

# Narrative Rewritings and Artistic Praxis in Derek Walcott's Works



# Narrative Rewritings and Artistic Praxis in Derek Walcott's Works:

*Caribbean Decolonisations*

By

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Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-8806-8

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8806-6

*To my nephews, Cristian and Filippo  
To my grandparents, Marisa, Francesco, Iole and Antonio*



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the result of a challenging, twofold journey through Walcott's poetry, theatre and art, and my own life-long passions of literature and dance. It presents an interdisciplinary dialogue connecting forms of expression and the arts, a long-awaited dream that came into being during my PhD studies at the University of Udine (Italy) and the University of Essex (United Kingdom). I would like to mention all those who made this journey possible.

First of all, thank you to my supervisor and mentor, Professor Antonella Riem, for your invaluable support and guidance over the years, and for believing in me and my work; to Professor Maria Cristina Fumagalli, for your generosity and directions on Walcott's work; and to Professor Adeline Chevrier-Bosseau, for helping me in framing and "seeing" the connection between literature and dance.

This book could have never been written without the support of my parents, family and friends, mum and dad, Edi, Anna, Andrea, Emma, Sara, Hayley, Raffaele, Marco, José, Nicoletta, Chiara, and my dance students.

I dedicate this book to my "roots", to the past and future generations who guide me through the light of their eyes. To my grandparents, Marisa, Francesco, Iole and Antonio, may your flowers always blossom in dignity, beauty and kindness. To my nephews, Cristian and Filippo, may your life be respectful of others and of yourselves, and may your petals bring joy, happiness and love.



# INTRODUCTION

Investigating the work of the Caribbean writer, playwright and artist Derek Walcott (1930-2017) means adopting new, alternative and multidisciplinary strategies of enquiry. While, on the one hand, Walcott's texts are still interpreted and read from a Eurocentric perspective that looks back at canonical Western European and Northern Atlantic structures and themes, on the other, it is true that the Antillean writer—and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1992—was immediately recognised for his originality in introducing new dynamics and configurations to the “sound colonial education”<sup>1</sup> of his youth.

At the beginning of the new millennium, in her critical work *Abandoning Dead Metaphors: The Caribbean Phase of Derek Walcott's Poetry* (2001), Patricia Ismond argued that the four main studies on the Caribbean author, namely “Edward Baugh's monograph on *Another Life*, entitled *Memory as Vision* (1978), Robert Hamner's *Derek Walcott* ([1981] 1993), Rei Terada's *American Mimicry* (1992), and John Thieme's *Derek Walcott* (1999)”<sup>2</sup>, focused primarily on the intertextual connections that Walcott drew from Western European literary models, as well as on his original writing back, a theoretical perspective that pertained to post-colonial studies. Ismond was one of the first to suggest that Walcott's work should be read from a new and alternative perspective:

Walcott's anticolonial revolutionary route turns primarily on a counter-discourse with the dominant mode of thought of the colonizer's tradition, against which he pursues an alternative, liberating order of values and meanings, generated from the different time and place of his Caribbean, New World ground<sup>3</sup>.

Only recently, have scholars and critics opted for a new critical approach on Walcott's works, reflecting, in particular, on his context and

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<sup>1</sup> Walcott (1979), *The Schooner Flight* in Walcott (2014), *The poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Ismond (2001), *Abandoning Dead Metaphors: The Caribbean Phase of Derek Walcott's Poetry*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ismond (2001), *Abandoning Dead Metaphors: The Caribbean Phase of Derek Walcott's Poetry*, p. 2.

on the cultures and native traditions he came from. “Abandoning dead metaphors” means adopting a radical change and approach or acknowledging that the literatures of the “edge”<sup>4</sup> (that is to say, literary works from former European colonies) are not to be considered minor replicas or simple interactions with the Western world, but rather original and unexpected interpretations of today’s world. In this sense, world literatures create and provide uncharted and authentic experiments, which can help us understand the complex global reality in which we live.

During the annual conference organised by the TaPRA (Theatre and Performance Research Association), which was held at the University of Exeter in September 2019, Margherita Laera, a translator and scholar of theatre and performance in Europe, pointed out how the concept of Anglo-American multiculturalism “has allowed on the one side the representation and acceptance of multiple and articulated socio-cultural constructs, but it failed in bridging the gap that still exists between the rich societies of the West and the poor communities of the Global South, or rather South of the world”. Laera stressed how recent xenophobic and racist movements in Europe have promoted a shameful denial of the Other<sup>5</sup>, the migrant or the refugee, as much as well-represented ethnic minorities within British society, thus allowing intolerant attitudes, unjustified tensions and cultural clashes between communities and peoples. In reality, according to Laera, it is thanks to the phenomenon of creolisation, which took place mainly in the former European colonies, that we have witnessed the establishment of new identities and hybrid relational systems, as much as connections and exchanges that reflect the dynamics at work in our global and multicultural societies. Laera, along with other academics in theatre, literature, anthropology and human sciences, calls for a new wor(l)d paradigm, or better, a cultural transformation and shift in literature and the humanities in general. They see a need for new definitions and strategies which they designate as de-colonial.

Therefore, I decided to adopt a de-colonial methodology in an attempt to outline the unpredictable and creative transdisciplinary effort that distinguishes Walcott’s way of writing and interacting with different forms of expression and the arts.

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<sup>4</sup> See: Jacobs (1996), *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City*.

<sup>5</sup> In this book the term *Other* will be foregrounded because it is only through the recognition of Other options, identities, cultures and point of views that we can imagine and transform the wor(l)d. See: Ahmed (2000), *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*; Albertazzi (2000), *Lo Sguardo dell’Altro: Le Letterature Postcoloniali*.

The aim of my research was to delve into Walcott's universe from a new perspective, thus unravelling the puzzling and intrinsic porosity of his literary and artistic borders and constructs. Before becoming a sign on a page, Walcott's texts are firstly impressions, visions, images, rhythms and sounds that embody Caribbean life and cultures.

In the first chapter I give an overview of the decolonial theories, which, since the 1990s, have characterised the approach of different groups of scholars who aimed at unmasking colonial and neo-colonial structures of power. The chapter presents the revolutionary approaches of scholars coming from Latin America, one of the margins outlined by Western-oriented powers. In particular, Aníbal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Maria Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa and Walter Dignolo promote an epistemological shift that recognises a correspondence between the nexus modernity/coloniality, especially for what they identify as the colonial matrix of power, i.e. the neo-colonial constraints that perpetuate the influence and control of West European and Northern Atlantic dominator views on the rest of the world. In explaining the purposes of the decolonial option, which rejects pre-established dichotomies and pre-ordained frameworks, Dignolo points out:

Decoloniality [...] does not [...] imply the absence of coloniality but rather the ongoing serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living; that is, an otherwise in plural<sup>6</sup>.

In theorising a shared and intersubjective thought, an open-minded approach capable of dialoguing with other cultures and relation systems, Quijano is one of the first to call into question the foundations of the Western European logocentric and dominator worldview. Indeed, Quijano suggest replacing the Cartesian equation "I think therefore I am" with a radical and proactive "I am where I do and think"<sup>7</sup>. Promoters of the decolonial approach believe in the need for change and in "learning to unlearn"<sup>8</sup>, so as to question assumptions and perspectives that we take for granted in the reception and interpretation of reality<sup>9</sup>. Decolonial theorists

<sup>6</sup> Dignolo & Walsh (2018), *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Quijano (2007), Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality, *Cultural Studies*, 21, 2/3, p. 168.

<sup>8</sup> Dignolo & Tlostanova (2012), *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> In a similar direction, I want to recall here the work of the poet, traditional Celtic harpist and philologist Francesco Benozzo who proposes a new perspective, an "indiscipline" towards philology (which he re-names "ethnophilology"), a process

foreground how their approach is not an academic discipline, nor a new pattern or paradigm to follow; it is an open space in which to dialogue, share and experiment, in an attempt to deconstruct and subvert the Western European wor(l)d order. In this regard, “[decoloniality] is a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice and praxis”<sup>10</sup>.

Amongst the multiple strategies that theorists and scholars of this new critical approach have developed, I focused in particular on two standpoints. My analysis of a selection of Walcott’s texts deals firstly with reworking or rather rewriting narratives and stories which are considered exemplary models in the so-called Western literary canon and, secondly, with Walcott’s reuse and re-evaluation of Western aesthetics and artistic practice. For Walcott, art represents a creative and dynamic space, a laboratory or practice for the representation of new, collective and unexpected relations.

Decolonialists feel the need to rethink stories and narratives that shaped modernity/coloniality societies so as to debunk allegedly free and articulated thought—as well as the “danger of a single and homologising story”<sup>11</sup>. They also call into question the premises of art for its own sake, for they do not accept constraints and restrictions within the realm of creative imagination. The decolonial option sees art as an instrument for subverting current stereotypes and representations, an expression of/for the Other. Through art, for instance, Caribbean peoples, artists and writers were able to refer to and interpret the past through a new lens.

Moreover, the decolonial option brings to the fore the concept of praxis and/or practice: the need for practical and proactive action and experimentation. The aim is to re-interpret the Western dominator worldview and provide alternative and transdisciplinary challenges, which

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or praxis which will preserve the “emotion of meeting with texts and words”. According to Antonella Riem and Tony Hughes-d’Aeth: “Ethnophilology thus is an invitation to manifest the capacity not to ‘fix’ or imprison living traditions within a ‘canon’, established by an ‘authority’, within defined margins and crystallised static interpretative schemes”. See: Benozzo (2010), *Etnofilologia. Un’Introduzione*, p. 1; Riem & Hughes-d’Aeth (eds. 2022), *Ecosustainable Narratives and Partnership Relationships in World Literatures in English*, p. xxviii.

<sup>10</sup> Mignolo & Walsh (2018), *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> I draw on the concept (and danger) of the single story from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s inspiring TED TALK. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009), *The Danger of a Single Story*

[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story) (consulted on 01/03/2022).

cannot be simply interdisciplinary, as that would mean deciphering reality through known schemes, relations and strategies.

Chapter 1 continues with a brief overview of Derek Walcott's life and work. From a theoretical point of view, I present his particular way of responding to the English canon or Western European literary tradition through strategies such as the so-called act of naming, the denial and forgetting of (colonial) history or the use of multiple, multimodal and hybrid languages or systems of communication. In this evocative literary journey, I also show how Walcott's creolisation of the New World echoes, in more than one way, Édouard Glissant's thought, and in particular his "rhizomic" view of the world or *Tout-Monde*. Moreover, my methodology takes also into great consideration the work and approach of the Jewish-American anthropologist, social activist and scholar Riane Eisler. With her theory of partnership, she promotes a spiralling and circular thought process, which aims to rebalance the forgotten bonds between individuals, genders and communities. Eisler's bio-cultural approach<sup>12</sup> calls for a much-needed cultural transformation, a way of rethinking the wor(l)d which reconnects to the theoretical background I have chosen for my research<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> According to Riane Eisler: "the new interdisciplinary perspective of the Biocultural Partnership-Dominator Lens reveals how cultural beliefs and social institutions such as politics, economics, and education affect, and are in turn affected by, childhood and gender relations [...] and shows how we can use our knowledge of human development to construct equitable and sustainable cultures that maximize human well-being". Eisler & Fry (2019), *Nurturing Our Humanity. How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> In this regard, I was also inspired by the work of the Partnership Studies Group (PSG) based at the University of Udine and directed by Professor Riem since 1998. "The PSG unites scholars, research centres and universities that collaborate in interdisciplinary and transcultural projects on aspects of partnership across languages, literatures and world cultures. In 2014 the *Global Academy of Liberal Arts* joined the PSG network with the intent of developing further research collaborations. Since 2002 the PSG has promoted interdisciplinary studies on languages and literatures through a publishing series (ALL), which combines literary criticism, linguistics (applied and theoretical) and creative writing to create an experimental, multidisciplinary, poetic and artistic laboratory". <https://www.uniud.it/ateneo-uniud/ateneo-uniud-organizzazione/dipartimenti/dill-old/ricerca/allegati-centri-laboratori/all-partnership-studies-group> (consulted on 01/03/2022). For more information on the PSG, please visit its official website: <https://partnershipstudiesgroup.uniud.it> (consulted on 01/03/2022).

The second chapter presents a textual and artistic analysis of three Walcottian works which I believe are significant examples of decolonialisation. In particular, I examine *The Joker of Seville*, a play or musical produced in 1974 and one of the greatest hits of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, the first West Indian theatrical company that Walcott founded in the early 1960s. It is a rewriting of *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* (1616), a Spanish play attributed to Tirso de Molina. *Joker* is paramount to the understanding of Walcott's work for four main reasons. Firstly, because it shows the relentless and puzzling displacement of the main characters between different contexts (and even different shores of the Atlantic), thus calling into question Western European geo-temporal coordinates and cultural borders. Secondly, because it demonstrates how cultural syncretism is rooted in the West Indies, with its indefinite contours between European tradition and Caribbean folklore<sup>14</sup>. Thirdly, because the production proposes the Caribbean carnival as an interpretative model for the characterisation and psychological examination of the protagonists, thus highlighting Caribbean ambiguity and schizophrenia. In reality, the carnival theme is a framework or topos which can be found in most of Walcott's plays, such as *Drums and Colours*, a commission for the opening of the first Federation of the West Indies in 1958. Finally, *The Joker of Seville* is meant to be staged in a circular arena to recall the bullrings or battlegrounds for stickfighters, who are essentially spoken-word artists or performers in Caribbean culture. In this sense, the play is imbued with popular songs and melodies, which evoke traditional Antillean calypsos<sup>15</sup>. *The Joker of Seville*'s lyrics were written by Walcott, while the music was arranged by the American composer Galt MacDermot, the famous producer of *Hair*. This demonstrates Walcott's attempt to create new art for and in the Caribbean,

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<sup>14</sup> See: Atlas (1982), Derek Walcott: Poet of Two Worlds, *New York Time Magazine*, 23: 32-38.

<sup>15</sup> In explaining the meaning of carnival, canboulay and calypso in the Caribbean, John Cowley argues: "Popular fascination with music from the Americas has been of great significance in the twentieth century. The United States is usually recognised as the source of this trend, with African-American styles the most prominent. Less documented, but equally influential, is equivalent black music from the Caribbean and Latin America. [...] Each style reflects contributions from differing European languages—Spanish (tango and rumba), French (biguine) and Portuguese (samba). In the English-speaking world, calypso (from Trinidad) gained popular recognition from the 1930s. Calypso, samba, biguine and (sometimes) rumba are each associated with Carnival [...]. All have African-American origins that date from slavery". Cowley (1996), *Carnival, Canboulay, and Calypso: Traditions in the Making*, p. 1.

an astonishingly creative context which he strongly believed deserved international recognition.

*Pantomime* (1978), the second work I analyse, is an ironic play and a rewriting of the myth of *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. It is a complex text that recalls the theatre of the absurd and the work of Bertolt Brecht. It is structured as a witty dialogue between the white owner of a dilapidated hotel on the island of Tobago, Harry Trewe, and his black assistant, Jackson Phillip. Trewe wants to stage a reversed version of Robinson Crusoe's story for his hotel guests. He wishes to interpret Friday, the slave, and asks Jackson to take the part of Master Crusoe. At first reluctant to embrace the idea, Phillip eventually accepts his employer's challenge, thus contributing to the changing of the story. The final outcome does not convince Trewe. Indeed, the hotel owner soon realises that modifying the identity of the roles may upset the audience, especially the island's white privileged ruling colonial class. Moreover, the exchange may call into question his white authority over Jackson and, therefore, at the end of Act I, the reversal is interrupted. In the performance, the (ironic) clash and encounter between the coloniser and the colonised obliterates the historical and social boundaries that separate the two. This is further emphasised by an artistic and creative duel: Jackson is indeed a former calypsonian, that is to say a singer performing a sort of liberatory poetry that used to be sung by black slaves as a reaction to white colonial domination; while Harry embodies the spirit of the American music hall of the early 1920s. Walcott meticulously works on the positioning of the body and on the mimicry of the actors. While, at the beginning of the play, Phillip is perceived as Harry's shadow, in the second part of the performance the black attendant starts taking control over his master, not only in terms of his gestural and interpretative embodiments but also through his witty and intelligent remarks and monologues. The play debunks socio-hierarchical relations between individuals and reflects on how systems of colonial domination are still powerful within Western European and Northern Atlantic contexts. Indeed, modernity/coloniality propounds a dichotomous paradigm that recognises, on the one side, a civilised white world and, on the other, its black, native, and inferior counterpart. The performance brings to the fore the consciousness and intellect of the main protagonists, thus providing an insightful analysis on the concept of the solitary man, the Caribbean, who needs to confront and appease his social, ethnical, economic, and cultural mix in new and unexpected ways.

*Tiepolo's Hound*, the third text I study, is a long and complex poem that Walcott published in 2000, after the success and international recognition he received as a poet and voice of the Caribbean. It is a mature work in which

the author reflects on the power of art in building partnership connections between cultures and soothing the wounds of a troubled and still unsolved colonial past. Walcott presents the story of Camille Pissarro, a nineteenth century European Impressionist who is wrongly identified as a French painter. Pissarro was actually born on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas into a Portuguese Sephardic family who escaped to the Danish colony following the persecution of Jews in the 1500s. For Walcott, the poem is a pretext to meditate on his own condition as an expatriate poet and playwright in search of his fortune in the U.S.A. of the 1980s. The author reflects on how Pissarro's decision to make his fortune in France erases his identity as "an artist of the Antilles", an expression that is attributed instead to the painter who took the opposite journey, from Europe to the Caribbean, namely Paul Gauguin. Walcott provides a profound reflection on identity and artistic representational boundaries. Over the course of the poem, Walcott's alter-ego is constantly searching for the "slash of pink"<sup>16</sup> of a white hound he glimpsed in a painting at a museum or gallery, the name and location of which he cannot recall. Walcott wonders whether the animal that haunts him belongs to a painting by Veronese, exhibited at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, and in which the artist depicted ordinary people and unexpected situations in Christ's Last Supper. The painting portrays Moors, dwarves and animals in addition to occurrences such as a servant's nosebleed, which caused a scandal amongst the ecclesiastical and Inquisition circles. Veronese was forced to change the painting's title from "Christ's Last Supper" to "The Feast of Levi". Towards the end of the poem, Walcott understands he is wrong to attribute a privileged meaning to the representation. While opening the unresolved archive of his own hybrid condition, Walcott realises that the much sought-after hound is nothing more than a "mongrel", a starving pup he encounters on a beach on his native island. The contrast between the mongrel of the colonies and the privileged white dog of the banquets of European society reflects the condition of marginalised, dispossessed peoples who still struggle to find a place to call home, and also an authoritative partnership voice that stands up for them. Walcott proposes art, and the artistic process, as a practice for a more equitable and proactive future and a partnership society that recognises itself in beauty and in the inclusion of Other peoples and ways of seeing, thinking, and acting.

There is a chronological gap between the two plays I have chosen for my analysis and *Tiepolo's Hound*. Walcott wrote the first two in the middle and towards the end of the 1970s respectively, while his book-

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<sup>16</sup> Walcott (2000), *Tiepolo's Hound*, p. 7.



length poem came at the end of his career. If read from a decolonial perspective, though, Walcott's texts dialogue with one another in more than one way. First, they are all rewritings of Western European and Northern Atlantic stories or narratives. Second, they bestow great importance and significance on the power of West Indian art, imagination and folklore. Third, they express Walcott's desire to scrutinise the hybrid and heterogeneous legacies of the Caribbean. In particular, *The Joker of Seville* dialogues with and recalls Trinidadian Spanish heritage while referencing and reviving one of its most memorable literary heroes, *Don Juan*; *Pantomime* presents the clash between Antillean and British societies and structures of power, while reviving the adventurous story of *Robinson Crusoe*; and *Tiepolo's Hound* is a truthful account of Camille Pissarro's story, an artist who is wrongly remembered as French.

The three texts share an incessant need to bring Caribbean representational identities to the fore, or better, give meaning to the scattered and disjointed archives of Antillean creole cultures. In this sense, simple definitions and identifications are rejected because boundaries are abolished in an archipelago that constantly remoulds and rebuffs its colonial legacies. The Caribbean refutes linear thinking and acting, instead embracing a circular, dynamic and fluid system of possibilities and alternatives. The opening up towards other types of expressions beyond writing demonstrates how the Antilles are creative laboratories in which writers, playwrights and artists are not afraid to experiment or challenge themselves, through music, figurative art, performance and dance, to name but a few.

In this sense, it comes as no surprise that Walcott describes his particular type of writing in this way:

I am a kind of a split writer: I have one tradition inside me going one way, and another tradition going another. The mimetic, the Narrative, and dance element is strong on one side, and the literary, the classical tradition is strong on the other<sup>17</sup>.

The third and final chapter of my book presents an original transdisciplinary experiment, bringing together Walcott's wor(l)d and the art of dance. In tune with the decolonial option, I have relied on the concept of praxis to rethink and reinterpret Walcott's verses as a dance-theatre performance. In line with my career as a professional dancer, choreographer and teacher of contemporary dance, I decided to give voice, through movement, to a selection of verses from Walcott's *The Schooner Flight*, his poetic manifesto and one of his most well-known and praised

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<sup>17</sup> Hamner (ed. [1993] 1997), *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, p. 48.

poems. Taking into account the framework and premise of the discipline of Performance Studies, propounded by Schechner, and the standpoints of Applied Theatre, I have created a dialogue between Walcott's poem and my own reality both in terms of my social context and as a performer. The project was produced in collaboration with a colleague and fellow choreographer, Raffaele Simoni, and a group of young dance students from a local ballet school in Pordenone where I teach, A.S.D. Passione Arte Danza, run by principal Nicoletta Moras. In addition, I worked with a costume designer from Turin, and two audio and video technicians, so as to produce a video recording of the entire work<sup>18</sup> and a video-abstract which is available online on my VIMEO channel<sup>19</sup>.

I selected five emblematic passages from *The Schooner Flight* in an attempt to fully develop the themes and suggestions evoked in the poem and provide a coherent balance between poetry, dance, music, performance, words and text.

*The Schooner Flight* is a poem written by Walcott towards the middle of his career. It presents the story of one of Walcott's alter-egos, the sailor Shabine, who struggles with his own divided identity and cultural mix. Shabine in patois means "red nigger" and, through his wanderings around the Antillean archipelago, the protagonist has the chance to confront his past and present life. Shabine is one of those rejected and dispossessed Caribbean people who suffered from the shameful practices conducted through the modernity/coloniality matrix of power. In his redemptive journey, the protagonist comes to terms with the people he abandoned and also with his unknown and forgotten ancestors, the African slaves who were brought to the Caribbean under the deck of colonial ships.

I know these islands from Monos to Nassau,  
a rusty head sailor with sea-green eyes  
that they nickname Shabine, the patois for  
any red nigger, and I, Shabine, saw  
when these slums of empire was paradise.  
I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,  
I had a sound colonial education,  
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,  
and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> The full production of *The Dancing Wor(l)d of The Schooner Flight* is available by clicking on this link: <https://youtu.be/jEB0nxBxZI0>. Likewise, at the end of this book, you can find a QR Code that takes you directly to the performance.

<sup>19</sup> Please, see: <https://vimeo.com/364759314>.

<sup>20</sup> Walcott (1979), *The Schooner Flight* in Walcott (2014), *The poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, p. 297.

These emblematic lines of the poem were rendered in the choreography in a duet: my colleague Simoni and I embodied the divided figure of the sailor Shabine, who at times feels particularly involved in the context in which he lives, and at times refuses and rejects his own identity. In correspondence with Walcott's most celebrated verses, namely "I'm just a red nigger who loves the sea...", Simoni colours my white clothes with different temperas, to re-evoked the Caribbean creolisation and hybrid reality.

I bring Walcott's verses directly into today's world in a dialogue with my homeland, Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy). The region has three names that remind us of its history. It is situated at the borders of former Yugoslavia, and it has a strong influence of Slavic, Germanic and Venetian legacies and cultures. It has always been a war territory and a space traversed by many different populations and migrants, till these very days. The region has always benefited from encounters and clashes between languages, ethnic groups and traditions, and, in this sense, it recalls the multiculturalism of the Caribbean island of Trinidad, the context in which the poem takes place.

The video was recorded in Teatro Verdi in Pordenone, as part of the dance school's end-of-year performance, but also outside in the barren and desert-like area known as the Magredi in Pordenone<sup>21</sup>. The undetermined porosity of the performative spaces is a clear reference to the need to redraw borders and imagine them as an intercultural meeting space, rather than a dividing and dangerous line of separation. Today's societies are characterised by increasing economic, cultural and social inequalities but also by a more fluid and multifaceted heterogeneity of thought. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt an intersubjective perspective and approach that debunks any attempt to build new borders between us and them, the migrant and the citizen, the legitimated and the dispossessed, the privileged and the subordinate.

Within the choreography, I also took up the challenge to disrupt and disarticulate the semantic constraints of the text. In this sense, the "soundless decks" on which Shabine's forebears were transported to the

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<sup>21</sup> The name of this stretch of land comes from the Friulan language and the culture of popular country dwellers. The word *magredi* stands metaphorically for scarce or poor. The area looks like a tiny desert, made up of stones and sporadic bush vegetation. It is believed to be a very ancient natural formation deriving from the erosion of the Alps in the Northern part of the region where I was born. Under the surface of this apparently barren land, there is a complex system of concealed streams and watercourses. During the rainy seasons, the Magredi area floods easily and, astonishingly, separates villages and communities nearby.

New World were finally given a voice through the silent movements, jumps and turns performed by my dance students<sup>22</sup>. Conversely, in Walcott's text, only the great admirals' orders and cries can be heard:

I couldn't believe what I see:  
 [...]
 I saw men with rusty eyeholes like cannons,  
 [...]
 and high on their decks I saw great admirals,  
 Rodney, Nelson, de Grasse, I heard the hoarse orders  
 they gave those Shabines, and that forest  
 of masts sail right through the *Flight*  
 [...]
 Next we pass slave ships. Flags of all nations,  
 our fathers below deck too deep, I suppose,  
 to hear us shouting. So we stop shouting.  
 Who knows  
 who his grandfather is, much less his name?<sup>23</sup>

In my multimodal dance-theatre work, I opted for a reversal of this scene. The colonial ships and colonisers are silenced through the use of handmade masks. In this way, the dancers themselves experienced an internal re-adaptation of Walcott's text.

This overturning and destabilisation of perspectives allowed me to provide a challenging and original artistic, transdisciplinary rewriting of Walcott's poem<sup>24</sup>. In this sense, both the dancers and the audience were able to ponder on the importance of hospitality and the need to respect of all human beings. Bringing together choreographers, students and collaborators allowed us, as a partnership community, to share ideas and opinions, which made me change my initial perspective on the work. We all acknowledged the importance of taking action against policies and practices that tend to divide, separate and create new borders, walls or frontiers.

The workshop between dancers and crew proved unexpected because the dancers started talking about their own problems and ambitions, also in

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<sup>22</sup> See also: Roach (1996), *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*; Gittens (2012), *Black Dance and the Fight for Flight: Sabar and the Transformation and Cultural Significance of Dance from West Africa to Black America (1960-2010)*, *Journal of Black Studies*, 43, 1: 49-71.

<sup>23</sup> Walcott (1979), *The Schooner Flight* in Walcott (2014), *The poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, pp. 304-305.

<sup>24</sup> See: McKenzie, Roms & Wan-Ling Wee (eds. 2009), *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research*.

relation to the verses they were going to embody through dance and gestures. From this perspective, in our long discussions on the work, the students started to question systems of domination of thoughts and control. They agreed on the need to rewrite stories from a partnership perspective, giving them new shades of meaning or light, in the words of Walcott. The hope is for a radical shift towards partnership, and towards a mutual, caring and equitable approach that can prevail only if peoples are able to rethink and transform the Western-oriented paradigms and frameworks.

In this sense, academic research and teaching should provide the context in which women and men are able to reflect freely and develop critical thinking, so as to forge a more peaceful and respectful world. The arts, too, are responsible in guiding peoples towards change and on a journey towards *Tout-Monde*<sup>25</sup>, a concept that Glissant uses to describe the spiralling energy that connects all of us in the web of life.

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<sup>25</sup> Glissant (1997), *Traité du Tout-Monde. Poétique IV*.

## CHAPTER ONE

# DEREK WALCOTT FROM A DECOLONIAL POINT OF VIEW: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

The aim of this book is to analyse the literary and artistic work of the Caribbean poet and playwright Derek Walcott (1930-2017) from a decolonial perspective, which essentially emerged with the critical work of Aníbal Quijano in the late 1980s, as an original methodology and a challenging detour from canonical and traditional ways<sup>1</sup> of interpreting an author's voice and production.

Considered as an alternative to Western-oriented theoretical approaches<sup>2</sup>, the decolonial option focuses not only on the literary outputs of writers from the edge but also on their transversal and secondary openings, artistic visions and thoughts, thus prompting new and different

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<sup>1</sup> Literary theory has always been interested in defining a national or traditional literature, i.e. a corpus of texts and works that epitomise sharing values and cultural viewpoints of a community or nation. The canon, a list of books that encompasses the most representative voices of a particular context or society, stands as a symbol of this endeavour. In the course of literary history, scholars and intellectuals have tried to identify a Western-based canon or, better, a number of works that were to represent European literatures at their richest and most varied. With the appearance of postcolonial writings and literatures from the “edge”, or liminal literatures, the issue has shifted to include former European colonies on a global scale, thus implying the need for world literatures. Amongst the most known publications on these issues, see: Altieri (1983), “An Idea and Ideal of a Literary Canon” in Von Hallberg (ed. 1983), *Canons*; Calvino ([1991] 1995), *Perché leggere i classici*; Guillory ([1993] 1995), *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*; Bloom (1994), *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*; Palumbo-Liu (ed. 1995), *The Ethnic Canon. Histories, Institutions and Interventions*; Prendergast (eds. 2004), *Debating World Literature*, & Casanova ([1997] 2004), *The World Republic of Letters*.

<sup>2</sup> See: Loomba (1998), *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*.

understandings and interpretations of their work. In postcolonial studies Walcott is recognised as an author and an artist, yet, few monographies and studies have read his production also from an artistic point of view. This volume presents Walcott's literary and artistic perspectives as a whole and proposes a transdisciplinary and multimodal translation of *The Schooner Flight*, one of his most celebrated poems. As a former professional dancer and now choreographer I have tried to overcome disciplinary boundaries in order to propose a decolonial intersemiotic interpretation of Walcott's wor(l)d.

## The Postcolonial Perspective and its Western Influence

In order to provide a better perspective on decoloniality and its original standpoint, I will first provide an overview of how Walcott's work has been studied and read according to Western-based critical models, and then I will present decoloniality and my specific interdisciplinary and intersemiotic methodological approach.

Although various theoretical approaches have been used to deal with the 1992 Nobel laureate's production, Walcott is usually read within the context of postcolonialism, which thrived after the independence of former European colonies and the consequent twilight of the Western imperial powers<sup>3</sup>.

Critical theories and methodologies need to be constantly revised and adjusted according to different contexts, places and times. Postcolonial theory began to be influential as a literary, anthropological and socio-cultural critical approach around the 1970s, thanks to the work of scholars coming from so-called subaltern and radical groups, originally established outside of the circle of Western academia<sup>4</sup>. Edward Said<sup>5</sup>, Gayatri

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<sup>3</sup> On Postcolonial studies and theory, see: King (1980), *The New English Literatures: Cultural Nationalisms in a Changing World*; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (eds. 1995), *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*; Boehmer (1995), *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*; Parker & Starkey (ed. 1995), *Postcolonial Literatures: Achebe, Ngugi, Desai, Walcott*; Childs (1999), *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature: a Reader*; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (eds. 1998), *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*; Edwards (2008), *Postcolonial Literature. A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*; Sian (eds. 2014), *Conversations in Postcolonial Thought*.

<sup>4</sup> See also: Williams & Chrisman (eds. 1993), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*; Young (2003), *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*.

Chakravorty Spivak<sup>6</sup> and Homi K. Bhabha<sup>7</sup> are among the most prominent intellectuals who studied writers and thinkers coming from the so-called “edge”, i.e. the peripheries of the territories controlled by the European colonial powers. Postcolonialism proved to be a challenging twist because, for the first time in the history of Western domination<sup>8</sup>, the voices of thinkers, artists and writers from the margins were allowed to be heard, printed and made the subject of liberal debate and confrontation. The postcolonial revolution brought to the fore issues such as colonial subjugation, natural and human exploitation, slavery and forced migrations, and started to reflect on the perpetuation and endurance of Western-capitalist dominator order. It also bolstered the publication and criticism of new literatures in English, Spanish, French, Dutch and other European languages that had previously served as instruments for colonial domination, while the writings of aboriginal or indigenous writers were finally acknowledged and included in the lists of academic interest.

Even if these epistemological shifts nowadays are still considered as liberating accomplishments in the development and advancement of literary critique—an idea with which I agree—they often reveal influences and readings that look back at the same Western-based critical thought, or that are directly influenced by its own hegemonic dominator paradigm<sup>9</sup>. I do not wish to argue that the postcolonial attempt to weaken the gap between former masters and colonised communities was a failed one, but rather that it reiterated similar strategies and viewpoints to those it aimed to debunk.

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<sup>5</sup> Among Said’s most important works: Said (1978), *Orientalism*; Said (1984), *The World, the Text and the Critic*; Said (1994), *Culture and Imperialism*; Said (1999), *Out of Place*; Said (2000), *Reflections on Exile*.

<sup>6</sup> For an overview on Spivak’s work, see: Spivak (1990), *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, and Dialogues*; Spivak (1998), *Can the Subaltern Speak?*; Spivak (2003), *Death of a Discipline*.

<sup>7</sup> Some of Bhabha’s most influential works are: Bhabha (1990), *Nation and Narration*; Bhabha (1994), *The Location of Culture*. See also: Parry, Benita (1994), *Signs of Our Times: Discussion of Homi Bhabha’s ‘The Location of Culture’*, *Third Text*, 28/29: 9.

<sup>8</sup> See: Poddar & Johnson (eds. 2005), *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures in English*.

<sup>9</sup> One of the main theoretical frameworks at the basis of this work is Riane Eisler’s partnership model. I will later explain the key concepts and ideas at the core of this critical approach which is essentially based upon a refusal of dominator societies for a more equitable, caring and mutual paradigm. For more information on the Partnership model and Riane Eisler’s work, see: <https://centerforpartnership.org/> (consulted on 01/03/2022).



My intent here is to discuss the processes that brought about the acceptance of postcolonial views, including the perspective of former European structures of power that called for change and reform. I will focus on two highly debated concerns: the idea of representational difference and the presence of the subaltern speaker, and question whether their postcolonial application overcomes the Western-based dialectic or rather offers a revision that hints at canonical and traditional European strategies of reading literature. At the same time, I will present extracts of two Walcottian poems, *A Far Cry From Africa* (1962) and *The Arkansas Testament* (1987), to see if postcoloniality is useful in highlighting the author's main concerns in Western European and Northern Atlantic terms. Or if, on the contrary, it is a weak critical tool to propose new and alternative perspectives for studying diverse cultural backgrounds and a transmedial way of expressing ideas and communicating.

The discourse on difference is one of the most discussed postcolonial concerns<sup>10</sup> in the field of literary theory<sup>11</sup>, and it was aptly foregrounded in the dichotomies and binary oppositions in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), such as East/West, black/white<sup>12</sup>, savage/civilised or rational/irrational<sup>13</sup>. In highlighting the ethnical divisions that Western European powers had established in order to maintain control over their subjects, Said echoed the ideas of post-structuralist thinkers of the 1970s and, in particular, the elaborations and deconstructions of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida<sup>14</sup>. Drawing from Derrida's idea that language and discourse were direct representations of cultural difference (in opposition to the structuralist belief that language was monolithic), Said argues that features often attributed to Orientals were fictional representations perpetuated by European myths and thought, which were later disseminated throughout by the colonial matrix of power.

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, see: Mills (1991), *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*.

<sup>11</sup> See: McLeod ([2000] 2010), *Beginning Postcolonialism*, pp. 80-120; Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin ([1989] 2002), *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 14-36.

<sup>12</sup> See: Sollors (1997), *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*.

<sup>13</sup> For a thorough overview on Said's work and thought, see: Said (1978), *Orientalism*; Said (1994), *Culture and Imperialism*; Said (1999), *Out of Place*; Said (2000), *Reflections on Exile*.

<sup>14</sup> Most critics tend to underline how Said's theoretical discourse was imbued with reverberations coming also from readings of Antonio Gramsci and Michael Foucault's perspectives and philosophies.

The application of Said's divisions on Walcottian poetry is useful in discerning one of the most emblematic issues addressed by the Caribbean poet, namely his never-ending questioning of ethnical differentiation and representation. This is particularly evident in Walcott's very first production, as in the case of the poem titled *A Far Cry from Africa* (1962), where the author openly questions his persona and his double-sided European and African heritage:

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?<sup>15</sup>

The excruciating division affecting Walcott's representation of identity<sup>16</sup> cursed him for the rest of his life. The poet underwent a complex journey of self-discovery before accepting and finding a way out towards his double-marked voice, physical appearance and cultural hybridity<sup>17</sup>. Reading these verses through Said's methodology may enhance the understanding of colonial strategies to actualise racial hierarchies of social divide: a scale of arbitrary divisions assumed to be determined by a higher, if not divine, civilising white order. The intermingling of peoples and communities in the Caribbean prompted the growth of mixed socio-cultural divisions, with a majority of black people and mulattos whose values were extremely heterogeneous because of different traditions, religious beliefs and genealogies. This way of presenting Walcott's work is certainly useful to Western readers in order to orientate themselves through postcolonial thinking and writing, and also show the features that define the Caribbean poet's literary and aesthetic views. What might be missing though is an overview of the causes that determined this hybrid and undetermined space. Put simply, Western European and Northern Atlantic ways of reading postcolonial thought tend to simplify Walcott's poetry through dichotomies which do not fully account for the complexities of his work and the context in which he lived and worked.

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<sup>15</sup> Walcott (1962), *A Far Cry from Africa* in Walcott (2014), *The poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, p. 48. *A Far Cry from Africa* explores the history of an uprising in Kenya, occupied by the British colonial powers, in 1950s.

<sup>16</sup> See: Appiah (2004), *The Ethics of Identity*.

<sup>17</sup> See: Young (1995), *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*.

A decolonial point of view would not merely focus on the poem's divisions but rather on Walcott's attempt to debunk and re-think traditional concepts of borders and epistemic representations, thus reflecting simultaneously on European, African and West Indian legacies and definitions. Walcott does not want to choose a side for his divided-self but rather give back to it what it endured and what it now represents, thus reaping the benefits that the divide can provide. Through these compelling verses, Walcott presents colonial domination from a wider point of view, thus including the voices of indigenous populations that were once forced into silence in the Caribbean through the Middle Passage and the colonial system. Walcott's poetry uncovers dynamics that continue to perpetuate Western dominating hierarchies of power, even after the supposed twilight of their empires. In this sense, the poem shifts between past and present and reflects on the consequences of a not yet mutual confrontation between different cultures, languages and societies. Confirmation of these aspects may be found in the very reason that led Walcott to write these lines: *A Far Cry from Africa* was published in 1962, showing the author's angst in thinking about the violent eight-year campaign of the Kikuyu tribes in Kenya against the British Empire in order to preserve ancestral land.

In this regard, Walcott's work is more than a single dividing line; it is a continuous shifting and remoulding of dichotomies, binary oppositions, spaces and temporalities. It is a polyhedral type of writing, whose order cannot hold and whose structures and realisations urge for new and challenging analytical paradigms and perspectives.

The postcolonial Western reading of the subaltern speaker exemplifies a second example of how the analysis of Walcott's work has been limiting. It was promoted and employed for the first time by the Indian scholar and critic G. C. Spivak in her well-known essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"<sup>18</sup>. In forming a concept that accounted for the consequences derived from silencing colonial subjects, Spivak took as an example the female sati or widow sacrifice in Indian culture, thus presenting the dynamics of a

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<sup>18</sup> Childs and Williams explain that Spivak's "answer to this question is in the negative, because the subaltern is only produced by the subject-effects, the inscriptions, found in colonial historiography [...]. There is no subaltern voice that can be retrieved or made to speak, only the designations of texts that constructs peasant resisters as 'criminals' or 'mutineers'". Childs & Williams (1997), *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, p. 163. For an interactive overview of the totality of human history, see: <http://histography.io> (consulted on 01/03/2022).

double colonisation at work in non-Western female subjects<sup>19</sup>. This way of responding to colonial power revealed other strategies of coercion and exploitation operated by European powers, but it also drew on assumptions found in the critical work of Lacan and Derrida<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, this way of reading and interpreting colonial history and its literary or expressive outputs might be limiting, if the current unaltered political situation is to be considered<sup>21</sup>.

When exploring Walcott's representation of voices coming from the margins, Western postcolonial scholars or readers are tempted to connect the Caribbean author's descriptions and narrations with the perspective outlined by Spivak's critical work. In other words, Western academia tends to simplify the matter by viewing strategies of colonial coercion and subjugation as dynamics that are now no longer valid. A true account of today's unreversed scenario proves the contrary, as Western structures of power do still influence most of the global political agenda. Since the appearance of postcolonial thought, global scenarios have radically changed but dominator and violent relationships have not yet disappeared, instead they have assumed new and unpredictable forms. Western European powers read postcoloniality as a way of foregrounding and responding to what it assumes to be post- ("past" strategies of suppression and domination) thus suggesting that, in the current world order, these issues no longer exist.

To clarify these critical perspectives, I present here an extract of Walcott's *The Arkansas Testament* (1987) where he suggests that subaltern voices should remain silent in order to survive:

In an all-night garage I saw  
the gums of a toothless Sybil  
in garage tires, and she said:  
STAY BLACK AND INVISIBLE

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<sup>19</sup> See also: Lewis (1996), *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*.

<sup>20</sup> See: Derrida (1978), *Writing and Difference*.

<sup>21</sup> In *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak highlights the limits of Western European literary critique and comparative literature: "As far as I am concerned, [...] there is nothing necessarily new about the new Comparative Literature. Nonetheless, I must acknowledge that the times determine how the necessary vision of 'comparativity' will play out. Comparative Literature must always cross borders. And crossing borders, as Derrida never cease reminding us via Kant, is a problematic affair. Spivak (2003), *Death of a Discipline*, p. 16. See also: Larsen (2015), *From Comparatism to Comparativity: Comparative Reasoning Reconsidered*:

<https://riviste.unimi.it/interfaces/article/view/4929> (consulted on 01/03/2022).

## TO THE SIRENS OF ARKANSAS.

The snakes coiled on the pumps  
 hissed with their metal mouth:  
 Your shadow still hurts the South<sup>22</sup>

Walcott wrote the poem in the late 1980s, thus denouncing—through the use of capital letters—the perpetuation of racial segregation at the heart of the United States of America, often portrayed as one of the most civilised countries in the world. Postcolonial theory and Spivak's argument on subaltern voices are meaningful tools in identifying uncivilised strategies of colonial dominance but they do not clarify how Walcott overcomes contextual, physical and social dilemmas from an alternative and decolonial perspective.

The precise reference to a character from the classical world—the Sybil—whose role it is to foresee and question the destiny and future of humanity, is Walcott's rewriting of a Western, hegemonic and powerful narration from a universal and a-temporal point of view. The Sybil is portrayed in an unfamiliar setting, decontextualised with respect to traditional Western European representations. She has assumed the appearance of a poor, rejected person, thus becoming a subaltern voice in her own world. Remoulding and proposing a new identity for this mythological figure<sup>23</sup> means reworking Western European standpoints and structures<sup>24</sup>. It means proposing a new perspective while asserting that the silencing of black persons is still a problem haunting the structures of a presumably civilised, modern and postcolonial world. White domination has not yet been overcome in Arkansas, one of the most intolerant and racist states in the United States. Colonial history and legacies are far from

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<sup>22</sup> Walcott ([1987] 1988), *The Arkansas Testament*, p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> See: Irvine (2005), Betray Them Both, or Give Back What They Give?: Derek Walcott's Deterritorialization of Western Myth, *Journal of Caribbean Literature*, 4, 1: 123-132.

<sup>24</sup> Re-writing and re-thinking Western classical mythology through a West Indian perspective is a strategy that Walcott employs in most of his works. For an interesting study on this subject, see: Greenwood (2009), *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues Between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century*. In the Introduction to her work, Greenwood explains: "The echo of the phrase 'new word' in 'new world' neatly encapsulates the aim of this study: to look at ancient Graeco-Roman literature and culture afresh via Caribbean readings, and to examine the new words and paradigms for the study of both Graeco-Roman Classics and the Caribbean that emerge from this dialogue". Greenwood (2009), *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues Between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century*, p. 8.

surpassed. Black people are still seen as “shadows” who would do better to hide and stay invisible in order to survive. In short, they remain subalterns. In this regard, Walcott’s poem also offers a challenging insight into reconsidering literature not only within defined categorisations and binary oppositions, but more as an intuitive ground to read the complexities of today’s society. The Sybil in this case encompasses new and old traditions and innovations, thus becoming the symbol of a new globalised web of interrelations, embodying the contradictions of a globalised disoriented world.

A challenging strategy to look at today’s world order is most certainly needed. Postcolonial theory and its Western-based methodologies and readings have prompted an awareness on the concept of Other while proposing alternatives in order to overcome racial, anthropological, social, and historical issues. Nevertheless, they have not confronted the complexities that have emerged in the new global order.

These readings of Walcott’s poems aim to point out how postcolonial theory might still be carrying limitations and constraints derived from its Western-oriented background and influences. Even though postcolonial thought has opened up the path to relevant epistemic and transformative processes in the field of literary critique, its Western-dominant foundations have not yet been debunked.

To conclude, I will briefly discuss the value of the term or label postcolonial<sup>25</sup>. The prefix post- designates a period of time after or past the colonial era. The meaning of the term presupposes a definite closure of the Western European matrix of power. At the time of writing, a new globalised capitalist world has replaced the former imperial spaces of domination, while its structures are still dictated and influenced by Northern Atlantic and Western European alliances and institutions. In this respect, I do concur with Moore-Gilbert’s view when he argues:

The problem derives from the fact that the term has been so variously applied to such different kinds of historical moments, geographical regions, cultural identities, political predicaments and affiliations, and reading practices. As a consequence, there has been increasingly heated, even bitter, contestation of the legitimacy of seeing certain regions, periods, socio-political formations and cultural practises as ‘genuinely’ postcolonial<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> See: Adam & Tiffin (eds. 1991), *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*.

<sup>26</sup> Moore-Gilbert (1997), *Postcolonial theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*, p. 11.