الشخصيه الهجين (الغير) مأساويه في جزرالكاريبي: ديريك والكوت و"النْام" المُتأصل في هُويتهِ الهجين كنموذج

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المُلخّصْ

هذا البحث ماهو إلا محاولة لإبراز ومعالجة أحدي النقاط النقدية الهامه والتي لم تجد ألأهتمام الكافي لدي نقاد الشاعر ألأشهر في تاريخ ألأدب الكاريبي ديريك والكوت، ألا وهي رؤيته الشخصيه في هُويتهِ الهجين ورسمه لسمات تلك الشخصيه في مجمل أعماله ألأدبيه. يعتمد البحث في معالجتة لتلك القضية علي قراءة عملين مشهورين لوالكوت، ألأول عمل مسرحي والثاني لأحدي قصائدة الشهيرة. أما ألأطار النظري للبحث فيعتمد بالأساس علي الجدليه الشهيره بين والكوت و شاعر كاريبي آخر هو كامو براثوايت. يهتم البحث في مجمله الي تقديم دراسة نقدية مستفيضة لقصيدة والكوت الشهيرة *"A Far Cry From Africa"* وذالك في سياق ومن خلال الجدليه التي أمتدت لسنوات بين والكوت وبراثوايت، فالتباين الصارخ بين وجهتي النظر للشاعرين بخصوص الهوية الكاريبية وخصائصها المتفردة أنما تُدلل عليه القصيدة بوضوح. فالقصيدة ماهي إلا مثال وتجسيد واضح لمجمل ألأتهامات التي وجهها براثوايت لوالكوت والتي يمكن تلخيصها في أبتعاد والكوت عن أصوله ألأفريقية وتحيزه للحضارة ألأوربية وميوله للتشبهه بالرجل ألأبيض حتي في سخريتة من الرجل ألأسود، ذالك علي النقيض من رؤية براثوايت والتي تبنت فكرة العودة إلى ألأصول ألأفريقية كمميز أصيل للهوية الكاريبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: والكوت – الغير – النْام – الهجين – جزر الكاريبي – السمر – الأصول الإفريقية.

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this re-visioning of the scene of origin, the Caribbean mulatto's evokes colonial and native histories in terms of parental figures, belatedly recognizing that the colonial encounter is a violation in itself since he himself is a product of an illicit sexual relationship between a white 'drunken officer' and a native African girl. At the level of his own experience, therefore, the more tragic effect of this violation is that unlike the reassurance of the identity buoyed by his white legacy that assimilative policy could indeed lead to an expunging of previous origin, the speaker here realizes that his African 'nam' is in fact not totally erased, but rather misplaced through the assimilative identifications under 'the English tongue' he loved. Torn between 'Africa' and the 'English tongue', the mulatto's conflict goes straight to the core of his existence and identity, forcing him to recognize that he is in a quandary, one inextricably bound up in the question of 'nam'. As Brathwaite puts it, " Nam/ is the name reduced, survival nomen, oppression eats the e (or eye) and yet the a (or alpha) is protected by the n and m: dark consonants, deep boulders of continent cool sound ….so even if you lose your name … you cannot lose your *nam.* (quoted in Annie Paul, 13) Though polemic in its logic, the 'nam' is that salient/silent residual force which is incorporated in a piecemeal fashion by the dominant assimilative culture, but this incorporation is not absolute, simply because even if one's mother culture is disavowed and cannibalized by the authoritative assimilative culture, this process of cannibalization leaves the trace of difference. It is only then, when the 'Africa' beneath 'the English tongue' is recovered, that the journey from a 'hole' towards a 'whole' identity can begin, forming opportunities to confront the ambivalence of identification and to find an ontological and psychic location in the history of the community.

Although the magnetic force which Africa holds over the mulatto Walcott in the last stanza of the poem may appear to be a surprising foray from a poet whose texts are so apparently anchored in the white 'nam', the moments of crisis Walcott experienced in this poem causes him to amend many of his theoretical and aesthetic stances. After "A Far Cry from Africa", Walcott begins slowly but surely to pull himself away from the great white 'nam' to which he initially lend himself and with which he remains most closely identified: No longer were African customs and traditions "merely 'desultory'; they might be 'partially remembered', but 'they are not decayed, they are strong'. No longer was he talking about the erasure of the past of which nature was a metaphor. No longer was he calling history irrelevant and absurd; this rigid theoretical stance had been subdued somewhat" (Strachan, 223). And, to this list one should add, no longer was Walcott's dream of bringing harmony to the Caribbean ethnic diversity through his writings remained forever a valid one; it has been partly shattered even though it vigorously erupts again in works such as *Omeros* in 1990.

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between past memory and present reality, however, comes Walcott's call to the Caribbean (and by default to Pan-Africanists like Brathwaite) to unburden themselves from the legacy of the past by adopting the stance of forgiveness rather than bitterness: the former promises a straightforward horizon full of new possibilities while the latter would seem to preclude the existence of the future itself. For Walcott, therefore, forgiveness is both a means and an end, a graceful act and an aspiration. The aspiration is the ideal, the reinvention of the Caribbean as an Eden-like community in which the successors of the victims can live alongside those of the guilty ones in harmony.

Yet, the main problem with this vision is that it has its source in the ideology of utopianism which presupposes that the whole society can participate, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in a policy of too-easy forgiveness, a stance which Walcott himself expresses his inability and refusal to perform.(4) And who, after all, is entitled to forgive on behalf of the victims of the Middle Passage and slavery? The only ones who can do so, according to the logic advanced by Pan-Africanism, are the victims themselves, and they are dead. For Pan-Africanists like Brathwaite, the healing process should begin with the past, by giving a voice back to the victims and the origin from which their story began. It is by doing so that not only the deeds of the guilty are brought to light in a manner entirely different from which they wish to see them, but also the perpetrators of the crime will be dispossessed from sovereignty over the narrative, deprived from having the sole access to the representation of their deeds. Furthermore, the presentation of what happened in the past from the victim's point of view serves not only to establish what might be called the collective memory/narrative - the basis of the national story of the community - but also to preserve what Brathwaite would surely have called the 'nam': the word he gives to the "atomic core of man's culture. It is the kernel of his name, his nature of immanence, …. disguised backward (nam /X\ man). It is the essence of [the Caribbean] culture in the sense that culture is what man's eat (nyam, yam) and the power and glory out of that." ("Gods of the Middle Passage", 18) Brathwaite is surely right to direct our attention to the significance of the 'residual nam' with respect to Caribbean literature and culture, for how can we would be able to gain an understanding of problematic texts such as "A Far Cry from Africa" without embarking on this concept? The shift that occurs in the last stanza of the poem and the anxiety evident in the five rhetorical questions which conclude it are both emblematic of a 'hole' self that lacks the integration which characterise the 'whole' one, indicative of the mulatto's predicament upon his illogical negation of one side of his divided 'nam' which inevitably plunges him into a feverish malaise of confusion:

I who am poisoned with the blood of both
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?
(In a Green Night, 18)

The earlier sense of blessing for his white legacy is now transformed into a curse. In

(4) Consider, for instance, the following statement from "The Muse of History" in which Walcott might seem to be displaying a strange ambivalence towards the kind of forgiveness he is preaching in the above quoted lines: "I say to the ancestor who sold me, and the ancestor who bought me, I have no father, I want no such father, although I can understand you, black ghost, white ghost, when you both whisper 'history', for if I attempt to forgive you both, I am falling into your idea of history which justifies and explains and expiates, and it is not mine to forgive, my memory cannot summon any filial love, since your features are anonymous and erased and I have no wish and no power to pardon." (373-374)

even before the Kikuyu. While the metaphor of "ibis equals white person" may work with the thrust of the poem, it is far too positive an image to represent the whites who took Kenya away from Kenyans. (69)

Through the metaphor of the 'ibis', then, Britain's presence in Kenya is not only represented in a complimentary light, but it seems to be indispensable in order to draw the country out of its primordial darkness. Not occurred overnight, however, such a presence is retained and finds its way to Walcott's mind through the prevailing myth of an African 'Heart of Darkness' which has pervaded the imperial project in the continent since the first wave of colonization. Hochman, using to an extent some concepts from Brathwaite's critique, goes even further finding in the poem's diction a great deal of implicit evidence sufficient enough to vindicate Walcott's racist stance and his prejudice against the Africans. In Brathwaite's reading, Walcott's poem is represented as a symptomatic of the mulatto writer whose unrestricted allegiance to the white 'nam' of his cultural heritage apparently hindered him from rendering his racially/cultural hypbridity as a place of celebration and as an alternative 'third space' which, according to Bhabha's theory of hybridity, constitutes a relief from the binary. Hochman, on the other hand, attentively demonstrates that the type of hybridity Walcott constructs in the poem belongs to a different/peculiar model of hybridization wherein the most salient parental traits are magnified in reproduction: white is more whitened and valorised, black is more blackened and degraded, the strong side is strengthened while the weak side is weakened, and so on.

In what might seem to be a response to Brathwaite, Walcott takes the opportunity of being asked to give an assessment, in the light of his controversial but most well known poem, "A Far Cry from Africa", of his own "current sense of the West Indian writer's relationship to Africa", to which Walcott responds:

There is a duty in every son to become his own man. The son serves himself the father. The Caribbean very often refuses to cut that umbilical cord to confront its own stature. So a lot of people exploit an idea of Africa out of both the wrong kind of pride and the wrong kind of heroic idealism. A great cost and a lot of criticism, what I used to try to point out was that there is a great danger in historical sentimentality. We are most prone to this because of suffering of slavery. There's a sense of skipping the part of slavery, and going straight back to a kind of Eden-like grandeur… Whereas what I'm saying is to take in the fact of slavery, if you're capable of it, without bitterness, because bitterness is going to lead to the fatality of revenge…… Think [instead] about illegitimacy in the Caribbean! Few people can claim to find their ancestry in the linear way. The whole situation in the Caribbean is an illegitimate situation. If we admit that from the beginning that there is no shame in that historical bastardy, then we can be men. But if we continue to sulk and say, "Look at what the slave-owner did", and so forth, we will never mature. (Hirsch, 78-79).

What Walcott seems to be suggesting here is that traumatic events like the Middle Passage and slavery can leave the people of the Caribbean stalled in time, stuck in the events that then become the model for history, trapped in the wrong deeds of the past for now and ever. Since the victims of the Middle Passage cannot be brought back to life nor the wounds of slavery can be permanently healed, what can instead be done is to forge a new contract for collective existence by thinking of the Caribbean as a sort of a vestigial version of 'Eden-like grandeur' - an ethical imagined community that would enable its members to depoliticise, dehistoricize and to skip all the historical injustice and grievances weighted down upon the present with the dust of unavenged ancestors. Out of the dissociation

of Africa". (69) In the remaining lines of the first stanza, Walcott continues to fixate the perceived animality of the African, making a value judgement from exclusively European standpoint, developing the metaphor of flies a little further by linking it with the 'worm' in the fifth line. "As flies lay eggs that turn into maggots (Walcott's "worms"), the Kikuyu also brought forth something considered unappealing by Walcott: Mau Mau, a secret terrorist organization". (69)

Though Walcott implicitly acknowledges the existence of Mau Mau as a terrorist group of the Kikuyu, he says absolutely nothing about why these people are involved in guerrilla warfare with the white settlers: they fight in order to regain their tribal land from which they have been severely dispossessed and to end the colonial rule in Kenya. While it might be possible to agree with the critics who admonish us not to consider the poem as a work on political philosophy but to regard it as simply a polemic "dramatization of Walcott's own particular racial angst" (John Thieme, 38), the absence of an awareness of the causes behind the alleged terrorism of Mau Mau is particularly shocking in its disregard. Even the claim that Walcott is a humanist who sometimes lacks a political conscience can also be disputed: Walcott's compassionate references to the extermination of the Jews at the hands of the Nazi in last line of the first stanza, and to the republicans in the Spanish civil war in the third stanza are instances sufficient enough to indicate the extent of his inconsiderate stance to the blight of his half-black brothers in Africa. Occupying a state of limbo in the last two lines of the first stanza, however, Walcott's persona gingerly aspires to maintain balance or the middle ground, mitigating his response to the massive and 'expandable' killing of the Africans by equating it with the hacking of an innocent white child in his bed by Mau Mau, therefore, while representing the two sides as intolerant of one another, simultaneously implying that the Africans are not only black in skin, but also of soul.

Existing in strong contrast to the disdain for Africans and their animality is the valorisation of all that is associated with the white culture in the second stanza which serves as yet another example of the polarized binary categories that shape the poem. Perhaps the most arresting representation of the white culture in this stanza is the association Walcott makes between the white settlers and the bird 'ibis'. As Jhan Hochman notes, "[t]he ibis was a favourite animal of the ancient Egyptians, becoming not only the incarnation of the god Thoth--patron of astronomers, scribes, magicians, healers, and enchanters--but a bird whose appearance heralded the flooding Nile, the season of fertility". (69) Obviously, then, the metaphor of 'ibises' is meant to *displace* its referent: while it is meant to implicitly acknowledge a shared animality between the white settlers and the natives, at once yields to an understanding of a significantly different meaning. The only logical extrapolation of such a metaphor, of the correlation it draws between the white settlers and the fertility associated with the bird ibis, is that not only should the British imperial project in Kenya be reified but it is deemed necessary because of the warts it brought to the country. In fact, Hochman usefully calls attention to the detrimental effects of the association between the bird 'ibis' and the white settlers. As he argues,

In this stanza, (white) ibises are apparently being hunted by black Africans, which could be read as a metaphor of black Mau Maus "hunting" white estate owners and farmers. Some reading this poem are apt to synecdochically understand the white ibis, intuitively or intellectually, as a good symbol. Once the association is made, whites hunted by Mau Mau can seem blameless, guiltless, and good. Further, calling white ibises inhabitants of Africa since "civilization's dawn," makes it seem as if whites resided in Africa

ing a truly different approach to this poem, then, Brathwaite criticises Walcott not because of the neutral political stance he adopted in the poem, as so many critics have mistakenly believed, but for something from which Walcott could never escape: that is, the 'nam' which Walcott fiercely defended in the poem is apparently the creation of white history and white culture. Of course, there is more to this charge than that, in part because of the poem's vocabulary with which Walcott embellished his representation of the white 'nam' and which seem, for some critics such as Jhan Hochman, that Walcott has aligned himself with the white side.

It is significant that the poem is titled 'A Far Cry from Africa', as if Walcott wants to suggest from the beginning that what lies beneath this 'far cry' is an investment in the idea of 'Africa' as a nurturing motherland, a potent symbol of memory and identity, and a space once invoked simultaneously provoking a slippery negotiation between culture and biology. As we read the poem, however, we realize that his link with Africa is indeed a very tenuous one, occasioned by a historical crisis - the Mau Mau Rebellion against British colonialism in the late 1950s in Kenya which was ended with an estimated number of 12000 African and little over 100 European dead. As the first two stanzas make clear, Walcott's choice of this historical event is undertaken not in defence of the African cause as such, but rather, as part of exploring/exposing the strengths and weaknesses of the British and the Africans respectively which leaves no doubt as to how the reader is meant to judge to which side the mulatto Walcott should be affiliated:

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt
Of Africa. Kikuyu, quick as flies
Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.
Corpses are scattered through a paradise.
Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:
'Waste no compassion on these separate dead!'
Statistics justify and scholars seize
The salients of colonial policy,
What is that to the white child hacked in bed?
To savages, expendable as Jews?
Threshed out by beaters, the long rushes break
In a white dust of ibises whose cries
Have wheeled since civilization's dawn
From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.
The violence of beast on beast is read
As natural law, but upright man
Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.
Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars
Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum,
While he calls courage still that native dread
Of the white peace contracted by the dead.
(In a Green Night, 18)

Each of these lines finds a correlative in the colonial rhetoric: it is a rhetoric that enables colonial discourse to evade the sense of being guilty for all their wrong doings by blaming the Africans for their animality and backwardness. Much like animals, argues Jhan Hochman, the inhabitants of the continent of Africa are not only associated with animals but are also represented as animals. Consider, for instance, the word 'pelt' in the opening image of the poem which overtly links the continent of Africa directly to the world of animals: it "refers to the furry or hairy skin of an animal, such as a wild cat, dog, or antelope" (69). And the word 'veldt' in the third lines which not only enforces the already made connection between Africa and animals but also service as a key to identifying the inhabitants of Africa as truly animals; it is "a Dutch Afrikaans word meaning a field or a flat grassland or prairie with few or no trees" but that which is filled with "insects, specifically flies". (69) Hence the significance of associating the tribal people of Kenya, the Kikuyu, in the second line with flies, indicating not only the metaphorical animality of these people, but figuring them as really "pesky insects sucking the blood out

ses bring to the fore what sides the members of each group are on in opposition to the other groups, the imperatives of taking side are determined not by the binary of complicity and resistance, but through the 'nam' which, in Brathwaite's view, can be defined as "the utter inner self, like when you eat the flesh you cannot eat the fetish". (quoted in Annie Paul, 13) Simply put, the 'nam' is not only what defines and regulates one's own/inner identity but also presumed to have unchangeable hold in one's core identity.

In the Caribbean context, however, the concept of the 'nam' takes on an additional importance, given what Brathwaite refers to as the broad range of ethnicities of people in the Caribbean with named and claimed African and European ancestry such as the mulattos. As people in-between the centre and periphery, the value of the 'nam' to these people both in 'normal times' and in 'moments of crisis' is evidently crucial: it allows them to maintain a sense of stability within their fractured identity in the former case, while in the latter it propels them to make a choice and to decide what fealties are proper and which ones are treasonous. To expand further upon Brathwaite's reasoning, in the engagement of the centre/periphery dialectic particularly in moments of crisis, each culture tend to assume a level of homogeneity that is both tactical and defensive. Consequently, since the racial superiority of the Caribbean mulatto and his legalised 'white' status depend upon the preservation of the differences between the two cultures, it is therefore particularly at these moments, when the two cultures come into some sort of equalizing proximity, that the agency of the identity he projects for himself is inevitably put into test: he is pressured to make certain identificatory affiliations by narrating an identity that is either fights for a legitimacy within the dominant culture or an identity that struggles for a strong grip in the folk tradition and the history of the community. In such discourses, then, attention should be paid to the deployment of the 'nam', the 'core'/'essence' which defines and compels loyalty to its cause and constitutes who and what the Black/African is and what White/ European is.

It is precisely this function of the 'residual nam' that Brathwaite seems to be insisting upon in his debate with Walcott. That, however, "A Far Cry from Africa" occupies a central place in the early years of this debate is evident from the numerous references to the poem in their exchanges. In Brathwaite's essay "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature" in the early seventies, for instance, Brathwaite refers to the poem, along with other poems mostly written by mulattos, as an instance of Caribbean literature that is written by a writer who uses

Africa as mask, signal, or nomen. He doesn't know very much about Africa necessarily, although he reflects a deep desire to make connection. But he is only saying the word "Africa" or invoking a dream of the Congo, Senegal, Niger, the Zulu, Nile, or Zambesi. He is not necessarily celebrating or activating the African presence. (80-81. See also fn#. 44, 104)

From this "rhetorical" use of Africa, argues Brathwaite, emerges a type of Caribbean literature which is "static, wishful, and wilful in nature … it betrays a significant instinct for Africa", an instinct which "is based on ignorance and often …. on received European notions of 'darkest Africa'". Walcott's poem, in Brathwaite's view, illustrates how from the ambivalence of attraction/ignorance "springs the sense…..that the two cultures present a dichotomy and that one must choose between them" (82). Implied, therefore, in Brathwaite's critique is that instead of searching for an image of Africa that could distinguish it from Europe, Walcott drew near to the white 'nam', enthusiastically defending the European 'nam' of his cultural heritage while unapologetically distances himself from his African one. Tak-

controversial concept, the 'residual nam' - that "indestructible culture-core", as Brathwaite defines it, "which in normal times one is proud enough of, but which, at times of crisis, may be fiercely defended by its possessors". ("World Order Models", 57) The usefulness of Brathwaite's concept to an understanding of the poem is drawn from the peculiarities of Walcott's sudden discovery in this poem of the disharmony within which causes him, in subsequent works such as "The Schooner *Flight*", to doubt the harmony and integration he always believed possible between the diverse ethnicities which compose the Caribbean. One important and often ignored factor in the process of championing the Caribbean as a pluralistic society by Walcott and the theorists of Creolization such as Edouard Glissant and Wilson Harris is that they assume the possibility of a multi-ethnic community of an overarching shared culture to be evolved in the Caribbean despite the vast disparities between its diverse ethnic groups, an assumption which Brathwaite contests with his concept of the 'residual nam'. Mindful of the fact that the Caribbean has been for centuries a 'hole' society rather than a 'whole' one, Brathwaite's own negotiated reading of the Caribbean's ethnic diversity revises the ideology of hybridization and multiraciality which inaccurately designates the region as a prime example of a cosmopolitan community.

In his essay "World Order Models – A Caribbean Perspective", Brathwaite differentiates between 'whole' and 'hole' societies as follows: a 'whole' society is that "where the geo-politics coincides with the culture." A society can be characterized as a 'whole' when the whole nation "speaks the same language, worships the same gods, prepare the same foods, create shelters which are aesthetically similar, where they share, consciously or unconsciously, the same norms and the same nam".(57) Existing in contrast to the 'whole' society is the 'hole' one like the Caribbean "where this integrity does not exist, although through time, force, circumstance and cultural interaction, a group of people …attempt to create a whole from hole". (57) When compared with the evolution of a 'whole' society, the Caribbean can be said to be artificially or imaginatively constructed as a community simply because of its heterogeneous and mixed "infrastructure", composed as it is "of a complex of pressures and forces: class, caste, ethnic, linguistic/class, linguistic/ethnic, religious, folk/urban, literate/illiterate, elite/mass". Recognition of such quite different 'infrastructure' of the Caribbean suggests the need to amend theories of hybridity and cosmopolitanism so that they can adequately account for what Brathwaite calls

> an essence, an indestructible culture-core, imparting to each group an identity which in normal times one is proud enough of, but which, at times of crisis, may be fiercely defended by its possessors. I call this essence or quality **nam:** the reduction of one's name to its essentials. In the case of oppressed people, it is the necessary disguise of **man**hood, retaining the possibility of resurrection, the divine spark, **nyame** or **dynamo.** (55-56) [emphasis original]

The underlying logic here is that in a 'hole' community like the Caribbean, it is difficult for one ethnic group to exclude other groups from the process of creating a 'whole' from a 'hole', since no one ethnic group can claim a sort of primacy based on historical precedence as found in 'whole' societies. This, in turn, creates the possibility of friction when one ethnic group refuses to be assimilated into a sense of a unified identity based on the norms of another group's identity. Such is perhaps what Brathwaite refers to as the times of crisis, when each group, instead of giving up its own ethnic identity for the sake of founding such an imaginative 'whole' culture, seeks to differentiate itself by assuming a level of homogeneity within its own culture and tradition. Since such cri-

not 'othered' but rather allowed to exist in relationship with one another. In his interview with David Montenegro, for instance, Walcott describes the Caribbean as inherently hybrid society, distinguished from the American multi-culturalist model by what he calls "the strong balance" that exists between races, the "knowledge of where one is that is very rooted in the Caribbean, very secure." In the Caribbean, Walcott adds, "there isn't daily confrontation of identity, of who you are; and what I am? … This doesn't happen, as it does to minorities who have to live in the cities everyday [in America]" (93–94). Such a society, as Walcott describes it, characterized by a much greater degree of syncretism than America definitely provides the means to pull the Caribbean mulatto out of states of anxiety and alienation, as usually ascribed to the American mulatto, into more viable states of racial security and stability.

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If the above arguments appear so far to drive toward highlighting the fact that the attitude of the Caribbean mulatto to his racial identity usually appears to be mostly secure and stable, they are also meant to be a preliminary pathway for positing the overarching question of this paper. In the light of the above arguments and the lines quoted as an epigraph to this paper, how then is one to interpret the fact that, secure and stable with his racially-mixed identity as he seems, the Caribbean mulatto sometimes appear to be under very strong inner pressure to maintain his racial purity, and exhibits an almost paranoiac horror of miscegenation? How, then, are we to integrate the poet whose clinching intention in the bulk of his writings is to champion 'bastardy' as a hallmark characteristic of the Caribbean identity, with the poet who sees his mulatto 'bastard' self to be "poisoned with the blood of both" and "divided to the vein", therefore, recognizing his racially mixed identity as a spectacle of fatalistic tragedy and painfulness?

Although the interest in "A Far Cry from Africa" has renewed itself out in Walcott's scholarships since the publication of the poem, it has become customary for many critics to skirt around the complexity of such questions by merely emphasizing the anomalous status the poem occupies with regard to Walcott's continuing appeal for the hybridization of the Caribbean. For some critics, for instance, the poem appears to be an "unlikeable poem" simply because it "introduces a well-worn topic" which stands in disharmony with Walcott's other poems that champion racial and culture mixtures. (Gerald Guinness, 151) Such a line of reasoning definitely dismisses the prospect of understanding the poem as a reflection of how the racial stability the Caribbean mulatto presumes to be maintaining from connecting his own hybrid identity with that of the Caribbean nation itself, this reciprocal stance seems to be overwhelmingly threatening to the core of his identity in times of crisis. As a person in-between the white world and the black folk who is ostensibly identified with one side of the binary while in fact he can be identified with the other side, the whole truth of the Caribbean mulatto's agency is put into test only in times of crisis. In other words, it is when the two sides of the Caribbean mulatto's cultural heritage are inevitably put in clash with each other or in moments when power structure is shifted from one side to the other that he is pressured to act in a performative sense of belonging either to the white side of his cultural heritage or to the black one. Consequently, unless the Caribbean mulatto experiences a conflict and without the motivating force of a crisis, he may continue with his stance of 'inbetweenness' and find many ways to accommodate his divided loyalty.

This refers us directly not only to the famous debate between Derek Walcott and Kamau Brathwaite in which issues of allegiance, loyalty and of taking side are at the core, but also to Brathwaite's perhaps most

ences are erased.

If the mulatto Corporal Lestrade represents, in more than one way, the effects of the malleable racial lines of the Caribbean islands on the social status of the mulatto where he is endowed with all the privileges of whiteness, it is also worth noting that the racial make up of the region has also afforded the Caribbean mulatto the opportunity to accommodate his divided loyalty, to balance his allegiance to the white world and black folk and, in normal times, to move from darkness and confusion into a sense of harmony and coherence. One basic difference between the Caribbean and all other European colonies, argues Stefano Harney, is that while the initial of the colonizer in the colonies of Asia and Africa predicated upon the subjugation of the natives to the territory, the Caribbean as a colony, on the other hand, is formed from the diversity of subaltern people who came to the region under conditions as slaves, servants, indentured Indian labourers, in addition to refugees, middle eastern traders and mercenaries who arrived in the region after the abolition of the slave-trade. As Harney notes, this unique situation conditioned the emergence of the post-Indenture as the most "ethnically diverse nation which consists of people of African origin (40%), Indian origin (40–45%), East Indian origin, plus those of Syrian, Chinese, Portuguese, French and English descent" (218). While the lumping together of people as diverse as European, African, Asian and the Amerindian as the indigenous stock evidently makes miscegenation in the Caribbean not only the product of black and white, but also of various and diverse ethnicities, it also underscores the Caribbean mulatto's own perception of his identity as a biracial person living among a multi-racial race. Indeed, it is in the context of an individual biraciality melted within a larger collective one that we can understand how Walcott, in works such as "What the Twilight Says" and "The Schooner *Flight"*, articulates his mulatto identity as if it is always in the unattainable place of *inbetweenness,* vehemently resisting a designation within a specific race or a single origin.

In his "What the Twilight Says: An Overture", for instance, Walcott envisages his own mulatto identity as it effectively overlooks a troublesome and protracted history of white and black cultural influences. As he argues, Pastoralists of the African revival should know that what is needed is not new names for old things, or old names for old things, but the faith of using the old names anew, so that mongrel as I am, something prickles in me when I see the word Ashanti with the word Warwickshire, both separately intimating my grandfather's roots, both baptising this neither proud nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, this West Indian. (92)

This appeal to the hybridity of the West India, underscored by a staunch belief in the 'illegitimacy' of the whole region, becomes critical means for Walcott to cope with what he realized to be the 'bastardy' of his own identity, and with all the contradictory and complicated feelings this realization produces. Through the image of the 'bastard', then, Walcott retraces connection between his own 'mongrel' identity and the Caribbean nation itself in which "few people can claim to find their ancestry in the linear way". As Walcott confided to Edward Hirsch in an interview, "the whole situation in the Caribbean is an illegitimate situation. If we admit that from the beginning that there is no shame in that historical bastardy, then we can be men" (79). Walcott's particular interest in the 'bastardy' of the Caribbean situation definitely proceeds from his desire to reconcile his own mulatto identity with the narrow notion of Caribbeanness to which he passionately subscribes. His comment on the 'illegitimacy' of the Caribbean situation also highlights a strain in his thinking that subscribes to a conception of the Caribbean nationhood in which differences are

natical obsession with whiteness and blackness respectively into an acceptance of the place and culture to which they have always belonged, the Caribbean. As the process of newfound selves unfold, Makak and Lestrade both go a long journey to Africa in order to discover themselves as Caribbean. In the words of Makak at the end of the play: "Lord, I have been washed from shore to shore, as a tree in the ocean. The branches of my fingers, the roots of my feet, could grip nothing, but now, God, they have found ground" in the Caribbean (326). One of the most appealing aspects of the play, therefore, is the balanced treatment both of the passing for whiteness and the longing for blackness as limited and limiting possibilities, shifting the identity quest neither towards the white world nor to the black folk but towards the Caribbean which emerges at the end of the play as the place where the sun appears in all its bright glory (325).

While it is possible to agree with Ian Gregory Strachan that the play demonstrates, through the characters of Makak, Walcott's adamant abhorrence of extolling an "Africa of grandeur and to celebrate blackness for its own sake", a nostalgic impulse which Walcott views as a product "of love for whiteness" (204), one would further argue that Makak represents not something outside of Walcott himself that he is critiquing, but rather an aspect of his own divided self that he is attempting to eliminate in order to create a space for his internal Lestrade. On the one hand, while at the beginning of the play Lestrade is introduced as a symbol of the self- righteous arrogance of the mulatto who embraces whiteness as the ultimate good and stands indifferent to the pain and suffering of his half-black brother, his retrogression in the middle of the play to embrace the black side of his identity indicates a refusal on his part to let one epistemological position dominate his search for an integrated identity. In this sense, Walcott's depiction of Makak is perhaps paradoxically both critical and celebratory, for this aspect of himself that Walcott wishes to eliminate as destructively nostalgic is also an aspect of himself that he also requests. On the other hand, if it can be argued that Makak represents that part of Walcott obsessed with reaching the root of his black identity, Lestrade may also be read as representing that aspect of the mulatto Walcott who must be reminded not to go too 'rage' with blackness but to make sense of all the privileges of his whiteness. It is certainly ironic and apropos that in his first encounter with Makak at the beginning of the play, the mulatto Lestrade takes the enforcement of the differences between the two races as one of the basic tasks of his bureaucratic duties: "Now if you apes [the blacks] will behave like gentlemen, who knows what could happen? The bottle could go round. .. it behoves me, Corporal Lestrade, to perform my duty according to the rules of her Majesty's Government,.." (217). The will to maintain differences surfaces even at the apex of Lestrade's embracing of blackness in Africa, in the famous apotheosis scene when the power of shaping the course of history comes to the hands of Makak; Lestrade is immediately reminded of the same task: "Roman law, my friend is not tribal law. Tribal law, in conclusion, is not Roman law" (311). Throughout the play, then, Walcott casts Lestrade in a the typical role of the Caribbean mulatto whose anxiety and fear are strongly associated not with the impulse to pass for white, but with the possibility that differences might, at one point, be overcome when whiteness and blackness come into some sort of equalising proximity. This would also account for the true impulse behind Lestrade's renunciation of the African side of his identity which can arguably be traced, not to the backwardness of Africa, but to the fantasy of wholeness and mastery in his split and fragmented mulatto identity, alongside the paranoia about losing all the privileges of whiteness once the differ-

occupies in the Caribbean – as intermediaries, buffers, mediators or bridges – which creates for him the possibility to switch or pass through identities, to shuttle between the whites and the blacks and even to articulate both the boundaries and the prototypical centres of the two worlds respectively more easily than his American counterpart.

Probably there is no example in Walcott's early works that best demonstrates this social/racial conception of the mulatto individual in the Caribbean better than Corporal Lestrade, the 'straddler' in Dream On Monkey Mountain (first published in 1976) who upholds "the white man's law at the expense of his black half-brother" (Innes, 32). The play, then, brings together two acts of exploitation in the Caribbean: one performed by the white authority of the mulatto individual who is empowered and authorized to act by its name in order to implement its law and culture, and the other by the mulatto figure himself of his black half-brothers whom he despises and degrades as animals. As the play describes the mulatto Lestrade, he is "the straddler, neither one thing nor he next, neither milk, coal, neither day or night, neither lion or monkey, but a mulatto", the gray man who can connect with the white and black worlds at once. Set in a cell where Makak, the 'monkey-man' and the 'Black Messiah', is being interrogated by the mulatto Corporal Lestrade for the accusation of smashing up a small Coffee shop in the town, the play begins with Makak recalling his obsession with a 'white Goddess' with whom he falls in love and deceptively believes that she is also in love with him. "This rage for whiteness", as Lestrade describes it, "that does drive nigger mad" (228), evidently bears the prospect of passing for whiteness and underscores Makak's yearning for rising socially. In the process of interpellation, Makak is introduced as a poetic and melancholy type who chooses to fulfil the white woman's prophecy that his ultimate destiny is not to be in love with her but to liberate his own race there in Africa. In his attempt to fulfil this prophecy and to take his role as the King of Africa and the saviour of his people, Makak stabs Lestrade and frees himself from the jail. Lestrade, however, is not dead but becomes thoroughly convinced of Makak's seeming possession of a healing power and decides to follow his steps in the forest. The mulatto Lestrade becomes an apostle of Makak, kissing his foot while asking him to liberate his mind from the chain of 'whiteness' and to help him accept the second half of his identity which he always despises: Too late have I loved thee, Africa of my mind….I jeered thee because I hated half of myself, my eclipse. But now in the heart of the forest at the foot of Monkey Mountain…I return to this earth, my mother….Come, all you splendour of imagination. Let me sing of darkness now! My hands, my hands are heavy. My feet… my feet grip like roots. (299-300)

Lestrade, who from the beginning of the play insists on valorising the glories of the white race, now begins to applaud those of the black race, the glories of the mythical Africa; a shift in attitude which is indicative of his ability to switch sides easily and to embrace both the white and black worlds simultaneously. Another interesting similarity of Lestrade's ability to concurrently participate in the white culture as well as the black tradition without any sense of confusion or hypocrisy occurs just at the moment when he decides to embrace the black side of his identity when he enthusiastically states: "I have the black man work to do" now (307) which, not coincidentally, is reminiscent of the same Lestrade who, a few pages earlier, also states: "I got the white man work to do" (279).

Once in a dream-like visit to Africa with Makak, however, what Lestrade discovered there is not the mythical land he has dreamed of but a land torn by tribal wars. At the end of the play, Makak and Lestrade both undergo a profound transformation from fa-

Despite the critical attention Lyn devotes to issues pertaining to "the mulatto sensibility"(50-54), the sheer range of parallelisms she finds between Walcott's early works and the works of other mulatto writers apparently leads her to envisage the psychological make-up of the mulatto as a monolithic construction. Consequently, she appropriates and utilizes what Stuart Hall would call "a unitary, transhistorical [and] a universal structure" of racial dynamics, an interpretive hegemony that places a limit on our attempt to define and understand a racialized identity, rather than considering "the historical specificity of race [and] the historically specific racism" (50) that illuminate how racialized identity is always culturally constructed and socially perceived in terms of the ideological expectations of a particular region. In other words, in order to fully understand how far removed from the stereotype of the 'tragic mulatto' is Walcott's perception/projection of his identity, it is necessary to consider the historical particularities of race dynamics in the Caribbean rather than positing a single overarching paradigm of race prejudice that homogenizes two different regions like America and the Caribbean.

Any discussion of the differences and similarities between America and the Caribbean in the arena of racial make-up, race dynamics and prejudice is unintelligible if it bypasses the status of the mulatto. Such is the argument made by Peter Dodge in his study on the "Comparative Racial Systems in the Great Caribbean". Drawing on the work of the sociologist Marvin Harris who argues that "the differential position of the mulatto in two social systems is to be understood as primarily the consequence of the differing racial balance of the total population", Dodge alerts us to the fact that because the white population has never constituted a majority in the Caribbean islands, the mulatto in these societies has been endowed with certain privileges of which his American counterpart has been deprived. In the Caribbean, for instance, [I]t was the mulatto freedman who provided manpower for the defence and maintenance of slave system … The great division was between…white and mulatto, as against the mass of the Negro slaves, … and the sharp class division that accompanied this order both masked colour discrimination and made it unnecessary. In the United States, on the contrary, the mulatto found himself largely suppressed by the mass of poor whites, who … found colour differentiation their principle basis for self-esteem…(255)

The implication here is that the regulation of the cross-racial border in the Caribbean ever since the plantation era was not as restricted as that of America and the Caribbean mulatto was not as compelled to pass for white as his American counterpart who was forced to identify with certain image of himself through the psychology of colour discrimination. This is particularly evident once we consider the other key difference between American and Caribbean mulattoes in the field of race prejudice which concerns how the mulatto figure is socially perceived and legally considered in the two regions. Whereas in the Caribbean "those who are … removed from the original Negro stock [like the mulattoes] are considered by the law as whites … [with] all the privileges of a white" (Knight, 136-137), in America, by contrast, "the mulatto is classified as black, and even the slightest admixture of black blood is exposed to vitiate the white" (Kirk, 107). This means that, unlike the American mulatto for whom the one drop of black blood is sufficient to classify him as black, one drop of white blood could, in fact, permit the Caribbean mulatto to attain white status and to whiten his self both socially and legally without the supposed struggle to 'pass' for white with all its conventionally perceived tragic consequences. For the most part, then, the Caribbean mulatto is very different from the American one due to the pivotal position he

haps critics are inclined or find it convenient to describe mixed race persons of white and black ancestry such as Walcott by using what Werner Sollors has called "the more neutral-seeming term hybridity" rather than the term 'mulatto', a term which has a volatile history and is surrounded by heated controversies.(2) Third, perhaps because the issue of racial mix, as David Gilbert observes, is largely left "under-theorized" (58) in recent critical race theories, Walcott's critics may have thought it difficult to find the terminology that would sufficiently allow them to address the issue of how the poet articulates his mixed race identity and perceive the world as a mulatto without being entangled in a discourse that reasserts the binarism of black/white race thinking.(3) Finally, perhaps cultural changes have undercut the critical currency which the term mulatto retained during the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance and during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries.

That well more than half a century of Walcott criticism has still failed to address the issue of Walcott's identity as a mulatto should, therefore, not come as a surprise. The only article to address this critical lapse is by Diana Lyn in 1980. Her unapologetic examination of "The Concept of The Mulatto in Some Works of Derek Walcott" is apparently informed by the American stereotypes of 'the tragic mulatto' and 'passing'. Dedicated to examining works by Walcott that feature protagonists who are mulattoes, Lyn's sensationalist psychoanalytic reading is sustained by the traditional notion that biraciality creates an insurmountable psychic crisis similar to the 'double consciousness' W. E. B. DuBois identified as the psychic experience endured by Afro-Americans. Assuming "the duality of the mulatto" as the inevitable kernel from which any study of Walcott's identity should be initiated (50), Lyn then proceeds to chart out "three distinct phases in Walcott's difficult maturation that issue in self-knowledge" (52). These three phases manifest themselves in Walcott's works in a way that exactly parallels the psychological and developmental model of the American 'tragic mulatto' which starts with the stage of confusion, proceeds to claims of whiteness or 'passing' and ends in a stage of acceptance of oneself as of mixed race. Accordingly, Lyn's essay reiterates what became a fashionable refrain in the 'passing' narratives, as when she states that "the conflict ridden mulatto, Derek Walcott …. had himself felt like an outsider, ….. He too had that rage for whiteness….; he wrestles psychologically with the contradiction of being 'white in mind and black in body'" (60). This psychological torment experienced by Walcott in his youth served as a substance that led him in his maturity to the discovery of a new vision of his identity, a vision "that can neither be 'given' nor simply 'inherited'". Walcott's process of self-maturation, according to Lyn, then ended with a stereotypical kind of acceptance of his identity as a mixed race person, a mulatto whose burden was how to remain "honest" to the African side of his heritage and its so-called traditions, because they were not given legitimacy in the first place (64).

tation here is not limited to the biological analogy between the 'mule' and the 'mulatto' as the offspring of mixed races, but extends to confer the sterility of hybrid animals upon a human being who is designated by this term. For further discussion on this point, see, Jack F. Forbes 46-48.

(2) While one certainly appreciates the position taken by the critics who vehemently reject the use of the term 'mulatto' on the ground of its 'offensiveness', it is surprising to know that the perspective they adopt on holding on 'hybridity' depends exactly upon the same boundary they claim to avoid. The *OED* defines 'hybrid' as "the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar; hence, of human parents of different races, half breed". As Sollors argues, "the sow-and-boar origin of the word … makes the word 'hybrid' no more human than its etymology makes 'mulatto'". (129-130)

(3) The argument made by Sollors in this context is quiet relevant. He argues that while in the utilization of the figure of the mulatto we may seem to be "supporting racial essentialism, or advocating as 'normal' a view of the world that divide people first of all into 'black' and 'white'", he also states that in dismissing the mulatto figure and in "ridiculing the 'conventions' of [its] representation in literature as 'unrealistic' we may also silently, or not so silently, reinstate the legitimacy of two categories only, black and white" (242)

The Caribbean (Un)Tragic Mulatto: Derek Walcott and the 'Residual Nam' of the White/Black Man

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Abstract

This paper addresses a critical lapse in the critical writings on Derek Walcott; that is, the issue of Walcott's projection/perception of his identity as a mulatto which his critics have so far skirted around without seriously addressing it. Two famous works by Walcott are discussed in this paper as instances of this issue, the play Dream on Monkey Mountain and the frequently cited poem "A Far Cry From Africa". The well-known debate between Walcott and Kamau Brathwaite is also taken as a theoretical framework that underpins my reading of the poem. At the centre of this debate is the concern of mapping a culturally viable and politically workable concept of the Caribbean identity, characterized as it is for centuries now of its hybridity and multiraciality. In the context of this debate, Walcott's "A Far Cry From Africa" comes to be a glaring instance that validates most of the accusations Brathwaite has leveled against Walcott. As the paper demonstrates, Brathwaite's concept of the 'residual nam' provides a mean for an understanding of how the mulatto Walcott has always aligned himself with the white side of his hybrid identity, enthusiastically defending the European 'nam' of his cultural heritage while unapologetically distanced himself from his African origin.

Keywords: Walcott, mulatto, hybridity, Brathwaite, Residual Nam, Caribbean identity, race theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

I who am poisoned with the blood of both Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed The drunken officer of British rule, how choose Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?
Derek Walcott "A Far Cry from Africa"

Derek Walcott's "A Far Cry from Africa" will be centrally addressed in the second part of this paper not only because of what it declares about the innate self-division of a poetic identity nurtured by a colonial history of mixed inheritance and hybridity, but also because of what Walcott's critics have so far refrained, sometimes refused, to read in the poem. The above lines, however, are quoted as an epigraph to this paper simply because their frequent citation by Walcott's critics indicates a trend in Walcott criticism, which is to skirt around the issue of Walcott's vision of himself as a mulatto, to take to take it at face value without seriously addressing it, insisting on seeing this issue, somewhat reluctantly, as something other than it actually is. The reasons for this critical hesitancy are manifold. First, the caveat provided by *Oxford Dictionary* in its definition of the term 'mulatto' may explain part of the critics' unwillingness to address the Nobel Laureate who is Derek Walcott, as a mulatto.(1) Second, per-

(1) The *OED* defines the 'mulatto' as the biracial person who has "one white and one black parent", a person "of mixed race", but cautiously reminds readers that the use of the term is "now chiefly considered *offensive.*" As Jack F. Forbes argues, the caution here refers to the commonly held thesis that the origin of the word mulatto is the Spanish word *mulato*, a derivative from the Latin word *mulus* which means "young mule" – the offspring of a horse and monkey. The derogatory conno-

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