JOURNEYS OF SELF-DISCOVERY IN POSTCOLONIAL CARIBBEAN LITERATURE:

IDENTITY AND HISTORICAL MEMORY IN BRATHWAITE, WALCOTT, AND HARRIS

A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of Humanities

at Notre Dame University- Louaize

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

M.A. in English Literature

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YARA GEORGE BERBERY

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Introduction

European powers expanded in different regions including Asia, Africa, and the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards through colonialism. Before the sixteenth century, colonialism was characterized by the conquest of lands and exchanges of commodities, repeated and extensive features in human history. In the second century AD, "the Roman Empire stretched from Armenia to the Atlantic. Under Genghis Khan in the thirteen century, the Mongols conquered the Middle East and China" (Loomba 8). In a different context, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, the Aztec Empire was established with the conquest and the extraction of goods from colonized regions in pre-Columbine Americas. Nevertheless, despite the fact that "[m]odern European colonialism cannot be sealed off from these earlier histories of contact- the Crusades, or the Moorish invasion of Spain, the legendary exploits of Mongol rulers," (Loomba 9) the European version brought about different social formations and colonial practices, with implications that are still seen until this day.

Unlike previous conquests, modern colonialism "did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it colonized – it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own" (Loomba 9). This economic change not only led to a flow of goods but also of human and natural resources actualized through slavery and the transportation of raw materials, influencing the peripheral space whose literature concerns this study, namely the Anglophone West Indies. Hence, modern European colonialism goes beyond the control of physical geographies and commodified goods to that of cultural identity. Moreover, colonialism was able to infiltrate many layers of a society including education, religion, economics,

and politics. With the deep penetration of European powers into colonized Caribbean societies, various problematics have emerged related to identity and historical memory. Even with decolonization, colonialism's scars are so deep as to have left their trace in the field of cultural production and literature, a matter of deep import to the field of postcolonial studies.

The term "postcolonial" was first used in a historical and political sense between 1972 and 1974 "to identify the period immediately following decolonization, when the various leaderships, parties, and governments which had gained access to the colonial state apparatuses at independence undertook to transform these apparatuses" (Lazarus 2). As a matter of theory, postcolonial studies thus became the academic study of the effects of this political project on colonial subjects with the aim of "bearing witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (Bhabha 171). Postcolonial studies eventually developed into a school of "literary studies of the new writing that was being produced by writers from these territories" (Lazarus 2), finding a welcoming home in academic departments of literature but distinguishing itself from contemporaneous critical movements through the interdisciplinarfy use of diverse disciplines like cultural studies, history, art, and anthropology.

With an initial focus on decolonized states, the periodizing term of "postcolonial" was originally meant to be understood as historical and descriptive, but later became a politically charged theoretical tool of interpretation and critique. To Homi Bhabha, the term "postcolonial" is nothing if not a theoretical weapon to question political and philosophical constructions by "forcing a recognition of the more complex cultural and

political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres" (Bhabha 173). Bhabha goes on to argue against universalist social explanations and ideologies (in that sense he might be termed postmodern) to argue for hybridity and cultural difference.

Simon During defines postcolonialism as "the need, in nations or groups which have been victims of imperialism, to achieve an identity uncontaminated by Universalist or Eurocentric concepts and images" (Xie 7). Nevertheless, many critics including Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha are "unmistakably skeptical of the possibility of an 'uncontaminated' or 'indigenous' postcolonial theory" (Xie 7), because postcolonialism is a rebellious discourse set within and against Eurocentric culture and not entirely outside it. Spivak disclaims the idea of creating indigenous theories by ignoring the historical involvement of the last few centuries while Bhabha goes beyond the binary oppositions of colonizer/colonized to introduce a third space that embraces hybridity, rejecting the idea of a pure or essentialist postcolonial identity in the process. These critics recognize the role Europe has played in molding history and highlight the importance of postcolonial critique in unfettering the shackles of Western colonialism. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty expands on this idea by posing a crucial question:

> The everyday paradox of third-world social science is that we find these [Western] theories, in spite of their inherent ignorance of 'us,' eminently useful in understanding our societies. What allowed the modern European sages to develop such clairvoyance with regard to societies of which they were empirically ignorant? Why cannot we, once again, return the gaze? (29)

This critical tone urges non-western subjects to construct their own mode of consciousness and not be silenced by imposed Western notions, a position espoused by Edward Said during his visit to the Persian Gulf in 1985. Said was surprised to find that "English literature courses were rigorously orthodox, and that young Arabs in Arab universities were dutifully reading Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Austen, and Dickens as if there were no connection between English and the colonial processes that brought the language and its literature to the Arab world" (Xie 14). In its early articulation, postcolonial studies suggested that many "Third World" scholars were not eager to return the gaze, to cite Chakrabarty, and seemed to disregard the problematic of colonialism and its multiple cultural displacements. It also points out that "Orientals' occidentalism contributes to Eurocentrism as much as Westerners' orientalism. This is the historical context for the emergence of postcolonialism with its counterhegemonic task. Its purpose is to critique and dismantle Eurocentric forms of knowledge and structures of feeling located on both sides of the neocolonialist divide" (Xie 14-15). Therefore, postcolonial criticism spearheads the need to deconstruct imperial structures and cultural notions to give voice to the subalterns. It is this understanding of postcolonial readings that guides the methodological approach of this study. The latter's central idea is to show how postcolonial writers, particularly Brathwaite, Walcott, and Harris shatter imperial powers using postcolonial literary elements as an armament against imperialism.

However, not all critics believe in postcolonialism's destabilizing and liberating prowess. Critics such as Anne McClintock, Ella Shohat, and Arif Dirlik find problems with postcolonial studies and criticism. First, they object to using the term "postcolonial" because of the faulty implications of the prefix "post" and secondly, because of their

reading of postcolonialism as no different from postmodernism. The prefix "post" is problematic to these critics because of its implication of a teleological simplicity, suggesting an aftermath in two senses: "temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting. It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable: if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism" (Loomba 12). Hence, a country can be postcolonial, in the sense of nominally independent, but also neocolonial while still economically and culturally dependent on the old powers at the same time. To McClintock, this is a problem within postcolonialism as a discipline because it suggests that decolonized nation states remain unevenly developed in relation to modernity (87).

Furthermore, even in its linearly temporal meaning, postcolonialism is still problematic to these critics because the term lacks a specific and clear beginning. Decolonization extended to three centuries, "ranging from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, to the 1970s in the case of Angola and Mozambique" (Loomba 12). Thus, pointing to the different beginnings of formal decolonization, Ella Shohat critically asks, "When exactly, then, does the 'postcolonial' begin?" (Shohat 103). Homi bhabha and Spivak might add, "When exactly does the 'postcolonial' end?", a question that is posed in this study as well.

Nevertheless, critics of postcolonialism as an *approach* fail to see its non-teleological coming-after-colonialism in the sense of commemorating an ending, but rather that the "post" is a mere contestation of colonial domination and legacies. This refutes the previous argument that the postcolonial subject is unevenly developed because

its imaginary encompasses a vast geography of countries that have been displaced by colonialism. Jorge De Alva says that postcolonialism ought to "signify not so much subjectivity 'after' the colonial experience as a subjectivity of oppositionality to imperializing/colonizing (read: subordinating/subjectivizing) discourses and practices" (245). He supports his argument by dismissing the modernist view of a linear history, arguing for a "multiplicity of often conflicting and parallel narratives" (de Alva 245). Furthermore, the "post" in postcolonialism acts not only in opposition to colonialism but also indicates moving beyond:

> Eurocentric historicism, beyond imperialist polarities of self/Other, center/periphery, metropolis/country, and modern/traditional. In this sense, postcolonialism is the exemplary counterhegemonic discourse at a time when imperialism and colonialism are displaced from their earlier, crude political and military coercion to cultural and economic hegemony (Xie 17).

This view is shared by Braithwaite, Walcott, and Harris, as they shatter the idea of a linear history, and fight for a multiplicity of histories, cultures, and even identities through their works.

In a world still tainted by traces of the colonial, it is difficult to construct identities and ideas untouched by Eurocentric or universalizing concepts and ideals. Instead, postcolonialism offers a new space that moves beyond binary concepts toward what Bhabha calls the third space or the "beyond" that is neither the indigenous past (never authentic) nor the colonized present. Bhabha acknowledges the fact that it is impossible to escape the ideological trappings of history that have pierced every aspect of world culture. Hence, through the third space, he gives a useful alternative to omnipresent

Eurocentric modernity. By doing so, he sheds light on the implications of the contact between the colonizer and the colonized, one of which is the emergence of hybrid identities and ambivalent concepts and ideas, opening the possibility of theorizing postcolonial creolization. Moreover, Bhabha's theory of postcolonial, counterhegemonic discourses creates new spaces that invite resistance not only to current forms of imperialism such as Eurocentricism but also to future imperialistic forms. Again according to Shaobo Xie,

> [i]f the history of the world is a rich documentation of empires and imperialisms, if ethnocentrism is a closet monster in every ethnic community and individual, and if there is racial confrontation within indigenous nations as well as between the indigenous and the Western colonizer, the postcolonial counterhegemonic project will indeed go a long way toward interrogating and disintegrating any form of imperialism (17-18).

Thus, postcolonalism's political agenda is to deconstruct hegemonic limitations and all elements that construct unequal relations of power constructed atop binary oppositions such as "first" versus "third" world, "colonizer" versus "colonized," or white/black.

Many critics believe that postcolonialism is merely another term for postmodernism. To Arif Dirlik, for instance, postcolonialism is the direct progeny of postmodernism which can be seen though the way postcolonial critics admit to their debt to postmodernist thinking. By conflating the "post"-isms, Dirlik reasons that postcolonialsm is only appealing because it "disguises the power relations that shape a

seemingly shapeless world and contributes to a conceptualization of that world that both consolidates and subverts possibilities of resistance" (Dirlik 355-356). Anne McClintock also argues that the relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism is merely a marketing strategy: with the emergence of a new field of disciplinary studies and the literature attributed to it, 'the term "post-colonialism" makes possible the marketing of a whole new generation of panels, articles, books and courses […] [as it] borrows, moreover, on the dazzling marketing success of the term "post-modern-ism" (McClintock 93).

However, it is misguided to reduce postcolonialism to a secondary form of postmodernism as there are obvious differences between the two. To be sure, postcolonialism benefits from Foucault's and Derrida's (post-structuralist) deconstructive approach toward Western thought, which offer "a powerful critique of the rule of modernity that the colonies experienced in a peculiar form" (Prakash 10). This may be one of the factors that led Dirlik to the assumption that postcolonialism is a progeny of postmodernism. However, despite the shared features between postcolonialism and postmodernism, the former is not a reduced form of postmodernism because that would "turn postcolonialism into a West-centered discourse and West-centered universalism and rationalism. True, postcolonialism owes much of its sophisticated conceptual language to postmodernism, but it emerges as a distinct discourse with a set of problematics different from those of postmodernism" (Xie 9).

One key difference between postmodernism and postcolonialism lies in the nature of their discourse. Postcolonialism is a counterdiscourse of the previously colonized "others," opposing the cultural supremacy of the west and its constructed imperialist

ideologies, whereas postmodernism is a counter discourse against modernism in all its aspects, elaborated from *the inside*. A second difference is that postmodernism universalizes its problematics, whereas postcolonialism historicizes postmodern features to deconstruct a history that is tainted with Western, universalizing doctrines. Xie points out this idea by affirming that "postmodernism, while rigorously challenging the fundamental assumptions of Truth, Order, sign, and subjectivity institutionalized since Plato and sublimated by modernism, tends to *universalize* its own problematics [emphasis added]. Postcolonialism historicizes postmodern thematics, deploying postmodern arguments in the service of decentering world history as well as vindicating and asserting the identities of the formerly colonized" (9). Thus, postcolonialism cannot be regarded as the belated progeny of postmodernism because of the foundational differences between the two. Furthermore, postcolonialism rests on a particularly ideological foundation that seeks to dismantle Western structures and ideologies, while postmodernism is "politically ambivalent: its critique coexists with an equally real and equally powerful complicity with the cultural dominants within which it inescapably exists" (Hutcheon 150). In addition, the formerly colonized subjects try to reevaluate, rethink, and reconstruct their own culture which is a major feature of postcolonialism that differs from postmodernism.

More significantly, however, is the critique of postcolonialism not with the term "post" but with the term "colonial." Some critics argue that postcolonialism is so concerned with colonialism that it neglects the pre-colonial history of the subaltern societies, so much so that the so-called "third world" becomes "a world defined entirely by its relation to colonialism. Its histories are then flattened, and colonialism becomes their defining feature" (Loomba 21). Nonetheless, critics like Gayatri Spivak have

questioned the position that a pre-colonial culture is something easily recoverable, arguing instead that "a nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism" (262), a view that concords with this study even with the rise of pan-Africanism in the works of figures such as E.K. Brathwaite in *The Arrivants*. The impossibility of returning to a pre-colonial "origin" is due to the fact that the pre-colonial state is inextricably intertwined with the history of colonialism, making it almost impossible to completely separate the two moments. Kwame Anthony Appiah, a key critic in the field, also condemns "the tendency to eulogise the pre-colonial past or romanticize native culture. Such 'nativism,' they suggest, is espoused by both certain intellectuals within postcolonial societies and some First World academics" (qtd. in Loomba 21). While this questioning of a pre-colonial state is crucial, there is a risk that such reasoning leads to a simplification of the postcolonial world, essentializing and defining it solely on its condition of having been "colonial." Hence, the term postcolonialism should be used with caution, for "it refers to a *process* of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and probably is inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena: 'postcolonial' is (or should be) a descriptive, not an evaluative, term" (Hulme 120).

Furthermore, postcolonialism seeks to eradicate the effects of colonial discourse on postcolonial subjects, one of which is the imposition of a cultural identity. Cultural imposition came about through the infiltration of Western knowledge and forms of representation into the colonized world, the Afro-Caribbean world in particular which is the object of this research study. Loomba calls attention to a Foucauldian understanding

that knowledge is not innocent but deeply dependent upon the operations of power. This awareness seeps through Edward Said's *Orientalism*, "which points out the extent to which 'knowledge' about 'the Orient' as it was produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of 'colonial power'" (Loomba 42). Said highlights the Western representation of colonial cultures and explores the process by which the identity of the colonial subject, its "othering," is shaped and defined by Europe, to the extent that a totalizing discourse of orientalism was given shape. To Said, this study of the Orient is subjective, as it is filtered through the West's cultural perceptions. Thus, Said warns against biased texts that are rendered "the authority of academics, institutions, and governments […] Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it" (*Orientalism* 94). Hence, power gives form to language, institutions, and identities, which is what the apparatus of postcolonial criticism seeks to destabilize.

In another critical context, Frantz Fanon argues against the fixed image or representation of the black subject as an inferior, marginalized, and negatively different being. In his view, the colonized black subject should not be imprisoned and confined by Western ideologies and images, as it is not through assimilating fixed identities that one can achieve self-identification: it is "through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world" (Fanon 181).

Hence, Fanon stresses the negative impact of colonialism by stating that it was Europe that created the "Third World" through its representation of the colonial subject as a marginalized, different "other." In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon denounces the racial alienation of the colonized subject, and the imposition of white, or Western, representations upon the black (or subaltern) subject:

> As a range of culturally and racially marginalized groups readily assume the mask of the black, or the position of the minority, not to deny their diversity, but audaciously to announce the important artifice of cultural identity and its difference, the need for Fanon becomes urgent. […] in order to remind us of that crucial engagement between mask and identity, image and identification, from which comes the lasting tension of our freedom and the lasting impression of ourselves as others (Bhabha 63).

Against this critical backdrop, the Afro-Caribbean subject experiences the need to have a sense of belonging and to reconnect with an African identity or "essence," a problematic term to be sure, but one which nonetheless is at the center of the poetics of the writers that concern this study. Accordingly, the Caribbean cultural movement known as *négritude* assumes particular importance, clearly the fountainhead of influence for the three major writers explored here.

Négritude as a cultural movement is "the culmination of the complete range of reactions provoked by the impact of western civilisation on the African, and of the whole complex of social and psychological factors that have gone to form black people's collective experience of western domination" (Irele 322). This cultural manifestation, indeed celebration, of cultural blackness affected leading Anglophone Caribbean writers

and their cultural production, wedded to the postcolonial search for an authentic Caribbean identity. However, some critics including Fanon and Bhabha have criticized *négritude*—as artistic ideology and cultural movement—for its essentialist worldview based on race, which failed to encompass the complexity of Caribbean identity in its multiple, diverse manifestations. But it was *négritude* that inspired critics and artists to delve into the nature of Caribbean identity and thus forged an opening to broader aspects of identity such as historical, political and cultural.

Bhabha and Fanon read négritude as a romanticized, essentialising gesture of a long-lost Afro-centric past at odds with present realities of postcolonial diverse identities. Which is why, in light of the historical complexity underlying Caribbean postcolonialism, alternative discourses of identity based on radical hybridity came into being. Bhabha argues that cultural identity in the postcolonial world should not be confined or limited to purist and essentialist notions but rather should acknowledge the complexity of the postcolonial subject. To Bhabha, the postcolonial world entails the notion of "going beyond:"

> The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past.... Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (1-2)

This mode of going beyond entails acknowledging the postcolonial subject as infinitely hybridized, mongrelized, and carnivalized. This mode is apparent in Anglophone Caribbean literary production, "a place where 'transculturation' takes place in all its

complexity. Literature written on both sides of the colonial divide often absorbs, appropriates and inscribes aspects of 'the other' culture, creating new genres, ideas, and identities in the process" (Loomba 63). Hence, postcolonial Anglophone literature plays the subversive role of challenging and deconstructing dominant ways of representation and colonial ideologies: heteroglossia against the Logos. This is seen in the works of Brathwaite, Walcott and Harris.

The notable critic who argues against purist notions of postcolonial identities is Paul Gilroy. Gilroy not only refutes essentialist ideas, but offers a new way of looking at the diasporic history of black culture and Afro-Caribbean subjects. As opposed to nationalistic formations, Gilroy develops the idea of a transcultural, international formation he calls the "black Atlantic" (Gilroy 4). For Gilroy, the African-diasporic intellectual culture is complex and transnational and thus it cannot be limited to a simple nationalistic history and culture. By extension, Gilroy develops "the suggestion that cultural historians could take the black Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" (Gilroy 15). Hence, Gilroy's black Atlantic outlines a distinctively modern, cultural-political space that is not merely African, American, Caribbean, or British, but is, rather, a hybrid amalgam of all of these at once.

In the three chapters that follow, three Anglophone writers—Edward Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados), Derek Walcott (St. Lucia), and Theodore Wilson Harris (Guyana)—undertake the literary journey of recovery, discovery, and construction of an explicitly Caribbean postcolonial identity in various ways. The first chapter deals with Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*, a work that challenges dominant historical accounts by

chronicling the experience of exile in order to redeem a more "authentic" Caribbean identity. By acknowledging the centrality of Africanness, Brathwaite seeks to recover the fragmented historical memory of Afro-Caribbean subjects. This is done through elements of anthropology, adding music, creole expressions and oral traditions to his poems. Moreover, language, an essential element in the quest for Caribbean identity, is used as a weapon against Western representation. This is seen in the second chapter of Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* where conventional racial, cultural and literary categories are dismantled through a postmodern use of language, a deconstruction of Caribbean identity. Like Walcott, Harris opposes homogeneity and essentialist beliefs in his novel, *Palace of the Peacock*. To Harris, essentialist ideas alienate the hybrid Afro-Caribbean subject as they do not represent cross-cultural experiences. Thus, the third chapter of this study deals with Harris's view of a creolized postcolonial Caribbean identity which shatters the limitations of constructed ideologies and leads to infinite possibilities. These three chapters complete one another, as they depict the gradual process of shattering the doors of colonialism and opening up a new postcolonial world. From rewriting historical narratives with Brathwaite, to dismantling a language charged with colonial powers with Walcott, the postcolonial world breaks free from all colonial walls, embracing a creolized postcolonial identity brought into being in Harris's work.

Taken together, the three chapters that follow attempt to show that there is no single literary journey toward the construction of a postcolonial Caribbean identity. These multiple paths fork in various parallel directions as thus illustrate the multiplicity of histories, memories, and identities in the postcolonial Afro-Caribbean world. In Brathwaite, this journey is predicated on a return to origins, to the essence of mother

Africa as the fountainhead of identity in exile. While there are clear echoes of this type of pan-Africanism in Walcott, the postmodern turn in his works allows him to question this meta-quest for origins because the turn to language, to literary bricolage and linguistic play, is of necessity a turn away from Braithwaite's claim to a universal truth anchored in Africa. The third step in this postcolonial movement is represented by Harris, who posits literary creolization as the logical outcome of both pan-Africanism and its deconstruction: Caribbean identity as a non-binary, infinitely syncretic discourse of identity formation that remains forever open. Taken together, these three intentionally chosen canonical works contribute to a dynamic understanding of postcolonialism as an evolving historical mode of self understanding.

The chapters that follow thus offer a more nuanced understanding of the complex role of hybridity and creolization in Caribbean identity by looking at different modes of literary self-discovery of the postcolonial subject. But a note on the approach to these canonical works is worth underlining. While the approach is clearly "postcolonial," it intentionally avoids the perils of turning this literary methodology into Chakrabarty's "social science," even while accepting postcolonialism's multi- and interdisciplinary composition. By deploying close reading without emptying the cultural and historical specificity of Caribbean literature, the three main works examined here are granted the same status of literary autonomy commensurate with canonical fictions in other national traditions. There is a rationale inherent in this approach. While this is not the place to retrace the turn toward language characterizing literary theory in the twentieth century, this focus on language, on the close reading of the language of the text, is the indispensable tool in the reading of texts, as literary language is in the end the raw

material available to the critic in her approach to textuality. One crucial question guides this thesis: can the specter of colonialism be displaced by the creative response of creole cultures or is this creative project a doomed form of cultural self-recovery? Moreover, the thesis contributes to the study of the relationship between colonialism and Anglophone literature, especially in the wake of recent debates over canonicity and the multiple meanings of "world" literature. A way of solving the problematic of the postcolonial self is through the exploration of these narrative experiences and by moving away from the overly-facile labeling and dichotomies inherited by cultural modernity.

Chapter 1

Remembering the Past: The Return to Africa in E.K. Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*

The colonial period in the Anglophone Caribbean lasted from the sixteenth until the late nineteenth century, a period during which African slaves were transported to the New World in what has come to be known as the "Middle Passage." This forced voyage amounted to the importation of 12.5 million Africans into the New World, constituting the majority of the Caribbean population (Wolfe). Due to this phenomenon, an established theory emerged, arguing that the Middle Passage shattered the culture of the enslaved African people, "that it was such a catastrophic, definitive experience that none of those transported during the period from 1840 escaped trauma. But modern research is pointing to a denial of this, showing that African culture not only crossed the Atlantic, it crossed, survived, creatively adapted itself to its new environment" (Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" 73). Hence, post-exilic Afro-Caribbean culture was not purely African, but rather an adaptation of African culture and traditions in the colonized world, particularly focused on religious culture. The latter does not entail a single practice, but the admixture of different cultural spheres with religious practices such as philosophy, art, and society, forming a syncretic whole.

The dominant historical narrative states that African culture started to fade following emancipation for many reasons, including the labor of missionaries and the enforcement of Western education. Missionaries were "naturally against African or African oriented religious practices among their ex-African adherents. Hence the banning of the drum (voice of god or worship: nyame- one of three Akan names for the Supreme

Being); the gradual replacement of African foods and food styles (nyam/yam) by European or creole substitutes, and the Christianization of names (nommo- Bantu for the Word) and ideas (nam)" (Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" 75). Thus, ex-slaves slowly started to lose connections to their African traditions and cultures. Moreover, with colonial and postcolonial education, former slaves started to learn reading and writing, and as a result were "diverted from the oral tradition of their inheritance; they became literate in a language which was foreign to them, 'liberated' into a culture which was not theirs" (Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" 75). Faced with the infiltration of Western culture, the Caribbean subject experienced a sense of alienation that manifested itself as a crisis of cultural identity. These subjects in turn undertook the search for a "lost" identity, one of reconnecting with their black African roots. This fueled the Negritude movement that celebrates blackness and African heritage by bringing back, through literature, African identity through oral cultural traditions such as hymns, rituals, and folktales. This thematic concern with orality is flagrantly seen in other instances of postcolonial writings, such as Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, suggesting a unity to Caribbean writing. In the latter, Selvon uses a creolized voice in the narrative's language and the dialogue, a voice that creates a space for Caribbean subjects in London, by destroying the boundaries of written language so that the boundary between writing and orality blurs. As in Selvon, the well known Trinidadian writer Earl Lovelace creates a new narrative voice that incorporates orality in his novel, *The Dragon Can't Dance*. By inscribing music, rhythm, and story-telling in their woks, postcolonial writers redefine literary works by offering new means of expression that truly depict the postcolonial individuals and their experiences.

Leading Anglo-Caribbean writers, including Edward Brathwaite, have undertaken the project of rediscovering the essence of blackness and Africanism in the Caribbean as a way of restoring a lost Caribbean identity. In his book *The Poet's Africa*, Josaphat Kubayanda distinguishes Brathwaite's *The Arrivants* by affirming that "[o]f the contemporary Caribbean writers in English, the Barbadian Edward Brathwaite perhaps most effectively articulates the Negritude consciousness of 'race,' history, and language" (124). Brathwaite's poetic trilogy, published in 1973, develops the idea of recovery and reintegration of African heritage in Afro-Caribbean history. Throughout his three books, *Rights of Passage* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969), Brathwaite seeks to recover a distinct Afro-Caribbean identity by challenging dominant Western historical accounts and chronicles about the past and celebrating a history of the "voice." This is carried out by reshaping historical figures and events based on the historical memory and experiences of the Afro-Caribbean subjects, and by bringing back oral traditions in order to retrieve a lost Afro-Caribbean voice. Accordingly, Brathwaite breaks English literary traditions and creates a poetic language and culture based upon African oral traditions that are not found in a dictionary, but in the tradition of the spoken word (271). With the use of a poetic language he calls "nation language," Brathwaite highlights the importance of oral tradition not only to relate to the past, but also to show how it is crucial in the New World, as it "forces us into recognition of the fact that modern culture (in the widest sense of the world) is in good part oral and visual however much we may be loth to admit it" (Cattaneo 81). Hence, in this study, Brathwaite initiates the gradual process of dismantling colonial powers through affirming the presence of Afro-Caribbean individual in the New World. Thus, in *The Arrivant*, Brathwaite shatters conventional historical

narratives that have erased the postcolonial presence and rewrites history by bringing back the Afro-Caribbean voice and traditions.

Brathwaite's *The Arrivants* is a subversive weapon against historical narratives of displacement and rootlessness of Caribbean subjects. This classic work of literary pan-Africanism displays itself as a persistent narrative of "an African experience originating on the mother continent and extending to the diaspora, an experience in which the marking elements of black destiny have been brought together into a single existential perspective, each episode bearing upon the other and determining the direction and lived texture of the whole" (Irele, "The return of the native" 720). History is then rewritten or retold based on the memory and experiences of Afro-Caribbean subjects. In *The Arrivants*, Western representations of historical figures are reshaped and retraced from the perspective of the African experience. One particularly poignant example is Brathwaite's re-envisioning of the figure of Uncle Tom, a slave character taken from Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), set in the American south, and a canonical testament to abolitionism. The figure of Stowe's Uncle Tom has been understood as an archetype of "blackness," but he is perceived as a controversial character because of his submissive and passive nature throughout Stowe's novel. Regardless of the novel's attack on slavery, Stowe falls into racial stereotypes by attributing degrading traits to Uncle Tom's character that are linked to his racial identity and essentialized blackness (Robbins 2007).

In contrast, Brathwaite reshapes the character of Uncle Tom by giving him a subversive voice and representing him as the purveyor of African history and culture. He is a "complex character, one who embodies memories of African glory as well as the

devastating loss and self-pity that followed the Middle Passage" (Dawson 65). In Brathwaite Tom's character urges the Afro-Caribbean subject, allegorized by the presence of his children, to learn and remember their traumatic African past in order to preserve their African heritage. He explains how the African slaves have worked with sweat and blood, yet have attained nothing but agony and loss: "for he who have achieved nothing / work / who have not built / dream / who have forgotten all / dance / and dare to remember" (Brathwaite 13) In this verse, Brathwaite stresses the slaves' struggles and hardships through a rhetorical parallelism and breaks in the last verse to highlight the importance of remembrance, in the process reactualizing trauma. Through Uncle Tom, Brathwaite laments the loss of African culture in the wake of European imperialism, igniting the quest to restore an Afrocentric identity. This is apparent in the following verses:

> the paths we shall never remember
> again: Atumpan talking and the harvest branch-
> es, all the tribes of Ashanti dreaming the dream
> of Tutu, Anokye and the Golden Stool, built
> in Heaven for our nation by the work
> of lightning and the brilliant adze: and now nothing (13)

These verses' use of enjambment mirrors the fragmentation and loss of the Afro-Caribbean subject brought about by historical amnesia, by forgetting an ancestral history. Tom goes on to warn his children of the danger of forgetting and by doing so, affirms that the only way to actualizing an Afro-Caribbean identity is through a process of historical recovery, specifically that of the African past. Thus, through the figure of Uncle Tom, African values are "restored" in the New World and given a new place of privilege.

The trope of Africa and the importance of recovering a (lost) African identity is an example of what Paul Gilroy denotes as "Afrocentricity." According to Gilroy, Afrocentricity is "African genius and African values created, recreated, reconstructed, and derived from our history and experiences in our best interests" (Gilroy 188). By reinventing him from within the ideology of Afrocentricism, Tom becomes a rebellious figure who opposes Western imperialism and condemns its teachings: his children, representing future generations, have been taught nothing of their African heritage. The latter is replaced by the study of a European culture that has superseded an "authentic" African one. Thus, the Afro-Caribbean subjects have been taught about cultures that do not belong to their own culture. This leads to a sense of alienation and loss which is translated through the fragmentation of Afro-Caribbean identity:

> But help-
> less my children are
> caught leader-
> less are taught fool-
> ishness and use-
> lessness and
> sorrow (14)

The use of enjambment in breaking down words emphasizes again the fragmentation of Afro-Caribbean identity caused by colonial education, as George Lamming exposes in his brilliant narrative, *In the Castle of my Skin*; in Brathwaite's poem, the gesture is so radical that the verses are cut and shortened, leading up a single utterance at the end, a formal feature of Brathwaite's poem. Despite Tom's attempts to teach his children about the importance of African culture, they do not listen to him nor do they form a unified cultural resistance against Western imperialism; he "speak[s] /

their shame / their lack of power / but [they are] weak" (15). This verse indicates that Uncle Tom's fellowmen cannot even speak for themselves, granting him the role to speak about their history and their identity: "so let me sing / let me remember / let me suffer" (13). The passivity of his fellow subjects or "lost children" as he calls them (13) echoes Spivak's silenced subalterns who are shaped by Western representations; instead of condemning Western doctrines and stereotypes, Tom's brood tell him to embrace them and be "the black buttin' ram" (21) of the white subject. This inhibits the recovery of an Afro-Caribbean identity as it confines it within westernized colonial ideologies that do not belong to Afro-Caribbean culture.

Furthermore, through Uncle Tom's figure, Brathwaite highlights the need for a national culture in order to recover an Afro-Caribbean identity. The idea of the nation emerged from anti-colonial struggles and gave impetus to creating "new and powerful identities for colonized peoples and to challenge colonialism not only at a political level, but also on an emotional plane" (Loomba 155). As a consequence, Fanon described native intellectuals' search for a shared culture as a

> passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era […] to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped. Because they realize they are in danger of losing their lives and becoming lost to their people, these men, hotheaded and with anger in their hearts, relentlessly determine to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people. (Fanon, *Wretched* 209-210)

Like Fanon, Brathwaite warns against the loss of a national culture as one more step in the loss of cultural identity and a confinement of the Afro-Caribbean subject

within the boundaries of Western representations. This is seen in his poem "Folkways," in which he portrays an Afro-Caribbean slave devoid of all sense of national culture, a victim of internalized Western representation of blackness:

> I am a fuck-
> in' negro,
> man, hole
> in my head,
> brains in
> my belly;
> black skin
> red eyes
> broad back (30)

This act of appropriation leads to a fragmentation of identity, and to a further cultural loss by identifying with Western colonial image of blackness as a sign of inferiority.

The reconstruction of a national culture is a delicate matter as it can easily fall into the trap of Western representation. In fact, Fanon warns against the simplistic representation of national culture as a mere form of bringing back customs and traditions; this "desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one's own people" (Fanon, *Wretched* 223). By confining itself to only traditions and customs, national culture becomes tainted with Western stereotypes and representations, neglecting the political changes that its people have undergone. To Fanon, "[w]hen a people undertakes an armed struggle or even a political struggle against a relentless colonialism, the significance of tradition changes" (*Wretched* 223). Hence, culture should also embrace and acknowledge the political changes, as well as people's struggles and experiences to

reconstruct and maintain a national culture that is free from Western shackles in the New World. This is what Brathwaite attempts to do by inscribing the experiences and struggles of the Afro-Caribbean subjects in a literary space, as well as by bringing back figures and elements of African culture. As such, literature takes up the role of historical revisionism.

Other than Uncle Tom's Character, Brathwaite reshapes keystone literary and cultural figures such as Ananse and Caliban. The former is an African folktale spider character from the Asante people of Ghana, an imagined god-like spirit that serves as a trickster, while the Shakespearean Caliban needs no introduction. Ananse weaves its web in trees and preserves its concealed powers to use them whenever they are needed, so that its identification as an emblem of resistance becomes exceedingly clear. This folktale character metamorphosed into a cultural symbol portraying the sufferings of the slaves, a figure through which they were able to find the power of resistance and strength (Bobb 73). Brathwaite uses this image of the spider because it symbolizes the artist's power in creating a whole world through writing; like Anancy, "the artist escapes the disastrous prospect of nonbeing by weaving a (fictive/narrative) thread and climbing it to freedom. He takes the strand of linearity (oppressive history or plot) and complicates it by making a patterned web of connections and interrelationships –a woven "text" that turns history/ his story into oracular myth, an infinite ploy of signifiers" (Jonas 2).

In "Ananse," Brathwaite depicts this figure "[w]ith a black snake's unwinking eye […] his brain green, a green chrysalis / storing leaves" (165). This reflects the black slaves' hidden power, namely memories and experiences concealed and forgotten. Throughout this poem, Anansi "spins drum-/beats, silver skin / webs of sound / through the villages" (165) and by so doing reminds the Afro-Caribbean villagers of their history

and past experiences that form their national culture. This god-like spirit is "threading/threading" (166) and rewriting the historical narrative by linking Caribbean subjects to their African culture and history. At the end of the poem, this god comes to life, with the "black beating heart of him breathing" (166); the metamorphosis of this figure into a living being is highlighted through alliteration. The resurgence of this god-like spirit symbolizes the possibility of having a unified Caribbean identity not only through remembering African culture, but also the painful experiences and suffering of the Afro-Caribbean subject in the wake of forced alienation.

In addition, like Ananse, Brathwaite reshapes the figure of Caliban and highlights the significance of music in the recovery of the Afro-Caribbean identity. Shakespeare's Caliban, in this by-now established trope of postcoloniality given his status as a subjected slave, is resurrected and liberated in Brathwaite's "Caliban" through the power of music. Brathwaite begins his poem by displaying historical dates, serving as a reminder of the slaves' past suffering and crisis of cultural identity. An example is "December second, nineteen fifty-six" (192), a title recollecting the day when the revolutionary Fidel Castro makes his first move against the Western system. This revolutionary spirit vibrates in Caliban as he sings a rebellious, euphoric song that turns into an incantation, calling for the remembrance and acknowledgement of African culture, of "black" culture:

> Ban
> Ban
> Cal-
> iban
> like to play
> pan
> at the Car-
> nival (192)

This repeated verse calls for a celebration of the African world in the Caribbean that had been silenced by Western culture, rebelling through musical rhythm and puns. In fact, the oppressed Caliban finds his voice again through musical expression and dance, challenging "the privileged conceptions of both language and writing as preeminent expressions of human consciousness." (Gilroy 74).

Through Caliban, oral expressions are then brought back to help restore a fragmented Afro-Caribbean identity by explicitly linking Africa to the New World. Edouard Glissant corroborates the subversive role of oral expressions by declaring that "music, gesture, dance are forms of communication, just as important as the gift of speech. This is how [slaves] first managed to emerge from the plantation" (248). Caliban is musically (culturally) liberated through the beating of the drum, awakening a historical memory as he begins to remember significant events of the past. In fact, Caliban's drum is not just any drum, it is a "pan," which refers to the steel pan, a Calypso musical instrument invented in Trinidad by its people. The first beatings of the drum take Caliban back to when African slaves danced the limbo while they sailed across the Middle Passage: "stick hit sound / and the ship like it ready" (194). The drum stick subsequently transforms into the whip, emblem of slavery and the suffering of Afro-Caribbean subjects: "stick is the whip and the dark deck is slavery" (194). Thus, through music, Caliban creatively revives past experiences and sufferings of postcolonial subjects in order to assert their presence and experiences in history. By doing so, Brathwaite conveys the ability of the drum to turn into a subversive weapon that liberates Caliban, and subsequently all Afro-Caribbean subjects: "sun coming up / and the drummers are praising me / out of the dark" (195). The drum not only frees Caliban, but also connects

the past with the present to mend the fragmented cultural identity and strengthen the collective consciousness of Afro-Caribbean subjects.

In his literary journey across Africa, Brathwaite attempts to recover a forgotten black African identity through the retelling of past events based on the Caribbean subject's memories and experiences. This act of retelling serves as a way of solidifying a collective Afro-Caribbean historical memory and consciousness in the New World. When the word "memory" appears in Brathwaite's trilogy, for example, it is pluralized, turned into a collective: "Memories are smoke / lips we can't kiss / hands we can't hold" (28) and again "memories / are cold" (78). Plurality is a key element of Afro-Caribbean identity because "a multitude of ethnicities – Amerindian, European, African, Asian – have interacted within and across the region over the centuries. It is also relevant against the singularity of memory, often associated with a unilateral European perspective" (Manolachi 137). This plurality of memory and experiences is clearly seen in Brathwaite's poem "The Dust" through an amalgam of Afro-Caribbean voices. The latter depicts a conversation between different Afro-Caribbean women who meet at a local store. Even though the poem's primary voice belongs to Olive, the poem is closer to a "vocal documentary in which the separate voices are only relatively autonomous" rather than a "dramatic poem with distinct characters" (Hart 125). As such, polyvocality becomes the central trope that gives shape to the poem's form, a rhetorical critique of the "singularity of memory" evoked by Manolachi. In the poem, the amalgamation of multiple voices foregrounds a communal subjectivity that highlights Afro-Caribbean collectiveness. This is seen in the poem's opening:

> Evenin' Miss
> Evvy, Miss

Maisie, Miss
Maud. Olive (62)

The enjambment in the process of versification denotes an admixture of female voices while the repetition of "Miss" represents continuity. However, the rupture of repetition with "Olive" indicates that this collective is not completely attained. Olive's character acts as a reminder of the past and a transition between the past and the present to reconstruct a collective historical memory. In fact, Olive is keen on preserving memories of the past by retelling a story she has heard from her grandmother years ago. This poetic narrative speaks about the damage of a volcanic eruption in a neighboring island which echoes the fragmentation of the present Caribbean region. By acknowledging a shared past, "Brathwaite sets the ground for a collective Caribbean present and future" (Josephs 3). Glissant supports this idea by stating that it is the writer's obligation to look at his people's fixation with the past, yet to become official history, and to "show its relevance in a continuous fashion to the immediate present" (64). Both past and present generations have experienced fragmentation of identity and are searching for meaning in the Caribbean:

An' then suddenly so
widdout rhyme
widdout reason
you crops start to die
you can't even see the sun in the sky (68)

Olive becomes the powerful voice that represents the voice of resistance which preserves African traditions and culture. By uniting the past and the present, Olive strengthens the collective memory and consciousness of Afro-Caribbean subjects.

Nevertheless, in order to recover the fragmented identity of Afro-Caribbean subjects, Brathwaite challenges the nature of history as a written narrative by advocating orality. To the marginalized Afro-Caribbean subjects, "history is not the archetypal journey to self-knowledge, but the ultimate form of displacement" (Gikandi 734). These historical written narratives are fraught by Western representation and ideologies that distort and deform, rather than mirror historical experience. Glissant argues that "music, gesture, dance are forms of communication, just as important as the gift of speech. This is how [Caribbeans] first managed to emerge from the plantation: esthetic form in our cultures must be shaped from these oral structures" (249). For this reason, Brathwaite introduces oral traditions while rewriting history and supersedes the latter with the history of the voice. Among the major elements of oral traditions are musical instruments, particularly the drum. Through the latter, Brathwaite brings back African culture to the Caribbean region to remind the Afro-Caribbean subjects of their African roots. In "The Making of the Drum," Brathwaite displays the importance of musical expression as a major component in Afro-Caribbean identity by introducing the reader, literally, to the process of drum-making, while elevating an emblem of black popular culture to an aesthetic plane. Portraying himself as a craftsman, the poet highlights the step by step process that is simultaneously a restoration of Africa. In the first step, Brathwaite goes back to animal sacrifice in Africa in which a goat is sacrificed to make the skin of the drum:

> First the goat
> must be killed
> and the skin
> stretched. (94)

The poet addresses the symbolic goat and by doing so, raises questions critical to identity formation: “we have killed / you to make a thin / voice that will reach // further than hope” (94). The dialogue with the sacrificial goat is a dialogue with the shards of African traditions inherited or forgotten but that still live on through music. The latter becomes a strategy of survival and resistance against the traumatic experiences of Afro-Caribbean subjects. Gilroy acknowledges the power of black music “as a way of constituting an open sense of black collectivity in the shifting, changing beat of the present” (qtd. in Bhabha 178). In the second step, the barrel of the drum is made from the wood of a specific kind of tree named “twenedure.” The wood is personified in the poem to evoke the painful memories of African history; it bleeds and speaks the pre-colonial and colonial African history (Manolachi 140). Brathwaite also combines natural, material elements with linguistic, immaterial elements:

> we hear the wounds
> of the forest;
> we hear the sounds
> of the rivers;
>
> vowels of reed- lips,
> pebbles of
> consonants,
> underground the dark
> of the continent. (95)

Nature intermingles with linguistic elements not only to stress African history and accompanying landscape, but also to give its history a voice. This combination of natural and linguistic elements “parallels the double role of the drum, as a musical instrument in

an orchestra and as a source of specific sounds" (Manolachi 140). This echoes the mixture of African culture with the Caribbean's colonial Western culture. Glissant reasons that in Africa, "the drum is a language that becomes structured speech: there are orchestras of drums in which each instrument has its voice. The drum is part of a system. In the Caribbean it is more often isolated or used for accompaniment" (112-113). Hence, by bringing back African traditions through the poetic staging of drum-making, Brathwaite attempts to restore the collective experience of the Afro-Caribbean subjects found in the harmony of the "orchestra." In the last section of the poem, the gong-gong, an African instrument, leads the rhythm and creates a new one.

Through repeated lines, abundant in plosive consonants, a new rhythm emerges to form drum poetry: "God is dumb / until the drum / speaks. // The drum / is dumb / until the gong-gong leads" (97). By using drum poetry, the poet warns that "unlike speech that needs translation from one language into another, music is universal and can reach God" (Manolachi 140). The African drum becomes a tool that goes beyond the physicality of the African world to form a link between motherland and the spaces of exile, a link beyond language. Brathwaite then gives the drum a subversive role as it conveys new rhythms, different from traditional English poetry, which beat the sounds of Africa in the Caribbean.

Moreover, through Brathwaite's poetic drum, African oral traditions break through the world of sounds and enter the written world. In "Atumpan," the speaking drum is perceived as an instrument through which the African god Odomankoma both addresses and is addressed by his people. The Atumpan, a talking drum of the Akan people in Africa, allows the African god to speak to both worlds, the African and the

Caribbean. Hence, the drum links the past and the present together in the New World. Also, drum language comprises "not merely a communication through sound but also words. It is a poetic text for linguistic communication rather than playing music for dance" (Hurley et al. 151-152). In fact, in the poem, the rhythm of the drum is transmitted through the Akan language where the repetition of words gives sound to selected lines: "Kon kon kon kon/ kun kun kun kun" (98). Brathwaite not only fuses sounds and words together, but also the languages of Akan and English. At first, Brathwaite displays the English language as a translation, a transliteration even, of the Akan language:

> akoko bon anopa
> akoko tua bon
> nhima hima hima
> nhima hima hima…
> that he has come from sleep
> that he has come from sleep
> and is arising
> and is arising (98)

English is employed to "echo" the Akan language and by putting them side by side, Brathwaite displays two distinct worlds and moments: the past African world and his contemporary Caribbean. At the end of the poem, Brathwaite fuses both languages:

> like *akoko* the clock
> like *akoko* the clock who clucks
> who crows in the morning
> who crows in the morning
> we are addressing you
> *ye re kyere wo*
> we are addressing you

ye re kyere yo (99).

By repeating the same words in both Akan and English, Brathwaite creates a stereophonic space where both languages reverberate and intersect freely. This stereophonic space is produced by poetic echoes, "where the original signal enters the same acoustic field as its reflections and the sounds become intermingled in a single sonic field" (Jaji 180). Through the poetic strategy of echoing, Brathwaite reconfigures the limits of oral culture in print. Thus, oral culture can not only be manifested in speech, but also in words to sew two different worlds together. Music, and especially the drum, is then a major cultural marker that helps recover the Afro-Caribbean self by reconciling past and present.

As such, Brathwaite's journey to recover Africa and place it at the heart of an Afro-Caribbean identity refers to a primary marker of cultural identification, namely language. The latter is both marker shaping the cultural and individual identity of subjects and a conduit of meaning. It is worth remembering that colonial education in the Caribbean disallowed remnants of African languages and the subject's desire for cultural self-expression, imposing the dominance of Englishness in a peripheral, colonial space. Hence, Caribbean subjects were "forced to learn things which had no relevance to themselves" (Brathwaite, *Roots* 262), using a language that was not even theirs. In the attempt to recover an Afro-Caribbean identity, Brathwaite dismantles cultural discourses of imperialism by offering a new language, "the language of the slaves and labourers, the servants who were brought in by the conquistadors," called the nation language (Brathwaite *Roots* 260). Nation language betrays influences of African models and aspects of New World heritage by making the English language more vocal and bringing

it closer to the oral traditions of African culture. Thus, nation language may be English "in terms of its lexicon, but it is not English in terms of its syntax. And English it certainly is not in terms of its rhythm and timbre, its own sound explosion" (Brathwaite *Roots* 266).

Through music and rhythm, Brathwaite is able to form nation language as he breaks down the traditional English iambic pentameter used in canonical poetry and employs calypso in his poems. Calypso uses dactyls and therefore dictates the use of the tongue and sound in a certain way (Brathwaite *Roots* 272). It is also the "metrical, musical and rhythmical form which is specific to the particular history, population and geography of the Caribbean. It is the folk expression of the African-descended people on the islands" (Fludernik 311). The "Libation" section of *Masks,* the second book in the trilogy, begins with a poem titled "Prelude" that serves as an example of the use of calypso. In this poem, Brathwaite begins by counting the seven kingdoms of the Ancient African world as a reminder of cultural heritage:

> …the seven kingdoms: Songhai, Mali,
> Chad, Ghana,
> Tim-
> buctu, Volta,
> and the bitter waste that was
> Ben-
> in, … (90)

These names have been carefully chosen in a traditional fashion in order to create a "musical" experience. The group of syllables informs the reader that there is an emphasis on orality, on a (lost) voice that is the voice of Africa. Also, some names have been broken down through the use of enjambment to give rhythm to the poem and to stress its

orality. Through nation language, Brathwaite seeks to link African cultural traditions with Afro-Caribbean ones as a way of both linkage and recovery of a wholeness missing in the fragmented configuration of Afro-Caribbean identity.

Brathwaite's poetic nation language is also apparent in another poem called "J'ouvert." This is the last in the series of poems in his trilogy and its title refers to the opening day or official start of the traditional Trinidadian carnival which represents freedom. In "J'ouvert," Brathwaite mends the fragmented Afro-Caribbean identity through rhythm and music, highlighting the importance of orality. Throughout the poem, the rhythm and sound of the drum act as a refrain that not only links the old world with the new, but also paves the way towards new rhythms and new Afro-Caribbean identities:

> *bambalula bambalulai*
> *bambalula bambalulai*
> stretch the drum
> tight hips will sway (267).

The repetition of "*bambalula bambalulai"* throughout the poem weaves together the fragmented Afro-Caribbean identity as it enables the merging of old and new worlds. For example, following this musical refrain, the two most prevailing religions in the African and Caribbean worlds are brought together:

> Christ will pray To Odomankoma
> Nyame God and Nyankopon (267)

Through the beating of the drum, Brathwaite merges both worlds to highlight the shared community and reality which is neither African nor Caribbean, but Afro-Caribbean. Hence, Brathwaite uses music as a bridge that links the past to the present and in so doing embraces a new Afro-Caribbean reality:

now waking
making
making
with their
rhythm some-
thing torn
and new (270)

It is remarkable to note that unlike all of the preceding poems, this last poem does not end with a full stop. The absence of punctuation at the end represents new possibilities and new postcolonial identities that emerge when linking the past and the present, the Old World and the New.

In conclusion, Brathwaite gives voice to the marginalized Afro-Caribbean subject by reimagining a history anchored in the lost (mother)land of Africa. He recedes to the past in order to retrieve important elements of African culture and to remind new world subjects of their cultural heritage. In this journey back to Africa, Brathwaite highlights the importance of voice and sound in African forms of self-expression, prompting him to establish a "poetics of the voice" in the Caribbean (Gikandi 727). By bringing back oral traditions that include music and African rituals, Brathwaite gives new meaning to New World voices. As he links the past to the present, he imagines a new Afro-Caribbean aesthetics not only defined by African culture but one that also encompasses the reality of Caribbean "blackness" in the diaspora. To be sure, Brathwaite's fixation on Africa and the racial struggles of the black community actually distort the reality of Afro-Caribbean subjects, and Brathwaite risks falling into the trap of racial and cultural essentialism, a topic that will be tackled in the chapters that follow as other artistic aesthetics are considered.

Brathwaite's pan-Africanist approach assumes a racial-cultural mode of being, and thus "engages in a complex process of contesting as well as appropriating colonialist versions of the past" (Loomba 164). This risks relegating his literary project to the problematic space of "authenticity." Many critics, including Anthony Appiah, have blamed this nationalist way of thinking in making "real the imaginary identities to which Europe has subjected us" (150). To him, nativisms are complicit in the Western project without being aware of it as they affirm essentialist ideas of a mythical past. And as pan-Africanism celebrates the unity and centrality of a single experience, alternative identities may be excluded and marginalized. This flows from the fact that nationalist thinking pays attention to who is included in the nation that it disregards those who are excluded (Loomba 165). In Brathwaite's case, the focus was on a specific race-culture, black African culture, limiting the Caribbean identity to the primacy of race. In Walcott, as will be apparent in the chapter that follows, this racial nostalgia is a "corrupting influence, and [he] began to prefer amnesia, a deliberate casting off of the past, and an 'Adamic' acceptance of the responsibility to name a whole new world, to the ceremony of return" (Rohlehr 8). Hence, as postmodernism weds negritude, writers come to reject Brathwaite's idea of a possibility of returning to the past and stress more on cultural plurality and the hybridization of Caribbean subjects. In the following chapter, Walcott builds on Brathwaite's revision of historical narratives, and delves more into the problematic of the postcolonial individual by inspecting language itself. Like Brathwaite, Walcott embraces a plurality of memories, histories, and even identities in the postcolonial Afro-Caribbean world and adds to the narrative of the ongoing quest of postcolonial identity.

Chapter 2

Self-invention: Going Beyond the Boundaries of Culture in Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

In the postcolonial journey of self-discovery, knowledge of self functions as a trope for the recovery of a Caribbean identity. However, colonialism has tainted human self-knowledge with imperial representations and has therefore inhibited the process of self-discovery. Loomba asserts that "[c]olonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge [so that] no branch of learning was left untouched by the colonial experience" (53). Michel Foucault argues that knowledge is not neutral and objective but is fueled by power. To Foucault, "[k]nowledge and power are integrated with one another, and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power" (52). This is seen in the case of colonialism in which the colonizers impose their language and culture upon the colonized as a means of exercising power. Through language, imperial ideas and representations infiltrate the minds of the colonial subjects and shape their identities by assimilating a culture that is not "authentically" theirs. Thus, language plays a crucial role in the formation of identity: speaking not only "means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (Fanon, "Black Skin, White Masks" 8).

With the intrusion of European cultures in the black Atlantic, identities and cultures of Caribbean subjects are subdued, leading to the disorientation of Caribbean identity. Fanon illustrates this point by stating that European indoctrination led to the death of local cultures ("Black Skin, White Masks" 9) and that due to language, it has

become harder to restore these local cultures. He contends that the colonial subject is trapped by language because "when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country" (*Wretched* 222). Hence, restoring the subaltern's culture and identity is handled through dismantling language and destroying conventional ideas and representations that marginalize the Caribbean subject. This self-conscious, postmodern use of language is seen in Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Walcott delves more into the barriers of having a free postcolonial identity and builds on Brathwaite's revision of historical narratives by inspecting language per se. In his work, Walcott attempts to dig into the Caribbean identity by dismantling dominant, conventional racial, cultural, and even literary categories through a problematization of language. He destabilizes the linguistic chains placed upon the Caribbean subject so as to display language as ambivalent, capable of embracing different and self-contradictory meanings rather than being built upon fixed structures. Following in the steps of Jacques Derrida, Walcott dismantles centered structures by using self-referential language, giving rise to a radical mode of figuration.

By dismantling conventional notions and structures, Walcott lays the foundation of a new, hybridized Caribbean identity. The latter falls into Paul Gilroy's paradigm of "the black Atlantic". Gilroy's theory transcends cultural boundaries via rejecting the idea of a simple or pure one-ness of identity, in favor of cultural exchange and multiple cultural influences, leading to a hybridization of identity. Like Gilroy, Walcott advocates cultural exchange and rejects conventional structures and identities. In fact, throughout

the play, Walcott criticizes the idea of a "pure" postcolonial identity as he exposes the dangers of assimilating a notion of culture that disregards the "other."

In Walcott's poetic dream play, Makak, the protagonist, undergoes a visionary experience that catapults him to a quest for self-discovery. In his vision, a white goddess tells him that he is destined to become the racial savior of his people by leading them to Africa in the prophetic mold of the Biblical Moses, a key figure in black narratives of emancipation. Blinded by the white apparition which represents Western oppression, Makak begins his journey from a Caribbean island towards Africa alongside his friend, Moustique. Walcott uses the paradox of a European muse to highlight the binary forces that are at the root of the Caribbean subject's dilemma. The play unfolds with Makak incarcerated on charges of being disorderly and shouting claims to royal African lineage. Corporal Lestrade, a mulatto jailer, puts Makak in a cell next to two other prisoners, Tigre and Souris. Lestrade identifies himself entirely with the Westernized white colonial oppressors, having internalized the colonial discourse of white superiority. Like Makak, Lestrade is manipulated by a colonial rule that suppresses his Caribbean identity. However, in the course of the play, the characters undergo inner transformations fueled by Makak's search for home. At the end, when Lestrade is freed from colonial oppression, he urges Makak to behead the white goddess; Lestrade condemns her as a manifestation of Western ideology, which associates white with beauty and goodness, and black with ugliness and evil. Makak, then, beheads the white goddess and regains his freedom.

Arguing against centered structures in "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human sciences," Derrida believes that these structures are organized around a pivotal

center that simultaneously limits them. The way to break free of structure is through what he describes as *freeplay*. Even though the latter exists in the structure, it is limited by the center, and hence the need for de-centering through the repetition of structures. This repetition allows for the displacement and substitution of the center, giving rise to many possible conceptual meanings that linguists after Saussure have termed the signified. In parallel fashion, by dislodging the center of conventional racial, cultural, and even literary categories, Walcott takes the protagonist into a journey of self-invention, beyond the binary opposition of Europe and Africa and down a path of what Bhabha labels the "third space." In order to do that, he uses irony, metaphor, and symbolic imagery to reclaim blackness as a positive affirmation of being and to explore the powers of the mulatto or hybrid Caribbean subject.

First, throughout the play, Walcott uses irony through figuration to create conflict or confusion by contrasting contradictory words or using conflicting images (Uhrbach 580). Such scheme is seen even before the play begins, in its title, which is ironic because Walcott juxtaposes two different images, that of the mountain and monkey. The former implies progress and ascent "which is equated with the laborious communal ascent of the blacks towards the summit of consciousness of their own being and yet the deliberate juxtaposition of the word 'monkey' is a ridicule of that ascent" (Lyn 51). The title also contains a double use of irony with the word 'monkey' which refers to Makak, the protagonist of the play. Even though the protagonist is displayed as a monkey, negative stereotypical image used by colonizers to represent blackness, he is also the "healer of leprocy and the Saviour of his race" (Walcott 225). Through the image of the monkey, Walcott critiques the Western representational mode by adopting Henry Louis Gates'

revised concept of signification. As a way of breaking out of Westernized representations that limit the black subject, Gates offers a new notion of signification he refers to as "signifyin(g)" which centers on rhetorical figures. Gates's "signifyin(g)" concept "revises and critiques both the standard English usage of signification and the structuralist conception of the sign, as represented by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure" (Warren 224). Unlike Saussure's concept, "signifyin(g)" does not denote meaning but rather replaces meaning with rhetorical figures. Thus, in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the image of the monkey is rhetorical, echoing Gates's "Signifying Monkey," a rebellious figure against a conventional racist image of the black as "simianlike." According to Gates, the Signifying Monkey, "he who dwells at the margins of discourse, ever punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language, is [a] trope for repetition and revision, indeed [a] trope of chiasmus, repeating and reversing simultaneously as he does in one deft discursive act" (Gates 52).

Moreover, Walcott unfolds the conflicting images attributed to positivistic notions of evolution. The latter, according to Darwin, is an evolutionary stage from which all men evolved over the course of generations through the process of natural selection. However, Darwin's evolutionary theory is also problematic in its ideological usage to uphold white supremacy and black inferiority. To Darwin, Western nations of Europe "so immeasurably surpass their former savage progenitors and stand at the summit of civilization" (178). In this sense, Anglophone Caribbean narratives can be understood as a rebuke of Darwin. Corporal Lestrade's symbolic speech mirrors Darwin's theory of evolution, and through it, Walcott makes a universal statement in full ironic mode: "[i]n the beginning was the ape, and the ape had no name, so God call him man," not black nor

white (216-217). Nevertheless, even though Walcott makes no racial distinctions at the beginning, he consistently uses irony to depict Darwin's view of white supremacy: "For some of the apes had straighten their backbone, and start walking upright, but there was one tribe unfortunately that lingered behind, and that was the nigger" (217). Through metaphor, Walcott highlights the domination of whites and their forging of a black identity that is limited by Western representation; according to Lestrade's speech, God allows the ape to evolve into a human being but it is the colonialist who denies the Negro humanity. Fanon corroborates Walcott's view by arguing that, due to colonialism, the black man experiences fragmentation of the self, through "those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man" ("Black Skin, White Masks" 8).

In addition, Walcott uses language to deal with the problem of cultural identity within the psyche of the colonized. In dealing with this dilemma, Walcott embraces postcolonial criticism and follows the steps of Fanon. For Fanon, cultural identity is problematic because the postcolonial subject often falls in the trap of mimicry. The latter is a result of the long colonial indoctrination during which the Caribbean subject was deprived of the formation of autonomous cultural formations and thus forced to imitate ("mimic") Western models ("Black Skin, White Masks" 110). Fanon asserts that mimicry leads to a disavowal of difference and turns the colonial subject into a misfit, fragmenting his/her identity by embodying and performing colonial roles (Bhabha 75). Mimicry is then a false representation of a given "reality" as it is "an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject" (Bhabha 75).

Throughout the play, Walcott displays mimicry through irony and metaphors to portray its negative effects on the formation of a Caribbean identity. In this way, language becomes a subversive weapon used against imperialistic ideas and fixed, centered notions and structures.

Walcott underscores (and satirizes) the role of mimicry by giving black characters in the play animalistic names, such as Tigre, Souris, Moustique, and Makak, which replicate the settlers' own animalistic description of the "native." As Fanon says, when the settler describes the native, "he constantly refers to the bestiary. The European rarely hits on a picturesque style; but the native, who knows what is in the mind of the settler, guesses at once what he is thinking" (*Wretched* 41). Through mimicry, the Caribbean subject assimilates a forged black identity shaped by Western representations. This assimilation is seen in Makak's submission to Corporal Lestrade in the opening of the play as Makak takes on the monkey persona imposed by Lestrade, a mulatto who carries out English laws. To the latter, Makak is "a being without a mind, a will, a name, a tribe of its own," and an animal who has "come from a cave of darkness" (Walcott 222). Thus, when Lestrade gives him orders to turn, sit and stand, Makak immediately obeys and acts as a monkey: "Everything I say this monkey does do, I don't know what to say this monkey won't do" (223). By doing so, Makak accepts Lestrade's Westernized projection of black identity as dark and animalistic. This shows that at this point, Makak is still controlled and not yet free from colonial powers.

Moreover, Walcott uses metaphor to create a new space in which fixed concepts are freed, allowing the emergence of new ones. Thus, through metaphor, language's referential power no longer resides in a fixed foundation, but rather frees words and

meanings to associate in new ways (Ashcroft et al. 151). One of the major conventional associations that prohibit the formation of new forms of black identity is that of binary oppositions, such as blackness versus whiteness. Throughout the play, Walcott "often plays with the accepted associations given to blackness and whiteness by inverting their associations or making them less contrastive and dichotomous so that he may have ground to modify them" (Crossley 18). Thus, Walcott destabilizes language by challenging the conventional associations of these binary racial distinctions: blackness that is synonymous with things that are evil, dark, depressing, and soiled, as opposed to a whiteness associated with purity, goodness, and fairness. By reconfiguring the accepted conceptual metaphors that English legitimated for the semantic associations of blackness and whiteness, Walcott takes away the negative attributes of blackness in order to open a space of possibility for a new Caribbean identity.

Throughout the play, whiteness functions as a representation of Western European culture, regardless of the effects that this dominant culture has had on the identities of the West Indian subjects. From the start, whiteness is perceived by the colonized as a positive image, a source of inspiration and beauty, as part of the colonial logic. However, as the characters begin to evolve and take off the white colonial mask, they uncover whiteness's controlling, negative powers.

Walcott uses many metaphors to display the different associations of this supposed whiteness, one of which is through the figurative use of the moon. Wearing the white colonial mask, Makak sees the moon as a source of beauty and inspiration and associates it with the white woman who appears in his dream. He portrays the white woman as "the loveliest thing [he] see[s] on this earth, like the moon walking along her

own road" (Walcott 227) and later as "the moon climbing down the steps of heaven" (227). The moon is then a source of inspiration and admiration to the extent that he is completely lost without it: "When the moon is hidden, look how you sink, forgotten, into the night" (300); its absence leads to a darkness synonymous with blackness. Makak, then, rejects blackness as he is fixated on whiteness and is unable to see the negative effects of colonialism and Western indoctrination. In this sense, the moon or whiteness comes to be seen as controlling because it leads Makak to reject blackness and prohibits him from acknowledging and exploring his black identity.

Whiteness is also characterized in the play as controlling and fearful attributes through other metaphorical images such as white spiders. Moustique feels threatened by white spiders because they instill control and fear. This fear of white spiders as a fear of whiteness and the western world ensues from the colonial logic of power. Through Moustique's fear of whiteness, Walcott depicts Western culture as "a fertile culture that is capable of breeding fear and submission in those that it acculturates. He does so when he portrays Moustique's horror of coming into contact with a pregnant, white spider that he subsequently kills" (Crossley 23). As the character says, "[a] spider. A spider was on the sack. A big white one with eggs. A mother with white eggs. I hate those things" (Walcott 238). The white spider is seen as a mother, a mirror of England, mother country that breeds white eggs, its colonial progeny. When Moustique kills the spider, a metaphorical image of colonialism's undoing, Makak sees this act as "a bad sign" (239) because of his fixation and submission to whiteness. However, Moustique warns Makak of the dangers of whiteness and reminds him that West Indians have the right to take control of their own future without the interference of the Western: "Every man have to die. It have a

million ways to die. But no spider with white eggs will bring it" (239). Subsequently in their journey, Moustique will help Makak become more aware of the negative of whiteness by destroying its false imprint on Makak's mind. Thus, Moustique shatters Makak's image of the moon as a muse by revealing its falseness and controlling nature: "But I look at the moon and it's like a plate that a dog lick clean, bright as florin, but dogs chase me out of the people's yard when I go begging" (255).

Furthermore, through Makak's fixation and valorization of whiteness, Walcott stresses the dangers of cultural alienation. The latter is the assimilation of an imposed and constructed identity which distances the colonial subject from his own culture. To Fanon, cultural alienation betrays deep psychological symptoms as he "speaks about the alienation of the Negro in terms of cultural imposition, and of the exploitation of the native by the colonists, just as Marx sees the alienation of the proletariat as their exploitation by the bourgeoisie" (Onwuanibe 41). Attached to a "white" dream that calls him to go back to Africa, Makak is unaware that he is in fact submitting to Western culture. This attachment to origin and to the past prevents him from reconstructing his black identity which alienates him from his own culture. According to Fanon, colonial subjects "must turn their backs on the inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be possible. Before it can adopt a positive voice, freedom requires an effort at disalienation" ("Black Skin, White Masks" 180). Thus, Makak needs to destroy his dream to break free from colonial powers or whiteness. However, Makak completes this denouncement of whiteness progressively throughout the play as he begins to question the value of whiteness little by little with the help of Moustique, Souris, and even the Corporal. Walcott, then, tears off the white mask,

with its conventional attributes of purity, Justice, and Truth, (Fanon, "Black Skin, White Masks" xiii) to uncover its manipulative, and fearful colonial powers.

In addition, like whiteness, blackness enters the space of linguistic figuration, a dialectical gesture misaligned with the ideology of negritude and Brathwaite. From the play's opening, Walcott displays the conventional association of blackness as representative of Afro-Caribbean identity. These associations appear to be pejorative as blackness is defined in contrast to whiteness. In fact, Fanon points out that "blackness represents the diametrical opposite [of whiteness]: in the collective unconsciousness, it stands for *ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality*" ("Black Skin, White Masks xiii). Hence, in the play, blackness is first perceived as primitive, and dependent on Western culture or whiteness. Nevertheless, as the play progresses and the characters begin to embrace their blackness, Walcott challenges these constructed associations by portraying blackness as an embodiment of nature and a guiding instrument. One of Walcott's literary devices that represent blackness is that of coal, which is made to take on many metaphorical associations throughout the play. Coal is first seen as a dirty and primeval business that Makak and Moustique are involved in; it is one of "the misery black people have to see in this life" (Walcott 238). However, as the characters begin to discover and embrace their blackness, coal becomes a symbol of a nurturing force that brings about healing powers. Blackness is then "a guiding force or natural energy that allows people to accomplish miracles and find faith in concepts other than whiteness" (Crossley 27). This is seen when Makak uses coal to heal a sick peasant he encounters: "Now I want a woman to put a coal in this hand, a living coal. A soul in my hand" (Walcott 248). The coal becomes a soul, a living thing that is able to resurrect the sick man. This scene acquires symbolic

significance not only for portraying the resurrection of the sick man, but that of blackness. Makak cannot heal the sick man only through coal, he needs the peasants to have faith in themselves, in the power of blackness as well: “And believe in me. Faith, Faith! Believe in yourselves” (249). When the peasants started accepting their own blackness by taking off the white mask and seeing things through their own eyes, the sick man was healed. Thus, when blackness is detached from whiteness or the removed from under the Western gaze, it is revealed to be a positive and powerful aspect in its own right and as a fundamental part of Caribbean identity.

By dismantling the conventional black and white opposition, Walcott sheds light on the complexity of Caribbean identity and paves the way towards creolisation. The latter represents the reality of the contemporary Caribbean subject who is trapped in the dichotomy of whiteness and blackness. As a consequence of this opposition, Walcott dives into the condition of being a mulatto, neither completely white nor completely black, through the character of Lestrade. Walcott believes that the “mulatto's self-discovery and resolution of the dichotomy born of a dual heritage, would involve a merging of the two cultures, which by implication, would result in a positive affirmation of negritude in the merging of the two shadows, ‘both’ (significantly) ‘of equal size’ (Lyn 53-54). Thus, it is through acknowledging and accepting blackness that the Caribbean mulatto succeeds in the discovery of his/her identity.

The mulatto’s journey of self-discovery is seen through Lestrade’s transformation throughout the play. At first, Lestrade does not acknowledge blackness as he is blinded by the colonizer’s pejorative perceptions of it. As a law enforcer, he mimics English culture and alienates himself from his own culture. He sees black West Indians as weak-

minded and primitive; to him, when human beings evolved, “there was one tribe unfortunately that lingered behind, and that was the nigger” (Walcott 217). Laughably, he believes that whites are superior to blacks and mistreats Makak not only for being “an animal [that] is tamed and obedient” (222).

Lestrade represents then the voice of Western culture and personifies the English language with its fixed prejudices, particularly those that confirm the derogatory semantic associations of blackness and whiteness. However, by wearing the white mask, Lestrade is stuck in the colonizer’s projected image of the Other which alienates him from himself. The latter leads to an “experience of dispossession and dislocation - psychic and social - which speaks to the condition of the marginalized, the alienated, those who have to live under the surveillance of a sign of identity and fantasy that denies their difference” (Bhabha 63). Therefore, the colonial subject needs to acknowledge and accept his culture and the Western culture ought to acknowledge the Other. According to Fanon, “The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity—cultural or psychic—that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the “cultural” to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality” (“Black Skin, White Masks” xxx). By denying cultural differences, Lestrade is in fact rejecting his own hybrid identity; he states that English law does not allow one to be different as it “does not allow you to be black, not even black, but tinged with black” (Walcott 280). Thus, blinded by Western culture, he does not allow himself to admit to his blackness and explore the dark, unconscious aspects of his identity. Nevertheless, it is when Lestrade is stabbed and wounded that his white mask begins to fall and he becomes more aware of his body,

mainly his blackness. He no longer sees Makak, Souris, and Tigre, through the white mask as animals; he sees them for who they really are, as "just natives" (Walcott 286).

In another instance, Walcott uses the metaphor of the dark forest to represent the unconscious mind of Caribbean subjects, an unconscious that is "dark". As the characters go into the forest in Shakespearean fashion, they delve "below the conscious level and contend with the darkness of the unconscious in an act of self-discovery" (Lyn 59). Hence, it is only in the darkness of the forest that the characters, especially Lestrade, gain limited knowledge about the essence of their own being and their own reality. In the forest, the heart of darkness, Lestrade experiences a transformation once confronted by death, through the character of Basil. The latter urges Lestrade to strip himself naked and "look at [his] skin and confess [his] sins" (298). It is then that Lestrade becomes aware of his blackness and begins to accept his black identity: "Too late have I loved thee, Africa of my mind, sero te amavi, to cite Saint Augustine who they say was black. I jeered these because I hated half of myself, my eclipse. But now in the heart of the forest at the foot of Monkey Mountain. I kiss your foot O Monkey Mountain" (299). At that moment, he acknowledges the conflict and confronts the dichotomy of whiteness and blackness that "ha[d] been eating out [his] soul" (280).

By stripping himself physically and psychologically, Lestrade is freed from the dominance of conventional Western ideologies as he realizes that whiteness is not superior to blackness. To Fanon, blackness should not be perceived in pejorative opposition to whiteness because given their theoretical equality: "The scientists have admitted that the Negro is a human creature: physically and mentally he has developed analogously to the white man, the same morphology, the same histology. On all fronts

reason has secured our victory" (qtd. in Coulthard 60). Thus, Lestrade accepts and embraces his blackness; he no longer punishes Makak and his "own grandfather" (280) for being black and causing racial disintegration. In fact, he glorifies Makak and sees his black lineage through him: "Now I see a new light. I sing the glories of Makak! The glories of my race! […] O God I have become what I mocked. I always was, I always was. Makak! Makak! Forgive me, old father" (299-300). Through Lestrade's struggle, Walcott displays the psychological and physical conflict of being white in mind and black in body. In a moment of awakening, Lestrade reveals that the white and black dichotomy he has been holding on to is but a constructed Westernized association. Only when he strips himself psychologically from Westernized notions does he find himself and attains selfhood.

In this search for Caribbean identity, Walcott transcends cultural oppositions such as whiteness and blackness by taking the characters into a voyage beyond Africa or Europe, beyond Afro-centrism even while restoring blackness to its historical centrality. Throughout this journey, the characters embark on new dimensions of consciousness, groping towards hybridity. To Walcott unlike Brathwaite, Africa is but an experience of the mind as he "would no longer wish to visit Europe as if [he] could repossess it, than [he] wish[es] to visit Africa for that purpose" ("The Muse of History" 26). This fixation with the return to Africa as the origin for Caribbean identity is portrayed though the metaphor of the white apparition. At first, Makak is compelled by the white lady that he sees in his dream and he depicts her as "the loveliest thing [he] sees[s] on this earth, like the moon walking along her road" (Walcott 227). However, this white apparition, that represents whiteness or Western culture, has clouded Makak's mind and judgment by

making him turn away from blackness. This white apparition has made "a white mist in the mind […] that mist hang like cloth from the dress of a woman, on prickles, on branches" (Walcott 235).

Blinded by whiteness, Makak believes that he comes "from the family of lions and kings," (236) and that he must go back to Africa to find himself. Nevertheless, Makak is unaware that by so doing, he is submitting to the forces of whiteness and Western beliefs. In the forest, it is the liberated Lestrade who wakes Makak up from his dream and helps him break free from the enchantment of Western culture. Lestrade points out that the white apparition is the one who caused the loss and fragmentation of Caribbean identity as "she is the white light that paralysed [Makak's] mind" (319). Thus, to get rid of the confusion Makak is feeling, Lestrade urges him to kill the white apparition: "She is the wife of the devil, the white witch. She is the mirror of the moon that this ape look into to find himself unbearable […] if you want to discover the beautiful depth of your blackness, nigger, chop off her head!" (319). By killing the white lady, Makak destroys the dream of the return to Africa and the need to cling to the past.

Through this act, Walcott displays the problematic notion of going back to a past that inhibits Caribbean subjects from (re)creating a Caribbean identity. According to Walcott, "[t]he ultimate message in *Dream On Monkey Mountain* is for us to shed the African longing, and to say that we are here, whatever the historical process that brought us, and this is where our roots have to begin; and with that whole cycle of reclaiming the territory, spiritual territory, where we have been put" (qtd. in Lyn 62). Walcott, then, transcends the cultural oppositions of Africa and Europe by going down the path of Bhabha's "third space." In this space of creolization, the subject breaks the shackles of a

fixed and colonizing culture where "the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew" (Bhabha 37). In this new space, subjects can recreate their Caribbean identity without being controlled or manipulated by power of colonial representation.

Fanon also comes to this conclusion by stating, "I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it" ("Black Skin, White Masks" 179). To him, it is "by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that [the Caribbean subject] will initiate the cycle of [his/her] freedom" (180). Hence, by transcending cultural oppositions and embracing the present hybrid reality of Caribbean subjects, Walcott recreates a Caribbean self, always in flux.

Furthermore, Walcott's postmodern use of language "transforms the characters from mimic men pulled in opposite directions by Europe and Africa into genuine hybrids who transcend cultural oppositions toward an in-between-ness" (Haney 81). This transformation reshapes the nature of Caribbean identity into a hybridized self that transcends conceptual boundaries. By favoring either Europe or Africa, Lestrade and Makak are both blinded and prisoners of cultural boundaries and conventional structures which are the roots of their psychological struggle. According to John Thieme, supporting either Europe or Africa is "psychologically damaging, because [it] involve[s] the repression of the hybridized reality of the Caribbean situation" (Thieme 71).

Bhabha advocates cultural hybridity by affirming that the colonial subject lives in-between cultures, and by extension in-between different arrays of conceptuality. To Bhabha, the colonized occupies "an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity […] it is the inter-cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space - that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (38). In the play, once Lestrade and Makak get rid of their infatuation with Europe and Africa, they become more conscious of their hybrid Caribbean self. In fact, when Makak beheads the white apparition, he proclaims his freedom: "Now, O God, now I am free" (Walcott 320). He also recalls his genuine non-animalistic name, Felix Hobain: "My name is Felix Hobain" (321). And through Makak, Walcott suggests that the way to break free from the cultural oppositions of Africa and Europe, blackness and whiteness, is through the separation of the self from the past and its localization in the current cultural context, namely the world of multiple Caribbean hybridizations.

In the end, the psychological dilemma that the characters in Walcott's play go through is the result of their attachment to the past and to a singularity of culture and of memory. Hence, throughout the play, Walcott warns against the assimilation of a single culture as it has led the characters to become mimic men of Europeans and Africans, preventing them from attaining their hybrid Caribbean identity. At the end of the play, when Makak beheads the white apparition, he symbolically destroys the notion of a pure and single identity, and opens up a hybrid space of in-between-ness and most importantly a multiplicity of memories, cultures, and identities. Similar to Walcott, Harris highlights the negative effects of colonial powers on the Caribbean identity and advocates the

importance of having a collective postcolonial awakened consciousness which paves the way towards creolization, a gate of limitless possibilities and fluid identities in the postcolonial world.

Chapter 3

The Womb of Space: A Journey towards Creolization in Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*

In its colonial moment, the Caribbean region experienced a massive dislocation of peoples, resulting in the eradication of indigenous Amerindians alongside the great influx of Europeans, Africans, Chinese, and Indians either as slaves or indentured servants whose cultural presence is a defining characteristic of the Caribbean (Burns 99). In an implicit acknowledgment of the complexity of this (post)colonial encounter, Édouard Glissant states that the contemporary Caribbean is "a testament to this forced meeting of disparate cultures, producing what [he] refers to as a 'composite culture'" (Burns 99). In light of this composite culture, characterized by a radical admixture of identities and cultures, a specifically *Caribbean* discourse of *creolization* has come into being. Creolization is not mere hybridity or cross-breeding, but rather a discourse offering a new way of conceptualizing identity and culture through "open[ing] on a radically new dimension of reality" (Glissant, "Creolization in the Making of the Americas" 83). Through creolization, postcolonial identities are reshaped into non-fixed, fluid narratives, always in flux, always already becoming. Deleuze and Guattari explain the following:

> [B]ecoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain of symbioses that bring into

play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation (263).

In view of this open-ended notion of cultural identity, creolization offers a novel understanding of "evolution" in the postcolonial world, one no longer conceived as a teleological, progressive development within a single species, as Darwin argued, but rather a contrapuntal and open-ended relation between different orders of being. This new understanding of evolution shatters westernized components in the formation of identity such as filiation, lineage, parentage, and kinship that break the taboo of cross-cultural admixture. Moreover, Glissant argues that "being cannot be understood apart from lived experience, and that lived experience must acknowledge cross-cultural exchange and the creolized identities that have resulted from radical cross-cultural encounters" (Burns 101). Hence, by rejecting filiation and the idea of discrete histories and origins, Glissant reconstructs postcolonial Caribbean identities as creolized ones that are always in flux.

This concept of creolization is apparent in postcolonial Caribbean writings as a weapon against colonialism and its conceptions of identity as 'pure' and 'authentic'. Other postcolonial writers share Glissant's and Harris'svision of cross-culture admixture and infinite syncretism, such as Jean Rhys. In her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys portrays the creative "beauty: of creolization through nature, as her oft cited description of nature in the well known novel. As part one of *Wide Sargasso Sea* draws to a close, the garden was "large and beautiful as the garden in the Bible- the tree of life grew there. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. […] It was a bell-shaped mass of white, mauve, deep purples, wonderful to see" (5). This mixture of different flowers and colors represents the mixture of different races, cultures,

and identities that do not seem to fit with one another, yet when they do, they create a beautiful image, shattering the Darwininian taboo against cross-breeding, which results in mongrel species. Through this scene of nature, Rhys reveals the beauty of cross-breeding and creolization which, just like the garden, celebrate life.

Another important writer who shares Glissant and Rhys's view of creolization is the Guyanese postcolonial writer, Wilson Harris. Having lived in multi-racial Guyana, Harris explored ideas of cross-culturalism and heterogeneous communities. Similarly to Brathwaite and Walcott, Harris believes that the way to construct a postcolonial Caribbean identity is through challenging dominant historical accounts and westernized notions of time, identity, and even space. Hence, in this gradual process of unleashing the postcolonial identity from colonial powers, Harris goes beyond Brathwaite's revised historical narratives, and Walcott's postmodern language into creating a new limitless world where postcolonial identities move freely. To Harris, history is then transformed into "a Harlequin Picasso-esque reassemblage of dark and light, line and plane, celebrating human energies in all their outward expressions. […] [History] also carries tell-tale signs-bright irreverent linings to its cloak, dark intimations of lost secrets in its folds-of what it hides" (Sharrad 98). This carnivalesque depiction of history echoes Brathwaite's view based on the experiences and stories of Afro-Caribbean subjects. By incorporating calypso, patois, and jazz rhythms in his poetry, Brathwaite "produces a celebratory parade not of romanticized nostalgia for past kingdoms, but of present popular variety and vitality" (Sharrad 99). This present variety is characterized by the acknowledgment of different cultures which leads to cultural exchange, and most importantly to a new postcolonial reality framed by creolization.

Like Glissant, Wilson Harris believes in a creolized postcolonial Caribbean identity that shatters the limitations of constructed ideologies and leads to infinite possibilities. Harris argues that the only way Caribbean subjects can overcome their history of slavery, exploitation and dismemberment is through creative imagination: creativity as opposed to procreativity. According to Harris, as a consequence of imperialism, "we have lost the capacity to imagine, and have grown fond of superficiality and fallacious clarity; we have been trained to see things in blocks, in frames, in moulds, and not in motion. It is this tendency toward fixedness, toward self-preservation and survival that shackles and trammels us most, aborting our embryonic imagination" (Gana 157).

In the search for a postcolonial Caribbean identity, Harris opposes homogeneity and essentialism as modes of representing the cross-cultural experience of hybrid subjects. Instead, he offers a new way of seeing the postcolonial world by shattering barriers of history, time, and space in order to revive a lost narrative of Caribbean identity. Accordingly, unlike some postcolonial writers such as V.S Naipaul who asserted that the Caribbean is historyless and uncreative, Harris believes that a shattered Caribbean "History" can be woven together and revived through the creative imagination:

> "'[T]he void" or sense of void into which the "eclipsed" [or Caribbean] fell, whether African slaves cutoff from their country of origin or Amerindians present though forgotten in his own ancestry, […] is actually as dense as the landscape he discovered when he led expeditions in the Guyanese jungle. As suggested above, this density is made of the accumulated sufferings of the oppressed, either

invisible (like the Amerindians in *Palace of the Peacock)* or lost in an abyss of unconsciousness (Maes-Jelinek 520).

To Harris, imagination is not simply an exploratory and creative power; it is also a means to open up innumerable possibilities of development and a capacity for self-renewal. This imagination is characterized by the ability to transform "a relationship of opposition into one of reciprocity, which is a fundamental precondition for creativeness" (Maes-Jelinek, *The Labyrinth of Universality* 31). Hence, in his novels, Harris weaves together binary oppositions such as life and death, myth and history, in order to attain the "womb of space," a metaphorical representation of creative imagination. Once the subject attains this womb, he/she is reborn, allowing new and fluid postcolonial identities to resurface.

This journey towards Caribbean rebirth is clearly embodied in Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*. In the latter, Donne, the main character and a ruthless colonizer, takes a multiracial crew on an expedition to find cheap labour. This expedition alludes to the "repetitive pattern of Guyanese history: the invasion of the country by successive waves of conquerors in search of a legendary El Dorado, motivated by the mixture of brutality and idealism" (Maes-Jelinek, *The Labyrinth of Universality* 32) that exploits the land and people. Throughout their journey, they re-experience "Donne's first innocent voyage and excursion into the interior country" (Harris 24) and "the odd fact existed [...] that their living names matched the names of a famous dead crew that had sunk in the rapids and been drowned to a man" (23). From the beginning of the novel, Harris introduces the reader to a world in which the individual is no longer limited by constructs such as (Western) history, time, and space. In this seven-day journey evoking genesis, members

of the crew die one by one, accidentally, or from exhaustion. In the end, they finally reach an enormous waterfall, and with the two remaining members of the crew, Donne embarks on an ascent of the cliff until they fall and meet their death. Nevertheless, "the story does not end with the catastrophic ordeal towards which Donne has been travelling but with an illumination that grows out of his understanding of that very catastrophe" (Maes-Jelinek 33). In the end, the characters reach the womb of space, and are then born again into a new world of infinite possibilities and ever-evolving fluid identities.

Moreover, Harris's journey towards new, creolized identities is made possible through the operation in his novel of magical realism. The latter was first coined in 1925 by Franz Roh in relation to post-expressionist art, designating two major periods in Latin-American and Caribbean culture (Slemon 9). The first period is "that of the 1940's [sic] and 1950's [sic], in which the concept was closely aligned with that of the 'marvellous' as something ontologically necessary to the regional population's 'vision of everyday reality'" (Slemon 9). The second period is that of the "Boom" which deals with the Latin-American novel in the late 1950s and 1960s, where the term was used to address works that widely differ in genre and discursive approach (Slemon 9). As of the late 19th century, many postcolonial writers, including Gabriel García Márquez, adopted the magical realist approach as a subversive weapon against imperial discourses and totalizing systems. Through magical realism, new possibilities and realities can come to life, particularly the possibility or vision of achieving a unified Caribbean narrative that embraces cross-cultural experiences, again what Gilroy called "the black Atlantic."

To be sure, the term magical realism may be seen as an oxymoron that depicts postcolonial reality as a binary opposition between reality and fantasy. Mirroring

Caribbean postcolonial society, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place in the magic realist text: that of the Caribbean reality of oppression and the Caribbean dream of the oppressed. Slemon argues that "[s]ince the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the other, a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences" (11). However, in *Palace of the Peacock*, Harris weaves together this disjunction and reconciles two opposing worlds through dualisms and creative imagination.

In order to explore a Caribbean postcolonial identity, Harris sheds light on colonial binary oppositions still found in the postcolonial world such as victim and victimizer, native and alien, Westerner and other. In *Palace of the Peacock*, Harris merges these oppositions through a dualism "so that self becomes other and other becomes self, so that what was thought to be common becomes strange/alien and what was thought to be foreign becomes familiar" (Toliver 175). The dualistic relationship is then redefined as a relationship of reciprocity which best represents cross-cultural exchanges. From the beginning of the novel, Harris undermines binary oppositions through the dualistic relationship between the main character, Donne, and his double, the narrator. Donne and the narrator represent "two forces [who] confront each other: a cruel materialism and an idealism in search of a spiritual community, represented by Donne and "I" respectively" (Steele 63).

The relationship between Donne and the narrator denotes the complex identity and consciousness of the postcolonial Caribbean subject who is caught between two

worlds, the west and the Caribbean. The novel opens up with a vision of colonial oppression and the need for freedom. In this vision, Donne, the conquistador, is shot by Mariella, an Amerindian woman he has exploited. This vision is that of "vengeance and death that acts as a spur to the narrator's recollection of the meeting between conqueror and conquered. It is the content of a dream that seems to haunt the Guyanese consciousness and starts the nameless first-person narrator on his visionary quest" (Maes-Jelinek, *The Labyrinth of Universality* 33). Donne, a clear reference to the metaphysical poet John Donne, is blinded by materialism and Western conquests as he takes on the oppressor's identity as "gaoler and ruler" (Harris 20). Through Donne, Harris warns against the assimilation of the colonizer's identity in the postcolonial world; he believes that it is easy for a society "to overturn an oppressor, but it is equally easy for those who overturned the oppressor to become the oppressor in return" (qtd. in Gana 157). Hence, in Harris's journey towards postcolonial identity, Donne's material self is deconstructed with the advent of his double, the narrator. The latter is Donne's spiritual self who helps him overcome his one-sided vision and limited perception of reality. Through the narrator, Donne's fixed postcolonial identity is breached open so that it can be boundlessly revisited and infinitely rehearsed.

From the start, Donne's identity is being undone or "unDonne" by the narrator's presence. Donne's death brings back to life the narrator, as "[t]he shot had pulled [him] up and stifled [his] own heart in heaven" (Harris 19). This death evokes a "revival of the past, which strikes one as both an actual occurrence and its imaginative reconstruction" (Maes-Jelinek 34). Hence, the narrator revisits Donne's past and reconstructs it with dreams "that delve into the past, unearth the pastness of the present, and envision the

pastness of the future. These [d]reams are the seeds sown into the womb of history to outline its [postcolonial] future" (Gana 158). Through this imaginative reconstruction of the past, the postcolonial subject asserts his/her presence in the past and is no longer marginalized by an imperial history. In fact, Fanon argues that history should be recreated as it represents the non-western world as inferior to the West ("Black Skin, White Masks" 91).

Moreover, with the appearance of the narrator, Donne is introduced to a world in which binary oppositions such as life and death are dismantled, allowing new possibilities and realities to come to life. Life and death are inverted in the presence of the narrator, as the action of seeing becomes performed by a dead man (Donne) "whose open eyes stared at the sky" (Harris 19). This reversal creates "a space in between, for a peculiar kind of relationship is established as both "I" and the dead man are actually looking at each other from one meeting point" (Steele 63). Thus, binary oppositions are replaced by reciprocal relationships that free the postcolonial subject from the limitations of an imperialistic reality. Furthermore, in this space of in-betweenness, Donne and the narrator become one as the I-narrator infiltrates the eyes and "I"s of Donne. Accordingly, the narrator starts seeing with "one dead seeing eye and one living closed eye" (Harris 19).

The dead, seeing eye represents Donne's physical eye that looks at the world through a material lens and is blind to its spiritual depth. Even when the I-narrator reminds Donne that he resides in him as his spiritual double, Donne states that "[he] had almost forgotten [he] had a brother like [him] [….] It had passed from [his] mind — this dreaming responsibility" (23). This shows that the I-narrator is Donne's spiritual self

whose voice he hears no more as he has become obsessed with the material world. Blinded by materialism, and by what he can possess, Donne tells his spiritual self to rule the land "[w]hile you still have a ghost of a chance. And you rule the world" (23). In contrast, the narrator's living closed eye refers to the "dreamy, Utopian eye that broadcasts the visionary, imaginary wonderland in which the I-narrator dwells" (Gana 159). By merging the two eyes and "I"s (Donne's and the narrator's) together, Harris destroys binary oppositions and begins the inner journey toward a space for creolization.

In the novel, Harris explores the duality of the landscape or nature, which reflects humanity's dual nature that helps them define themselves. Harris transforms the nature of the relationship between Man and nature from an opposing relationship to a reciprocal one. By doing so, Harris not only eradicates binary oppositions but also argues that Man is found in nature just as nature is found in Man. This interaction between humans and nature is particularly a letimotiv of postcolonial culture, where individuals and nature are seen as having a common experience, namely the colonizer's exploitation of the two.

Moreover, like nature and the national landscape, humans are in a constant movement that allows for the creation of new and different possibilities, realities, and even postcolonial identities. In *Palace of the Peacock*, as the characters explore the Guyanese landscape, they also delve into their own consciousness. Hence, this journey is simultaneously an inner journey as "the glaring contrasts and uncertainties of the Guyanese natural world are a phenomenal and spatial equivalent of the psyche, and the two blend in the narrative" (Maes-Jelinek 34). The reciprocal relationship between humans and nature is apparent as the landscape takes on features of the human body in

the novel. This transformation is seen when Donne makes his way further into the jungle and becomes overwhelmed by an unseen presence both outside and inside of him:

> At last I lifted my head into a normal position. The heavy undergrowth had lightened. The forest rustled and rippled with a sigh and ubiquitous step. I stopped dead where I was, frightened for no reason whatever. The step near me stopped and stood still. I stared around me wildly, in surprise and terror, and my body grew faint and trembling as a woman's or a child's. I gave a loud ambushed cry which was no more than an echo of myself − a breaking and grotesque voice, man and boy, age and youth speaking together. (27-28)

In this encounter between narrator and landscape, nature is perceived as an Other who is alive and moving. Here, the landscape mirrors the narrator's perception of his Guyanese community and postcolonial consciousness as an Other. However, the narrator is unable to recognize that "the 'echo' is an expression of the community he will discover to be in himself at the end" (Maes-Jelinek 35). Thus, the landscape reflects the troubled psyche of the postcolonial subject who sees his own self as an Other, through the eyes of the colonizer, and fails to recognize the self within the Other. This dual and complex nature of the postcolonial subject's identity echoes Paul Gilroy's notion of double consciousness. According to Gilroy, the creolized postcolonial subject is "both European and black [which] requires some specific forms of double consciousness," (1) a term he borrowed from William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. Gilroy argues that double consciousness is not only used in terms of the black internalization of an American identity, but also "to illuminate the experience of post-slave populations in general"

(126). This doubleness delineates the rhizomatic, creolized identity of postcolonial subjects who are finally united in the black Atlantic

Furthermore, through the metamorphosis of the landscape, Harris breaks binary oppositions as the forest evokes in the narrator contrasting personalities within himself that denote his double consciousness: “man and boy, age and youth” (28). In another encounter with the landscape, the characters experience a similar moment of revelation in the river. They notice that the river has “a pale smooth patch that seemed hardly worth a thought [....] Formidable lips breathed in the open running atmosphere to flatter it, many a wreathed countenance to conceal it” (32). This depiction of the river shows that, like human subjects, nature is not passive but alive through its people, particularly Amerindians. Moreover, this river of life is also a stream of death because of the dangers it can provoke: “[the crew] bowed and steered in the nick of time away from the evasive, faintly discernible unconscious head whose meek moon-patch heralded corrugations and thorns and spears we dimly saw in a volcanic and turbulent bosom of water” (32). The “thorns and spears” symbolize the colonizers’ exploitations of both land and people. The dual nature of the river mirrors the double consciousness of the crew. This is apparent as the characters see their reflection in the river: “The silent faces and lips raised out of the heart of the stream glanced at us. They presented no obvious danger and difficulty once we detected them beneath and above and in our own curious distraction and musing reflection in the water” (32).

Additionally, the characters in the novel take on animalistic features which corroborate the reciprocal relationship between nature and humans. Wishrop is transformed into a spider as he falls into the water with “webbed fingers” (101). The

spider image evokes the trickster Ananse, the African folktale spider character which was also seen in Brathwaite's poetry, in the first chapter of this study. Like Brathwaite, Harris uses the spider image as a subversive weapon against colonial powers and Westernized notions of linear, homogeneous history. This image is attached to Wishrop because he "is a distillation of the complex and many-faceted persona of the age of conquest. […] He is a symbol of the personality divided against itself or at war with itself" (Shaw 164). In addition, the spider/trickster image stands "as heraldic emblem for Harris's subversive assault on conventional form, conventional persona, conventional story-line" (Shaw 161).

Through Wishrop's death, Harris in fact destroys conventional forms and creates new ones that mirror a creolized postcolonial identity by promoting the interconnectedness of all things. In fact, following Wishrop's death, his spider/skeleton rises again and becomes the center of a growing wheel or web that symbolizes interconnectedness: "[He] rose still again-a skull on whom the hair had been plastered for a changeling demon. It was impossible to say. Anything was everything in the whirling swift moment and in the fantasy of their shattered boat and life" (101). Wishrop's death not only promotes interconnections between life and death, animate and inanimate objects, old and new, but also helps the crew overcome "a premature sense of a finished creation" (Shaw 164). This is precisely the essence of creolization. To Harris, creation is never-ending as identities are always in motion, seen through images of metamorphoses of nature and humans. These images "render the essential fluidity that Harris opposes to the fixity of human polarizations" (Maes-Jelinek 46). Thus, like Glissant, Harris redefines Caribbean identity "as a synthesis of cultural features, never finally realized in some static and essentialised form but always as a becoming-Caribbean" (Burns 101).

Furthermore, Harris explores another dualism which contributes to the formation of the postcolonial identity, that of myth and history. Faced with a fixed imperial history that marginalizes Caribbean subjects, many postcolonial writers like "Naipaul and Harris work at a double task: on the one hand, imaginative liberation from the tyranny of a history which denies them a past (and thus a presence), and, on the other, immersion in history to recover/recreate a past" (Sharrad 92). *Palace of the Peacock* mixes myth with history in order to recreate the past and, by so doing, recover a Caribbean identity lost in the flow of a linear and homogenous history. In the novel, "Donne's historically fixed imperial posture is set in motion via the journey motif pertaining to the gold rush and prompted by the spread of the El Dorado myth" (Gana 162). In the novel, this mythical journey in search of gold (gold represented as fugitive folk in the novel) is a journey of psychic rebirth not only on an individual level but also on a historical level. By incorporating the El Dorado myth, Harris highlights the "egocentric truths of history books — books that would speak of journeys into the Guyanese hinterland as imperial" (Gana 162). Harris's re-illustration of history leads to the revival of Donne's fixed imperial history.

From the novel's beginning, Donne believes that history is only made by those who "[r]ule the land" and "rule the world" (23). As he undertakes his journey and reaches Mariella, his destination, he finds an old Arawak woman who is left behind while the folk have flown away. When he sees the Arawak woman, Donne experiences a self-reflective moment, as he remembers his cruel past actions: "I am beginning to lose all my imagination save that sometimes I feel involved in the most frightful material slavery. I hate myself sometimes, hate myself for being the most violent taskmaster— I drive

myself with no hope of redemption whatsoever and I lash the folk" (50). Donne is remorseful once faced with the presence of the Arawak woman as he realizes that history cannot only be objective but is also subjective through individual personal experience. Donne confesses that his fixed, imperial history lacks "imagination" which is at the core of cross-cultural exchanges. Through the immersion of myth in the novel, Harris not only frees Caribbean subjects from the clutches of material history, but also creates new possibilities and realities, the radical openness described by Glissant.

Moreover, the genesis myth is revisited in the novel through the crew's seven day journey that leads them to the palace of the peacock, a metaphor of creation. In this journey, Harris integrates figures of Christian creation narratives to highlight Donne's psychic rebirth. One of the first indications of Donne's transformation is the awakening of a new desire in him "to see the indestructible nucleus and redemption of creation, the remote and the abstract images and correspondence, in which all things and events gained their substance and universal meaning" (101). As a result, in their ascent of the cliff, the characters "discover a number of tableaux which echo very old, archetypal scenes linked with the foundation of the Judeo-Christian imagination" (Maes-Jelinek and Ledent 98). The figure of a carpenter appears evoking Joseph the carpenter but who is made of "fleshless wood" (102). Another figure is that of a child in a crib, evoking the birth of Christ.

However, the presence of these figures, who are reminders of the origin of Western civilization, does not indicate that the characters are reunited with these creation stories. These tableaux or visions are "framed in windows in the rock, and Donne though he hammers on the glass, obtains no response from them" (Maes-Jelinek and Ledent 98).

This lack of communication unfolds Harris's argument that, "unless people are ready to revise their conceptions radically, such regressive journeys will prove sterile" (Maes-Jelinek and Ledent 98). Through these visions, Harris attacks an imposed Western culture that forces the Caribbean subject to assimilate a culture he/she does not belong to. Hence, the postcolonial subject is urged to freely discover him/herself outside the colonial frame of influence.

After weaving together opposing constructs such as matter and spirit, human and nature, self and other, Harris leads the characters into the magical space of a creolized postcolonial identity. At the end of the novel, the characters find themselves in the palace of the peacock, emblem of spiritual rebirth. Through the spatial metaphor of the palace, Harris transports the Caribbean subject into a genesis of creation, a world devoid of opposites in which the fluid postcolonial identity can infinitely *become*. This palace illustrates Bhabha's "third space," in which "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriate, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 37). It is in this space that the narrator finds "what he had been for ever seeking and what he had eternally possessed," (117) namely his own voice and an alternative identity befitting the postcolonial world.

In the palace of the peacock, Harris destroys linguistic communication "with the emergence of another kind of communication— a spiritual one. While ordinary language intensifies differences and binaries, spiritual language blends opposites and animates the inanimate" (Gana 167). This loss of speech gives room to music, "challeng[ing] the privileged conceptions of both language and writing as preeminent expressions of human consciousness" (Gilroy 75). In the novel, this linguistic loss "ushers in a world where

everything speaks, sings, and listens to the undying bone-flute music of the soul" (Gana 167). Through Carroll's music, the narrator is able to delve deep within himself and find his new voice:

> One was what I am in the music- buoyed and supported above dreams by the undivided soul and anima in the universe from whom the word of dance and creation first came, the command to the starred peacock who was instantly transported to know and to hug to himself his true invisible otherness and opposition, his true alien spiritual love without cruelty and confusion in the blindness and frustration of desire. It was the dance of all fulfillment I now held and knew deeply, cancelling my forgotten fear of strangeness and catastrophe in a destitute world. (116)

In this third space, music acts as a metaphor of Harris's imaginative creativeness not only for linking the soul to the universe but by merging one's consciousness and unconsciousness together. The narrator, through the image of the starred peacock (a symbol of spiritual rebirth), transcends all oppositions including that of "otherness" by entering the "womb of space," Harris's notion of imagination. The latter "encompasses the others within what is a highly extended (rippling) gyno-centered metaphor for a latent native heteroglossia that is pregnant with regenerative potentialities ("absent presence[s]") for closing riffs in cross-cultural intercourses both inside and outside the text proper" (Toliver 174). Accordingly, it is in this womb of space that the narrator discovers a new voice within him through the emergence of a new self, a divine self that transcends all boundaries and encompasses postcoloniality as a condition: "This was the

inner music and voice of the peacock I suddenly encountered and echoed and sang as I had never heard myself sing before" (116).

Furthermore, the palace of the peacock highlights the importance of interconnectedness and cultural-exchanges to attaining fluid postcolonial identities. Through the windows of the palace, the narrator sees the crew members who died throughout the journey: "I had plainly seen Carroll and Wishrop; and now as plainly I saw Cameron, the adversary of Jennings. I saw as well the newspaper face and twin of the daSilvas who had vanished before the fifth day from Mariella" (116). It is then that the narrator no longer sees the characters as an "other," but realizes that they are parts of himself as they are connected to one another. Hence, in this inner space, the narrator's initial "I" becomes a "we": "In the rooms of the palace where we firmly stood […] the sound that filled us was unlike the link of memory itself" (116). This interconnectedness echoes Glissant's idea of a relational poetics in which he argues that "each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (qtd. in Burns 105).

According to Glissant, Caribbean reality and identity is rhizomatic, a metaphor he borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari which rejects fixed rootedness and promotes multiplicity. This notion of the rhizome delineates Glissant's view of the creolized postcolonial identity as "a synthesis of cultural features, never finally realized in some static and essentialised form but always as a becoming-Caribbean" (Burns 101). Like Glissant, Harris believes in the creolized postcolonial identity; to him, "creolization, the infinite genesis in the 'womb of space', is a synthesis that moves beyond itself, that produces 'a new and original dimension'" (Burns 107).

In summary, *Palace of the Peacock*, delves into the Guyanese landscape as the gateway to the hidden territories of the postcolonial Caribbean subject's psyche. Through his novel, Harris offers the fragmented postcolonial subject "a dream of what could be, the vision coming at the end of a reverse voyage upstream to the source of life, to the original creative, imaginative force in man – a remembering, that is, of what it means to be man" (Adler 39). Faced with fragmented postcolonial identities, Harris argues in favor of a creolized Caribbean identity.

In the journey towards the Caribbean self, Harris weaves together opposing constructs via dualistic relationships such as materialism and spiritualism, humans and nature, myth and history. He then displaces binary oppositions with reciprocal relationships to eradicate the marginalization and alienation of postcolonial subjects in the westernized imperial world. The latter is a world impoverished by the illiteracy of imagination as it is built upon constructed and fixed, "pure" identities which alienates the postcolonial subject. In contrast, Harris creates a "womb of space," a space where identities and structures can be infinitely rehearsed and revisited, breaking all westernized chains. As the characters reach this "womb of space" in the novel, they experience wholeness. Harris redefines wholeness not as a totality, defined by a static absolute, but denoting all human experience, all partial elements, and all cultures that are constantly evolving (Maes-Jelinek, "Wilson Harris's Multi-faceted and Dynamic Perception of the Imaginary," 186). In this wholeness or womb, fluid postcolonial Caribbean identities float in a limitless space in which they ceaselessly evolve as radically creolized ones.

Conclusion

Finally, the three different chapters in this study portray the gradual process of re(contructing) the Afro-Caribbean identity. Brathwaite's *The Arrivant*, Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, and Wilson's *Palace of the Peacock* complement one another, as each work adds on to the previous one in order to free the postcolonial identity from all colonial bounds. This continuum demonstrates the impossibility of achieving a single postcolonial Afro-Caribbean identity, as it is an ongoing quest and it can best be represented as an unending narrative. Each in his own way, Brathwaite, Walcott, and Harris grappled with the fragmentation of postcolonial Caribbean identity and produced varying poetics to (re)construct the historical memory and cultural identity of the Caribbean subject. Moving from a romantic and 'nostalgic' search by Brathwaite to the postmodernism of Walcott and Harris, Western representation and ideology are deconstructed to facilitate the emergence of new meanings. Faced with alienation and marginalization, Westernized notions of identity, history, and even time are challenged in order to free the postcolonial subject from the chains of colonialism. These Caribbean writers offer a new way of comprehending identity: "instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact,[…]we should think […] of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Rutherford 222).

Moreover, these three works have shown that there is not a single route or journey towards the postcolonial Caribbean identity, but rather a multiplicity of routes which reflect the multiplicity of memories, and identities in the postcolonial world. Brathwaite, Walcott, and Harris's works break the walls of 'canonicity' as they succeed

in dismantling colonial power; their works act as creative responses that displace the specter of colonialism and give voice to the silenced postcolonial Caribbean subject.

As seen in chapter 1, the postcolonial Caribbean subject is trapped in a Westernized history tainted by dominant historical accounts that marginalize him/her in the New World, away from mother Africa. Brathwaite offers a way of breaking out of this oppression by embracing the experience of exile and acknowledging the historical memories of Caribbean subjects, allowing these subjects to have a voice in history. In addition, fragmented postcolonial identity is confined within the boundaries of binary oppositions such as white/black, us/them, hindering the possibility of a postcolonial Caribbean identity. In chapter 2, Walcott delves more into destroying these boundaries and redefining postcolonial Caribbean identity not as fragmented, but as a complex and hybrid identity. Building on Walcott's deconstruction of binary oppositions, Harris transcends these oppositions, including that of "otherness," and creates a new, third space for the postcolonial Caribbean subject. As seen in chapter 3, Harris replaces binary oppositions with reciprocal relationships to eradicate the marginalization and alienation of postcolonial subjects in the westernized imperial world. Still, the latter incarcerates the postcolonial subject in a space that is still tainted by colonial power. Hence, as opposed to this colonial prison, Harris creates a new space which he calls the "womb of space," in which postcolonial identities can be infinitely rehearsed and revisited, breaking all colonial chains.

Through their works, these postcolonial writers return the oppressor's gaze and break free from the shackles of white supremacy and imperialistic ideologies. This study shows a dissection of colonial powers that moves from outer layers to inner layers in

order to completely eradicate these powers. Thus, beginning with the outer layer of historical narratives, Brathwaite revisits them by introducing the experiences of postcolonial individual. Then, Walcott goes deeper into the problematic of postcolonial identity and dismantles the inner layer of binary oppositions. Lastly, building on Walcott's eradication of binary oppositions, Wilson creates a new world in which postcolonial identities can float freely. By extension, the ever-evolving postcolonial Caribbean identity is no longer limited to a single past, memory and culture, but it is one that celebrates similarities as much as differences. Moreover, by deconstructing binary oppositions, Walcott embraces the postcolonial Caribbean subject as a hybrid being. Walcott then takes the postcolonial Caribbean subject into a journey of self-invention, beyond the binary opposition of Europe and Africa and down a path of what Bhabha labeled the "third space." The latter is present in Harris's *Palace of the Peacock* as "the womb of space," a limitless place in which fluid postcolonial Caribbean identities float and evolve as creolized identities.

These three Anglophone Caribbean writers attempt to construct a new and hybrid Caribbean subject that falls within the framework of the Black Atlantic. The latter outlines a distinctively modern, cultural-political space that is not merely African, American, Caribbean, or European, but is, rather, a hybrid amalgam of all of these at once. Against omnipresent Eurocentric modernity, Gilroy envisions the black Atlantic as a space that celebrates the creolized postcolonial Caribbean identity.

This study adds to the conversation of postcolonial studies by exploring how Anglophone Caribbean works can complement one another in order to re(construt) a postcolonial Caribbean identity that is free from colonial bounds. In their complementary

ways, these Anglophone Caribbean writers deconstruct the boundaries traced by the colonizers and construct new creolized postcolonial identities in the New World. It would be interesting if further research could be done to explore the trajectory of other Anglophone Caribbean writers, especially female writers such as Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, and Merle Hodge in order to see if they go along the paths of Brathwaite, Walcott, and Harris.

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