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Landscape in Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses landscape in Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. The paper demonstrates that landscape, which comprises trees, and sea, is very active when it comes to human existence. How does an ecological perspective give prominence to landscape peopled by miscreants, outsiders and mulattoes? With this question posed, this research, applying tenets of postcolonial ecocriticism, contends that landscape, in Walcott's worldview, is a partner that humans, especially the colonially minded ones have neglected. Therefore, the call is for the Caribbean to reclaim their landscape and revalue it.

Keywords: *Dream, Ecology, Landscape, Monkeying, Walcott.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses landscape and its importance in one of Derek Walcott's earlier and lesser-known plays, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Walcott has termed the play "illogical, derivative and contradictory" (1970: 208). The play is peopled by miscreants, outsiders, mulattoes and a cripple (all of them are crippled in a sense), freaks who bear animal names and characteristics. They all "monkey around" on *Monkey Mountain* where survival and hegemony are best defined by who appropriates the upper hand, since to "monkey around" suggests not only "to play" but "to mask" in this dreamscape (Walcott 1970: 323). Perhaps, the characters in the play put on masks because "the first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits" (Fanon 1963: 52). This would be "signifying" in the words of Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988), the indirect presentation of an idea, a concept central to the monkey as a trickster figure in most African tales. Lestrade, who would later state that "Everybody around here have one" (Walcott 1970: 323), meaning a mask, illustrates this in his exchange with Inspector in Part One, Scene Three, where he evokes the market scene and tells the latter, "The pistol is not to destroy but to protect. ...to preserve order for the people" (Walcott 1970: 259-260), only to immediately and deliberately contradict himself and to (de)emphasize his point when he identifies the "nice pawpaw" the vendor holds. When, however, Inspector points out that it was "a melon," Lestrade says, "I know. But in the opinion of the pistol, and for the preservation of order, and to avoid any argument, we both was satisfied it was a pawpaw" (Walcott 1970: 261-262). The symbol of law and order is clearly an embodiment not only of contradictions but total disorder. To adumbrate this point, Lestrade would again immediately contradict himself when he suggests that he would like to see the people revolt:

and if you know how much I would like to do for these people, my people, you would understand even better. *I would like to see them challenge the law, to show me they alive. But they paralyse with darkness. They paralyse with faith. They cannot do nothing, because they born slaves, and they born tired.* (Walcott 1970: 261) [my emphasis]

Souris [Rat] and Tigre [Tiger] deny this paralysis and provoke Makak, the “Lion of Judah,” and, therefore, the salvific figure to a revolt, even though this occurs only within a dream.

In this paper we argue that Walcott’s landscape is an active force since both the natural environment and the human become interwoven entities in the process of defining *Caribbeanness* (Phillips, 2003; Feder, 2014 & Goodbody and Rigby 2011). Walcott’s dramatic mission, as discussed here, is the revaluing of the colonial victim’s identity in his/her environment (Toh 2015). This paper therefore discusses Walcott’s landscape in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* bearing in mind postcolonial and ecocritical perspectives. A blend of these concepts is an attempt to bridge the “barrier between the realm of the “postcolonial” and “ecocriticism” (DeLoughrey and Handley 2010: 20). Consequently, this generates a St. Lucian/ Caribbean nationalist interpretation of landscape from the dramatic scope of the play.

2. DREAMSCAPE TECHNIQUE AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Playing and masking are affected through the constant alternation of scenes between reality and dream, past and present, and characters who take on multiple roles to facilitate the ambiguousness which Walcott claims is the very nature of the drama. Basil, one of the characters in the play, going down to hospital too, just in case . . . amen” (Walcott 1970: 246). Later, he will also refer to himself as “a charcoal seller” (Walcott 1970: 297), thus drawing an association with Makak. We recall that Makak is also a lifegiving force. Also, there is Lestrade, Corporal, who evidences some humaneness when he pre-emptively locks up Makak for one night as a precautionary measure, so the latter does no further havoc in Alcindor’s café. But Lestrade is in her Majesty’s service and, therefore, a symbol of law and order, as emphasized when later he dons a wig and gown. As a mulatto he, typically, like other mulattoes, ironically considers himself better than the other Islanders, distances himself from “these people” for he believes he is closer to the white man. In his capacity as Corporal and given his role as go-between between the islander and his so-called absentee master, he is seen as one who played a major role in the promotion of the trade in slaves and their emasculation. While his

pigmentation reinforces the miscegenation prevalent during slavery, Lestrade cannot seem to grasp or simply refuses the fact that he is a hybrid.

Walcott has also peopled his drama with a CAST who not only bear animal names but mimic their characteristics to highlight the white man's hypocrisy. Drunkenness and disorderly conduct precipitate Makak's incarceration. His first offence leads to jail time and speaks to the unjust incarceration black people have suffered in the hands of the white man. In jail, the monkey nature takes over, "a frenzy does take him" (Walcott 1970: 325). The dream is, however, so "real" that Makak thinks he has killed Moustique. In this dream they can be transported to Africa where Makak is described as the "King of Limpopo, eye of Zambezi, blazing spear," who the Chorus lets on,

...has bundled the tribes like broken sticks,

Masai, Zulu, Ibo, Coromanti,

Who has scattered his enemies like grain in the wind. (Walcott 1970: 308)

There seems to be some inconsistency in his thoughts as he tells Souris and Tigre that they are going to Africa, only to later say it is impossible. This is followed by the exhortation that Corporal should be killed and his armies fed. There seems to be "reason in his madness," which madness is part and parcel of this landscape. To assure victory, they must dissemble. The trickster hat once more is their way into freedom when Tigre cautions them and Makak reiterates that they must move with stealth: "The first quality of animals is stillness. Keep still. I can hear the crack of every leaf" (Walcott 1970: 289). Clearly, one can make this inference since Makak accepts his madness "to achieve the agency that [his] host society has refused [him]" given that 'the traumatized individual can perform the mental deviance they are charged with' (Lèdent 2019: 3).

Landscape is not simply a collection of physical forms but "evidence of what has occurred there" (Evernden 1978: 19), a conscious progression from Gaston Bachelard's position in his study of the poetics of space that "our house is our corner of the universe" (Bachelard 1969: 4), and such a location helps to determine our ideology. This viewpoint is

supported by James H. Maguire (1988: 649-650) who argues that not only does “memory function best when it has a strong sense of place” but also, when “tastes, ideas, and values are shaped in every individual, at least to some extent, by the places where he or she lives.” This means that no writer writes out of space; the writer has a space which s/he uses to describe and interpret his/her work. This space influences the writer’s ideology since by focusing on landscape Walcott illustrates his recognition of “the importance of systems and relationships in the phenomenological world” (McDowell 1996: 371). This highlights Glissant’s (2005: 105-106) views that “landscape ... stops being merely decorative or supportive and emerges as a full character. Describing the landscape is not enough. The community, the land is inextricable in the process of creating history. Landscape becomes a character in the process.” Its deepest meanings need to be understood. Walcott’s play reveals his environmental concerns and helps to attenuate problems of hegemony inherent in the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized because if material power (Said 1994), is nothing but a means to an end, Empire cannot be maintained. Walcott intentionally demonstrates how the indigene can subvert the dominant power as seen through the act of signifying by Makak and his friends. This would support the argument postulated by DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley (2005: 4), in their introduction to *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*, that “unlike the white settler culture of nature writing, Caribbean writers refuse to depict the natural world in terms that erase the relationship between landscape and power.” This provokes and facilitates the constant reversals that occur in the play.

The natural environment, in the play, is active and central as man is not too far off from being animal. At the very best, man in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is considered irrational. Makak asks rhetorically to all the characters just before this dream ends:

Doesn’t the floor of the forest feel cool under your foot? Don’t you hear your own voice in the gibberish of the leaves? Look how the trees have opened their arms. And in the hoarseness of the rivers, don’t you hear the advice of all our ancestors? When the moon is hidden, look how you sink, forgotten, into the night. The forest claims us all, my son. (Walcott 1970: 300-301)



In other words, there is no distinction between man and beast or between man and nature. They are one. Consequently, to be in the forest is simultaneously “to be woo’d and to be wood” as the pun suggests (Jua 1987: 58) to amplify the conundrum and disorder which Walcott tells us is central to the play. The latter meaning issues from the local rum produced from illegal cane-burning and the side effects of disorder and disorientation it produces when drunk in excess as Makak exemplifies when he thrashes Alcindor’s Cafe. The dream can thus be considered one continuous argument into the erosions that have occurred over time and frayed these relationships to substantiate what Elizabeth DeLoughrey calls “the permeability between land and sea, [and man] particularly on small islands” (2018: 93).

One way Walcott achieves this quest for freedom is to prioritize the white woman who appears only as ghost or as hallucination. She is not real, a figment of Makak’s imagination, yet her “appearance” immobilises Makak who confesses “...my feet grow roots. I could move no more/ ... and I beheld this woman,/ The loveliest thing I see on this earth,/ Like the moon walking along her own road” (Walcott 1970: 227). Corporal remarks that “this rage for whiteness ... does drive niggers mad” (1970: 228), which idea Souris later reinforces when he states, “that is what they teach me since I was small. To be black like coal, and to dream of milk” (Walcott 1970: 290). This is the conventional portrayal of the white woman as that representation of beauty which the black man hankers after, or who the black woman seeks to emulate/copy since what is white is right. (Walcott 1970). Notably, there is no named black woman in this male dominant world. That the white woman appears only in Makak’s hallucination is not only ironic but tantamount to questioning that perception of beauty and relegating it to a nightmare.

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, vivid pictures of the environment painted through the writer’s penchant for detailed description and narrative prowess help us determine the importance of setting in the work even though, as Walcott states in “Notes on Production,” “The Play is a dream, one that exists as much in the given minds of its principal character as in that of its writer” (Walcott 1970: 208). Proceeding from an application

of Mikhail Bakhtin's study of the relationship between time and space, McDowell (1996: 378) arrives at a like position when he states that "an analysis of landscape [...] (is) key to understanding at least some of the meanings of a narrative. The concept of landscape is predicated on the complex interaction of the environment, relationship, history, and language (McDowell 1996: 386-387 and Kwansuh 2002:103). This means that for a place to be truly called landscape it must have an identified environment. That environment must have a history and a language. Landscape is seen then, in this study, as a place of habitation for a people who have it as a home as reflected in the setting of this drama. Commencing with the prologue in jail where we are introduced to Souris [Rat] and Tigre [Tiger] with Corporal bringing in Makak to be booked, we will come full circle and return to the jail in the epilogue. Where formerly Makak had forgotten his name, now, he will state his name freely and in response to the question of his denomination confess that he "believe[s] in [his] God" (Walcott 1970: 322). Incarcerated overnight, he gets up tellingly not only to a new day and freedom, but a Sunday, a day of worship and the music from the Church of Revelation. We recall that he has only recently decapitated the mask and has also refused to take or own it when Corporal offers it to him. Corporal tells him, "It have no salvation for them, and no hope for us" (Walcott 1970: 324). Makak testifies:

Lord, I have been washed from shore to shore, as a tree in the ocean. The branches of my fingers, the root of my feet, could grip nothing, but now, God, they have found ground. Let me be swallowed up in mist again, and let me be forgotten, so that when the mist open, men can look up, at some small clearing with a hut, with a small signal of smoke, and say, "Makak lives there. Makak lives where he has always lived, in the dreams of his people." ... this old hermit is going back home, back to the beginning of this world. (Walcott 1970: 326)

Recalling the middle passage, Makak, no longer rudderless or rootless, can now find anchor and own the land which has protected and given him succour. Can one assume that the decapitation of the mask, the killing of the white woman and the invocation of the white man's God by the end of the play is Walcott acknowledging that the Caribe who has been silenced, been marginalized and bestialized must re-assert his individuality and

identity? We must also remember that it was Makak who, using a life coal, brought a dying Joseph back to life, *not* medicine as practiced by the white man.

This circular fable which poses so many questions crucial to black Caribbean existentialism assumes the guise of a political satire considering that it allegorizes the poverty, servitude, and pain of an exiled, displaced, and dislocated people to situate itself within the ambit of the post-colony. The ever-present, threatening and unpredictable volcanic mountain and the moon or the sun dominate from the start as we are apprised in the prologue of the dance of the “spidery motion.” As J. E. Cirlot (1962: 304) suggests, the ambivalent moon, both protective and dangerous, is a spider which “weaves the thread of each man’s destiny;” each gets entangled in the web to further amplify the metaphor of food and feeding but interestingly *reflects interconnectedness*. The notion of feeding also encompasses preying on each other and may help to explain the bestiality that abounds in the dream. In this paper, I focus my discussion on the earth, the sea, the trees and animals where there are no boundaries, and they all form part of the landscape since “Human life is ‘conjoined’ with the life of nature (McDowell 1996: 379). This landscape assures survival as we infer from the juxtaposition of the utility of charcoal to the ephemeral ghost of the white lady; while the former would assure him livelihood, the latter would endanger his livelihood.

3. THE EARTH

In this section, I argue that all activity is earth-centred; rendering the earth indispensable as the only recognised habitat where humans and non-humans live. In Jonathan Bate’s *The Song of the Earth*, we are asked to

hold in [our] mind’s eye a photograph of the earth taken from space: green and blue, smudged with the motion of cloud ... So small in the surrounding darkness that you could imagine cupping it in with your hand. A planet that is fragile, a planet of which we are a part but which we do not possess. (Bate 2000: 160)

This excerpt calls to mind what the earth is supposed to look like in a photograph taken from space. It is green following the trees, leaves, and

grass and blue because of the seas. The planet earth is fragile because of man's mishandling, through pollution and many other environmental hazards. The earth is thus a part of the biosphere, where humans and non-humans' tread. For Bate, to further argue that man cannot possess the earth suggests man's inability to treat and handle the earth that houses him and all of nature with respect and vigilance. Andrew Ross, one of the few eco-critics working on popular rather than literary culture, considering a photograph of earth by the Apollo astronauts amongst his images of ecology, states that:

In recent years, we have become accustomed to seeing images of a dying planet, variously exhibited in grisly poses of ecological depletion and circulated by all sectors of the image industry, often in spots reserved for the exploitation fare of genocidal atrocities. The clichés of the standard environmental image are known to us all: on the one hand, belching smokestacks, seabirds mired in petrochemical sludge, fish floating belly-up, traffic jams in Los Angeles and Mexico City and clear-cut Forests; on the other hand, the redeeming repertoire of pastoral imagery, pristine, and green, unspoiled by human habitation, crowned by the ultimate global spectacle, the fragile, vulnerable spaceship earth. (Ross 1994:171)

According to Ross, images of a dying planet are more common in recent years because of industrial pollution, genocide, and other atrocities. He again recalls the original earth, before the cold war, green and unspoiled by human habitation. This sordid and hopeless presentation of man's treatment of mother earth serves as an eye opener to restoring her dignity, a task Walcott strives to handle in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* where he acclaims the intimacy between man, earth, sea, are parts of nature; a phenomenon that DeLoughrey (2018: 94) calls "an active and participatory engagement with the island seascape" in her consideration of *Tidalectics* and which Paravisini-Gebert (2015: 81) sees as the "need for communal action [where man] acts as one body with the land to promote recovery and a return to prosperity."

In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the earth is the principal habitat for all characters whose main occupation is the selling of charcoal. Charcoal is produced from burnt trees and the trees in turn grow from the earth.

Without the earth there would be no life for these trees, and this would make livelihood for the inhabitants near impossible, a pointer to the reciprocity that exists in nature. The fact that these characters are not conscious of their environment and that their actions may result in deforestation which would be detrimental to it and themselves is a real problem. A limping Moustique reminds a sleepy Makak of their business of charcoal selling every market day:

Makak, Makak, wake up. Is me, Moustique. You didn't hear me calling you from the throat of the gully? I bring a next crocus bag from Alcindor café. Today is market day, and time and tide wait for no man. I tie Berthilia to a gommier tree by the ravine." (Walcott 1970: 231)

Moustique reveals the true image of the man. Moustique argues and rightly so, I believe, that in such hostile capitalistic space of endless competition, time waits for no one. (1974: 231). That is why one apprehends the amazement which pervades his tone when he discovers Makak still sleeping on market day, the busiest day of the week, the only opportunity they must use to make some money and meet their debts. Their livelihood which is dependent on trees is threatened by Makak's indolence, an indolence reminiscent of Rip's in Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle," summoning the threat of possible extinction such a character faces in the capitalist world.

Interestingly, their trade in charcoal is detrimental to the very soil (earth) on which their livelihood depends. This cutting down and burning of trees results in deforestation, subsequent pollution of the environment by smoke and the erosion of the topsoil to the sea. Evidently, the burning of trees is both a health and ecological hazard as the inspector's presence in the market to seize bags of charcoal and prevent cane-burning attests. However, Moustique also reveals that the earth is useful to them as he ties his donkey to a tree by the ravine. This picture is evocative of its once Edenic nature and re-enforces the argument that the landscape of the Caribbean is beautiful, only to be immediately contrasted with the ramshackle market which in its bustling nature interestingly depicts the heartbeat of the community.



The make-shift market in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is very important. It stands as a meeting place for the villages. It is also an arena where economic activity is carried out and what we find expressed in this market is Caribbean misery. In the stage directions, we read:

A village market, at a crossroads, before dawn. Vendors, crates, carts, wares, slung from rope. The FIRST VENDOR'S cries, flute music. In one corner, setting up their basket-stall, a WOMAN, her HUSBAND, and two other VENDORS in near-rags, drinking coffee. (Walcott 1970: 256-257)

The namelessness of the characters identified only by their gender or trade, the make-shift image suggested by the crossroads, "zone of radical juxtaposition and unpredictable synthesis, where the associated processes of *mestizaje*, creolization, liminality, and so on flourish" (Dash 2002: 37), reflecting the possibility of several entry and exit points to the market is significant as it re-enforces the lack of identity of the Caribbean and his/her inability to possess and better manage the landscape where he/she finds him/herself. "This 'openness' suggests a tidalectic between the routes of the sea and the transplanted roots of Caribbean diasporas, providing a critical method of reading island literatures" (DeLoughrey 2018: 95). This lack of identity is tied to who owns the land. In the play, it seems clear that ownership belongs to the colonialist through his agents like Lestrade. The vendors in this village market, seen before dawn as each sets out his/her wares on market day, are remarkable for their poverty. Besides charcoal, the people also sell fruit like pawpaw and melon. Interestingly, the fruit come from trees, all rooted in the earth. The people do not only live on the earth but from the earth. All they eat (cocoyam, plantain, rice, cassava, or fruit), springs from or is rooted in the earth. The stage directions above convey a perfect description of a market scene in Part 1, Scene Three:

[In a corner of the market, an improvised music of sticks, clapping and a tin grater begins under the cries of the VENDORS. Two men dance as another sings a bongo. The men mime a healing]

SINGER

I'll show you how it happen: *Il dit Levez, Makak*. [He said Rise, Makak]



VENDOR

Pepper, pepperrrrr

VENDOR

Plantainnnn!

DANCER

Woy, woy, Makak.

SINGER

Quittez charbon en sac. [Leave your bags of coal]

DANCER

Woy, woy, Makak.

SINGER

Negre ka weh twop misere. [Niggers see too much misery]

VENDOR

Cassava, cassavaaah. (Walcott 1970: 262-263)

This stichomythic scene everybody struggles to survive depicts the hybridity of the Caribbean; vendors shout at the top of their voices, in local patois in cacophonous syncopation, almost drowning out each other about their produce, which produce comes from the earth; they almost efface each other, analogous to how the white man has erased their identity:

“that is what they teach me since I small. To be black like coal, and to dream of milk. To love God, and obey the white man” (Walcott 1970: 290).

Pepper is the first plant mentioned, a spice that grows from the earth whose fruits are used for soup; Plantain is food specie that grows in the tropics and cassava is tuber harvested from the ground. This illustrates man’s complete dependence on the earth, on roots, for paradoxically it picks up on their rootlessness if one can refer to DeLoughrey’s (2007) metaphor and pun on “roots and routes” to emphasize the caribes displacement and subsequent attempt at definition. Both man and plants have been transplanted and must take root in the Caribbean to assure livelihood. It is by taking root and rooting himself that the Caribe carves out a route for his survival.



Makak uses not only charcoal to treat the people but also needs the help of the moon. As I stated previously, the charcoal comes from trees and these trees have the earth as their habitat.

MAKAK

Let all who want this man to heal, kneel down. I ask you. Kneel! [*They kneel, after some delay, except one or two men, whom MOUSTIQUE gently forces down*]

MOUSTIQUE

The man say kneel! Kneel!

MAKAK

Now I want a woman to put a coal in this hand, a living coal. A soul in my hand.

[*He places one hand on the SICK MAN'S forehead and holds out his palm. A WOMAN hesitantly places a coal in his palm. MAKAK winces, closing his eyes. We hear him groan, then silence*] we will wait for the moon. (Walcott 1970: 247-248)

This quotation, in which Makak equates a live coal with a soul, reveals that man's health is completely dependent on the earth and the biosphere. The man in question has been bitten by a snake. Walcott seems to have been influenced not only by voodoo practices but also by Judeo-Christian doctrine where the snake was declared by God to be man's chief enemy. This is important to stress because man/snake binary and or difference is a product of man's deliberate disobedience to God in his quest for wisdom in the creation myth of the Torah, which led to the destruction of nature. Modern medicine has failed to heal the sick man, and everyone believes he will die, as revealed in the procession song.

Before this time another year

I may be gone, Lord,

In some lonesome graveyard

Oh lord, how long. (Walcott 1970: 243)

The song reflects the hopelessness in the people's lives and the advent of the charcoal burner who uses a live coal to resuscitate him reveals Makak as saviour and bringer of hope to highlight the motifs of life and death so closely intertwined in this *dream* which frames the play. Moreover, to reinforce these attributes, Makak, "God's warrior," "healer of leprosy and Saviour of his race" (Walcott 1970: 225-226), has also been called the "Lion

of Judah" (Walcott 1970: 217), appellations which draw parallels between him and Jesus Christ. While Christ is the saviour and the hope of mankind, Makak in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* stands as the liberator of the Caribbean Man. Like Christ, Makak represents hope to fight the sting of death and the snake's enmity. But, the singers' melancholic tone, as they sing of graves and the graveyard illustrate the ambivalence of the earth to man. It is the earth that harbours loved ones who die; the imagery and tone of the song suggests that the people do not welcome death. This may explain why Makak's determination to heal the man is first greeted with mixed feelings and Moustique must force some people in the procession to obey Makak's command to kneel. Where science has failed, nature is victorious as Makak uses charcoal and the moon to heal the man. Though it seems ambiguous in purely environmental discourse as charcoal comes from burnt wood, Walcott's view is that man needs nature for healing and that can be done without hurting nature. According to Hewett the "reciprocity [that] exists between human and spirit" (2006: 136) is strong given that the Caribe must develop deep knowledge of poisons and magic. Walcott's ideology thus, is to remind mankind of his dependence on the earth for sustainability and a good life even as he juxtaposes it with man's destruction of nature. As voodoo priest and healer, Makak should preserve the land. Paradoxically, as charcoal burner, he is complicit and heralds deforestation and therefore the threat to livelihood and so can be compared to Papa Beauville of *Fonds des Negres* who Paravisini-Gebert (2015: 79) states is both "witness and repository of the meaning of increasing catastrophic deforestation in ... rural landscape."

The earth is the embodiment of mother, important to humans as well as to non-humans, living and non-living things. Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* underscores the indispensability of mother earth in the Caribbean space. Walcott's seems to challenge the Caribbean to venerate mother earth through the multiplicity of voices that emerge. One perceives in the foregoing the conundrum of the Caribbean, that people of all cultures can live together harmoniously – like the animals, each has a function, and variety is its identity.

4. THE SEA

The aim of this section is to underscore the importance of the inscrutable sea in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*; the enigmatic sea which Walcott (1986: 364) and Glissant (1989: 11) have defined as “history,” is active but remote and not simply a passive environmental location. How Walcott presents the sea is thus my preoccupation in this section. If one may be allowed to pun, “we remain at sea,” a play on *history* given the absence of named black female characters, the sea ceases to be perceived as womb/mother and takes on a patriarchal connotation and evokes the spectre of filicide or infanticide. This reading is supported by the fact that even though we are introduced to Makak’s many wives in the CAST, no child or offspring is mentioned in this dream. On the other hand, if Makak’s fascination with the white woman were to continue it would lead to the extinction of his bloodline and by extension the black race. Water, which we conventionally associate with life, rebirth, and regeneration, is now a threat to all the foregoing. It engorges all and their stories remain untold like the bodies, buried, remain in the bottom of the sea in unmarked graves.

The sea, part of the landscape (Hambuch 2015: 200) is inherent to the Caribbean and plays an important role as far as the history of the Caribbean man is concerned. It stands at the centre of Caribbean life and cosmology. This shows that the environment can serve as a source of identity and definition of a people as I mentioned when citing Kwansuh. But this can only be so if the people realise the usefulness of nature. As partner and cradle of the Caribbean, the sea demands an ecological reading as it takes a dominant place and plays an important role in the worldview of the characters given the Caribe’s proximity to and dependence on the sea. Ironically, even though the sea was partner to the crime of slavery since it fostered conveyance, it has remained a puzzle. Thus, the sea will swallow a leaf in one shore and spit it out on another shore thousands of miles away. Possessing a will of its own, popular parlance states that during low tide “the sea has travelled” and during high tide that “the sea has returned;” where it goes to you cannot say and when it will return you cannot determine. The constant is this cyclic motion. Paradoxically, it



denotes for the Caribe that there is no return, that what is lost is lost and can only remain a dream.

The sea, this Atlantic Ocean, is inevitable in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* and is a very active force as in most Caribbean literature and history. In the characters' very attachment to the sea, Walcott revisits the Middle Passage, calls up the spectre of the inhumanity of the slave traders and the commodification of people in the ruthless transportation of Africans to the Americas; humans transformed into animals or to quote Zora Neale Hurston, "mules."

The Atlantic Ocean as earlier mentioned, is the medium through which the Africans found themselves in the Caribbean. Thus, their memory of home is attached to the sea. Moustique is proud of his home, Africa, situated behind the Ocean. He says: "Look, turn your head, old man, look there, and that thing shining there that is the ocean. Behind that is Africa" (Walcott 1970: 255). The fact that the ocean is shining is important in this character's mind. The sheen of the sea externalises Moustique's mind as serene now that he knows the route to his identity, home, and destiny but that he limps implies his inability to effect a return. The sheen of the ocean denotes that the sea is beautiful and uncorrupted nature even though historically, this ocean has been both a mode of conveyance to enslavement (inflicting pain on his race) and burial ground (for those who died during the passage). The sea/nature is thus complicit and duplicitous. The sea continues to be a threat even after the slave has settled in the Caribbean, for not only does it erode the land, but it also welcomes topsoil lost to the land due to deforestation. Walcott skilfully links this definition of self to the sea for the sea is a frontier which establishes a boundary and identifies the Caribbean man not with Africa that he may only dream of but the land he now possesses.

The wife of the sick man says that Makak is going through every village on his way to the sea. "They say that he on a long walk, going through every village on his way to the sea, looking across to Africa, and that when he get there God will tell him what to do" (Walcott 1970: 262), intimating that Makak gets his powers to heal from the sea. This means that the people do not only use the sea for food, for clothing and housing,

but also as a means of medicinal power. The fact that Makak's healing power is rumoured to appear from beyond the sea illustrates this populist attachment to the sea, a signifier not only as the route to pain and slavery, but the path to remembrance and identity embedded on the memory of the Caribbean. Even if this were merely rumour and unfounded, it portrays the centrality of the sea in the lives of the characters and the fact that it remains a conundrum.

In this section, my focus has been to show the paradox that is the sea; how active it is and yet how mysterious it remains. The place of the sea goes beyond its ecological presence and the need to preserve it. It reiterates the question of a people's rootedness with all accompanying ambiguities since the sea is both aide for the survival of the Caribbean and the great destroyer.

5. THE TREES

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that trees form part of the environment and like the land and the sea they play an important role; it acts as shelter to humans, the fruits they produce is food, its leaves, branches and bark medication, its trunk planks to build houses and to make furniture. The tree trunks have served for many centuries as vehicles of transportation including, paradoxically, the slave ships that sailed into the Caribbean and these victims use the canoe, another product of the tree for fishing. Trees also feel pain when they are hewn down. Thomas Tryon reported in 1691 that "trees suffer pains when cut down, even as the beasts and animals do when they are killed" (qtd in Thomas 1983: 221). Ecologists generally refer to the orchards and the forest where large quantities and qualities of trees grow when they talk about trees. In an elegy for the forest, Joy A. Palmer in "Destruction of the Rain Forest: Principles or Practices?" writes:

Forest of intrinsic value and worth. Forest of beauty, of natural harmony, of extraordinary biological diversity. Forest wherein some human beings, adapted to rigours of high humidity and heat, have shown that they are able to dwell, not in competition with their surroundings but in a state of interdependence with them. (Palmer 1992: 81)



Palmer implies interdependence between man and the environment as she justifies the place of trees and their usefulness to humans and nature at large. It is for this reason that Keith Thomas in *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* argues that man has from past generations grown to revere trees. This was especially true in the eighteenth century where “tree-planting and landscape-gardening had become characteristic pastimes” (Thomas 1983: 192). Walcott in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* also reveres the trees and the forest for Makak will come to realize that when we kill the trees, we kill the land.

In the play, trees play a vital role as far as the plot development and characterisation are concerned. We find landscape in agreement with the predicament of a people who are “rootless on [their] own earth, chafing at its beaches” (Walcott, 1970: 21). Walcott’s postulation that the Caribbean is rootless in his own earth in *What the Twilight Says* seems ironic because it highlights the relationship between identity and landscape since the closer man is to something, the more he protects it. But there is a paradox here; this landscape does not recognise them for they are strangers to the island, “migratory West Indians.”

Moustique and Makak earn a living through trade in charcoal harvested from cut trees. This is what makes their lives worthwhile in a capitalist society where money is pre-eminent. Moustique describes the charcoal activity in economic terms of division of labour and supply chain: “You cut, burn and so on, and I sell, until we make enough to buy the donkey” (Walcott 1970: 233). They cut down trees and burn them to produce charcoal which they sell to earn a living. Corporal Lestrade on Saturdays or on market days goes to the market, with a gun to prevent strikes and cane-burning in the district. The law recognizes that the burning of trees leads to deforestation and further consequences like erosion; on the other hand, cane-burning depletes the topsoil of all its nutrients. Clearly, violation of nature must be prevented since tree shortage will pose a danger to humans and animals alike; obliterated, the jungle will become open space, no longer fit habitat for animals. On the other hand, lack of timber will mean lack of fuel, firewood, poverty, and hunger for man. It seems then to be a vicious cycle; there are no winners



given the impossibility to reconcile the irreconcilable within such ambivalence and ambiguity.

Walcott goes further than these daily attributes to demand that we read trees symbolically as Makak draws an immediate analogy between trees and man when he affects a cure:

I see you all as trees,
like a twisted forest,
like trees without names
a forest with no roots! (Walcott 1970: 248)

Whereas other men are deficient, Makak is however at the centre, for it is his “feet that grow roots” (Walcott 1970: 27) so that he is “Half-man, half-forest, a shadow moving through the leaves” (Walcott 1970: 289). The forest is his home, he knows it intimately like the back of his hand and can never go hungry there since, “Here you are at home ... one of the forest creatures (Walcott 1970: 290). That is why Makak acknowledges that he can use the dark of the forest to his advantage: “I will still find my way; the blackness will swallow me. I will wear it like fish wears water (Walcott 1970: 286). On the other hand, Tigre introduces the duplicitous nature of the forest when he states that “This is [Makak’s] forest. He could easily lose us” (Walcott 1970: 289), and Makak had himself acknowledged that it is “better to die, fighting like men than to hide in this forest” (Walcott 1970: 241). Clearly, each character is in the forest, lost so to speak and must find a way home or in other words achieve individuation.

Lestrade, the mulatto Corporal, who “once knew this forest like the back of [his] hand” (Walcott 1970: 296) but sold out to the colonizer he now apes in enforcing the white man’s laws and stalking his brothers, stands revealed as a lost soul and can no longer find his way in the forest. Basil picks up on this meaning when he informs Lestrade that “his mind was never [his]” (Walcott 1970: 297) and that to save himself he must look to the colour of his skin and acknowledge his guilt. Lestrade begins to plead forgiveness as he sings Tigre’s opening lament to Mooma, becoming “what I mocked. I always was. I always was” (Walcott 1970: 300) gradually accepting his blackness and bringing order to the wasteland:



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 kiss your foot, O Monkey Mountain. I return to this earth, my mother, Naked, trying very hard not to weep in the dust. I was what I am, but now I am myself. Now I see a new light. I sing the glories of Makak! The glories of my race! (Walcott 1970: 299-300)

Once he merges with the earth, he stands revealed as his “feet grip like roots” (Walcott 1970: 300), akin to being naked or exposed and no longer in need of a gun. It is only proper that Makak, the lion of the Mountain should proclaim as he covers the nakedness of this prodigal son now returned to the fold:

They reject half of you. We accept all. Rise. Take off your boots. Doesn’t the floor of the forest feel cool under your foot? Don’t you hear your own voice in the gibberish of the leaves? Look how the trees have opened their arms. And in the hoarseness of the rivers, don’t you hear the advice of all our ancestors. When the moon is hidden, look how you sink, forgotten, into the night. The forest claims us all, my son. (Walcott 1970: 300-301)

Paradoxically, it is Lestrade who, in turn, reminds Makak of what he must do, for Makak cannot become what Lestrade was, straddling two races. He must choose and the only logical choice is to kill the white woman to assert his identity. Clearly, the tree and its products are useful to mankind and Walcott demonstrates that because the tree can be a weapon and space to assert one’s identity, this vibrant environmental partner needs to be treated with respect.

6. CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, as asserted previously, (Jua 1987) the presence of trees indicates a forest which amplifies the understanding that we are at once “woo’d” and “wood” in the struggle for agency, the conundrum which Walcott had intimated in a dissembling manner is central to the play. The multiple threads he evokes mask his objectives effectively and the question one must grapple with is how these diverse issues coalescing around dominance, enslavement and freedom can be resolved. In the dream sequence where the battle (itself signifying chaos) is fought in the forest, “in Africa, the dark continent,” it is impossible to distinguish between the



Caribe and the African; they all have the same roots, and they all melt into the darkness of the forest. Thus, for so long called the Dark continent Africa's children are depicted as finally uniting to defeat the white man at his own game and claiming agency through signifying. Whether the centuries old conflict waged between the colonizer and the colonized can be resolved in the space of eight hours, remember Makak is only imprisoned overnight, is suggested in and through subterfuge. The King of Limpopo/Monkey Mountain and his animal brothers must use the very elements which the white man has seen as a curse (his blackness) to defeat the white man. Blackness can, therefore, no longer be seen as a curse or evil.

The earth, the sea, and the trees are all part of the environment and in relation with man they become partners who should live in mutual respect, as Corporal intimates in the opening lines of the play where he makes no distinction between "animals, beasts, savages, cannibals, [and] niggers" but lumps them all together in this "stinking zoo" (Walcott 1970: 216). This relationship is further adumbrated by the constant association of the character/individual to and with the animal he is named after as meanings tied to their nature are exemplified throughout the drama. The cutting of trees signifies the advent of disaster and misfortune for the Caribbean. Analysing Marie Chauvet's *Fonds des Nègres* which she considers depicts the most sustained exploration of deforestation and its impact on the rural population, Paravisini-Gebert posits that without trees the topsoil, that is the land, which gives the Caribbean culture its character, cannot thrive or survive (Paravisini-Gebert 2015:74-75). Only when reciprocity exists can the potential for regeneration and survival of the land and community become visible and possible. Only then will there be no need for subterfuge, for masks, "for monkey to do what monkey sees" as the adage goes and as Corporal/Chorus chimes in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*:

I kneel down, monkey kneel down too,
I don't know what to say this monkey won't do.
I praying, monkey praying too,

I don't know what the hell this monkey won't do. (Walcott 1970: 223)

The trees, animals, sea, earth are all conjoined here in the landscape Walcott depicts and survival is collective and participatory in recognition of their mutuality.

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