‘HEADED HOME’:
GLISSANT, BHABHA AND THE POLITICS OF HOMECOMING IN WALCOTT’S *OMEROS* AND *THE ODYSSEY*

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2015

UNIVERSITI MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

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'Headed Home': Glissant, Bhabha and the Politics of Homecoming in Walcott's *Omeros* and *The Odyssey*

Field of Study: English Literature

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines representations of home and homecoming in Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (1993). The quest for home and at-homeness has been identified as a primary motif in contemporary literature in English. Within conventional scholarship, home or "*nostos*," homecoming, is usually associated with genealogy and geography; it is also traditionally defined in terms of homogeneity. In this study, I demonstrate how the postcolonial imaginings of Walcott's Homeric-inspired texts dismantle such fixed and unitary understandings of home. I show how these works reject notions of linearity and purity to construct a model of home and homecoming that recognizes and affirms multiplicity and displacement. This postcolonial paradigm of home, I argue, is more attuned to the realities of diaspora, the specificities of Caribbean identity, and the distinctive contours of its colonial history and experience. Toward this end, the study's four chapters examine the concept of home and homecoming from various perspectives, each framed and informed by Édouard Glissant's theoretical notions of "opacity," "relation," "creolization," "*detour*," and "verbal delirium," and Homi Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely." In reading the trope of "*nostos*" through these postcolonial concepts, this study moves away from a purely classicist approach to argue that home, for Walcott, invokes both the pleasures of familiarity and the terrors and ambivalences of unhomeliness.

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini mengkaji pewakilan dan erti tanah air dan kepulangan kepada tanah air yang terdapat dalam buku *Omeros* (1990) dan *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (1993) oleh Derek Walcott. Usaha untuk berada di tempat kediaman dan perasaan kehadiran di tempat kediaman telah di kenal pasti sebagai motif utama dalam sastera Inggeris kontemporari. Dari segi kajian konvensional, rumah atau "*nostos"* dan kepulangan ke rumah, biasanya dikaitkan dengan geneologi dan geography. Ia juga difahami dari segi semangat kekitaan atau persamaan. Dalam kajian ini, saya menunjukkan bagaimana teks Walcott berkenaan khayalan pascakolonial yang berunsur Homer, dapat menghapuskan pemahaman yang tetap atau terhad mengenai konsep tanah air dan kepulangan kepadanya. Saya menjelaskan bagaimana karya-karya ini menolak tanggapan yang terhad dan lurus. Sebaliknya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa karya-karya tersebut membentuk pandangan terhadap tanahair yang mengakui kepelbagaian dan sesaran. Oleh itu, saya berhujah bahawa paradigma tanahair pascakolonial tersebut, lebih selaras dengan hakikat diaspora, identiti Caribbean yang khusus dan ciri-ciri sejarah kolonial dan pengalaman itu. Empat bab dalam kajian ini meneliti konsep tanahair dan kepulangan dari pelbagai perspektif. Setiap perspektif dilihat dari segi teori Édouard Glissant yang berkenaan dengan "*opacity," "relation," "creolization," "detour,"* dan *"verbal delirium,"* dan juga konsep *"unhomely"* oleh Homi Bhabha. Dengan menggunakan konsep pascakolonial untuk bacaan kiasan "*nostos,"* kajian ini menuju ke arah yang bertentangan dengan kaedah klasik. Sebaliknya kajian ini mendakwa bahawa tanahair, untuk Walcott, dapat merujuk kepada kesenangan kebiasaan tanahair dan kesusahan berada jauh dari tanahair seseorang.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Sharmani Patricia Gabriel, who has been a great source of inspiration and wisdom for me. Throughout this project, her support, expertise, and, above all, her confidence encouraged me to give shape to my ideas. No one could wish for a better PhD supervisor. I also wish to thank Professor Otto Steinmayer, my first supervisor, who greatly helped me in the early stages of this thesis.

In the process of writing this thesis, and even before, I received help from other scholars in the field to whom I am greatly indebted. Professor Lorna Hardwick, Dr. Justine McConnell, Professor Rachel D. Friedman, Professor Peter Hulme, Dr. William Shullenberger, Professor Valérie Loichot, Dr. Birgit Mara Kaiser, Dr. Elizabeth Duchanaud, and Dr. Marie-Jose Nzengou-Tayo.

I would like to thank Urmia University for funding my graduate studies. I also wish to acknowledge the help of my colleague, Christopher De Shield, for his help with the editing.

I also want to thank my cousin, Nasser Abbaszadeh, who was a great source of inspiration for me throughout my studies. My mother and sisters have given me extraordinary support and encouragement in these years. Finally, I like to thank my husband and my son who were my patient companions on this journey.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Walcott and Home in the Caribbean

"Home" is an important concept; conventionally speaking, it determines one's identity, roots, culture, religion, and language. Articulations of desire for home have been issued from the classical era, dating back to Homer in the eighth century B.C., and continue to reverberate in Derek Walcott's postcolonial works in the late twentieth and early twenty first century. As history testifies, colonialism is not the only phenomenon which has problematized home. Homer relates to us in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* how war can also complicate the concept of home. Continuing Homer's tale in the first century B.C., Virgil, in the *Aeneid*, similarly recounts the story of the defeated Trojans who escape from their war-torn city to found a new home for themselves in Rome. However, due to cultural, racial, political, religious, linguistic, and economic con/fusions, home has become much more complex in postcolonial experience.

As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin remind us, colonialism is an experience shared by many people in the world: "[m]ore than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (*The Empire Writes Back* 1). Colonial policies of territorial expansion have led to massive dislocation, forcible migration, transportation, enslavement, indentured labor, exile, and diaspora of the visited nations. As a result of the colonial intrusion and occupation, responses to colonialism have interrogated the essentialist evaluations of many concepts such as place, self, identity, roots, ancestry, and – in line with the terminology of this thesis – home, rootedness, sense of belonging, identification, and attachment.

The authors of *The Empire Writes Back,* however, argue that among the colonies, the Caribbean has witnessed the worst forms of violence in the history of colonialism (145).

Comparing the Caribbean with Africa and its dark history of slavery and exploitation, Philip Sherlock, a Jamaican historian, also points out that "[c]olonialism, however important, was an incident in the history of Nigeria and Ghana, Kenya or Uganda; but it is the whole history of the West Indies" (qtd. in Burnett, *Derek Walcott* 23).[1]

Due to its unique condition, discussion of the complexities of home and the experience of homecoming in the Caribbean (the focal concern of this thesis) might be different from other regions. This difference is related to a number of factors including, among others, the brutal historical background of the archipelago together with the current socio-economic, racial, and cultural composition of the islands. The invasive presence of the colonizers has registered deep wounds to the collective history on this archipelago: the virtual genocide of the indigenous people (Caribs, Aruacs, and Amerindians), followed by the tragedy of the Middle Passage where, by the end of the eighteenth century, more than three million African captives were brought to British, French and Dutch territories in the Caribbean (qtd. in Torres-Saillant 17). The arrival of these slaves from Africa into the New World was, in the following century, coupled by the influx of indentured laborers from Asia, mainly India. These arrivals transformed the archipelago into an amalgam of colors, cultures, and languages.

This multiplicity and dislocation might make it difficult for the transplanted people to develop a sense of home, belonging, and attachment to the New World as this space is shared by several other races who are in ancestral exile and "whose philosophies, languages, and ways of seeing and valuing were crucially tied to a belief in monoculturalism, to ancestry and purity of race or lineage" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin,

[1] George Lamming also notes that the term 'colonial' has a unique and different meaning in the Caribbean compared with Africa: "[t]he African, in spite of his modernity, has never been wholly severed from the cradle of a continuous culture and tradition. … It is the brevity of the West Indian's history and the fragmentary nature of the different cultures which have fused to make something new" (*The Pleasures of Exile* 34-5).

The Empire Writes Back 154). The inhabitants of the New World may have different attitudes to these issues.

Édouard Glissant was one of the Francophone Caribbean writers and critics whose concept of "*retour*" (or "reversion," in Michael Dash's translation) resonates with this discussion. I wish now to discuss this issue in terms of his theorizing. Thinking essentially, identity is tightly bound to roots and ancestry; as Glissant makes clear in his essay "Reversion and Diversion," "The first impulse of a transplanted population which is not sure of maintaining the old order of values in the transplanted locale is that of reversion" (*Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* 16). Hence, the desire of the New World inhabitants, in pursuit of pure lineage, to return to their native lands might not be beyond expectation. In this situation, return, even if possible, would be problematic due to the interval of time and the changes brought up both in the ancestral homeland and the person who left the New World for the old.

Homi Bhabha, the postcolonial critic and theorist, suggests the notion of the "unhomely" for this kind of homecoming, which due to "the intervention of the 'beyond,'" creates an estranged "sense of the relocation of the home" (*The Location of Culture* 13). It should be noted that time has always had the dimension of change; nonetheless, as the changes of the colonial era were caused by the Other, whose culture, language, religion, literature, and ideology differed sharply from that of the colonizing countries, reconciliation with this new system of values became more difficult for the returning individuals. Changes that take place within one's familiar and indigenous value system are comparatively less difficult. Due to these changes return to the postcolonial home/homeland confronts the homecomer with feelings of the unhomely.

While Bhabha's theoretical lens focuses on the moment of *retour* and the reconciliation of the homecomer with the unhomely home, Glissant's focus falls on the returning individual's creolized state of mind, which intervenes when the returning person wants to relocate himself in his once familiar home/homeland. Glissant describes white Americans financing the return of the African slaves to the (American created) state of Liberia in the nineteenth century as "[s]trange barbarism" (*Caribbean Discourse* 17). He contends that even if the slaves might be happy at being freed of the horrors of slavery, "one cannot fail to recognize the level of frustration implied by such a process in the scenario for creolization" (17).

Glissant's notion of *retour* can be traced in some literary and ideological movements. Due to the predominance of people of African origin in the islands, the desire for *retour* to the ancestral homeland has led to the formation of movements like Négritude, which determines identity in the parameters of "roots" and celebrates Africa as the "true" home for Afro-descent people. However, and I will return to this discussion later in this chapter, Glissant like other Caribbean intellectuals does not advocate the monolithic ideologies of this raced-based movement as he believes these people are not African anymore and their return "is already too late" (*Caribbean Discourse* 17). As Glissant contends, in order to "exorcise the impossibility of return" (18), the transplanted people may resort to the strategies of *detour* or diversion as an indirect way for dealing with this issue. *Detour* can be manifested in various forms; apart from its linguistic usage, "religious syncretism" or "popular belief" and "emigration" are other forms of *detour*.[2]

Apart from the idea of *retour*, the transplanted people may wish to stay in the New World; this also may have its own problems. Glissant saw these people as "outcasts" and

[2] This form of migration may also include the migration of Caribbean intellectuals, such as Frantz Fanon, to other countries to carry out their political activities.

notes that: "[u]sually an outcast in the place he has newly set anchor, he is forced into impossible attempts to reconcile his former and his present belonging" (*Poetics of Relation* 143). Hence, remaining in the new land might have its own problems as well. It is not only the matter of inherited or exposed culture which might be challenging; due to the islands' present day socio-economic situation, the dynamics of neo-colonialism as tourism can affect the life of these islanders in a negative way, either by threatening the vestiges of indigenous culture or by promoting assimilation with the new culture (see Chapter Two).

Migration into the colonial heartlands under the illusion of Europe as home could also be another alternative for the problem of home. This potential solution has also proved to be problematic due to the clashes resulting from assimilation of the culture of the Other at the expense of one's own cultural heritage. This is how the occurrence of different races and cultures in the Caribbean, the very specificity of the region, has transformed the region into a site of diaspora and compelled the migrated peoples to go on quests for home, for roots, and self-identification in other places. These three alternatives have their own problems and their simultaneity is even more problematic in the multi-racial context of the Caribbean.

Among different fields of study, literature plays a very salient role as a vehicle through which these issues can be discussed and new insights can be suggested.[3] As a prominent literary figure in the Caribbean, Derek Walcott, the St. Lucian poet, playwright, essayist and Nobel Laureate, engages with the idea of home in the cross-cultural context of the Antilles in his oeuvre. Walcott takes a positive stance with regard to

[3] Glissant assigns a significant role to literature and creative writing and believes the mission of an intellectual and literary artist is to employ an imaginative mind to build up a history for those who are living in "non-history," (to use his own phrase). To Glissant a writer is someone "who is capable of an imaginative re-construction of the past in the void left by History" (*Caribbean Discourse*, translator's Introduction xxxii). Glissant also quotes with approval Walcott's notions of history; for these authors "there is no sense of passing judgment on the past. No one has been unambiguously right or wrong. It is the collective experience that matters" (translator's Introduction xxix). Glissant believes in literature "lie histories and the voice of peoples. We must reflect on a new relationship between history and literature. We need to live it differently" (77).

the phenomenon of cross-culturality even though it is the legacy of colonialism and speaks of the violent history of the region. Margaret P. Joseph analyzes George Lamming's "Caribbean Literature: The Black Rock of Africa," in which Lamming makes clear that West Indian imagination has been built on three axes: "embarrassment," "ambivalence," and "the sense of possibility" (127). According to Lamming, Walcott is an ambivalent writer but, as Joseph reasons, Walcott's literature bespeaks of possibility as well. I agree with Joseph as Walcott is not a poet mired in the past. Rather, through a rich cluster of metaphors and similes, he attempts to "find fertile soil for a fruitful future" (129).[4] Like the Guyanese writers Denis Williams and Wilson Harris, Walcott views racial hybridity and cultural pluralism as an opportunity for the region and promotes cross-cultural interaction among them despite cultural differences or "opacities" (as Glissant terms them) and while recognizing and respecting these differences.

By this interaction people can develop a sense of relation and rootedness to the given community in spite of its multi-raciality (see Chapter Three for Glissant's concept of "relation"). This feeling of relatedness can make the islands like home for the people as it develops a sense of security and identification. In this thesis, I will explore home and homecoming in the selected works of Walcott in the context of shifting, diachronic attitudes to home and homecoming in and across Walcott's oeuvre.

As discussed, Walcott takes cultural pluralism as a positive and constructive property of the region and argues for relation and interaction among multiple racial groups. This interaction is very important. Without it, racial and cultural differences would lead to conflicts, divisions, and separatism. Hence, in order to have a stable and secure community there should be a kind of equilibrium among all these multiple strands to lessen the

[4] Paula Burnett also notes that "Walcott is no romantic, but he is an idealist, in the sense that he believes in the open-endedness of possibilities" (*Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* 9).

potential clashes and tensions within the fabric of society. However, this equilibrium should not suppress, but recognize and respect differences. To elaborate on this problem, I will quote from Eric Williams, the Caribbean historian and the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, who urges for homogeneity in the fragmented newly-independent nation of Trinidad and Tobago:

> There can be no Mother India for those whose ancestors came from India . . . . There can be no Mother Africa for those of African origin, and the Trinidad and Tobago society is living a lie and heading for trouble if it seeks to create the impression or to allow others to act under the delusion that Trinidad and Tobago is an African society. There can be no Mother England and no dual loyalties; no person can be allowed to get the best of both worlds, and to enjoy the privileges of citizenship in Trinidad and Tobago whilst expecting to retain United Kingdom citizenship. There can be no Mother China, even if one could agree as to which China is the mother; and there can be no Mother Syria or Mother Lebanon. A nation, like an individual, can have only one mother. The only Mother we recognize is Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children. (279)

Williams' speech captures persuasively the nuances of multi-raciality of the region. He cautions about the dangers of racial separatism and argues for unification and solidarity despite racial differences. Grant H. Cornwell and Eve W. Stoddard argue that Williams "focused on the common oppression of all groups under British colonialism, in the recent past, and on the present and future challenges facing the society" (43). With respect to nation building Shalini Puri also notes that "[if] Williams is to legitimize a Trinidadian nation, he must produce it as both hybrid *and* homogeneous" (48) (emphasis in original). I agree with Puri as only under such circumstances will the community be stable and secure; this stability would have positive and constructive effects on the social, economic, cultural, and political arenas of the respective races, cultures, and nations in the Caribbean.

1.2 Home(r) and the Trajectory of Homecoming

Home is a multi-layered concept with resonances in different disciplines. In a widely cited paper, Jeanne Moore surveys the recent decades' literature on home with respect to its current status in Western society in cultural, linguistic, historical, sociological, environmental psychology, philosophical, and phenomenological arenas. However, postcolonial, feminist, and literary accounts of home are not discussed in this paper. Human geographers also became interested in the concept of home from the last decades of the previous century, among whom Edward Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) and *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (1990), Douglas Porteous' "Home: The Territorial Core" (1976), David Sopher's "The Landscape of Home: Myth, Experience, Social Meaning" (1979), Gillian Rose's *Feminism & Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (1993), and Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1994) are notable. Home has also interested feminist scholars as it is traditionally taken to be "the private sphere" of women whereas home-country or homeland is related to "nationalism and other so-called masculine, public arenas" (George 19). To name but a few feminist scholars and studies: Minnie Bruce Pratt's "Identity: Skin Blood Heart" (1984), Biddy Martin's and Chandra Mohanty's "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?" (1986), and Rosemary Marangoly George's *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1999). European models of nationalism define home in terms of homogeneity, a restrictive designation, as Anne McClintock argues in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (2013), Laura Chrisman in "Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies" (2004), Partha Chatterjee in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (1986), Rosemary George in *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1999), and Neil

Lazarus in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (2004). I shall return to the question of nationalism later in this chapter.

As this general overview demonstrates, home has drawn the attention of many scholars and many different disciplines; among them, however, it is literature that engages more vigorously with the issue of home. For instance, the discussion of home in literary texts goes back to the classical era; however, as discussed earlier, since migration, exile, and diaspora have become a shared experience of colonialism in more recent times, home has gained prominence in postcolonial literature and theory. Among postcolonial literatures, due to their often violent historical background and context, home is a pervasive theme – and it is arguably even more pronounced in Caribbean literature and theory. As Anne M. François notes "[t]his myth has a long history that goes back to the very beginning of the dispersal process that Africans went through during the slave trade" (xiii).

The tropes of home and *retour* have been examined in a number of literary works among which Marysé Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove* (2011) and *Heremakhonon* (1999), Brathwaite's *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1988), Myriam Warner-Vieyra's *Juletane* (2014) Aimé Césaire's *Return to My Native Land* (1970), and Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon* (1979) can be notable. Scholars such as François in *Rewriting the Return of Africa: Voices of Francophone Caribbean Women Writers* (2011), Jahan Ramazani in *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2001), Justine McConnell in *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939* (2013), Gregson Davis in "'Homecomings without Home': Representations of (Post)Colonial *Nostos* (Homecoming) in the Lyric of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott" (2007), and Rachel Friedman in "Derek Walcott's *Odysseys*" (2007) have examined home and return in their works through the critical lens of feminism, postcolonialism, and classicism.

Even though these studies illumine home in a particular way, I want to argue that the specificity of the region as the site of diaspora should be taken into consideration so as to gain a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of home. These discussions inevitably lead us to theoretical concepts such as "creolization," "relation," and "opacity." It may at first seem that little attention is given to the evaluation of home within these theoretical paradigms, but these concepts – which are among Glissant's theories – can be effective analytical tools for the systematic and comprehensive reading and theorization of home and at-homeness. The prominent Martinican thinker, Édouard Glissant, has theorized home in a way that is congruent with the lived reality of the region in terms of its racial multiplicity and cultural pluralism. Despite the potential Glissant's theories have for evaluating constructions and re-constructions of home, due attention has not been given to his theories with respect to home in Caribbean literature in general and in Walcott's scholarship in particular. Celia Britton in *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (1999), Valérie Loichot in *Orphan Narratives: The Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant, Morrison, and Saint-John Perse* (2007), Jeannie Suk in *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing: Césaire, Glissant, Condé* (2001), Victor Figueroa in *Not at Home in One's Home: Caribbean Self-Fashioning in the Poetry of Luis Palés Matos, Aimé Césaire, and Derek Walcott* (2009), and Lorna Burns in *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature Between Postcolonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy* (2012) have applied these theoretical concepts in their analyses of literary texts while Shalini Puri in *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post/Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity* (2004), Nick Nesbitt in *Caribbean Critique: Antillean Critical Theory from Toussaint to Glissant* (2013), Peter Hallward in *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific* (2002), and Michael Dash in *Édouard Glissant* (1995) draw from Glissant in their

theoretical and philosophical discussions.[5] Hence, in this study, I will address this gap, by approaching the concept of home in Walcott's selected texts through key elements presented in Glissant's and Bhabha's postcolonial theorizings.

There are various strands in Walcott's scholarship. Postcolonialism, modernism,[6] eco-criticism[7] and reception studies[8] are the main areas of scrutiny. Methodologically speaking, this thesis bears greatest affinity with postcolonial studies; however, in reading the trope of *nostos*, it resonates with reception studies as well, since *nostos* is, in the first place, a classical trope. I believe this approach – a postcolonial reading of a classical trope, would be more illuminating than taking a purely classical approach to Walcott's oeuvre. This approach is significantly related to Walcott's postcolonial imaginings and the issues he grapples with in his works; as I have argued above with respect to the concept of home, colonialism is not the sole cause of displacement, movement, migration, diaspora, and exile.[9] However, colonial policies of territorial expansion, occupation, settlement, and

[5] Britton brilliantly reads Glissant's own novels in terms of his own theortical concepts; Burns offers a sophisticated and spirited philosophical and literary argument in her book; Dash's book provides a comprehensive overview of Glissant's works published up to date as a novelist and a theorist.

[6] As Walcott has been influenced by the leading modernist poets like James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Hart Crane, this influence is addressed in his scholarship. See Charles W. Pollard, "Traveling With Joyce: Derek Walcott's Discrepant Cosmopolitan Modernism"; Eugene Johnson, "The Poetics of Cultural Healing: Derek Walcott's '*Omeros'* and the Modernistic Epic."

[7] Centering on landscape, seascape and vegetation, his poetic works, such as *Omeros* and *Tiepolo's Hound* lend themselves to eco-critical scrutiny. See Marija Bergam, "Transplantation: Vegetation imagery in the poetry of Derek Walcott and Lorna Goodison."

[8] Reception study is a branch of study where the scholars are interested in the ways in which later works respond to classical mythology and the two-way dialogue between later receptions and their classical sources. Upon its publication, the epic status of *Omeros* and its relation with the Homeric texts have been examined in a number of works. On Homeric interface in *Omeros* see Timothy P. Hofmeister, "Iconoclasm, Elegy and Epiphany: Derek Walcott Contemplating the Bust of Homer"; Norman Austin, "Homer and the Sunrise in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*"; Gregson Davis, "Pastoral Sites": Aspects of Bucolic Transformation in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*"; John B.V. Sickle, "The Design of Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'"; James V. Morrison, "Homer Travels to the Caribbean: Teaching Walcott's '*Omeros*'"; Timothy P. Hofmeister, "This Is We Calypso: An Ithacan and Antillean Topos in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*"; Peter Burian, "You Can Build a Heavy-Beamed Poem out of This: Derek Walcott's *Odyssey*"; Peter Burian, "'All That Greek Manure under the Green Banana': Derek Walcott's *Odyssey*"; Gregory D. Alles, "The Greeks in the Caribbean: Reflections on Derek Walcott, Homer and Syncretism"; Stefania Ciocia, "To Hell and Back: The Katabasis and the Impossibility of Epic in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*"; Carol Dougherty, "Homer after *Omeros*: Reading a H/Omeric Text"; Adam Roberts, "Dropping the 'H': Derek Walcott's *Omeros*"; Lorna Hardwick, "Walcott's Philoctete: Imagining the Post-Colonial Condition"; Isidore Okpewho, "Walcott, Homer, and the 'Black Atlantic'". For an extensive analysis of the epic status of *Omeros* see Timothy P. Hofmeister, "The Wolf and The Hare: Epic Expansion and Contextualization in Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'"; Hamner, *Epic of Dispossessed* pp. 33-34. For discussion of the refutation of the Homeric intervention in *Omeros* see Paul Breslin, *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott* pp. 242-45; Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry* p. 185; Gregson Davis, "'With No Homeric Shadow"; Joseph Farrell, "Walcott's *Omeros*: The Classical Epic in a Postmodern World"; for a relationship between Caribbean and Aegean see Derek Walcott, "Reflection on *Omeros*" p. 232; for Greek's indebtedness to Africa see Derek Walcott, "Reflection on *Omeros*" p. 234; for discussion of relation between ancient Greek and contemporary Caribbean and the influence of classical literature on Walcott's oeuvre refer to Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*, pp. 107-9; for the role of Thersites refer to Rachel D. Friedman, "'Greek Calypso': Walcott, Homer, and the Figure of Thersites."

[9] People in ancient times also went to exile; however, as Glissant takes note: "[i]n Western antiquity a man in exile does not feel he is helpless or inferior, because he does not feel burdened with deprivation-of a nation that for him does not yet exist" (*Poetics* 13). Glissant

exploitation have radically problematized essentialist connotations of home, homeland, *retour*, roots, filiation, family, and identity by severing filial lines from pure and sacred ancestral ties. On the other hand, postcolonial theories are, likewise, specifically and principally devised in order to examine and offer alternative insights for the issues caused by colonialism. Therefore, reading postcolonial imaginings within postcolonial theorizing could offer viable solutions for the negative legacies of colonialism.

Having enjoyed a long professional career, Walcott has had the opportunity to deal with home and homecoming in a number of his works, though mainly within the Odyssean paradigm.[10] Among Walcott's works, however, I have chosen *Omeros* and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* in part because Walcott extensively and deeply engages with the trope of home in the entirety of these works. More importantly, Homeric echoes reach their culmination in these works as Homer appears as a presiding presence within and throughout these texts. *Omeros*, often hailed as Walcott's most ambitious work, reflects Homer, though implicitly, from its title page till the end[11] and the stage version of the *Odyssey* is overtly structured following its Greek counterpart. The significance of Homer is linked to a number of factors; among these, I am particularly interested in exploring the ways in which Walcott, as a twentieth-century postcolonial Caribbean poet, contributes to Homeric literature and the classical trope of homecoming. I primarily intend to discern how

goes on to say: "it even seems … that some experience of voyaging and exile is considered necessary for a being's complete fulfillment" (13).

[10] This theme is virtually traceable in most of Walcott's poetic oeuvre; *In a Green Night* (1969), *Gulf and Other Poems* (2014), *Another life (*1973), *The Star Apple Kingdom* (1979), *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981), *Midsummer* (1984), *The Arkansas Testament* (1988), *Omeros* (1990), the *Stage Version of the Odyssey* (1993), *The Bounty* (1997), and *The Prodigal* (2004).

[11] The name "Omeros" is the Modern Greek spelling of Homer which has been localized in Walcott's St. Lucian etymology:

> I said: "Omeros,"
>
> and *O* was the conch-shell's invocation, *mer was*
> both mother and sea in our Antillean patois,
> *os*, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes
>
> and spreads its sibilant collar on a lace shore. (14)

Walcott highlights the latent postcolonial issues of home and homecoming in Homer's works.

As its first objective, my study aims to investigate the ways in which Walcott remodels home in *Omeros*. I want to examine how Walcott challenges the conventional association of home with linearity and fixity with respect to familiarity of the accustomed land in *Omeros*. How can the pleasures of familiarity and community relatedness replace the unhomely but atavistic homeland? I am also interested in investigating the ways in which home can be experienced in the midst of racial and cultural multiplicities and opacities in *Omeros*. I am particularly interested in exploring how vertical and monolingual lines of filiation can be replaced with horizontal and multifarious lines of relation and creolization. And how can this experience of home affect identity politics?

The quest for home or the concept of *retour* may take place in a direct way; however, sometimes *detour* can circuitously lead to *retour*. Now the question is – how is *retour* possible through *detour*? How do the various kinds of *detour* and opacity facilitate homecoming and the re-construction of home in *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*? Returning to the homeland after an interval of centuries or decades may confront the homecomer with the alienating sense of the unhomely. In this study, I am interested in analyzing the ways in which the returning character in the *Odyssey* confronts this feeling. What strategies are used in accommodating the homecomer with this uncanny sensation? How does the agency of the homecomer become important?

These are the main objectives and questions this thesis attempts to address. In this thesis, I have taken Glissant's and Bhabha's theories as tools for reading the concepts of home and homecoming in selected texts by Walcott. I believe Glissant's and Bhabha's theoretical

concepts provide a complementary system in which different aspects of home – such as trajectories of homecoming, the difficulties of return, the unhomely experience of home at the moment of *retour*, and the accommodation and reconstruction of home after *retour* – can be examined in insightful and productive ways. Bhabha's concept of the unhomely is particularly useful for describing the estrangement and unfamiliarity of home for the homecomer while Glissant's theories offer strategies of reconciliation with and re-inhabitation of the unhomely home. If home is unhomely, the various tactics of "*detour"* and "opacity" can make it "homely"; if home is alienating, different manifestations of "relation" and "creolization" can make it familiar by preparing the stage for the development of a sense of at-homeness in the returning individual. As a broad-based postcolonial theorist, Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" supplements Glissant's more particularized theorizing of the Caribbean; this can also be related to the fact that colonialism evokes similar responses from those affected by the colonial experience.

In this study, I have brought Glissant and Bhabha into dialogue with Walcott in order to re-conceptualize home and homecoming in a way that is particularly feasible for the specificity of the region's amalgam of colors, cultures, and races. The theoretical frameworks Glissant and Bhabha formulate clarify the issues of home, at-homeness, and homecoming Walcott deals with in his selected works in terms of the unhomeliness of home, strategies of reconciliation and accommodation of home, and the re-configuration of home in a multi-racial and multi-cultural context such as the Caribbean in spite of, and while recognizing, these diversities and opacities. Even though the scope of this study is conspicuously Caribbean, by highlighting particular unspoken correspondences among these authors, the findings can be expanded to those regions beyond the Caribbean which have withstood colonialism in a racially mixed context.

The application of Glissant's and Bhabha's postcolonial theories and concepts on texts such as *Omeros* seems workable as this poem concerns the post-slavery or post-plantation context of St. Lucia, in which characters struggle with the legacies of colonialism, while the *Odyssey* recounts a Greek character's tale of homecoming.[12] By taking Glissant's and Bhabha's theories as analytical lenses for reading Walcott's the *Odyssey*, this thesis aims to expand the scope of these primarily and particularly postcolonial theories to a text that does not conspicuously deal with postcolonial concerns and conditions. Walcott's Greek Odysseus' trajectory of homecoming to his native land resonates with the black character's *nostos* in *Omeros* in terms of the challenges which are on his route home, alienating sense of re-inhabitation, and the strategies he uses in order to make his *nostos* happen. In spite of the varying measures of the challenges, as I will demonstrate, both homecomings are problematic. This similarity enables me to apply Bhabha's and Glissant's postcolonial theories on this text and by so doing to extend their application.

Bhabha designates the experience of the 'unhomely' primarily for the "colonial and post-colonial condition" (13); nonetheless, he goes on to characterize it similarly for "cross-cultural initiations" (13), for migrants – those who have experienced the dispersals and displacements of diaspora. In both texts under study, however, I demonstrate how the ancestral homeland itself can also constitute a space of unhomeliness for the returning homecomer.

By applying Glissant and Bhabha's theories to Walcott's Homeric-derived oeuvre, not only do I transcend these theorists' postcolonial theories beyond time and space but in a

[12] By this portrayal, Walcott blurs the distinctions between binary values to indicate that both sides, colonizer and colonized, become heir to the abuse of colonization. Odysseus is not a colonizer but as Martyniuk argues he has the intentions of a "raider" ("Playing with Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's '*Odyssey*'" 193). C. B. Davis calls Homer's Odysseus a colonizer when he contends: "[i]nto these 'alien worlds' Homer's Odysseus arrives as explorer, 'missionary' and colonizer" (32-33). Odysseus and his crew even intrude into Kyklops cave/home and want to take his property. This can also be said about the trope of the "wound" in *Omeros* where both the colonized and ex-colonizers suffer from physical and psychological injuries. In this poem, Philoctete, Achille, Hector, Helen and poet-persona are all wounded as well as Denis Plunkett who, as the representative of White colonial power, suffers a head wound.

triangular fashion I bring Glissant and Bhabha into dialogue with classical Homer hoping to propose this study as a novel path for reading the classical trope of *nostos* through a postcolonial prism. In Glissant's terms, Walcott's texts are like rhizomes with multiple enmeshed networks through which, as I will show, these theoretical concepts become entangled with Greek literature and mythology. This practice resonates with Michael Dash's epigraph for Caribbean literature, which he describes as "multiple series of literary relationships" (*The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* 20) [13]

1.3 Literature Review

The quest for the ancestral homeland, what Jahan Ramazani calls the "recuperative quest" (*The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* 10), is traced in much of African and Caribbean literature, though due to the changes caused by European colonialism this quest has been "qualified by countervailing skepticism" (10). Studying the paradigms of hybridity in postcolonial poetry, Ramazani briefly sketches the importance of the theme of return to one's homeland despite disillusionment and "unhomeliness." Indeed, separation from home and homeland, whether individually or communally, is problematic as it changes the traditional ways of life. Theodor W. Adorno, the German intellectual who lived in exile, likewise contends that "dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible … as the traditional residences … have grown intolerable…." (38). "The house is past…. It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (39).

Ramazani considers "modernity," "European colonialism," "internalized colonialism," "war and politics," "education and travel," "artifice," and language as causes of

[13] Unlike other Caribbean writers, Glissant has not weaved Classics into the fabric of his novels and dramas. However, to him Homer's *Odyssey* is a "great book of Mediterranean intelligence" (*Poetics* xvi). Classical literature and culture have influenced a number of Caribbean intellectuals, to name but a few, George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* (1991), V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* (1959), C. L. R. James' *Beyond a Boundary* (1993), and Austin Clarke's *Growing up Stupid under the Union Jack* (2003). About Homeric appropriation in the Caribbean along with Walcott, one can name Wilson Harris whose works are rife with Homeric references: *Eternity to Season* (1978), *Carnival* (1985), *The Infinite Rehearsal* (1987), and *The Four Banks of the River of Space* (1990), and his Odyssean novel *The Mask of the Beggar* (2003). There are also other postcolonial authors from around the world who are drawn to Homeric analogies: Canadian Robert Kroetsch, Michael Ondaatje, Hugh MacLennan, and Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005).

unhomeliness (*The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* 12). He also questions the applicability of Martin Heidegger's famous description of language as "the home of being" for postcolonial intellectuals who, like Caliban, speak the language of the colonizer (13).[14] By drawing on Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity as an ongoing construct, Ramazani concludes that though return to the postcolonial home might be skeptical, "postcolonial poets recathect the precolonial past as a powerful locus of identity, yet self-consciously probe the multiplicity and contractedness of the home they dislocate in the moment of reinhabiting it" (13).

As discussed, Walcott also engages with the trope of home. He deals with home in different ways; he "writes home," writes "of home," and writes of "homecomings." In *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* (2000), Paula Burnett notes that Walcott in the first place, portrays the geographical peculiarity of "his Caribbeanness" into literature rejoicing in his own "in-placeness." Though Walcott is a well-travelled intellectual, his island home has proved to be a very important locus for him: "[a]ll my work has been about this island," thus Walcott says on his first visit to St. Lucia after receiving the Nobel Prize (qtd. in Burnett 7).[15] This is how Walcott highly treasures his Caribbeanness and the distinctiveness of his island as home; instead of advocating return to ancestral homelands or migrating to

[14] Postcolonial writers have a dilemmatic relation to the imposed language; a few, like Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o, replace English with the native tongue while others agree with Walcott that "[t]he English language is nobody's special property" (Baer 106).

[15] Hence, St. Lucia, as Walcott's home, has been the main source of inspiration for him as he has produced most of his dramas, poems, and painting there. *Omeros* is a documentary of St. Lucia as Walcott depicts its flora and fauna with his painterly eyes in order to transfix his island in the readers' imagination. By stitching the richness and wealth of his island on the World map, this postcolonial writer writes back to the empire to rectify the wrong assumption regarding the status of the Caribbean islands as "dust-specks on the sea," as Charles De Gaulle has said from the plane (Glissant, *Poetics* xiii). In *Another Life*, Walcott and his painter friend, Gregorias, swear

> that we would never leave the island
> until we had put down, in paint, in words,
> as palmists learn the network of a hand,
> all of its sunken, leaf-choked ravines,
> every neglected, self-pitying inlet
> muttering in brackish dialects. . . . (50)

the land of beyond, he argues for deep knowledge and understanding of the properties of one's birthplace.[16]

Secondly, as Burnett goes on to argue, Walcott writes of home through the eyes of an outsider, a displaced Caribbean emigrant or wanderer (15). This practice implies "a subject position of not being at home" (14). Hence, Walcott's persistence on "writing of home" implies his state of displacement and not at-homeness.[17] Adorno similarly notes, "[f]or a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live" (87). Hence, Adorno, like Burnett, links the experience of home to writing in an exilic situation. Such a designation neatly resonates with Walcott's personal and professional career. As an intellectual exile, Walcott immerses himself in his writings and by so doing creates a home for himself. Walcott's poem *The Prodigal* (2004) similarly identifies home with a "moving train, which allows the author to travel through space and to remain always at home in the realms of his poetic imagination and world literature" (Meerzon 76).

Apart from writing "of home," Walcott also writes of homecomings. He has traced a kind of affinity between Ancient Greece and the modern Caribbean as he envisions these societies as being both "affected by the rhythm of the sea and its weather," which "produce wanderers and exiles, people who long for home, women who await the return of their

[16] Burnett elaborates on a number of factors which make St. Lucia so peculiar to Walcott. St. Lucia,

> is the place in which [Walcott] spent the first eighteen years of his life, to which he has returned whenever he could, and in which he has, since the Nobel, built his own house. In Walcott's geography, the island space is first and foremost a privileged place of origin because of its natural beauty and humanity of its people. It evokes elation, independently of any comparatives or any dialectics… [St. Lucia] is his "ocelle insularum," the apple of his eye, his "darling"…. To be in the islands is, for Walcott, to feel blessed. His work can indeed be regarded as an extended praise-song (a genre characteristic of Africa), a rite celebrating the gift of that particular heritage. (*Derek Walcott* 29-30)

The second characteristic feature of the island is its "therapeutic space" (30). This island can heal the wounded souls as *Omeros* also testifies to this healing quality. Burnett further maintains that even though this island has witnessed the worst form of colonial violence and horror, it has the capacity to self-cure. This is how, through his writings, Walcott implants his displaced island in literature as a spiritual and sacred locus of growth and inspiration.

[17] Like other Caribbean writers, Walcott is an intellectual exile who spent part of each year in the United States for teaching positions at different universities and part of the year in the Caribbean but unlike other Caribbean writers he did not leave the Caribbean until mid-life. Similar to Walcott, Édouard Glissant also kept moving between Martinique, Paris, and New York.

men" (King 528-9).[18] Hence, this St. Lucian poet conjoins modern Caribbean experience to the ancient Aegean worldview and through Homeric idioms attempts to render his own image of home. Peter Burian contends that as "sea, islands, wandering, and return" are among the pervasive themes in Walcott's works, it is not surprising that the myth of Odysseus has a particular importance for Walcott ("'All That Greek Manure under the Green Bananas': Derek Walcott's *Odyssey*" 361).[19] Thus Walcott opens *Sea Grapes*:

> That little sail in light,
> which tires of islands,
> a schooner beating up the Caribbean
>
> for home, could be Odysseus,
> home-bound on the Aegean (9)

By drawing on the figure of Odysseus and his tale of homecoming, Walcott masterfully turns the trope of homecoming into an interethnic dialogue, shattering the spatial and temporal boundaries between the Old World and the New while depicting his colonial heritage and disrupting the specificity of the quest for home among the colonized and affected people.

Analyzing Walcott's works, some scholars have focused either on Walcott's treatment of home or on the ways his characters reach home. Gregson Davis in his paper, "'Homecomings Without Home': Representation of (Post)colonial *nostos* (Homecoming) in the Lyric of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott," analyzes the motif of *nostos* in terms of another classical trope, namely *katabasis* (a visit to the underworld) in Walcott's "Homecoming: Anse La Raye" (1969) and Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939/47). In this illuminating paper, this classical scholar argues how nostalgia, hope, and

[18] In fact, to Walcott, Homer's characters are archetypal: "Odysseus, the Eternal Wanderer; or Helen, the Eternal Beauty; or, in this case, Achilles, the Eternal Warrior, or Hector …. These are just magnified, very ordinary symbols …." (qtd. in Thieme 153-54).
[19] For discussion of various forms of reconfiguration of the myth of Odysseus in Walcott's works see Burian, "'All That Greek Manure under the Green Bananas': Derek Walcott's '*Odyssey*'" (361-67) where he discusses classical interplay in Walcott's *Another Life,* "Homecoming: Anse La Raye," "The Schooner *Flight*," and *Sea Grapes*.

pleasures of traditional homecomings turn into disillusionment in postcolonial homecomings as the returning poet-heroes are either misrecognized as tourists or confronted with the spiritual and cultural deadness and sterility of their homelands respectively. Davis' analytical lens falls on the complexities of homecoming in the postcolonial era due to the changes in home and the homecomer; hence, instead of elaborating on the trope of *nostos*, he analyzes *katabasis*.

In *Postcolonial Odysseys: Derek Walcott's Voyages of Homecoming*, Maeve Tynan provides a comparative study of Walcott's *Odyssey* and that of Homer, explicating their thematic differences and similarities. Among the various themes, she relates the trope of carpentry and ship-building to homecoming. In another study, *Derek Walcott (Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature)*, Edward Baugh offers a descriptive reading of Walcott's *The Prodigal*, a lyric composition which, according to Baugh, is "the culmination of all the homecomings in Walcott's poetry" (222).[20] However, as Baugh goes on to argue, *The Prodigal* is not the end of the quest and wandering. This homecoming is a "reflective, still questing and self-questioning return" (227). Here, the traveler is the poet himself who reflects on his wanderings.

Apart from the trope of homecoming, home and its re-construction has also been the subject of scrutiny of some of the published works. In the Introduction to his book, *Epic of the Dispossessed* (1997), Robert Hamner refers to *Omeros* as an "'establishment epic'" since "homecoming and the establishment of roots are paramount themes" in this work (29). Hamner argues that the kind of homecoming Walcott depicts in *Omeros* differs from the classical prototypes; while Odysseus "returns to an established kingdom" and Aeneas is

[20] The shape of *The Prodigal* is similar to *Omeros* and *Tiepolo*'s *Hound*: it is divided into parts. In the first two parts the poet-persona travels away from his island, to "elsewhere" and in the concluding part he returns to his home, "here." In fact, the relation between home and away, here and there, has been a kind of cliché in Walcott's works since *The Fortunate Traveller*.

"promised a new empire," Walcott's "humble colonialists must create a home in the aftermath of Europe's failed dream of a New World Eden, using only their bare hands, faith and imagination" (3).

Similarly Peter Burian in "'All That Greek Manure under the Green Bananas': Derek Walcott's *Odyssey*," argues that Walcott's Homeric texts, *Omeros* and the *Odyssey*, question the meaning of home but that that question is raised "in the context of the destruction of cultures and the erasure of identity" (369). Evidently, for both Hamner and Burian, home and the myth of return are problematic in postcolonial contexts as culture and identity have been drastically affected by colonialism. However, as Hamner contends, one should have a strong belief in oneself and in one's power of imagination in order to re-construct home in the New World.

Elsewhere in "Creolizing Homer for the Stage: Walcott's '*The Odyssey*,'" Hamner discusses Walcott's contribution to the quest for home which he says is influenced by his colonial background. Being the progeny of African slaves and European masters, as Hamner maintains, "Walcott appreciates the complexity of *establishing* rather than *returning* 'home'"; by so doing, this St. Lucian playwright "subtly alters the epic goal of reclaiming a kingdom" (381) (emphasis in original). Even though Hamner describes this alteration as "subtle", I believe it is very radical as colonialism has harshly altered the meaning of roots, filiation, and ancestry. However, as Hamner goes on to argue, in spite of the difficulties of return and the re-establishment of home, the agency of the homecomer is very important as he should be equipped with appropriate tools for re-constructing home in the new land. In fact, this study aims to theoretically probe the ways in which home can be reconstructed and experienced even in the context of the New World, no matter how problematic or complicated it might be.

With respect to the construction of home, in "Cultural Imperatives in Derek Walcott's Dream on Monkey Mountain" Daizal R. Samad while reading Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* argues that, for Walcott, home should be sought within the actual physical landscape of the Caribbean rather than in other places (227-28). Samad refers to Walcott's essay "What the Twilight Says: An Overture" in which Walcott argues about the "mimic" nature of the West Indians and notes that the West Indian "escape[s] into hallucination in which home is constructed on some dubious model outside the cultural/actual landscape of the West Indies" (228). That is why the West Indian hopes to leave the West Indies for the North, East (Africa), Europe, or Asia. This is how the quest for home for Walcott "depend[s] upon a resolution within the West Indian's schizoid consciousness" (227-28). Samad's contention is that the West Indian should "find some social/cultural/artistic model which would elicit the participation of the heterogeneous aspects of the region" (228). By this participation, the West Indian may obtain "a sense of self and community and exorcize the demon of alienation and homelessness" (228). Hence, Samad argues that the confluence of self and community can oppose the sense of alienation people have in the society and this can strengthen their ties to the region in spite of its heterogeneity.

In her analysis of *Omeros* and *the Odyssey* in "Derek Walcott's *Odysseys*," Rachel D. Friedman relates homecoming to a kind of feeling which opposes alienation. When the poet becomes aware of the hybrid context of his postcolonial island, Friedman argues, he abandons the imperialist concepts of roots for the advantages of cross-cultural interactions in order to be able to accommodate himself to his island (466).

This Hellenist scholar describes a particular relationship between the characteristic features of the figure of Odysseus, namely, his ambivalent desire for wandering and *nostos,* with Walcott's *Omeros* and the *Odyssey*. She argues that much of *Omeros* is a desire for

homecoming while the *Odyssey* recounts the story of a character "who is ambivalent about returning home and still driven by the lures of wandering" (455). In the postcolonial context of displacement and deracination, Friedman argues, home does not refer to a specific place or locale; it could be an internalized quest for at-homeness in the world (456). With respect to Odysseus, Friedman also notes that his desire for *retour* mitigates when it becomes clear that "home" and "away" are "two halves of the same whole" (457). She likens Odysseus to a turtle that has developed an "internalized sense of at-homeness and carries it with him whenever he goes" (467).

Furthermore, the poet-persona's ability to rejoin his St. Lucian past and integrate the two interrupted segments of the poem (Books 1-3) and (Books 6-7) is to Friedman, a sign of the accomplishment of Walcott's homecoming (464): "he comes, through the writing of the poem, to find both an internalized sense of home and the confidence in his own poetic voice that it depends on" (456). In relating home to writing, Friedman's interpretation of home corresponds with Adorno's and Burnett's.

Similar to Friedman, who reads home and homecoming with respect to Odysseus' characteristic features, John Thieme relates the notion of home to the Odyssean theme of wandering and homecoming. In his book, *Derek Walcott* (1999), this postcolonial critic contends that though Walcott's Odyssean character is a restless wanderer, he still believes in the importance of home (152). Thieme argues that the importance of Odysseus as a migrant figure for Walcott is to emphasize the urgent need to erode essentialist notions of identity and cultural affiliation. Identity and culture, as Walcott shows, are not static; they are fluid and in the process of formation (4).

As demonstrated, these scholars have analyzed home and experiences of homecoming in different ways; Hamner, Burian, and Ramazani have only commented on these concepts, while others have analyzed them from more specific perspectives. Burnett's book, as an in-depth analysis of Walcott's works, focuses mainly on the ways Walcott writes his home in literature celebrating the peculiar beauty and wealth of his island. Hence, she relates home to place and, in a very comprehensive way, analyzes various aspects of Walcott's notation of his island as home. Thieme's book is also very insightful for this study as he attentively evaluates Odysseus' role in a number of Walcott's works. Samad's work is also illuminating. In fact, I have developed his contentions, regarding the interaction between self and community for putting an end to the sense of alienation, displacement and homelessness of diverse races and cultures, within Glissant's theorizing, in particular his notions of relation, creolization, opacity, and spiral. Of merit in Baugh's study is his general commentary on Walcott's works and his elaborations on the theme of homecoming in *The Prodigal*. However, his argument in this poem is textual; he focuses more on the structure and plot of the poem. Tynan has also examined the trope of homecoming thematically and in comparison with the Homeric themes.

Among the works reviewed, my study is closest in affinity to Friedman's "Derek Walcott's *Odysseys*" in which she analyzes the motif of journeying and return in *Omeros* and the *Odyssey*. However, there are some important differences in our work in terms of scope and focus. Friedman offers a detailed analysis of the poet-persona's homecoming while I will examine Achille's trajectory of homecoming as I believe both places, Africa and St. Lucia, *can* be his home.[21] More importantly, I have analyzed the clashing impulses

[21] Walcott's spelling of "Achille" is distinct from Homer's "Achilles". In this thesis, my main focus is on Walcott's character and it is only in a few cases that I make reference to Homer's hero.

of "home" and "away" in both works. I believe much of *Omeros* is a voyage away from St. Lucia as much as it is a desire for *nostos.* This is similar to Odysseus, who is both desirous of return while having a strong wanderlust. Hence, in considering both impulses of voyaging and homecoming in these texts, I have extended Friedman's study through Bhabha's and Glissant's theories.

My study will also expand Gregson Davis' discussion in "'Homecomings without Home': Representations of (Post)Colonial *Nostos* (Homecoming) in the Lyric of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott" in which he examines the unhomeliness of *nostos* in postcolonial homecomings in terms of *katabasis*. Davis develops his argument using a classical template while my reading has recourse to postcolonial theories. I have no problem with using classical analysis to consider the trope of *nostos* in Walcott's work; as shown in Chapter Two, this approach can illumine certain perspectives that might not be addressed by postcolonial configurations. However, as I have discussed earlier, as colonialism has problematized home and its associated concepts of identity, ancestry, linearity, roots, family, place, a postcolonial examination and analysis of these issues sheds clearer light on our understanding of home.

Toward this end, I will draw from Bhabha's concept of the unhomely and Glissant's concepts of creolization, relation, errancy, rhizome, digenesis, opacity, *retour*, and *detour* to show how Walcott departs from the conventional associations of home and homeland with fixity and purity. This study will also demonstrate how Walcott remodels home amid the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the Caribbean and how, in so doing, he challenges European models of nationalism and concepts of homeland, which underpin constructions of the nation as homogeneous.

Generally speaking, home can be experienced on a personal level, as a small place for family unions, or as a communal or national experience, where home and nation, home and homeland, home and country conflate. The latter case brings us to the discourse of nationalism which began from the late eighteenth century in Europe as a concept constructed mainly on the notion of the homogeneity of the nation. However, those attempting to establish homogeneity in a nation will find it very challenging as it [homogeneity] always fails in diffracting "the diversity of the actual 'national' community for which they purport to speak" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* 135). European models of nationalism and concepts of homeland therefore cannot be viable models for reading narratives of home. George likewise notes that nationalism needs a sweeping reconceptualization of its terms, because nationalism seems to be "too restrictive a term" as "it devalues (or else gentrifies) ordinary, everyday, subaltern, "non-official" experiences of home" (15).[22]

If establishing uniformity is problematic in countries in general, how challenging is it then in the Antilles—the setting of Walcott's works? The question is how to read "home" in terms of nationalism in the Caribbean. To speak of nationalism in the postcolonial Caribbean is to establish the homogenous "we" but this homogeneity will be unstable and fragile due to the cultural pluralism and racial diversity of the region. In his Nobel Lecture, Walcott envisions the Antilles as a reassembled vase, a mosaic. This region is also recognized as a "melting pot, salad bowl, or callaloo" (Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse* 61), a land with diverse cultures, races and languages. Hence, speaking of nationalism and identifying home in terms of sameness or homogeneity in the Caribbean with its hybrid racial configurations would pose its own problems. However, unlike other Caribbean

[22] George notes that Benedict Anderson makes a series of reconfigurations in "the traditional ways of reading nationalistic events as well as a whole new array of events that are deemed nationalistic" in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (12).

intellectuals,[23] Walcott is cognizant of this reality as the very specificity of the region when he writes:

> That is the basis of the Antillean experience, this shipwreck of fragments, these echoes, these shards of a huge tribal vocabulary, these partially remembered customs, and they are not decayed but strong. They survived the Middle Passage and the Fatel Rozack, the ship that carried the first indentured Indians from the port of Madras to the canefields of Felicity, that carried the chained Cromwellian convict and the Sephardic Jew, the Chinese grocer and the Lebanese merchant selling cloth samples on his bicycle. ("The Antilles, Fragments of Epic Memory" 262-3)

This is how difficult identifying home with a homogenous nation proves to be in the Caribbean landscape with its multi-racial composition. In spite of this, there have been movements to reclaim home in terms of racial homogeneity, such as Négritude (1930s-1960s) which was founded in Paris by Aimé Césaire (from Martinique), Sédar Senghor (from Senegal), and Léon-Gontran Damas (from Guiana) under the influence of the Harlem Renaissance, a 1920s-1930s African American movement.[24] Négritude is largely a reactionary movement formed to contest discourses of African or black inferiority. Negritudists proclaimed "a concept that linked them by race rather than nationality, and that overturned traditional, negative ideas of 'blackness' by expressing pride and strength in that identity" (McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*, 42). This race-based movement was to rectify and rebuild Africanness by excavating African roots, values, myths, folklore, and history.

However, despite being an Afro-Caribbean writer, Walcott distances himself from Négritude and its celebration of a stable and unchanging precolonial Africa. For Walcott, African roots are to be recognized, not fetishized (Baer 18). Regarding Walcott's stance

[23] Stuart Hall's and Glissant's stand concur with Walcott's.

[24] Regarding Walcott's concern with Négritude see his essay, "What the Twilight Says: An Overture"; "Necessity of Négritude"; Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry* pp. 26-8; Victor Figueroa, *Not at Home in One's Home: Caribbean Self-Fashioning in the Poetry of Luis Palés Matos, Aimé Césaire, and Derek Walcott* 163; Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* pp. 59-60; Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*, pp. 42-4.

toward this movement, scholars like Rei Terada and Shane Graham contend that Walcott engages with this ideology in spite of his repudiation of it.[25] However, Walcott's engagement with Négritude is also a problematization of this race-based theory (as will be discussed in Chapter Two); it highlights the entanglement of African roots with other racial and cultural strands in the multi-racial context of the Caribbean (this entanglement will be discussed in Chapter Three through Glissant's concepts of relation and creolization). In Walcott's 1967 play, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Makak travels to Africa; in *Omeros,* Achille goes to Africa in a hallucinatory journey that drastically changes his mind's ontological framework; again, in *Omeros*, Ma Kilman, clad in formal church attire, leaves the church and goes to find an African herb—thriving in the Caribbean soil—to cure Philoctete's ancestral wound. Unlike exponents of Négritude who see Africa as home, Walcott does not intend to render Africa as the ancestral home for Afro-Caribbeans. Africa, for Walcott, is "no longer home" ("What the Twilight Says" 38). By sending Achille and Makak to Africa, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two, Walcott intends to highlight Africa's distance from the lived reality of the New World, from what is experienced in the Caribbean together with its unhomeliness, estrangement and alienation. Hence, for Walcott, Africa cannot be home.

There are some other grounds on which Walcott repudiates the ideologies of Négritude. The first is related to the nationality of its proponents: those from different colonies have experienced Africa in different ways. Senghor, the poetic voice of Africa, belongs to Africa and African mythology is his racial inheritance whereas for Césaire, a descendent of slaves, Africa is "a nostalgia, a legend, a number of intuitions which he gives shape" (21), thus argues Walcott in his 1964 essay "Necessity of Négritude." The same is true for Africans

[25] Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry* 27 and Shane Graham, "'I Had Forgotten a Continent': Cosmopolitan Memory in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" 109.

living in places other than Africa. Black people in the West, as Walcott argues, have experienced language, religion, and culture very differently from their respective African heritages; however, they try to forcefully blend with their long-forgotten African values: "As Eliot once wrote, 'you gotta use words,' and the words he uses, to stretch the points to absurdity, are the white man's words'. So, in the Western World, are his God, his dress, his machinery, his food. And, of course, his literature" (20). Hence, Walcott contends that such a spatial and temporal fusion is forced; it is not natural.

Secondly, Walcott understands Négritude to be a double marginalization ("The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry" 12) that separates blacks from other racial strands and in so doing perpetuates Manicheanism: "We cannot focus on a single ancestor" (8).[26] Négritude has also reverberated in cultural and literary terrains but Walcott calls it a "separatist" art as it opposes the "integration movement." For Walcott, Negro literature "belligerently asserts its isolation, its difference, and sometimes its psychic superiority" ("Necessity of Négritude" 20). In fact, Walcott condemns any racial division of literature, whether white or Negro (20).

Finally, and the most important point in line with the terms of this thesis, is that this Afro-centric movement zooms in on one strand of identity (i.e. African identity), which, as Walcott clarifies, is just one of many different strands of identity in the hybrid context of the Caribbean "whose writers are East Indian, white, mixed, whose best painters are Chinese, and in whom the process of racial assimilation goes on with every other marriage" (23). That is why Walcott argues that Négritude is monolilithic; hence, it cannot be the sole cradle of identity for Afro-Caribbeans even though it could be a source of pride for them.

[26] Michael Dash also notes that "[i]f there is one sound idea that the ideology of 'Négritude' puts forward, it is certainly the notion of the double alienation of the black man—that is a belief that the problem is more than political and economic, that there was a psychological and spiritual reconstruction that should also take place" ("Marvellous Realism — The Way out of Négritude" 65).

This indicates, as Ramazani likewise notes in *The Hybrid Muse*, that Walcott is aware of the hybridity of Caribbean identity and recognizes the multi-cultural and multi-racial context of the Caribbean and its reverberation decades earlier to the circulation in academic spheres of postcolonial concepts such as "hybridity, creolization, cross-culturality, postethnicity, postnationalism, métissage, and mestizaje" (63).[27]

As discussed, Walcott's aesthetic practice complies with the cross-cultural specificity of the Caribbean as he questions the narrow dimensions of binarism, either as Euro-centrism or Afro-centrism. Walcott extols the multi-cultural and multi-racial proportion of the Caribbean "the Asiatic, the Mediterranean, the European, the African" ("The Antilles" 264) and takes this feature as a source of pride and a means of dynamism and liveliness. Antonio Benítez-Rojo similarly identifies the Caribbean as "a supersyncretic referential space," where no one paradigm of knowledge can "take over the Caribbean's total cultural space" (314). Correspondingly, Walcott and Glissant—together with Chinua Achebe, John P. Clark, and Wole Soyinka—repudiate Négritude. Soyinka even goes so far as to call the advocates of Négritude "neo-Tarzanists" ("Realms of Value in Literature Art" 123). Instead of Négritude, Walcott proposes the concept of the "mulatto of style" and Glissant suggests *antillanité*, notions which match better with "the topography" of the Antilles ("The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" 12).

In "What the Twilight Says," Walcott argues that as the revival of Africanness is "simplification," one should assimilate the roots of both ancestors to be "the mulatto of style. The traitor. The assimilator" (9). The Caribbean landscape yokes manifold cultural and racial elements and creates a synthesis which opens up new vistas for the hybrid New World inhabitants. Walcott calls himself "mongrel" and is excited to see "the word Ashanti

[27] In an interview in the United States Walcott notes that: "If anyone uses the word *multiculturalism* I'm walking out of this room. We've had it in the Caribbean for a long time, and this country's just discovered it" (qtd. in Justine McConnell, "'You had to wade this deep in blood?'" Violence and Madness in Derek Walcott's The Odyssey" 54.

as with the word Warwickshire, both separately intimating my grandfathers' roots, both baptizing this neither proud nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, the West Indian" (10).[28] Walcott goes on to say: "If one went in search of the African experience, carrying the luggage of a few phrases and a crude map, where would it end?" (37). In spite of this, some critics criticized Walcott's mulatto aesthetic style as they see it "as special pleading for his own racial group - and such terminology may itself be unfortunate - his position clearly addresses the creolized plurality of the region's culture, something shared by all Caribbean people irrespective of their particular ethnic origins" (Thieme 9). Undoubtedly Walcott is neither an Afrocentric nor a Eurocentric poet; instead, he interweaves European literary heritage with afro-Caribbean folklore and by so doing develops a multi-centric approach.

Like Walcott, Glissant also focuses on the Caribbean region, especially his birthplace of Martinique, and addresses the problems Martinicans are struggling with. His concept of *antillanité* also originates from the unique topography of the Caribbean, which is known as the land of relation: "What is the Caribbean in fact? A multiple series of relationships" (139), poses Glissant in *Caribbean Discourse*. Translated as "Caribbeanness," *antillanité* is a counterpoint concept to Négritude with its singular celebration of African origins at the expense of other races. The multiplicity of races and cultures in the Caribbean, as the very specificity of the region, speaks of its violent historical background and the massive transplantation of enslaved Africans and indentured Asian laborers along with the European colonizers in the region. Contrary to Négritude's stagnant relation with other cultures and races, *antillanité* advocates an open and multi-lateral relationship with "those who also share the same space" (*Caribbean Discourse* 224), the space of the Antilles, the real and the lived experience not the nostalgic and imaginary Africa. Négritude distances and

[28] Both Walcott's grandmothers were black and both his grandfathers were white.

alienates Afro-Caribbeans from their immediate context by prioritizing Africa while *antillanité* sets the stage for relation and creolization. However, like Négritude, the concept of *antillanité* or "the experience of Caribbeanness" is problematic and Glissant is quite aware of it. As he argues, *antillanité* is:

> A fragile reality (… woven together from one side of the Caribbean to the other) negatively twisted together in its urgency (Caribbeanness as a dream, forever denied, often deferred, yet a strange, stubborn presence in our responses).
>
> This reality is there in essence: dense (inscribed in fact) but threatened (not inscribed in consciousness).
>
> This dream is vital, but not obvious. (221)

Glissant relates the fragility and instability of *antillanité* to the historical background of the islands which were colonized by different imperial powers; the issue of language and the tension among imposed colonial languages; the role of the "metropolitan power," and the horrifying presence and influence of Canada and the United States. All these factors, as Glissant observes, delay recognition and appreciation of "a Caribbean identity" and simultaneously sunder "each community from its own true identity" (222).

Négritude, mulatto aesthetic style, and *antillanite* are all concepts to unite the New World inhabitants across the Caribbean. However, a construction of a stable identity is problematic in the multi-racial and multi-cultural context of the Caribbean. Négritude not only falls within the paradigm of black and white but strongly emphasizes this Manichean pattern. To challenge this binary pattern, the concept of hybridity is put forward. Bhabha's notion of the "third space," Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "rhizome" and its reconfigured version in Glissant's theoretical essays challenge such binary constructs.

1.4 Methodology

Bhabha approaches the concept of hybridity with his theory of the third space, an interstitial space created by the "post" or the "beyond." The opening chapter of *The Location of Culture* begins with an epigraph from Martin Heidegger who argues that: "[a] boundary is not that at which something stops but … [it] is that from which something begins its presencing" (1). Bhabha locates the culture "of our times" in the domain of the beyond which is:

> neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past. . . . Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siecle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words au-dela - here and there, on all sides, fort/da, hither and thither, back and forth. (1-2)

Bhabha argues about the necessity of thinking "beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities" (2). This distance provides a space for appreciating the differences produced in the domain of culture (1-2). By proposing this in-between space, or what he calls "third space," Bhabha breaks down the singularity, polarity, authority, and hierarchy in binary values. This interstitial space prepares the ground for the establishment of new identities "and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (1-2). To elaborate on this interstitial space, Bhabha refers to Renee Green's architectural metaphor of the stairwell in a museum building; Green employs this metaphor to associate it with binary values (5). The stairwell, as the threshold or the twilight, falls between two opposites; upstairs and downstairs. Bhabha contends that the stairwell, by acting "as a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and

lower, black and white" (5). This is how Bhabha challenges the authenticity of binary values; the third space conjoins and neutralizes the differences. By the intervention of the liminal space and the creation of overlaps, this settled division becomes ambiguous, unstable, fragile and confusing. Bhabha also takes this new interstitial space as a terrain for negotiating "the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural values" (2). Quoting Green, Bhabha notes that this African-American artist also argues for the understanding of cultural differences (4). Establishing cultural hybridity by the overlap of differences leads to the emergence of interstices, which are required for the establishment of solidarity and political authorization in multi-cultural communities. To elaborate on this issue, Bhabha refers to an interview with Green who says:

> Even then, it's still a struggle for power between various groups within ethnic groups about what's being said and who's saying what, who's representing who? What is a community anyway? What is a black community? What is a Latino community? I have trouble with thinking of all these things as monolithic fixed categories. (4)

Hence, in a hybrid community, monolingualism will not work; cultural diversities should be taken into consideration in order to encompass the interests of the diverse groups. Bhabha's concept of the "post" or the "beyond" also challenges the conventional notions of home as a familiar and secure place. To be in the "beyond" is like inhabiting the in-between "where 'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world—the unhomeliness—that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (13). Bhabha's concept of the unhomely echoes Freud's notion of *unheimlich* which confuses the boundary between repressed and revealed, secret and divulged, private and public. However, Bhabha expands the referential frame of the *unheimlich* from psychology to historical involvement, from individual experience to

racial memories. The confusion, estrangement and unfamiliarity inherent in the concept of "unhomely" is the result of the unsettled boundaries between private and public, home and away, past and present; these boundaries were conventionally assumed to be settled but they are now challenged.

While Bhabha theorizes the third space to dismantle binary oppositions, Deleuze and Guattari propose the rhizome as a model to displace Manichean binarism. They write in their book of criticism that

> We are tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes. (15)

The rhizome is different from roots as it grows a "subterranean stem" and "assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers" (7) whereas a tree "plots a point, [and] fixes an order" (7). The tree denotes "filiation" while the rhizome signifies "alliance." The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and…and…and…" (25). This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be" (25).

Deleuze and Guattari see characterized in the rhizome a sense of connectivity and "heterogeneity"; a condition which provides the ground in which "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (7). Furthermore, the rhizome is structured in a way that does not prioritize any position in the way that a tree or root does. The rhizome is built on lines (8). These lines are in the form of stria, a number of parallel lines whose multiplicity discards singularity or authority of any line. To elaborate on this, Deleuze and Guattari compare the multiplicity of rhizomic lines to puppet strings which

"are tied not to the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer but to a multiplicity of nerve fibers, which form another puppet in other dimensions connected to the first" (8). These multiple lines convey the sense of connectivity and inter-dependence among all the elements of a rhizomic structure.

In proposing the metaphor of the rhizome to approach hybridity, Deleuze and Guattari are not concerned with the unity or multiplicity, fusion or division of elements as some theorists of hybridity might be led to believe: "[w]hat is important is not whether the flows are "[o]ne or multiple"—we're past that point" (23). They are neither interested in the following questions: "[w]here are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for?" (25). They believe these questions define a boundary. To answer these questions in terms of the metaphor of the staircase discussed earlier, I would like to suggest, "I am coming from downstairs and am going upstairs." This movement falls within a closed space which Bhabha calls the third space whereas a rhizome "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (25).

Bhabha's interstitial space does not prioritize any of the two binary poles and in this way dismantles hierarchy and order. However, the notion of the third space still restlessly oscillates between the set binary paradigms, between here and there, now and then. With respect to this, Ramazani argues "the concept of hybridity replicates the binaries it is meant to supersede, perpetuating such dichotomies as colonizer/colonized, or First World and Third, even as it attempts to articulate a post-Manichean space of interculturation" (*The Hybrid Muse* 181). Hence, the way Deleuze and Guattari dismantle binarism to approach hybridity is different from Bhabha's.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome has also influenced Glissant, who critically constructs his theoretical notions of errancy, relational identity, relation, creolization, and opacity based on it. Through the concepts of rhizome, rhizomic wandering, relation and creolization, Glissant challenges the authenticity of a single paradigm in the multi-cultural and multi-racial context of the Caribbean, a condition which corresponds with the reality of the Caribbean. These concepts relate people across linguistic, cultural, and racial borders while respecting cultural diversities. In fact, in theorizing his concepts, Glissant is inspired by the diffracting arc of the Caribbean Sea which opens up to the world, unlike the Mediterranean Sea, which is locked by concentrating land. The Caribbean Sea is open to horizontal and cross-cultural relation with respect to cultural multiplicities.

Unlike Bhabha and his in-between space, Glissant does not designate referential points for his concept of the rhizome. Glissant, corresponding with Deleuze and Guattari who consider the rhizome as having no beginning and no end, argues: "when we speak of a poetics of Relation, we no longer need to add: relation between what and what? That is why the French word *Relation*, which functions somewhat like an intransitive verb, could not correspond, for example, to the English term *relationship*" (Glissant, *Poetics* 27) (italics original). Hence, Glissant's rhizome is not constrained by boundaries.

As discussed earlier, Deleuze and Guattari configure the botanical metaphor of the rhizome in opposition to the tree which is rooted to a fixed spot and designates stasis and filiation; the rhizome, however, is not entangled to any point and can move freely, either in the ground or in the air. However, Glissant does not oppose rhizome to the tree-root and the notion of immovability. This Martinican theorist uses the rhizome as a model for conflicting notions of rootedness and movement. In defining identity within the rhizomic

paradigm, he argues that an individual's identity is not defined "completely" by the root; it is also configured by Relation (18). Glissant calls this identity "relation identity." Hence, unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Glissant's concept of the rhizome embodies two contradictory notions of rootedness and movement, rootedness and errancy, rootedness and transversality.

To represent his rhizomic model of transversality, Glissant proposes the figure of the errant and the notion of *errance* or "errantry" (as in the English translation): "*errance*, its ending linked for the contemporary reader with deconstruction's validation of *différance*, deflects the negative associations between *errer* (to wander) and *erreur* (error)" (translator's Introduction xvi). To Glissant an errant is neither a "traveler, discoverer, or conqueror" (20) nor a wanderer because a wanderer may get lost in his wanderings as he has no aim or purpose (translator's Introduction xvi). However, an errant is an individual with a "sacred mission" who is aware of his position "at every moment in relation to the other" (translator's Introduction xvi).

Instead of errant, Deleuze and Guattari suggest the figure of the nomad to characterize their concept of the rhizome. Glissant is also interested in the nomad but in theorizing this concept he deviates from Deleuze and Guattari who believe nomadic life frees one from social bonds while "root" necessitates "a settled way of life" (11). Hence, for Deleuze and Guattari, nomadic life is the opposite of rootedness and settlement. Glissant takes this kind of nomadism to be harmful, destructive and anarchic. He does not grant the nomad absolute freedom as he believes the nomad is "overdetermined by the conditions of his existence" (12). Nomadism, for Glissant, is a form of "obedience to contingencies that are restrictive" (12). Glissant envisions nomadism in two different forms: the "nomade circulaire" and the "nomade en flèche." In "circular nomadism," a group moves in a circular measure and this "circularity" guarantees its survival while in the latter, translated as "arrowlike nomadism,"

the aim is to invade, conquer and reterritorialize other's territory (12-13). As described, arrow-like nomadism is destructive as it has the intention of occupation and settlement which leads to the forced migration and diaspora of the indigenous people. Circular nomadism, on the other hand, is constructive as it intends to preserve the communal sense along with its religious, cultural, tribal and linguistic heritage in the new home.

The metaphor of the rhizome plays a significant role for Glissant as he theorizes his concept of the "relation" based on its features: "[r]hizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11). Hence, the rhizome sets the stage for errantry, encounter, contact, and entanglement. Evidently, the identity defined within the paradigm of rhizome will not be static; as it has "an aptitude for 'giving-on-and-with' [*donner-avec*]" (142), an aptitude for active relation with the Other. So, the age-old notion of identity as fixity or as root should be discarded. Root-identity, as Glissant explains, is nourished by filiation, so it is linear and stable as it has no chance of alteration whereas rhizome-identity is dynamic and always in process (143-44).

To further clarify this distinctive feature of "l'identité-relation," Glissant differentiates two kinds of thoughts: "thought of the Other" and "the other of Thought" (154). Thought of the Other introduces a new set of ideologies which are different from one's own thoughts. The alterity arising from the thought of the Other can be restrictive, authoritative, universal or transcendental unless it is accompanied by the other of Thought. Accepting the alterity of the Other actively will not threaten one's personal thoughts since that individual dynamically participates in this confluence by contributing his own thoughts. This interaction is like "change" and "exchange" (154) or what Glissant calls "creolization." Attuned to the multiplicity of the region, creolization is a kind of synthesis, a confluence

with respect to differences or opacities. Creolization does not neutralize the differences; rather, while negotiating the meaning in a multi-cultural context, it diffracts its constitutive elements (34), no matter how ambiguous or opaque they are.

Elaborating on creolization in the multi-cultural context of the Caribbean, Glissant prioritizes the "right to opacity" over the "right to difference." He dismantles the authenticity of the right to difference, which is used to manifest itself in genetically superior races and their supremacy over the Other. This hegemony privileges them to reduce the Other to transparency and monolinguality. However, Glissant proclaims the exhaustion of the notion of differences. Hence, he writes: "'[w]e demand the right to opacity'" (189). Constructing relation and solidarity with the Other, in Glissant's perspective, is not to "try to become the other (to become other) nor to 'make' him in my image" (193). It is only to understand and respect the opacity of the other and enter into relation with him: "[o]pacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics" (190). Hence, for Glissant, opacity is "the real foundation of Relation, in freedoms" (190). The very notion of "freedom" makes one abandon the colonial obsession of the dichotomy of the self and Other. This is how Glissant's metaphor of the rhizome integrates the concepts of errantry, relation, creolization and opacity.

Taking Glissant's concepts of rhizome and errantry as tools for examining the issue of home and homecoming in Walcott's works may, at first sight, seem contradictory. As, conventionally speaking, home is associated with fixity, stability and rootedness while the rhizome implicates the opposite notions of motion and fluidity. However, throughout his oeuvre Walcott complements the issue of home with contradictory notions of movement, wandering, and journey. His characters travel restlessly across the Caribbean, to other continents both literally and imaginatively. This leads us to the conclusion that, as Walcott

suggests, the clichéd connotation of home should be discarded for the complex reality of postcolonial experiences. The errantry Walcott portrays in his poetic or dramatic output is a quest for self-identification, regional alliance and communal responsibility. Hence, this can be taken as a distinctive feature of Walcott's travelers who—like Glissant's errants—are on a sacred mission.

Another feature of the journey for Walcott is that it should not be one way; it should be circular, similar to Glissant's notion of circular-nomadism. In an interview, Nancy Schoenberger (86-94) questioned Walcott on his clashing "youthful desire" for leaving home. Walcott answered this question by quoting Joyce who associates "sundering" with "reconciliation." Sundering, travelling, going away from home, taking a journey or, speaking—in Glissant's terms errancy—is to Walcott "a process of growth"; nevertheless, one who leaves should return to complete the circle. Underscoring the significance of leaving or taking the journey away from home, Walcott went on to say that "a writer has to do this, to delineate himself from his background, so he can be *in* it distinctly, so he can be outlined within that background" (88, emphasis original). Hemingway, according to Walcott, is "a great [American] writer, but he would have been even greater had he come back to make the final link in the circle" (88). Hence, the final circuit of the journey for Walcott is of paramount significance. This return does not need to be necessarily physical; it could be spiritual. Completing the circle, a writer experiences "first, a bleakness beyond nostalgia, and then a radiant serenity. It's a superior feeling" (88). In *Omeros* and the *Odyssey*, Walcott's fictional characters complete this final lap.

As I have already mentioned, Walcott does not take these journeys as mere wanderings; for Walcott, they are quests for self-definition, regional-identification and communal responsibility. These journeys equip the individual with experience and knowledge as the

necessary requirements for life in the postcolonial era. The growth Walcott emphasizes in his interview with Schoenberger is, in fact, what the New World inhabitants need when, on a quest for self-identification, they are sundered from their accustomed and familiar home and go to unfamiliar and unacquainted places. Hence, the agency and the competency of the homecomer are of great significance for encountering and dealing with unfamiliar situations. Walcott's characters deal with unexpected trials cleverly and strategically. I have analyzed these tactics as constitutive of *detour*, another concept Glissant theorizes, which signifies diversion or deviation from the straight course. I argue that a *retour* to home can sometimes take place through a *detour*.

In sum, what Walcott intends to show in his works is that home in the New World cannot be constructed in terms of its conventional connotative understanding; nonetheless, it is not impossible to reconstruct home in the New World. George restates Robert Frost and David Sopher's notions of home: "home is neither where they have to take you in nor where they want to take you in, but rather the place where one is in because an Other(s) is kept out" (26-7).[29] Restating George in terms of Walcott's examined texts, I also argue that home is a place where one should struggle to be allowed in.

1.5 Chapter Outline

Chapter Two, "Achille and the Unhomely Atavistic Homeland," focuses on *Omeros* to examine Achille's trajectory of *nostos* to his native land, Africa. In this chapter, I draw on Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" to highlight the distancing and alienating sense of Africa as an ancestral homeland for hybrid Afro-Caribbean individuals. Through this analysis, I demonstrate how Walcott repudiates the essentialist ideologies of Négritude by

[29] "Peace be upon Robert Frost, but home is not where they have to take you in, it is where they want to take you in. The landscape of home are the signs that one is welcome. Most of us in academic life know that whatever we may be living, we are to some degree, in the biblical phrase, "strangers in a strange land." Yet the signs in the landscape are there to read, and they can tell us that we are, after all, at home" (Sopher, The Landscape of Home 147).

dismantling the conventional association of roots with genealogy and geography and by offering his own vision of home more attuned with the lived reality of New World inhabitants. In this chapter, I also draw on Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of "topophilia," to buttress Walcott's new model of home. The kind of home Walcott reconfigures does not make home "happen" in the essential sense of the word; however, as he shows, this new paradigm can produce a sense of security, relatedness, identification, and pleasure, which are among the important features of home.

Chapter Three, "Achille and Rhizomic At-Homeness through Relation and Creolization," is particularly concerned with the ways in which Walcott, in *Omeros*, re-conceptualizes home in the multi-racial and cross-cultural landscape of the Caribbean. Even though home is essentially associated with homogeneity, Walcott's postcolonial imaginings deconstruct notions of purity, uniformity, and fixity with respect to home. This postcolonial paradigm of home, however, recognizes and respects cultural and racial opacities. It also affects the identity of the homecomers. If Africa cannot be reached as an actual physical place or as an ancestral homeland, it can be reached through other routes. This is how Glissant's concepts of relation and creolization work and in this chapter I demonstrate Walcott's contribution to these concepts. Apart from these theories which lead to the creation of the sense of at-homeness with the context of the New World, Glissant's other concepts such as opacity, errancy, digenesis, and rhizome provide the theoretical framework for this chapter.

Chapter Four, "Odysseus' *Retour* through *Detour* and Opacity," takes Glissant's theoretical concepts as heuristic tools in reading Walcott's the *Stage Version of the Odyssey* to examine Odysseus' delayed trajectory of homecoming and the counter-poetic techniques he uses to challenge the barriers of his *nostos*. In this analysis, I examine almost all the

episodes of the drama to expose Walcott's vision of home in postcolonial era. I then focus subsequent analysis on the Cyclops' story and the strategies Odysseus uses to survive his *nostos*. In this episode, Walcott demonstrates how the agency of the homecomer becomes important in dealing with the challenges of home. In this chapter, I argue how the circuitous path of *detour* and opacity can sometimes set the stage for the homecomer's successful *retour* to his native land.

Chapter Five, "Odysseus and the Unhomely Ithaca," examines other forms of *detour* in Walcott's the *Odyssey*. Apart from Glissant's concept, I draw from Bhabha's notion of the "unhomely" and Fanon's concept of "violence" to help justify Odysseus' reaction to his unhomely home. In this chapter, I argue how the interval of time makes return and re-establishment of home difficult even for those who have voluntarily left their homes and those who have established homes, kingdoms, and families. This is how, through this Greek figure's trajectory of homecoming, Walcott demonstrates the complexities of home in modern era and extends the problematics of homecoming and re-inhabitation of home to other nations as well. This is another situation in which *retour* takes place through the strategies of *detour*. In the last chapter, "Conclusion," I conclude how Walcott departs from the essentialist association of home with roots, genesis, and ancestral homeland in his Homeric-derived texts. The new model of *nostos* that *Omeros* and the *Odyssey* offer suits well the lived reality of the Caribbean landscape and the specificity of the region as the site of diaspora. Taking postcolonial theories, I demonstrated that home, for the formerly colonized subjects, cannot be sought in the ancestral homeland due to its estrangement and unhomeliness. Instead, the familiarity of the accustomed land and the sense of relation with other community members can create home and a feeling of at-homeness with the new land.

CHAPTER 2: ACHILLE AND THE UNHOMELY ATAVISTIC HOMELAND

This chapter focuses on *Omeros* to examine Achille's trajectory of homecoming to his ancestral homeland. Through Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely," I analyze the sense of estrangement and alienation Achille comes to experience in Africa to argue how Achille realizes that Africa cannot be home for hybrid Afro-Caribbeans such as himself. In what follows, I first summarize this narrative poem and then examine its sequence of plot and action.

Summarizing Walcott's multi-layered "epic of the dispossessed," with its enmeshed web of classical and modern interventions and sequence of plots and subplots, is not easy;[30] however, the narrative line of this St. Lucian poem can be categorized into five main strands which correspond with the theoretical framework in this and the succeeding chapter. Much like its characters, the storyline of *Omeros* also wanders through different locales: the first two books of this omeric tale furnish the background of the story by presenting the inhabitants of this small fishing village, Gros Îlet, in St. Lucia; Book Three relates the hallucinatory journey to Africa of Achille, one of the protagonists; the following book largely centers on the plight of American Indians; in Book Five the narrator visits major European cities; and finally this cyclical journey comes to an end in St. Lucia in Book Six and Seven. Known as the "Helen of the West Indies," this Caribbean island obtained its independence in 1979;[31] nevertheless, the dynamics of neo-colonialism in the

[30] Hamner calls Walcott's *Omeros* "epic of the dispossessed" as he believes his protagonists are "castaway" either as European, African, American or Greek. These people are uprooted and their "separate quests all center on the fundamental need to strike roots in a place where they belong" (*Epic* 3). In a similar vein, Sheldon Brivic calls *Omeros* "pan-African Homeric epic of the dispossessed" (159).

[31] As James V. Morrison illuminates:

> Following the first inhabitants-the Arawak Indians … and conquistadors from Spain-the French and English disputed "ownership" of the island over the next 200 years. Between 1664 and 1814 the island changed hands frequently: "the island was once named Helen" due to the many who lost their lives fighting for it: Walcott mentions 13 treaties …. Following the Treaty of Paris (1814), it remained British until its independence in 1979. (n. 31, p. 93)

form of exploitative tourism hover very strongly in the backstage of the story and affect the life of Walcott's simple and poor fishermen in the village in one way or another.[32]

Most of the inhabitants of Gros Îlet are descendants of African slaves. Achille and Hector are both fishermen although in the course of the story Hector sells his canoe for a passenger van to transport tourists in the village; Achille remains faithful to the sea till the end. Though the sea bonds Achille and Hector together, there is "bad blood" between them as they compete for the love of Helen, a headstrong and beautiful local girl who works as a waitress in the island's hotels. Helen used to live with Achille but when Achille shows his jealousy and anger, she leaves him for Hector. Unlike Hector and Helen, Achille cannot assimilate himself to the new pattern of life generated by the presence of tourists on the island. This leads to his isolation. This sense of alienation and loneliness intensified by Helen's abandonment paves the way for a self-exploratory mission which finally leads him to Africa through a hallucinatory journey. Hector, who has become famous for his reckless driving, crashes his car and dies in Book Six. After his tragic incident, Helen, pregnant with Hector, returns to Achille's home.

Philoctete is another fisherman in Walcott's imaginary community with a festering wound on his shin whose "swelling came from the chained ankles / of his grandfathers" (19). This wound symbolizes the traumatic Atlantic crossing and enslavement. In spite of Philoctete's disbelief in a cure for his inherited scar, Ma Kilman heals it by applying

[32] On Walcott's denunciation of tourism industry see "The Antilles, Fragments of Epic Memory: The 1992 Nobel Lecture"; see also George B. Handley's interview with Walcott, "'The Argument of the Outdoor Motor': An Interview with Derek Walcott" pp.127-39; Paula Burnett, *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* pp. 53-3; Ian G. Strachan, *Paradise and plantation: Tourism and culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*; Natalie Melas, "Forgettable Vacations and Metaphor in Ruins: Walcott's '*Omeros*'"; Anthony Carrigan, "Postcolonial Tourism, Island Specificity, and Literary Representation: Observations on Derek Walcott's *Omeros*"; for discussion of ecotourism in the Caribbean within the arc of Kincaid's *A Small Place*, Walcott's *Omeros* and Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (in particular the essays on 'The Burning Beach' and 'Distancing, Determining') see Jana Evans Braziel, "Caribbean Genesis in Caribbean Literature and the Environment (Jamaica Kincaid, Derek Walcott, Édouard Glissant)" pp.110-26

medicine derived from an African plant.[33] Known as "a *gardeuse*, sybil, obeah-woman" (58), Ma Kilman runs a bar in Gros Îlet, aptly called "No Pain Café." Her bar is a center for community gatherings where Seven Seas, Philoctete and other fishermen get together.

A former fisherman, Seven Seas or Omeros/Homer is also a ubiquitous character who has been spotted in various places. Like an African griot, this ageless character sings the painful litany of the Middle Passage in Book Three (148-49);[34] as a Sioux shaman, he recalls dancing among the Ghost Dancers in America in Book Four (164, 318); with a manuscript of *Odyssey*, he is also seen in the Underground Station in London in Book Five (193). His blindness links him further to the Greek bard (Homer) and St. Lucia's blind patron. The narrator, identified as Walcott himself, is also a wanderer who is advised by the ghost of his father to travel "in a circular pattern" (188). As he wanders Euro-America and parts of the Mediterranean, he recounts hi/stories with the thematic of displacement, dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, and exile.[35]

Not all the villagers are of African-descent in this West Indian poem. This fact is but one of the major features which distinguishes Walcott's sprawling narrative from the work of other postcolonial authors who mainly portray the harrowing repercussions of colonialism on post-slavery or post-plantation life. Major Dennis Plunkett, a pensioned British officer, who suffers a head-wound caused in the Second World War while serving in North Africa, adopts this island as his new home shortly after the war and lives in its Afro-Caribbean

[33] Breslin relates Ma Kilman to Athena as she looks for "the moly-like herb" that cures Philoctete's wound in the same way that this Greek goddess helps Odysseus escape from Circe's island by giving him moly (250). In her analysis of non-Greek names in *Omeros*, Burnett relates Ma Kilman's name to a character (Miss. Doris Kilman) in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. For more on this sustained analogy and Ma Kilman's account of healing see Paula Burnett, "Walcott's Intertextual Method: Non-Greek Naming in *Omeros*" pp. 176-87. For an account of healing see Robert D. Hamner, "Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" 241; see also Victor Figueroa, *Not at Home in One's Home: Caribbean Self-Fashioning in the Poetry of Luis Palés Matos, Aimé Césaire, and Derek Walcott* pp. 173-74.

[34] Ron Ramdin, a historian, novelist and biographer, gives a historical account of this term in his book, *The Other Middle Passage: Journal of a Voyage from Calcutta to Trinidad, 1858.* The trauma of the Middle Passage is also recounted in Edward. K. Brathwaite's trilogy *The Arrivant*. Glissant also features this historical event in his short story "The First Voyage" (1994).

[35] For more on the wanderings of the poet persona refer to Rachel D. Friedman's *Derek Walcott's Odysseys.*

community along with his Irish wife.[36] Infatuated with Helen/island's beauty who used to work as a maid in their house, together with "an increasing guilt over the British colonial legacy" (Victor Figueroa 166), Plunkett, in a parallel move with the narrator, decides to give voice to Helen/island. Hence, he engages himself with an historical project.[37]

Nature can also be regarded as a character in this narrative poem; sea, flora (trees, seeds, plants) and fauna (sea-swift, ants) play a significant role in the development of the plot.[38]

2.1 Journey to Africa

As in the actual St. Lucia, Walcott, in his imagined community, shows how the dynamics of neo-colonialism, including tourism, affect and corrupt the simple life of the people in the village. In *Omeros*, Walcott deals with the corruptive consequences of tourism in the village. Among the characters, Helen and Hector easily adjust themselves with the new culture thriving in St. Lucia by mingling with tourists and working for them while Achille cannot adapt himself with the present-day condition of life in the touristic island of St. Lucia. To illustrate the corruption of tourism and the deterioration of the simple village life, Walcott describes a festival—a Saturday night block fête (109-115)—in which tourists and villagers mingle. On Saturday nights, Gros Îlet prepares for the fête with "barbecues of chicken and conch," "Frenetic DJs," "domino games," and "Tourists, in

[36] For a detailed elaboration of the symbolic name of Major Plunkett and its parallels with his Irish namesake (Joseph Mary Plunkett) see Paula Burnett, "Walcott's Intertextual Method: Non-Greek Naming in *Omeros*" pp. 173-74. Burnett also traces Maud's name in literary works by relating it to Maud Gonne and Tennyson's famous poem "Come into the garden, Maud." See p.174.

[37] Plunkett investigates the parallels and coincidences between the Trojan War and the famous Battle of the Saints fought for the possession of St. Lucia/Helen while the narrator cloaks the island in metaphor. Both projects fail at the close of the poem as the so-called historian and the poet does not see the island/Helen in her own terms:

> … There, in her head of ebony,
> there was no real need for the historian's
> remorse, nor for the literature's. Why not see Helen
>
> as the sun saw her, with no Homeric shadow,
> swinging her plastic sandals on that beach alone,
> as fresh as the sea wind? Why make the smoke a door? (271)

[38] For the relation between 'ants' and 'sea-swift' see Robert D. Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed: Derek Walcott's Omeros* 43; for the role of sea-swift and its comparison with Athena see Maeve Tynan, "Mapping Roots in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" pp. 238-40; see also John Thieme, *Derek Walcott* pp.185-86; for sea-swift as "hyphen, equator, and meridian" see Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry* pp. 15-17.

seraphic white" (109-10). The intruding presence of tourists has separated Achille from the villagers and village activities. He does not go for the festival but it sickens him when he indignantly watches Helen from a distance who walks, dances and whores herself among the tourists.[39] First, he decides to share his sense of loneliness with Seven Seas whom he envies as he is blind to the corruption of innocence in the island but then he goes to the sea and watches Helen:

> through flying stars from the coalpots, the painted mouth
> still eagerly parted. Murder throbbed in his wrists
>
> to the loudspeaker's pelvic thud, her floating move.
> She was selling herself like the island, without
> any pain, and the village did not seem to care
>
> that it was dying in its change, the way it whored
> away a simple life that would soon disappear
> while its children writhed on the sidewalks to the sounds
>
> of the DJ's fresh-water-Yankee-cool-Creole. (111)

Achille's pain intensifies as DJs scream: "WE MOVIN', MAN! WE MOVIN'!" (112) but Achille broods over this deteriorating "move" as he sees flour changing into cocaine and daughters to whores (112). The future is gloomy. This is what Achille ponders as he sees Helen like a bright meteor fading unknown in the village. When Helen returns home after blocko, Achille throws his lance of resentment to her castigating her: "[m]ore men plough that body than canoe plough the sea" (115). Helen remains silent that night but soon after leaves him for Hector.

Even though the villagers are mostly of African-descent, Africa is forgotten. Instead, people attune themselves with the rhythms of life in the New World. But Achille is different. There is a vague sense of void which distances him from such activities. His

[39] Hamner relates Achille's wrath to Homer's Achilles' who did not back Troy's siege after losing Briseis and stayed in his tent (*Epic* 67).

sense of attachment to the sea is greater than that to the land and the other islanders. He has a canoe and still works with the sea even though the young have lost their interest in canoes which "was longtime shit. Once it came from Africa" (112). A day after the block fête, Achille goes fishing, while lost in thought of Helen. But this fishing trip is different from everyday fishing as his dream-journey to Africa happens in this sequence of the story.[40] In this hallucinatory journey, Achille's soul flies to Africa in order to redeem his ancestral birthright and to glue together the broken fragments of the lost history of Africa, an excavation, which as Walcott shows, will assist him in healing his amnesia of Africa and Africanness.[41] Before analyzing Achille's journey to Africa, I will first discuss the scholarly debate regarding the kind of journey he takes in Africa.

Scholars have described Achille's journey "Back to Africa" in various ways; some have considered it as *nostos* while for others it falls within the paradigm of *katabasis*. *Katabasis* is an epic motif. In Hall and McConnell's definition, *katabasis*,

> has featured in, among others, Virgil and Dante, Homer and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, as well as in the works of Freud and Marx. During a *katabasis*, the traveller undergoes a series of trials through which he is metaphorically destroyed and reborn anew, often with new strength or knowledge. The *Odyssey*'s *katabasis* sees the hero descend to the underworld, ostensibly to question Teiresias about his route home. As he meets his mother there, as well as some famous warriors who had died at Troy, the episode emphasizes a reassessment of the Iliadic code, particularly seen in Achilles' volte-face regarding the decisions he should have made. The sequence renews Odysseus' confidence, links him once more to his past, and provides him with advice for the future. (354)

[40] Comparing Achille's hallucinatory *katabasis* in Africa with that of Aeneas in Virgil's epic, Gregson Davis notes: "[t]he dream-like quality of Achille's experience of *katabasis* may be compared to the ambiguous account in the *Aeneid* in the famous passage in which Virgil casts retrospective doubt on the ontological status of Aeneas' underworld visit by representing his hero as leaving the realm of Pluto through the gates of ivory, or false dreams" ("'Homecomings without Home'"195).

[41] This African journey, to McConnell recalls "'Back to Africa' campaigns'" which Garvey revived in the 1920s while it existed from the beginning of the nineteenth century (*Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*, pp. 119-120).

McConnell, like Gregson Davis, Hardwick, and Friedman, does not take Achille's hallucinatory African voyage as *nostos*.[42] To her, this journey is "*katabasis,*" a "nekuian *katabasis,*" a rite which will guarantee Achille's *retour* to his "true home" in St. Lucia (*Black Odysseys* 120). Nekyia is an ancient Greek rite for a journey into underworld in search of light. In Nekyia and *katabasis,* the traveler has the chance to negotiate with the dead but the actual journey happens only in *katabasis*. After this journey, as McConnell argues, Achille develops a deeper understanding of his situation in the New World as an individual as he envisions the world with a transformed perception (120-21). In her contention, McConnell brings up Walcott's own notion that "return to Africa" is an inferior idea given that the West Indies, by itself, is a reality, though a "mosaic" model which we must explore (Rodman 240).

I have no quarrel with McConnell's reasoning regarding Walcott's denounciation of Négritude. Despite her argument there, however, I want to suggest that Achille's journey to Africa is better viewed as a *nostos* not a *katabasis.* This idea is in line with Terada's and Burian's who have similarly taken this journey as *nostos*;[43] where it differs from them is in my argument that the journey is a "katabatic *nostos,*" a concept I have borrowed from Gregson Davis. In "'Homecomings without Home,'" Davis analyzes the theme of *nostos* in Césaire's *Cahier d' un retour au pays natal* (1939/47) and Walcott's "Homecoming: Anse La Raye" (1969). This classical scholar reads the motif of *nostos* within the framework of *katabasis* reasoning that the *retour* of the poet-narrator to his homeland is similar to *nostos* as most Caribbean writers are exilic writers; however, since this return is to the postcolonial context, it is katabatic. It is like a visit to the underworld, to the domain of the dead where

[42] Gregson Davis, "'Homecomings without Home': Representations of (Post)Colonial *Nostos* (Homecoming) in the Lyric of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott" 195; Lorna Hardwick, "Walcott's Philoctete: Imagining the Post-Colonial Condition" pp. 105-6; Rachel D. Friedman, "Derek Walcott's *Odysseys*" 459.

[43] Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry* 203; Peter Burian, "'All That Greek Manure under the Green Bananas': Derek Walcott's' *Odyssey*" 368. Burian takes Achille as Odysseus and his dream voyage as "his *nostos*, his return home; at the same time [Achille] is Telemachus in search of his father; both aspects are explicit in *Omeros*" (368).

even the last residue of the indigenous culture and ancestral heritage are dying, defunct or gone (196).

Katabasis is a necessary stage in an epic hero's maturation but when an epic hero visits the underworld, as in traditional heroic poems, from the outset he knows that it is a temporary stop where he will be told about the future course of events and afterwards he is to resume his corporeal life but with a renewed perception.[44] The realm of the dead cannot be *home* for the visiting epic hero; in Achille's case Africa could be—and indeed is—his true homeland but due to the violent intervention of colonialism, enslavement and Middle Passage, he has been deprived of his birthright. By taking Achille's journey as katabatic *nostos*, another important issue is also illumined. As *nostos*, this journey practically demonstrates the ways in which Walcott discards Africa as home for Afro-Caribbeans; as *katabasis*, it demonstrates the unreachability of Africa—that it is as a dead realm for Afro-Caribbeans like Achille. Having developed such an assumption, I shall then proceed to Achille's journey to examine the ways in which this Afro-Caribbean character experiences his ancestral homeland.

A sea-swift guides Achille to Africa by "widening the joy that had vanished from his work" (125). Her presence at first fills Achille with joy and bliss but afterwards Achille realizes that the song of this restless bird is intonated with sorrow. Walcott sends Achille home, to Africa, to an unknown past and ambivalently to an unfamiliar place, a Middle Passage from the New World to the Old. In this epic within an epic, as in traditional heroic formulae, Achille recalls a catalogue of names, the names of his African brothers who did not survive the crossing (127-28). This recollection may sound abrupt but the sea revives

[44] Achille's descent to the underworld is like Odysseus' *katabasis* in Book XI of Homer's *Odyssey* and the Virgilian Aeneas' descent in Book VIII in the *Aeneid* "in which Aeneas in fact journeys up the Tiber to visit Evander and finds a model Greek colony in which he is told about justifications for conquest" (Hardwick, "Classical Texts in Post-Colonial Literatures: Consolation, Redress and New Beginnings in the Work of Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney" 242).

Achille's mindfulness of the past as the sea is repository of history and ancestral memory, a memory which Glissant calls "unconscious memory" (*Poetics* 7); then Achille visualizes the African slaves being disgorged from each swell. The ancestral memory and the violence of the history restored in Achille's mind sicken him.[45] As the Caribbean has suffered a violent past, Walcott, in *Omeros* as well as in his essays, repudiates a simple revival of the past. In his Nobel Lecture walcott proclaims: "[w]e make too much of that long groan which underlines the past…. The sigh of History rises over ruins, not over landscapes, and in the Antilles there are few ruins to sigh over, apart from the ruins of sugar estates and abandoned forts" ("The Antilles" 262). Walcott argues that the Caribbean people should observe the natural scenery of the region as refreshing and energizing elements in order to forget and move beyond the atrocities of the past.

The recollection of the past, of history, and his torn lineage to Africa affects Achille's mind. Achille, like Shabine in Walcott's "The Schooner *Flight*" and Odysseus in *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*, is both a sea-farer and a hi/story teller who recounts the history of Africa and his unforgettable tribal memory; a history buried in the Atlantic Ocean along with the countless corpses at the bottom of the cold sea. His journey begins when the ghost of his father appears to awaken his consciousness to his lost identity, roots, and origin (130). His memories take him into the distant past, to three hundred years ago. Then he tries to recall and recite the names of the river god and the tree god but he could not. This oblivion makes him very ashamed. He then gradually remembers this "sunburnt river" in Congo (135). He sees some naked Africans who silently stare at his canoe. Then the prow stops, finding a stake:

[45] For discussion of memory/postmemory as a postcolonial concept with particular reference to Glissant's contribution to this concept refer to Bonnie Thomas "Édouard Glissant and the Art of Memory".

and now each cheek ran with its own clear rivulet

of tears, as Achille, weeping, fastened the bow
of the dugout, wiped his eyes with one dry palm,
and felt a hard hand help him up the shaking pier.

Half of me was with him. (135)

At this sequence, the poet-narrator interrupts the narrative to express his concern for Achille.[46] Evidently Achille's journey across time and space has its own forebodings as he is shown to be at the neither-nor state of happiness and unhappiness in his homeland. As the story advances, Achille's homecoming proves to be "unhomely," a concept which Freud outlines as "*unheimlich*" and Bhabha as "unhomely." In the chapter entitled "Unhomely Lives: The Literature of Recognition" in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha reworks Freud's notion of the "*unheimlich*" and extends its application from psycho-analytical discourse to that of postcolonial theory.[47] In the following section, I will first discuss Freud's conceptualization of the idea of the "unhomely" and then will proceed to Bhabha's appropriation of this concept. The concept of the "unhomely" will also be employed for reading Odysseus' unhomely *nostos* to his native land in Chapter Five.

2.2 The Unhomely

In his 1919 paper, "The Uncanny," Freud surveys the dictionary meaning of *un/heimlich* a concept related to "the qualities of feeling" which deals with restrained and "subdued emotional impulses." Definitively associated with something that provokes a sense of fear and horror (219), *unheimlich* sometimes also ambivalently overlaps with its opposite,

[46] In composing *Omeros*, Walcott not only borrows the *terza rima* verse form from Dante's *Divine Comedy* "but also the half-detached authorial voice, standing back from the action but engaged with it" (Hardwick, *Translating Words, Translating Cultures* 106). This is one of the reasons that Walcott believes *Omeros* is not an epic as the author is a character in the narrative. On denunciation of epic status of *Omeros* see Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* 519.

[47] *Unheimlich* is a German term translated into "uncanny" in English; it literally means 'unhomely' but as Freud argues "uncanny" is not the precise equivalent of *unheimlich* (219).

heimlich (226).[48] The formulations suggested for this term are as follows: the uncanny "is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220). *Unheimlich* can also refer to everything that should remain undisclosed but has been revealed (224). Bhabha constructs his notion of "unhomely" on this formulation. Finally, Freud takes uncanny as "something which is secretly familiar ... which has undergone repression and then returned from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfils this condition" (245).

By investigating all these formulations, it becomes clear that the common denominator among them is the idea of repression, which Freud relates to personal emotions, fears, feelings, and memories repressed during infancy or childhood. He believes the recurrence of the repressed sensation creates a kind of anxiety that leads to the uncanny situation. While Freud relates repressed feelings of the past to the individual's personal experiences and anxieties, Bhabha extends the frame of reference of this concept from psychological experience to historical, racial and cultural dimensions.[49] The past, for Bhabha, does not merely refer to the individual's past, or to the anxieties experienced personally at early ages; it encompasses traumas experienced not only personally but also collectively. The traumas of history, colonization, massive migrations, involuntary transplantations, uprootings, diaspora, and exile are the themes which haunt Bhabha's theorizing. From time to time, memories of the past resurface and stir "unhomely" emotions.

Apart from expanding the scale of Freud's notion of the repressed from personal to collective experience, Bhabha's postulation of the "uncanny" has further implications. As discussed earlier, "unhomely" for Bhabha refers to everything that ought to have remained

[48] The case is similar with its English equivalent 'canny' which as Freud quotes from the OED "may mean not only 'cozy' but also 'endowed with occult or magical powers'" (225).
[49] In his discussions, Freud lays stress on childhood fears and anxieties, mainly castration anxiety which he explicates in E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Sandman*.

concealed but has come to light (*The Location* 14-15); it can then be inferred that the realm of privacy has been invaded. In these unhomely circumstances, the boundaries between binary oppositions are blurred and "private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy" (19). As the past is tormenting for the colonized subject, its intervention and interruption of the present flow of time through memories is damaging. Such interactions and intimacies question "binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed" and "are linked through an 'in-between' temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history" (19). Hence, it can be inferred that the world is "unhomely" for the colonized; the anxiety created in such a situation affects the mind and the psyche of the individual who struggles with the uncanny until s/he manages to somehow bring about some changes or settle down the issues. But sometimes the weight of the past is beyond control and leads to madness, a discussion which I will return to in Chapter Five as "*delire verbal*" (verbal delirium).

In this way, Bhabha postcolonizes Freud's psychological notion in order to equip himself with a critical lens enabling the reading of unhomely moments experienced by colonized peoples; those who deal with temporal and spatial relocations and those who suffer the vicissitudes of history. Now, before reading Achille's trajectory of homecoming through Bhabha's theoretical framework, one particular point should be discussed. As Britton argues, the concept of the unhomely is generally associated with women because of their traditional association with the private sphere of the home (120). In like manner, Bhabha, himself, zooms his analytical lens on female characters.[50] However, in this analysis, I want to suggest that both genders can come across and experience the uncanny

[50] Bhabha explicates the phenomenon of "unhomeliness" in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*; Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*; Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

while returning to their estranged but once familiar homes or homelands. Hence, as will be demonstrated, the context for such feelings and sensations is wide enough to encompass the experiences of both genders. Therefore, in this chapter, I will read Achille's trajectory of katabatic *nostos* to Africa through Bhabha's concept of the unhomely to investigate how Achille comes to accommodate himself with that experience. Now I shall continue the discussion by highlighting the unhomely moments Achille encounters in his ancestral homeland.

2.3 Unhomely *Nostos*

Although, ancestrally, Achille belongs to Africa, his natal land looks unfamiliar to his hybrid Caribbean eyes in the same way that he himself looks strange to his tribesmen. Essentially speaking, home is associated with familiarity but the home/homeland Walcott presents to Achille is *unheimlich*. It is not only the scenery, his garments or the people but above all, it is his arc of mind that differs from the Africans as it is shaped in the socio-cultural context of the Caribbean. In what follows, I will trace the manifold reverberations of *unheimlich* in his homeland.

2.3.1 Cultural Unhomeliness

The very first trial Achille encounters in Africa is the question of his identity and his name which is featured as an important topic both in postcolonial studies as well as in Walcott's works. In "The Schooner *Flight*," Shabine,[51] the sailor-narrator, believes that as the Middle Passage has fragmented nations, tribes, and families, the question of roots, origin as well as name go unanswered:

> Next we pass slave ships. Flags of all nations,
> our fathers below deck too deep, I suppose,

[51] Shabine is mixed-raced while Achille is Afro-descent as well as Afolabe. However, as is often the case in Walcott's work, they share a common heritage.

> to hear us shouting. So we stop shouting. Who knows
> who his grandfather is, much less his name? (244)

In another poem, "Names," Walcott describes how his race entered the New World without a "horizon" and how empty-handed they were left on the shores of the alien world with their names erased by the waves (306). In his African journey in *Omeros*, Achille meets his father, Afolabe, who has forgotten the name he has given to his son, so he questions Achille of his name.[52] Achille tells his name to his "life-giver" (136); then Afolabe inquires about its meaning. Achille says:

> Well, I too have forgotten.
>
> Everything was forgotten. You also. I do not know.
> The deaf sea has changed around every name that you gave
> us; trees, men, we yearn for a sound that is missing. (137)[53]

Achille blames the sea for this loss and oblivion but this does not convince his father.[54] Afolabe believes there is a philosophy and a virtue behind each name; if a person does not know the meaning of his name, that person is almost "nothing." Achille is the progeny of slavery; his ancestors' enslavement and involuntary transplantation to the New World has crucially affected their identity. Being thrown into an alien world with bare hands, these deported people turned into "nobodies" as they lost the ensuring links to their ancestral lands, their indigenous language, culture, rituals, and securing gods. As nobodies, these people were forced to adopt the language and culture of the colonizers while they never stopped cherishing their past memories. Hence, the term nobody/nothingness has a

[52] Breslin also takes Afolabe and Achille's discussion of naming and its meaning as "the most extended discussion of language in *Omeros*"; separation from Africa, Breslin maintains, "has left not only empty hands but empty words as well" (266). For a detailed discussion of the importance of naming in *Omeros* as well as in *The Odyssey* see Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939.* pp. 124-26; Peter Burian, "'All that Greek Manure under the Green Bananas': Derek Walcott's *Odyssey*" 368; Victor Figueroa, *Not at Home in One's Home: Caribbean Self-Fashioning in the Poetry of Luis Palés Matos, Aimé Césaire, and Derek Walcott* pp. 163-64; Joe Moffett, "'Master, I was the Freshest of all Your Readers': Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and Homer as Literary Origin" pp. 14-16; Derek Walcott, "Reflection on *Omeros*" pp. 238-39; Stefania Ciocia, "To Hell and Back: The Katabasis and the Impossibility of Epic in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" 92; John B.V. Sickle, "The Design of Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'" pp. 8 and 23; Emily Greenwood, "Arriving Backward: the Return of *The Odyssey* in the English-Speaking Caribbean" pp. 200-2.

[53] As Hofmeister contents the missing sound is symptom of "the deracination of the tribe" ("Iconoclasm, Elegy and Epiphany" 119).

[54] Separation from Africa has not only emptied the hands of the transplanted subjects but it has also emptied the words (Breslin 266).

particular meaning in the Caribbean context as the people in this region are called nobodies. V.S. Naipaul, a Trinidadian-British writer, remarks in his novel, *The Middle Passage*, that history is constructed on "achievement and creation"; hence, as the West Indies lack these features, nothing has been produced there (29). Walcott blasts this concept of nobody/nothingness in his Nobel lecture by criticizing among others, the travel writers, who still see the Caribbean as "illegitimate, rootless, mongrelized" ("The Antilles" 262). In "Reflections on '*Omeros*,'" Walcott writes about the importance of names for many cultures:

> There are cultures that would ask, "What is "Joe"? … What is the meaning of that sound?" For somebody not to know the meaning of the sound of his or her name is to be nameless, not to have an identity. These are cultures in which the meaning of names is just absolutely crucial. What has been the experience in this part of the world of losing your name, of changing your name? (238)

Achille is brought up in the Caribbean, an archipelago which has stood the worst brutalities of colonialism ever, a context in which people still struggle with the legacies of colonialism and its ensuing neo-colonial dynamics. In such a context, the question of naming may not sound important for the people let alone its meaning.[55] Achille has never thought of the meaning of his name and his lineage until the time Afolabe questions him. This itself indicates a cultural clash between Africa and the New World. Achille's unconvincing remarks bring the tribe to the verge of grief who fear the amnesia. Achille is dumb as he could not justify his father:

> There was no answer to this, as in life. Achille nodded,
> the tears glazing his eyes, where the past was reflected
> as well as the future. The white foam lowered its head. (139)

[55] Upon arrival slaves were renamed by slave owners. By giving new names for the slaves, as McConnell notes, the colonial masters deprived them of their identity. After shattering their sense of individuality, they targeted family units and then, in a measured way, they separated groups who spoke one language. Through these calculated and planned techniques, colonizers intended to confuse the slaves and to "transform them into a blank canvas for their owner's wishes" (*Black Odysseys* 125).

He nods and this means that he accepts his father's reasoning. This lack of knowledge, though may sound unimportant in the Caribbean, seems to be problematic in the African context. Now that Achille is back home, this cultural clash stirs an unhomely moment whereas supposedly an individual should be familiar with his/her indigenous cultural values while in Africa Achille comes to understand that he does not have such a familiarity. In other words, his engagement with the Telemachus-motif in Africa situates him in the interstitial state somewhere between two geographic spaces; Africa and the Caribbean; two value systems: Old World and the New. This dialectic in-betweenness makes Africa unhomely as his consciousness has just awakened to his long-forgotten African values. The idea of oblivion or indifference to one's indigenous values along with the internalized sense of inferiority and passive submission are all the herald of life under the colonial system. This is quite evident in Achille's speech:

> I do not know what the name means. It means something,
> maybe. What's the difference? In the world I come from
> we accept the sounds we were given. Men, trees, water. (138)

Through the character of Achille and the unhomely sense of life he experiences, Walcott portrays how colonialism has castrated the Africans from their cultural heritage. Lack of correlation between one's name and its meaning, between a signifier and its signified is like a "social death" similar to slavery (Breslin 266). Though Achille still has no idea about the connotation of a name he carries, this conversation deepens his perception of the importance of naming.

2.3.2 Religious Unhomeliness

In the colonial era, colonizers not only imposed their language on their colonies, religion was also another herald of this invasion. Once at dawn, Achille climbs a track of yams to

get to the "sacred circle of clear ground / where the gods assembled" (140). He stands there and calls out the names of the African gods but much to his disappointment, there is no reply to his recitation. Then, to his embarrassment, he sees "a tree-hole, raw in the uprooted ground" (140). This "uprooted ground" reminds Achille and the readers as well of the very opening scene of the poem (3-8) where Achille along with other Afro-Caribbean fishermen unknowingly wound and kill these long-standing sacred pillars in order to carve them into the canoes for work and provision.

> "This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes."
> ...
> "Once wind bring the news
>
> to the *laurier-cannelles,* their leaves start shaking
> the minute the axe of sunlight hit the cedars.
> because they could see the axes in our own eyes.
>
> Wind lift the ferns. They sound like the sea that feed us
> fishermen all our life, and the ferns nodded 'Yes,
> the trees have to die.' So, fists jam in our jacket,
>
> cause the heights was cold and our breath making feathers
> like the mist, we pass the rum. When it came back, it
> give us the spirit to turn into murderers. (3)

Felling cedars in St. Lucia for canoes is not regarded as blasphemy whereas trees are worshiped as gods in some African spiritual beliefs. These Afro-Caribbean people have lost their faith in these elements due to the intervention of colonialism. Achille has been unwittingly engaged with this religious sacrilege as he was raised under Roman Catholicism in his island and is unaware of his ancestors' pagan and polytheistic practices. In Africa, Achille becomes stuck between two religious systems: the African gods and "an albino god" (139). His memory does not assist him in recalling his African gods; an amnesia which unwittingly engages him in the blasphemous act of wounding tree gods. On the other hand, he does not have a strong and supported belief in the colonial God, an issue

which I have related to the misspelling on his canoe, "*In God We Troust.*" If he whole-heartedly believed in the "albino god," he would *trust* him and would not suffer the oblivion of African gods. Here is how Said's contention of exilic life strikes an echo with Achille's state in St. Lucia: Achille is "in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half involvements and half detachments" ("Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals" 49). This statement clearly describes Achille's or other Achille-like individuals who are in the interstices of hybridity and exilic life. Being half-way between African and the Caribbean religious beliefs makes Africa *unheimlich* to Achille. He should have been familiar with his home religion but his postcolonial upbringing has torn the links to this securing element. Therefore, religion is another factor which alienates him from other Africans and makes him unhappy in his homeland. This religious experience further intensifies his burden; when gods ignore his incantation, Achille painfully notices that he is unwanted in Africa, in his ancestral homeland and this makes him sick.

2.3.3 Temporal Unhomeliness

The sense of the unhomely can be experienced with respect to the timespan as well. This is because Achille has travelled to the past of Africa, to three centuries ago and his cognizance of the future course of events intensifies his pain. Once at dawn when Achille wakes up:

> The sadness sank into him slowly that he was home_
> that dawn-sadness which ghosts have for their graves,
>
> because the future reversed itself in him.
> He was his own memory, the shadow under the pier. (141)

Ironically—instead of happiness, a sense of security, and familiarity—his ancestral homeland makes him melancholic and forlorn. This time his gloomy state is related to his temporal in-betweenness, the third space which is unstable and dialectic. Achille's mind hovers between the past and the future, memory and prediction, as he has travelled to the past of Africa. The past torments in the same way that the future hurts as he is aware of the atrocities which would befall his fellow tribesmen. On the one hand, as Walcott describes, Achille is like "a limb [trying to] remember the body from which it has been severed" ("The Antilles" 261-62), on the other hand, he tries to forget the future though these two dimensions of time are confusingly interrelated at this portion of the story. His awareness of the upcoming events and the temporal in-betweenness further disturbs his soul and separates him from his African brothers. In order to forget the horrifying future-in-the-past or past-in-the-future and to change his gloomy mood, he decides to engage with the activities of the village. He goes fishing,

> with the other shadows, saying, "Make me happier,
> make me forget the future." He laughed whenever
> the men laughed in their language which was his
>
> also. They entered the river, waist-deep. They spread
> in a half-circle, with the looped net. There was peace
> on the waveless river, but the surf roared in his head. (141)

He joins the fishermen while trying to imitate them as their language is ironically opaque to him. As an African, he is expected to know his indigenous language; however, as he is raised in the Caribbean, he is not familiar with this African language. So deeply he is lost in his thoughts that the other fishermen desert him. He could not forget the destiny of his people, the ruptures of the Middle Passage, the balls and chains. He could not even drink to forget the traumas of history for a short while:

> but the moment Achille wet
> his memory with it, tears stung his eyes. The taste
>
> of the bitter drink showed him Philoctete
> standing in green seawater up to his waist,
> hauling the canoe in, slowly, fist over fist. (141)

The fusion of the past with the future has agitated him. Though drinking is a private activity, it reminds him of the collective, of history, of slavery, of Philoctete, whose stinking wound reeks of rusted balls and chains.[56] In this scene, Walcott shows the entanglement of the private life with the public; it shows how historical traumas contaminate the present; how even after political and national independence, people suffer the violence of the past. The unhomely feeling stirs at this moment when the boundaries between personal and public collapse. Bhabha argues:

> Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy. It is an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an "in-between" temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. This is the moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double-edge which […] represents a hybridity, a difference "within," a subject that inhabits the rim of an "in-between" reality. ("The World and the Home" 148)

This is how the collapse of temporal boundaries and disrupted timelines ruins the balance of Achille's mind and intensifies his sense of unhomeliness in his ancestral homeland. Africa is *unheimlich* not only in terms of time but in the religious, cultural, and historical senses. The unhomeliness results from the fact that Achille is not a "true" African but a hybrid Afro-Caribbean whose exile from Africa has developed a "double perspective"

[56] For trope of "wound" and its various forms whether in nature (canoe-making) or in characters or the narrator see Paul Breslin, *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott* pp. 251-69; Tobias Doring, *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition* pp. 177-78; Carol Dougherty, "Homer after *Omeros*: Reading a H/Omeric Text" pp. 339-347; Jahan Ramazani, "The Wound of History: Walcott's *Omeros* and the Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction"; Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry;* Robert D. Hamner, "Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" 237; Lorna Hardwick, *Translating Words, Translating Cultures* pp. 97-113; Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939.* pp. 131-34. Seamus Heaney also reconfigures Philoctete as an allegorical agent of postcolonial affliction in *The Cure at Troy*. This classical figure has also been revisited by Gotthold E. Lessing and Edmund Wilson.

in him (Said, "Intellectual Exile" 60). This perspective intervenes when Achille wants to locate his home and determine his sense of self, identity, and roots. That is why, his *nostos* to Africa proves to be *unheimlich* as he comes to experience the alienating sense of re-inhabitation of home "that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" and results from long periods of geographical and temporal absence (Bhabha, *The Location* p. 13).

2.4 Paralysis of History

In Africa, Achille witnesses a slave raid when suddenly shafts rain on the terrified huts and the raiders attack and destroy everything, even yams in the gardens. When the raid is over, the raiders take fifteen slaves for the slavers. Achille is motionless in the middle, unable to move. Then he goes up a ridge and sees his fellow brothers chained to each other like ants. When the line disappears, he returns to the dusty silent village. There are only arrow shafts lying around the houses. He opens a door and finds "Seven Seas foaming with grief. He must / be deaf as well as blind" (145). Seven Seas is counting the list of battles to the river. Achille is grieved because "[h]e foresaw their future. He knew nothing could change it" (146). He was lost in the thought of the chained ants reaching up to the sea or going up piles of coal into the "dark hold" (146).

In this scene, Walcott presents Achille as quite impotent and helpless: "[he] could not hide / or fight. He stood in their centre, with useless arms" (144). Here, Achille is in the interstices of his Greek namesake and his Caribbean self; he can neither act courageously as Homer's Achilles nor as Walcott's fisherman. While some scholars have associated these two characters, he has only inherited his namesake's vulnerable heels not his courage.[57] Even though a fisherman, he could defend his tribesmen with his weapon, an oar, but as he

[57] For discussion of Achille's physic and his vulnerable heel see Isabella M. Zoppi, "'*Omeros*', Derek Walcott and the Contemporary Epic Poem" pp. 517-18; John B.V. Sickle, "The Design of Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'" 24.

is a ghost in Africa, he cannot act. He is a mere witness. Though a ghost, paradoxically, he will resume his earthly life again. Thinking in Bhabha's terms, Achille is somewhere between life and death and it is exactly this interstice of action/non-action that has made him uncomfortable in Africa. But he is outraged; he looks for the chances to retaliate. He finds an oar, runs to the pier and sees slave raiders:

> One was laggard; with a clenched roar
>
> he swung at the grinning laggard and the bladed oar
> cleft through his skull with a sound like a calabash,
> splattering his chest with brain; then the archer
>
> thudded in his death-throes like a spear-gaffed fish
> as Achille hammered and hammered him with the oar's head,
> as the skull grinned up at him with skinned yellow teeth (147)

He violently kills one of the slavers, vainly trying to help save his people.[58] Full of hatred, he hammers his brain so hard that his skull comes out; then he leaves the crime scene like an ocelot or a leopard. At this moment something comes to Achille's mind; he thinks of saving his African brothers. If so, he could change history:

> …Then a cord
> of thorned vine looped his tendon, encircling the heel
> with its own piercing chain. He fell hard. He saw
>
> the leaves pinned with stars. Ants crawled over Achille
> as his blind eyes stared from the mud, still as the archer
> he had brained, the bow beside him and the broken oar. (148)

Achille fails in rescuing his enslaved brothers while this failure does not indicate his impotence in real life. As a fisherman, he is expected to fight with the sea and as Walcott argues confronting "a natural element is more challenging than an army. You can perhaps

[58] Hofmeister has related the violence of this scene to the violence Achille's mate uses to catch the albacore, a great fish that lies besides Achille in the belly of Achille's canoe. See "The Wolf and the Hare: Epic Expansion and Contextualization in Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'" pp. 550-51.

face an army. You cannot face a hurricane" ("Reflections on *Omeros*" 244). By portraying Achille helpless in the midst of the raid, Walcott aims to emphasize that no one can change the course of the past events. Consciousness of the past, as it is tormenting, could also leave a deadening effect on the mind of the individual. That is why Walcott is against romanticizing the past. Tynan has also noted that "Walcott argues here as elsewhere that the past must be accepted – it is time to move on ("Mapping Roots in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" 241). In his Nobel lecture, Walcott describes the footmark of historical wounds on the Caribbean nature:

> It is not that History is obliterated by this sunrise. It is there in Antillean geography, in the vegetation itself. The sea sighs with the drowned from the Middle Passage, the butchery of its aborigines, Carib and Aruac and Taino, bleeds in the scarlet of the immortelle, and even the actions of surf on sand cannot erase the African memory, or the lances of cane as a green prison where indentured Asians, the ancestors of Felicity, are still serving time. ("The Antilles" 266)

Walcott is quite aware of the scars of history which has wounded the mind and soul of the Caribbean but argues that the Caribbeans should not get mired in its swamp. *Another Life*, Walcott's autobiographical poem first published in 1973, also deals with the negative dimensions of the literature which celebrates the wounds of history:

> those who peel, from their own leprous flesh, their names,
> who chafe and nurture the scars of rusted chains,
> like primates favouring scabs, those who charge tickets
> for another free ride on the middle passage,
> …
> Their music comes from the rattle of coral bones,
> their eyes like worms drill into parchment,
> they measure each other's sores
> to boast who has suffered most, (120-21)

Achille, victim of slavery and the Middle Passage, has been paralyzed and dumbed down as history unreels before his stupefied eyes like a live movie: slave raid, enslavement,

the tragedy of the Middle Passage, drowned slaves, rusted balls and chains. All these painful scenes have created an uncanny sensation which leads to his estrangement from other Africans:

> Achille, among those voluble leaves, his people,
> estranged from their chattering, withdrew in discontent.
> He brooded on the river. The canoe at its pole,
>
> doubled by its stillness, looked no different
> from its reflection, nor the pier stakes, nor the thick
> trees inverted at their riverline, but the shadow face
>
> swayed by the ochre ripples seemed homesick
> for the history ahead, as if its proper place
> lay in unsettlement. (140)

Achille gradually understands that his "proper place / lay in unsettlement," that Africa cannot be his true home. This intensifies his disillusionment of Africa. If his ancestral homeland, Africa, is not his home, where is his home? Where else could he set anchor? As the story unfolds, however, Walcott plants seeds of hope and possibilities. Lost in disappointment, one day to his great astonishment, he comes across a surprising scene;

> On the day of his feast they wore the same plantain trash
> like Philoctete at Christmas. A bannered mitre
> of bamboo was placed on his head, a calabash
>
> mask, and skirts that made him both woman and fighter.
> That was how they danced at home, to fifes and tambours,
> the same berries round their necks and the small mirrors
>
> flashing from their stuffed breasts. One of the warriors
> mounted on stilts walked like lightning over the thatch
> of the peaked village. Achille saw the same dances
>
> that the mitred warriors did with their bamboo stick
> as they scuttered around him, lifting, dipping their lances
> like divining rods turning the earth to music.
>
> the same chac-chac and ra-ra, the drumming the same,
> and the chant of the seed-eyed prophet to the same

response from the blurring ankles. The same, the same. (143)

By this similarity, Walcott suggests that if Africa is lost, Africanness could still be preserved in the New World. This likeness indicates a sense of connectivity between the old continent and the New World. Hence, it can be inferred that there could be more connective links between Africa and the Caribbean; there is still hope for reaching to Africa in other ways. Recuperation of these rituals seems to be important; however, Fanon, a Martinican psychiatrist and philosopher, cautions against romanticizing the past. Bhabha begins his discussion of "Unhomely Lives: The Literature of Recognition" in *The Location of Culture* with reference to Fanon who, as Bhabha contends, is "far too aware of the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial cultures to recommend 'roots' be struck in the celebratory romance of the past or by homogenizing the history of the past" (13). In his visionary journey, Achille tries to retrieve his ancestral values by listening to griots' songs or by taking undersea exploratory voyages; however, by these recuperations, he does not intend to romanticize or idealize Africa. The recovery of the past would equip him for a better life in the New World.

2.5 Retrieving the Past

In spite of the disenchantment of Africa, Walcott furnishes the story with rays of hope and possibilities by assigning Achille with a mission to accumulate long buried sediments of African values. As Fanon argues colonizers were not content with only turning the minds of the colonized into *tabulae rasae*: "[i]n a perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 210). Achille is one of those individuals Fanon describes. Emptied of his past, Walcott sends him on a recuperational mission to re-claim and to re-collect some long-lost rituals. In Africa, he

learns to chew kola nut, drink palm wine, listen to the tribal hi/stories, and recite the names of the deities (139-40).

These are the African rituals, Achille's ancestral lore, which supposedly African people should know them while they are buried in the Atlantic. Besides these rituals, Walcott appoints Achille with two undersea voyages in Africa: in the first one, Achille, like a walking fish, walks on the seabed for three hundred years and finds "the huge cemeteries / of bones and the huge crossbows of the rusted anchors" (142). The undersea journey opens pages of African history before Achille's eyes, the tragic story of the Middle Passage, a history saturated with violence, greed, and loss. In another occasion, Achille appears from the seabed like an astronaut weightlessly floating in the water as if confused. This time, he pages the book of world history from the last three centuries up to the present. There, he is told of the torn treaties; governments' rise and fall; kings' ascent to and descent from the throne; Toussaint L'Ouverture's death in the Pyrenees; Queen Victoria's reign over vast empires; Darwin's theory of evolution; indentured workers of *Fatel Rozack*, and many other sea battles. By excavating history, Achille tries to re-construct his African identity as historical lore—in James McCorkle's words— is the building block of "self-knowledge" (5). Apart from sea journeys, Achille listens to the griot's prophetic song of sorrow:

> The griot crouched there. Warm ashes made his skull white
> over eyes sore as embers, over a skin charred as coal,
> the core of his toothless mouth, groaning to the firelight,
>
> was like a felled cedar's whose sorrow surrounds its bole.
> One hand clawed the pile of ashes, the other fist thudded on
> the drum of his chest, the ribs were like a caved-in canoe
>
> that rots for years under the changing leaves of an almond, (146-147)

McConnell contends griot's role in the community is not just for entertaining, as with the *Odyssey*, it is to preserve "history for the present, in order that it may be learned from, and the communal identity of people may be understood and reaffirmed" (*Black Odysseys* 128). The griot is burning with sorrow; he is clawing the ashes. He tells Achille the story of their slavery that how they were taken from Bight of Benin and from the margin of Guinea, chained together, taken to slave ships and scorched on the deck, "our tubers withered in no time" (149):

> "Then, when the dead
> palms were heaved overside, the ribbed corpses
> floated, riding to the white sand they remembered,
>
> to the Bight of Benin, to the margin of Guinea.
> So when you see burnt branches riding the swell,
> trying to reclaim the surf through crooked fingers,
>
> after a night of rough wind by some stone-white hotel,
> past the bright triangular passage of the windsurfers,
> remember us to the black waiter bringing the bill." (149)

However, as griot reveals, it is not their tragic destiny which torments them; they suffer more when they see young generations like Helen, Hector and Lawrence of St. Lucia (23) have forgotten their ancestors' pains and work for the tourists. The griot then asks Achille to "remember [them] to the black waiter bringing the bill" to the tourists (149). In St. Lucia, a touristic spot advertised in brochures, black people work for the white/tourists; Walcott takes this as a kind of servitude. In fact, by this discussion, the griot assigns Achille with a kind of responsibility which, in itself, is one of the features of *katabasis* discussed earlier. Gregson Davis analyses the ramifications of *katabasis* in his article among which the following arguments most reverberate in Achille's African journey. This classical scholar contends that *katabasis* matures the epic hero by deepening his understanding of self and the community in which he lives. This deepened awareness assigns a sense of collective

responsibility on the epic hero's shoulders in enlightening others ("'Homecomings without Home'" 195). This is how Achille's katabatic *nostos* to Africa ends by widening his individual and communal senses in many respects. Achille not only attempts to maintain his own sense of Africanness when he returns to his village but he also tries to instruct others of their racial lineage and heritage. This is quite evident when he explains the significance of the Boxing Day festival to Helen (275) or when he decides to give an African name to Helen's child (318).

Through this journey, Walcott intimates that unhomely Africa cannot be home for hybrid Afro-Caribbeans while Africanness can still be maintained even in other lands. Achille not only attempts to maintain his own sense of Africanness in the New World but he also tries to instruct others of their racial lineage and values. This is quite evident when he explains the significance of the Boxing Day festival to Helen or in his decision in giving Helen's child an African name. Hence, Achille is like Makak in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, who goes to Africa not to stay but to restore "hereditary seeds that survived the Atlantic crossing, seeds that are rooted in Caribbean soil" (Hamner, *Epic* 75). By recuperating the past, Achille also redeems African seeds to plant them in the New World. Though most of the links to his native land are severely torn, he realizes that Africa has not been totally lost. Certain rituals are still conducted in the same way in the Caribbean. This is Achille's communal responsibility to try to keep Africa's long-forgotten rituals alive.

The second crucial implication of his imagined journey is that Achille learns to appreciate the present time rather than commemorating the past. This ability to change outlook, as Breslin contends, requires a strong and powerful agency: "[t]o experience the present as the beginning of creation rather than the grimly determined outcome of a brutal past requires above all recovery of agency, the power to transform, through one's work,

both oneself and the community in and for which the work is done" (251). Hall and McConnell also argue that *Omeros* renders "a more promising present and a St Lucia that is successfully throwing off the shackles of its colonial past" (355). Through Achille's trajectory of katabatic *nostos* to his homeland, Walcott illustrates that reviving the history of the Caribbean may paralyze the individual as this archipelago has stood a violent past. Hence the New World inhabitant should perceive the world in an Adamic vision, in a new light. In one of his essays, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry," Walcott argues about the irrelevance of history in the Caribbean, an irrevelance which does not emanate from shame or ignobility but from "the loss of history" and "the amnesia of the races" (6). To recompense this loss, a Caribbean needs a strong sense of imagination for re-inventing history for the archipelago. Walcott concludes this essay that the New World must be built upon hope and work (6).

2.6 Homecoming with Home

Having experienced the *unheimlich* sense of home in his homeland along with the shame of amnesia, Achille comes to understand that Africa cannot be his home. Hence, Walcott sets the stage for his *retour* to St. Lucia but with a renewed sense of identity, self, community, and home. Indeed Achille has his precursor in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* in which Makak, a "black, ugly, poor worse than nothing" (237) protagonist of the drama, dreams of a white woman who reveals his lineage to him that goes back to "the family of lions and kings" (236). This dream, as Tejumola Olaniyan makes clear, frees Makak of his "inferiority complex" (104) and prompts him to return to Africa. In Africa, he becomes a wealthy and powerful king but when he realizes the incongruities in his dream, "he 'returns' awake to his poor but now psychologically liberated West Indian self" (104). Similar to Makak, Achille undergoes a deep mental metamorphosis to the extent that when

his canoe turns toward Gros Îlet, he becomes overwhelmed with happiness as he is going to embrace St. Lucia as his home:

> This was the shout on which each *Odyssey* pivots,
> that silent cry for a reef, or familiar bird,
> not the outcry of battle, not the tangled plots
>
> of a fishnet, but when a wave rhymes with one's grave,
> a canoe with a coffin, once that parallel
> is crossed, and cancels the line of master and slave.
>
> Then an uplifted oar is stronger than marble
> Caesar's arresting palm, and a swift outrigger
> fleeter than his galleys in its skittering bliss. (159)(emphasis added)

Walcott celebrates Achille's homecoming with familiarity and makes him gratified by familiar scenes. Tuan likewise argues that "[f]amiliarity breeds affection" (*Topophilia* 99). This Chinese-American human geographer coins the concept of "topophilia" to examine people's response to the *environment* which is "emotionally charged" in the eyes of the individual (92-3) (emphasis added). The pleasure derived from the environment can be, among others, visual, sensual, or tactile, "a delight in the feel of air, water, earth" (93). It can also be related to the "feelings that one has toward a place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood" (93). This delight results from the sense of attachment and belonging people have to their accustomed environment. Hence, according to Tuan, place is significant because people are attached to it, "because it is familiar, because it is home and incarnates the past because it provokes pride of ownership and creation" (247). Tuan's associating of the sense of familiarity and attachment together with the visual and emotional pleasure to place resonates precisely with the moment Achille approaches the village where its birds, reef and shore all evoke a sense of delight in him. He passes the Barrel of Beef and reaches his village where "he can see the white / balconies of the hotel dipping with the bow" (160). This is how by deviating from the

Négritude's essentialist view of home in the ancestral homeland, Walcott demonstrates how a delightful sense of familiarity can be one of the crucial features of a true home.[59] Walcott celebrates Achille's *nostos* with the "white" color in a reminder of the white/black dichotomy of the colonial era and neo-colonial image of tourists (hotels); he submits that these familiar but neo-colonial scenes could have been accommodated more easily than the unbearable distancing sense of estrangement and unhomeliness of Africa. This is how, through Achille's happy *retour* to St. Lucia, Walcott underscores familiarity as one of the important features of home. As in his *nostos* to St. Lucia, Achille does not experience "the estranging sense of relocation of the home" which Bhabha describes for the "unhomely" homecomings. This familiarity gives a sense of security to the homecomer. Hence, St. Lucia *can* be regarded as Achille's home as it is familiar to his tired soul. This does not imply that Walcott wants to represent the Caribbean a true home for the diasporic Africans in the New World; rather, it means that this island can embrace *at least* some features of a true home. Burnett likewise argues that Achille's restless quest for home is finally fulfilled when he realizes that "home is already possessed, that it is the here and now, the elation of life in the Caribbean" (*Derek Walcott* 183).

Sharing a sense of community and relatedness in a given community can also be regarded as another important feature of home that Walcott advances.[60] As discussed earlier, Helen has not been loyal to Achille throughout the poem and at this sequence, she lives with Hector. Nonetheless, Walcott describes her desperate and unsettled because she is worried about Achille: "A single noon was as long as ten years, / because [Achille] had not come back, because they had gone / from yesterday" (153). Philoctete is also anxious

[59] "Yet the signs in the landscape are there to read, and they can tell us that we are, after all, at home" (Sopher, "The Landscape of Home" 147).
[60] I will discuss the concept of community building as one of the ramifications of Glissant's concept of "relation" in the following chapter in more detail.

but the blind Seven Seas comforts him that Achille has not drowned; he is in the sea in search of "his name and his soul" (154). When a conch-shell blows, the villagers are all notified of Achille's safe *retour* from the sea. The fishermen:

> ran down the hot street to pull the tired pirogue.
>
> Achille let the mate wave back. Then he saw Helen.
> But he said nothing. He sculled with a single oar.
> He watched her leave. The mate hoisted the albacore. (160)

This is how Walcott underscores the importance of relatedness in the community. Being an extension of a family, a community can create a sense of security among its members. Achille, who has suffered the distancing, uncanny and alienating homeland, enjoys the welcoming and comforting sense of community on the island through the greeting of Helen and the other fishermen. Hence, it can be inferred that the island can be Achille's home though not a "true home" as McConnell argues (*Black Odysseys* 120) because the dynamics of neo-colonialism and tourism still keep affecting the life of the islanders.

CHAPTER 3: ACHILLE AND RHIZOMIC AT-HOMENESS THROUGH RELATION AND CREOLIZATION

In the previous chapter, I showed how Achille's association of roots and home with geography fails. Falling into the interstitial space of now and then, here and there clearly demonstrates how this African journey brings Achille to realize the "unhomeliness" of his ancestral homeland. Bhabha conceptualizes this experience in terms of a postcolonial homecoming. Achille's missionary trip to Africa takes the form of a circular route, a *detour,* which returns him "to the point of entanglement," to St. Lucia (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 26) . Despite the sense of the *unhomely* attending Achille's experience of his ancestral homeland, his dream journey there proves enlightening. In this chapter, I will examine Achille's quest for home, roots, and origin from Glissant's theoretical framework.

3.1 Oedipal/Odyssean Quest

Life in a decentralized world with disrupted time-lines impels Walcott's cast, either as the colonizer or colonized, to engage with the atavistic pursuit for legitimacy. Among the omeric cast, Achille can be taken as paradigmatic for the oedipal quest; he is affected by the ruptures of the Middle Passage, the reverberations of which have disfigured his historical, geographical, cultural, and racial legacies. This state has driven him to initiate a self-exploratory journey in order to reposition himself in the disconnected strata of history and to locate his home. Observed within Glissant's theoretical paradigm, Achille is "the 'unhoused' wanderer across cultures [who] must be 'rehoused' in the fissured history, the exposed sands, before the surging sea" (translator's Introduction, *Caribbean Discourse* xx). Before undertaking a thorough analysis of Achille's oedipal struggle, I will discuss other characters' quests for filiation in relation to Achille's to underscore the pervasiveness of this desire in the New World.

There are a number of linking strings between Achille and Major Plunkett even though the latter is an ex-colonizer while Achille is the progeny of slavery. First of all, they both struggle with history. While the history Achille deals with is in fact "nonhistory" (to echo Glissant) — a ruptured account of the three hundred years past — Major Plunkett also engages with history. According to Breslin in *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*, Major Plunkett is similar to both Crusoe and Odysseus (250): inhabiting a new island akin to Defoe's shipwrecked protagonist, Plunkett becomes infatuated with the love of Helen, the local girl who likewise is the embodiment of the island. Plunkett imagines a common denominator with this girl: he has no heir so he would have no future (Helen/island remains similarly anonymous in history).[61] To save the island from oblivion and misrepresentation, he thinks that "what the place needed / was its true place in history, that he'd spend hours / for Helen's sake on research" (64). The second commonality between Achille and Plunkett is their quest for progenitor/progeny. Achille, Telemachus-like, is on an oedipal quest; Plunkett, as is Odysseus/Oedipus, is in search of his Telemachus/Laius.[62] Though, his research centers on the history of St. Lucia, its battles and its correlation with the Trojan War, sometimes Plunkett's large-scale historical investigation imbricates with the smaller arc of familial "ances-tree" (87). Once, while studying archives, he accidentally comes across his namesake, [63]

[61] On Helen see Charles Locke, "Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*': Echoes from a White-Throated Vase"; for Plunkett's relation with Helen see Irene Martyniuk, "The Irish in the Caribbean: Derek Walcott's Examination of the Irish in *Omeros*" pp. 144-45; for discussion of Helen's relation with Penelope, her role in the touristic island of St. Lucia and her pregnancy see Timothy P. Hofmeister's "This is We Calypso": An Ithacan and Antillean Topos in Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'" pp. 64-66; for the similarity between St. Lucia and Ireland see Walcott, "Meanings"; for a discussion of the relation between Walcott and Joyce see McGarrity, "The Gulf Stream and the Epic Drives of Joyce and Walcott".

[62] For an extended discussion of Oedipus complex in *Omeros* see Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, "The Wine-dark Caribbean" in *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora* pp. 263-69. Goff and Simpson argue that even though Oedipus has not been mentioned in Walcott's poem, he hobbles strongly behind the scenes (263).

[63] Along with *Omeros*, there are a number of other works with thematic of genealogy, errancy, and rootedness. Notable among these are Maryse Condé's *Tree of Life*; Fred D'Aguiar's *Bloodlines*, Pauline Melville's *The Ventriloquist's Tale;* Paule Marshall's *Daughters*, and Jamaica Kincaid's *Autobiography of My Mother*.

Then he found the entry
in pale lilac ink. *Plunkett*. One for the lacy trough.
Plunkett? His veins went cold. From what shire was he?

On what hill did he pause to watch gulls follow a plough,
seabag on one shoulder, with his apple-cheeked sheen?
This was his search's end. He had come far enough

to find a namesake and a son. *Aetat xix.*
Nineteen. Midshipman. From the horned sea, at sunrise
in the first breeze of landfall. Drowned! And so, close

his young eyes and the ledger. (93-4)

Plunkett finds a young British Midshipman who was drowned in the famous 1782 Battle of the Saints spying for the British who were battling the French. Being heirless, he decides to adopt this nineteen-year old Midshipman as his son even though chronologically this young man should have been major's ancestor as there is almost a two-century distance between the two namesakes.[64] Such dislocation in time-lines or family structures defies the traditional linear and uni-directional vectors of father-son, progenitor-progeny transmission, a gesture which has incited debates among the critics. Ciocia, in her article understands this adoption as signaling the individual's confused understanding of his own origin (92).[65] Birgit Neumann also infers that *Omeros* challenges the concept of origin by demonstrating a world in which "'firsts' lose their cultural validity and 'fathers' remain unidentifiable" (272). Breslin bases his discussion of this issue on Walcott's own suggestion of the notion of the "reversible world" in *Omeros* (207), and reasons that the concept of time (the past and the future) is likewise flexible; it can move in either course and past can be relived again (253).[66] Terada reads the Odysseus-Telemachus story as "an allegory of genealogical

[64] Such an inverted father-son timeline is also echoed in the poet-narrator's familial situation: his father's untimely death at the age of thirty creates the similar feeling in him (68). Correspondingly, Achille becomes "his own father and his own son" when he follows a sea-swift to Africa (275).
[65] Ciocia, even, metaphorically envisions Plunkett an orphan as he is a "Crusoe" in a new land (101, n. 16).
[66] Breslin further maintains that the curing of Philoctete's historical wound (235-247) "reopens" future possibilities which depend on the obeah woman's (Ma Kilman's) recuperation of the past in the same way that Achille's willingness to welcome Helen and Hector's unborn child for his future life depends on the insight he gleans from his restoration of the African past (253).

mystery," where the fathers' distancing absence accentuates the gap in all genealogical pursuits (203).[67] Victor Figueroa also relates Plunkett's adoption of the young Midshipman to the concept of reversed filiation. In Figueroa's configuration, Plunkett, the descendent, is old enough to beget his ancestor as he was destined to a premature death; this filial reverse dismantles the teleological traditions of progenitor-progeny (166-67). In her discussion of Glissant's and Morrison's novels, Valérie Loichot links the notion of reversed temporality and genealogy to a Yoruba model developed in Wole Soyinka's book, *Myth, Literature and the African World*; Soyinka's trope, I wish to argue, also resounds in Walcott's *Omeros* and illuminates Figueroa's discussion.[68] As Nigerian playwright and poet Wole Soyinka argues, in the traditional Yoruba thinking, the concept of time is viewed as being based on a cyclical rather than one-dimensional axis. "The expression 'the child is father of the man,'" Soyinka goes on to say, is "a proverb of human continuity which is not uni-directional." As this myth postulates none of these concepts (i.e. child and father) are finished or linear (10).[69] Hence, corresponding with the myth in the African concept of reality, Plunkett's adoption of his ancestor as his son sounds justifiable even though Breslin repudiates it as "a futile wish" (254); Plunkett would live longer than Midshipman Plunkett so he can engender his ancestor/son.

Apart from Plunkett, who looks for roots and filiation, is Plunkett's wife who also yearns to return to her ancestral homeland. Married to an English man, Maud is nostalgic for her Irish homeland. After the war they move to St. Lucia while Maud like a "homesick curlew" (89) suffered from sense of dislocation: "[s]ometimes the same old longing descended on her/to see Ireland" (29). Plunkett neglects her not only by burying himself

[67] For more on this concept see Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry* pp. 203-5.
[68] To Loichot, Soyinka's model of African family structure and temporality speaks of the violent ruptures of the Middle Passage and its ensuing repercussions in postslavery and postplanation context (*Orphan Narratives: The Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant, Morrison, and Saint-John Perse* 191).
[69] Soyinka further contends that this "temporal disorder" is not specific to the African mythology; it has a parallel discussion in Greek mythology traced in Karl Kerényi's essay "The Primordial Child in Primordial Times."

under "his ziggurat of books" (65), but also by disregarding her Irish values while Maud silently and "wifely" tolerates (24).[70] Silence is the only "mutual communion" of their marriage (24-5).[71] Even though Maud is barren, this transplanted woman produces orchids in the welcoming tropical weather of her adopted land, and through the roots of her flowers, she metaphorically roots herself to the island while her soul wishes to fly out of the island. This desire is also fulfilled but symbolically through the images of the island birds she embroiders in her tapestry "from Bond's *Ornithology*" (88). She also tries to preserve her ties to her ethnic land by playing Irish music in spite of Dennis's irritation.

3.2 Errantry

The motif of the (oedipal) quest entails wandering, movement or what Glissant terms "*errance*";[72] it is a trope pervasive in *Omeros* as well as in Walcott's other writings.[73] To elaborate on this concept, a distinction between the notions of "root" and "rhizome" should first be made. As Glissant clarifies, challenging the essentialist European models of "root" and "rootedness," Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari postulate the concept of the "rhizome" as an alternative for the metaphor of roots; the vertical shoots growing from "root" grounds it in a fixed spot while the "rhizome" shoots horizontally in multiple directions and constructs a network of relation with the Other (*Poetics* 11). Hence, the root necessitates

[70] By enmeshing the British/Irish couple to his Afro-Caribbean cast and depicting their distanced relationship, Walcott illustrates how the Irish have suffered under British colonialism. In an interview with Hirsch, Walcott describes the affinity of the Irish with the Caribbean by referring to their historical social denigration as "the niggers of Britain" (59). Furthermore, this choice of cast itself bespeaks of Walcott's style of writing who – contrary to other postcolonial writers who engage in the literature of revenge – sketches a wider picture of colonialism and its diffraction in the life of other nations too.

[71] For a comparison of Maud with Homer's Penelope and Joyce's Molly Bloom refer to Irene Martyniuk, "The Irish in the Caribbean: Derek Walcott's Examination of the Irish in *Omeros*"; regarding Joyce's dialogue with Walcott see Paul Breslin, *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*; for Joyce's intervention in Walcott's other works see Derek Walcott, *Epitaph for the Young: A Poem in XII Cantoes*; Derek Walcott, *Another Life*; for an extensive discussion of Maud in *Omeros* see Geert Lernout, "Derek Walcott's *Omeros*: The Isle is Full of Voices"; Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott's Poetry: American Mimicry*; Sheldon Brivic, "Toni Morrison's Funk in Finnegans Wake"; Maria McGarrity, *Washed by the Gulf Stream: The Historic and Geographic Relation of Irish and Caribbean Literature* pp. 80-120 and n.10 p. 168; Charles W. Pollard, "Travelling with Joyce: Derek Walcott's Discrepant Cosmopolitan Modernism."

[72] Glissant terms this concept "*errance*" but his translator calls it "errancy." "Errantry" is the English equivalent for Glissants' French term.

[73] As will be discussed in Chapter Four and Five, in Walcott's *Stage Version of the Odyssey*, Odysseus much like the Homeric counterpart wanders many islands before setting foot in Ithaca; in The Schooner *Flight*, Shabine also sets sail; "Homecoming: Anse La Raye" is similarly the story of the poet-narrator who returns home after being away from his island.

permanence and immovability whilst the rhizome has the innate ability for movement, wandering, or errancy. However, according to Betsy Wing, translator of *Poetics of Relation*, this errancy or movement is not aimless wandering as in purposeless roaming whereby the errant may get lost. There is instead a "sacred mission" in errancy where the errant "knows at every moment where one is-at every moment in relation to the other" (translator's Introduction, *Poetics* xvi).

By recalling Plato and Aristotle's biographies, among other Greek philosophers, Glissant stresses the significance of errancy, wandering, travelling and exile "for a being's complete fulfillment" (*Poetics* 13) as in ancient communities, homeland or territory was a boundary not a criterion for defining legitimacy of a given community. Legitimacy of a community, as Plato observes, depends on the rationality of its law and not on its being "within territory" (13). Besides, those who exemplify the exilic life in antiquity had voluntarily chosen this path, while conquered people were/are forced to go on exile for self-identification, or for a quest for home, roots, identity, and a sense of belonging (13).

Much like other Caribbean intellectuals, Walcott himself is an errant who has travelled extensively around the world. Some of his omeric characters are also errants whose errantry falls within the parameters of Glissant's concept of errancy or a variation of it. The narrator himself engages with errantry as he travels to North America and Europe in Book Four and Five and furnishes many hi/stories from each place. In Book Four, he relates his own life story (his failed marriage) to the hi/story of the Amerindians in North America together with their torn (marriage) contract/treaties. In this book, he evokes Manifest Destiny, American Dream, and the Trail of Tears as cornerstones in the history of the Americas. He also relates the story of Creeks and Choctaws, the Amerindian tribes, who were compelled to leave their homeland to Indian Territory together with the Sioux who stood "a spike

hammered / into the heart of their country" (175). In this American sojourn, Walcott probes the inexplicable inevitability of the evil institution of slavery together with "the Jeffersonian ideal in / plantation with its Hectors and Achilleses" (177). The thematic of forced migration, displacement, and dispossession pervade Book Four where Walcott broods on the brutality and violence of history in the American continent.

The grand tour of Europe begins in Book Five when the narrator crosses the Meridian to the Old World. The journey begins from Lisbon – Portugal being the first European nation to invade the West coast of Africa (189-193). While Lisbon's historical monuments and statues attract the poet-persona's attention, his critical lens zooms on the lost glory of this country. In this sequence, Walcott describes how "the past dryly grieves / from the O's of a Roman aqueduct" (192):

> ….The wharves of Portugal
>
> were empty as those of the islands. The slate pigeons lift
> from the roof of a Levantine warehouse, the castle in the trees
> is its own headstone. Yet, once, Alexander's meridian
>
> gave half a gourd to Lisbon, the seeds of its races,
> and half to Imperial Spain. Now Sunday afternoon passes
> the empty cafes, their beads hanging like rosaries. (193)

In 1493, Pope Alexander VI gave Africa to Portugal and the New World to Spain, but now, Portuguese wharves and cafes are empty on Sunday afternoons. This is why his Portuguese visit ends on a melancholic note. In Chapter XXXVIII he goes to England (193-197), one of the world's great centers of power. Walcott paints London in its summer pride with the "Chartered Tour," "red double-deckers," "pigeon-stirred Trafalgar," "Westminster Bridge," "St. Martin-in-the-fields," "Isle of Dogs," "Thames," "Big Ben," "National Gallery," "Bloody-Tower." By these monumental buildings, Walcott reflects on the

violence of empire and the ensuing dehumanization while trying to locate his people in the discriminating strata of history. In spite of all these magnificent edifices and monuments, he concludes

> … the sunflower sets after all, retracting its irises
> with the bargeman's own, then buds on black, iron trees
> as a gliding fog hides the empires: London, Rome, Greece.(196)

The "gliding fog" hides the Roman and Greek Empires along with the British Empire even though it was once said that "the sun never sets on the British Empire."

Chapter XXXIX recounts the narrator's Ireland visit (198-201). Like St. Lucia – which received its independence in 1979 – British rule had ended in 1921 when the Irish Free State was established. In this chapter, the narrator underscores the religious and spiritual turmoil (William of Orange's succession to the throne and the imposition of Protestantism over Catholicism) along with other social problems forced upon the Irish by British colonialism. His Mediterranean trip starts in the following chapter when "the Aegean coast" succeeds the Irish Sea (201-205) with Odysseus sailing homeward (to Ithaca) together with his exhausted crew. In this section, he visits Istanbul and Venice. This is how the poet-persona's errantry comes to an end.

Major Plunkett is also involved with the concept of errancy but with a variation of it as his wandering is immobile. Seven Seas argues that there are two kinds of wandering in every journey: one is bent and rooted to a single spot whereas the other requires the actual movement (291). As a historical researcher, who is bound to redress Helen (the island) in true history, Plunkett anchors in a fixed spot to surf books, documents and ledgers.[74] Thus, his "motionless" pursuit can be considered a form of errantry which I have called

[74] For discussion of Plunkett's role as a historical creator see Maria McGarrity, "The Gulf Stream and the Epic Drives of Joyce and Walcott" pp. 8-10; Robert D. Hamner, "Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" pp. 239-41.

"historical *errancy*." Instead of visiting actual physical places here and there, he wanders motionless and silently through the pages in order to locate his lost ones.

I have also taken Helen as an errant as she moves between two homes, Hector's and Achille's, one representing assimilation and the other alienation. Hector was affiliated with the sea but as the story unfolds in Book One (50-51), he once loses the anchor of his pirogue due to some stormy weather; the consequences of this, as Hamner argues, are so wide that the event affects the rest of his life and turns him into a drifter (*Epic* 52). Like Achille's, Hector's ancestors have survived the traumas of the Middle Passage; but, unlike Achille, Hector is oblivious to his atavistic lineage and its associated legacy. In his dream in Africa, Achille is moved by the griot's woeful song (148) when he recounts the sore story of enslavement and the Atlantic crossing:

> Then, when the dead
> palms were heaved overside, the ribbed corpses
> floated, riding, to the white sand they remembered,
>
> to the Bight of Benin, to the margin of Guinea.
> So, when you see burnt branches riding the swell,
> trying to reclaim the surf through crooked fingers,
>
> after a night of rough wind by some stone-white hotel,
> past the bright triangular passage of the windsurfers,
> remember us to the black waiter bringing the bill." (149)

However, what the griot laments more is not uprootedness or dispossession but the new generation's historical amnesia. Hence, he advises Achille to remember and to remind his fellow Africans of the wounds of history when they serve island tourists. Colonization in the Caribbean has not only erased the past but through the new dynamics of colonialism (tourism) it also affects the present and ruins future possibilities. Walcott's Hector is the amnesiac African whom the griot warns about, whose oblivion of the ancestral past eases

his assimilation with the glamour of the new culture that thrives in the touristic island of St. Lucia. Hector is not a "waiter" to bring the bill for the tourists but he does "wait" for them in the airport. The change of Hector's means of livelihood from a canoe to a transport, from sea chore to land work leads to his downfall. By selling his canoe for a passenger van, Hector, in fact, sells his soul to the tourists who take the soul of the villagers by their Cyclops eye (3). But as the narrative unfolds, Hector fails and dies on the road as a road-warrior (224-31). Walcott associates his death and failure to his abandonment of the sea and Castries' corrupting life:

> He'd paid the penalty of giving up the sea
> as graceless and as treacherous as it had seemed,
> for the taxi-business; he was making money,
>
> but all of that money was making him ashamed
> of the long afternoons of shouting by the wharf
> hustling passengers. … (231)

As Walcott shows, lures of assimilation overwhelm Hector, leaving him unable to reconcile the dual sides of his hybrid identity. Achille, on the other hand, having gained a deep awareness (which I will discuss in a moment) after his reunion with his ancestors, manages somehow to attune the African half of his identity with the Caribbean reality. After that African journey, when Achille manages to reconcile some of the alienating elements of the community, Helen shows readiness to return to his home; she is assured that Achille can now accommodate himself much better with her and the specificity of the island. Hamner also makes clear that after that dream journey, Achille "emerges more whole than he has ever been, more worthy of Helen and all she represents" ("Derek Walcott's Omeros" 239). I have distinguished Helen's errantry between two homes – Hector's and Achille's – as that between naïve assimilation and deep awareness; the essential spectrum or dynamic of postcolonial errancy.

Ma Kilman herself can also be considered an errant as she moves, though in the abyss of her memories, between the two religions. Being engaged with "religious errancy," she wanders between the rituals of Catholicism and African animism wondering how to heal Philoctete's pains of history in her No Pain Café.[75] As a Catholic, she participates in Holy Communion though she takes "the wafer's white leaf" (58) with hesitancy. This doubtfulness itself bespeaks of the imposed nature of Catholicism and its opacity as the religion of the colonizers. In a mini-plot from chapter forty-seven to forty-nine, Walcott relates this obeah/Sibyl woman's troubled quest for the healing plant. Clad in the formal but uncomfortable attire of the church for "*la Messe*" (236), the bands of her stockings pains her calves reminding her of Philoctete's everyday wound. Through her ancestral lore she knows of a healing plant but in order to find it, she should first revive her memory of the African gods who waited to be called though their features looked blurred "unlike the logwood thorns of her Lord" (242). As she has been engaged in "a different prayer" for years (242), the names of the African gods were "subdued in the rivers of her blood" (242). She must try to establish correlation between, on the one hand, Catholicism, its rituals, Mass, Christ, Mary, and, on the other hand, African mysticism, Erzulie, Shango, and Ogun; the African deities who were dead for three long centuries. When out of shame of amnesia, she struggles in the caves of her memory to recall their names and restore her belief in them, she feels their presence within her "as if her veins were their roots" (242). She imagines the dead trunk of the gods sprouts new leaves (243). Then with the help of revived gods and an army of ants, she succeeds in locating the African herb to cure Philoctete of his festering ancestral wound and to end her "religious errancy."

[75] For an account of Ma Kilman's healing of Philoctete's wound see Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott (Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature*) pp. 192-94.

Not only are the characters involved with the concept of errantry, Walcott engages natural elements with this epic paraphernalia as well. Through the concept of errantry, this Caribbean poet stitches the New World to the Old when a sea-swift flies from Africa to the New World carrying a seed in its stomach (238). But as there was "no house / for her weariness" in the sea (239), the exhausted swift ejects the seed in the island. The bird does not live to see how this sea-born vine thrives in the new soil (239). This plant is the healing plant with which Ma Kilman cures Philoctete's inherited wound.

3.3 "The Sea is History"

Achille, the focal character of this chapter, is also an errant but his errancy is water-based. "The Sea is History" is a poem in Walcott's *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979) where the poet envisions the sea the depository of history and ancestral memory as it preserves the evils of the centuries in its belly. Correspondingly in *Omeros*, Walcott designates the sea with a parallel function in recounting hi/story. Throughout the poem and for various reasons, Walcott sends Achille to the mysterious realms of the sea. Chapter VIII in Book One (43-47) relates his first undersea descent into the cold water which unveils a grim vision to him. He has heard different stories about a hurricane-driven galleon or a flagship (in the Battle of the Saints) that drowned in the sea with gold bars. Being out of money, Achille decides to dive illegally for coins hoping to return Helen to him. She is with Hector but Achille thinks money can win her heart (44):

> The shreds of the ocean's floor passed him from corpses
> that had perished in the crossing, their hair like weeds,
> their bones were long coral fingers, bubbles of eyes
>
> watched him, a brain-coral gurgled their words,
> and every bubble englobed a biography,
> no less than the wine-bottle's mouth, but for Achille,
>
> treading the mulch floor of the Caribbean Sea,

no coins were enough to repay its deep evil.
The ransom of centuries shone through the mossy doors

that the moon-blind Cyclops counted, every tendril
raked in the guineas it tested with its soft jaws.
Light paved the ceiling with silver with every swell. (45-46)

The seabed, as Walcott portrays, is like the book of history or "an unofficial history" (Breslin 256), which preserves the vestige of centuries in its stasis. As with Walcott, Glissant also envisions this fluid element as a reservoir of the past in evoking the image of drowned Africans who planted in the bed of the sea "seeds" of an unseen "presence" (*Caribbean Discourse* 66-67). Though the seafloor is silent and still, it recounts hi/story of colonial expansion, incursions, transportations, and discoveries. This first undersea voyage tells him the story of the first European colonials, "Portuguese captains," who, like the captives, could not make the passage, whose skulls roll like dice in the fluid and indifferent swells of the sea. To Achille, the sea is an evildoer which cannot repay the deep evil of the Middle Passage, no matter how many coins it returns. Achille rises to the surface with empty hands (46). His failure to collect coins has further repercussions for him: the loss of Helen, who, like a "specter," disappeared from his eyes (46). This undersea adventure makes him lose faith in any ship; it strongly haunts his mind, as if he receives the call of his unburied ancestors who floundered in the Atlantic crossing. [76] To Glissant this is the call of

[76] Like Achille, Shabine, the poet-sailor in The Schooner *Flight*, encounters the harrowing image of the sea bed (the Middle Passage crossing) in his "salvage diving." Haunted by the sea, Shabine also "couldn't shake the sea noise out of [his] head":

but this Caribbean so choke with the dead
…
I saw them corals: brain, fire, sea fans,
dead-men's-fingers, and then, the dead men.
I saw that the powdery sand was their bones
ground white from Senegal to San Salvador,
so, I panic third dive, and surface for a month
in the Seamen's Hostel. (240)

The image of the corpses is so chilly that Shabine does not dare the "third dive." "The Sea is History" also shows Walcott's projection of history to the sea: "[w]here is your tribal memory? Sirs, / in that grey vault. The sea. The sea / has locked them up." Walcott rewrites the history engraved in the seabed through the fragmented images of the drowned enslaved Africans: "bones soldered by coral to bone," manacles like "ivory bracelets … on the drowned women," unburied men "anchor[ed]" to the seabed, "bones ground by windmills / into marl and cornmeal." Finally, the poet concludes that this is not history; it is "just lamentation," a lamentation over the dehumanization of the Africans. For a thorough and chronological examination of the trope of the sea in Walcott's works see Ben Thomas Jefferson, "The

"those Africans weighed down with ball and chain and thrown overboard whenever a slave ship was pursued by enemy vessels and felt too weak to put up the fight" (*Caribbean Discourse* 66-7).

Walcott assigns Achille with two other sea journeys while undertaking his hallucinatory journey in Africa. Transformed into a walking fish in Africa, Achille swims in the wavy sea for three hundred years and sees:

> … the huge cemeteries
>
> of bone and the huge crossbows of the rusted anchors,
> and groves of coral with hands as massive as trees
> like calcified ferns and the greening gold ingots of bars
>
> whose value had outlasted that of the privateers.(142)

In this excursion, Achille discovers huge bone cemeteries, sunken galleons, golden ingots, and corroded anchors in the bed of the sea. These remnants of the Middle Passage or "undersea museum" (*Another Life* 64) are all shards and shreds of history, pieces of African heritage. Through these fragmented images, Walcott depicts a grim vision of man, of his wickedness and excessive greed. In another occasion in Africa, Achille appears from the seabed running homeward:

> … the parchment overhead
>
> of crinkling water recorded three centuries
> of the submerged archipelago, in its swell
> the world above him passed through important epochs
>
> in which treaties were shredded like surf, governments fell,
> markets soared and plunged, but never once did the shocks

Sea as Place in Derek Walcott's Poetry"; see also Stephanie P. Boeninger, "'I Have Become the Sea's Craft': Authorial Subjectivity in Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and David Dabydeen's 'Turner'"; for a detailed analysis of "The Schooner *Flight,*" see Breslin, *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott* pp. 189-215.

of power find a just horizon, from capture

in chains to long debates over manumission,
from which abolitionists soared in a rapture
of guilt. Kings lost their minds. A Jesuit mission

burned in Veracruz; fleeing the Inquisition
a Sephardic merchant, bag locked in one elbow,
crouched by a Lisbon dock, and in that position

was reborn in the New World: Lima; Curacao.
A snow-headed Negro froze in the Pyrenees,
an ape behind bars, to Napoleon's orders,

but the dark fathoms were godless, then the waters
grew hungrier and a wave swallowed Port Royal.
Victoria revolved with her gold orb and sceptre,

Wilberforce was struck by lightning, a second Saul
at the crossroads of empire, while the spectre
breathed in the one element that had made them all

fishes and men; Darwin claimed fishes equal
in the sight of the sea. Madrasi climbed the hull
with their rolled bundles from Calcutta and Bombay,

huddling like laundry in the hold of the *Fatel*
Rozack, ninety-six days out and forty-one more away
from the Cape of Good Hope. In a great sea-battle,

before them, a midshipman was wounded and drowned.
Dawn brought a sea-drizzle. Achille, cramped from a sound
sleep, watched the lights of the morning plane as it droned. (155-56)

In this sequence, the submerged history of three centuries past is presented before his eyes, a survey which divulges many socio-historical, political, cultural, and ideological facts to him. The arc of this undersea excursion does not cover the history of Africa; rather, it widely exposes Achille to transcontinental hi/stories of forced migration, uprootedness and diaspora. In this voyage, Achille learns about *Fatel Rozack*'s human cargo relocating Indians from Calcutta and Bombay to the New World; it also echoes the plight of Jews who were transplanted from their land. There Achille contemplates the wicked nature of the

colonizers who abolished signed treaties for their own benefits; who had insatiable greed for power and wealth; who brought suffering, exploitation, and dehumanization for those they disempowered despite Darwin's theory of the equality of all the fishes "in the sight of the sea." This is how Achille as an errant, as a sea-wanderer explores and accumulates the buried history of Africa along with the history of other nations. Elsewhere Walcott also associates the sea with origin/motherhood; it is to this theme that I now turn in the next section.

3.4 Genesis/Digenesis

Through the character of Achille and his errantry, Walcott openly elucidates that the quest for "single roots" in and for the Caribbean is bound to fail as the term "*single*" signifies at least two layers of meaning. The first one, as expounded by a number of Caribbean writers, is related to the metaphor of the sea as a site of shared beginning or mother. One recalls Edward K. Brathwaite's oft-quoted phrase regarding the submarine unity of the Caribbean islands in *Contradictory omens* (64) as well as Glissant's notion in *Caribbean Discourse* on the subject of submarine roots which float freely in the water spreading shoots in all routes (67). Glissant also imagines the depth of the sea as a communal engendering element for the Caribbean (*Poetics* 8). In his description of the etymology of "O-mer-os," Walcott similarly designates two different roles to *"mer*" as both mother and the sea (14) and correspondingly Antonio Benítez -Rojo, in *The Repeating Island,* envisions the culture of the Caribbean to be "aquatic" rather than "terrestrial" (11). Evidently in the Caribbean imagination, the sea is associated with genealogy, with origin and with mother. If so, the *individual* or the *singular* quest for roots becomes futile since the Caribbean beginning is plural. Hence, Caribbean ancestry is plural and the sea becomes

a paradigm for defining the plural or heterogeneous identities of the Caribbean.[77] For Glissant the experience of the Middle Passage and the abyss of the sea is the greatest "element" of give-and-take (*Poetics* 8). Hence, the Atlantic Ocean and the slave ship can be the birthplace of the Caribbean people.

Secondly, associating a singular line of descent with ancestry faces an impasse in the Caribbean, as, due to the ruptures of the Atlantic crossing, as Françoise Lionnet notes in her paper "Traversée De La Mangrove De Maryse Condé: Vers Un Nouvel Humanisme Antillais?", the non-sequential concept of time has become the frame of reference in the Antilles (480) (qtd and translated by Ruthmarie H. Mitsch 59).[78] Lorna Burns, in a similar vein, argues that the founding myth cannot function in the Caribbean as it is bound to linearity and legitimation; hence, it is not in tune with the melody of the lived experiences in the Caribbean ("Landscape and Genre in the Caribbean Canon: Creolizing the Poetics of Place and Paradise" 30). This is the very specificity of the region and its historical/colonial bequest. With this respect, the question of "who am I" in the New World must be substituted by "who are we" (translator's Introduction, *Caribbean Discourse* xix). [79]

This is how the linkage between filiation, genealogy, and "singular" line of descent falls apart. With respect to the above argument, the quest for the myth of Genesis is bound to fail in the hybrid context of the Caribbean. With the help of "the blue savannas of memory and imagination" (*Poetics* 7), Glissant proposes the concept of "digenesis" for the imaginative recreation of the world,[80] a concept which differs from the orthodox idea of Genesis as the

[77] As Hall also notes Caribbean identity does not fall within one paradigm as "everybody there comes from somewhere else …. That is to say, their true cultures, the places they really come from, the traditions that really formed them, are somewhere else. The Caribbean is the first, the original and the purest diaspora" ("Negotiating Caribbean Identities" pp. 283-84).
[78] Benítez -Rojo describes the Caribbean culture as "a sinuous culture where time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycles of clock and calendar" (11).
[79] Jean-Claude Bajeux also observes that the Caribbean poets tend to move from the "I" to the "We" (qtd. in Victor Figueroa 212).
[80] On "digenesis" see Lorna Burns, "Creolizing the Canon: Engagements with Legacy and Relation in Contemporary Postcolonial Caribbean Writing" pp. 212-16; for the (myth of) genesis, the concept of digenesis, and creolizatoin see Édouard Glissant, "The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World" pp. 289-92.

origin or beginning[81] of the creation.[82] As Glissant perceives, Genesis in its essential connotation, as believed in atavistic communities, refers to an unbroken father-son line of descent (*Faulkner, Mississippi* 114). This sense of filiation together with its concomitant notions of legitimacy and inheritance cannot be experienced in the Caribbean as a non-atavistic community due to the very specificity of this archipelago's historical makeup (three-centuries of rupture with the Middle Passage, slavery, and the Plantation matrix). As Glissant further notes:

> At the birth of the Antillean or Caribbean people there was no Genesis, but a historical fact established over and over again from public memory: Slavery. The holocaust of the slave trade and the belly of the slave ship … confer a much more imperative Genesis, even if the origin proceeds from a point that is hybrid. (195)

This is how Glissant, imaginatively, reconceives the concept of "digenesis" for "genesis" in non-atavistic context of the Caribbean. The OED defines digenesis as "successive generation by two different processes, as sexual and asexual." Loichot also contends that "di" in this term does not refer to "two geneses" or "two beginnings"; instead it delineates another form of development (*Orphan Narratives* 41). Digenesis, she maintains, should be read not in a biblical but in a biological sense. "The term, in zoology, describes the 'alternation of generations' or 'the alternation in the life cycle of an organism of forms produced in a different manner, especially the alternation of sexual with asexual generations'" (41). In Glissant's theoretical image, the sexual generation alters into asexual when the imaginary belly of the boat or the slave ship is taken as the womb of the mother

[81] In parallel with Glissant's notion of imagination, Breslin remarks:

> The branches must be literally re-membered through an act of imaginative recovery of the past, breaking through the amnesia of diaspora and enslavement. That is the role of memory. Once this act of recovery has been accomplished, the past as "history," a crippling deformation of the present, falls away, allowing an Adamic consciousness of the present as open, facing toward the future. That is the role of forgetting. (251)

Breslin's endorsement of the imaginative re-creation of the Caribbean's fissured history by reference to an "Adamic consciousness" recalls Walcott's notion of the "second Adam" as "the spirit of poetic creation" (Braziel 122). Braziel also refers to Kincaid's "textual and philosophical tilling of the garden as a metaphor for historical forms of colonial violence in the region" (122).

[82] Said differentiates the notion of beginning from that of origin: "the latter divine, mythical and privileged, the former secular, humanly produced, and ceaselessly re-examined" (*Beginnings: Intention and Method* xii-xiii).

even though it is "a malfunctioning and abject womb" (43). In this poetic vision, parental, familial or sexual relations are replaced by fictional and imagined myths. Blending the concept of digenesis with Achille's trajectory, it becomes clear that Achille's and other Afro-Caribbean individuals' genesis is in fact digenetic since the tragic Atlantic crossing has torn the securing links to Africa or to a singular linear history.

But the slave ship also, much like the sea/ocean belly, is a paradoxical metaphor as it conveys contradictory images of life and death or life "under sentence of death" (Glissant, *Poetics* 6). The belly of the sea or the ocean cannot replace or be likened to the mother's womb as the mother is a life-giver while the belly of the sea is a burial site which has gulped down countless Africans. Elsewhere Glissant envisions the sea as an "abyss," a chasm which still recalls "these lowest depths, these deeps, with their punctuation of scarcely corroded balls and chains" (6). As the passage lays bare, the seabed is marked with rusted balls and chains. There is no life there; that is why, the projection of motherhood to the sea, with its bleak image of death and sterility, fails. Hence, the cold and floating sea cannot mother, cannot ground and give birth to the descendants of the Middle Passage. Regarding the belly of the slave ship/boat Glissant writes:

> In [our] poetic vision, a boat has no belly; a boat does not swallow up, does not devour; a boat is steered by open skies. Yet, the belly of *this* boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a nonworld from which you cry out. This boat is a womb, a womb abyss. It generates the clamor of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity…. This boat is your womb, matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death." (*Poetics* 6)(italics mine).

Hence, the belly of the slave ship cannot be a womb of life or the origin for the Africans though it can be a womb for the dying and the death. But if we recall Achille's canoe and notice its difference from the devouring belly of the slave ship Glissant describes, we can

visualize it as the belly of a mother. Like the womb, *In God We Troust* carries Achille in the renewing waters of consciousness and widens his closed ontological scaffolding. Though Achille travels to the depths of Africa, this sea voyage proves to be very enlightening.[83] It is like a re-birth, a second beginning where he comes to discover his identity and true beginning together with the submerged history of his archipelago and transnational stories of diaspora. The sea mothers Achille and after carrying and nurturing him as "a foetus" in its womb delivers him to his island home (158). Zoppi's contention, who compares Achille's journey to Africa with Ulysses' arduous *retour* to his homeland, also attests to this suggestion. She contends that Achille goes to Africa in order to find his place in the layers of history; this self-identification can equip him for life in his Ithaca/ St Lucia (528).

The element of water in Achille's sea adventures could also have symbolic interpretation. Water can be interpreted as:

> the collective or of the personal unconscious, or else as an element of mediation and dissolution, it is obvious that this symbolism is an expression of the vital potential of the psyche, of the struggles of the psychic depths to find a way of formulating a clear message comprehensible to the consciousness.(Cirlot 366)

By giving him wisdom, awareness, and a sense of understanding, water opens Achille's mind to the historical reality where he can "rehouse" himself in the fissures of history. Immersion in water is not just purification but also "regeneration through the effect of the transitional powers (implying change, destruction, and re-creation) of the 'primordial waters' (the fluid Element)" (23). Apart from the notion of 'digenesis', which Achille comes to learn in his African journey, his sea errantry has further ramifications which address his identity and his quest for home, the topics of the following two sections.

[83] As Dougherty observes any journey, in particular sea voyage, expands the traveler's arc of understanding and sense of perception ("Homer after *Omeros*" 355).

3.5 Roots/Origin

As discussed earlier, the metaphor of single-root parentage fails in the New World due to the century long rupture of history. Hence, Achille's identification and determinism with a single ground (Africa) and with singular atavistic roots (African) fail. According to Glissant, Deleuze and Guattari define the concept of roots as "a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it" whereas the rhizome, as the French theorists propose, is "an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking permanently" (*Poetics* 11). Hence, the root is monolingual while the rhizome has the characteristics of heterogeneity and connectivity as its principles: "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (Deleuze and Guattari 7).

Accordingly, Glissant differentiates two varieties of identity: "*identité racine*" and "identite rhizome".[84] "*Identité racine*" or "root identity", as a violent form of reterritorialization, is based on the myth of Genesis and is legitimated by linear lines of descent whereas in the latter, identity is defined by the cultural exchange with the other which leads to "the chaotic" web of relation. In sum, rhizomic identity celebrates the concept of "errantry and of totality" while "*identité racine*" guarantees the concept of "self and territory" (*Poetics* 144). Root-identity seeks exclusivity and racial purity; that is why it has historical reverberations for Glissant as it evokes colonialism, together with its racial and ethnic preferences (Richard Clarke 19). On the other hand, rhizome identity is a network of relation with "an aptitude for giving-on-and-with" (*Poetics* 141-42). Therefore,

[84] For a detailed discussion of the distinction between "root-identity" and "rhizome" see Richard L. W. Clarke, "Root Versus Rhizome: An 'Epistemological Break' in Francophone Caribbean Thought" pp. 19-24; Édouard Glissant, "The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World 291; Birgit Mara Kaiser, "Poesie et etendue: Deluze, Glissant and a Post-Postcolonial Aesthetics of the Earth" pp. 132-33; Raphael Dalleo, "Another 'Our America': Rooting a Caribbean Aesthetics in the Work of Jose Marti, Kamau Brathwaite and Édouard Glissant" pp. 3 and 5-6; Valérie Loichot, "Between Breadfruit and Masala: Food Politics in Glissant's Martinique" pp. 128-30; Rachel D. Friedman, "Derek Walcott's *Odysseys*" 456; Dash, *Édouard Glissant* 179; for criticism of Glissant's concept of 'rhizome' see Richard L. W. Clarke, "Root Versus Rhizome: An 'Epistemological Break' in Francophone Caribbean Thought" pp. 23-4.

single-rootedness celebrates the supremacy of the One which determines the other's position either as conforming to the norms settled by the One or distancing from them (Loichot, "Between Breadfruit and Masala" 129) whereas rhizome enables the errant to wander and to spread horizontal relations with the other through contact. Thus, in the rhizomic model, identity is both rooted and routed. [85]

. Here is how Glissant through the botanical metaphors of root and rhizome interprets the plight of the New World inhabitants, legitimates their errancy and their fervent search for home, identity, and filiation. Achille's quest for anchorage in his fatherland together with his oedipal quest for tree-like linkage to his father/ancestors fail as oedipal determination in the Caribbean gives way to a rhizomic or relational model. As Glissant notes, the concept of filiation cannot be planted in another land in the same way that the quest for oedipal determination cannot be sought for in the measure of expansion (*Poetics* 61). Through Achille's African journey, *Omeros* demonstrates that the Caribbean landscape is not the land of linearity and the concept of identity is not entangled to a single-root family tree. However, it can be argued that Achille's filial quest in the unhomely context of Africa has not failed as relation, according to Britton, is the recompense for the sense of unhomeliness (129) an errant may encounter either in genealogical pursuit or in geographical determination. This relational/rhizomic model propounded by Glissant is both a challenge to and a reconstructive and substitutive way for the essential genealogical patterns for the people of the New World. By extending rhizomic roots, Achille's identity does not get him embroiled in the diachronic template of filiation; instead, this model helps Achille like other Afro-Caribbean subjects in developing synchronic perceptions of time.

[85] I have seen a kind of relation between Glissant's theory of 'rhizome' and Said's notion of 'exile' when he writes: "[a]n intellectual is like a shipwrecked person who learns to live in a certain sense with the land, not on it, not like Robinson Crusoe, whose goal is to colonize his little island, but more like Marco Polo, whose sense of the marvelous never fails him, and who is always a traveler, a provisional guest, not a freeloader, conqueror, or raider" ("Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals" pp. 59-60).

3.6 Home/At-homeness

In Chapter Two, I discussed Achille's failure in associating the concept of home with geography. This awareness impelled him to leave Africa for St. Lucia with an ironic happy sense of homecoming as the island and the islanders presented him with familiarity. In this section, I will analyze the ways in which, Achille, as a new-born Afro-Caribbean, attempts to accommodate St. Lucia as his home by developing a sense of at-homeness through the strategies of relation and creolization. As Hamner also argues "[i]n order to convert a house, a colony, or a nation into a home, the individual must confront inner as well as external sources of alienation" (*Epic* 91). There are some alienating elements in the island which Achille needs to cope with by changing his way of thought.

In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant elaborates on the concept of "Relation" (169-79) with respect to three meshed verbs: "relink," "relay," and "relate" (173).[86] "Relink" can refer to any association made between two concepts, objects, or individuals; "relay," as Loichot illustrates in *Orphan Narratives*, suggests "community building and solidarity: we relay by relieving others when their individual strength has wanted" (149). Glissant makes clear that relational thought is the fundamental assumption behind the concept of relation which prepares the ground for the extension of the relation "with the Other" (*Poetics* 11). Glissant also associates the concept of relation with movement, or what Loichot calls "locomotion" (*Orphan Narratives* 149), when he writes "Relation is movement" (*Poetics* 171). By this suggestion, Glissant underscores the significance of cultural interaction, community building and relational expansion through errancy and rhizomic wandering. The third verb, "relate," indicates an act of recounting or narrating a story. Loichot further notes that by

[86] On relation, *Tout-monde*, totality, and creolization see Birgit Mara Kaiser, "Poesie et etendue: Deluze, Glissant and a Post-Postcolonial Aesthetics of the Earth"; on creolization see Edward K. Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean*; James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*; Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* pp. 134-44; regarding creolization of Homer in *Omeros* on the axis of ideology and aesthetics see Lorna Burns, "Creolizing the Canon: Engagements with Legacy and Relation in Contemporary Postcolonial Caribbean Writing" pp. 291-98.

referring to a Sioux word in *Faulkner, Mississippi*, Glissant adds a fourth layer of meaning – namely, kinship – to this triad-connoting concept (*Orphan Narratives* 191-92).[87]

Among Walcott's cast, Achille is likely the best paradigm for illuminating Glissant's notion of relation (as movement). Walcott opens *Omeros* with Philoctete's account of the fishermen's canoe-making and makes particular reference to Achille and his canoe, *In God we Troust*;[88] Walcott also closes the book with Achille leaving the beach as "the sea was still going on" (325). In both scenes, Achille, one of Walcott's key protagonists, is involved with the sea, the fluid element which signifies movement and transportation in contrast to the stasis which land may connote. As discussed earlier, despite the poet-persona's land-based errancy in North America and Europe, Achille's locomotion takes him to the depth of the sea.

After his *retour* to his familiar village with a transformed understanding of genesis, roots, and identity, Achille relates himself to the island and islanders in three expanding levels: familial, communal, and trans-national. Through these relations, as I will demonstrate, Achille attempts to develop a sense of at-homeness with the island. In the first level, which accords with Glissant's concept of relation as "kinship," Achille extends his kinship ties on familial level by accepting Helen to his home while she bears Hector's unborn child.[89] Evidently, this gesture, the adoption of Hector's child, indicates Achille's awareness of the family structure in the New World where – in Dash's words – the linear quest is ill-fated (translator's Introduction, *Caribbean Discourse* xxxiii); hence, Achille

[87] In Chapter Six (The Deferred, The Word) from *Faulkner, Mississippi*, there is a subsection entitled "[w]e Are All Related" with an excerpt from a Native American play where Glissant writes: "*Mita kuye oyasin* is a Sioux word that means 'we are all related' or 'all my relations.' It is widely used by many Native American people today and is used at the beginning or at the end of the play. As I think of these words in French, *mita kuye oyasin* becomes Nous sommes tous en Relation' [We are all in Relation]" (196).

[88] For a description of canoe-making and tree-cutting see Paul Breslin, *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott* pp. 251-52; Norman Austin, "Homer and the Sunrise in Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'"; Robert D. Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed: Derek Walcott's Omeros* 37.

[89] At Maud's burial ceremony, Helen approaches Achille telling him of her desire to return to his home (267).

abandons the linear sense of filiation for "the surplus of expansiveness" (Glissant, *Poetics* 138).[90] Equipped with new insight, he expands his genealogy on horizontal lines rather than confine it to strictly biological, vertical or monolingual parameters. By so doing, Achille becomes one among the villagers who becomes able to construct a family for himself. Ma Kilman is a childless widow. By the death of Maud in Book Six, Plunkett also becomes a widower. Engaged in a love triangle, Hector tragically dies to see his child. Philoctete also has no family though he suffers the absent presence of his ancestors through the trope of the wound. Seven Seas lives with his dog. The poet-narrator also suffers from his failed love relation. Catherine Weldon, similarly, is a widow who after her son's death commits herself to the cause of the Amerindians.

Developing his family on the rhizomic model of expansion plainly reveals Achille's embrace of the specificities of Caribbean reality and experience. By this gesture, Achille succeeds in creating a "homely" sense for himself in the island though he is also keen on preserving his ties to Africa. That is why he decides to give Hector's child an African name. Through naming, Achille reaches Africa "but by another route" (Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 232). [91] As Ma Kilman talks with Seven Seas:

> "Achille want to give it,
> even is Hector's, an African name. Helen
> don't want no African child. He say he'll leave it
>
> till the day of the christening. That Helen must learn
> where she from. (318)

Helen does not think the way Achille does; she is disinterested in the African values Achille wants to observe. Achille's choice clearly manifests Glissant's theory of

[90] "Expanse and Filiation" (47-63) is title of an essay in *Poetic of Relation.*
[91] Achille has had a long discussion over the concept of naming and its meaning in Africa with Afolabe. That is why the issue of "naming" seems very important for him.

creolization, while it is closely connected to the concept of relation. Creolization to Glissant is " … a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry" (*Poetics* 34). Achille tries to harmonize himself with the composite culture of the Caribbean while at the same time, he feels free to dive and root himself deeper in the mores of his ancestral heritage, in the remnants of his African wealth. The extension of filiation on a rhizomic vector is a construct imposed upon the Caribbean as a result of the "European presence" (to echo Stuart Hall), a presence which has altered the formulation of many essentialized concepts (here relation for filiation, digenesis for Genesis, rhizome for roots, at-homeness for a solid home). This alteration caused by "thought of the Other" registers another formulation in this cultural interaction which Achille manages to synchronize with "the other of Thought" (Glissant, *Poetics* 154). Achille acknowledges "thought of the Other" without distorting his own African values. This is what creolization does. As Glissant argues, creolization repudiates the exaltation of the singular root that guarantees and legitimates the sovereignty of one race over the other (*Caribbean Discourse* 140). "Thought of the other" creates a sense of duality, a sense of alterity, but Glissant underscores that the existence of another element, another force or presence cannot be harmful in the community, cannot lead to universal transcendence or hierarchy unless differences are acknowledged. When these differences are recognized and accepted, the hierarchical model gives way to a horizontal axis and multiplicity replaces oneness (*Poetics* 17). This outlook prepares the ground for a give and take, for change and exchange, for creolization which helps Achille contribute to the cultural confluence of his community.[92]

[92] In a discussion of 'acculturation' and 'transculturation', Burns takes the latter as the immediate antecedent of Glissant's concept of creolization, the important characteristic feature of identity in the Caribbean. She also relates it to Ortiz's notion of *neo*culturation ("Becoming-Postcolonial, Becoming-Caribbean: Édouard Glissant and the Poetics of Creolization" pp. 102-3). Creolization differs from *métissage* as in general terms the confluence in creolization is without limit; it combines different things whose constituent elements can

Another ring of relation as "relaying" is echoed in the communal level where Achille, through his active participation, sustains and strengthens his relational ties with others in the community. Before undertaking his African journey, Achille is usually seen as an individual alienated from the mainstream society who lives a life of seclusion by the sea (recall Saturday night blockorama in Chapter Two) while after his dream-journey, his presence is felt more actively. On Boxing Day, the annual carnival celebrated a day after Christmas, people wear masks and dance to the tune of fifes, drums and chac-chac (276). This year, Achille is very excited as he would take part in it with a renewed sense of identity as an African, a real African but a transgendered one, "a muscular woman, a scarf round his head" (273).[93] Even though the rituals of this ceremony seem ridiculous to Helen, she helps Achille prepare for it. Having undergone a katabatic *nostos* in Africa, Achille understands that this is his communal responsibility to inform his fellow Africans of their ancestral rituals:

> … with firm tenderness,
> Achille explained that he and Philo had done this
> every Boxing Day, and not because of Christmas,
>
> but for something older; something that he had seen
> in Africa, when his name had followed a swift,
> where he had been his own father and his own son. (275)

This is how Achille enlightens Helen of her buried ancestral heritage. His belief in this ceremony originates from his African roots and not from a colonially-imposed Christian religion.

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be recognized, can be reflected while in *métissage* the synthesized elements sometimes cannot be diffracted (Glissant, *Poetics* 34). For discussion of *métissage* see Roberto F. Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays*; Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* pp. 1-29; Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* 214, n.3; for creolization and *métissage* see also Édouard Glissant, "Beyond Babel" pp. 561-63; for more on the theory of creolization, totality, and relation see Lorna Burns, "Becoming-Postcolonial, Becoming-Caribbean: Édouard Glissant and the Poetics of Creolization."

[93] In "Walcott's Intertextual Method: Non-Greek Naming in '*Omeros*'", Burnett contrasts the concept of androgyny in this sequence with that of Virginia Woolf's works (*Orlando* and *Mrs. Dalloway*). Burnett relates this equal combination of masculinity and femininity to Jung's ideas that in a healthy mind, regardless of the gender of the individual, *animus-anima* are in balance (183). Ciocia also relates Achille's androgynous appearance to his namesake (Homer's Achilles) in the Greek classical tradition who wore woman's dress in order not to attend the Trojan War (101, n. 14); see also Paula Burnett, *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* 23.

There is another important issue worth discussing in this sequence and that is related to Helen's contentious yellow dress with which Achille partakes in this African ceremony.[94] Even though it has empire's tag on it, Achille, excitedly, "wriggle[s] through the armholes of the tight lemon dress" (275). Conducting this African ritual by the dress of empire is another instance of creolization which reflects diverse spectrums of this Afro-European ritual. By this gesture, Achille synthesizes Africanness with a European element; this is part of the Caribbean reality and a crucial aspect of its specific identity, an aspect that resonates with Hall's concept of "American presence." This evidence of creolization signposts Achille's attempt at cultural at-homeness in the New World context. Achille could not stay in Africa as that land was not *heimlich* to him; instead, he tries to preserve and practice his indigenous cultural rites in St. Lucia. In Glissant's words, Achille does not need to hide his Africanness or idolize it "*en-soi*" (*Poetics* 55); rather, he must acknowledge his racial strand together with the European elements. Only through this propitious combination, can he succeed in becoming a true Caribbean or what Stuart Hall calls, in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," "uniquely – essentially Caribbean" (235). This is how Achille comes to understand that,

> from all this history … *another reality* has come about. He is no longer forced to reject strategically the European elements in his composition, although they continue to be a source of alienation, since he knows that he can choose between them. He can see that alienation first and foremost resides in the impossibility of choice, in the arbitrary imposition of values, and, perhaps, in the concept of value itself. He can conceive that synthesis is not a process of bastardization as he used to be told, but a productive activity through which each element is enriched. He has *become* Caribbean. (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 8) (Italics original)

[94] Maud dismisses Helen as she thinks she has stolen this dress while Helen says Maud has given it to her. For discussion of contention over the 'yellow dress' see Timothy P. Hofmeister, "This is We Calypso": An Ithacan and Antillean Topos in Derek Walcott's "*Omeros*" pp. 64-5.

Achille has become aware of his African identity alongside the Creole construct of the Caribbean. Hence, he fuses his ancestral and tribal heritage with the European elements present in society.

There are also two funeral ceremonies in Book Six which deserve our attention; one is Hector's (232-33) and the other Maud's (264-67). In spite of the rivalry and feud between Hector and Achille over Helen, Achille attends Hector's funeral:

> ….Crouching for his friend to hear,
> Achille whispered about their ancestral river,
> and those things he would recognize when he got there,
>
> his true home, forever and ever and ever,
> forever; *compere*. Then Philoctete limped over
> and rested his hand firmly on a shaking shoulder
>
> to anchor his sorrow.(232)

It is not beyond expectation to see Achille at Hector's burial ceremony, as they share ethnic ties with each other; his attendance at Maud's ceremony, on the other hand, might appear suspect (to the narrator), since the Plunketts epitomize ex-colonizers in the village. The poet-persona, himself one of the attendees, describes the ceremony with particular reference to Achille:

> I recognized Achille. He stood next to Philoctete
> in a rusted black suit, his eyes anchored to the pew:
> then he lifted them and I saw that the eyes were wet
> …
> Why should he be here, why should they have come at all,
> none of them following the words, but he had such grace
>
> that I couldn't bear it. I could leave the funeral,
> but his wet ebony mask and her fishnetted face
> were shrouded with Hector's death. Could he, in that small
>
> suit too tight at the shoulders, who shovelled the pens
> in the rain at Plunkett's, love him? Where was it from,

this charity of soul, more piercing than Helen's

beauty? runnelling his face like the road to the farm?[95]
We sang behind Plunkett, and I saw Achille perspire
over the words, his lips following after the sound. (265)

Walcott's commingling of the villagers, in particular Achille in his tight discolored black suit, with the Plunketts is thought-provoking.[96] This sequence makes clear how creolization is in keeping with relation. As an African, Achille would have practiced his native religion but – by the violent intervention of history and fractures of colonialism – the institution of the church is imposed on him and other Afro-Caribbeans. The "opacity" of Christianity is nicely illustrated by Walcott when he describes Achille's lips "following the sound" in sweat. This gesture, this blank imitation of the sound indicates the opaqueness of Plunkett's religion to Achille. In spite of this, Achille does not imprison himself within the boundaries of his renewed African values; rather, he opens his mind to embrace the "thought of the Other" together with his cultural and religious rites – this is the very specificity of the composite culture of St. Lucia. This willingness for expanding relation with various spectrums of a given community, even with the culture of the former colonizers, speaks of Achille's conceptual transformation and his ability to expand his thought in diverse routes, an expansion which Glissant labels a "healthy Excess" ("The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World" 288). This sense of community and collectivity in the Caribbean is a privilege for constructing a "block of subjectivities" (Loichot, *Orphan Narrative* 153). As analyzed, relation, creolization, and opacity are concurrent and complementary processes. [97]

[95] On farm see John B. V. Sickle, "The Design of Derek Walcott's '*Omeros*'"

[96] Achille's "tight" coat in Maud's funeral recalls his tight yellow dress in Boxing Day and Ma Kilman's "tight" Mass attire. This tightness is symbolic of the imposed restrictions of colonialism. However, Achille and Ma Kilman succeed in transcending the "tightness" of colonialism through creolization. By so doing, they managed to balance "thought of the Other" with "the Other of thought" by contributing their own share in cultural interactions.

[97] Regarding opacity Loichot writes:

> In the description of an inextricable compositeness, we recognize the opacity, which occurs necessarily with every cultural contact. The constant oscillation between a separate distinction and blending points not to the result but to the process,

The third relational expansion which develops in Achille's mind and broadens his understanding of the composite culture of the Caribbean is the expansion of trans-national and trans-regional relations with those who share the same wound of dislocation and dispossession. This relational model invokes the concept of relation as "relinking" and as "relating/narrating" history or a story. Here, one can recall Achille's sea voyages in Africa when the sea diffracts hi/stories recorded in the belly of the ocean. There Achille comes to learn the story or the history of the Indian indentured workers who were transplanted to the New World by *Fatel Rozack* together with the Jewish diaspora.[98] This realization that Africans were not the only subjugated peoples in history – having experienced colonization, transplantation, and deportation – eases his pain. Glissant notes, "[s]ometimes, by taking up the problems of the Other, it is possible to find oneself" (*Poetics* 18). Extrapolating the reading of the poem, it becomes clear that *Omeros* piles up and connects all vanquished nations across the world. This accumulation is similar to Glissant's concept of the "spiral" – which he prefers over the square and the circle; he associates the square "with the rigidity of Western thought" and the circle "with the proverbial enclosed space of the Plantation" (Loichot, "Édouard Glissant's Graves" 1019). In spite of the bounded space of the square or the circle, the spiral moves from one ring to the other and by so doing "encounters new spaces and does not transform them into either depths or conquests" (Glissant, *Poetics* 199).[99] Another ring is also added to the spiral of diasporic nations when a day after Achille's *retour* to St. Lucia, he beats out Marley's *Buffalo Soldier*, a song which relates the hi/story of massacre and displacement of

> which is for Glissant the only possible state in which a composite culture can be observed. This endless process prevents settlement in equilibrium or in stasis, which would allow classification, categorization, and lines (the main characteristic of an atavistic society). (*Orphan Narratives* 154)

[98] Not only in *Omeros* but in *Drums and Colors*, "North and South" and "The Fortunate Traveler" Walcott relates the tragic destiny of Africans in parallel with Jews.

[99] Another characteristic feature of spiral is that it does not fall within the Manichean concept of binarism; rather, it builds an expanding web (Glissant, *Poetics* 199). For more on this concept and as a design on Glissant's grave see Valérie Loichot, "Édouard Glissant's Graves" 1019 and n. 17.

Amerindians.[100] Achille, who is on "a rhizomatic motion of constant becoming and continual mapping" (Meerzon 73), comes to learn that his problems are not unique. He wrestles with them, wrongly imaging himself as the sole afflicted in the world while, in reality, these problems are ubiquitous in other places too (Glissant, *Poetics* 153). Thus, the plight of the Africans is similar to that of Amerindians, in the same way that Asian problems echo in the Caribbean.[101] This is how Achille, according to Glissant, comes to realize the "dialectics of interdependence" (153), a process through which he reaches to a kind of awareness.[102] This interrelatedness across diaporic nations creates a sense of solidarity which reverberates in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*: "each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd" (3).

As discussed earlier, involved in a wide-reaching cyclical errancy, and parallel to Achille – though in another route – the poet-persona journeys to North America and Europe and relates various tales of dispossession and displacement. Due to the discordance of the Native American predicament and European scenes within the arc of a West Indian epic, these sections of the poem have come under criticism by many critics. In *The Epic of the Dispossessed*, Hamner discusses Christopher Benfey, Brad Leithauser, Sean O'Brien, David Mason, Rei Terada, and Patricia Ismond's critical stand toward these imaginary journeys (92-93). The first four critics are not clear about the relevance of these sporadic journeys within the overall framework of a West Indian poem. Terada offers no commentary regarding the justification of American Indian tribes in Walcott's Caribbean poem, an issue which Hamner relates to the scope of her research (93). Among these

[100] On this song see Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*, p. 120; Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora* pp. 245-46.

[101] Walcott describes dispossessed and transplanted nations as fallen leaves, a metaphor which symbolize "dead or discarded souls" (Hamner, *Epic* 90).

[102] In his analysis of Walcott's appropriation of Homer and his relation with Greek literature, Moffett argues that Achille, as one of the characters who engages with origins, "shows the smallest personal growth by the close of the book" (2). Toward the end of his discussion, Moffett even calls Achille "an anti-hero" as he "fails to acquire self-awareness which appears to have come to many characters of the poem like Helen and Plunkett" (18). I do not accept Moffett's contention as after his revelatory journey to Africa, Achille's limited frame of mind undergoes a drastic transformation through the dialectics of creolization and relation.

negative or neutral criticisms, only Ismond supports the appropriateness of American Indian plight in *Omeros*. Hamner, himself, does not offer a strong support for these books though he believes the thematic of " dispossession" links the poet-narrator's sprawling European errantry in the heart of the West Indian epic (106). Dubbing *Omeros* as "the epic of the dispossessed," Hamner argues that, in contrast to the principles of the heroic poem in representing the heroic deeds of supernatural elements and heroes, people populating *Omeros* hail from the margins (94). To this scholar, this fact itself suggests the features of the epic of the dispossessed; indigenous tribes in Africa, North America, and the West Indies were all subject to the violence of history. In spite of this argument, he concludes that stitching "Euro-American scenes" to an epic of West Indies pulls apart the overall structure of the poem (106).[103] In spite of these discussions, I suggest that these segments endorse the focal themes of *Omeros*.

Thematically, these books progress in two vectors: on one level, they relate the story of dispossessed, transplanted, and diasporic nations and on the other, they recount the fading glory of former colonial powers. This is my contention that in either course, the poet-persona's global errancy across time and space thematically broadens Achille's African excursion by adding more rings to the accumulating "spiral" of dispossessed nations. Graham likewise underlines the significance of these scenes for the thematic fortification of the poem if the poet intends to echo the West Indies' historical violence and cultural dispossession across nations (113). Friedman also argues that without these sections *Omeros* would be a "less rich poem" ("Derek Walcott's *Odysseys*" 461). Brought up in "the land of relations" and educated under the colonial curriculum, Walcott masterfully

[103] For a detailed analysis of poet-persona's homecoming after his Euro-American journey see Rachel D. Friedman, "Derek Walcott's *Odysseys*"

concocts a wide-reaching epic of the dispossessed by seaming the hi/stories of affected nations.

Walcott also recounts two more stories with parallel scenes in Book Three and Four while relating the slave raid in Africa and massacre in the Americas.[104] He concludes this portion by Weldon's commentary regarding the replication of history in time and space:

> "This was history. I had no power to change it.
> And yet I still felt that this had happened before.
> I knew it would happen again, but how strange it
>
> was to have seen it in Boston, in the hearth-fire.
> I was a leaf in the whirlwind of the Ordained.
> Then *Omeros*'s voice came from the mouth of the tent:
>
> 'We galloped towards death swept by the exaltation
> of meeting ourselves in a place just like this one:
> The Ghost Dance has tied the tribes into one nation. (217)

As Ghost Dance ties American tribes to each other, the legacies of slavery unites Ibo, Mandingo, Ashanti and Guinea "into one nation / of eyes and shadows and groans, in the one pain / that is inconsolable, the loss of one's shore / with its crooked footpath" (151).[105] This linkage of distant diasporic populations in Walcott's West Indian epic of the dispossessed precisely reverberates with Glissant's concept of relation which requires common ground between relating elements (*Poetics* 8).

In Chapter XLII *Omeros* adds yet another layer to the dispossessed and migrant nations by introducing Nina, a Polish emigrant waitress in a hotel in Canada, to the cast of his characters (212). *Omeros* also writes of Greeks who were enslaved by the Romans "as

[104] After the slave raid in Africa, Achille goes to the empty village but finds only a child and a dog while the rest had "vanished into their souls" (146). He sees Seven Seas "foaming with grief. He must / be deaf as well as blind" (145). Then the line of captive Africans chained together like black ants catches his eyes (145). Walcott similarly repeats the image of ants in the Plains for Catherine Weldon while this time black ants are red (215). As Weldon rides her horse to the Indian camp after the massacre, she finds "a starved mongrel / and a papoose" (215) sitting alone in the street. Like Achille, she goes to other lanes futilely hoping to find a living soul while she only spots *Omeros* frozen with grief. "He must / be deaf too, I thought, as well as blind" (216).

aesthetics instructors/of their spoilt children" (206). By highlighting the plight of Aruac, Carib, Sioux, Crow, Creeks, Choctaws, Ibo, Ashanti, Mandingo along with Indians and Jews together with European Irish, Polish, and Greeks, Walcott unites them into one nation as they undergo almost similar experiences, a linkage which supports Glissant's concept of relational identity.[106] In *Traité du tout-monde,* Glissant takes this solidarity network as exemplary of the poetics of relation (qtd. in Loichot, *Orphan Narratives* 155). Glissant's concept of "distancing" also authenticates Walcott's sprawling and loosely-structured poem; for Glissant, "distancing" is a required element for relation (*Poetics* 156). The widespread convergence of cultures across time and space "thus makes every distancing … be determinant but also makes every (self-) determination be a generative distancing" (153). This is precisely what Walcott illuminates in Achille's journey for self-determination in the pages of "nonhistory." These acts of distancing, as Braziel correspondingly notes, are required for self-sufficiency and a sense of otherness (118). That is why Glissant considers exile and uprootedness as constructive blocks of identity particularly when the errant quests for alterity through circular nomadism instead of uni-directional arrow-like nomadism (*Poetics* 18).[107]

Through Achille's rhizomic homecoming, Walcott remodels the conventional conceptions of identity, filiation, genesis, roots, and – above all – home. In this chapter, I demonstrated how Achille on a sacred mission for self-definition, manages to glue some broken pieces of the Antilles' vase.[108] Such an act of redeeming proves to be promising as

[106] McGarrity similarly contends that Walcott "views the endurance of subjugation as a means of connection for various groups" (*Washed by the Gulf Stream* 102).

[107] Hamner's conclusion in "Creolizing Homer" also attest Glissant's concept of relation: "[i]n singling out the same alienation factor within as well as between societies, [C. B.] Davis, Hardwick, and Peter Burian ("'You can Build'" 80) all conclude that Walcott advocates interrelatedness and commonalities rather than difference in his creolized *Odyssey*" (384).

[108] Walcott uses the metaphor of the broken vase in his Nobel Lecture, "The Antilles, Fragments of Epic Memory: The 1992 Nobel Lecture":

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

it links the present to the shattered past and helps construct a future for the displaced Caribbean inhabitants. Through the consciousness bestowed Achille by virtue of his African journey, and his sea voyages in particular, this Afro-Caribbean individual comes to learn that the oedipal quest cannot be projected to the non-atavistic context of the Caribbean as it is not the land of filiation; it is the land of relation. By comprehending the diversity and multiplicity of cultures in the island, as the very specificity of the New World, Achille envisions displacement in a positive light as it assists him in expanding his filial ties not in a linear, time-bound direction but in a horizontal and rhizomic model. Such awareness enables him to accommodate and heal some of the alienating phenomenal features of the New World through – relation and creolization – the two concepts which make Achille at-home in the island. [109] This suggests that for the inhabitants of the New World, home is not simply a physical place or a location; it can connote a feeling, the sense of being at-home. At-homeness with the New World thus might be better than returning or living in one's ancestral, and yet unhomely, homeland.

> pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are disparate, ill-fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places. Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent. (262)

[109] In her discussion of the variety and diversity of cultures in the Caribbean archipelago, Hardwick argues that "[i]ndeed, current socio-cultural analysis has rejected essentialist models and the search for 'roots' in favour of analysis of the cultural dynamic generated by the cross currents of diasporas" (Hardwick, "A Daidalos in the Late-Modern Age? Transplanting Homer into Derek Walcott's the *Odyssey*: A Stage Version"). As this classical scholar underscores concepts need to be rethought in order to meet the dynamics of the New World.

CHAPTER 4: ODYSSEUS' *RETOUR* THROUGH *DETOUR* AND OPACITY

In the proceeding chapter I demonstrated how—through Glissant's concepts of relation and creolization—Achille succeeds in developing a rhizomic sense of relation and a feeling of at-homeness with the island in which he lives. In this chapter, I will draw on Glissant's theoretical concepts of "*detour*" and "opacity," as heuristic tools for reading Walcott's stage version of the *Odyssey*. These two concepts are also embodied in the island vernacular, the Creole language. I will use these concepts to examine Odysseus' trajectory of homecoming, the delay in his quest for home, and the counter-poetic techniques he uses to challenge the barriers of his *nostos*. In this close analysis, I will survey almost all the episodes in terms of structure and content, giving special attention to the Cyclops' episode, the massacre, and the scenes taking place in Ithaca. These particular episodes are chosen for their significance in highlighting how the home-bound Odysseus surmounts obstacles en route. In these episodes, Odysseus hides his real intensions behind camouflaged speech; the use of puns, masks; via opacity and disguise, in order to save himself from life-threatening hazards. In other episodes, he deals with the issues in a direct and transparent way. Before proceeding to the discussion of *detour*, opacity, and the Creole language—its genesis, development, and application—a brief observation on the historical, socio-political, and economic status of Martinique is required in order to contextualize Glissant's theoretical concepts.

Unlike other Caribbean intellectuals, who helped the revolutions of other countries or wrote about other cultures and nations, Glissant centers his thoughts and theoretical ponderings on the Caribbean—in particular, Martinique—and writes about the economic, historical, cultural, geographical, linguistic, racial, and environmental issues with which its inhabitants wrestle. Since 1946, Martinique—like Guadeloupe—has been a *departement*

d'outre mer (overseas region) of France in the Lesser Antilles in the Eastern Caribbean. This status explains the assimilating and authoritative policies of France in various areas such as language, culture, education, production, economy, and modernity in Martinique. In describing the predicament of Martinicans, Glissant explains how dependency on France destroys "the natural tendency to self-affirmation" among Martinicans (Dash, *Édouard Glissant* 141). Through this passive reliance, Martinique looks very modern while local culture, indigenous language (Creole) and local economy are all at the threat of extinction, dearth, and erosion. This state of passivity, dependency, and consumerism has affected the psyche and mind of the people; it has also preoccupied Glissant's thought. In one of his essays, *Le delire verbal* (verbal delirium), which is categorized under the concept of *detour*, Glissant elaborates on this issue as mental disequilibrium (the concept of *delire verbal* will be discussed in Chapter Five as *detour* of resistance and survival).

4.1 *Detour*

Detour or diversion is one of the important concepts in Glissant's theories.[110] According to the OED, *detour* as a verb means "to turn aside from the direct way; to go round about"; and as a noun it means "a turning or deviation from the direct road; a roundabout or circuitous way, course, or proceeding." To Glissant, *detour* is "not a systematic refusal to see." It is neither "a kind of self-inflicted blindness nor a conscious strategy of flight in the face of reality. Rather, we would say that *detour* is formed, like a habit, from an interweaving of negative forces that go unchallenged" (*Caribbean Discourse* 19). *Detour* does not deal with the problem in a direct or straight way; it rather follows it in a meandering path. Hence *detour* is "both an evasion of the real situation and an obstinate

[110] Dash translates *detour* to "diversion" (*Caribbean Discourse* 14).

effort to find a way round it" (Britton 26). This avoidance or indirectness postpones the intended meaning of the given situation.

As Glissant observes, the Creole language is "the first area of diversion" (*Caribbean Discourse* 20). What is Creole and how did it originate? Historically speaking, Creole was not an autonomous language pre-dating the invasion of the colonizers in the Caribbean; rather as Glissant describes, it was "a concession made by the Other for his own purposes in his dealings with our world" (166-67). This compromise was made between the colonizers/planters and colonized/Plantation slaves. Hence, this colonial construct was born out of the unequal power relation between varieties of African languages—spoken by the slaves—and European languages—spoken by the colonizers.[111] Thus, Creole as a subversive language emerged at the advent of colonialism and became the language of command, power, and authority as well as submission, obedience, and—above all—resistance (the function of Creole in the Plantation era will be discussed under the concept of opacity below).

In present-day Martinique, as Glissant observes, the relationship between Creole, as the vernacular language of the island, and French, as the vehicular language, creates "an unsuspected source of *anguish*" (*Caribbean Discourse* 120) (emphasis added). Glissant notes that "[w]e have seized this concession [Creole] to use it for our own purposes … but having seized it does not make it into a means of self-expression …." (167). With respect to self-expression, Glissant differentiates two kinds of poetics in Martinique: forced poetics and natural poetics.[112] Natural/free poetics is defined as "any collective yearning for expression that is not opposed to itself either at the level of what it wishes to express or at

[111] Martinican Creole is a "francophone phenomenon" greatly influenced by the French lexicon (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 185).
[112] In fact, language, self-expression, comprehension, and communication are among the important issues discussed by other postcolonial thinkers like Brathwaite, Spivak, Fanon (*Black Skin, White Masks*), and Lamming (*The Pleasures of Exile*) and others; language was the first and immediate herald of colonialism.

the level of the language that it puts into practice" (120). On the other hand, forced/constrained poetics is "any collective desire for expression that, when it manifests itself, is negated at the same time because of the *deficiency* that stifles it, not at the level of desire, which never ceases, but at the level of expression, which is never realized" (120) (italics original). Glissant calls natural poetics *langue* and forced poetics *langage*. A *langue*, as Betsy Wing discusses in her notes to Glissant's book, "may be a national language (French, Spanish, etc.) or an imposed language (French in Martinique) or a dominated language (Creole)" whereas "a *langage* is a way of using language that can cross linguistic borders" (*Poetics* 217).[113]

In Martinique, as Glissant observes, natural poetics does not exist because language and expression mismatch (*Caribbean Discourse* 121); neither Creole nor French are the indigenous languages of the people. Creole is the mother tongue of the island but it is "a not-yet-standardized language" (121). In the present time, as Glissant argues, as a result of French Departmentalization, this European vehicular language keeps debasing and eroding the vernacular language by pushing it to the edges of the community (translator's Introduction xxii). Hence, Glissant closely relates the erosion of the Creole language to economic growth (*Poetics* 112). In an essay in *Caribbean Discourse* subtitled, "*Man gin-yin an zin*" (191-94), he argues that Creole is not "a functional language" anymore as "it is being undermined by a dominant language. … All that the Creole language has achieved … risks being lost in this process of marginalization, produced by both an absence of productivity and an absence of creativity" (193). That is how consumerism and dependency

[113] Wing later translates Glissant's notion of the relation between *langue* and *langage* from *Le discours antillais*: "the Creole *langue*, which is natural to me, comes at every moment to irrigate my written practice of French, and my *langage* results from this symbiosis" (217). Wing's English equivalents for Glissant's *langue* and *langage* are –"language-voice" and "language-use," while Dash translates them as "language" and "self-expression" respectively (217).

on France crushes Creole. According to Glissant bananas, cane, and pineapples are the final residues of the Creole world (127).

As it becomes clear, counter-poetics was and is an inherent feature of Creole. Hence, Creole can function as *detour* in the area of language. In this chapter, I will examine *detour* in various forms in Walcott's drama even though it is not written in Creole; it is an English drama with only a few passages in Creole uttered by a few characters.[114] However, the inherent dynamics of Creole language can be fleshed out in the underlying structure of Walcott's text. Much like his counterpart in the Greek text, Walcott's Odysseus is also going home. As I suggest in this study, Odysseus challenges the obstacles of his *nostos* through the camouflaging techniques of Creole language. *Detour* can be analyzed in the structure of Walcott's drama either as repetition/rhythm or digression/diversions; it could also be detected in the terrain of language as linguistic *detour* or camouflaged speech. As the given text is a drama, para-linguistic features of *detour* such as gesture, movement, and facial expression can likewise be traced. Madness and the compulsive use of language, or *detour*, as verbal delirium is another feature of Glissant's concept. Finally, the element of disguise—either as physical or linguistic—is an additional form of *detour* (*detour* of madness and disguise will be analyzed in Chapter Five). In what follows, I first analyze the structure of the drama to see how it hinders Odysseus' homecoming.

[114] The official language of St. Lucia is English while French Creole is the vernacular language of the island. Glissant also does not write in Creole. His fictional and theoretical works are all in French but, as Britton argues, they are "infiltrated" with Creole (141). It is not the matter of Creolism (particular Creole words or phrases), Britton goes on to say, which interests Glissant "but, more importantly, of syntactic and rhetorical structures. Glissant defines this technique a form of creolization and claims that it alone is a genuinely subversive action on the French language" (141).

4.2 Structural *Detour*

From the opening pages of his drama, Walcott underscores the theme of home and *retour*. Being away from home for ten years has made home an object of desire for the Greek kings and warriors:

> MENELAUS
> Turn the gaping beaks of our fleet homeward again.
> …
> AGAMEMNON
> Through the length of war, home was our long desire.
> …
> NESTOR
> Let wet-heeled Athena race our lunging ships home. (2-4)

They all eventually go home safe and sound while Odysseus' *nostos* is delayed for another ten years. In an essay in *Caribbean Discourse*, "Reversion and Diversion" (14-26), Glissant contemplates the strong sense of *retour* among the transplanted and uprooted people: "[t]here is a difference between the transplanting (by exile or dispersion) of a people who continue to survive elsewhere and the transfer (by the slave trade) of a population to another place where they change into something different, into a new set of possibilities" (14). A common denominator between the two groups is that in both cases, the transported individual's identity is severed badly from the natural and familiar flow of his indigenous culture and ancestral roots. The situation for the latter, however, is much more difficult. Ostensibly, neither Odysseus nor the other Greek kings belong to these categories but, as Walcott describes, they similarly have a strong sense of attachment and desire to return to their secure homelands.

The ten-year delay in Odysseus' homebound journey can be ascribed different causes like Ajax's curse, Poseidon's rage, or Odysseus' greed for goods. Apart from these factors, this delay in Odysseus' *retour* can also be related to the very structure of the drama. There

are a number of loops, digressions, and interruptions in the sweep of the story which delay Odysseus' *retour* and complicate the expectations of the reader and the audience. Much like the Homeric original and other classical epics, Walcott's drama begins "*in medias res*." This is a literary technique in which the narrative begins in the middle of things; instead of a linear flow of the plot, the story falls back and winds upon itself to unravel the exposition. As Glissant observes in *Poetics of Relation*, "[t]he literary text plays the contradictory role of a producer of opacity" (115). Instead of explication, as the narrative advances, the plot becomes complicated; this is, in fact, how rhetorical devices and literary techniques work. Functionally speaking, *in medias res* acts like *detour* as they both defer the meaning or the denouement of the story which in Walcott's text is Odysseus' *nostos*. This is how the structure of the drama postpones Odysseus' *retour* to Ithaca.

Published in 1993 but performed on stage on July 2, 1992 by Britain's Royal Shakespeare Company, Walcott's three-hour drama reflects the author's close acquaintance with this classical monument.[115] Unlike *Omeros*, this epic drama is closely structured on its classical counterpart while also infused with Afro-Caribbean folklore and mythology. Though Walcott has "compressed a poem of more than twelve thousand lines to dramatic poetry of just under two thousand," strikingly nothing important is excluded from the master text (Burnett, *Derek Walcott* 284).[116] Walcott's drama is recounted in two acts with fourteen and six scenes respectively. Scene I invites the audience to Troy where Greek kings and heroes are getting ready to return home. Scene II changes the locale to Ithaca

[115] Classical Greek literature has fertilized Walcott's mind and helped him in developing a Walcottian canon. Regarding the *Odyssey* Valérie Bada attests: "Walcott's *Odyssey* appears as a palimpsestic 'tapestry' in which the Aegean and Atlantic texts are intricately interwoven" (13). In a similar fashion, Martyniuk argues Walcott "does not … change Homer's original poem but instead finds a postcolonial perspective that is already present in Homer's *Odyssey*" ("Playing with Europe" 188). On the whole, evidently, Walcott maintains his fidelity to the master text while simultaneously broadening the scope of Homeric world view in different directions. Along with *Omeros* and the *Stage Version of the Odyssey*, Walcott has reconfigured other literary texts in his works: *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954) is written based on Synge's *Riders to the Sea*; *The Joker of Seville* (1974) is based on Tirso de Molina's *El Burlador de Sevilla*.

[116] For more on the differences between the two texts in terms of episodes see Paula Burnett, *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* pp. 284-86; Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939*, pp. 134-35; Lorna Hardwick, "'Shards and Suckers': Contemporary Reception of Homer."

where Athena as swallow persuades Telemachus to go on a quest after his father. In Scene III and IV, Telemachus visits Nestor's palace as well as Menelaus' seeking news of his father. Scene V shifts the narrative to Odysseus who is at sea with his crew. In the next scene, the shipwrecked Odysseus finds himself at Scheria. In Scene VII, Odysseus is still in the court of Alcinous where he begins relating the retrospective episodes which begin with the story of a goddess, Calypso. The next two scenes relate Odysseus' adventures with the Cyclops. Scene X takes the audience to Circe's beach with "[r]ich wild plantains" (72). The following scene again is in Circe's island with sailors turned into "pig-men" (76). The twelfth scene is still in Circe's island where she prepares a drink for Odysseus. Scene XIII happens in "a yard. Drummers, Shango dancers in white, a sacrificial rooster, priests, Odysseus. Circe leads Odysseus to the center of the chalk circle" (87). Act One ends in the Underworld where Odysseus meets his mother (Anticlea), Billy Blue, Tiresias, and Elpenor.[117]

The following act opens at noon while "Odysseus, ragged, badly sunburnt, is singing" (99). The second scene takes place in Ithaca where "a shepherd on a rock" watches Odysseus being carried to the shore by sailors "with his sacks" (107). In Scene III, Odysseus is seen "curled up under a rock, asleep" (118). Scene IV is in "the palace kitchen. Odysseus and Billy Blue as Demodocus in different corners. Sound of the suitors" (121). Scene V is in the palace chamber where Odysseus meets Penelope. The closing or the slaughter scene is again in the palace. "Odysseus as a beggar sits on a throne, with begging bowl and oar, draped in fishing net, SUITORS surrounding him" (141) and this is how the drama ends.

[117] For the role of Billy Blue as a blue singer see Rachel D. Friedman, "Call and Response: Derek Walcott's Collaboration with Homer in His the *Odyssey*: A Stage Version."

As mentioned earlier, the story begins in the present; it then retrospectively recounts earlier scenes and then again returns to the present. As a shipwrecked sea-wanderer in the court of Alcinous (Act One, Scene VII) Odysseus relates his adventures. In fact, from scene VII to XIV, Odysseus recounts Calypso, the Cyclops, Circe and Underworld scene, mermaids, Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis stories. This long gap interrupts the forward advancement of the story.[118] These backward deviations defer the fulfilment of Odysseus' homeward journey. This could be a reason why Odysseus' homecoming spans a period of ten years.

Though the episodes recounted in each scene happen in different socio-cultural milieu, they are rhythmically linked. These thematically-knit episodes or repetitions, as Glissant contends, hinder denouement (*Caribbean Discourse* 4). In all episodes except one (the Cyclops'), Odysseus encounters female figures who either intend to keep Odysseus in their island to marry and live with him or want to harm him.[119] Odysseus denies all such requests; the yearning he has for his "rock-steady wife," his son, and his home links the fragmented tales like a cadence. Shipwrecked in Scheria, Odysseus encounters the princess, Nausicaa, who is attracted to him and wants to marry him.

NAUSICAA
Then, our marriage-cart, drawn by nodding white oxen.
ODYSSEUS (*Laughing*)
Whoa! Whoa! Not so fast! You deserve a good husband.
NAUSICAA
There's a 'but'?
ODYSSEUS
How'll I explain it to my wife?
(*Laughter*.)

[118] Storytelling as the main Homeric technique is also interwoven into the fabric of Walcott's drama. "The need to entertain is vigorously met in the play, which is fast-moving and funny, as well as emotive and extraordinary, couched in language of wit and poetry in an informal colloquial idiom" (Burnett, *Derek Walcott* 290).
[119] The Homeric Cyclops' cave is often discussed as a symbol of "the maternal womb," given that when Odysseus/Nobody comes out of the cave/womb, re-gains his identity and shouts his true name to the blinded Cyclops as if he is born anew (Hernández 352). Hernández refers to Seth L. Schein who lists Cyclops among Odysseus' "feminine" enemies (fn. 22, 352).

NAUSICAA
Tell her you met me and were swept overboard and . . .
ODYSSEUS
That's true.
NAUSICAA
Wouldn't she be happy that I saved your life? (58)

In a similar vein, Calypso, the goddess, entombs Odysseus for seven years in her island (55) while thoughts of home clouds Odysseus and sinks him "into a sadness no flesh could cure" (56). Odysseus longs for his wife and "his own rock, too stony for horses" (57). When the goddess learns that Odysseus wants "to kindle the lamps of his own house" (58), she lets Odysseus go. Calypso aids Odysseus in building a raft (57).[120] A similar situation is met in Circe's island. In a conversation with Odysseus, Circe says:

CIRCE
You're in your house. A house men's desires built.
…
ODYSSEUS
And my wife?
CIRCE
My cold lips will be Penelope's.
ODYSSEUS
Ah!
CIRCE
We'll re-create the gendering of your son.
ODYSSEUS
No 'home' and no mercy. The white harbour. The heat. (82)

Such a rhythmic reiteration, detected as a structural *detour*, only advances the story in a whirlpool. In this situation, as Britton notes "[m]eaning winds in upon itself like a snake, it is slowly refined like a machete being sharpened, it has the meandering logic of a dream, or it advances sideways, like the mongoose zigzagging through the undergrowth. It emerges in

[120] Like Achille who makes a canoe for himself, Odysseus builds a raft to furrow the waves of the sea homeward. Tynan has related the art of carpentry to the trope of homecoming: "[t]hough carpentry provides a principle figure for ship building and travel within the narrative, it is closely tied to the tropes of homecoming and stasis. The quality of the carpentry within Odysseus' home ultimately ensures the final re-union between husband and wife; in passing Penelope's test about the rooted tree, Odysseus is invited to resume his rightful place within it" (*Postcolonial Homecomings* pp. 153-54).

cumulative, piecemeal, and oblique ways" (137). Glissant calls this technique of "repetition/variation" as "consecutiveness of exposition," a technique which substitutes linear development of the plot "with a kind of self-generating 'proliferation'" (qtd. from *Le discours antillais* (371) in Britton 108). Though the story moves on, it seems that Odysseus is turning around himself. Cyclops, a one-eyed monster also has the intension of keeping Odysseus in his island:

> ODYSSEUS
> Put in a good word, then. I'm trying to get home.
> CYCLOPS
> Home. You're home now.
> ODYSSEUS
> Well, this wasn't quite my idea.
> CYCLOPS
> Not your idea? There're no ideas in this kingdom.
> ODYSSEUS
> I've a wife, you see. Like my eyes. We make one pair. (69)

Apart from those who want to keep Odysseus in their islands, there are others who intend to seduce or harm Odysseus. The Cyclops, a cannibal son of Poseidon, intends to kill (and eat) Odysseus. In Act Two Odysseus encounters two mermaids who climb onto his raft saying: "[n]ever dreamt of two girls together in one bed?" (100). But Odysseus throws them away. Then Odysseus meets "two old crones" as Sirens who sing a luring song to drown the listener. Odysseus' sailors ask him not to listen to the song otherwise he would drown (102). Odysseus manages to escape from this hazard with their help. Then he passes through "dark cliffs" as the "only way home" (105) which is the abode of Scylla, who "gobbles dolphins, with six writhing necks" while "gargling Charybdis who sucks vessels under" (105). Evidently, Odysseus passes through similar trials.

Comparing the structural framework of the drama in terms of acts indicates that the two acts also sometimes move in parallel lines; some incidents which happened in the first act

are repeated in a condensed form in the following act. Act Two has a number of identical incidents. In Act One Scene IX Odysseus gouges the Cyclops's eye then in Act Two Scene IV, he sees a ram-keeper with an eye-patch in his home and mistakes him for Poseidon's son, driving the ram-keeper mad. Another instance happens at the opening scene of Act Two where Odysseus is in his raft and sings a homecoming song; his song is interrupted by two mermaids who get on his raft. Bewildered Odysseus asks them to return where they come from (99). Then in Ithaca Odysseus sees the same girls as kitchen maids but when he reminds them of their previous encounter, they deny it.

The highlighted examples of repetitions, deviations and parallel structure in Walcott's text are examined in terms of structural *detour*. Glissant elaborates that rhythm and parallel structures block the linear advancement of the story and this hindrance detains the intended meaning while this is itself one of the characteristic features of *detour*: "[r]epetition does not clarify … expression; on the contrary, it perhaps leads to obscurity. We need those stubborn shadows where repetition leads to perpetual concealment, which is our form of resistance" (*Caribbean Discourse* 4). Such corresponding or backward directions in Walcott's stage version function as *detour* in the structure of the drama and obstruct the fulfilment of Odysseus' quest. As Britton discusses "the *parole différée* [deferred speech]" is a speech "in which a piece of information is repeatedly withheld, or the story is full of irrelevant digressions, or folds back on itself in a series of loops rather than proceeding in a linear fashion. Alternatively, as here, the point of the narrative is sometimes not clear until the end" (138). As a result of this deferral, the resolution is also delayed.

I would like to argue that through this technique of narration (*in medias res*), which corresponds with the Homeric template, Walcott intends to negotiate the difficulties and the impediments of *retour* and *nostos* in the postcolonial era. Even though Walcott's stage

version of the *Odyssey* follows the Homeric model closely, he could have begun the story "*ab ovo*" (from the beginning) similar to other changes he has made in the Greek text. In other words, this structural resistance indicates the complexity of the issue of home and homecoming for postcolonial experiences. This is how Walcott intends to correct our assumption of "home" as a settled, stable, and available place for everyone.

There is an important discussion regarding the question of home between Telemachus and Menelaus: "[b]ut isn't home God's bounty, great Menelaus?" Telemachus asks. Menelaus replies: "[n]o. God's trial. We earn home, like everything else" (29). In this conversation, Walcott through Menelaus tries to change Telemachus' essentialist conception of home which is not to be re-claimed but to be re-established. This is how Walcott argues that conventional connotation of home and homecoming need a radical reconceptualization. By relating home to "trial," Walcott further emphasizes the agency of the homecomer who should be cautious of the possible dangers and threats on his/her way home. The postcolonial era demands experience from the homecomers and this experience, as Walcott demonstrates in the arc of his works, is achieved through wandering and travel. This is, in fact, Walcott's postcolonial contribution to the theme of return, home, and homecoming.

Having analyzed the structure of the drama in terms of literary techniques (*in medias res*), recurrences, digressions, loops, and parallel scenes as structural *detour*, I shall turn to the Cyclops' story as one of the controversial episodes in the Homeric and Walcottian scholarship. The Cyclops, son of a sea god and Orwellian Big Brother, is a life-threatening impediment on Odysseus' route home; however, Odysseus must pass the Cyclops' island in order to reach home. I have related the socio-political situation in the Cyclops' island to life under the Plantation matrix and Odysseus' strategic challenge of the Cyclops to the tactics

of *detour* and opacity. As discussed earlier, *detour* and opacity can also be analyzed in the structure of Creole. This portion of the drama is rife with examples of camouflaged speech; Odysseus has conscious control over his speech. Para-linguistic features of *detour* will also be examined here.

4.3 Linguistic and Para-linguistic *Detour*

The martial chorus links this monster story to the previous episode where Odysseus is still at the court of Alcinous and has just finished Calypso's story:

> MARTIAL CHORUS (OFF)
> To die for the eye is best, it's the greatest glory:
> Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.
>
> There is no I after the eye, no more history,
> Except his own, Odysseus. This was his first story: (60)[121]

Odysseus along with his sailors enters the Cyclops' frightening island "an infinite, empty wharf" (60). Upon their entrance, Philosopher, one of the islanders, rushes towards them saying: "[w]anderer, you'll need advice" (60). As the story advances, it becomes clear that the advice is that the ruler of the city, the Cyclops, is a one-eyed cannibal. From the very first moment Odysseus enters this city, he notices the cruelty of the ruler and the ways in which he treats the nation. There is a wall in the city which attracts Odysseus' attention. He asks the Philosopher about it:

> ODYSSEUS
> And the wall?
> PHILOSOPHER
> Erected to keep us in pen.
> ODYSSEUS
> So this city is nothing but a giant cave. (61)

[121] Hamner has related the singular pronoun *I* to Rastafarianism. On Rastafarianism see Robert D. Hamner, "Creolizing Homer for the Stage: Walcott's 'the *Odyssey*'" 381; Maria C. Fumagalli and Peter L. Patrick, "Two Healing Narratives: Suffering, Reintegration, and the Struggle of Language"; Paula Burnett, *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* 22; Justine McConnell, "'You had to Wade this Deep in Blood?': Violence and Madness in Derek Walcott's The Odyssey" pp. 48-9.

The city is walled and roofed and the nation is kept in pens.[122] This is similar to the dehumanizing and oppressive system of Plantation which "was defined by boundaries… everything was taken care of within a closed circle" (*Poetics* 64). Reduced to the level of sheep, the nation live under the terrifying gaze of the giant Eye who observes and controls everything. The Eye's menacing presence is felt and exhibited everywhere even in his absence. "Sir, everywhere there's the sign of this giant eye!" says Odysseus' sailor (61). Even though this story is recounted in two scenes (Scenes VIII and IX), Walcott keeps repeating the word "eye" and "Eye" twenty four times to address the Cyclops and to describe his monocular eyesight. In fact, by calling this monster "the Eye," "the giant Eye," and "the Great eye" Walcott accentuates the unequal scopic relation between the Cyclops and his nation.[123]

Such an unbalanced power relation between the seer and the seen, between the Eye and the nation, between the shepherd and his sheep, is similar to the master-slave relation of the Plantation era. Though slaves, Plantation workers, and the colonized outnumbered their masters, they have always been objectified under their masters' panoptic eyes/gaze.[124] Such objectification has kept the people in a state of intimidation and made them inactive by depriving them of having an active and constructive role and presence in the community. Indeed, sight, vision, visibility, exhibition, gaze, being seen and objectification are the important issues in postcolonial debates. With respect to this issue, Glissant observes that

[122] Hardwick contends that the image of the wall much like Berlin wall or Belfast can be an indication of diversity of culture and ideology as well as an epitome of "repression by an occupying power" ("Reception as Simile" 336). The Cyclops are famous for building walls; son of Poseidon also shows this capacity in Homer's text in the same way that Poseidon is reputed for this trait. On the concept of "wall" in other texts including *Iliad* see Pura N. Hernández, "Back in the Cave of the Cyclops" pp. 360-61.

[123] This episode is another instance where Walcott deviates from the Homeric perspective. Homer does not show his Kyklops (book IX 145-65) eyeing the people. Homer's man-eating Kyklops is a wild brutal caveman "ignorant of civility" (151) who unlike Walcott's Cyclops shepherds real flocks (rams, sheep and ewes) not men. This kyklops does not gaze at his sheep; he rather takes them to graze in pastures every day. Ironically, in Homer it is Odysseus and his crew who keeps an eye on Kyklops and sits in ambush to learn more about him, his manners and his way of living. For differences between the two versions of the Cyclops story see Lorna Hardwick, "A Daidalos in the Late-Modern Age? Transplanting Homer into Derek Walcott's the *Odyssey*: A Stage Version."

[124] It is also similar to the panopticon system where the watchman could observe the prisoners while the prisoners themselves could not see the watchman. Jeremy Bentham, 18th century British philosopher and social theorist, develops the concept of the panopticon for institutional buildings in particular prison. This model of surveillance is designed in a way to enable a single person, who is situated in the center of the circular building, to observe all the prisoners while the prisoners cannot know when they are watched. Though in this system of inspection the watchman cannot control all the cells simultaneously, the prisoners should control their behavior all the time.

"looked at-ness" may not be that resentful as not having the right for a reciprocal give-and-take in the phenomenon of observation. He writes, "[w]e hate ethnography…. The distrust we feel toward it comes not from the displeasure at being watched, but from the resentment at not watching in turn" (*Poetic Intention* 122) . However, as Walcott also demonstrates in his play, the objectified people have always tried to challenge the gaze of the observer.

The difference between the Cyclops' eying his nation and slave masters' controlling eye is that Cyclops is a native ruler who exerts his total power on the native people and dehumanizes them by torture, chains and clubs while the colonial masters were outsiders who persecuted the natives for political and economic profits. In this episode, Odysseus is an outsider who intrudes the Cyclops' island; however, unlike invading colonizers, he becomes disempowered in this alien land. As Martyniuk argues, Odysseus has the intention of an "imperializing raider, with his crew members bullying the first native they encounter: "Listen, buzz off!" ("Playing with Europe" 193). However, as the story unfolds, the power dynamics shift Odysseus' position from an authorizing powerful king, Trojan warrior, and hero to a disempowered intruder and victim.

Apart from the element of control and surveillance, there is also another affinity between Cyclops' pen and the enclosed world of the Plantation. In an essay in *Poetics of Relation*, "Closed Place, Open Word" (63-75), Glissant clearly describes the condition of life in the Plantation where reading and writing were banned (73). Literacy was a threat to the masters as knowledge and power work together; therefore, Plantation owners tried to keep their slaves in the dark realms of ignorance and silence in order to have them under their control. "In the past, in the darkness of slavery speech was forbidden, singing was forbidden, but also learning to read was punishable by death," thus Glissant observes in *Caribbean*

Discourse (249). In the same fashion, the landscape in the Cyclops' kingdom is in lockdown. Odysseus ponders:

> ODYSSEUS
> Is this the Greece that I loved? Is this my city?
> PHILOSOPHER
> Philosophy's cradle, where Thought is forbidden.
> …
> EURYLOCHUS
> There is no art, no theatre, no circuses even?
> PHILOSOPHER
> This is the era of the grey colonels. Gray rain. (61-2)[125]

This tyrant has created an intimidating situation where people could not even think of an idea. "There are no ideas in this kingdom," says the Cyclops to Odysseus (69). For Thieme, the Cyclops is "a political dictator" and his regime represents "the Greece of the colonels" or "the repressive post-independence government in the Caribbean" (190). By this policy, the Cyclops intends to keep everything under his control.

While Odysseus was talking with the Philosopher, suddenly the door of the cave is closed and Odysseus and his crew are trapped. The Giant Eye's patrolmen come to capture the Philosopher as he has slandered the Eye:

> (*Sound of boots over cobbles, two PATROLMEN in sheepskin coats enter, carrying chains*.)
> FIRST SAILOR
> The Eye has found us.
> PHILOSOPHER
> Bay! Obey! Do what it says.
> …
> PHILOSOPHER
> …
> (*He is marched up against the wall, clubbed, then held upright*.)
> FIRST PATROLMAN

[125] The reference to "grey colonels," as Hamner quotes Clogg, has a historic perspective: it refers to "the years 1967-74, during which Greece suffered the brutal tyranny of Colonels George Papadopoulos, Nicholas Makarezos, and other right-wing officers ("Creolizing Homer" 382).

Lower your heads, you sheep! The Great Shepherd is here.
(*The door opens and the CYCLOPS slowly approaches. Sound of cheering crowds, distantly*.) (62-3)

While removing Philosopher from the stage, Philosopher praises Odysseus' bravery: "[l]et the Greeks remember Odysseus the Brave"! (63) Analyzing this sequence, Hardwick argues that through the character of the Philosopher Walcott creates "a new polarity … between thinkers and doers. The philosophers … [are] able to resist only in the cave of the mind. Yet they do not have the status of heroic resisters" ("Reception as Simile" 336). In a similar vein Burian describes Philosopher as "a man of words *only*, powerless to resist and defensive about his own unwilling complicity" ("'You can Build'" 77) (italics added). Hardwick continues that ideas fail if they are "divorced from action" ("Reception as Simile" 336) as in the case of the Philosopher who is captured by patrolmen since he has insulted the giant Eye (Walcott, *The Odyssey* 62).

Though Philosopher is not a man of action and thinks only in his mind's cave, I believe, the encouragement he gives Odysseus indicates his faith in the idea of resistance. There are some people who are not even *passive* resisters. In this intimidating situation, a passive thinker might be better than those who complicitly cheer the giant Eye when he appears in the balcony. Glissant aptly entitles one of his essays "Closed Place, Open Word," in which he describes the Plantation matrix. Similar to a closed place, in the Cyclops' penned kingdom "[t]he place was closed, but the word derived from it remains open" (*Poetics* 75). Through the figure of Philosopher, Walcott contends that even in such a menacing situation the idea of challenge and resistance is *still* alive. Philosopher's encouragement may plant the idea of resistance in other people's minds who then may rise to action.

Even though the situation in the Cyclops's pen is really hazardous, Odysseus is resolute to breach the walls of autocracy (62). As a natal errant he should confront this cannibal in order to reach home. The problem in this challenge is that Odysseus has lost his authorial power and is subject to the native ruler's controlling "eye" and command. Physical encounter is by no means possible because the Cyclops is guarded by his patrolmen. Odysseus cannot escape this city as it is situated on the way to Ithaca; besides, he would have been eyed and the patrolmen could easily capture him. Now the question is how Odysseus could deal with the Cyclops under these circumstances. At this sequence of the drama, Odysseus' situation is similar to Plantation slaves in Martinique (I shall elaborate on this similarity below) who had nothing to resort to in order to resist the authority of their masters. Odysseus might similarly confront the Cyclops with bare hands. This situation opens up the discussion of opacity, as a strategy of resistance and protection, which is another important concept Glissant, puts forward in his theoretical essays.

4.4 Opacity

According to the OED opacity means "obscurity of meaning; resistance to interpretation; impenetrability." It also refers to "the state of being in shadow; darkness, dimness, obscurity." Evidently, opacity is the opposite of clarity, lucidity, visibility, and transparency. In an opaque sentence, speech or situation the intention of the speaker is not clear; it is screened or twisted while in a lucid utterance the speaker can be understood straightaway.

To Glissant opacity is a right: "[w]e clamor for the right to opacity for everyone" (*Poetics* 194). He believes Caribbean people sometimes need not to be understood as they are misunderstood. "In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps,

judgments. I have to reduce" (190). Such was the attitude of the West toward its colonies; in order to comprehend them, they needed to create them anew and this recreation was based on their own scales: "I admit you to existence, within my system. I create you afresh." "But perhaps," Glissant argues, "we need to bring an end to the very notion of a scale. Displace all reduction" (190). In fact, Glissant fights against reducing scales; he believes reduction should be replaced with equality, interaction, interdependence and above all relation (190). Hence, opacity is a strategy of defense against misunderstanding, reduction or transcendence and a strategy for protection and concealment. Slaves in the Plantation era used the techniques of opacity in order to defend and protect themselves against the conspicuous transparency of their masters. This protection could have various forms which Glissant categorizes as "hinterlands": it could be a physical or geographical hinterland, historical hinterland, cultural hinterland, and linguistic hinterland.

Thick forests of the Caribbean were among the best hiding places for the slaves. Glissant takes the forest as both "defiant and compliant, it is primitive warmth" (*Caribbean Discourse* 82). Commenting on the awe-inspiring visibility of the master in the Plantation era, Glissant notes that "the forest of the maroon was thus the first obstacle the slave opposed to the *transparency* of the planter. There is no clear path, no way forward, in this density. You turn in obscure circles until you find the primordial tree" (83) (emphasis original). Slaves could take retreat in the density of the forests but the forest was disappearing in the island of Martinique and it could not be a protective hideaway anymore in the way it was for Jamaican or Haitian slaves (Britton 24-5). Culture and history did not also predate "the intrusion of a transcendent Sameness" (*Caribbean Discourse* 102) in the Caribbean. Therefore, the colonized subject could not resort to any conspicuous indigenous heritage and common cultural myth and symbols at the threat of transcendence. This might

be related to the traumatic history of the region as the site of diaspora repopulated by uprooted Africans and Asians, each with a different ethnic background.

This geographical, cultural, and historical dearth resulted in a tragedy in Martinique and turned it into a "'cornered community'" (Caribbean *Discourse* 103).[126] As the recovery of history and culture seemed difficult, language gradually turned into an active site of resistance as a counter-discourse for Martinicans.[127] But, as discussed earlier, language was also problematic in Martinique in comparison with other colonies such as Africa or India which were equipped with their pre-existing indigenous languages. The only language available for the slaves in the islands was Creole which was not the indigenous language of the island and the masters already knew it. Under these circumstances, opacity, as a protective shield, needed to "be produced as an *unintelligible* presence from within the *visible* presence of the colonized" (Britton 25) (italics original).

Slaves in the Plantation era gradually formulated particular strategies for "'unstructured' use of language" (*Caribbean Discourse* 124) in order to enable them to communicate secretly among themselves while blocking their master's understanding. [128] Hence, Creole's function changed from *langue* to *langage*. Among the characteristic features of Creole which could create an opaque situation, Glissant emphasizes sound, rhythm, concrete images and repetition as signs of "deliberate ploy" or "craftiness" (126). In the Plantation era:

[126] In a footnote on "'cornered communities'" Glissant argues:

> Communities supported by their cultural hinterland and often by subsistence economies cannot be suppressed (the Kurds, in spite of being scattered through five countries), except by extermination and dispersion (the Armenians). Elsewhere, ancestral cultures have been eradicated by oblivion on the economic level, where survival (subsistence economy) has not been "organized" as a form of large-scale resistance (certain communities of Oceania). (*Caribbean Discourse* 103)

[127] As Tiffin comments: "[p]ost-colonial literatures/cultures are thus constituted in counter-discursive rather than homologous practices, and they offer 'fields' of counter-discursive strategies to the dominant discourse" (95-6).

[128] In a similar fashion Brathwaite argues that 'it was in language that the slave was perhaps most successfully imprisoned by his master, and it was in his (mis-)use of it that he perhaps most effectively rebelled' (*The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* p. 237).

> It seems that language and pitch went together for the uprooted individual, in the unrelenting silence of the world of slavery. It was the intensity of the sound that dictated meaning: the pitch of the sound conferred significance. Ideas were bracketed. One person could make himself understood through the subtle associations of sound, in which the master, so capable of managing "basic Creole" in other situations, got hopelessly lost. Creole spoken by the *békés* was never shouted out loud. Since speech was forbidden, slaves camouflaged the word under the provocative intensity of the scream. No one could translate the meaning of what seemed to be nothing but a shout. It was taken to be nothing but the call of a wild animal. This is how the dispossessed man organized his speech by weaving it into the apparently meaningless texture of extreme noise. (123-24)

Since Creole sounded irrational, nonsensical and incomprehensive to the masters' ear, they did not think that a "defensive reflex" could be inherent in such a debased language (translator's Introduction xxiii). The slave, however, had another attitude toward this nonsensical use of language. Regarding the systematic mockery and ruse of Creole, Glissant quotes Michel Benamou:

> the slave takes possession of the language imposed by his master, a simplified language, adopted to the demands of his labor (a black pidgin) and makes this simplification even more extreme. You wish to reduce me to a childish babble, I will make this babble systematic, we shall see if you can make sense of it. (20)

Hence, Creole as an irrational jumble of words was taken over by the slaves in order to make themselves as opaque as possible to the master to blur his understanding. In fact, the vagueness of Creole was a means of "defense against understanding," as the West usually views the Third World in "the hierarchical, objectifying way" (Britton 19). Essentially speaking, language is a means of communication but Creole is a tool for both communication and miscommunication. Indeed all languages have this capacity but, as Glissant comments, unlike other languages with "*structuration naturelle*" (natural structure), Creole is a "negative or reactive linguistic structure" with "scrambled sounds," "the pitch," "the deliberate cacophony" and "the patterns of *detour*s and delays" (Dash, *Édouard Glissant* 144). All these linguistic twists confuse the listener and cloud his

understanding. This confusion, in turn, defers the meaning. In fact, deferral of meaning is one of the important functions of opacity and also *detour*. Such deferral of meaning not only indicates the colonized's resistance to dominant discourse but it also demonstrates the inability of the dominant discourse to comprehend the symbolic language of the oppressed.

Having discussed the concept of opacity, I now wish to turn to the drama to see how Odysseus, like the Plantation slaves, challenges the Cyclops through techniques of *detour* and opacity. He has already competently acquainted himself with the Cyclops' island. This mastery over the situation is in fact one of the characteristic features of Odysseus who must try to escape from this giant-cave safely in order to make his *nostos* happen. As Hamner notes: "[i]n his struggle to return home, Odysseus is capable of acting decisively and violently, but when occasion demands, … [he] is equally adept at lying, assuming a pseudonym or disguise, and patiently biding his time" ("Creolizing Homer" 381).

Odysseus is a nomadic wanderer whose position changes in his errantry from an authorial king to the Trojan warrior, a Mediterranean seafarer, and finally a dethroned king, displaced native and long-awaited husband, father, and son. Though each of these roles differs from each other, they share a unifying feature: in all, Odysseus is an ingenious, skillful strategist who masterfully challenges the trials on his way home. In the prologue of the drama, Billy Blue calls him "polutropon," an epithet Hamner believes well suits Odysseus (1).[129] Furthermore, this enduring character has variously been called devious, divisive, cunning, liar, "quick-witted," resourceful, "man of evasions, man skilled at lying" (Walcott, *The Odyssey* 110).

[129] "The prefix *polu* (*poly*-) basically means *many*, *much* or *varied*" and tropon literally means: "*devices*, *ways*, *means*, or *skills*; but metaphorically - *versatile*, *changeable*, or *fickle*, as of the mind; and in its passive form - *being acted upon*, *moved*, or *tossed about by accident*, fortune, or the gods" (qtd. in Hamner, "Creolizing Homer" 380-81) (italics original). On *polutropos* see also Emily Greenwood, "Arriving Backward: The Return of *The Odyssey* in the English-Speaking Caribbean" pp. 198-99; Carol Dougherty, *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer's Odyssey* p. 221, n. 47.

Though all these epithets aptly match his role and each describes more or less a similar aspect of his personality, I have borrowed Patrick Charaudeau's apt expression, "situational competence" through Glissant and modified it to "competent-to-situation" as an epithet to describe Walcott's postcolonial protagonist.[130] The difference between Charaudeau's term with the one I have coined is that in the former the emphasis is primarily on the changing *situation* which determines the speaker's understanding while in the "competent-to-situation" the emphasis is more on the *individual* and his/her mastery and control over the changing circumstances. I think this attribute, as an umbrella term, could best encompass Odysseus' mentioned characteristic traits. Either as a speaker or a listener, this Greek protagonist is a competent character who is fully aware of the requirements of the situations he deals with; this aptitude endows Odysseus with a deep insight to surpass the impediments obstructing his way home. Hence, his competency requires him to inquire more about his adversary (the Cyclops), his personal characteristics (for example, if he cries), the way he rules, and the city he rules. Odysseus volunteers to see the monster so he should resort to his *metis* (wisdom) and skillful use of language.[131] When the patrolmen take Philosopher away, Odysseus sees the giant Eye:

CYCLOPS
  Don't stare.
ODYSSEUS
  Sorry.
CYCLOPS
  What is your name?
ODYSSEUS
  Nobody.

[130] In his essay "Transparency and Opacity," in *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant brings up the discussion of the language usage by borrowing the concept of "situational competence" from Charaudeau and extending its original application from learning a language to its usage. Charaudeau indicates that in the elementary stages of learning a language, the student should be aware of "situational competence" of that particular *text* (116) (emphasis added). Using this notion, Glissant argues that in using a language one should evaluate the "situational competence" of that *language*, "its situation within Relation, its precursors and its conceivable future" (116) (emphasis added).

[131] Regarding Odysseus' speech in the sweep of Homer's poem Marianne G. Hopman contends: "[t]he *Odyssey* plot proffers Odysseus' honeyed words as the means to his return" (42).

CYCLOPS
Where're you from?
ODYSSEUS
Nowhere.
CYCLOPS (*Nodding*)
Where're you going?
ODYSSEUS
I don't know.
CYCLOPS
Nobody.
From nowhere.
Going where he doesn't know.
Normal.
No?
ODYSSEUS
Yes. (64)

This series of negative and imperative utterances establishes Cyclops' authority over Odysseus from the outset. The Cyclops asks Odysseus' name, where he is from, and his destination. Competent-to-situation Odysseus, like the Homeric counterpart, does not reveal his true name and his home-bound destination to the Cyclops. He introduces himself as "Nobody" and, under the disguise of a false name, converses with him.[132] Three issues can be examined in this sequence. First, this situation directs us to another common feature between the Cyclops' cave and the Plantation matrix where "everyone had two names, an official one and an essential one—the nickname given by his community" (Glissant, *Poetics* 72). Philosopher and Odysseus' sailors call him "Odysseus" whereas due to the particular situation in the Cyclops' city, he renames himself as "Nobody." The difference between this situation with that of the Plantation era is that in that time masters changed the names of the slaves but in Walcott's story this is the disempowered individual who befits himself a pseudonym.[133]

[132] Shabine, the sailor-narrator in Walcott's "The Schooner *Flight*," also calls himself "nobody": "either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation" (346).
[133] Regarding renaming of slaves see Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939* p. 125; see also Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. pp. 55-8.

Secondly, under the shield of the pseudonym "Nobody," Odysseus makes himself opaque to the giant Eye. Functionally, *detour* may overlap with opacity but according to Britton opacity can be "above all an ethical value and a political right" while the *detour* is "more tactical and ambiguous" (25). Through the shield of "Nobody" and the *detour* of camouflaged speech, Odysseus protects himself from possible threats. These tactics circuitously help the disguised person to defend himself.

Through this twisty and double-edged speech, like Plantation laborers communicating in Creole, Odysseus confuses the Cyclops. He plays with words and pretends that his speech is quite sensible though the bewildered Cyclops thinks otherwise. Indeed, Odysseus' word-play (Nobody, nobody, nowhere, anybody) is similar to a seemingly childish and nonsensical Creole utterance. "Linguists have noticed that traditional Creole syntax spontaneously imitates the speech of the child (the use of repetition, for example, *pretty pretty baby for very pretty child*). Taken to this extreme, the systematic use of childish speech is not naïve" (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 20). So the slaves conversing in Creole intentionally used repeated words in order to confuse their masters by their obscure language and the resulted frustration excluded masters from comprehending slaves symbolic language. This is how the dispossessed individual could take control of the situation through the *detour* and opacity of language in order to protect himself from the gaze of the oppressor. Though Odysseus' dialogue with the Cyclops does not sound sensible, a serious meaning is inherent in it and this is one of the features of Creole language. "Creole is originally a kind of conspiracy that concealed itself by its public and open expression" (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 124-25). Hence, Odysseus' word play is not naïve and through linguistic *detour* he intends to defer the meaning of their meeting;

that is Odysseus' death at the hands' of this man-eating cannibal.[134] Homer's Odysseus likewise uses language in a skillful way. Commenting on the Homeric Odysseus, Hopman argues "[t]hroughout the poem, language is Odysseus' prime resource to overcome dangers and win his homecoming. His distinctive cunning is primarily based on speech" (43).

The third issue is related to the fact that differentiates Glissant's stance toward self-expression from that of Gayatri Spivak who gives a negative answer to the question: "On the other side of the international division of labour from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuits of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *can the subaltern speak?*" (25) (Italics original). The voice of the subaltern, as Spivak contends, cannot be heard in a straight and unproblematic way by the ruling class. In a similar vein, Bhabha also notes that "the colonized is constructed within a disabling master discourse of colonialism which specifies a degenerate native population in order to justify its conquest and subsequent rule" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* 178). Evidently, Glissant and Bhabha have a far more positive stance toward the concept of self-expression and voice: Glissant relates this lack of understanding and comprehension to the impotence of the dominant discourse in deciphering the symbolic codes of the disempowered while for Spivak this situation indicates the impotency of the subaltern in voicing his or her thoughts. On the other hand, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin interpret Bhabha's concepts of mimicry/mockery and ambivalence as an inappropriate appropriation of the colonial discourse which is "almost the same, *but not quite*" and which is "at once resemblance and menace" (*The Location* 123). This is a sign which indicates that "the subaltern has, in fact, spoken, and that properly symptomatic readings of the colonialist text can and do 'recover a

[134] For discussion of cannibalism in Homer's *The Odyssey* see Carol Dougherty, *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer's Odyssey*, pp. 134-40.

native voice'" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* 178). I agree with these scholars as through mimicry, the oppressed individual brings his own agency and voice and by so doing menaces the colonizer. Therefore, as Glissant observes, opacity equips the oppressed subaltern with tools for challenging the hegemony of the colonizers.

The conversation between Nobody and the Eye resumes:

> CYCLOPS
> ….
> You believe I see all?
> ODYSSEUS
> No.
> CYCLOPS
> No?
> ODYSSEUS
> You don't see anybody.
> CYCLOPS
> I see you.
> ODYSSEUS
> I'm Nobody.
> CYCLOPS (*Laughing*)
> So you said.
> ODYSSEUS
> All you see is nobody and nothing. (65)

Odysseus' real intention is disguised behind *langage*, word play, witty remarks, symbols and puns. By his linguistic *detour*, Odysseus both attracts and distracts the Cyclops' attention in an amusing way. Betsy Wing, in one of her notes in Glissant's book, explains the meaning of '*detour*': "[t]here are times, for instance, in the slave/master relation when "diversion" in the sense of "providing amusement" was a tactical move on the part of the slave, diverting the master from the slave's actual desires or agenda" (*Poetics*, n.4, 212). This function of *detour* is what exactly happens in Nobody/the Eye's encounter. Here, camouflaged speech acts like *double entendre:*

> The transplanted Africans found that psychic survival depended on their facility for a kind of *double entendre.* They were forced to develop the skill of being able

> to say one thing in front of 'massa' and have it interpreted differently by their fellow slaves. This skill involved a radical subversion of the meanings of the master's tongue.(Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* 145)

In fact, this is not just Odysseus who uses the tactics of Creole. Martyniuk discusses how, through Creole, Walcott's black characters "hide their intelligence and cunning from those, like the representatives of imperialism, who would harm them" ("Playing with Europe" 192). Martyniuk refers to the encounter between Antinous and Eurycleia, Telemachus' nurse, whose island patois saved Telemachus from Antinous' anger.

However, Martyniuk goes on to argue that "this linguistic disguising cannot eliminate the true power sources in the play …. Island language may keep one safe, but it does not automatically make one a master (193). She further maintains that Creole does not change the position of the power and power is still in the hands of the power holders. I have no quarrel with Martyniuk's contention; however, I think such reasoning may make the oppressed individual more passive given that the colonial system or Plantation matrix or the Cyclops' menacing gaze were planned to make the people passive. Such an argument intensifies the passivity and inactivity of the oppressed. Even though Eurycleia is only a slave and a nurse and cannot defy the power of the invading suitors, the use of island language indicates her agency and resistance. Her *langage* shows her competency over the situation; she knows when to speak in patois and when to use the standard language. The indirectness of Creole language helps her solve some issues easily while otherwise it would be difficult to tackle them.

Apart from linguistic *detour*, Odysseus benefits from the para-linguistic features of *detour*. He uses the black (American) vernacular: "I'm nobody, dude. You're *ugly*, l believe it" (65) (italics original). Elsewhere he says: "Man, you so ugly nobody would believe it"

(65). The Cyclops laughs as he is entertained by this accent. Odysseus' talk of his ugliness does not irritate him as his real intention is camouflaged behind the *detour* of *langage*. This witty use of language obstructs the Cyclops' understanding of Odysseus' intended meaning. The Cyclops asks Odysseus:

CYCLOPS (*Roaring with laughter*)
God, what accent is that? I'm going to die.
ODYSSEUS
Oh, you will, you will, boss.
CYCLOPS (*Weeping with laughter*)
Stop, you're making me die. (66)

Facial games also help Odysseus distracts his adversary's attention. Odysseus crosses his eyes and says:

ODYSSEUS
… Know why I can cross my eyes?
(*He crosses his eyes*.)
CYCLOPS (*Giggling*)
No, why?
ODYSSEUS
God gave us two eyes because we're human.
CYCLOPS
I'm not.
ODYSSEUS
One is for laughter, the other one cries.
CYCLOPS
Do it. Show me. Ram, come here. Take a look at this.
(*Odysseus makes a funny face. Ram comes forward*.)
RAM
Very good, sir. Nobody I know can do it.
(*He resumes his position*.)
CYCLOPS
I love Nobody.
ODYSSEUS
Same here. Nobody loves you. (67-8)

Odysseus' eye-game acts in a diverting way. This competent-to-situation character uses the *detour* of language in order to highlight the giant Eye's physical impotency. He finds fault with the Cyclops' appearance, his ugliness and his one-eyed perception but as all these

things happen in a light-hearted, opaque, and circuitous way, the Cyclops is not offended. If the same ideas were uttered in another way, the Cyclops would definitely take it as an offense; the matter is serious but the manner is playful. In their conversation, Odysseus keeps referring to the qualities of one-eyedness and two-eyedness several times to the extent that arouses the Cyclops' curiosity. The Eye asks:

CYCLOPS
Look! Why do you need two eyes? One does just as well.
ODYSSEUS
For balance. Proportion. Contrast. Mortals need two.
CYCLOPS
I'm a demi-god.
ODYSSEUS
Left, right. Good, bad. Heaven, hell. (68)

Odysseus reasons that one-eyed-ness creates a monolithic and limited breadth of view, a condition which negates freedom and pluralism whereas two-eyedness allows for duality of perception and contrast. Though Odysseus prefers duality to monocularism, Thieme believes that by hiding himself under the disguise of "Nobody," Odysseus wishes to resist "the entrapments of binary models of culture and society" (190-91). As Nobody, Odysseus can take the role of anybody. As Nobody, not only does Odysseus try to escape "unitary definition but any definition at all. … he can be seen as a figure representing migrant resistance to entrapment in constricting identity labels and, a frame of reference which has particular resonance in the context of the play, a Protean capacity for transformation" (191).

Odysseus' witty remarks and discussions entertain Cyclops so he invites him for dinner. When Cyclops leaves, Odysseus' crew asks him to *think* of a way out of this cave. In spite of the fact that "[t]hought is forbidden" (61) in the Cyclops' kingdom. Odysseus knows that

there should be some way out of this giant's trap (66).[135] While Odysseus tries to come up with an idea to escape, the patrolmen come and take his men. This closes Scene VIII and the next scene invites the audience to a dinner table where the Cyclops and his guest sit at the table:

> CYCLOPS
> Know what you're eating? Your men. As good as sheep.
> (*Odysseus pauses, eats*.)
> ODYSSEUS
> And you know what they call these drops from my eyes?
> Tears.
> (*He stops eating*.)
> CYCLOPS
> My eyes cloud when I laugh. You must teach me to weep.
> ODYSSEUS
> Well, first you must lose things you loved.
> CYCLOPS
> Then cry, like this?
> (*He squeezes his eye shut*.)
> ODYSSEUS
> Not quite.
> CYCLOPS (*Opening his eye*)
> I like laughing. Make me laugh, little man. (67)

The Eye cannot cry as he has not lost anything; therefore, his understanding of the sense of loss and pain is crippled.[136] Now that Odysseus has established an intimate relation with him, he does not need camouflage, mask or pun. The *langage* turns into *langue* and he speaks with him in a straight manner. He questions his brutality to his defenseless people and his lack of hospitability. He then openly tells the Cyclops that he is on his way home while in their earlier conversation, he hides his destination from him. Odysseus also tells

[135] This is the Homeric parallel for this situation. Telling the story from the first person point of view, Odysseus thinks:

> But I kept thinking how to win the game:
> Death sat there huge; how could we slip away?
> I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics,
> Reasoning as a man will for dear life,
> Until a trick came-and it pleased me well. (157)

[136] Burian argues that "[t]ears are a token of humanity" ("'You can Build'" 78).

him that he has a kingdom but it is very different from his in that "its subjects don't end up on skewers" (69). Then the Cyclops says:

CYCLOPS
They're tenderized by tortures, the flesh is beaten.
ODYSSEUS
While your sheep bleat in fear of their devourer.

CYCLOPS
But I'm saving you for last.
ODYSSEUS
Well, that's very kind.
CYCLOPS
Thank you. (70)

Then Odysseus decides to take action: he "holds the skewer over the flames" and says, "[l]ook how this little iron lance glows at the top!" (70). This terrifies the monster who has been terrifying his nation for years.

CYCLOPS
Stick it in the meat.
(ODYSSEUS *drops the skewer*.)
CYCLOPS
Ram, get a clean one.
…
CYCLOPS
Ram, a clean skewer!
…
CYCLOPS
LEAVE IT ALONE!
…
ODYSSEUS
That's the way I am, sorry. I hate losing things.
CYCLOPS
GET OFF YOUR KNEES!
ODYSSEUS
My men, my money. My way home.
CYCLOPS
Your life next.
ODYSSEUS
That I don't mind. Just hate losing things. (70-71)

The Cyclops' terror becomes manifest once again. He asks Odysseus three times to forget the skewer and resume his place but Odysseus remains indifferent to his warnings. Odysseus keeps repeating his hatred of losing things. Seeing his persistence and indifference even at the risk of losing his life, the giant Eye kneels down to help him find the skewer. This posture (kneeling) is very significant; Burnett believes by this "symbolic prostration" Odysseus "appears to humble himself as a prelude to striking. This incident foregrounds a Caribbean understanding of subversion through ironized submission, a familiar strategy of Anansi" (*Derek Walcott* 296).[137] Anansi is a rogue and a hero in Afro-Caribbean folklore who "with his antiestablishment tricks cheat[s] the authority figure, Tiger, to put more food in his own belly" (304). Through the metaphor of Anansi, as Burnett notes, Walcott "plant[s] the Caribbean firmly in the drama" (290).[138] This is how Odysseus/Anansi so cleverly defies the power of the monster/Tiger.

This feature is exactly what the Creole language was known for; there was a necessity for concealment, *langue* turned into *langage* and speech became double-edged. The speaker intentionally avoided transparency and directness and by confusing the listener/master/colonizer, the subjugated speaker strategically defended and protected himself. "The Creole language was constituted around this strategy of trickery," thus Glissant claims in *Caribbean Discourse* (21). By making the Cyclops kneel down, Odysseus lowers the Cyclops' status to his own; through opacity, the *detour* of his indirect speech, subterfuge, word plays, and puns Odysseus boldly shatters that tense and unequal

[137] In an interview with Walcott, Burnett asks if his Caribbean Odysseus characterizes Anansi or not:

> Yes, very much…his thing is his wit, his evasiveness: the … zoological equivalent would be like a bear chasing a mouse. … it's like the Tiger and Anansi … there's always one figure in the folk imagination who is kind of a protestant figure, who … upsets the hierarchy somehow, either by defiance or by wit, or by solving challenges … most of the West Indian jokes, which are based on African stories, are somebody always challenging Tiger… And this person who is sceptical and smart and avoids the power of the Tiger is really a kind of protest … or query or scepticism [against] omniscience or power. And that's what he represents, I think. (*Derek Walcott* 304)

[138] Hamner also relates Odysseus' competency and "quick-wittedness" to "his Anansi training" ("Creolizing Homer" 382).

scopic supervision ubiquitous everywhere in the kingdom. Now the giant Eye kneels besides Nobody and looks for the skewer. There is no gaze, no eying, and no hierarchy of vision. This monster is not omnipotent anymore. "That's three eyes, fine. Where did it go?" (71). Once again, Odysseus reminds him of his one-eyed-ness and his impotency. Now the situation is under Odysseus' control. Soon Odysseus gives up: "[t]he sky goes pitch black when there is no moon" and after that "crawls near the Cyclops, takes out the skewer, blinds him" (71).[139] By blinding him, not only does Odysseus make Cyclops understand the sense of pain and loss but he deprives him forever of his gazing tool and in this way totally dis-empowers him. Consequently, the giant Eye turns into a Zero in Odysseus' hands. Earlier in this episode, Philosopher likens the Cyclops to Zero: "[a] man becomes nothing at that Zero's bidding" (61). Mathematically speaking, Zero equals nothing. So this Giant Eye, in spite of his awe-inspiring presence or absence, has been reduced to nothing.

> *Blackout. Sirens moaning*.)
> CYCLOPS
> NOBODY HAS ESCAPED, NOBODY BLINDED ME!
> LOUDSPEAKER
> REPEAT, NO ONE HAS ESCAPED. KEEP LOOKING FOR HIM.
> NOBODY'S ESCAPED, NOBODY'S BLINDED THE EYE.
> CYCLOPS
> NOBODY, YOU HEAR ME? NOBODY IS HIS NAME!
> …
> ODYSSEUS (*Shouts back*)
> …
> MY NAME IS NOT NOBODY! IT'S ODYSSEUS!

[139] Homer's Odysseus much like Walcott's approaches Kyklops tactically and wins the giant monster through the tactics of *detour*. He offers Kyklops a drink and introduces himself as "Nohbdy" to him. After intoxicating the kyklops (158), Odysseus rams a spike "deep in his crater eye" and blinds Kyklops. "Clawing his face/ he tugged the bloody spike out of his eyes" (156-57) and roars for help but there is no help as kyklops roars: "Nohbdy, Nohbdy's tricked me, Nohbdy's ruined me" (157)! If Odysseus does not hide his true identity from kyklops, other Kyklopes would come and kill Odysseus. But the *detour* of a false name fools all the cannibals and helps Odysseus escape from the lawless isle. At the end, Odysseus ridicules all the Kyklopes who are deceived by his false name. Thus, the shield of opacity could be a very powerful strategy of survival and resistance.

AND LEARN, YOU BLOODY TYRANTS, THAT MEN CAN STILL THINK! (71-72)

Only after blinding him Odysseus reveals his true identity to the Cyclops. He then, with a raised voice, tells him that he may confine his nation in a closed place but cannot control their thoughts. Here, as Hamner contends, Odysseus "speaks on behalf of any group so oppressed: prisoners, slaves, minorities, colonials" ("Creolizing Homer" 382). This is how at last the son of Poseidon pays the price of his intimidating supervision in his gray kingdom. Even though Odysseus is a powerful king and a famous Greek warrior, he is not the agent of power in Cyclops' island. Like devastated and helpless people, he looks for a way out of this tyrant's grip. Such a strategic encounter shows the triumph "of brain over brawn" (McConnell, *Black Odysseys* 2). Through his competency, Odysseus critically assesses the situation and by so doing resists and challenges the Cyclops' authority. [140] This is how Odysseus' skill in using language as *detour* of resistance and survival sets him free from the giant Eye's cave and paves the way for his *retour*.

Taking the story of the Cyclops as the turning point in Homer and Walcott, Hardwick differentiates the ways in which these authors treat Odysseus. It is Hardwick's contention that Homer puts more emphasis on Odysseus' intelligence while "Walcott's emphasis is on resolution of Odysseus' identity crisis and a move onward from the deepest point of depression" (8). Elsewhere in her discussion of the tactic of "Nobody," Hardwick argues

[140] Hamner argues in his article,

> By emphasizing this resistance and the equivocal devices of Homer's archetypal wanderer, Walcott is delineating latent virtues in predecessors of his Creole protagonist. These include Ti-Jean from *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), Makak from *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967), Jackson Phillip from *Pantomime* (1978), Shabine from The Schooner *Flight* (in *The Star-Apple Kingdom* [1979]), and Achille from *Omeros*. Ti-Jean and Phillip share a natural cunning and irreverence toward authority; Makak and Achille have their ahistoric visions and the ability to adapt through experience; Shabine, in addition to the native wit and hard-earned insight of these others, has the wanderlust as well as the linguistic skill of Homer's Odysseus. ("Creolizing Homer" 385).

that Nobody epitomizes Odysseus' "sense of complete nihilism as well as being a safety strategy" ("Reception as Simile" 336). As I have demonstrated through Glissant's concepts of *detour* and opacity, "Nobody" is a strategy of safety and protection; however, I do not quite agree with Hardwick's contention regarding Odysseus' identity crisis and nihilism. Throughout this episode, Walcott's Odysseus shows his intelligence, competence, and cognizance of his situation in the Cyclops' pen and through tactics of *detour* (linguistic and para-linguistic) and opacity, this competent-to-situation character protects and defends himself against the Cyclops' threats in order to make a successful *nostos*.

Contrasting Walcott's text with the Homeric one reflects the impact of socio-political contexts on the authors' creative minds. Walcott has been brought up in a context with a tense background of colonization, slavery and subjugation; an island torn by Manichean oppositions of colonizer/colonized, control/submission, surveillance/objectification. Walcott may have experienced the humiliating sense of unequal power relations, objectification and control ancestrally or/and communally. That could be a reason why, unlike Homer, Walcott renames the Cyclops as the Great Eye and from the outset depicts Cyclops as an imposing authoritarian. In fact, as in his other works, Walcott has been very careful in his choice of names; the Eye, Nobody and philosopher. When second patrolman asks Philosopher's name, he replies, "Socrates. Aristotle. Lucretius. Philosopher" (63). This sounds ironic; if thought and learning is forbidden in this kingdom, how is it that Philosopher is named after Greek and Roman philosophers? This might be related to the fact that even in such a controlled situation (walled, roofed, and penned), people still think of ways of freedom and resistance. In fact, this sequence is an allegory of power and resistance; whenever power is exerted, counter-action also exists even though it might be doomed to failure. In this dramatization Walcott demonstrates how the oppressed can

sometimes defeat the oppressor by employing the ploys of *detour* and opacity. That is why Britton takes opacity as a "*militant* position" (19)(emphasis in original).

This is how *retour* to one's native land happens—through *detour*. Reading Walcott's *Stage Version of the Odyssey* in terms of Glissant's theoretical concepts of opacity and *detour* demonstrates the ways in which Walcott envisions home and the experiences of homecoming. Through the literary technique of "*in medias res*" which leads to a *detour* of loops, digressions, and interruptions in the sweep of the drama, Walcott shows the complexity of home in the postcolonial era; it seems as if home, itself, evades fulfillment. Walcott also refers to home as a "trial" that demands a competency in the homecomer to confront the challenges en route. By recounting Odysseus' trajectory of homecoming and by showing his competency in resorting to the techniques of *detour* and opacity, Walcott puts great emphasis on the agency of the natal errant who tries to reconstruct his home in the postcolonial era with his "bare hands" and his imagination. Furthermore, by highlighting the rhythm and cadence of Homer's epic poem in his drama through Odysseus' burning desire for *nostos*, Walcott implies that rooted people like Odysseus—those who are on a "temporary" and voluntary mission—suffer exile and alienation. How arduous the journey is for uprooted, dispossessed, dislocated, and displaced Afro-Caribbeans, or any other transplanted people forced to leave their home and homeland.

CHAPTER 5: ODYSSEUS AND THE UNHOMELY ITHACA

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Glissant's concept of *detour* (structural, linguistic, and para-linguistic) aids Odysseus in counteracting human/monster threats on his way home. This chapter is also concerned with two other variations of *detour*: *detour* as disguise (either as verbal or physical) and the *detour* of madness and delirious speech (as strategies of survival and resistance). Along with Glissant's concept of *detour*, I will also reference Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" and Fanon's conception of "violence" as these theorists' ideas resonate with analyses of Ithaca and the massacre scenes of the Homeric drama. Drawing on these analytical tools, I focus on the second act of the drama: the sequence in which Odysseus reaches Ithaca to analyze his *nostos.* I also examine the sense of the *unheimlich* Odysseus experiences at "home" in Ithaca at the moment of his relocation together with his violent and psychotic response to it. In this analysis, I will demonstrate how the *detour* of madness, as a counter-poetic strategy, will help Odysseus reappropriate his home, family, and kingdom from the usurping suitors.

5.1 Disguise in Home

Walcott begins the second act of the drama with Odysseus singing of home:

> Let his stories be told, he's a mariner old,
> And his head's turning white as the foam.
> Scorched by the sun, cracked by the cold
> And a long—sing the song—
> And a long, long way from . . .
> (*Weeps*)
>
> Home. (101)

These opening verses are repeated with some variations three times in the first three pages of Act Two. By beginning the second act with the motif of *retour*, Walcott not only links the first scenes of the two acts to each other but he also accentuates the importance of

the issue of home and homecoming in his drama as a whole. Odysseus is not the only man who longs for his familiar homeland, cozy home, and welcoming family all through the war, so do his fellow Greek kings (2). Odysseus goes so far as to extend the desire of *retour* to "monsters on the bottom [who] crawl to their bed" (2). It can be inferred from Walcott's drama that when only ten years trigger such desire in Greek kings and soldiers, how strong this desire could be for uprooted and transplanted inhabitants of the New World who were deported to alien lands against their will. By this dramatization, Walcott underscores the intensity of the desire not only among the New World inhabitants but among all the diasporic nations in the world.

During his ten years of errancy and exile "crawling on the sea's line" (7), Odysseus' yearning for *retour* to his native land is deferred by various impediments. This prolonged homeward journey has wearied him: "I'd give up all this heaving for one yard of earth" (39), but his sailor, Elpenor, assures him of his impending *nostos* (39). [141] As king of Ithaca, Odysseus had enjoyed the privileges of an essential home before departing Ithaca for Troy while after his *nostos*, he finds his home in chaotic disorder. Walcott's Odysseus, paralleling Homer's, besieges Troy for ten years along with other Greek kings and warriors while ironically his own home is also surrounded for three years by the invading suitors.[142] Hence, home, essentially a secure place, has turned into an estranged and threatening place to the extent that when Odysseus reaches Ithaca, he does not recognize it (107-8).

[141] Odysseus' weariness echoes Shabine's, the travelling protagonist of The Schooner *Flight,* who suffers from his restless wanderings: "Where is my rest place, Jesus? Where is my harbor? / Where is the pillow I will not have to pay for, / And the window I can look from that frames my life"? (241)

[142] When Homer's Odysseus returns home and learns about all the ordeal Penelope has gone through in his absence, he says:

> hers of the siege her beauty stood at home
> from arrogant suitors, crowding on her sight
> and how they fed their courtship on his cattle,
> oxen and fat sheep, and drank up rivers
> of wine out of the vats. (438-39)

Surprisingly, no one recognizes him at home either, other than his dog and the blind Billy Blue who sings a sore hymn for his unwelcome reception:

> BILLY BLUE (Sings)
> …
> Imagine the bitter ecstasy of Odysseus.
> Imagine, after a hard night, coming home to your door.
> ….
> A doormat marked 'Welcome', they scrape their soles on
> your heart,
> And you can't do nothing about it, wouldn't that be sump'n?
> …
> Now, if you were that cat, tell me, brother, wouldn't you be
> sore?
> Wouldn't you be sore? Come on now, brother. I would.
> Man, I'd have their thighs for drumsticks, and for wine?
> Their blood! (120-121)

This is how Walcott depicts Odysseus' confrontation with the unhomely. While Bhabha contends the "unhomely" is typically associated with the colonial and post-colonial condition (*The Location* 13), I will demonstrate how the scope of this experience is wider than this as these uncanny feelings can also be experienced by colonizers, or those who have been on short or long term exile, and those who inhabit interstitial third spaces.

Walcott's Odysseus shares with Homer's an ambivalent character; his identity fluctuates between opposing poles. Sometimes he is on the side of the empowered and sometimes the disempowered. This chapter examines the Ithaca scene when Odysseus has reached home; however, as the condition of home has changed from "homely" to "unhomely", Odysseus cannot identify himself as the king; this is due to the invasion of the suitors whose presence throws Odysseus to the edges of his own kingdom. Instead of a king, he can be recognized as a native in opposition to the suitors who invaded his house and settled there for three years hoping to win the queen's hand in marriage. Henceforth, I examine the relationship between Odysseus and the suitors according to the dichotomous rubric of the native and the

suitor/settler; in doing so I echo Fanon's detailed discussion of the psychologically loaded relationship between natives and settlers in his chapter "Concerning Violence" from *The Wretched of the Earth* (35-95). Even though Odysseus is a king with an established kingdom, home, and household—like the uprooted omeric Achille—he comes to experience the unhomeliness of home in his unique way. Such experience is the result of ten years of war and ten more years of errancy and exile in the Mediterranean basin and the ensuing changes that have taken place in his home by the invasion of suitor-settlers. The suitor-settlers' invading presence has created a dichotomous world in which Ithaca suffers the binary oppositions of order/disorder, respect/disrespect, native/settler, insider/outsider, and empowerment/disempowerment. All these changes have made Odysseus' re-inhabitation difficult; the world of Ithaca looks strangely unfamiliar and chaotic to Walcott's returning protagonist: "[t]wenty years, and you wind up a tramp outside your own / door," says Billy Blue (121).

As the drama advances, Walcott demonstrates through Odysseus' alienating exile that even a short period of absence and exile can trigger an unhomely impression. This is the second aspect through which Walcott's text expands Bhabha's notion of the unhomely. The time-span Bhabha attributes to the concept of the "unhomely" encompasses a number of decades, generations, and even centuries—as discussed in the case of Afro-Caribbean Achille who suffers an almost three hundred-year rupture of history. Even though Odysseus is not concerned with the past or history as a long span of time, he also experiences the unhomely. The past he deals with covers a period of a mere two decades: "[t]en years of Troy. And after, ten tired years more" (138). However, this short lapse of time confronts him with the unhomely. The past has consumed his mind; some of his obsessions are related to the first decade of his exile from Ithaca and the Trojan War and others to the

threats he has experienced while in errancy in the Mediterranean basin. When he reaches Ithaca and experiences an alienating *retour*, Odysseus comes to learn that his trials are not yet over; he has struggled to survive the life-threatening impediments in the exotic and alien islands, and he should fight for his survival in his home too. This frustrating condition indicates that the boundaries between home and away, home and world, familiar and strange, as Bhabha describes, have become tenuous and fragile.

The authoritative intrusion of the suitor-settlers has created a threatening situation. In such circumstances, if the suitor-settlers recognize Odysseus' true identity, he would definitely be killed. Odysseus, who is the favorite of Athena, is advised by the goddess to enter Ithaca in disguise: "grime your face with sand and act like a beggar" (110). As a prerequisite for entry then, Odysseus must make himself undecipherable and opaque to the suitor-settlers in order to secure his life and his family from the "wild boars" (137). That is why the concept of opacity is of great significance to Glissant as he claims: "[w]e clamor for the right to opacity for everyone" (*Poetics* 194). To resort to the *detour* of disguise is, in the first place, Odysseus' right; in the second place, it is his natural reaction to the unhomeliness of home which confronts him with the malice of the intruders. He must challenge them by clever tactics of *detour* because unmasked, direct, and physical confrontation is strategically unwise seeing as the suitors outnumber him. If they identify him as the king, they will surely kill him.

This beggar attire functions in paradoxical levels; in the first place by disguising his true identity, it makes Odysseus' presence possible in his home while still protecting him from possible threats. Secondly, as discussed earlier, disguise, as a kind of *detour* or diversion, can act on both linguistic and physical vectors. Verbal disguise is similar to the camouflaged speech which is a characteristic feature of Creole language discussed in the

previous chapter.[143] Hence, to negotiate meaning, Odysseus' speech becomes double-edged from the moment he steps into Ithaca; in fact his speech turns into a protective screen.

The physical disguise operates when a person appears in the guise of another person. In Ithaca, Odysseus-the-beggar takes benefit from both linguistic and physical disguises. The element of disguise aids him in hiding his real intentions and obstructing the Other's understanding (here the suitor-settlers) of the hidden significance of his speech or action. Obviously Odysseus cannot evade this final obstacle (suitor-settlers); hence, he resorts to the strategy of disguise as *detour* to keep himself safe. This is how Glissant's notion of *detour* works as a defensive tool for self-preservation where there is an inequality in power relations. The once powerful king of Ithaca now needs to play the role of a beggar in his own home in order to wrest his kingdom away from usurpers. The beggar's attire shrinks the whole world of Ithaca for Odysseus; without it, his life would be threatened. When, after killing the suitors, he takes off this protective veil, Ithaca expands for him as he can enjoy it not as a beggar but as a king, a husband, a father, and a son.

In this critical situation, Odysseus-the-beggar should think of ways to counter-act the suitor-settlers. His competency requires him to first have mastery over the current status of affairs at home. The *detour* of the beggar's attire grants him safe freedom to competently converse with the people, even with the suitor-settlers. Eumaeus, his swineherd, is a reliable person who tells him about all the changes that have happened in his kingdom, from the invading suitor-settlers who put his fortune out (113) to his besieged Penelope[144]

[143] Athena and Billy Blue also use this verbal technique of disguise in some occasions throughout the drama.
[144] When Odysseus meets his dead mother along with other Greek souls in underworld, they tell him all about his beloved Penelope.

> Anticlea
> Like a bridal rock she veils and unveils herself.
> Tirestas
> She's still besieged like Troy by those roaring suitors.
> Anticlea

and threatened Telemachus whom suitors will kill "when he came of age" (115). Moved by the news of his fragmented family and the suffering they have gone through, Odysseus begins to think of the causes of their pain and suffering. His musings take him to the past, to Troy and the Trojan War. Paradoxically when in exile, he was so desirous to reach Ithaca; now that he has reached home, Troy keeps presenting itself in Ithaca:

> ODYSSEUS
> Back to a broken kingdom. To brood on Troy's fire . . .
> EUMAEUS
> Were you in that war?
> ODYSSEUS
> . . . and see Helen's hair. I was.
> EUMAEUS
> For a faithless wife. Isn't that what it was for?
> ODYSSEUS
> Among other things. The smoke has clouded its cause.
> (Silence.)(114)

Odysseus comes to realize that the things he has lost in the war are more than the things he has gained, a war whose cause is now shrouded by smoke.[145] By reflecting on the past, it becomes clear that the destruction of the Trojan War has also penetrated into the very corners of his home and threaded his private life; Ithaca, like Troy, is surrounded and plundered by the invaders. Reading Walcott's drama closely illuminates the unbearable weight of the past and the personal experiences on the mind of the war hero. Odysseus, as the Greek spokesperson of the St. Lucian Walcott, suggests how the fusion of the past with the present, as Bhabha contends, could create uncanny moments. Apart from depicting the

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> She's a rare vase, out of a cat's reach, on its shelf.
> Tirestas
> One day his leaping claws could snatch her. Antinous! (96)

[145] The marriage of Peleus and Thetis caused the Trojan War as they had not invited the goddess of discord to their ceremony. Outraged Eris went to their marriage feast with a golden apple saying that the apple belonged to the fairest. Athena, Hera and Aphrodite reached for the apple and Zeus asked Paris, the Trojan prince, to choose the fairest. To influence Paris, Hera promised to give him power; Athena talked of wealth, and Aphrodite of the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris liked Aphrodite's offer and she promised him Helen, the queen of Sparta, wife of Menelaus. In spite of his mother's disagreement, Paris went to Sparta and abducted Helen. This outraged Menelaus who took fleets to go to Troy and to return Helen back. This is how the Trojan War begins.

unheimlich sense of home, Walcott, ironically, criticizes and dramatizes the pointlessness of war through the mind of the sacker of cities, the winner of the Trojan War; the king-warrior who is back home to suffer the reverberations of the Trojan War in his home. Ironically, even the winner thinks there was no point and no cause for the Greek expedition to Troy. If the winner suffers the agonies of war, how wretched the loser would be. This is how Walcott demonstrates the after effects of war and invasion in the life and psyche of the individuals. This blurred spatial and temporal division between Ithaca and Troy, now and then, home and away can devastate the mind and psyche of the individual. This psychological turmoil concurs with Freud's understanding of the *unheimlich* in which repressed past memories come to the surface and affect the mind:

ODYSSEUS
Listen to that wind outside, Eumaeus. You hear it?
EUMAEUS
And the fire's raging.
ODYSSEUS
Like Troy's. What a far cause!
EUMAEUS
A black-maned storm galloping with Troy's wild horses.
ODYSSEUS
Wilder since the war.
EUMAEUS
God, what a man! No men left. (116)

In this sequence Odysseus is grappling with the past, with the ruins of war-torn Troy. Though it is a "far cause," its echoes have reached Ithaca as well. The confused borderline separating the past from the present has collided and this collision has influenced Odysseus' psyche. This uncanny feeling besieges Odysseus' mind at which "[t]he recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (Bhabha, *The Location* 13).

As discussed earlier, apart from the temporal and spatial con/fusions, the suitor-settlers' three-year usurping presence has also blurred the distinction of other binary opposites as well as social classes. There is no respect and privacy at home, a circumstance which negates the conventional conception of home as a place of seclusion and confidentiality. Hence, this unhomely circumstance requires the king-as-beggar to hide and suppress his anger on many occasions and withstand the humiliation and disgrace of home. After identifying himself to his son, Odysseus tells him all about the unbearable atmosphere which he has tolerated at his home: "[f]or hours, as a beggar, boy, I've choked back my rage" (139). House servants disgrace him:

> (MELANTHO, the housemaid, Nausicaa's double, passes,
> trips on Odysseus, kicks him.)
> MELANTHO
> You nearly made me fall, you homeless parasite!
> ODYSSEUS
> Sorry. But, girl, have some respect for your elders.
> MELANTHO
> You wanted me to fall so you could see these thighs?
> (She sits astride Odysseus.) (124)

By hiding his true identity, the beggar attire facilitates Odysseus' presence in Ithaca; however, it also limits his freedom of speech and action and makes him passive. When house servants insolently humiliate him, he cannot say or do anything. This situation, namely, Odysseus' degradation, powerlessness and restraint in his own home is similar to the situation of the natives, as Fanon describes, who were condemned to passivity and immobility by the dominating settlers or colonials (*The Wretched* 51).[146] Experiencing all this is hard for Odysseus-the-king who has lost his power and authority in his home and is

[146] "This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motorcars which never catch up with me. During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning" (Fanon, *The Wretched* 52).

thrown to the edges of his own kingdom. The new condition in Ithaca pushes Odysseus to the interstices of identity, space and time. He is neither a king nor a beggar; neither home nor away; neither in the past nor in the present. The past torments him; Ithaca does not welcome him.

The irreverence and disrespect Odysseus comes to experience is pervasive in his house. Aided by the goddess Athena, Telemachus secretly takes Antinous' ship to visit the palace of Greek kings to get the news of his father. In an unexpected way, Melantho, his mother's unfaithful maid, discloses his secret mission to Antinous, Penelope's suitor:

MELANTHO
Don't punish me, sir, but I have serious news.
ANTINOUS
Better make it good, girl, or I'll lop off that nose.
MELANTHO
The boy has gone.
EURYCLEIA
Melantho!
ANTINOUS
Gone? Telemachus?
MELANTHO
Look in the harbour. He stole your ship, Antinous.
PENELOPE
Poor girl! You were the last jewel left of my trust. (19)

In another occasion, Melantho insolently reveals the queen's secret to her suitors. The queen weaves a shroud for Laertes (Odysseus' father) but unweaves it at night. She has promised the suitors that upon its completion, she will choose one to marry. By unweaving the shroud, she tries to delay the word she has given to the suitors as she believes her husband is still alive, an idea her suitors laugh at.

MELANTHO
She's been unravelling the same shroud for three years.
ANTINOUS
Ah! I understand. Call in the others. Right now!

(MELANTHO exits.)
PENELOPE
You touch my son and you'll face my husband's revenge.
ANTINOUS
Your husband is dead. What sword can slice a shadow?
PENELOPE
No!
ANTINOUS
Let him return. He'll see how your patience ends.
PENELOPE
My patience wasn't slavery, it was pure trust.
ANTINOUS
And mine for three years. Get our marriage bed ready.
PENELOPE
Look, sir, my vows aren't brooches I wear till they rust.
ANTINOUS
Neither is my star, that's kept its distance, lady.
(AMPHINOMUS and CTESIPPUS enter, armed.)
AMPHINOMUS
The girl told us. (19-20)

The feeling of betrayal that Penelope experiences at this moment emanates from the blurred peculiarity between private and public spheres. This is how the personal and public provinces collapse and trigger *unheimlich* sensations. Melantho's report has further repercussions, which dismantle the stabilized hierarchy in social classes, namely between the royal family and the servants: Penelope, the queen, must hide her affairs from her servant. Another repercussion of the suitor-settlers' presence is the creation of a dichotomous situation in the house: there are those for and those against. Eurycleia was Odysseus and Telemachus' nurse and Penelope highly respects and supports her as the foundation of the house (18). In spite of this, the house servants are disrespectful to her. Melantho calls her a "crooked Black bitch" (125) and Arnaeus calls her a "dried-up old stick" (126). Odysseus is perplexed at the irreverence; how can one call "[t]his neglected marsh, this swamp and chaos" a house!? (125). Eumaeus calls it a "pig-pen" with "screeching chaos" (115). When Odysseus thinks of his home as a chaotic space, a place of

"commotion" (128), Eurycleia says "[i]s years, sir, all this damned wilderness been going on!" (125).

This is how the unwelcome intrusion of the suitor-settlers shatters the secrecy and security of home. As a result of the Trojan War and Odysseus' exile, the uncanny has crept into his house. Such a difficult situation is experienced by the colonized far more dramatically as they have lost control of their land, language, religion, nature, and culture due to the imposing presence of the colonizers. This may be a criticism Walcott aims at colonization, invasion, domination, settlement, and control.

Alienated and pushed to the margin of his home, suffering the psychic burden of the unhomely, choking on the suffocating chaos and insolence of the house, this competent-to-situation character should think of the ways to strategically put an end to this commotion. Fanon's argument of violence in *The Wretched of the Earth* as a means for overcoming the psychological alienation of colonialism resonates here. In the next section, I will demonstrate how Odysseus puts an end to the disorder in his house through violence.

5.2 Violence in the Hall

In Walcott's drama, the presence of suitor-settlers has developed an alienating atmosphere for the natives. In Act One, Odysseus has been using his mind's power to challenge the trials en route to Ithaca; in Act Two, he also employs his physical power to counteract the suitor-settlers. He must end their siege; he must take action, use violence in response to violence. "The violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the native balance each other" (Fanon, *The Wretched* 88). Odysseus' confrontation of the suitor-settlers and their massacre is akin to decolonization where the colonized natives, on a mission for "national liberation," struggle to restore their nation from the colonizers to

themselves. In like manner, Odysseus schemes to liberate his home and kingdom from the suitor-settlers. To this end, he should think of arms and army and a proper time to act. As the leader of the reform, Odysseus "should call on the people to enter upon an armed struggle" (73). The problem Odysseus faces is the unbalanced proportion of the so-called natives and the suitor-settlers. As Fanon argues,

> The settler-native relationship is a mass relationship. The settler pits brute force against the weight of numbers. He is an exhibitionist. His preoccupation with security makes him remind the native out loud that there he alone is master. The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. (53-4)

Obviously the situation in Ithaca is quite reversed: the suitor-settlers outnumber the natives. It is three to one hundred but as Odysseus has been supported by the goddess Athena through the arc of the drama, she will also assist the dethroned king in decolonizing his home and kingdom by sending him an army of swallows. Another issue for enacting violence is weaponry, which Fanon also mentions: "[i]n fact, the leaders of reform have nothing else to say than: '[w]ith what are you going to fight the settlers? With your knives? Your shotguns?'" (64). Odysseus likewise should see how he can get weapons. He asks Telemachus,

> ODYSSEUS
> There're bright arms on my wall. Trophies from endeavours?
> TELEMACHUS
> Yes?
> ODYSSEUS
> Unhang them, and offer some servant's excuse.
> TELEMACHUS
> Like, too much smoke smudges them. That'll be my excuse.
> ODYSSEUS
> To polish and hoard them in case someone argues.
> TELEMACHUS
> I'll hide your armoury away from the suitors' (140)

This is how Odysseus, the leader, gets weapons prepared. Assured of the assistance of his army (Athena's swallows, Telemachus and Eumaeus), Odysseus "sits on a throne, with begging bowl" in Scene VI (141) while suitors surround him. He tells them about Troy and his adventures with Poseidon (141). He asks them to pray as he sees that the Trojan War will be repeated by a darkening storm while their "tombs will tumble like surf in its aftermath" (142). As he is in begging attire, the suitors do not take his threats seriously; they ridicule him. Then Odysseus asks:

> ODYSSEUS
> Whyn't you search for your weapons, in case you're besieged?
> EURYMACHUS
> Who's going to besiege us?
> ODYSSEUS
> Your enemies.
> ANTINOUS
> Who're they?
> ODYSSEUS
> An old swineherd. A boy. That swallow. All of these" (144-45).[147]

The suitor-settlers are not aware of the conspiracy going on in the house. Then Penelope brings Odysseus' bow to test the ability of the suitor who will win her hand as she says her husband could string it (146). One of the suitors tries but he fails cursing. Odysseus goes next. First he pretends it is difficult but then he strings it and "*shoots the arrow through the twelve axes*" (147) (italics original). While stringing the bow he prays to Athena to help him "bring a hundred throats to grief" (147). Then Antinous asks him to shoot one more

[147] Telemachus has also been asked about this at the beginning of the drama:

> TELEMACHUS
> I mourned my father's absence. Soon I'll avenge it!
> CTESIPPUS
> Such sweet impetuosity, Telemachus!
> EURYMACHUS.
> There's a hundred of us, boy. How will you manage it? (12)

time and this time Odysseus hits him right in the throat pretending it as an accident (148). When the suitors identify him as Odysseus, they turn into statues:

> ODYSSEUS
> Dogs, didn't you keep baying I'd never get home?
> POLYBUS
> O many-wiled model of human survival!
> EURYMACHUS
> Odysseus! It's Odysseus! Welcome, sir! Welcome!
> (He crawls on his knees.)
> CTESIPPUS
> We beg. On our knees.
> ODYSSEUS
> Don't you think begging is vile?
> (*He kills EURYMACHUS. The other suitors run*.
> Eumaeus *gives* ODYSSEUS *the shield*.) (149)

After this discovery, the suitor-settlers fall on their knees and beg Odysseus' pardon but Odysseus—similar to Fanon's natives—does not compromise with them (*The Wretched* 61). When the violence begins, Odysseus together with Telemachus and Eumeaus from one side and "swallow-nation" from another side, attack all the suitors and avenges Odysseus. This violent massacre silences the three-year chaos in the house.

Odysseus' violent retaliation in mass murdering the suitor-settlers proves Fanon's claim on violence as the only approach to defy and solve the psychological alienation caused by colonialism: "[t]he colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence. This rule of conduct enlightens the agent because it indicates to him the means and the end" (86). Fanon's argument on the "cleansing force" of violence on the individuals is also relevant in Odysseus' case. Fanon contends that violence sets free the "inferiority complex" of the native together with their sense of "despair and inaction" (94). The violent action further indicates the courage of the individual and "restores his self-respect" (94). Odysseus, who has repressed and suffered silently the disgrace and humiliation of his home in beggar

attire, succeeds in restoring his dignity and his damaged pride as a king by scheming this massacre through which he decolonizes his home from the suitor-settlers. Fanon's concept of violence clearly justifies this violence. However, after the massacre scene, the trauma of the Trojan War assails Odysseus.

With the death of the suitors, suddenly all the roar and noise subside in the house to the extent that absolute silence surprises Telemachus (150). Even though home/the external sphere becomes silent, Odysseus' avenging mind and psyche fall into turmoil. Even though the violent decolonization restores Odysseus' pride, dignity, and authority, the massacre scene disorients him as it projects the past into the private sphere of his home. The bloodshed is reminiscent of Troy's battle field; hence, it revives the traumas of the war. By the gradual eruption of war-memories in Odysseus' mind, his speech becomes delirious like that of mad people. However, Glissant perceives madness in a positive light as *detour* of resistance and survival. I will read the after-massacre scene through Glissant's concept of madness together with Bhabha's concept of the unhomely.

5.3 Madness and Delirium

Glissant's concept of madness and delirium shares important resonances with Bhabha's notion of the unhomely. As Bhabha contends, life in an *unheimlich* world depends on the distinctions one may find between "control" and "accommodation"; "we ought to concern ourselves with the understanding of human action and the social world as a moment when *something is beyond control, but it is not beyond accommodation*" (*The Location* 17-18) (italics original). In her book of criticism on Glissant, Britton relates Bhabha's notion of "accommodation" to Glissant's conception of "*detour*" but she then reasons that "in the context of individual anxiety and the threat of psychosis," accommodation echoes more strongly with Glissant's concept of delirium as a strategy for survival and resistance (120).

In his essay "Sur le delire verbal" (On Verbal Delirium), published originally in the last issue of *Acoma* in 1973 and later in *Le discours antillais* (361-91), Glissant studies delirium in the domain of language.[148] The concept of verbal delirium, which associates "the logic of the word with the concept of madness," is a resistance strategy, a *langage* (Duchanaud 254). Verbal delirium has two categories: "pathological verbal delirium" (*le délire pathologique*) and "routine verbal delirium" (*le delire verbal coutumier*). Though Glissant's focus is more on the latter type, as Britton argues, the borderline demarcating sanity from insanity seems to be difficult to clearly identify (91). Routine or customary verbal delirium differs from the pathological delirium as it could be resolved by political action, "résolution dans la pratique politique" (*Le discours antillais* 369). In routine verbal delirium, the *délirant* participates in society while the pathological *délirant* is isolated from society; "Le délire pathologique est dans sa solitude, le délire couturier est souvent participant" (369). Routine verbal delirium:

> is a direct reaction to the social situation: specifically, a symptom of the occultation of social relations …. and is not perceived by the community as either abnormal ([*Le discours antillais*] 364) or socially dysfunctional in the way that it would be in Europe (369). And indeed it is socially functional insofar as it is also an alienated attempt to resolve, subjectively, the tensions caused by the misrecognition of social relations (364). (Britton 91)

Verbal delirium has four subcategories (*Le discours antillais* 374-76) differentiated on the basis of two features: firstly, it could be either *élite* or *populaire*/subaltern and secondly, it could be "de-propriating" or "reappropriating'. In "*dé-propriatian*" the *délirant* obsessively attempts to be identified as French by mimicking the language and culture of the white other (though in an alienated way) whereas in the latter case, which can be a kind of *detour*, the *délirant* tries to voice and reconcile with the contradictions of society

[148] In spite of its importance, this essay has not been translated into English. On "Verbal Delirium" in English references see Michael Dash, *Édouard Glissant* pp. 115-25; Celia Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* pp. 83-118; Carine Mardorossian, "From Fanon to Glissant: A Martinican Genealogy" pp.21-22; Elizabeth Duchanaud, *Reading the French Caribbean through Édouard Glissant* pp. 234-302; the quotations in the last reference are in French though.

(Britton 92).[149] The four categories of "routine verbal delirium" are "dramatization" and "communication" (in both popular forms) as well as "representation" and "persuasion" (both for elites). All these forms of delirium are de-propriating except "dramatization" (*théâtralisation*) which functions as reappropriating: "[s]i l'on ajoute que dans le délire populaire de communication l'agressivite est presque toujours la régle, on aboutit a la conclusion provisoire que la conduite verbale dans le délire coutumier est presque uniment vécue comme dé-propriation, sauf dans le cas délire de théatralisalion" (*Le discours antillais* 378).[150] *Le délire pathologique* is also reappropriating.

Based on what I have discussed so far, I see a kind of correlation between Odysseus' madness and delirium after the massacre scene (150-53) with Glissant's notion of madness as *detour* for resistance and survival,[151] a discussion which also resonates with Bhabha's concept of the unhomely. But to apply this concept to Walcott's drama, some variations are required. The first issue is related to the dichotomy of elite/popular in which Odysseus does not fit. Instead, he can be identified as the native in the native/settler dichotomy in this sequence of the drama.

Secondly, in formulating this theoretical concept, Glissant focuses on the delirium and madness which ensue from the mimetic impulse in the domain of language. In Walcott's drama, Odysseus neither intends to mimic the language of the Other (suitor-settlers) nor their culture in order to be identified with them. He speaks English throughout the story though he shifts from *langue* to *langage* on some occasions. His speech is quite sensible in

[149] Here is another note for the illumination of the concept of '*dé-propriation*' suggested by Dr. Marie-José Nzengou-Tayo, in email correspondence with the author (26 May 2015): "'*dé-propriation*' is coined by Glissant and is used as an antonym of 'appropriation' with the meaning of being deprived of control/'ownership' over one's self".

[150] This passage is also translated by Dr. Marie-José Nzengou-Tayo in email correspondence with the author (26 May 2015): "[i]f we add that in popular communication delirium, aggressiveness is almost always the norm, we are led to provisionally conclude that verbal behaviour during customary[routine] delirium is almost uniformly experienced as '*dé-propriation*' except in cases of theatricalized delirium".

[151] Glissant's own fictive charcters are affilicted with madness as is seen in his novel, *Malemort.* Seemingly the madness and psychic disequilibrium in this work "is associated with impotence, mysticism and violence" whereas the various kinds of madness described in *Caribbean Discourse* "are interpreted as positively deviant, a kind of escape into the irrational" (Dash, *Édouard Glissant* 127).

the arc of the drama except after the massacre scene when his mind suddenly disintegrates. As Glissant theorizes, routine verbal delirium is a reflex to the contradictions experienced in the social situation (*Le discours antillais* 368). Odysseus' delirious speech and madness is a reflexive response to the *unheimlich* sense of the world and home. This disillusioning realization crumbles the equilibrium of his psyche as he could not see the distinction between home and away. Evidently, as Bhabha theorizes, the boundary separating secure home from insecure world has become shaky. Here Walcott dramatically demonstrates how the winner and the hero of the Trojan War also comes to experience the *unheimlich* sense of home akin to the colonized, displaced, and conquered natives.

There is also another issue related to "the occultation of social relations" which strongly affects Odysseus' mental poise. Though the king of Ithaca, Odysseus' status has been reduced to a beggar in his kingdom; a beggar who should beg for his home, family, and his kingdom from the suitor-settlers. Odysseus is a dignified king; it might be beyond him to persevere in spite of this humiliation. His house has turned into a chaotic place; his wife and son are threatened. All these changes disorient him. When he reflects on the alienating experiences of his chaotic and unhomely home together with years of exile, he understands that all these changes are brought by the war. Torments of the past and the Trojan War gradually affect his mind and bring him to "the verge of total disintegration" (Tynan, *Postcolonial Odysseys* 156).

Among the various forms of verbal delirium, as I will demonstrate, *théâtralisation* can best describe Odysseus' situation. After killing the suitor-settlers, the scene of violence, the blood, and dead bodies intensifies Odysseus' psychic burden. The ghostly presence of history intervenes and blurs the spatial/temporal border lines between past and present, between Troy and Ithaca. Odysseus wrestles with the past in a confused and delirious way

while, as I will show, this retrieval has both maddening and healing effects on his chaotic mind as Glissant takes delirium as a survival strategy (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 129). For a short while, past and present coexist and he dramatically superimposes the past to the present[152] in a parallelism:

> ODYSSEUS
> When I look at [dead bodies] I hear armour and chaos.
> TELEMACHUS
> Quiet as a hundred brides whose suitor is death.
> (*War noises increasing*. *The* SUITORS *begin to stir*.)
> ODYSSEUS
> Look! Nestor, Thersites, my silent Greek chorus.
> TELEMACHUS
> But you can talk to me, Father. Father, you're home.
> ODYSSEUS
> Then who are those soundless shadows crossing my wall?
> TELEMACHUS
> What is he staring at? Eumaeus, help him!
> ODYSSEUS
> Look! I will not fight the Trojans! My mind's not well.
> EUMAEUS
> This is a madness that I've seen on him before. (150-51)

He identifies the Greek kings and warriors with the suitors and thinks the Trojan War is about to begin but he does not want to go to the war. In this "historical present" (to speak in Bhabha's terms), the strain and trauma of Troy gradually brings him to the verge of madness and delirium. As discussed earlier, dramatizing verbal delirium deals with *tourment d'histoire* (the torment of history) while in other forms of *delire verbal*, history is repressed or refused: "là où les autres délires coutumiers signalent l'absence à l'histoire ou son refus" (Glissant, *Le discours antillais* 378).

By reviving the incidents of the Trojan War, Odysseus dramatically attempts to re-appropriate his disordered home, his fragmented family, and his own place from the

[152] McCorkle notes that "[t]he present is always mediated by historical knowledge" (5).

invading suitor-settlers. Bewildered Telemachus keeps reminding his father that he is in Ithaca and the Trojan War is over but evidently Odysseus' mind is not conscious of the present. His mind and body have split; his body is in Ithaca while his mind is in Troy. The interplay of the past in the present has maddened him. This is how the boundaries between routine verbal delirium and pathological delirium become indistinct when the temporal borderlines become blurred:

ODYSSEUS
Look! (*Points at the* SUITORS.)
Troy's mulch. Troy's rain! Wounds. Festering diseases!
BILLY BLUE
Troy's glory.
ODYSSEUS
I'll kill you for telling boys that lie!
(*He leaps towards* BILLY BLUE, *grabs him*.)
EUMAEUS
He's a homeless, wandering voice, Odysseus.
(*Pause*.)
Kill him and you stain the fountain of poetry.
(*The* SUITORS *rise as warriors*.)
BILLY BLUE
His mind is dislodged from its masonry. From Troy's wall. (151-52)

As discussed, one of the features of dramatic verbal delirium is to externalize and voice the traumas of history. This feature is quite evident in Odysseus' delirium when he externalizes and expresses the naked truth of the war. Even though the Greek army has won the war, Odysseus does not praise war's glory; neither does he boast of the Greek victory over the Trojans. He has come to experience the war's traumatic repercussions in the very corners of his private home. "[Penelope] has weathered a siege even longer than Troy's," says Billy Blue (123). In the Introduction to her book, Tynan describes Odysseus as a "shell-shocked veteran lost at sea" (*Postcolonial Odysseys* xxiv).[153] This phrase, which

[153] The OED defines "shell-shocked" as a name given, especially, during the war of 1914-18, to certain psychological disturbances occurring in conditions of active warfare and supposed to result primarily from exposure to shell-fire." Modern psychology also deals with it as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), a traumatic condition either experienced or witnessed; it is typically associated with

according to the *Free Dictionary* describes a person who is "stunned, distressed, or exhausted from a prolonged trauma or an unexpected difficulty," aptly suits Odysseus in this sequence as the estranged and alienating Ithaca has affected his mind. His exposure to the destructive reverberations of war has awakened him to the reality of war. The concept of deviance or delirium is in fact the "sign of social awareness" and a "necessary step in dodging alienation" (Duchanaud 251). The dramatic point in this revelation is that he is the winner of the war; he is a warrior and through his fragmented and affected mind, Walcott criticizes war. Odysseus does not repress the dark side of the war, its wounds, diseases, and injuries as delirium is indicative of "an exemplary state of extreme consciousness … not a form of pathological behavior" (Dash, *No Mad Art: The Deterritorialized Déparleur in the work of Édouard Glissant* 113).

In fact, this is the positive aspect of the dramatic delirium where the *délirant* "*essaie dramatiquement de réapproprier par le verbe.*" Odysseus madly and deliriously voices the traumas of the war; hence, he is identified as mad or *fou.* However, through this frantic dramatization, he obliges the community to look at itself as this way of observation is both needed and important: "[c]'est pourquoi la communauté le ressent comme fou (il oblige à se regarder vraiment), mais comme un fou spectaculaire et important (car elle a besoin de ce regard)" (*Le Discours antillais* 378). As Britton clarifies, "[t]he dramatizing delirium fulfills the function of a socially necessary acting out of collective unconscious conflicts

wars or victims of horrific incidents/accidents. In *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, Jonathan Shay, a psychiatrist, analyzes the psychological injury of war experienced by Vietnam veterans as post-traumatic stress disorder in comparison with the psychological state of the Iliadic warriors. In another book, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, Shay goes on to compare Vietnam veterans' experiences of homecomings and the difficulties of reconciliation with home after return through the trials the Homeric Odysseus goes through. In "'You had to wade this deep in blood?': Violence and Madness in Derek Walcott's The Odyssey," McConnell discusses Odysseus' psychological delusion in the massacre scene as "a type of post-traumatic stress" (44). She refers to Edith Hall's study in *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer's Odyssey* in which Hall mentions Stanisław Wyspianski's *Powrót Odysa* (*Return of Odysseus*) as a first text in which psychological impact of war is overtly examined. Together with this Polish tragedy, Edith Hall mentions Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Bow of Odysseus* as another important text which analyzes the psychological crisis of war (181-82). David Farr's *The Odyssey* is another drama which explores the psychological devastation of war on both losers and winners (44). For more on this in Walcott's drama see Maeve Tynan, *Postcolonial Odysseys: Derek Walcott's Voyages of Homecoming* pp. 156-58 and 161-62.

(92-3). This is in fact another feature of dramatizing verbal delirium in which the *délirant* has the role of a public figure or an "actor on stage" who, while externalizing and reappropriating reality through his speech, intends to illuminate the whole community. In turn, the community plays the role of a spectator and a participant as it tries to decipher this actor's play and realize itself through this actor: "[c]et individu est alors un acteur en scéne, pour toute la communauté qui se trouve à la fois spectatrice (elle essaie de déchiffrer le jeu de cet acteur) et participante (elle essaie de se rèaliser dans cet acteur)" (*Le discours antillais* 375).

The work under discussion is a drama and Odysseus is a real actor on the stage; an age-old familiar figure in the literary scene. He is not fully a Walcott-invented character as Walcott has reconfigured Homer's poem in his drama. Odysseus is a mythic figure, a Trojan warrior, a Homeric hero. Hence, he takes a very important role as "un acteur en scene" (375). As Britton observes, this public role accomplishes "the social function" associated with the dramatizing delirium: "[d]espite his 'deviance,'" the dramatizing *délirant* communicates with the others and "acts out for the community a shared delirium" (108). As mentioned earlier, dramatizing delirium echoes collective consciousness. In fact, Odysseus is Walcott's spokesperson who, through his musing, fragmented memory, and delirium, criticizes the war and the epic genre which celebrates the death and suffering of the people.

Gradually the noise of war increases in Odysseus' mind. He cannot distinguish Ithaca from Troy. In his mind's eye, Odysseus envisions Ithaca as the war-torn Troy and recalls the horrors of the War and the butchery of the Trojans. He remembers the Trojan horse pregnant with Greek soldiers and hears the painful wails of Hecuba over dead stones (152). As the repository of the past, Odysseus digs up the tormenting memories. Eumaeus relates

his dramatic confusion to war: "[t]his is the after-shock that is war's remorse" (152). This is war's remorse, the guilt of his conscience for the Greek army's expedition to Troy erupts and discloses all his repressed and pent-up violent memories. It seems that this war-affected king-warrior needs verbal release to alleviate his pain as if the violence of war is deposited in his mind and psyche.[154] Odysseus shares the agonizing shreds of the past to fill the void of time and the years of his absence:

(ODYSSEUS *stumbles over* ANTINOUS' *body*.)
ODYSSEUS
Now why has the tide dragged this log into my house?
TELEMCHUS
This is Antinous! Not a log! Rather, it was.
ODYSSEUS
The spitting image of Ajax. The same hooked nose.
EUMAEUS
This is not Ajax.
ODYSSEUS
Not him? Where's Odysseus?
TELEMACHUS
Here.
ODYSSEUS
Look at him stride; arrogant, floating Ajax!
(ANTINOUS/AJAX *moves away, turns, exits*.)
TELEMACHUS
Sir!
ODYSSEUS
Cut me in hell. Couldn't face Achilles' shield.
TELEMACHUS
The shield is home now. The lances ranged on their racks.
ODYSSEUS
Look how he stalks through the stench of the battlefield!
EUMAEUS
These images rise from the shield. They're not his own.

[154] This sequence is linked to Philoctetes's plight:

His knee was radiant iron,
his chest was a sack of ice, and behind the bars

of his rusted teeth, like a mongoose in a cage,
a scream was mad to come out; his tongue tickled its claws
on the roof of his mouth rattling its bars in rage. (21)

As a descendant of African slaves who has inherited the silence of slavery (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 161), Philoctete also needs to voice the physical and psychic pains of his ancestral wound in order to purge himself of the burden of the unvoiced sufferings and the muted state of slavery. Glissant describes slavery as "a struggle with no witness" (161).

ODYSEEUS
Since when did logs stand, then walk leagues over water?
EUMAEUS
He's wrestling the god for his mind.
ODUSSEUS (*Shouting*)
POSEIDON!
(*He hurls* TELEMACHUS *off*.)
TELEMACHUS
The sea can't come in! Stop it! Stop it, please, Father! (152-53)

Odysseus misidentifies Antinous with Ajax; then looks for himself in the battle-ground and remembers his argument with Ajax over Achilles' shield. Eumaeus thinks all these fragmented images and invocations rise from that token of war, Achilles' shield.[155]

This is the anxiety of war that comes to light; this is the uncanny moment which, as Freud postulates, is the return of the repressed past. This psychic reflex is a reaction both to his exile in the world and the unhomely sense of home in Ithaca. Odysseus is not at home anywhere in the world though home has been offered to him in the islands he visits. Odysseus needs to voice the undisclosed and secret truths of war in order to purge, relieve and release his psyche of the guilt of war and the pain of his conscience. He only recovers when he articulates his pent-up thoughts as if the scene of butchery is a recovery site which maddens but then heals his disintegrated mind. This is how Britton notes that the boundary demarcating "psychic disintegration" from "psychic survival" proves to be very confusing (119). After externalizing the traumas of the Trojan War through the dramatic *delire verbal*, it seems that Odysseus is psychically healed and his resistance to the alienation of the world and the unhomely home survives him while restoring the lost peace and harmony into his home and kingdom. In fact, this is the positive feature of madness as *detour* for survival and resistance which interests Glissant. Here is how Odysseus accommodates himself with

[155] While giving the shield to Odysseus, Ajax curses him, "Bear it, you turtle! Take ten years to reach your coast" (4). This is the curse of Ajax which defers his *retour*. That shield takes ten years of Odysseus' life aided by the malice of Poseidon. For a discussion of shield see Eckhard Breitinger, "Odysseus, Crusoe and the Making of the Caribbean Hero: Derek Walcott's Variations of Great Traditions" 219.

the unhomely circumstances of home and this is how Glissant's concept of delirium resonates with Bhabha's notion of accommodation.

Odysseus' delirious speech and insanity stop with the entrance of Penelope to the stage. Symbolizing home, Ithaca, constancy, and peace, Penelope returns Odysseus so abruptly from burning Troy to the present time in Ithaca. Her presence reminds him that his exilic life is over and that he can now reunite with his long-waiting wife to whom he has not yet identified himself. Departing from her Homeric role, Penelope reacts harshly to the bloodbath in the house and rebukes Odysseus-the-beggar for causing this carnage: "[y]ou had to wade this deep in blood?" to turn the house into an "abattoir" (153).[156] Penelope likens Odysseus to a butcher: "[t]hese butchers that dyed the whole Aegean's basin" (154). Her allusion to the Trojan War, "[t]o make this a second Troy! When will men learn?"(154), indicates her hatred of war and massacre. Her criticism not only addresses human vengeance but it also targets the "retributive justice" of mythic gods' celebrated in epic works (Burian, "'You can Build'" 79). Penelope's remarks on Odysseus' dismemberment of the branches of mankind (154) suggest Walcott's own perceptions of war, invasion, settlement, and revenge. However, the difference between Odysseus' dismemberment of mankind and the colonizers' genocide of the indigenous people of the Caribbean is that Odysseus is a native and the massacre of the suitor-settlers is an act of self-defense while the colonizers were not native to the lands they had intruded. By slaughtering them, Odysseus wants them to "learn not to be monstrous to those in rags" (156). Hence, reading the drama from Odysseus' perspective could justify this bloodshed. Martyniuk also argues that "[l]ike the past colonial overlords and the present neo-imperialists, the suitors ignore the real native threat to their colony" ("Playing with Europe"

[156] In fact, "[t]he feminine principle is … given more emphasis in Walcott's adaptation, with female characters fleshing out their allegorical significance with additional agency" (Tynan, *Postcolonial Odysseys* 146).

196). By this act of defiance, Odysseus-the-displaced-native decolonizes his kingdom to re-claim his home from the suitor-settlers (153).

The last trial Odysseus must pass happens in the scene of recognition where Penelope is reluctant to accept Odysseus' evidence regarding his true identity underneath his beggar's attire. This is the final uncanny moment that attends his time in Ithaca. This time he needs to convince his own wife of his true identity. The unhomely situation of home has hardened Penelope's heart. She cannot trust anyone; she does not believe in the evidences that Odysseus-the-beggar brings regarding his identity. She thinks he is a smart beggar who wants to get at her throne. Odysseus tells her all about her brooch, bow, oak tree, and the scar on his leg but she does not accept them. Telemachus and Eurycleia intervene but Penelope does not listen to them. The only thing which convinces her of Odysseus' true identity is the secret of the immobility of their rooted bed which is grown from "an olive tree" (157). Hearing this from Odysseus, Penelope says: "[o]h God! I'll wash your hands with these tears, Odysseus" (157). Burnett interprets this statement as her offer "of absolution from the blood-guilt" (*Derek Walcott* 309). After the scene of recognition, they both talk about the threats that they have endured during these years. Time, separation and exile have made them both suffer:

> PENELOPE
> They tried to strangle love like a fowler, but . . .
> Odysseus
> I prayed that they wouldn't, my dove, my peace' my mind.
> PENELOPE
> She fluttered. She played dead, but her warm heart still beat.
> Odysseus
> And that sea beat me with everything it could find. (158)

This is how the story ends along with Odysseus' trials. Even though the unhomely home seemed beyond Odysseus' control at the beginning, he managed to accommodate it.

Experiencing the "unhomely" does not mean that the person is homeless. Rather, as Bhabha argues, an "unhomely" individual is one who finds that accommodation and re-settlement are not easy "in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres" (13). However, by resorting to the strategic tactic of *detour* as verbal delirium and disguise along with violence Odysseus manages to accommodate his home.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have tried to show how Walcott's postcolonial thinking reconfigures home, at-homeness, and models of homecoming in the Caribbean context of multiplicity and diaspora by problematizing essentialist connotations of home with respect to genealogy, geography, and homogeneity. By moving away from the conventional notions of home with respect to space, fixity and homogeneity, Walcott gestures toward a model of home that favors diversity and multiplicity. This new model brings diverse cultural components of the region into dialogue with each other. The resulting confluence and interrelatedness can lessen potential inter-cultural tensions. The kind of interaction Walcott advocates, nonetheless, recognizes and respects racial and cultural differences. This model matches the specificity of the region in its lived reality and historical legacy.

In spite of their differences, one relating an Afro-Caribbean character's quest for home and the other recounting the famous Odysseus' tale of homecoming, *Omeros* and the *Odyssey* share a commonality: both show impulses of homecoming and journeying in a very comprehensive way. To experience home, both protagonists need to change their outlook, one should exorcise conventional associations of home with ancestry and ancestral homeland; the other should think of ways of reconciling his once familiar but now estranged homeland. Drawing on the theorizings of Glissant and Bhabha, I have shown how these changes happen.

For Derek Walcott, home is not to be sought in terms of linearity and fixity of roots and ancestry. While the omeric Achille's missionary journey to his native homeland exposes him to the unhomeliness of Africa, his return journey to his accustomed land fills him with happiness, joy, and serenity as he is emotionally attached to the island and the people.

Hence, in spite of its ambivalence, the accustomed land can better accommodate the homecomer as it has at least some features of a real home. Apart from the pleasures of familiarity, the sense of relation to a given community is also very significant as it creates a positive feeling of communal identification in the returning person.

If classical paradigms of nationalism determine homogeneity as a main criterion for the construction of nation, for Walcott in *Omeros* home and at-homeness can be reached through Édouard Glissant's inter-related concepts of relation, creolization, and opacity. Within the paradigms of these concepts, cultural multiplicity and diversity can be better understood and appreciated. This cultural confluence can interrelate community members in spite of their opacities and this in turn can lead to a sense of at-homeness within the given community. If, as Walcott demonstrates, Africa cannot accommodate Afro-Caribbeans as an ancestral homeland, African roots can be reached through other routes in the new land. This is how Glissant's metaphor of the rhizome works in giving freedom for the individuals to make connective ties with other racial strands while being rooted to their ancestral heritage.

The myth of return to homeland, as Walcott shows in *The Stage Version of the Odyssey*, is likewise complicated for the Greek Odysseus even though he is not supposed to deal with century-long ruptures of history in the way the formerly colonized are. To challenge the trials of *nostos* in this drama, Walcott argues for the strong agency of the returning individual. Through the figure of Odysseus, Walcott shows how *detour* as a meandering way can sometimes set the stage for *retour*. If directness and transparency are always said to be the shortest way home, sometimes vagueness, obscurity, and indirectness can also take us home.

By confronting Odysseus with the unhomely, an experience specified for postcolonial returns, Walcott attempts to highlight the effects of exile, separation, and war even on the mind and life of a character who is the winner of war, who has voluntarily left his home, and has an established home, kingdom, and family. However, as return has been complicated by the interval of time, this Greek character also comes to experience the unhomely. He thus looks for ways to challenge and accommodate this situation. Similar to dispossessed and displaced individuals, Odysseus must also resist the unhomeliness of home through the strategies of *detour*. If Odysseus is thrown away from his own home as a disempowered native, Fanon's concept of violence can help him to decolonize his home. If the pressure and violence of war affect his psyche, he can release his psyche from the guilt of war and the pain of conscience through the *detour* offered by verbal delirium.[157]

As demonstrated, Walcott examines home within the classical paradigm of the Homeric tales. His drama was published in the twentieth century, an era far removed from Homer's eighth century B.C. in terms of their socio-political and socio-historical realities. However, Walcott demonstrates that "Homer's poem is just as relevant in the current neo-imperial global community as it was in Homer's time" (Martyniuk, "Playing with Europe" 196). By so doing, in the first place, Walcott shatters the specificity and the complexity of home for the formerly colonized people. When one learns that one's problems are not unique, one can deal with them easily. Glissant also takes notes of this: "[w]e struggle against our problems, without knowing that throughout the world they are widespread. There is no place that does not have its elsewhere. No place where this is not an essential dilemma"

[157] I would like to draw attention to one of the limitations of this study with respect to Glissant's book, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. The English version of this five hundred page book is partially translated and this created some problems in the course of my research. As my competencies are greater in English, I have spent a lot of time looking for the English version of one of his essays, *Le delire verbal* (verbal delirium). I have written to Glissant scholars and translators and they mostly replied that, in spite of its importance, this essay has not been translated. Here I wanted to ask the French scholars of Glissant to possibly consider the translation of the unpublished essays of this book in their schedule. The translation could be done either as a second volume to *Caribbean Discourse* or as separate essays in scholarly journals. This could greatly help English readers gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of Glissant's thoughts.

(*Poetics* 153). Hence, through the Odyssean homecoming, Walcott makes clear that the interval of time always makes return difficult; the longer the intervention, the more difficult the reconciliation. However, these problems are more complicated for postcolonial homecomings because colonialism has drastically changed the conventional meaning of origins, family structure, and ancestry.

Secondly, through the figure of Odysseus, Walcott emphasizes the circularity of the journey. In his 1992 interview with Burnett, Walcott says that obviously the Caribbean "is an archipelago – the whole presence of the sea, the variety of the islands, that any departure from an island means a return to it" (*Derek Walcott* 32). This circularity indicates spiritual attachment and the sense of rootedness one can develop toward the point of departure which can be called "home." As I have discussed, the Caribbean people are not indigenous to the land; however, it is their accustomed land, and this is the very quality that creates a pleasurable sense of familiarity and security in them when they return. Hence, as Walcott shows in *Omeros*, returning to the accustomed land one cannot experience the unhomeliness of home Bhabha theorizes for postcolonial homecomings.

Through Walcott's selected texts, I have defined home and at-homeness in a way that favors both rootedness and errantry, stasis and flight (these are in fact the qualities one can find in Glissant's metaphor of the rhizome as well). I believe this sense of attachment and rootedness to a place can give a sense of self-reliance to the relocated individuals and this can be emotionally assuring.

As discussed earlier,[158] Walcott sees the Antilles like a broken vase.[159] This metaphor can further indicate the prioritization Walcott instates, discriminating between journey and

[158] See p. 113, n. 106.

stasis. Even though journey is a recurring trope in Walcott's works and Walcott himself is a well-travelled individual, when it comes to priorities, he prioritizes stasis over journey, a kind of stasis that accommodates constant change.[160] Only in stasis one can have the sense of rootedness to the place, can see the island as home, and can work for the island by gluing and inter-relating the legacies of the past. Hence, in comparison with other Caribbean writers such as Maryse Condé for instance, it can be concluded that Walcott's position with regard to home is more in line with stasis, while this Guadeloupean novelist advocates constant nomadic errantry instead of developing a sense of attachment and belonging to native land: "[i]nstead of home and return [Condé] proposes errancy as her characters constantly migrate from one continent to the other, always in search of themselves" (François 3). Contrary to Condé, Walcott sees St. Lucia and the whole Caribbean as home, as a place of inspiration and growth and by so doing, draws a new picture of the wealth and peculiarity of his archipelago on the map of the world.

[159] The fragments of the vase speak of the violence of history, of colonialism, and the past. However, Walcott argues for "gluing" these fragments in order to heal scars of the past in the present for a better future.

[160] In *Omeros*, Seven Seas says:

> "You ain't been nowhere," Seven Seas said, "you have seen
> nothing no matter how far you may have travelled,
> …
> you have learnt no more than if you stood on that beach
> watching the unthreading foam you watched as a youth,
>
> except your skill with one oar; you hear the salt speech
> that your father once heard; one island, and one truth. (291)

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS PRESENTED

Published and Presented Papers:

1. Journal Publication: Forthcoming in SARE (Volume 52, 2014/2015)
   "Africa or Africanness in Derek Walcott's *Omeros"*

2. Journal Paper (under review)
   "Achille and the Unhomely Pull of Atavistic Homeland in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*"

3. Poster Presentaion
   Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 26-27th September 2012, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya

4. Colloquium
   Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, English Department
   December 2012
   "Landscape and Seascape in Postcolonial Contexts: Derek Walcott's *Omeros"*

5. Talk in English Department, University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus,
   December 2013

6. Colloquium
   Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, English Department
   December 2013
   "Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey* and the Maddening History"

7. Colloquium
   Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, English Department
   December 2014
   "Rhiz(h)oming Achille: Walcott, Glissant, and the Politics of Relation and Creolization"