who seeks to re-connect with his people. Breslin argues that the bus ‘is the transport of momentary reintegration with the community that he has abandoned, as the woman who cried “[P]as quittez moi a`terre” had feared the transport would abandon her.’<sup>994</sup> In addition, there is the difficulty of ‘solidify[ing] my shadow / to be one of their shadows, I had left them their earth.’<sup>995</sup> This realisation comes with the notion that the people’s trust in their local regional artist (Bob Marley) whose lyrics is seen in the epigraph of the poem: ‘Kaya now, got to have kaya now, / Got to have kaya now, / For the rain is falling,’<sup>996</sup> is playing on the ‘transport stereo.’<sup>997</sup> Thus, aside from the neighbourliness of the other passengers that eases the burden of abandonment and suffering, kaya or ganja / cannabis also seems to be a spiritual remedy to their deprivation. Rei asserts that ‘Kaya also functions, like poetic transport, as a vehicle towards the destination of simultaneous heightened elevation and oblivion.’<sup>998</sup>

The speaker’s heightened sense of estrangement and desire for a place is expressed at the end of the poem: ‘I got off the van without saying good night. / Goodnight would be full of inexpressible love. / They went on in their transport, they left me on earth.’<sup>999</sup> Although he feels depressed for not staying on in the community transport, he is reassured when the van stops and a man calls back to him handing over a pack of cigarette, which had dropped from his pocket. He could not offer them anything either as they wanted nothing from him. But all he could give them was his art and this line: ‘The light of the world’.

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<sup>994</sup> Breslin, *Nobody Nation*, p. 237.

<sup>995</sup> Ibid.

<sup>996</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 48.

<sup>997</sup> Ibid.

<sup>998</sup> Terada Rei, ‘Derek Walcott and the Poetics of Transport’, p. 9.

<sup>999</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, P. 51.

Breslin advances that: ‘to be sure one reason the speaker has nothing the people on the transport want is that his poems, including this one, are not what that community ask of art.’<sup>1000</sup> However, Lloyd King suggests that for the Caribbean intellectual, a return to the West Indian folk is a stage of grace, of wholeness. Thus,

In Walcott’s eyes, that grace and wholeness is itself ‘the light of the world’: the other passengers need not take it from him, because they have it already. As in the gospels, to say ‘I am the light of the world’ is to say ‘you are the light of the world’: To have it is to perceive it in others. What his fellow passengers have given the poet, they have given without knowing it, and what he gives in return they might not want.<sup>1001</sup>

The poet therefore bequeaths the biblical image of the light, a heraldic status, to his community through his poetry, as if to say that a city built on the periphery cannot be hidden but will shine forth.<sup>1002</sup> This praise form of the beauty of blackness, of the beauty of a black woman is also shown in ‘The Villa Restaurant’, a homecoming poem that describes how via the physical beauty of a waitress, the poet relates and reclaims geographical spaces:

That terra-cotta waitress,  
elbows out, seems to brood  
on her own shape, her irises  
now slate, now hazel-hued

as pebbles in the shallows  
of sunlit river D’Oree;  
her ears, curled jars, enclosed  
small talk and cutlery.<sup>1003</sup>

Like some of Walcott’s poems discussed above, in this chapter, this is well crafted in Quatrains. Most of the stanzas have an alternating rhyme scheme pattern abab - giving it the quality of a song of praise to his lady. Vernon Shetley describes this poem among others in this collection as ‘predominantly lyric focus [where] the full range of Walcott’s

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<sup>1000</sup> Breslin, *Nobody’s Nation*, p. 240.

<sup>1001</sup> Lloyd King, ‘Caribbean Literature: Aspects of a Nationalist Process’, in *Perspectives on Caribbean Regional Identity*, ed. Elizabeth M. Thomas-Hope (Liverpool: Centre for Latin American Studies, University of Liverpool, 1984), p. 100.

<sup>1002</sup> John 8.12.

<sup>1003</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 25.

oratory comes into play; the most mundane observations even when recorded in a syncopated, jogging meter, take on a certain magnificence.’<sup>1004</sup> From the stanzas, the speaker expresses his admiration of a black waitress at a restaurant in Choiseul. He describes her physical beauty in a simultaneous relationship with the landscape about her. The phrasal verb ‘elbows out’ might imply that she seems to have been forced out of place. The speaker asserts that in that position, she seems ‘to brood on her own shape.’ I argue that this line reflects the peripheral nature of the island which the poet is determined to give it a centripetal reading. Although I agree with Macarie Gilles<sup>1005</sup> that women, more than men, occupy traditional and peripheral role in Walcott’s poetry, I contend that beauty is naturally endowed with women and that the poet uses feminine qualities as an enabling metaphor to write about the beauty of a home he desires to be a part of. The lady’s beauty is reflected in the image of ‘terra-cotta’, a red brownish clay used as a material for sculptures. I argue that Walcott might be compared to a potter who through his imagination paints the beauty of the island using the image of the ‘terra cotta.’ The speaker asserts that the beautiful rounded nature of her ‘irises’ changes from fine grains of rock to ‘hazel-hued’ like the ‘pebbles’ of ‘river D’Oree.’ The river D’Oree contextualises the place as St Lucia especially when Walcott writes that it had its name from ‘some Frenchman called Choiseul,’<sup>1006</sup> which further gives away the historical origin of the island and enables more appreciation of the speaker’s sense of place. The speaker goes on to reclaim the island on behalf of the terra-cotta waitress:

the cracked ground in Mantegna  
 is hers, the golden apple;  
 the blue gesso behind her  
 head is my Sistine Chapel<sup>1007</sup>

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<sup>1004</sup> Vernon Shetley, ‘Review of The Arkansas Testament’ in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, (Boulder: Three Continent Press, 1996), p. 394.

<sup>1005</sup> Macarie Gilles, ‘Not his but her Story: The Place of Women in Derek Walcott’s Poetry’, *commonwealth: Essays and Studies*, 26.1 (2003), pp.71-74 (p. 71).

<sup>1006</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, P. 26.

<sup>1007</sup> Derek Walcott, p. 27.

Walcott's speaker makes a series of associations to display the beauty of the terra-cotta waitress or his landscape. The cracked ground of Mantagna is an allusion to the painter, Andrea Mantegna<sup>1008</sup> who is known to have loved painting on hard surfaces instead of soft meadows. This comparison suggests that there is beauty in the speaker's landscape despite its history of slavery. The golden apple metaphor goes back in time to Greek mythology when the goddess of discord, Eris threw an apple to three goddesses using the words: 'to the fairest.'<sup>1009</sup> These associations suggest that Walcott's poetic is like an 'open boat,'<sup>1010</sup> set to sail for everyone and ready to relate with others. The speaker's beautiful landscape or lady is therefore gifted with natural beauty ready for painting. In this way, the 'blue gasso' behind her head serves as a sign of readiness to be represented. Thus, Walcott advances that her readiness in turn, serves as a source of inspiration and it is therefore 'my Sistine Chapel', an allusion to the pope's palace of authority to express a sense of belonging to a place.

The speaker is very conscious of the idea that there may be different perspective on his lady's beauty:

So others can look for her  
beauty through dusty glass,  
in Greek urn or amphora-  
I choose the living vase

and turn into a river  
whose brown tongue will not rest  
until my praises fill the  
clay goblet of her breast<sup>1011</sup>

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<sup>1008</sup> Derek Walcott, p. 26.

<sup>1009</sup> The Apple of Discord and Beauty, <https://www.alimentarium.org/en/knowledge/apple-discord-and-beauty.html> [last accessed 27 August 2019], n.p.

<sup>1010</sup> Glissant, p. 5.

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid.

Drawing from the above stanzas, the beauty of the speaker's island is often appreciated through a 'dusty glass' of the Greek urn or amphora. Contrary to this large decorated ancient Greek vase and Roman storage jar respectively, the speaker prefers rather the living vase of nature whose river will not lay still until he has filled 'the clay goblet of her breast,' a proverb which the speaker draws from his landscape to express the idea that giving voice to the landscape is like filling a goblet to its brim. Timothy P. Hofmeister advances that 'the speaker of the poem yearns to assume elemental form and unite with his woman through song.'<sup>1012</sup> Therefore, Walcott in this poem, praises the beauty of his landscape. Brutus also seeks a closer relationship with his land and desires to reclaim it from the clutches of the apartheid regime as follows:

Land that I love, now must I ask  
Dare I discard the diurnal mask  
Of feeling, the protective husk  
Of manufactured feeling hiding hurt.  
Now that you show your secret hues  
And hint in flickering tints your permanent heart  
Glimmering and tender in the luminous dark  
Your exposed loveliness dissolving away my fear  
Now must I wonder if I dare,  
Dare I discard my quotidian mask?<sup>1013</sup>

Here the poet uses the metaphor of the land to describe his love and affection for it. The entire poem could be described as a rhetorical poem although within it is embedded some justifications. The speaker questions: 'land that I love, now must I ask / dare I discard the diurnal mask?' These show that the speaker is suffering psychologically and requests to know if it is time to take off 'the diurnal mask', 'the protective mask' that shields his feelings. His feelings are manufactured because they have been forcefully created by the apartheid regime. These feelings are heightened because they are not expressed. Thus, they become 'manufactured feeling of hiding hurt.' The alliteration 'hiding hurt'

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<sup>1012</sup> Timothy P. Hofmeister, 'Iconoclasm, Elegy and Epiphany: Derek Walcott Contemplating the Bust of Homer', *International Journal of Classical Tradition* 1.1(1994), pp. 107-128 (p. 117).

<sup>1013</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 52.

emphasises a tortured persona. The double entendre image of the female is pivotal in this poem. This is because the images used foreground the idea that his land is like a woman, an image which embodies the discourse here on home and belonging. For example, the poet appeals to visual images of light and colour. These sensuous images are brought out in ‘your secret hues’, ‘flickering tints’, ‘glimmering and tender.’ The images of colour, ‘hues’ and ‘tints’ express the beauty of the speaker’s landscape. Although the light may be ‘flickering’ and ‘glimmering’, a suggestion that the landscape is not a sure place of safety, the speaker believes that her ‘tender’ nature and loveliness ‘exposed’ are capable of ‘dissolving away my fear.’ It is important to note that the speaker’s landscape is clouded by ‘the luminous dark’, a paradox that exposes the bittersweet nature of his home.

The above poem is written in *descastich*, a ten-line poem with no reference to meter and rhyme pattern. The stress at the beginning of the lines varies between stress and unstressed pattern. For example, the first two lines and last two lines of the poem have stressed syllables or trochaic in the words: ‘land’ ‘dare’, ‘now’ and ‘dare’ respectively. In addition, these same lines show a variation in repetition that emphasises the melodic rhythm of the poem. Also, the variation in, ‘the diurnal mask’ or ‘my quotidian mask’ are indicative of the pain the speaker must keep up with. This is contrasted with the third and fourth lines of the poem that begins with an unstressed syllable or an iamb: ‘of feeling, the protective husk / of manufactured feeling hiding hurt.’ The iamb and the repetition of the conjunction ‘of’, sustain the lyrical and rhetorical nature of the poem. The rhetoric is made more apparent by the sound images seen in the internal rhymes: ‘hint’ and ‘tints’, ‘dark’ and ‘heart’ on the one hand, and the half rhymes: ‘ask’ ‘mask’, ‘hurt’ and ‘heart.’ Brutus’ use of pararrhyme goes back to the traditional poet Gerard Manley Hopkins whose

poetry exposes a man with a sense of deep personal experience. This seems to be a trend in Brutus's lyrical poetry especially here:

The beauty of my land peers warily  
Through palisading trees on hilly slopes;  
At night along the tree-fenced roads  
I sense her presence pacing sinously  
Beyond the searching circle of lights.  
Exploring pools of soothing tepidness  
I find the indrawn nerveless diffidence  
Of beauty fearing ravishment's delight;  
I shiver at her self-defensive scorn  
In chillness of aloofly soaring rocks-  
But all of these my unwearying ardour mocks  
When sunfire ignites the miles of rippling corn.<sup>1014</sup>

The first line expresses the idea that the speaker's land / lover is always on guard as if apprehensive of an attack when she 'peers warily.' There is a suggestion that the speaker's land/lover lives in a state of perpetual fear and imprisonment especially when it looks 'through palisading trees on hilly slopes.' Aside from the palisading trees on hilly slopes, the roads too seem to be guarded when described as a 'tree-fenced road.' I propose that the speaker is disheartened by his landscape and or / lover's imprisoned nature. This is compounded when 'at night ... I sense her presence pacing [sinuously].' The error in the word 'sinously' might be a misspelled or a deliberate attempt by Brutus to use the word in that form, probably to mock the security mounted by the apartheid government. The voiceless plosive sound /p/ in the alliteration 'presence pacing' is effective in indicating the helpless nature of the lover/landscape and as well as the need to remain cautious when treading on apartheid's dangerous grounds.

Moreover, in exploring further, the speaker notices that his lady /land shows signs of tepidness and lack of confidence. As a result, he asserts that her lukewarm nature can be

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<sup>1014</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 52.

the result 'of beauty fearing ravishment's delight.' The image of rape in this line portrays a landscape that is grossly exploited by the regime. The oxymoron in 'ravishment's delight's' might mean that the apartheid regime rapes the land for its pleasure. It is this act that keeps her on guard and forces her to put on a look of 'scorn' for her own self-defence. Although the speaker shivers at her scornful looks, he is resolute that 'my unwearying ardour mocks / when sunfire ignites the miles of rippling corn.' The choice of words: 'unwearying' and 'sunfire' reflects the diction of his landscape. The 'unwearying' nature of the speaker depicts a stubborn lover who is determined to fight for his lady despite her loss of self-confidence in the struggle to be free. His inspiration is sustained by the 'sunfire' that 'ignites the miles of rippling corn' in his landscape. Brutus' use of the noun 'beauty' is like Walcott's description of the St Lucian travellers on the bus as 'Oh beauty! You are the light of the world.' Thus, there is a similar signalling that both poets express their love for home through the lens of a feminine beauty. The paradox in 'ravishment's delight,' calls for an urgent need to dissociate from inhuman practises that hold a people and a land in perpetual servitude. Such an imperial culture must be debunked in favour of a culture that 'that seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases belonging to or in a place, being in a place'<sup>1015</sup> as Said suggests.

The enjambments used in this poem underline the ambiguity of the land vis a vis the lover metaphor. However, the run-on- lines are moderated by the end-stopped lines. There is also the use of internal rhymes in: 'soothing' 'pool', 'aloof' with the sound /u/, and the words: 'soar' and 'scorn' with the sound /ɔ/. This rhythmic pattern enhances the lyric nature of the poem. I also note how the poet uses an enclosed rhyme scheme

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<sup>1015</sup> Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 8.

abbacddcebbe, which has the effect of relieving tension in the poem. I argue that such a rhyme pattern may have been inspired by Brutus' reading of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poetry. One example of Tennyson's poem that uses an enclosed pattern is 'In Memoriam:'

Strong son of God, immortal love,  
Whom we, that have not seen they face,  
By faith, and faith only embrace  
Believing where we cannot prove;

Although the enclosed rhyme is perfectly delivered in quatrains, Brutus' poem could be divided into four quatrains as seen in Tennyson's poem. Like Walcott, Brutus is also open to relating with other cultures through his poetic writings. Such influences go way back to his childhood memories when he asserts that 'I was hearing bits of poetry all around me. One which I remembered all my life is Tennyson's ode on the death of the "Duke of Wellington, Bury the Great Duke."'”<sup>1016</sup> Tennyson's rhyme pattern abba might portray an example of Brutus's poetic inspiration in writing his own rhyme scheme pattern. The double entendre image of the female as used by Walcott and Brutus, does not serve to silence the female but rather to portray a beautiful but torturous landscape that needs voicing. This image is also associated with literary cultures where she is described as a mistress whose love must be won by a knight. Walcott and Brutus' romance with the English and classic traditions is clearly shown in their cross-cultural borrowings which reflect their move towards an open and shared belonging as the next section exemplifies.

### **Diasporic Belonging: Literary and Cross-Cultural Poetics**

The focus here is to portray how Walcott and Brutus harness and appropriate Western literary and cultural tropes to re-define their own identities as diasporic poets. The poems take the reader across migrant spaces and portray personas who travel through their literal appropriation of tropes and cultures of writing. The question I raise is how does a cross-cultural poetic bridge the gap between past and present, and how does it enhance a

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<sup>1016</sup> Lindfors. *The Dennis Brutus Tapes: Essays at Autobiography*, p. 144.

diasporic sense of belonging in the poetics of Walcott and Brutus? Bobb offers that ‘belonging and identity come through an understanding of the inherited past.’<sup>1017</sup> I add that it is not only through an inherited past, but the present as well. Thus, both the past and the diasporic present open to ambivalent practices of racism and alienation must be harnessed to assert a sense of place. As Thieme argues, Walcott’s *The Arkansas Testament* is a testament of the ‘intermingling and cultural cross-pollination.’<sup>1018</sup> Its division into ‘Here’ and ‘Elsewhere’ as Baugh suggests,

[They] are both necessary states and reference points of the one mind working to locate itself. It is a mind which cherishes its rootedness in a particular small corner of the earth, but which at the same time insists upon its free passage through the world.<sup>1019</sup>

These intermingling and cultural cross-pollinations are seen in ‘Eulogy to W. H. Auden’, where the metaphorical and allusive density that usually accompanies Walcott’s poetry can be noticed. Here, the poet pays tribute to the English-American poet, Auden and acknowledges his apprenticeship to Auden and his debt to Western literature. The poem is also a celebration of death as:

Assuredly, that fissured face  
is wincing deeply, and must loathe  
our solemn rubbish,  
frown on our canonizing farce  
as self-enhancing, in lines both  
devout and snobbish.<sup>1020</sup>

The speaker addresses ‘that fissured face’, an alliteration expressing the idea of a death person whose features ‘in [the] flat world of silence’<sup>1021</sup> could only be seen through a narrow opening. The poem is set in the cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York as indicated in the epigraph of the poem. The speaker is conscious of the notion that Auden’s

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<sup>1017</sup> June Bobb, p. 201.

<sup>1018</sup> John Thieme, p.176.

<sup>1019</sup> Edward Baugh, p. 127.

<sup>1020</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 61.

<sup>1021</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 62.

remains may 'loathe' their ceremonial presence as a pompous enhancement of self-identity. However, he pleads that the death 'may spare us who convene / against its wish.'<sup>1022</sup> The rhyme scheme of the above stanza is abcabc. The third and last lines of the stanza have five syllables each giving it a metrical foot of a dimeter. This pattern runs throughout the first section of the poem. I argue that some features of this poem might be compared to W. H. Auden's lyrics 'In Memory of W B Yeats:'

He disappeared in the dead of winter:  
The brooks were frozen, the airport almost  
deserted,  
And snow disfigured the public statues;  
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying  
day.  
What instruments we have agree  
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Although Walcott does not use the same rhyme scheme pattern as Auden, both poems have six lines per stanzas. Also, Auden alludes to winter as the time of the death of the poet and Walcott writes of 'this autumn evening', using nature as a sympathetic background similarly to the way that Auden does. These literary similarities show that Walcott's poetry, like his own nature finds belonging in a hybrid mix of cultures. It is a belonging that reaches out through a poetic relation inclusive of its diasporic ties with other poets. As Glissant argues, 'it is no longer through deepening a tradition but through the tendency of all traditions to enter into relation that this is achieved.'<sup>1023</sup> Also, the idea that 'Kirchstetten freed its tenant of / Time and its burden'<sup>1024</sup> sounds like Auden's 'Let the Irish Vessel lie / Emptied of its poetry.' The metonymic use of a country's name in association with an individual is an example of a style that is well grounded in the classics. Walcott is ready to copy from the masters especially when he addresses Auden:

Our conjugations, Master,  
are still based on the beat

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<sup>1022</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1023</sup> Edouard Glissant, p. 95.

<sup>1024</sup> Derek Walcott, p. 62.

of wings that gave their cast to  
our cuneiform alphabet,<sup>1025</sup>

The stanza expresses the speaker's acknowledgement of Auden as Master of the art, one from whom he is willing to learn although his form of writing is still determined by the 'beat of wings.' This implies that Walcott's poetry and his use of language are determined by his landscape and also relates to other cultures. Edward Baugh asserts that 'Walcott ... makes the point that one has to feel the landscape of a place in its language.'<sup>1026</sup> Walcott's language is most often indebted to both the Caribbean Creole and the standardized English Language like the speaker describes in this poem:

Once, past a wooden vestry,  
down still colonial streets,  
the hoisted chords of Wesley  
were strong as miners' throats;

in treachery and in union,  
despite your Empire's wrong,  
I made my first communion  
there, with the English tongue.

It was such dispossession  
that made possession joy  
when, strict as Psalm or lesson,  
I learnt your poetry.<sup>1027</sup>

In this second section written in quatrains rhyming abab, the poet brings the past and the present together and assesses its result. The speaker takes us down the vestry of a church and alludes to the Methodist hymns composed by John Wesley, an English cleric and evangelist.<sup>1028</sup> These influences have had a tremendous impact not only on Walcott's life but also on his poetry, which is permeated with this kind of meter and biblical allusions. One such allusion is exposed when Walcott writes: 'railings where it moves, / brightening

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<sup>1025</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 63.

<sup>1026</sup> Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 155.

<sup>1027</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 63-64.

<sup>1028</sup> Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, *The Arkansas Testament*, in *The Art of Derek Walcott* p. 127.

with *Nunc Dimittis*,<sup>1029</sup> to suggest that the song of Simeon, used as a canticle in the liturgy has the power to brighten the railings on which Auden's remains lay.

Furthermore, although the Empire's presence was a curse due to slavery and colonialism, the speaker advances that 'it was such dispossession that made possession joy.' This paradox is significant in showing how the pain of slavery has provided the speaker and the people of the Caribbean the opportunity to start afresh. It is a new beginning that is not limited to a singular root influence but avails itself of other cultural roots. Also, it should be emphasized that Walcott's strict use of the quatrain sequence shows his respect for the discipline of craft and his openness to other literary cultures. Baugh argues that:

Walcott's sustained use engagement of quatrain in *The Arkansas Testament* is an expression of his insistence on the notion of poetry as a discipline, a craft which one has to learn and work at. He never sees himself as too old to go to school to the old Masters, and he is ever striving for more care in the craft of verse'<sup>1030</sup>

I note also that Walcott uses end-stopped lines as a style that enhances the ease and plain-speaking nature of the poem, and enabling the reader to read the lines, pause and meditate on each word used.

A similar association with the classical is seen in 'French colonial: Vers de Societe.' Here, the speaker enumerates a few French novelists and their impact on the society:

Maurois, or Mauriac – but not Malraux,  
the morose Marxist, prophet of *Man's Fate*  
in something I read many years ago  
that stuck, without an accurate memory of the date,

Compare, the symmetry of a work of art

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<sup>1029</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 64.

<sup>1030</sup> Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 176.

to an hourglass. The French are very good at these  
sort of thing; every other frog is a Descartes:  
*Cogito ergo*, that precise *b?tise*.<sup>1031</sup>

Walcott makes a classical allusion to the first World War's French veteran and writer, André Maurois,<sup>1032</sup> and French novelists - François Charles Mauriac<sup>1033</sup> and André Malraux.<sup>1034</sup> The poet's intimation of Andre Malraux as a 'morose Marxist' is based on his pessimistic philosophical writings in *Man's Fate*.<sup>1035</sup> These references display his homage to renowned writers and like the previous poem, also shows his desire to pay attention to the crafting of art. This is especially so when he obliges the reader to 'compare, the symmetry of a work of art / to an hourglass.' Thus, he asserts that every work of art must follow a dimension and create balance within that dimension. The speaker identifies with the French because they 'are very good at these.' An example is René Descartes' assertion in his *Cogito ergo (sum)*: 'I think, therefore I am'<sup>1036</sup> which creates a balance in structure and thought. Walcott is sarcastic in his use of words such as: 'frog' and 'b?tise' or betise – a word that is nonsense. The forced rhyming of the word 'these' with 'b?tise,' is also to that effect. Baugh posits that 'the grammatically incorrect 'these', needing to rhyme with betise, may also be part of the sophisticated play of wit, mimicking a French pronunciation of 'this.'<sup>1037</sup> These do not only reflect Walcott's strict use of rhyme, but also the ironic and humorous nature of his poetics.

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<sup>1031</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 75.

<sup>1032</sup> André Maurois, <<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/maurois-andr-x00e9.html>> [last accessed 14 August 2019], n.p.

<sup>1033</sup> François Charles Mauriac, <<http://www.britannica.com/biography/françois-mauria.html>> [last accesses 14 August 2019], n.p.

<sup>1034</sup> André Malraux, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Andre-malraux.html>> [last accessed 14 August 2019], n.p.

<sup>1035</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1036</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. by Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>1037</sup> Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 177.

From the above associations and witty remarks on the French culture, the poet takes us to another typical French territory, the island of Martinique which he knows too well:

I memorize the atmosphere in Martinique  
as comfortable colonial – tobacco, awnings, Peugeot, pink gendarmes,  
their pride in a language that I dare not speak  
as casually as the gesticulating palms

before Algeria and Dien Bien Phu-  
their nauseous sense of heritage and order  
revolving around Josephine's or Schoelcher's statue,  
and that it was a culture that abhorred water <sup>1038</sup>

The speaker describes the socio-cultural and post-colonial setting of the island of Martinique, a former French colonial territory which to date is considered an overseas region of France. The speaker is critical of the French culture visibly seen in Martinique. This is compounded by a walk down memory lane recalling the French intervention in Algeria and Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam. He also abhors the statues of Joséphine de Beauharnais, the Empress of France.<sup>1039</sup> Although Victor Schoelcher<sup>1040</sup> was an abolitionist, the speaker still abhors his statues since it brings back memories of slavery in their 'nauseous sense of heritage.' Furthermore, Walcott distorts the symmetry of the second line of the first stanza by enumerating the various colonial heritage of the island of Martinique. However, the line also maintains the rhythm of the poem as it enables the word 'gendarmes' to rhyme with the word 'palms.' I argue that such an obnoxious feeling is not simply a hatred for one culture but more of a critique against cultural superiority. To this end, Glissant proposes a circular nomadism which abolishes the notions of center and periphery.<sup>1041</sup> In this way, there is freedom in association with other cultures which contributes to my idea of a shared poetics of belonging.

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<sup>1038</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1039</sup> F. K. Turgeon, 'Fanny de Beuharnais: Biographical Notes', *Modern Philology* 30.1 (1932), pp. 61-80, (p. 67).

<sup>1040</sup> Marcel Dorigny, *The abolitions of slavery: From Léger Félicité Sonthonax to Victor Schoelcher, 1793, 1794, 1848*, (Bergahn Books, New York, 2003), p. 340.

<sup>1041</sup> Édouard Glissant, p. 34.

Diasporic belonging is also noticeable through relation to common folklore performances. For example, in 'Salsa', Walcott takes his reader on a journey to the north and south poles of the American continent to depict how one can find semblances of other cultures. The first stanza, for example, situates the reader in California:

The Morro has one eye slit.  
It is hard grey stone, it is visored  
Like a scraped conquistador's helmet.  
These days not much happens around it.  
The palm frond rusts like a Castilian sword.<sup>1042</sup>

Here the speaker describes the monumental rock in Morro Bay California as a 'hard grey stone' with 'one eye slit' and shield 'like a scraped conquistador's helmet.' The personification of the rock as that which 'has one eye slit,' stresses the idea that the rock is at risk of extinction. This also justifies the speaker's assertion that 'these days not much happens around it' with the result that 'the palm frond rusts like a Castilian sword.' The comparison here suggests that the palm frond is just meant for decoration and nothing else. It is important to draw attention to the name associated with the rock. *Morro* is a word that is common to the Spanish, Portuguese and Italian languages and the word is also the name of many places in the world. This commonality is not intended to undermine the uniqueness of each place but to suggest a relation between cultures linked by folklore and mediated by colonialism.

Contrary to the rust palm fronds around the Morro reserve, the speaker describes the beauty of some women:

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<sup>1042</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 72.

But there, the women have pomegranate skins  
and eyes like black olives, and hair that shines  
blue as a crow's wing, if they are Indians.  
And the Indians there were Toltec and I forget  
What else. But at Ramada and Holiday Inns<sup>1043</sup>

Besides the physical beauty of these women with pomegranate skins, hair that shines and black olives eyes, the speaker draws our attention to their origin. If their hair shines blue, then they are Indians of the Toltec culture; 'an archeological Mesoamerican that dominated a state centered in Tula, Hilalgo, Mexico in the early post-classic period of Mesoamerican chronology.'<sup>1044</sup> I propose that this reference echoes again the multicultural landscape of the American continent which the speaker can easily relate to. This multiculturalism is further enhanced by the singing of the 'Salsa combo' from 'the Ramada and Holiday Inns':

"Ay, caramba, gringo!  
Is getting like New York!  
Or Miami, mi amigo, the lingo  
The hustling palm trees talk.'<sup>1045</sup>

The Salsa dance finds root in both the Cuban and Latino communities in North America. The performance of the salsa band 'combo' is contrasted with the inactive nature of the 'Morro.' Walcott's choice of words in the band's lyric is a *mélange* of both Spanish and English languages to reflect the cross-cultural reality in both the Caribbean and the North American landscapes. Here, Walcott switches between English and Spanish. Thus, the poem echoes the idea of folklore, which is closely related to the idea of Creolisation, 'the creative response of people coming in contact with each other and new situations-resisting

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<sup>1043</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1044</sup> The Mysterious Toltec Civilization of Mexico, <https://www.humansarefree.com/2014/08/the-mysterious-toltec-of.html> [last accessed 14 August 2019], n.p.

<sup>1045</sup> Walcott, *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 72.

the imposition of mechanistic, systematizing, standardizing.’<sup>1046</sup> Salsa therefore represents that creative form.

In the last stanza, the poet goes back to the Caribbean island and makes the connection between Salsa in the North of America and in the Americas where ‘a tree reads the palm of sand, But the lines fade quickly.’” Walcott’s image of the tree symbolises the vibrant nature of the people of the Americas. The name Cartagena situates the reader in a port city in Colombia. I suggest that the lines of sands that fade quickly are as a result of the waves of the sea that wipes them off. Nature therefore serves as a source of remembering, but also effects constant changes. The speaker finds similarities between the Malaguena tune among the Latinos with those of Colombia particularly as ‘Malaguena grates from a sun-straw-hatted band, / and a cockerel comes striding with its Quetzalcoatl.’ The Malaguena is a folk tune native to Malaga, a municipality in Spain.<sup>1047</sup> Spanish colonial occupation of Colombia enabled cultural appropriation of some cultural values of the Spanish. Added to this appropriation is the ‘Quetzalcoatl,’<sup>1048</sup> a feathered-serpent or plumed serpent which is the Nahuatl name for the feathered-serpent deity of ancient Mesoamerican culture. The triangular relation between the American, Spanish and Caribbean island makes room for a constant appropriation between cultures and the idea that cultures keep changing as well alongside one’s sense of belonging. In conversation with Baer, Walcott asserts that:

The whole idea of America, and the whole idea of everything on this side of the world... is imported; we’re all imported- Black or Spanish... The difficult part is the realization that one is part of the whole idea of colonization... the

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<sup>1046</sup> Robert Baron and Ana C. Cara, ‘Introduction: Creolization and Folklore: Cultural Creativity in Process’, *The Journal of American Folklore* 116.4 (2003), pp. 4-8 (p. 5).

<sup>1047</sup> Malaguena, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/malaguena\\_\(song\).html](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/malaguena_(song).html) [accessed 14 August 2019].

<sup>1048</sup> Quetzalcóatl: Mesoamerican God, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Quetzalcoatl.html> [accesses 14 August 2019], n.p.

rare thing is the resolution of being where one is and doing something positive about that reality.<sup>1049</sup>

The possible thing to do is to accept modes of existence that dignify the human and confront ‘the barbarism of Western humanism which made them lesser humans’<sup>1050</sup> as Mignolo argues. One way of accepting these modes of existence is through cultural appropriation. Brutus moves beyond the limiting notion of a single cultural influence by incorporating into his poetics element of the medieval troubadour image, a trope that has come under intense scrutiny from critics like Tejani, who asserts that:

the reoccurrence of the archaic description of himself, far more relevant in the sunny non-racial climate of the Mediterranean, and the mood of the poem, show that the poet listens to the outside voices with a decisiveness which is his weakness. He is struggling to gain self-realization but is far from achieving it.’<sup>1051</sup>

Tejani could be right to a certain extent about the context of the troubadour as out of place within the South African landscape. Tyrone August argues, ‘the lyrics of the troubadours were initially a form of poetry that was essentially aristocratic, intended for nobles and for courts, appealing but rarely to the middle classes and to the common people not at all.’<sup>1052</sup> However, Brutus’ appropriation of the image serves his purpose of identity formation and of giving voice to this same common people in his community who are racially oppressed, as a way of debunking the stereotypical troubadour. August does not feel Brutus is mocking him however:

he expands on his notion of the medieval figure as a lover: ‘His third element was that he tended to have a reputation as a lover ... [I]t is about a permanent love affair, a relationship between me and my country which is often described in male-female terms.

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<sup>1049</sup> William Baer, ed. *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, p. 203.

<sup>1050</sup> Mignolo, ‘Coloniality is far from Over, and so Must Be Decoloniality’, p. 43.

<sup>1051</sup> Tejani, ‘Can a Prison Make a Poet? A Critical Discussion of Letters to Martha’, p.133.

<sup>1052</sup> Tyrone August, ‘Old Root, New Routes: Following the Troubadour in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus, *English in Africa*, 44.2 (2017), 65-91.

These three aspects associated by Brutus with the troubadour – the singer, the fighter and the lover – correspond broadly to historical accounts of the troubadours.<sup>1053</sup>

Brutus himself maintains that he uses the image of the Troubadour ‘because it seems to me a true kind of shorthand for something which is part of my life and my pursuit of justice in a menacing South Africa.’<sup>1054</sup>

Brutus believes in the idea that art can contribute significantly in effecting change. He asserts that ‘the one thing I accept from the western approach to art is the maxim that the artist ought not to be content to describe the world, but that he ought to be trying to transform the world.’<sup>1055</sup> Thus, the image of a knight fighting to defend a land and a people against injustice is evident in the speaker’s assertions that:

I will be the world’s Troubadour  
if not my country’s  
Knight-erranting  
jousting up and down  
with justice for my theme  
weapons as I find them  
and a world-wide scatter of foes

Being what I am  
a compound of speech and thoughts and song  
and girded by indignation  
and accoutered with some undeniable scars  
surely I may be  
this cavalier?

The speaker defines himself as a troubadour of the world. He does not consider himself a medieval troubadour but of a ‘knight-erranting’, / jousting up and down’ in pursuit of justice. His weapons are not defined but he hopes to use whatever weapon he has on the spur of the moment since the enemies of justice are scattered ‘world-wide.’ Hence,

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<sup>1053</sup> Tyrone August, p. 137.

<sup>1054</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Essays at Autobiography*, p. 98.

<sup>1055</sup> Dennis Brutus, Joel Goodfader and Alice Finn, ‘A Poet’s Conscience: An Interview with Dennis Brutus.’ *Harvard International Review*, 5.6 (1983), pp. 28-29 (p. 28).

injustice is not only witnessed in South Africa, but might be considered a world-wide phenomenon. Although the speaker lacks the weapons to use as in a military combat, he describes himself as ‘a compound of speech and thoughts and song,’ and so we assume his weapons are his words. This exhibits a parallelism that makes it clear that Brutus’ poetics includes the singing words of his poem which he uses in defense of the course of justice. Although this image is described in his collection *A Simple Lust* as a knight fighting to win his lover, in the *Stubborn Hope* poems, the image is extended to that of a fight against injustice world-wide. Jane Grant argues that ‘in the present collection we once again find many poems which express, often in images of great tenderness and sensuality, his passionate involvement with the land of South Africa.’<sup>1056</sup> In this way, Brutus’ reiteration of protest against apartheid is to emphasise the need for justice towards all humans and an assertion of identity in a specific place. Said describes this move as ‘filiation with his natal culture and, because of exile, affiliation with it through critical consciousness and scholarly work.’<sup>1057</sup> Brutus’ appeal for justice through his poetry and his use of alien tropes justify his filiation to his place of birth, but also his affiliation with other places.

It is important to note that the speaker braces for action and this is spurred ‘by indignation’, a strong displeasure of the unjust system in apartheid South Africa. This offensive act by the regime has produced ‘undeniable scars’ which he now wears as his own equipment, dress-ready for battle. The rhetorical question at the end of the poem is one which Brutus takes up later as he fights against global apartheid using his poetry. Other than the image of the troubadour, Brutus also draws from the classical tradition, symbols and myths. As the name suggests, in ‘Janus,’ the poet refers to a classical myth:

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<sup>1056</sup> Jane Grant, ‘Exile Progress’, *Sage Journals* 8.4 (1979), pp. 75-77 (p. 76).

<sup>1057</sup> Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 16.

One face speaks emollient words  
while one contrives my mutilation  
One spews homeward hypocritic turds  
the other overseas upbraids hypocritic nations

One furrows anxiously for birds  
while one condones a man's castration

But where will they look when anger makes its ring  
or draws the noose of vengeful suffering?<sup>1058</sup>

From the first quatrain, the poet alludes to the Roman god Janus, who in ancient Roman religion and myth, is believed to be the god of beginning, duality, time, transitions and endings.<sup>1059</sup> As a result of its two fronts and the varied use of its name, it is also referred to as a 'bifacial eponymous god.'<sup>1060</sup> I argue that Brutus' use of this image is filled with some paradoxes of the South African situation and of the speaker's conflicted self. As Trinya suggests, 'the recurrent vision of co-occurring unlikes in the poetry is Brutus' attempt to highlight his society in which there is tension, resulting from the two forces in opposition.'<sup>1061</sup> The speaker asserts that this double face personality has the power to soothe and to hurt at the same time. For example, 'One face speaks emollient words / while one contrives my mutilation.' Here, the speaker presents a paradoxical view of the apartheid landscape. The landscape is such that it enables the persona to feel calm and hopeful about the future of his country. At the same time, the opposing face schemes for his disfigurement.

The last two couplets of the poem are reminiscent of similar circumstances in the *Letters to Martha* poems, which convey that the speaker is in an imprisoned state given that 'one furrows anxiously for birds / while one condones a man's castration.' The furrowing for

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<sup>1058</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 4.

<sup>1059</sup> Janus: Roman God, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Janus-Roman-god.html> [last accessed 14 August 2019], n.p.

<sup>1060</sup> Trinya, 'Mirrors of social paradox in the poetry of Dennis Brutus', p. 7.

<sup>1061</sup> Trinya, p.6.

birds brings out the idea of toil and suffering, a desire to be free like the birds, to get out of his imprisoned world and watch the birds fly past and listen to their tweeting. This desire is reflected in Glissant's idea of a relation identity that 'exults the thought of errantry and totality'<sup>1062</sup> with the world at large. In a contrary view, the other face accepts the emasculation of the male as a means towards disempowering him. The rhetorical question at the end of the poem questions the exercise of anger by both faces. In this vein, the speaker discourages the idea of anger and revenge on the part of the oppressors and revenge on the part of the oppressed. It also suggests Brutus' move towards a relational poetics where both faces must seek a dialogue. It is only then that the speaker and his people can find a safe haven at home. The poem is written in an octave form but follows no set form like the patriarchal or Shakespearean octave of a sonnet written in iambic pentameter. Instead Brutus divides his octave into three stanzas. The first stanza takes the form of a ballad with an alternative rhyme scheme abab. This pattern gives the stanza a memorable rhythm. The entire rhyme scheme of the poem is abababcc. It takes after that of the *ottava rima* but only defers in terms of the meter. The alternating rhyme scheme is apt in describing the opposing groups in apartheid South Africa and the paradoxes that this poem suggests. The last rhyming couplet is therefore an appeal for relation between these opposing forces.

As the troubadour poet, Brutus continues to paint images of an individual who is constantly on the road seeking justice but also discovers that the sufferings back home are universal and inescapable:

Sirens contrail the night air:

Images of prisons around the world,  
Reports of torture, cries of pain  
All strike me on a single sore  
All focus on a total wound:

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<sup>1062</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 144.

Isle of Shippey, isle of Wight,  
New Zealand and Australia  
Are places with a single name  
-where I am they always are:

I go through the world with a literal scar,  
Their names are stitched into my flesh,  
Their mewedupness is my perennial ache,  
Their voice the texture of my air:

Sirens contrail the London air.<sup>1063</sup>

The poem is written in a sonnet form and can be read as a song expressing suffering and pain. Although Brutus draws from the classic tradition, I note that the form of the poem on the page resembles a song with a refrain at the beginning and at the end. These refrains are interspaced by three stanzas written in quatrain. I propose that the three quatrains reflect the Shakespearean sonnet, but the difference lies in the division of the rhyming couplet. Brutus' poetic form is essential in highlighting the socio-political reality of the South African context, a setting full of terror as opposed to the peaceful and harmonious setting of the Shakespearean period. As a modern African poet, Brutus' poetry 'is fueled by history and politics in the African continent and it gets its sustenance from these.'<sup>1064</sup>

The cross-cultural nature of this poem is not only limited to the form of the poem as shown above, but also in terms of the names of places. For example, the 'Isle of Shippey,' the 'Isle of Wight,' 'New Zealand and Australia' are all connected to the British Empire and represent places where there have been conflicts due to imperialism. Significantly,

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<sup>1063</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 50.

<sup>1064</sup> Mathias Iroero Orhero, 'Trends in Modern African Poetic Composition: Identifying the Canons, *UNIUYO Journal of Humanities* 21.1 (2017), pp. 146-164 (p. 150).

the second stanza brings out the musicality of the poem. I concede with Trinya that the rhythm is like Jane Taylor's very popular nursery rhyme, 'The Star':

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!  
Up above the world, so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky.

From this comparison I posit that Brutus handles his subject matter of suffering and pain in a light-hearted and playful manner as a way of leaving a lasting memory of its effect on the reader through its rhythmic familiar and playful structure. The variation in these repetitions: 'Isle of Shippey, Isle of Wight' and 'Sirens contrail the night air / Sirens contrail the London air' are set to music and enhances the musicality of the entire poem. The trochee falling rhythm of these lines and of the entire poem allows for a choral performance of the poem.

The last stanza also heightens the musical quality of the poem. This is conveyed through the repetition 'their' to express the state of a psychologically tortured individual who carries 'a literal scar' with him around the world. The juxtaposition of pain and the musical quality of the poem confirms Trinya's assertion that:

we are consequently shocked by the contrast between the painful message and the apparently rhapsodic and hypnotic mode of its conveyance; shocked that such suffering, or such a tale of *scars* and *sores* and *pain* and *prison* and *torture* and unnerving *sirens* should be told with such rhythmic composure. But therein lies the force of it, to highlight the ugly content by presenting it against a clearly contrasting background of rhythmic beauty.<sup>1065</sup>

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<sup>1065</sup> Kontein Trinya, 'The Dialectics of Art and Society in the poetry of Dennis Brutus,' <https://www.academia.edu/984623/> [accessed 02 July 2019], n.p.

I note that the speaker's physical scar is a true metaphor of the scars of those he has left behind in South Africa. This is stitched into his flesh as well as their 'mewedupness', and their voices are constantly a part of him, and are indefinitely unavoidable. Thus, like Walcott's 'The Arkansas Testament', this poem also examines an individual who finds that life in exile is a reminder of the torturous circumstances of his people at home. The expression 'mewedupness' comes from the words 'mew' and 'dup' which imply the ability to open the mouth's cavity widely to produce a high pitch cry like that of a cat. Brutus's characteristic coining of words is an attempt to find a word that may better depict apartheid South Africa. The coining of the word evidences the lyrical nature of Brutus' poetry and the endless wails/songs by black South African poets about man's inhumanity to fellow man.

The question of how to write home in multicultural societies such as the regions of St Lucia and South Africa is inexhaustible. However, Walcott and Brutus offer opportunities for the assertion of self and place in their poetic writings. Through their revision of home, the claiming of worldly identities, the beauty and the pain of being at the periphery, to the assertion of self in a place, each poet marks a trajectory for the recovery of lost humanities a shared poetics of belonging that insists on full humanity for all peoples. Their use of metaphors shows a double edge impact as it serves the function of resisting stereotypical denigration of the cultures of the 'Other.' At the same time, it portrays the beauty of cross-cultural borrowings as a means towards bridging the gap between an unequal past tradition and a contemporary affiliated tradition. In so doing, the idea of a relational poetics is made possible through Relation with others and an appreciation of the fluidity in identities and cultures.

## CONCLUSION

### A RELATIONAL POETICS: LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

My concern at the very beginning of this thesis process was with questioning what a relational poetics might look like if broaden out to include poets who are not obviously similar in their experience of what Glissant refers to as the abyss. I arrived at the aim to locate instances of how through their poetic writings, Walcott and Brutus give voice to the black and racially mixed people of their respective homes, who have experienced a non-voicing (and silencing) for centuries. Based on their sometimes dissimilar experience of racialised colonial practices, I realised that the eons of these silencing lie in the colonial venture of slavery and segregation that gave birth to what Ramazan describes as the colonial wound of history. My research has centred on making sense of that colonial wound of history, the cultural, and socio-political complexities of race, relation and home that are particular to the regions of the Caribbean and South Africa affected by that wound. My thesis has argued the need for a journey to that hideous past, to find out how these wounds were sustained and what to do to enable healing and a new beginning. Toni Morrison refers to this as ‘a kind of literary archaeology: On the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply.’<sup>1066</sup> And as Said argues, ‘appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present.’<sup>1067</sup> Thus, my thesis has offered a sustained, concerned engagement with the re-representation of those humans who have often been misrepresented and denied core values of empathy, reason, autonomy, justice and freedom that supposedly are linked to Western humanism.

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<sup>1066</sup> Toni Morrison, ‘The Site of Memory’, in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, 2nd ed., ed. by William Zinsser (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), pp.83-102 (p. 92).

<sup>1067</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.1.

I have indicated how through a relational poetics, Walcott and Brutus have shown that the colonial wound of history cannot be reversed but must be mediated through an appreciation of new Relation(s) between people and the places that they call home. The Caribbean has been, and unfortunately continues to be, four hundred years after a cartographic miscalculation, a space of misappropriation and mistranslation. In the light of this, Walcott's poetic form has provided some crucial space, and the structure within which to come to grips with past distortions. I have explored how poetry has formed that space, through which disconnected people from almost every corner of the globe can establish a sense of home and belonging through a relational poetics. This Relation has not been limited to physical bodies but also to land and sea. It is unsurprising developing a thesis about home and relation of the Caribbean and South African regions has been problematic. Firstly, one of the limitations is gender representation since my study has focused on male poets and the slightly problematic representation of the land as mother country. Secondly, the diaspora has had less of a focus in this thesis. The complexities of living in alienating – away from home – spaces might provide another insight on how these poets negotiate a sense of belonging.

Yet I sought in the thesis to explore the literary representations of Walcott and Brutus's poetics through the key conceptual terms and discourses of home, belonging and Relation. To do this, I proposed to examine how Walcott and Brutus presented a model for a counter discourse to hegemonic European and Western literary thought, which for so long had defined the theoretical currents concerning the region. This included a re-presentation of landscape and people on their own terms. By examining the intricacies of a revision of home and the complexities of diaspora and exile in Chapter One, I highlighted the

composite<sup>1068</sup> and quintessentially hybrid<sup>1069</sup> nature of the Caribbean and South African regions that build on both old and new forms with which to write home. As a consequence, I propose a model of reading that prefaces a necessity regarding how the search for home becomes attainable through a bricolage of old and New World material. I use the ideas of modernist bricolage that Ramazani describes as ‘articulating a cross-culturalism still more plural and polyphonic than Euromodernism’<sup>1070</sup> to depict in the poetry of Walcott and Brutus an intersection between traditional forms of writing and contemporary forms. This is particularly seen in Walcott’s use of oral form of narration and a hybrid Dante terza rima, and in Brutus’ lyrical protest poetry as well as his use of conceit that follows John Donne’s style. My purpose here was to suggest that this was a critical and urgent requirement for all literary exploration concerning the cultural landscape of the regions under study. Only then, I argued, can we begin to fully understand the complexities of the lived Caribbean and South African experiences.

Drawing fully on Glissant’s process of becoming or ‘Creolization’<sup>1071</sup> whereby the individual’s relation is defined ‘by their relation to everything possible,’ I highlighted Walcott and Brutus’ use of praise poetry to trace the development of their personae in their successful relations between fellow humans. In doing so, I underlined an example of Walcott’s celebration of Achille’s return on the island, and the thriving of his fishing business and Brutus’ praise poem for Chief Albert, for his courageous stand against apartheid as an example of restoring a ‘shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all pressures of the colonial system.’<sup>1072</sup> I have shown as

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<sup>1068</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, p. 91.

<sup>1069</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 68.

<sup>1070</sup> Jahan Ramazani, ‘Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity’, *Modernism/Modernity* 13.3(2006), pp. 445-463 (p. 449).

<sup>1071</sup> Glissant, p. 89.

<sup>1072</sup> Said, p. 252-253.

Mignolo asserts, that such resistant projects have emerged from very specific ‘geopolitical local histories’<sup>1073</sup> such as those of the Caribbean and Southern Africa where there is a greater need for confronting global designs that continue to place formerly enslaved peoples at the border.

In developing a sense of community and place, I turned to the poets’ literary representations of their landscapes and how each poet captures multicultural identities in poetry. Huggan and Tiffin theorising on post-colonial eco-criticism have provided a useful theoretical lens through which to consider the relation between man and his environment. Thus, of crucial importance is the

fundamental questions about the nature of human rootedness, the possibility of reconciling place and placeness, and the need to find or at least imagine a dwelling-place in which human beings can both respond to and creatively refashion their relationship with the earth.<sup>1074</sup>

Consequently, I have explored the idea that as post-colonial poets, Walcott and Brutus respond to the catastrophes of colonialism but also do not completely reject the Romantic pastoral ideals. I suggest that nature is paradoxically a blessing and a curse. In one sense it is described as a ‘wild scythe blindly flailing friends, flowers, and grass, / as the seaside city of graves expands its acre.’<sup>1075</sup> However, I have shown that it must be reclaimed as recuperative sites of postcolonial historiography.<sup>1076</sup> It is in this light that for example the bounteous nature of the island is celebrated as ‘the breadfruit opens its palms in praise of the bounty.’<sup>1077</sup> I have highlighted that Walcott’s pull towards nature ‘seems to be one of reconciliation: to find consolation for death in art; to find, in tracing the differences

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<sup>1073</sup> Mignolo, ‘Coloniality is far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality’, p. 41.

<sup>1074</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animal, Environment* p. 136.

<sup>1075</sup> Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 19.

<sup>1076</sup> Elizabeth Deloughrey and George B. Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* p. 8.

<sup>1077</sup> *Ibid.*

between the Old and the New World, a love for both'<sup>1078</sup> as another avenue allowing him to build from the detritus of that past in asserting belonging.

As with Walcott, I explored how Brutus laments the dead nature of his landscape. It is a landscape which '–like sapless autumn leaves / they rasp in vain,' an example depicting the helpless nature of the black South African majority. The poet draws from a past described as a 'spectre'<sup>1079</sup>, 'unavowed'<sup>1080</sup> and whose 'bound figure pleads silently.'<sup>1081</sup> Trinya asserts that 'the wordlessness... might also suggest the wordlessness or speechless astonishment not only of the victims being reported on but of the reporting poet himself.'<sup>1082</sup> I have indicated that such a silencing of a people is a violation of their rights as humans and it is such that Brutus seeks to refute it. Nevertheless, Brutus's landscape like Walcott's is beautiful and it is his task to uphold this beauty because 'my land takes precedence of all my loves.'<sup>1083</sup> For although it embodies a past that is painful, it must be remembered especially in its 'milkblue'<sup>1084</sup> skyscapes, its ability to fill the speaker with 'lovelaughter'<sup>1085</sup> and 'a luminous glow'<sup>1086</sup> that forms 'arches from circling horizoning hills.'<sup>1087</sup> Ngongkum opines that 'these visual images, in conjunction with the precedent colour terms, conjure up the magnificence of the natural environment made more beautiful by the falling light.'<sup>1088</sup> Exploring literary representations of home and relation through the lens of the landscape brought into question the relationship between the

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<sup>1078</sup> Noel Kopriva, 'The Bounty', *The Missouri Review: University of Missouri*, p. 218.

<sup>1079</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 107.

<sup>1080</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1081</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1082</sup> Kontein Trinya, 'Musical Paradigms of Social Horror in the Apartheid Poetry of Dennis Brutus' p. 122.

<sup>1083</sup> Brutus, p. 24.

<sup>1084</sup> Brutus, *A Simple Lust*, p. 37.

<sup>1085</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1086</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1087</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1088</sup> Eunice Ngongkum, *Poetics of Revolt*, p. 11.

subjects vis-à-vis the landscape and in particular the notions of the landscape as recuperative sites for a distorted history. The thesis has argued that dialectics between man and the environment not only complicates ideas concerning territory and coloniality in the region but also presents a framework that attempts to accurately reference the distinct identities present in the attainment of home in the Caribbean island and the South African region.

A concern running throughout my thesis has been the presence of the violent image of the wound, at times submerged, at other times explicit, which as I suggested is a foundational and fundamental feature of colonialism. The poetry of Walcott and Brutus, in contrasting ways, presents the explicit violence of the first encounters of slavery and apartheid. In questioning how a wounded landscape and people serve a poetic writing of home, I have shown that each poet depicts how the dispossessed, the castaway, the torn asunder of slavery and segregation in the Caribbean and South Africa must take root in their present environments. Specifically, in relation to notions of healing, I have argued for the need for a process of literary excavation, as a means of locating the fuller discourse on the origin of such violence. For instance, Philocete's wound represents the wound of his community particularly as he '...believed the swelling came from the chained ankles of his grandfathers.'<sup>1089</sup> As Fumagalli and Patrick put it, 'it is also the wound inflicted by tearing Africans from their homeland into New World slavery.'<sup>1090</sup> For Brutus' South Africa, it is the wound of apartheid, especially as the poet-speaker and other captives walk to Robbin Island in 'chains on our ankles and wrist that

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<sup>1089</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 19.

<sup>1090</sup> Maria Cristina Fumagalli and Peter L. Patrick, p. 68.

pair us together.’<sup>1091</sup> This is an example which describes both the burden of slavery and settler colonialism.

In addition, the poetry examined has also dared to express the latent violence, seemingly apart from the overt colonial wound, and present in the private and domestic spheres. For instance, the love wound exposes the desire to lay claim to one’s beloved as Walcott’s Hector and Achilles fight over Helen (Island), Brutus’ speaker enacts what can be described as literary battles with words to free his beloved (land) from the clutches of the apartheid regime. Since my aim was not solely to expose the wounds of slavery and apartheid, I have shown how these poets represent a society that makes continuous use of the wound trope as a point of new beginnings. In commenting on the Creole language of his island, Walcott acknowledges the blessings accruing from colonialism and slavery when he writes that ‘exiled from your own Edens you have placed me in the wonder of another, and that was my inheritance and your gift.’<sup>1092</sup> This gift is reflected in the diversified cultural nature of the island that allows for a Relation with others. Brutus recognises this aspect of growth especially when he writes that ‘one comes to welcome the closer contact / and understanding one achieves / with one’s fellow-men,’<sup>1093</sup> a contact which Glissant describes as a Relation that ‘links diversities and perceives and names differences and works persistently on our consciousness and revives our intentions.’<sup>1094</sup> Discourses on violence, and in particular colonial wounds are understandably complex, but the paucity of such critical discourses points to a critical theoretical gap that my thesis has made an attempt to unveil.

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<sup>1091</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 162.

<sup>1092</sup> Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 64.

<sup>1093</sup> Brutus, *Letters to Martha*, p. 60.

<sup>1094</sup> Glissant, ‘In praise of the Different and of Difference’, p. 861.

It is only after attending to these wounds, I argue, that the human can truly celebrate its distinct nature. It is in this light that I have proposed a model of a relational poetics based on Glissant's theory of Relation. Caribbean and South African lived experiences inevitably demand an exploration of relational poetics that addresses how Relation might serve a poetic medium in constructing notions of home. Through metaphoric images and representation of transcultural personae, each poet discussed here, has argued that what the island or region needs is not a complete appropriation into mainstream European cultures but rather a relational negotiation of elements and people to reflect their respective regions and pasts. By drawing on the metaphors and transcultural images in the poetry of Walcott and Brutus, I aimed to locate and place in dialogue the creolised Caribbean and South African subject and the double discourse at play in these circumstances. I have suggested that Walcott's image of the Frigate bird acts as a reconciliatory metaphor enabling the speaker and his people to find their voices within the distant literatures. The different names associated with this bird create the relation between past and present histories. Baugh asserts that 'the patois name reflects the imaginative power of the people, a power rooted in their native environment. It sums up their capacity for metaphor, the sufficiency of their language to name their world'<sup>1095</sup> and as I underline, to portray the different cultural voices that typifies Walcott's poetry.

Brutus' caged bird in 'Inscription for a copy of Road to Ghana by Alfred Hutchinson', sings a song of freedom as 'we have caged our bird / and he has sung for us / as sweet a song as any heard- / time now, we freed our bird.' The bird as I have described, symbolises the imprisonment of apartheid political prisoners such as Brutus and Hutchinson to whom this poem is dedicated. Speaking about African American and African political prisoners,

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<sup>1095</sup> Edward Baugh, 'The Arkansas Testament' in *The Art of Derek Walcott*, p. 130.

Chikwenye Ogunyemi asserts that ‘they fight their political opponents in a battle of words that has at least left the opposition psychically as scarred as the new songbirds.’<sup>1096</sup> Thus, I have suggested that Brutus sings neither prayers nor carols of joy or glee but a lament and protest for freedom. In exploring these literary representations, I have sought to articulate the idea that metaphors serve as both means of resistance to ascribe roles of inhumanity and inferiority often associated with black people and racially mixed people in the regions under study. In so doing, I presented a reading of home and relation which situated the Caribbean and South African poet as central to a modern process of identity formation. This seemed particularly important because, the poet, I argued, must create an image of himself and his people and through this means heal their worlds which are wounded by the dislocation and dispossession of slavery and apartheid distorted during the violent encounters with the conquistadors.

In exploring Walcott and Brutus’ use of western traditions, I highlighted that they might be building bridges in their acceptance of Western traditions, a move that can serve as a model for any contemporary society. Each poet harnesses and appropriates Western literal and cultural tropes to redefine their identities and belonging. As Baugh suggests, Walcott’s collection *The Arkansas Testament* shows ‘a mind which cherishes its rootedness in a particular small corner of the earth, but which at the same time insists upon its free passage through the world.’<sup>1097</sup> Thus, the lived experience of the enslaved past must acknowledge cross-cultural exchange and creolised identities that have resulted. As for Brutus, his poet-persona insists that ‘I will be the world’s Troubadour / if not my country’s.’<sup>1098</sup> He must get involved because ‘the notion of the African writer

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<sup>1096</sup> Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, ‘The Song of the Caged Bird: Contemporary African Prison Poetry’, p. 66.

<sup>1097</sup> Edward Baugh, p. 127.

<sup>1098</sup> Brutus, *Stubborn Hope*, p. 22.

is an involved person in a tradition that is part of the culture today.’<sup>1099</sup> The poet’s speaker refuses to settle into a fixed essential identity but opts for a transformation into something different, a new set of possibilities as a mode of belonging. This also reflects Wale Adebani’s idea that African creative writers are ‘social thinkers themselves who engage with the nature of existence and questions of knowledge in the continent and beyond.’<sup>1100</sup> My exploration to this end provides an example of some largely unexamined commonalities underpinning cultures in the Caribbean and South African landscapes.

In my reading of the works by Walcott and Brutus, I hope to have added to the discourses on the literary representations of ‘home’ and ‘Relation’ and demonstrated through theoretical discourses that more meaningfully locate the Caribbean and South African subjects and landscape. My exploration of their work has identified a large area which many people share. It is a relational poetics grounded in the ecological system and human bodies brought together, a lived experience that is made anew with each encounter and exchange, thus resulting in a creolised identity and a sense of belonging in a particular place. As Glissant discusses in his *Poetics of Relation*, the plantation matrix and the transient liminal space of the ship provide a good example of how such a Relation began.<sup>1101</sup> Although apartheid meant separation of people, it indirectly encouraged a complex mix of races, an opportunity that brought races together albeit in a brutal and systematic way. I have argued that such a relational poetics, having been used in some critical literatures of the Caribbean region such as Lorna Goodison’s take on Glissant’s idea of Creolisation as the ‘generation of something wholly new’<sup>1102</sup> have now been

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<sup>1099</sup> Dennis Brutus, Joel Goodfader and Alice Finn, ‘A Poet’s Conscience: An Interview with Dennis Brutus’, p. 28.

<sup>1100</sup> Wale Adebani, ‘The Writer as Social Thinker’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32.4 (2014), pp. 405-420 (p. 405).

<sup>1101</sup> Glissant, p. 5-9.

<sup>1102</sup> Lorna Burns, ‘Becoming-postcolonial, becoming-Caribbean: Édouard Glissant and the Poetics of Creolization’, *Textual Practice* 23(2009), pp. 99-117 (p. 100).

explored to include works by African writers such as Brutus to show how concerns of home transcend borders. The current xenophobia in South Africa is a classic example of a failed Relation and justifies the relevance of the kind of relational poetics argued for in this thesis. Beyond this study, I suggest that further questioning of a relational poetics can be useful to works within English literary studies particularly in its current diverse configuration, both in Britain and in former colonies. It is useful for our scholarship that we bring diverse writers together and not just Walcott and Brutus. It is from this common ground that I am thinking of a relational poetics.

I expect this thesis to have contributed to the debate on home and belonging through my focus on a relational belonging. As I have noted, this is made possible through affiliation with peoples and landscapes and is not tied to the limited idea of root and singularity in cultures. The starting point for this, is as Mignolo argues, is delinking from the servitude of that colonial past while harnessing its history as a point of departure in realising something new in the present. Of significance in Walcott and Brutus' poetic dialogue is that it has pointed out the urgent need for societies with wounded histories based on ideas of racial superiority to delve into the depth of such histories to provide opportunities for healing and growth. This agency and resistance to the burden of an unjust past allows for a negotiation of a sense of place and self. My findings show that the colonial wound of history that forms the core of Walcott and Brutus' poetic is aimed at countering coloniality and the idea of black people as non-human. Thus, a major contribution has been to show how each poet, through their poetic writing, allows for a sense of dignity and belonging of the black human, in their own ways thus reconfiguring the indignities, deprivation, and humiliating experience underpinning the institution of slavery and apartheid in the regions of the Caribbean and Southern Africa.

Although this work was limited to male poets, my intention is that the theoretical work opens spaces for further comparative analysis especially inclusive of Caribbean and African women poets. I propose for future study a comparative analysis of the poetry of Grace Nichols and Antjie Krog, for example, with particular focus on how black females take exuberant pleasures in their bodies and align themselves with elemental forces or are closely in tune with the landscape. I remain aware, however, that there is still much research to be done regarding the remodelling and positioning of where home is for the diaspora, exiled poets and for those who suffer internal discrimination in the places they call home. This endless search for home is vividly represented in Walcott's 'the sea was still going,'<sup>1103</sup> a signal that the search for home is continuous.

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<sup>1103</sup> Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 325.

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