

THE POSTCOLONIAL 'GREEN' IN DEREK WALCOTT: A POSTCOLONIAL ECOCRITICAL READING OF DEREK WALCOTT'S POEMS

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Abstract: The article seeks to introspect into the animal imagery and the representation of nature in Derek Walcott's poems. This article reads the postcolonial poems from an ecocritical viewpoint, and fuses the two readings into one to understand the ecological significance of prominently postcolonial writings. The changing pattern in the writings of Walcott is read as integral to the changing environment. The poems of his early period as writer have been given importance and they are analysed in the light of the crucial significance of decaying nature. Among the many elements of nature the role of animals has been particularly stressed.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, postcolonialism, Caribbean, nature, animals, zoocriticism.

INTRODUCTION

Ecocriticism came in the field of literary criticism rather late but it was not slow to gain a prestigious place in the oeuvre of literary criticism. Cheryll Glotfelty writes in the much quoted introduction of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*:

Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary studies (XVIII).

While ecocriticism is largely busy to point out the threats of a modern civilization captained by the homo sapiens (?) and the gradual retreat of the 'nature' before the aggression of human science and technology, it does not exclude from its assigned duty the task to cull the elements of dying nature's last breaths in the modern civilization. The seminal book on the ecocritical concepts is *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, which shifts our focus from the inside to the outside, from psychology to geology, from the split-personality of the modern ineffectual Prufrocks and the sterile ennui and boredom of ultramodern existence to the more potent and more demanding holes in the ozone layer, the melting of the colossal icebergs, the rapid rise in the sea level, the merciless butchering of the natural flora and fauna. Cheryll Glotfelty succinctly puts the hallmarks of

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ecocriticism in the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* in which he acknowledges the possible parallel arguments in the main flow of ecocriticism:

Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman (XIX).

Postcolonial literature, or world literature as it is now known in the sphere of literary criticism has invoked many critical arguments from theorists, but in every discourse the dual aspect of colonization and decolonization hold the focal point. These dual aspects operate both on the material and the cultural level, they also function in the psychological and the physical plain. Ania Loomba argues in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* that 'the word postcolonial cannot be used in any single sense. Formal decolonization has spanned three centuries, ranging from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, to the 1970s in the case of Angola and Mozambique.' (29)

Postcolonialism celebrates, though reluctantly, the final emergence of a hybrid, mutant culture in a changed world, which comes into existence as the outcome, nostalgic yet inevitable, of the contact or rather direct clash between the two opposing cultural forces, the European and the other, may it be Asian, African or South American. The representation of the cultural subjugation, the coercion of the colonial people both materially and psychologically, and the next level of fighting and writing back constitute the kernel of postcolonialism.

Unlike feminism, ecocriticism or green studies does not have much shared ground with postcolonialism, though some critics have tried to bridge the gulf between the two. In this respect *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* is a pioneering effort. In this book postcolonialism is seen as operating hand to hand with ecocriticism. In this book the writers see ecocriticism as a powerful aspect of postcolonial discourse. In most of the countries the pastoral form and nature writing is seen as a lens through which the native landscape that defies the imported vocabulary is viewed (110). The Caribbean, in this respect is seen a unique place. The ecologies of the Caribbean were different and the romantic vocabulary of the English language was at a loss to express the unexpressable. Mary Baine Campbell writes in her book *The Whiteness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing* that the literature of Discovery often had presented a burlesque writing when it had tried to bridge the gulf. She cites the case of Walter Raleigh, whose pastoral invocations of Guiana are a calculated political voice rather than

a exuberant voice at finding a paradise on earth. As a direct outcome of this is the fear of the modern Caribbean writers to handle this slippery issue. They have to express in the language of the ruler the truth of the nature which is thrice divorced from the medium and heritage of mainstream English literature.

Ecocriticism has also faced a charge of being covertly an agent of neo-colonial outlook, the modern version of the age old colonial mindset. In the present age when biocolonialism is going to be a great threat to the empowerment of the third world, the only means of salvation lies, as Ramachandra Guha unequivocally argues in his *The Unquiet Woods*, in the bringing of postcolonial and ecological issues together as a means of challenging continuing imperialist modes of social and environmental dominance. So the question that arises when dealing with the world literature today is, "How are we to read the burgeoning alliance between postcolonial and environmental studies, the increasing convergence of postcolonialism and ecocriticism, in such conflicted, even contradictory, aspects" (Postcolonial Ecocriticism 2).

In this research article we have endeavoured to bring to the fore how nature and the various aspects of the flora and fauna of the Caribbean have been used in the poems written by Derek Walcott, the 1991 noble laureate and one of the icons of Caribbean literature. His poems are taken into account as they express more of his subjective trait and more of his personal feelings. The poems are then read against the backdrop of both ecocriticism and colonialism. His writings constantly draw the critics' attention to the development of consciousness of postcolonial Caribbean existence. His dramas and poems raise the question of the justification of the troubled, traumatized and fractured identity of a modern educated post-independent Caribbean man. At the same time he never fails to point out that the literature of revenge or literature aiming a going back to the past, to the pre colonial period's unmixed culture – a culture which is purely black, is untenable for a modern

Caribbean writer as the birth of the West Indies is due to the amalgamation of European, Asian and African ancestry and culture. That is why the representative modern Caribbean man Shabine, the protagonist of the poem "The Schooner 'Flight'" proudly declares: Either I am nobody, or a nation (The Star-Apple Kingdom 4).

This article primarily focuses on the representation of nature and the condition of environment in the poems and next tries to solve the following questions-Are the images and representations of nature integral to the quest for a new identity dissolving the barrier in the blood of the Caribbean people? Are they mere ornaments to add an additional flavour of west Indies or they goes deep down the existential level to add another dimension which, when integrated in the construction, buttresses the postcolonial discourse?

The Caribbean is not traditionally accepted as a great patch of magnificent ecosystems like Kenya, India, Madagascar, Indonesia, Brazil, Peru or Bolivia. In

the hyper-real audio-visual media oriented imagination of people around the globe it is constructed in the symbols of blue sky against a blue sea with great long, wide golden beaches surrounded by scantily dressed ebony girls singing and dancing to the tune of calypso under the shades of coconut palms. How much this image is constructed by the orientalist, male gaze that sees the colonized and other countries as object of male desire is an issue of much hot debate. As far as the ecology is concerned the space that is constructed while forming a mental image of the islands belongs to the border of wilderness and the scenic sublime. The fear and dread of the wilderness and the coveted desire for the scenic sublime is amalgamated in this image and it also unearths the troubling relation between the colonizer and the colonized- the fear and distrust of the colonizer originating from the wilderness that surrounds the colonized world and at the same time the strong desire to possess and explore the scenic sublimes that this place can boast off.

In the discourse of eco-feminism, which seeks to explain, in terms of structuralist anthropology, the presence, in diverse cultures, of the idea that women were/are subordinate to men, nature is often seen as a female object in its presentation in popular art. It is argued that nature is presented as an object waiting to be seen and consequently discovered by the male gaze. This points holds its ground as far as the Caribbean is concerned, in the case of colonialists' view of the colonized world as an exotic object without history and existence prior to the coming of the 'civilized' white people. Walcott often gives the voice and covert protest of this reduction to a flat view. In the poem "Prelude", which instantly recalls the name of the famous nature poem of Wordsworth, Walcott writes about his 'prone' island which is

Found only

In tourist booklets, behind ardent binoculars;

Found in the blue reflection of eyes

That have known cities and think us here happy (Collected Poems 4).

Richard Kerridge writes in "Environmentalism and Ecocriticism": The Romantic gaze frequently belongs to a lone figure stilled in contemplation of immanent nature, or of landscapes suggestive of infinity-mountains, chasms, oceans, distant plains (Waugh 541). Walcott as a city boy never lived in the heart of nature and it is vain to expect from him a poetry of Wordsworth or Burns or the prose of Emerson. But what he does throughout his poems is no less important. Here what we get is very near the post modernist description of romantic view. He gives a detailed description of the slow damage of the set colonial order and the slow emergence of a consciousness. Throughout this contrapuntal oppositions nature, both in the image of tall imported trees standing upright and flanking the city roads, and in the squalor of the sea port where the sea, far from being the home of 'Triton blowing his wreathed horn', becomes the source of biological food for the half fed people and the grave of their bodies, plays a significant role- a role of

describing and defining Caribbean existence. Just as the curling smokes from the charcoal burners' home at once indicate the condition of low living of the subaltern people and the slow yet steady process of deforestation. The smoke is the indication of felling large trees and afterwards charring them.

The poem 'Origins' artistically combines the dual aspect of the problems of identity in a modern Caribbean writer in the flawless description of a naturalist. In the poem the life of the sea shore comes in the fullest colour. The identity of a Caribbean man who has creative mind is not easy to pin down. It is useless to use terms as history has rejected the Caribbean. Walcott writes in his essay 'The Muse of History': thus as we grow older as a race, we grow aware the history is written, that it is a kind of literature without morality, that in its actualities the ego of the race is indissoluble and that everything depends on whether we write this fiction through the memory of hero or of victim (37).

If the postcolonial world resorts to the literature of recrimination or violent revenge, the progress is no longer possible. So it must rise out like a fresh and new beginning. Just like the earth that first raised from the undivided ocean.

The above mentioned poem begins on a sea beach amid beauty and power and violence-

The flowering breaker detonates its surf
 White bees hiss in the coral skull
 Nameless I came among olives of algae
 Foetus of plankton, remember nothing, (Collected Poems 11)

The poem draws a constant parallel between the biblical genesis and the growth of a selfhood in the young poet. For Walcott his genesis is couched in greenery. The cultural naivety of the colonized and the sophistication of the colonizer is inherent in the image of sea. If the Jews were forced to make the Exodus from the 'Egypt embalmed in an amber childhood', the Caribbean poet who has in his veins the blood of forcefully bought and brought slaves must make his home in the land where his ancestors were forced to live.

Nature, here, perhaps is a forming ground. Walcott places the Caribbean identity in a matrix. Just like a warrior misses the whole significance if he is put out of warfront: the Caribbean, if placed in a different backdrop other than the sea misses the full reality. If for Moses the truth was revealed in a bush of fire, the new 'infant Moses' gets the prophecy of the destined journey comes in the sight of 'malarial bush'. This is a baptism in stark, nude reality and the acceptance of reality can make a new start. Heaven appears for the child in the image of 'columns of lilies.'

To reform and recreate, to make a new reality out of the cultural food he had consumed, the child is left with no option but to give new names- to apply a hyper-reality albeit culturally indebted to the Europe to the native West Indian natural

reality. He mentions that he rechristened trees. He also writes that the golden dolphins remind him of the past myths of the native Indian and African reality. The new woman for the Caribbean islands, a veritable emerging post-colonial presence, comes to the presence decked in natural aspects. The native flora and fauna come to the redemption of identity. He sees the figure, in the image of a lady who bears in her hands 'a white frangipani with berries of blood'. It is a combined figure of sibyl and fate.

Thus, it becomes palpably clear the nature, the physical aspects of environment are attributed with the broken cultural epic memory of Europe. It was a kind of mimicry on the European settlers' psychological creation of a semi-Europe. Thus the surrounding has been fraught with the ghost of European presence. In order to be free from the imaginative cultural subjugation, the environment must be freed from the burden of White past. But as a child giving an European name to a native thing, be it a plant or a rock, appeared to Walcott as a sly endeavour to be living in the grand narrative of Europe. Yet, this mimicry is fraught with sinister echoes as in the view of Homi K. Bhabha in the essay 'Of Mimicry and Man', taken from *The Location of Culture*, this attempt to copy and use the voice of the colonizer is always frightening to the colonizer as it presents a distorted image of the colonizer (121-130).

The poet is remembered of his origin- the heritage of his African ancestry and the image of the infamous 'middle passage' and the memory of the silent process of cultural disintegration come to his mind. The imported slaves were made to abandon their mythology based rituals and most parts of their religions were left behind in favour of Christianity which was imposed on them, even sometimes their names were changed. The poet finely calls up the process of this in 'death of old gods' and the consequent implementation of the European ideology is patent in 'Zeus rise from the foam's beard'. But the poet cannot go back to the literature of revenge or literature of remorse. The nature again with the cycle of creation and destruction- a veritable myth of nature-comes to solve the issue. The most important hinge in the poem is the lines: Beetles lift the dead elephant into the/Jaws of the forest (Collected Poems 14). This is nature's supreme law. Even the mighty elephant falls dead and it is for nature neither a catastrophe nor a disaster, it is rather a process of sustaining the progress. To keep the function of the vast ecosystem intact, it must send the puny angels of death. The flesh is consumed and the jungle is fed well. If seen as a single, separate event this death of jumbo may appear nothing less than a debacle, when put in the larger matrix of death – life –death cycle is merely a part.

In 'A Far Cry From Africa', a poem which is quintessential in the reading of Derek Walcott, Walcott is divided to assert his loyalty. The conflict arises from his love of Eurocentric literature and artistic heritage and his anger at the Europeans' ruthless cruelty to the Africans. This tension becomes more acute when the African fighters are seen to apply the tool of violence and cruelty as freely as it was applied

on them. In this poem, in the view of Peter Balakian, as expressed in his essay 'The Poetry of Derek Walcott' included in *Derek Walcott, Bloom's Modern Critical Views*, the poet searching for his exact cultural identity is seen to 'wrestle with the complex identity that will unfold in his later books - his irreconcilable and pluralistic cultural situation as a transplanted African in a colonial English society' (45). In this poem, nature is the vast wild veldts of Africa. The veldts of Africa become associated with the idea of id, where no normal boundary of morality and humanity can hold the supremacy. It is wild with passion and violence with which the clashing war parties confront each other with murderous intention. The warring Kikuyu are described in the image of blood sucking tsetse flies:

...Kikuyu, quick as flies,
 Batten upon the blood stream of the Veldt
 Corpses are scattered through a paradise.. (Collected Poems 17).

The flying ibises crying in fear for life signify the continuing pressure of the powerful over the powerless- a veritable food cycle to hold the power relation in order. While the British state power is (mockingly?) dubbed as 'superman' the black fighters are described in the animalistic image of 'gorilla', a beast huge and 'almost human'; a species belonging to the apes but having little of man's superior intellect. His deliberate usage is a punch at the white Eurocentric chauvinism to treat the black people as monkeys, chimpanzees or gorilla. The use of derogatory animal metaphors is characteristic of human languages, often in association with racism and sexism. These metaphors are used to justify exploitation and enslavement (Huggan and Tiffin 136). Marjorie Spiegel goes a step farther in her book *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*. For her the comparison makes the slavery justified as negroes are nothing but animals, but the question of the mastery and right of human is now backfired and as the result: 'It is a comparison that, even for those of us who recognise its validity, is a difficult one to face' (Spiegel 9)

A fear of black people's physical power and endurance and their lack of so called refined human feelings can easily be smelled but there is a lurking acceptance of one thing- they live closer to nature and they are bound to nature by their instincts. Postcolonialism is not a simple phrase like going back to nature but it is an unmistakable concern in the discourse of resistance to colonial power.

In 'Tales of the Islands' chapter VII entitled 'Lotus Eater' instantly draws the attention to the corruption that began with the process of colonization and the consequent slow decay of natural order due to the external interference of greedy men. The poem does not prevaricate like Hamlet to hit the target as it opens:

'Maingot', the fishermen called the pool blacked by
 Increasing filth that piled between ocean
 And jungle. (Collected Poems 25)

When the pastoral is a European form and was copied by the writers from colonies, the form that the postcolonial writers now use is the anti-pastoral and post-pastoral. Gifford mentions V.S. Naipaul in *Pastoral* as the champion of this genre as he portrays the ugliness, the stark reality of the despoiled Caribbean villages. We can classify Walcott as a writer in the post-pastoral tradition in this poem as the landscape bereft of beauty comes alive in this poem. The animals that are portrayed here are used to describe the ugliness and degeneration. The images that are used also present the animals in the negative light. The road which wriggles like a snake is muddy and treacherous. The tadpoles that throng the mucky water are the life forms that never change and never develop into the full aspect of life. If the lotus eaters of Homer or of Tennyson are blessed with a beautiful life of inertia, life in the Caribbean is neither sweet nor beautiful. It is a sunless bog.

The tadpoles that go on living without complaining are similar to the nearby villagers that never raise their voice in protest and live their lives in the same place without making any progress both spiritually or physically.

In *The Star-Apple Kingdom*, the sea appears almost without failing, as the larger context on which the materials are foregrounded. "The Schooner 'Flight'" begins –

In idle August, while the sea soft,
And leaves of brown islands stick to the rim
Of this Caribbean (3)

This poem for the critics like Patricia Ismond is at the centre of Walcott's use of patois and mixing of genres, and Edward Baugh remarks: By its geological manoeuvre, the poem encompasses the Caribbean and provides a nice variety of entry points into different points of Caribbean history and experience as well as of Shabine's life, which is a product of that history (111). In this poem the existential need to survive is always described in the animalistic imagery. The word 'animal' comes from Latin word 'anima'- life. So this urge of life, the Freudian eros is animal instinct where platonic love or spiritual love is a mockery and the body is filled with animals. Shabine unequivocally asserts-

...."I ain't want her
Dressed in the sexless light of a seraph,
I want those round brown eyes like a marmoset and, and
Till the day when I can lean back and laugh
These claws that trickled my back on sweating
Sunday afternoons like a crab on wet sand" (5)

The frivolousness and perhaps infidelity is apparent in the 'marmoset's eyes' and the sand digging movement and the delving deep into the conscience comes covertly in the crab's movement.

The monster minister for whom Shabine worked in a smuggling racket has a 'face thick with powder, the warts, the stone lids/like a dinosaur caked with primordial ooze' (6). The unsavoury picture of the powerful and greedy politician is portrayed through the image of the ace predator with supreme power and ruthless hunger.

Shabine's journey is less than a self revelation and more self discovery. For him the myth of progress in the postcolonial era is simply a 'dirty joke' and he realizes that the Caribs who committed suicide in a mass hysteria are the counterparts of modern day people of Caribbean. Progress again reveals itself, at least for Shabine, in the image of an iguana basking in the sun. The lethargy of the iguana and the lack of enthusiasm for progress combine seamlessly here. The protagonist compares the corrupted islands as a breeding ground of bloodsucking animals. The comparison again brings to mind the dead issues which propelled the anti-colonial movements of the past ages. The corruption and power, both monetary and political, give the wings to soar above others. The problem is these wings are not angelic but demonic like mosquitoes the veritable blood suckers. The animal images as it is seen clearly connote negation, evil nonhuman in a sense of lacking human qualities. They are either greedy predator, or lethargic things opposed to progress, or things that bring disease and decay in an established standard. And if we take Shabine as a representative Caribbean man just as Paul Breslin sees him in *Nobody's Nation* and feel that "through his racially mixed heritage and his knowledge of 'these islands from Monos to Nassau', Shabine harbours within him a West Indies of the spirit" (196), then it can easily be seen that this outlook is more culturally implanted than individual.

He dreams of three old woman who are featureless as 'silkworm'. The formidable fate sisters are hereby reduced to the status of ignoble worms stitching the fate of more ignoble Shabine. So far the depiction of fauna becomes the moot symbol of oppression and corruption and stagnation in the postmodern and postcolonial existence, but from the middle portion the tone of the outlook changes as the natural elements become more increasingly the tool of fighting back and creating a new identity. In a rhetorical bombast that echoes the passages of Christopher Marlowe, Shabine wages his war against the corrupted people. This vaunt may as well be empty, but as far as zoocriticism is concerned, it becomes a must to quote. Shabine asserts that he will fight back with only the tools of verse. Nature is accepted as the source of uncorrupted state of things and will be accepted as an ally in this struggle. The sea will be his 'shining shield' and the tall palms will serve as 'shields'. The flowing and recreating natural elements stand in stark contrast to the sick and corrupted world of power and dominion.

In the following passage the sea is depicted in the elemental force of nature- red in tooth and claw. The storm is personified in animal imagery.

A stingray steeplechase across the sea,
 tail whipping water, the high man-o`-wars
 start reeling inland, quick, quick an archery
 of flying fish miss us! Vince say: "You notice?"
 and a black- mane squall pounce on the sail
 like a dog on a pigeon, and it snap the neck.... (17)

in the passage 'After the Storm' narrator's voice is almost enigmatic and in it he expresses his feeling that he has seen Maria married to the sea and being followed by gulls who serve as bridesmaids. Thus the sailor poet is free from the past guilt and trauma that was haunting him throughout the poem. He has now found a peaceful existence in the midst of natural surrounding though it may be in 'the depths of the sea'.

The strange mixing up of the real and the probable impossible in the images, in the opinion of David Mikics indicate the presence of the surrealistic, magic realistic vein in Walcott. For Mikics, 'magical realism realizes the conjunction of ordinary and fantastic by focussing on a particular historical moment graced by this doubleness' (Derek Walcott, Bloom's Modern Critical Views 103). But Helen Tiffin points out the fact that the stringent collaboration of fixed perceptions are indicative of Eurocentric and malecentric discourse and the breaking up of fixed modes of perception in a text rebels against it and celebrates the 'natural' freedom from language bonds and the proximity to nature. So what Mikics sees as the continuation of magic realist tradition is also at the same time the new text that can be read from postcolonial-ecocritical point.

In "Forest of Europe", a poem which was dedicated to Joseph Brodsky, the nature is often an object which is, more often than not, seen through the lenses of the pictures and descriptions of European artists and consequently becomes an object of desire which can give the colonized people an association with the best and the standard in the world. The much heard and much seen landscapes of Europe become for the emerging artists of the Caribbean a holy place, but the growing sense that the forest and the culture of Europe are now in the state of decay makes the stand more problematic than ever. In the poem the cultural growth and inevitable decrepitude are reflected in the image of forests of Europe. Still this beginning of death is not a horror to the poet, it has a soft and sad beauty which is tragic. This is less a groan and more a swansong:

The last leaves fell like notes from a piano
 and left their ovals echoing in the ear ;
 with gawky music stands, the winter forest
 looks like an empty orchestra, its lines
 ruled on these scattered manuscripts of snow. (38)

In this poem the vast expanses of wilderness become a haunting presence while going through the district “that could gulp Oklahoma like a grape” (38) and the poet is forced not because of the presence of tree shaded prairie but in the presence of space. The desolation is so complete that ‘it mocked destinations’.

The celebrated European landscapes now only invoke awe and wonder and a slight sense of pity. For a former colonized the vast trees of Europe only bring the memories of the past power structures that fed on exploitation and torture. The rivers, which has long been associated with spiritual flow are now for the post colonial writer only meaningless natural entities. The rivers like the Thames and the Neva which were once integral to the system of business and imperialism are now lying almost disused ‘rustling like banknotes’ (38). The figure of a solitary child makes the narrator ask:

Who is the dark child on the parapets
of Europe, watching the evening river mint
its sovereigns stamped with power, not with poets,
the Thames and the Neva rustling like banknotes,
then, black on gold, the Hudson’s silhouettes? (39)

Europe is seen through the natural objects. It is a writing back from a postcolonial viewpoint, as it is the Europe that has long subjected the orient and the other countries as consisting only in nature as opposed to the culture of Europe. The non European culture is seen as dumb and based on nature. The power to use language or more properly speaking written language is viewed as a European attribute that must be guarded. Christopher Manes remarks in his influential essay “Nature and Silence”: Nature is silent in our culture (and in literary societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative (*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* 15).

The fact that this poem under discussion is Walcott’s venture into the combined realm of language, exile and art comes to the forefront in the assessment of it by another great modern poet Seamus Heaney when he observes in his essay “The Murmur of Malvern” in *Derek Walcott: Bloom’s Modern Critical Views* that “‘Forest of Europe’, the poem dedicated to Joseph Brodsky, is aimed at the centre of Walcott’s themes- language, exile, art- and is written with the surge of ambition that marks him as a major voice” (10).

The forests not only serve to depict the fall of Europe, they also help to understand the totalitarian dictatorship that tries to silence the voice of artists and forces the free thinkers like Brodsky to take shelter in other countries. The forest, as Walcott sees it, is dark and made of ‘barbed wire branches’. It again becomes a haunting ground, a forest of night where predators rule supreme.

The gloomy past and gloomier future of European tradition, however powerful they may be, cannot induce the poet to helplessly succumb to the nihilistic void.

The 'giants' of Europe's cultural tradition still holds the ground. The redemptive image comes alive in the image of mastodons walking.

but now that fever is a fire whose glow
 warms our hands, Joseph, as we grunt like primate
 exchanging gutturals in their winter cave
 of a brown cottage, while in drifts outside
 mastodons force their systems through the snow. (41)

This image of mastodons as opposed to the dinosaur is oversized, bulky and wonder of the world. In *Abandoning Dead Metaphors: The Caribbean Phase of Derek Walcott's Poetry*, Patricia Ismond writes: The giant minds of the European past are virtually being identified with the formidable dimensions of the oversized mastodon (80).

Thus, it is clearly manifested that for the modern Caribbean writer, nature must come in the context of man. Unpolluted nature-nature that is virgin- is not possible in the islands. Man and nature, through their long association had become one and they must be depicted with one another. The nature in the postcolonial Caribbean invariably becomes postcolonial nature. The hybridity is the gift of the colonial rule and if the reality comes through the medium of language, then the delineation must be a patchwork of nature and postcolonial culture. Bearing this in mind Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin remarks:

Modern Caribbean writing, in this context, involves a history of ecological and reclamation- less a history that seeks to compensate for irrecoverable loss and dispossession than a history re-won. As the term 'ecology suggests', this is a history of place as much as it is a history of people, and the Caribbean writers have played a major role in re-establishing it, both for their kinsfolk and themselves (Postcolonial Ecocriticism, 111).

The art of Derek Walcott, then, applies the elements of nature as a multipurpose tool. Even though it never becomes the primary concern in his poems, it gives a rich texture and a powerful sense of identification of the Caribbean existence with the natural objects. Sometimes it may appear as a signifier of passions and nonhuman existential crisis or even something opposed to intellect but never it becomes totally evil, a binary of man's goodness rather it becomes a no man's land where long standing feud can be solved. Shabine feels himself freed of the burden of past after nature comes to the aid. So nature changes its significance throughout the poems of Walcott. It is multilayered and of many dimension. In forming a new identity, which Walcott sees as the only way to be free from the epic memory of torture, and the consequent literature of violence and revenge, as the only way of living in this postcolonial world, nature is unique - it not only gives a native flavour but lends the possibility of a marriage between instinct and reason, intellect and emotion, the brain and the heart, the colonizer and the colonized.

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