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## EKPHRASIS THROUGH OTHERNESS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF IMAGERY IN DEREK WALCOTT'S WHITE EGRETS

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"And the painter said:
let there be sound!
And that was the first line.
And I said:
I see it."
(Me)

### **ABSTRACT**

Opposing the contemporary literary reductionism of ekphrasis to a verbal representation of a painting, a sculpture, a drawing, or a photograph, this research views otherness as the object of contemplation. Through the present rereading of ekphrasis, the investigation will seek 1) to analyze how the ekphrastic characteristics of Walcott's poetry in his latest work White Egrets promote more companionship than antagonistic views between poetry and painting, and; 2) to analyze how ekphrasis transforms the imagery of Derek Walcott's créole identity into an aesthetic object of contemplation, depicting it in the similar way of a work of art. More specifically, the discussion analyses how the cultural relations/representations between the self and the other provide an "ekphrastic situation" for Derek Walcott in the Caribbean's complex colonial legacy. The poet's ekphrastic act to render private and personal identity intimacies will lean on the *nonfixity* of the image, or its motion in stasis. The main theoretical concepts that sustain this investigation are drawn from the works of W.J.T. Mitchell (1980, 1986, 1994, 1996), Cheeke (2008), Loizeaux (2008), and Hall (1989, 1993, 1996, 1997).

**Keywords:** Ekphrasis, Otherness, Derek Walcott, *White Egrets*, Caribbean identity.

### **RESUMO**

Opondo-se ao reducionismo literário contemporâneo de que a écfrase seja somente uma representação verbal de uma pintura, uma escultura, um desenho ou uma fotografia, esta pesquisa vê a própria alteridade como objeto de contemplação. Através desta releitura da écfrase, a presente investigação visa 1) analisar como as características ecfrásticas da poesia de Derek Walcott em sua última coleção de poesias intitulada White Egrets (Garças Brancas) propiciam mais companheirismo que visões antagônicas entre poesia e pintura, e; 2) analisar como a écfrase transforma a imagem da identidade crioula de Derek Walcott em um objeto estético de contemplação, retratando-a de uma forma semelhante a uma obra de arte. Mais especificamente, a discussão analisa como as relações/representações culturais entre o eu-individual e o outro propiciam uma "situação ecfrástica" para Derek Walcott no complexo legado colonial Caribenho. O ato ecfrástico do poeta ao relatar aspectos privados e pessoais de sua identidade revelar-se-á embasado na infixidez da imagem, ou seja, seu imobilismo em movimento. Os principais conceitos teóricos que sustentam esta investigação foram retirados das obras de W.J.T. Mitchell (1980, 1986, 1994, 1996), Cheeke (2008), Loizeaux (2008), e Hall (1989, 1993, 1996, 1997).

**Palavras-chave:** Écfrase, Alteridade, Derek Walcott, *White Egrets*, Identidade Caribenha.

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to give a new reading of Derek Walcott's Caribbean otherness<sup>1</sup> through ekphrasis, both being the general context of the investigation. Ekphrasis is an "umbrella" term, for it embodies several and different meanings. To this dissertation, ekphrasis means more than the usual "verbal representation of a visual representation" coined by James Heffernan in Museum of Words, where art (usually a painting or a sculpture) is subject to perception and, therefore, in need of every word to suggest to the ear what the eye may have taken for granted (3). According to Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, the definition of ekphrasis, from the Greek ek, "out" and phrasis, "to speak," is a poetic writing form, a sub-genre of the lyric in which the poet engages a work of art (here again, usually a painting or a sculpture) and (re)presents it to an "always present and sometimes active-in-theexchange audience" (5). However, because of its many definitions and applications throughout history, as well as because of its elevation to a disciplinary principle, I am afraid any attempt to define ekphrasis (here) will be limited. I agree with Ralf Hertel when he says:

For by now, this broad definition has gone out of use, and the meaning of ekphrasis has been narrowed down to purely visual literary descriptions; the evocation of auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory sensations is usually no longer associated with it. (49)

What bodes well for me is to deal with the literary aspects of ekphrasis, that is, its word power to evoke visuality, of which this dissertation is no exception. The same categorical uncertainty can be attributed to otherness in any (double-thinking) political backdrop that circumscribes social theories about the formation and/or the location of cultural identities, portraying the collective ideal in foreclosure of the exclusivity of the individual. With that in mind, I see fit to begin with an introduction to the life and work of Derek Walcott, with a slight emphasis on his relevance as a Caribbean poet to this study of cultural

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This research will take into account Stuart Hall's conceptualizations of otherness such as *self-othering* (a consequence of Imperialist, hegemonic power representations), as well as otherness in The Caribbean, which denotes notions of diasporic rupture and discontinuity. Self-othering in Walcott's poetry is all at once (re)construction and (re)discovery of identity. As the discussion moves on, split terms of otherness shall be explored, such as *mestizaje*, syncretism, and creolization

identities and otherness (to be discussed with more property throughout the analysis of the poems). I do so because *White Egrets* (2010), the object under analysis in this research (also the specific context), is an autobiographical account that mingles poet and persona, and that seems to evoke a relation and a representation between *the self* and *the other*, mostly how the colonized self thinks of itself. Since the discussion of *the self* and of *the other* is essential to this work, I find much needed to say who the man behind the poet is before I can talk about ekphrasis or otherness, and about my attempt to relate the aesthetic<sup>2</sup> imagery of otherness with ekphrasis.

After presenting Walcott, I will briefly delineate the statement of the general and specific problems concerning the investigation, the hypothesis assumptions that made me believe relation/interconnection between ekphrasis and otherness is possible, and how the study will be carried out. In chapter 2, I will describe the core principles that regulate ekphrasis, discussing the paragone of poetry and painting, and the definitions that best fit the analysis, i.e., actual and notional ekphrasis. More specifically, I will mention how this work concerns mainly John Hollander's, Stephen Cheeke's, Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux's, and Stuart Hall3's critical thinking, along with several postcolonial theorists, including Walcott. After the attempt of elucidating the reader concerning ekphrasis and the approach I am using, chapter 2 will also bring into discussion theories of otherness and their emancipation toward "creolization of otherness" (a concept that seems to come in quite handy), along with historical data concerning the colonization of the Caribbean islands, and their historical struggle for identity. In chapter 3, I will proceed with the analysis of the selected poems seeking traces of ekphrasis portrayed through otherness, emphasizing the stillness and the movement imagery acquires in Walcott's poetry, and how I understand imagery gets "transformed" when treated ekphrastically. Finally, the conclusion will reveal the results of the proposed dialectical entanglements or new reading of otherness through ekphrasis, and whether there is more to ekphrasis than

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In the modern era, the term "aesthetic," or "aesthetics" used in this research is in accordance with Eagleton's definition: "Previously men and women had written poems, staged plays or painted pictures for a variety of purposes, while others had read, watched or viewed them in a variety of ways. Now these concrete, historically variable practices were being subsumed into some special, mysterious faculty known as the 'aesthetic,' and a new breed of aestheticians sought to lay bare its inmost structures" (*Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Great Britain. First Edition:1983. 18).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> It is sad for me to acknowledge that, as I write this dissertation, Stuart Hall passed away on Feb. 10, 2014.

the mentioning of another work of art, as well as the implications of treating otherness as the ekphrastic subject.

## 1.1. DEREK WALCOTT'S LIFE AND WORK

Derek Alton Walcott is a Caribbean painter, poet, and playwright who has the skillful ability of a craftsman. He is a "mixed blood" descendant of African and Dutch heritages, well-known worldwide for his imagetic poetry about cultural and political issues. Walcott was born in Castries, the capital of the island of Saint Lucia—former British colony in the West Indies—on January 23, 1930. Having lost his father when only one year old, he, his twin brother Roderick, and his sister were brought up by his light-skinned mother—a Methodist teacher at a local school by the name of Alix. When eighteen years of age, Walcott published his first collection of poetry (Twenty Five Poems 1948) with the money he borrowed from his mother. In 1958, he moved to Trinidad where he kept working as a teacher until he could establish himself as a poet in 1964 with the publication of In A Green Night - Poems 1948-1960. As a world citizen, he still lives in Trinidad, except for the semesters he takes off to teach as a visiting Professor of Poetry in universities in USA, UK, and England. He has already taught at Yales, Harvard, Oxford, Essex, and Columbia Universities, and in 2009 began a three-year distinguished scholar-inresidence position at the University of Alberta, Canada. His teaching experience has contributed to the propagation of other contemporary writers such as V. S. Nailpaul, Seamus Heaney, among others. His career granted him a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award, a Royal Society of Literature Award, the Queen's Medal for Poetry in 1988, and in 1992, the Nobel Prize of Literature for the epic Omeros<sup>4</sup>, awarded by the Swedish Academy. In 2011, he won both the T. S. Eliot Prize and the One Caribbean Media Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature with the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Omeros (1990)—which gave Walcott the Nobel prize of literature in 1992—attracted traditional classicists to the poem's epic structure, having them see it as a major strength, untroubled by its supposed Eurocentric roots. Another set of critics, including Dougherty and Farrell, affirm the poem's status as an epic, but insist that it foregrounds elements of the classical epic the traditionalists have ignored and which link it to oral or folk traditions within and outside the classical tradition. A third set of critics, including John Figueroa, Patricia Ismond, and Walcott himself, have played down or denied altogether the poem's epic qualities. Finally, a fourth set of critics argue that while Omeros draws on conventions of the classical epic, it remakes the form into something specifically Caribbean and postcolonial (Jay, Paul. Fated to Unoriginality: The Politics of Mimicry in Derek Walcott's Omeros. Callaloo. Volume 29, Number 2, Spring 2006).

54-poem collection *White Egrets*. He is also an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Thomas Hardy, a Victorian realist, English novelist, and poet was a big influence in his poetic life. Here in Brazil, my enunciating departure, and somehow a peripheral location within the worldwide poetry context, Walcott's poetry was very well received by the editorial market under Paulo Vizioli's 1994 translation of *Omeros* (442 pages), published by *Companhia das Letras*. The work found resonance with Brazilian racial, ethnical, and political policies around identity, and the echoes of an "extended Caribbean" from the Northeast of Brazil down to *Recôncavo Baiano*.

Writing about the Caribbean has been Walcott's privilege for a long time now. As a West Indian writer, as he defines himself, Walcott felt it was his responsibility to write about this "undefined place," about people and places for the first time, but with the advantage of knowing the English language so well, up to the mastering of the most complicate rhymes of poetry. The analysis will explore how the political choice for the English language constitutes an act of subverting a structuralist metalanguage that cannot fully speak for the subaltern, since English comes from the colonizers. Somehow, his evident Western literary tradition strengthened his poetry, giving classicism a postcolonial look. From a young age, he sought to develop a language for his subject matter, something deriving from Milton and Marlowe, but without neglecting native forms. As young Walcott developed "his own language," he sought to portrait the Caribbean experience through different genres and mediums, as in the hundreds of essays he has written throughout his life while working for The Guardian Post as a critic and journalist, through his many plays, and through his several paintings. These words of James Dickey do him more justice than mine as a way of introducing Walcott to the reader:

Here he is, a twentieth-century man, living in the West Indies and in Boston, poised between the blue sea and its real fish...and the rockets and warheads, between a lapsed colonial culture and the industrial North, between Africa and the West, between slavery and intellectualism, between the native Caribbean tongue and the English learned from books, between the black and white of his own body, between the sound of the home ocean and the lure of European culture. (2)

An in-between man usually has more to offer than the splitminded. That is what White Egrets shows. In this his fourteenth poetry collection, Walcott evinces how the Caribbean has a complex colonial legacy, how its author continues to see himself as "hybrid<sup>5</sup>," or "divided to the vein<sup>6</sup>," and how his worldwide experience in literature and in travels turn his poems into different self-portraits of him. In White Egrets, Walcott promotes an imaginarium of collective experiences that depict the fragmentation of cultural identities in the Caribbean and worldwide, but especially in Saint Lucia, his hometown. Such fragmentation of the self is a major subject in his work (almost an "indigenous drama"), linking African, Asiatic, and European seemingly cultural oppositions on a land that has never left his imagination. It is a celebratory collection of a mature poet, not afraid of conventionalisms or of the autobiographical, who uses nature's surroundings to portrait, or even perhaps as an attempt to mediate and render the nuances of his inner convictions and ethnicity with potent immediacy:

At least since Another Life, Walcott's books have increasingly been a chronicle of his life reflected on in poetry, a series of self-portraits. Like several of the earlier works, White Egrets can be read as a narrative, the story of a particular period in a life which is on the one hand extraordinary—in that it is the life of a fabulously talented man whose gifts have been recognised and whose recognition has brought him fame, travel, and an experience of wealth—and is on the other hand the story of all of us, male or female, wealthy or not, who inevitably experience bereavement, illness, and the fear of death. (Jane King 24 Nov.)

A series of "self-portraits" foreshadows my analysis of Walcott's life and work in *White Egrets*. The story of one man, and the story of "all of us" intertwine as connections with tropes of personal and social identities instigate self-awareness. There is in *White Egrets* a close connection/association between the natural

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Due to the fluctuation of theories around the subject, this work will not adopt the concept of "hybridity" as it is attributed to Walcott by many theoreticians, especially based on his poem "A Cry from Africa." It will rather stick to "creolization" and "créolité" and their relation with postcolonial otherness.

From Walcott's (1964) "A Cry from Africa."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Based on < <a href="http://allpoetry.com/Derek-Walcott">http://allpoetry.com/Derek-Walcott</a>>. Web. Dec. 27. 2014.

world and the social world, as well as between the historically constructed subject and the subject that is part of the land. Walcott's scansioning and rhyming are considerate, taking the craft of writing very seriously. Below I mention his own declaration of how he claims to compose poetry based on his "traditions." In an essay entitled "Meanings," Walcott confessed: "I am a kind of split writer: I have one tradition inside me going in one way, and another going another. The mimetic, the narrative, and dance element is strong on one side, and the literary, the classical tradition is strong on the other<sup>8</sup>." While in this rhyming and scansioning and crafting, the whole book becomes a metaphor: the egrets are sepulchral white, symbolic, and majestic birds by nature, and they also sound like "regrets:" his regrets in life. One of these regrets is that he did not turn out to be as good of a painter as he did a poet, dwelling upon the impossibilities of his own failures. More interestingly, those are "white" regrets, suggesting a final, agonizing dance of death where the poet is an egret himself yielding before mortality, as the swan, in the lake of his grey memories. He slowly turns to grey, though his skin is already neither black nor white: a conflicting allusion to creolization, or the mixing of race, ethnicity, and culture that help construct identities. The beauty of grey, if not theoretically relevant, is thematically intriguing in Walcott's, to say the least, for some postcolonial writers and critics do not consider him "black enough<sup>9</sup>."

A more close reading of *White Egrets* will reveal that, besides these issues of fragmented identities, there seems to be a price to be paid for Caribbean citizenship. The imbrications of a political and social consciousness under a double-dividedness of convictions grant his identity a secluded introspection. He seems to be constantly thinking about and reflecting upon his condition as a Caribbean writer, as a Saint Lucian, as an English poet, and being a little harsh upon himself about the painter he so much wanted to have become. The poet/painter's self-consciousness abides in the particularities of some lyricism that is best associated to West Indian poets and the diasporic figure which is constantly reenacting the fragmented subject. I say lyricism because the conception of a single West Indian literature to be produced and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Walcott, in Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott, ed. Hamner, 1970, p. 48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> "In the 1970s, Walcott came under attack from the Black Power movement on Trinidad, and later, on St Lucia, a group of performance poets staged a protest against his traditional loyalties - which are always in danger of being misread as 'English' or 'colonial' allegiance' (*The Guardian*. Oct. 4, 2008). Web. 24 Oct. 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/oct/04/poetry.derekwalcott">http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/oct/04/poetry.derekwalcott</a>.

developed across the islands surely needed an audience, and that essential fact was encouraged, for instance, by BBC radio program *Caribbean Voices*, in the 1940's—a program that sought to give West Indian soldiers serving Britain during the Second World War an opportunity to connect with family at home. The rise and spread of West Indian literature through the radio has an ekphrastic origin: that of an audience, of imagination, and of connection. Here in 2015, Caribbean Literature stands strong in suggesting cultural diversity is more than a historical process, but a necessary refinement of the social condition of subjects as citizens.

Certainly, the notion of a social subject that is "subject" to historical processes finds its way through the collection, resuming agency and resistance, as he discusses the damage of colonization, and the diasporic figures of Saint Lucia. However, such historical processes that have and are still taking place in Saint Lucia, Trinidad, Haiti, and the French Guyana (to name a few) are given a new meaning as Walcott suggests that Caribbean autonomy—or the freedom to take up their right acquired by inheritance 10—is what should drive every effort to define the Caribbean identity, rather than a cultural myth imposed by the hegemonic West. Striving through the collection, the reader will find otherness manifested in conceptualized embodiments of reality, e.g., life, race, identity, nationality, mimicry, creolization, citizenship, beauty, love, art, poetry, and self-awareness. In certain recurrent moments, White Egrets suggests a strong relation between Walcott's poetry and nature, and between him and his racial and cultural inheritance, even though the in-betweenness of his identity places White Egrets among those works that treat subjectivity as the civility that is immanent to the social subject. As Locke would say: "People will give up the power of self-preservation and individual punishment of others in the 'unsafe' and 'uneasy' state of nature in exchange for legislative and judicial protection in the state of civil society. The gain is peace, civility, and protection of private property<sup>11</sup>." Subjectivity in Walcott's voice plays a crucial role in revealing his representative perspectives, his political positioning, and his constant relocation of the speaking subject.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Chapter II will seek to demonstrate how *White Egrets* challenges otherness as inheritance, how Walcott immerses in a deep reflection about his own otherness in the way it is viewed by him and the social critics of literature, and how creolization can be considered a positive mixing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Quoted from Carolyn Merchant's *The Reinvention of Eden*: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture. Routledge, London, 2003. 78.

As he relates nature and the self (or nature and himself<sup>12</sup>) as changing and evolving systems—not necessarily meaning evolution, but regrets—the research will seek to deal straightforwardly with the representation such related imagery brings forth into the social realm. Based on several articles, essays, and chapters of books of (mainly) Stuart Hall, I will formulate a relation between Walcott's representation of himself and the Caribbean with the ekphrastic imagery of otherness as communicated visually in his poetry. Representations of systems of values, ideas, and practices reflect directly in how identities are understood in the social realm, being a product of collective thinking, communicability, and adjustment.

#### 1.2. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Western ontologies have long been based in binary constructions with the self being constituted in relation to its excluded Other. (Thobani 5)

I see Walcott's poetry as an example of the struggle for *companionship* between poetry and painting. Because of his renowned poetic skills, sometimes the words in his poems are far sweeter than the images they provide. It is a "mixed" medium of representation, where poetry walks along with the imagery of painting, providing the reader with an exquisite experience of self-assessment. I attribute such "mixing" to the use of ekphrasis <sup>13</sup>. Following this assumption, I came up with a general and a specific objective of investigation: the general objective of this investigation is to analyze how the ekphrastic characteristics of Walcott's poetry in *White Egrets* promote more *companionship* than *antagonistic views* between poetry and painting; the specific objective is to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> According to Marjorie Hope Nicolson, "What men see in Nature is a result of what they have been taught to see - lessons they have learned in school, doctrines they have heard in church, books they have read. They are conditioned most of all by what they mean by Nature, a word that has gathered around itself paradox and ambiguity ever since the fifth century B.C." (In Robert Wilcher's *The Use Of Natural Details In English Poetry:* 1643-1668. University of Birmingham, 1972. 21). Since the author matters for this research, the previous quotation finds resonance with Walcott being a *Methodist* and a voracious reader of 17<sup>th</sup> century English Literature.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> To be defined in chapter 2 with more details. Ekphrasis can be "actual," or "notional." Actual ekphrasis happens when the poet is before the real object of art (a painting, a sculpture, a drawing) and writes toward or about the object. Notional ekphrasis is when the object (a landscape, or any kind of depictional imagery) only exists in the (collective or individual) imagination, but works as a referential object just as well.

analyze how ekphrasis *transforms* the imagery of Derek Walcott's *créole* identity into an aesthetic object of contemplation, depicting it in the similar way of a work of art.

I have opted to find dialogical connections, as well as to promote literary associations between otherness and ekphrasis in White Egrets because it seems possible to me, at least, to identify and contemplate in it an imaginary of otherness that has been challenged in its binary oppositions by Walcott's poetry. As a reader of Stuart Hall, it instigated in me the desire to bring together different theoretical frameworks in order to move beyond the limits of either theory on its own: not exclusion or simply acceptance, but articulation instead. To sustain ekphrasis as a possible means for interpreting otherness I would argue that through the mentioning of paintings and painters, as well as allusions to Walcott's own paintings in the poems, otherness acquires an "ekphrastic perspective," that is, his poetry portrays otherness in a way that suggests a moment of intense visuality. The associations this study draws between ekphrasis and otherness lie also upon the fact that Walcott is himself a painter, and as such, he looks at the world as painters do, and approaches his themes through what seems to be "ekphrastically." The sensibility of Walcott as a painter-poet is better told in the words of Northrop Frye:

Where we see a landscape, a painter also sees the possibility of a picture. He sees more than we see, and the picture itself is the proof that he really does see it. The standard of reality does not inhere in what is there, but in an unreal and subjective excess over what is there which then comes into being with its own kind of reality. (*Fables of Identity* 19)

This premise makes me believe there is more to ekphrasis than the direct mentioning of another work of art. Although not all the poems analyzed in this investigation make straight reference to painting, they were chosen because they possess a quality that fits with what happens in ekphrasis—alternatively to the overloaded discussion about its genre that is so common in interdisciplinary studies, from which I could not entirely escape. As Loizeaux affirmed: "In practice, however, ekphrasis is created and operates within a whole network of textual and social relations that open out of and into the relation of word image, self and other, and audience" (18). In *White Egrets*, Walcott explores the very own dichotomy of painter/poet regarding his otherness and identity

(including that of a painter), thus allowing this critic the possibility of "borrowing" ekphrasis to find intertextuality between the arts, just as he (presumably) has used it to write, which is not the scope of this research.

This research will not investigate whether nor how Walcott's technique in composing White Egrets made use of ekphrasis because I, hereby, assume he composed it "ekphrastically." Based on this assumption, I will seek to identify and analyze how ekphrasis works as a rhetorical and poetic device in the promotion of companionship vs. antagonistic views between poetry and painting (the general objective). More specifically, I will attempt to investigate how Derek Walcott "binds," or so it seems, the imagery of painting and natural objects with his poetry to pictorially represent his own otherness through companionship, kinship, togetherness, and/or collaboration between poetry and painting. The attempt of the poet to (re)present the object/subject (himself) in a different medium, say, less plastic, less visual, inevitably craves for a companionship between the sister arts. Hence, I conjecture, ekphrasis becomes a rhetorical situation that allows the poet to reflect upon his poetic work, and to wish to experiment an alteration of poetry's medium of representation. The medium is altered due to the relational nature of ekphrasis that relates different modes of representation, enhancing intertextuality. In the "ekphrastic situation" or the moment of intense visuality, the poet departs from the image toward the poem. In other words, images appear to "inspire" the poet to compose, and because he is limited to his medium of representation, that is, poetry is limited to words, the hypothesis is that Walcott finds in ekphrasis a moment of contemplation to translate the visuality that is only conceived in spatiality. Sometimes images are strictly related to landscape, or nature, requiring a more direct/descriptive approach to encompass them. That is when abstraction about painting, or imagery related with spatiality, is not abstract, but an important part of the whole poetic conception. In other words, images that compose an overall picture that would best be depicted through painting are thereby "incorporated" by analogy. Language, in ekphrasis, translates the imagery, even when there is a straight reference to the visual, the material, the concrete, and the spatial. It provides the bridge across the otherness of signs, but within the knowing of a hope to fail. As to William James Thomas Mitchell, ekphrastic poetry is "[...] the genre in which texts encounter their own semiotic 'others,' those rival, alien modes of representation called the visual, graphic, plastic, or 'spatial' arts" ("Ekphrasis and the Other" para. 9). Ekphrasis translates (for lack of a better word) the space in the painting, or in the natural world, into

temporal flow. In my assumptions, Walcott would not have had a similar imagetic outcome were the word a mere addendum to the image.

The specific objective to be investigated in this research is how notional ekphrasis14 "transforms" the imagery of creolization of otherness in White Egrets into an aesthetic object of contemplation. After explaining the types of ekphrasis in chapter 2 (part 1), I will venture (in part 2) a historical recover of the Caribbean colonization, its geographical displacements, and the primary conditions in which identities could rise, assemble, and articulate. After a long and intense exposition of how Caribbean otherness was configured into "creolization of otherness" (the hardest challenge of this research), I will then proceed to the analysis proposed by the specific objective. In order to carry out the analysis, I will attempt to show through textual evidence in the poems how the image of a "creolized" Walcott—a multifaceted, in-between citizen of the Caribbean island whose cultural legacy converges therein—crystallizes in and is reflected by his poetic gaze. For that, this investigation will assume it is possible to treat the imagery of creolization of otherness in White Egrets the same way a notional ekphrasis would do.

When imagery is *formed* through notional ekphrasis, imagery "depends upon the poet's own words to be contained, reined in, and made comprehensible to a viewer who is made to feel 'other' by it" (Messenger 102). The intricate relation between imagery and words (part of the general objective) is here scrutinized slightly in order to demonstrate how Walcott "frames," or even captures his ethnicity through the contemplation of a visuality provided by the ekphrastic writing. In the search for the specific objective, I will investigate how ekphrasis serves as a catalyzing means for the conversion of cultural projection/identification and visual sign for the self, breaking the suspended flux of inanimation that lies on the limited enclosure of the poems. <sup>15</sup> His otherness is enunciated while making references to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The distinction between the terms "Actual" and "Notional Ekphrasis" was coined by John Hollander in his book *The Gazer's Spirit* (1995 30). While the "actual" ekphrasis describes a real work of art, the "notional" ekphrasis consists of a description of a work of art that only exists in the mind of the writer, totally dependent upon words to "come to life". Thus, notional ekphrasis becomes a tool to illustrate greater themes and motifs through imagetic metaphor, as, for instance, in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess", in P. K. Page's "After Rain," or in William Blake's "Tyger." Web. 31 Mar. 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/callaloo/summary/v034/34.3.pardlo01.html">http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/callaloo/summary/v034/34.3.pardlo01.html</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Although the research will not explore "Reader's Reception Theory," it will keep in mind what Holub (1984) pointed out: "The literary work is neither completely text nor completely the subjectivity of the reader, but a combination or merger of the two" (84). Whenever "reader," "visuality," "interpretation," "subjectivity," and "understanding" are mentioned, the

paintings and postcolonial imagery all at once, this being my main supporting assumption that *White Egrets* was born out of a notional ekphrastic genesis. In other words, with the exceptions of when real painters or paintings are mentioned in the poems, his otherness becomes the very picture at which the speaker gazes, confronting the image of his (undefined) identity in both stillness and movement (to be discussed). Walcott's cultural identity acquires an amount of spatiality in the sense that it is "materialized" through words put together, as brushstrokes on a canvas.

Despite the general objective being already broad enough, it brings some other contexts into investigation: the relation between the verbal and the visual, the word and the image, the spatial and the temporal, and the stillness and the movement. The general objective will then propose a discussion about these relations under the poetic experience of a traveling painter poet, pointing toward how silence and stillness in notional ekphrasis become movement, a sort of "motion in stasis 16." As already mentioned, White Egrets is an autobiographical work, which in fact, makes the notion of motion in stasis to be produced out of a personal connection between the speaker/observer (who is also a traveler/poet), and the places he mentions. The personal connection with different locations and cultures around the world keeps revealing his alterity and his fragmented subject, and his otherness acquires different perspectives of the same Walcott, the man. The analysis will venture to show that through more than the inherent antagonism between the sister arts, his otherness gets revealed every time he is at a different place, but all in all, always pointing back to Saint Lucia—his safe harbor

As the reader delves into the poems, s/he will notice that there is not a single image, by all appearances, or an image of the speaker that "comes up" and that can "be fixed." Should we consider Hall ("Representation and the Media"), an image has no fixed meaning and it cannot be fixed, especially when it is an ideological representation of power designed in a certain way to convey a certain meaning. The problem is that *meaning* cannot be fixed. There remains, in the end, the

concepts of ekphrasis and otherness are meant to cover them. Even though I try to attribute the participatory emotion in the act of writing to Walcott himself, I cannot exhume myself from passiveness either.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> The phrase will flood the dissertation. Based on Loizeaux's analysis of "eternal stillness" (19), motion in stasis is the most common trope of ekphrasis. It underlies a notion of "not moving" but "enduring," as in Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" striking line: "A sudden blow: the great wings beating still."

act of interpretation to hold it, so that it can be unfixed, loosen and fray (20). Throughout the entire collection, Walcott is compared to an egrethaired viejo (46) flying through different landscapes, in constant movement. In thinking of such movement, the scope of this investigation is, therefore, otherness as a moving reflection—something that is constantly in motion as the themes and motifs in White Egrets care enough to emphasize. The word "transformation" was employed in the title of this dissertation because otherness does not revolve around a single image or representation, but gets revealed one piece at a time, from poem to poem, transforming its own imagery as Walcott seeks ways to conform to cultural identity. As a matter of introduction to the line of thought used in the analysis, it is important to mention that ekphrasis is not viewed as the recreation of the stillness of the image, but as relation, as negotiation of interaction between the stillness caught up by the viewer and the other in the image, as proposed by Loizeaux. Through a rereading of ekphrasis more as companionship/friendship than competition between painting and poetry, this work seeks to establish a slight "subversion" of the genre, viewing the imagery of "creolization of otherness" (to be presented) in White Egrets as an aesthetic/political representation. In other words, creolization of otherness portrayed as in a painting, but not totally destitute of the feeling/sensation of movement (as its own definition in chapter 2 will show).

The dilemma presented above brings us once again to the specific objective of this investigation: can ekphrasis behold, sustain, and depict the imagery of otherness? In other words, can Walcott's créole identity be portrayed through ekphrasis as if it were on a painting? As a matter of fact, this work considers that what ekphrasis actually does is expose the *nonfixity* of the image—even in that *crucial* moment full of expectancies that pervade the action that surrounds it. In order to investigate both the general (companionship vs. the paragone) and the specific objectives, the research will conduct a theoretical analysis or study of some poems in White Egrets under Loizeaux's perspective of "companionship among the arts," namely painting and poetry, identifying traces of Walcott's Caribbean otherness. Once more, ekphrasis—a verbal representation of (real or imagined) works of art will be taken here as the means whereby companionship takes place to catalyze and convey otherness in White Egrets. For that purpose, I have selected 13 (out of the 54) poems that deal more directly with the visual aspects of imagery and that look and sound to me they portray a painting/poetry relation in critical moments. Viewing otherness through

an ekphrastic perspective (or reading) might not prove that the poems in *White Egrets* are "ekphrastic poems." On the contrary, what this work proposes is that the otherness addressed in *White Egrets*, when "viewed" as a work of art for the purpose of a critical analysis, may present aesthetic qualities.

The specific objective of this dissertation tackles this researcher's assumption that through exphrastic elements present in or intricate to *White Egrets*, otherness may acquire a more distinct representation that is not eradicated by empathy or similarities in the negotiation of meaning. As Hall affirmed, identity is a

[...] process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are'... so much as what we might become... not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our 'routes'; "never singular but multiple, constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. ("Who Needs Identity?" 4)

The crossing of the identity border constructs a place of mobility, uncertainty, and multiplicity, and it inevitably falls into comparison and contrast between cultures in a type of empathic accuracy, or the so-called capacity to infer other people's feelings, thoughts and intentions. Hopefully, the analysis may corroborate to bring otherness out of questions of binary identities and culture only. The general objective of this research poses 3 questions: 1) can there be "companionship" between poetry and painting?; 2) If there is, is ekphrasis the means whereby companionship takes place?; and 3) How does ekphrasis take hold of Walcott's verbal images in White Egrets? Each of these questions brings a counterpoint to be discussed either in chapter 2 or in the analytical chapter: companionship vs. the paragone, the types of ekphrasis, and the nonfixity of the image. The study might also contribute to the intellectual formation of Brazilian educators, seeing that the discussions about African basis Diaspora, and cultural diversity in Brazilian universities have been acquiring a more recognizable distinctiveness. Since Brazil is my enunciating departure, or my aquarela backdrop, to get into painterly terms, the study is designed to foster discussions about ethnicity, otherness, and ekphrastic poetry in the Brazilian academic context as well.

## 2. EKPHRASIS DESPITE THE PARAGONE, CREOLIZATION BECAUSE OF OTHERNESS

What then do poems and paintings see in each other? What do they give to each other? In what ways is the materiality of painting an 'other' to language? Is there a sense in which the verbal may be said to bring a non-material element (sometimes thought of as a spiritual element) to the carnality of the visual? Is it equally the case that the visual image offers a 'spiritual' or non-material element to the body of language and print? (Cheeke 6).

The epigraph above summarizes the main concern of this chapter, which is divided into two greater sections: ekphrasis and otherness. In the first part, I will bring into consideration some historical aspects that comprise the *paragone* of poetry and painting, mostly instigated by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing 17's Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry (1766), which became "responsible" for generalized binary oppositions between the genres. After presenting and defining the theories that gave birth to ekphrasis, I will lay out my understanding of how ekphrasis can be the means to converge the imagery of cultural identity by the appropriation of some key literary elements such as imagination, comparison, and relation, along with other aspects already mentioned in the introduction. In the second part of this chapter, I will enterprise to delineate the binary oppositions between some theories of otherness, especially creolization in the Caribbean complex. The challenge will be to corroborate with Aisha Khan, who argues that—only for social scientists and literary writers—the Caribbean "creole / ization" has become a sort of "master symbol" or "index" to what a globalized world will look like, fostering relationships of mimicry, syncretism, creativity, and ambiguity (Quoted

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) was a German writer, philosopher, and dramatist, also known as the "father of German criticism" (In *Minute History of the Drama*. Alice B. Fort & Herbert S. Kates. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1935. 68). He contributed to the historical criticism of the word-image difference regarding poetry and painting as being two totally different modes of representation mostly through analogous oppositions, such as nature and culture, time and space, natural and arbitrary signs. For Lessing, the comparison or approximation between poetry and painting (initially proposed by Simonides of Keos - See 24) can only bring but "inexactness and falsity" since there can be no "temporality" in painting or that "it is dangerous for a spatial art like painting to attempt the progressive effects of a temporal art like poetry" (Quoted in Mitchell. *Iconology*. 48, 97).

in Douillet 7). The analysis will point out that, not only globalization is a different process than that of creolization, but that creolization in the Caribbean has become static, despite of its constant syncretism. The second part will relate with the epigraph above in the sense that the verbal (theories of otherness, creolization, *mestizaje*, syncretism, etc.) is directly responsible for the creation of an image of the Caribbean and of the identity of its people.

## 2.1. THE PARAGONE AND THE CULT OF EKPHRASIS

There are, in ekphrastic poetry, at least two lines of thought: the paragonal (which envisions the confrontation between poetry and painting), and the *Ut Pictura Poesis* (that deals more with analogy relations, and the one that best serves the discussion). In this section of the discussion I must make a combination of historical contextualism with critical analysis to present the *Ut pictura poesis* tradition, which was the antecessor of the paragone, and which made possible the whole discussion proposed by Lessing. To exemplify how, not why, different mediums of representation meet across, I will be mentioning the nature of the image, either for paragonistic or companionship reasons. By the end of this part of chapter 2, the reader will find that ekphrasis dwells upon both theories, depending on the approach given by the poet or the viewer, and that companionship between poetry and painting is not, hopefully, an unreasonable deadlock foundation for this dissertation.

Ut pictura poesis, meaning as in painting, so in poetry, is a historical key phrase that comes from Horace's Ars Poetica (Art of Poetry), written c. 20-10 BCE. In fact, this theory or analogy was so important for the arts, that Queen Elizabeth I herself made the first translation into English in 1598. Horace was the first to record the concept, but the idea came much earlier with the Greek poet Simonides of Keos (556-469? BCE). According to Plutarch, <sup>18</sup> Simonides was the first to come up with the concept by coining the phrase *Poema pictura* loquens, pictura poema silens, meaning poetry is a speaking picture, painting a mute poetry, or painting is silent poetry, poetry is eloquent painting. This theory dominated Western art from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. In Stephen Cheeke's Writing For Art, The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis, we find that Ut pictura poesis is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Greek historian and philosopher—C. 46-122? AD—who wrote the essay called *De Gloria* Atheniensium, "On the Glory of the Athenians," a century after Horace.

[...] a tradition of thinking about the relation of poetry and painting that assumes the relation is vital, mutually illuminating, and richly parallel. The doctrine also assumed that the highest form of painting, following poetry, would be 'history painting,' that is painting drawing upon Biblical and classical *texts* for its subject, and presenting narratives that would display heroic virtue in action. Likewise, the greatest form of poetry (the epic) would be rich in striking images and tableaux for the pleasure of the imagination or mind's eye. (21 italics in the original)

The discussion was fomented in 16th century Italy, where Florentines attributed a more contrasting relationship between painting and poetry while the Venetian debate was centered on the unity of the two arts, as exposed above. However, a notion of contrasting relationship began to prevail among scholars of the time, giving birth to the paragone of poetry and painting. Paragone means comparison, but a comparison for confrontation in order to determine which art can render the visual with more immediacy. Such confrontation in the genesis of the genres might be the main reason why words and images are not "treated alike" by literary criticism even today. The conceptions proposed by Lessing's ideas remain, among scholars worldwide, that painting is "more natural" than poetry because it makes use of "natural signs" (e.g. the image of a tree is more likely to represent a tree than the word "tree," or combinations of figures of speech that allude to a tree). while language has an "arbitrary," "assigned" code of representation, i.e. the linguistic code. Moreover, painting is spatial, while poetry is temporal; painting is mute and still, while poetry is speaking movement. In the words of Mitchell, "the *paragone* or debate of poetry and painting is never just a contest between two kinds of signs, but a struggle between body and soul, world and mind, nature and culture" (Iconology 47). Despite all reasoning, Lessing's paragone does not allow the least of connections between poetry and painting: they are two different modes of representation that can never walk along the same path, as language and imagery. Mitchell explains:

Language works with arbitrary, conventional signs, images with natural, universal signs. Language unfolds in temporal succession; images

reside in a realm of timeless spatiality and simultaneity. To speak of "imagery" or "spatial form" in temporal arts like music or literature or to claim that imagery has temporal or linguistic power is to commit a breach in decorum, or, to put it more positively, to make a metaphor. ("Ekphrasis and the Other" 361)

In his essay, despite Lessing's "limits between painting and poetry," Mitchell shows that language and imagery are important components of ekphrastic poetry because they are the means through which these mediums of representation (poetry and painting) can actually articulate any other type of representation (e.g. cultural, historical, philosophical, psychological, etc.). His ideas corroborate those of Hall (1997b) that language is "the privileged medium" through which we make sense of meaning—especially since semiotics—and that there is language in everything: photography, museums or art gallery exhibitions, music, even our bodies work as language that communicates our identification with certain cultural representations (Introduction). The fact is that, under the light of technology in modern culture, and the wide range of art, media, and communication, the traditional figures of opposition (poetry and painting) are, somehow, given a new version of complementary antithesis as text and image, sign and symbol, metonymy and metaphor, signifier and signified. All reasonable arguments for the paragone aside, this dissertation will venture the other way around: it will seek to find connections between the mediums, so that word and image can find their similar interest to serve both the painter and the poet in representing the human experience. Thus, what changes is the context, and in a new context for these our new times, ekphrasis comes in just as vital as it was in the days of old. Nowadays, images are everywhere, and are "as 'real' as the bread and wine on the table, as urgent as a dying parent or concealed lover in the next room," in spite of our disregard (J. D. McClatchy In Loizeaux's Introduction). As a consequence, poets have turned to ekphrasis to accommodate their thoughts about an everincreasing visual society. In fact, the practice is so common that, for instance, the Nillumbik Shire Council, in Victoria, Australia, annually holds an ekphrastic poetry competition to respond to works of art<sup>19</sup>. With Marjorie Munsterberg we learn how it all began:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> The last "Ekphrasis Poetry Award" was held in March this year, and competitors had to compose poems up to twelve lines long. Web. Oct. 14. 2014.

One particular kind of visual description is also the oldest type of writing about art in the West. Called ekphrasis, it was created by the Greeks. The goal of this literary form is to make the reader envision the thing described as if it were physically present. In many cases, however, the subject never actually existed, making the ekphrastic description a demonstration of both the creative imagination and the skill of the writer. For most readers of famous Greek and Latin texts, it did not matter whether the subject was actual or imagined. The texts were studied to form habits of thinking and writing, not as art historical evidence. (CreateSpace)

The "skill of the writer" to communicate her/his imagination finds in ekphrasis, as a mode of poetry, a fertile ground of basically two major ekphrastic situations. According to John Hollander, 20 the ekphrastic situation can be categorized into "actual" and "notional" ekphrasis. The actual ekphrasis or the actual ekphrastic situation occurs in the presence of the object of art: the poet stands before the painting, or the sculpture, and makes the attempt of recording his impressions upon the object, as in John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819), William Butler Yeast's already mentioned "Leda and the Swan" (1925), or in Richard Wilbur's "A Dutch Courtyard" (1947). As a matter of illustration, I borrow a poem from Loizeaux's introduction:

> Admire, when you come here, the glimmering hair Of the girl; praise her pale Complexion. Think well of her dress Though that is somewhat out of fashion. Don't try to take her hand, but smile for Her hesitant gentleness<sup>21</sup>.

Snodgrass's poem "VUILLARD: 'The Mother and Sister of the Artist" is a good example of actual ekphrastic poetry because it provides the reader not familiar with the painting all the elements

<sup>21</sup> W. D. Snodgrass, "VUILLARD: 'The Mother and Sister of the Artist.'" 1960–1961.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Lists/Events/The Nillumbik Ekphrasis Poetry Award 201">http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Lists/Events/The Nillumbik Ekphrasis Poetry Award 201</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> John Hollander was an American poet, a literary critic, and a sterling professor emeritus of English at Yales University. He passed away last August 17th, 2013.

necessary for its visualization. It also makes that direct/straight mentioning of the work of art, and the attempt of the poet to capture those moments of more intense visuality and expression. Notional ekphrasis, on the other hand, is the description/mentioning of an imagined work of art that may be only in the speaker's mind, or it is interdisciplinary to another literary work, as when Geoffrey Chaucer, in The Canterbury Tales, pauses the action of "The Knight's Tale" to describe a coliseum and a temple in detail, then to describe the artwork hanging on the walls of the temple. As Hollander defined it, notional ekphrasis is a poetic device that promotes a rhetorical situation between the poet/speaker and the objects of representation in her/his mind (Loizeaux 12-13). Notional ekphrasis is also present in Elizabeth Bishop's "Brazil, January 1, 1502" (1962), in which she turns the landscape into a one-dimensional tapestry of multiple colors. Another example is in P. K. Page's abstraction of Brazil's landscape, "Chimney Fire" (1957); when writing about motorcycle troops, she says: "they might have been a painting by Rousseau the douanier, known to me alone," clearly stating that her poem is ekphrastic, or as she stated, "like a Chagall painting" (Messenger 114, My emphasis).

Though it is widely accepted nowadays that both types, i.e. actual and notional ekphrasis, are a rhetorical tool to address the visual, ekphrasis had its controversies as art was given more refined thoughtfulness, and acquired a more public accessibility. Munsterberg continues:

In the second half of the 18th century, ekphrastic writing suddenly appeared in a new context. Travelers and would-be travelers provided a growing public eager for vivid descriptions of works of art. Without any way of publishing accurate reproductions, appearances had to be conveyed through words alone. William Hazlitt, John Ruskin, and Walter Pater, to name three great 19th-century writers in English, published grand set-pieces of ekphrasis about older as well as contemporary art. For them, the fact that the object existed mattered a great deal. The goal of these Victorian writers was to make the reader feel like a participant in the visual experience. The more convincingly this was done, the more effective the writing was judged to be. (CreateSpace)

To make the reader "feel like a participant in the visual experience" has now taken a new meaning after the 20th century and the museums. Since almost everything is *online* these days (both the poems and the paintings), the reader has more accessibility to the work of art, not depending "upon words alone" to render the object's visuality, neither being restrained from extra resources. Although it becomes easier for us to conceive that the object "really exists" because of such accessibility, sensorial experiences may fall shorter than if in the actual presence of the object, or simply by the use of imagination. All in all, what ekphrastic poetry does is usually turn on the antagonism between the genres, a situation where the *paragone* is welcome and abounds.

A relating subject comprising the *paragone* and ekphrasis can be exposed through Robert Browning's 1869 poem "Orpheus and Eurvdice." This poem is hereby assumed to be "clear" in providing a convincing example of such confrontation between the sister arts, basically for four reasons: firstly, because it is a poem about a painting made by Frederic Leighton in 1864—therefore an actual ekphrasis; secondly, because Leighton's painting was inspired on the Greek popular myth, reappropriating the imagery through a notional ekphrasis; thirdly, because Leighton painted a "silent moment" of the whole story, the crucial scene where Orpheus avoids looking at Eurydice to bring her out of *Hades*; and fourthly, because the poem is metaekphrastic, making reference to the very act of the ekphrastic situation, and the poet's desire to make words so powerful and instantaneous as the image<sup>22</sup>. In other words, someone told a story that turned into a myth, somebody painted its crucial/pregnant moment on canvas, and then someone else wrote an elegy to that painting, comparing the impossibility of the lovers being together with the impossibility of communion between the arts of painting and poetry. Each of these features exemplify ekphrasis in its amplitude, but especially the poet's "envy" of the painter, wishing his poem could portray the same immediateness, the same readiness in the display of the image.

The "clarity" in exposing the paragone in the poem "Orpheus and Eurydice" comes from its thematic inquiry: can poetry ever be capable of rendering the visual as a painting does? Can words, in their semantic, morphological limitations carry out the exuberating task of captivating the reader as, presumably, the image so easily does with the viewer? For all these inherited binaries, Lessing is deservedly to blame. However, for the purposes of this research, ekphrasis is more than

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Based on Stephen Cheeke's Writing For Art. For more information, see (his) chapter 1.

merely a literary technique, or an impossible situation as the paragone suggests: it is also a metafictional tool. Metafictional ekphrasis seems truer than fiction because it does not pretend to be non-fiction. Most non-fiction narratives have a structure of beginning and end, where linearity must be followed for comprehension to take place, which creates the illusion of a self-sustained narrative, sufficient in itself. Thus, as a metafictional tool, ekphrasis enables the author/poet to contrast the literary mode of representation with the painterly, thus being able to sharpen her/his awareness upon the implications of her/his own writing. Linearity gives way to awareness and sensibility. Crucially, ekphrasis and ekphrastic poetry are reflected in the way images are (re)created in literature. Notwithstanding Lessing's solid arguments, I do not mean (and I would not dare) to dispute his idea. What is relevant for the research is the (here simply seen otherwise) implication that the notion of the paragone suggests an actual impossibility of common ground between the arts.

On the other hand, Loizeaux suggests that, as true admirers of painters, poets have also historically tried to "paint with words" through ekphrasis, so that the reader could have the same experience of the viewer. She affirms that the paragone is less satisfying in recognizing, or acknowledging "such modest, and profound, feelings as companionship or friendship, the terms in which poets often describe their ekphrastic motives" (15). Admiration is strong enough a feeling for poets to mirror painters. The collaboration between these mediums of representation can create a far better understanding of the tentative of addressing life in its fullness. One must agree that, sometimes in life, there are situations in which it seems words lack to describe experiences and/or perceptions. What is left is the use of gestures, or even philosophy to give way to thoughts and feelings. In a similar sense, the visual aid of a painting, a drawing, or a photograph is actually a helping hand to communicate imagery through poetry. Whether referring directly to the picture or indirectly as in notional ekphrasis, ekphrastic poetry greatly benefits from collaboration and friendship. By intertextualizing poetry and painting, Walcott defies Lessing's theory of difference implying that the *nature* of the image does change, and that the aesthetic of beauty is even more monumental dressed with moral, ethics, and genius—abstract ideologically conceived qualities of an image. The nature of the image

changes because there is no evident taxonomy<sup>23</sup> in his poetry, i.e. the image does not follow the poems neither it is directly related to or derived from a painting. In other words, an image of the Caribbean portrayed by Walcott is never silent, but loaded with its own complexity. An image of the Caribbean as a nation, for instance, tends to change in face of the ideological implications that it brings when "incorporated" by analogy. In this case, the moral, the ethics, and the genius of the poet permeate the image with an intransitive nature and not with a silent one as Lessing has declared/proposed. Despite such an alluring, attractive issue, the discussion will focus on words generating images, rather than the signs of representation being "more," or "less" natural in their respective mediums, which would erase the possibility of intertwined collaboration. Should the paragone be the focus, this research would require an intersemiotic, linguistic, phenomenological approach to language in poetry itself, giving margin to a broader field of analysis, including the often cited approach of the "male word" and the "female image," which shall not be considered here. When I said earlier that the nature of the image changes, I mean a more "abstract" kind of image: that of Caribbean otherness, something that cannot easily be depicted. The "spatial relevance" of otherness as object will matter not because of its plasticity, but rather because of its cultural configuration that has acquired proportional dimensions. As stated in Mitchell, "[e]ven those forms of ekphrasis that occur in the presence of the described image disclose a tendency to alienate or displace the object, to make it disappear in favor of the textual image being produced by the ekphrasis" (Picture Theory 157). By what it seems, the importance of the image to ekphrastic poetry is related to the modes of perception under which the addressed image is (re)created through the use of language. My point here is that if language tends to distort and alienate in the description/depiction of a "material" object (a painting, a drawing, or a sculpture), this distortion and alienation may acquire greater proportions when the object is not "before the very eyes of the beholder," but rather, in the poet's mind. Language is the means whereby the ekphrastic act takes place in poetry, elevating the verbal representation to a pictorial realm of imagetic vividness.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Márcia Arbex (UFMG 2006) clarifies this notion in *Poéticas do Visível: ensaios sobre a escrita e a imagem.* A taxonomy of relationships between images and text can be used for analyzing the way that images and text interact according to the frame of production and reception. Walcott`s framing is no doubt postcolonial, but through no fault of his own. His poetry is usually read as postcolonial, and what is a postcolonial image than a moving, volatile, speaking picture?

If I have made myself clear so far, ekphrasis is usually at the core of the *paragone*, but not in my approach:

It exposes the need for criticism to evolve beyond the disputes about paragonal struggle and segregation between verbal and visual art as to recognize the emergence of an ekphrastic 'dialogue' between word and image, ekphrastic is to remain relevant to contemporary practice. The ekphrastic reading goes beyond the difficulties involved in comparing a visual and a written medium and tries to explore the ways in both worked out which these are complicated through ekphrasis the 'vision', the verbal representation of a visual representation turns back upon itself to transmute the fleeting power of language into the paradox of the still living tableau vivant that is suspended beyond the confines of space and time and often, but not always, brought to life through the imaginative motion of memory. (Banea 11)

These are some of the faces of the "cult of ekphrasis," the never-ending search for the alchemy of the image nestled somewhere between and "beyond the confines of space and time." As already presented, the type of ekphrasis that more likely seems to be present in Walcott's poetry is the notional type. The rhetorical situation empowers the poet with more tools to imagetically relate and verbalize his thoughts and perceptions of himself as a Caribbean human being. By being struck with word and image at the core of his creation, Walcott is under a co-dependent relation with ekphrasis. As pointed out by Loizeaux, "[...] ekphrasis opens out of lyric subjectivity into a social world, creating and depending upon the ekphrastic situation," which gives Walcott something to aim at (5). In the "ekphrastic situation," the poet engages the work of art with a desire to describe and depict it, but also with a great deal of subjectivity, or those inner questions that seem to have no right answer, but need to be asked anyway. Subjectivity is the way to render personal representations of reality through the bringing out of individuality, and through a democratic, inquiring, and intellectual perception of reality, of what or who we think we are, and what needs to be done and when. Since ekphrasis, by and large, means translating images into words and vice-versa, in Walcott the translation guides his writing by having his own dilemma as reference: matters of ethnicity and otherness spoken out. That does not imply *every* verbal description of an image is an ekphrastic endeavor, unless there is the attempt of interrelation between mediums, the addressing of its essence and form, and, most importantly, having a target audience in mind. Otherwise, a literary analysis would also be ekphrastic, if we could consider a literary analysis as a work of art. . . The contemplation of the possibility of a relational status between ekphrasis and otherness here lies in that, by reframing otherness with ekphrasis, the imagery of otherness may come out more neatly.

In Walcott, it is more than notional ekphrasis in its traditional conception of a silent image resting on the canvas of the mind then brought to life by words. . . The way he uses language to capture and portray the image in movement is where he begs to differ: the illusion of spatiality in movement is due because in White Egrets his choice of word arrangements provide a temporal speed, surrounding the object with precedent actions, and post-descriptions, which does not happen in (the narrative of) painting. Though the attempt of this critic is, as it were, to look at the painting and the painter as he is painting it, it would probably sound more reasonable to try to describe the imagery as it is being formed rather than the movements on the hands of the painter. I mean, it is not given to me, or actually any critic (unless we asked Walcott himself) to know what led him to use a certain figure of speech, a certain rhyme, or a certain political background to convey imagery in his poetry. What I can see here is what is written on the lines of the poems. Within the lines of the poems to be analyzed lie a rhetorical endeavor employed by the author, and to go beyond these lines is an ekphrastic act of interpretation that needs proper introspection under the light of otherness in the Caribbean complex. Here is where the "ekphrastic motives," as Loizeaux said, may be hidden: either in the way the poet composed them or in the way I may see them put.

## 2.2 CREOLIZING THE CRÉOLE

"It's not where we're coming from
It's how we turn from here
We know where we want to go
We just need the light to get us there."
(Europe – Let the Children Play)

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to some theories of otherness that underlie a notion of "creolization" and "créolité<sup>24</sup>" as originating from the border of two different cultures, thus creating another enunciating space—a third space. The space of origin, after some generations, becomes the space of différance<sup>25</sup>, and to go back to it might work as a re-creolization (Stewart "From Creolization..." 14). For the attempt, this section will seek to explore the Caribbean imaginarium in the historical creation and sustenance of otherness in the following split terms: "creolization," and "syncretism." It will venture interdisciplinary, and hopefully insightful associations, within/between social sciences discourse and literature, without consisting of a checkpoint or a pass of any sort. While "creolization" can be often understood as a world phenomenon, a conversion process among multiethnic cultures that is going on continuously in a globalized world, in the Caribbean this process is unique, and does not imply the same shifts of "globalization<sup>26</sup>." What I want to propose in this section is that creolization, as a Caribbean cultural movement, is also a motion in stasis, or as the epigraph suggests, a slow turn from Europe.

## 2.2.1 Creolization And The Search For Identity

According to Magdala França Vianna, in a chapter of the book *Conceitos de Literatura e Cultura*, the term *créole* either originates from the Latin *creare* in the sense of creating and giving shape, or from the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> According to Hall, *créolité* is the "good side" of creolization which allows literary expression and creative cultural practices, while the "bad side" is cultural domination and hegemony, violence, racism, appropriation and expropriation, conditions of subalterneity and enforced obligation, as well as an abrupt rupture with the past (In Enwezor 31).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> The term différance originated at a seminar given by Derrida in 1968 at the Société Française de Philosophie. By changing the grapheme "e" of the word différance (difference) to "a" in différance, Derrida proposes a semiotic and philosophical thinking in which the "a" marks the divergence that can be seen, but not heard. Différance is the difference that shatters the cult of identity and the dominance of Self over Other, meaning that there is no origin (originary unit). Différer [to differ] is to not be identical, to displace, or elude. The relation this theory has with this research lies on the fact that différance is "the future in progress (the fight against frozen meanings); it is the displacement of signifying signifiers to the fringe, since there is no organizing, original, transcendental signified" (Web. Jan. 30. 2015. <a href="http://www.signosemio.com/derrida/deconstruction-and-differance.asp">http://www.signosemio.com/derrida/deconstruction-and-differance.asp</a>). As the concept of différance mutates toward otherness and creolization, it provides this research the possibility to investigate its intricate relation between the imagery of identity/alterity and the nonfixity, or the motion in stasis of the image.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> The discussion about globalization will not delve into worldwide processes of "acculturation" (Brathwaite 06), but rather, serve as a counterpoint to creolization in the sense that, while globalization ventures toward capitalist progress, creolization moves toward *mestizaje* and syncretism.

Spanish *criollo*, which means born in the Americas, but from Old World origins. Either way, it referred, at first, to the offspring (of any race) of those who were brought to the new world after 1492, and by extension, to every animal and plant transported from the old world. Creole also refers to the language spoken by these ethnicities, under a particular social, historical, geographically, and chronologically specific-newworld-setting *process* that became known as "creolization" (103).

Moreover, in a conference at the Cave Hill campus, University of the West-Indies, Raphael Confiant stated that the first 50 years of French colonization in Martinique, Guadeloupe or Saint-Domingue (today Haiti) were the basis for what is called the *créole* language (a form of "*patois*") in the Caribbean. In the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was neither sugar-cane nor any plantation systems in the West-Indies. Whites and Blacks had to learn from The Caribs<sup>27</sup> how to live and to survive in a new and sometimes hostile environment:

The Caribs taught Whites and Blacks the culture of tobacco, sweet potatoes, and pine-apple; they taught them the different kinds of trees and animals. Although Blacks had an inferior position in French colonial society, they were not slaves in the classical sense of the word, in the plantation sense of the word, as it were. Whites and Blacks lived together and reprocreated. (2)

Although and because both Whites and Blacks were living in a situation, as Confiant described it, of "linguistic insecurity," the rising of a new language was inevitable (3). Contrary to what many historians say, Confiant affirms *créole* was not an exclusively "black language," but a creation of both Blacks and Whites (4). When plantation systems became a great resource for Whites, and hundreds of slaves were imported from Africa and India, the French *créole* became exposed to these many different dialects. They were forced to reinvent themselves:

1492 due to the montainous regions they lived in, too mountainous for the Spanish armada to chase them, and because of their brave spirit in war (Raphael Confiant. "Creole identity in a globalized world." 2006, p. 02).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> The Caribs were the only native population left on the small islands of the West-Indies after the Spanish invasion of Hispaniola (1493), Puerto Rico (1508), Jamaica (1509), Cuba (1511), and Trinidad (1530). They signed a peace treaty with the French in 1630, and later with the English, and the Dutch, for the promise of help to fight the Spanish. The French, then, massacred them all, so that by 1660, there was no Carib alive, including in Saint Lucia, named by the French as Saint Lucy of Syracuse. They had been resisting Spanish colonization since

Africans and Indians had been moved by force or persuasion to work on the sugar plantations, torn away from their homes, their traditions and their cultural authenticity, fooled into believing they were a kind of Britons through colonial schooling, and then forced to reinvent themselves almost on an everyday basis upon discovering that they were not. (Erikson 226)

Their "traditions and their cultural authenticity" were scattered across the many colonies, since colonial masters were careful enough to spread the slaves so that they could not understand each other. Around 1670, mostly and especially in French Caribbean plantation systems such as the Antilles, French Guyana, and *Reunión*, this new form of language was further developed in a struggle for survival and resistance. To resist colonial dominance, slaves in the Caribbean relied on memory traces, and began to develop nonstandard versions of an accepted language out of the various African dialects along with French, and later with Dutch, Portuguese, and English, depending on the current colonizer's language. Word "got out," and the *créole* language became a distinguishing mark for Caribbean peoples, and the inheritance of future generations.

The "creole" language was born out of a legit *process* of "creolization" (an intercultural, multiethnic exchange). It lasted because its necessity was bigger than the "relational" languages used as contact languages to facilitate trade between Europeans, Asians, and locals, such as the pidgins<sup>28</sup> (Vianna 104). Creolization, in this sense, refers to the linguistic restructuring in the domains of grammar, phonology, lexicon, and syntax involved in the rise and formation of the "*créole* people," which made them "hemispheric Americans of a new sort" (Hannerz 150). Under such a long, brutal process of conditioning and indoctrination imposed by the colonial masters, the colonial plantation experience was essential for the consolidation of the world of *créolité* not just as language, but as the basis for a whole new society. For centuries, the nation-building desire grew stronger until it broke loose in resilience, creativity, and in the inevitability of cultural mixture. Creoles

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Pidgins and communication languages are not creoles, as bases of emergent cultures. Colonization without slavery, however, had a cultural effect which somehow integrates the postcolonial principle of creolization. Colonization modifies the language and the vision of the world of both the colonized and the colonizer. See Gallgher, David (ed.), Creoles, Diasporas and Cosmopolitanisms. The Creolization of nations, cultural migrations, global languages and literatures, Bethesda, Dublin, Palo Alto: Academica Press, 2012, pp. 96-112.

stared back, and stole back the voice that had been taken away from them:

During the run up to independence, societies in the Americas appropriated and recast creolization as a more fortunate process productive of cultures and individual abilities distinct from, and possibly superior to, those found in the Old World. New World societies embraced their local identity, thereby valorizing the process of creolization. The term 'créole' obviously continues to have positive connotations for self-identifying creoles in Trinidad, Cape Verde, Mauritius and elsewhere. (Stewart 1)

Perhaps Stewart was a little too much "positive" when affirming that creolization was "a more fortunate process productive of cultures and individual abilities distinct from, and possibly superior to, those found in the Old World." However, the statement finds some resonance with what Walcott advocates, a sort of Caribbean autonomy to "embrace local identity," which in my view is just as problematic because, since both Caribbean autonomy and local identity are still in process, I am afraid cultures and individuals cannot be fully regarded as "fortunate." Caribbean autonomy to Walcott has to do with the creolization of that historically self-imposed otherness, not by denying tradition or inheritance, but by accepting it, and allowing the mixing to be whole. For Walcott, the mixing of race, ethnicity, language, and culture is considered "positive<sup>29</sup>." Once taken as someone out of the land with foreign origins, "Creole" has now taken on a "local color," possessing an emotional relationship with the land, and sometimes a social and sexual relationship with the local people. As Cohen puts it:

To be a Creole is no longer a mimetic, derivative stance. Rather it describes a position interposed

Whites who, through long exposure, have lost their originary identity. *Créolité* is the construction of a project out of these entangled mixings" (Rogoff, Irit. In James Elkins's *The State of Art Criticism.* Routledge, NY. 2008. 107).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> "At the Documenta platform of *Créolité* and Creolization, which took place in St. Lucia in January 2002, a model began to emerge that does seem to have potential as an alternative to some of the postcolonial, post-feudal paradigms. In this understanding, as articulated by Stuart Hall, Gerardo Mosqueras, Derek Walcott, and many other participants, creolization is a process of cultural mixings, an entanglement of cultures in the result of slavery, colonialism and plantation culture. Its components are highly slippery signifiers, since the originals Creoles are

between two or more cultures, selectively appropriating some elements, rejecting others, and creating new possibilities that transgress and supersede parent cultures, which themselves are increasingly recognized as fluid. ("Creolization and Diaspora" 14)

The upcoming crisis of modernity and the growth of capitalist societies in the West-Indies created a political environment of uncertainty. This political uncertainty, when in the face of transcultural encounters, kept waving between nostalgic patriotism and multiethnic tolerance. Creolization arises in such an environment to break the vicious cycle of centralizing power. Still according to Vianna, there is a burst of multiple reactions against any hegemonic attempt of westernization and return to unified and monologist paradigms, which turns multiplicity of i-dentities<sup>30</sup> something philosophically coherent, given Caribbean historical past (118). Minorities rise and "stare back" against those who insist on impolitely staring at strangers... not because staring at strangers is impolite, but because they are made strangers by that differance in the look that can only build up walls and put up barriers. Nevertheless, what practical difference does it make that Cuba, for instance, has been sustaining an alternative socio-economic framework than the dominant capitalist model that shaped the history of the Caribbean? The dominant capitalist model should not be a problem:

Barbados, pejoratively labeled as 'Little England', did not get to achieve the status of developed country by jettisoning Britishness. Rather it used the strengths of Englishness to propel itself into development. The solution has always been to as, Walcott so poetically suggested, "reassemble our fragments" because this gathering of our broken pieces is the "restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, [so that] our archipelago becomes a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent." (MacDonald 6 June).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> By coining "i-dentity" this way I keep in mind the question all of us must sometime face: "who am I?" It mingles the sociocultural aspect of being labeled to belong to a certain group, or for citizenship practicalities and its rights, but also means something deeper, I am confident, such as the essence of being, something so personal that only the "I" in us can identify, regardless of anything else. This is what, here I slip, *White Egrets* is all about.

Restoration of histories and reassembling of fragments is the positive aspect of *créolité*: a conscious effort not to erase identity traces, but to gather its qualities and strive toward a new social context in a more meaningful cultural practice. Such diversification of the Caribbean societies resumes what Aisha Khan thinks of creolization: that it has been one of the most alluded and vastly applied concepts in social sciences to analyze the processes in which new societies and languages emerged since colonial periods, but "a paradigmatic 'creolization' can, against intention, reproduce certain forms of knowledge about a people or a place—knowledge that is both elusive and, on the surface, persuasive" (Quoted in Walker 58). However, the on-the-groundness of academic remarks—myself included—might only end up bestowing a unilateral perspective upon creolization that falls into belligerency whenever the term comes up. When Jamaican historian and poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite began his manifest for national independent movements in formerly colonized regions in the 1960's, "creole" cultures fought for ideological breakaway and for nation-building alternatives. What Brathwaite proposed was a "postcolonial response to the cultural anthropology of the Caribbean in the mid-twentieth century" (Ahmed, quoted in Kirndörfer 9), and such a response originated in Caribbean societies. Here is how Brathwaite defines creolization:

[...] a cultural process which may be divided into two aspects of itself: ac/culturation, which is the yoking (by force and example, deriving from power/prestige) of one culture to another (in this case the enslaved/African to the European); and inter/culturation, which is an unplanned, unstructured but osmotic relationship proceeding from this yoke. The creolisation which results (and is a process, not a product) becomes the tentative cultural norm of the society. (Quoted in Douillet 7)

Creolization "becomes the tentative cultural norm of the society" because whatever shape society takes upon Caribbean land masses, which are defined geographically and by common historical experience as "Caribbean," is not enough to give an account of its Caribbeanness. It is a process, and as a process, the results of such creolization are in constant change. In consequence, Caribbean writers have developed what C. Wright Mills calls a "sociological imagination" (Douillet 1), which takes hold of the *Latin* origins of creolization to

create society—a creation that mirrors its own holistic image, and where the frontier now is no longer geographic, but cultural. Walcott has proved to have such sociological imagination, "[...] a quality of mind that seems most dramatically to promise an understanding of the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities" (1). To "declare" what the Caribbean i-dentity relies upon to (re)configure itself in Walcott's literary (re)presentations is to ponder upon how he decides to re-member <sup>31</sup> his society:

Walcott explores the colonial wounds of the Caribbean region and the various consequences of colonialism for the forging of Caribbean's contemporary identities. He proposes a model of Caribbeanness that values racial multiplicity and cross-dialogues between cultures, including, perhaps problematically, the European cultural tradition, as fertilizing. (Douillet, *Abstract*)

Nevertheless, "perhaps problematically" to whom? The European tradition has served him well, and I do not think any "forging" of Caribbeanness, or contemporary multiplicity of identities can escape such a tradition. Tradition of cross-dialogues, not only in language configurations, but in ideals of thought as well, is a "fertilizing tradition" in the sense that this tradition is undeniably part of him and of the Caribbean complex. One thing is to declare himself conscious of his historical heritage; another is to remain as vague as possible concerning the *forging* of his identity, whatever that might be. The in-betweenness of Walcott might sound as indifference and indecisiveness, without a practical image that actually attempts to represent his inner psychological identity. However, this apparent apolitical positioning regarding an essentialist identity as a Caribbean (and as a poet) is actually his political positioning on the matter. The acceptance of his identity, though fragmented and blurred by political acts such as the Caribbean postcolonial condition, is Walcott's ultimate attempt to embrace that *créolité* or genuine literary expression without restrictions whatsoever, dismissing poetry's Eurocentric cultural legacy by engaging the conflicts he is in.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ferment of abolition of slavery has been instilling Caribbean born-blacks into radical activism, especially in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Here again a pun with words, meaning both to remember or to tell from memory, and to reclassify or to grant another membership.

Britain. As a consequence, cultural and racial mixings are now welcome and seen as normal because, as sustained by Cohen, such mixings "create new possibilities that transgress and supersede parent cultures" ("Creolization and Cultural Globalization" 19). This is why, I venture, Walcott's claim on race is not so strong as it is with syncretism and creolization, for it matters not racial purity (which is a politically created illusion), or ancestry, but rather the sense that Caribbeans can act like Adam in a new Eden, being able to create, imagine, and "forge" their Reading Richard L. W identities. Clarke's "(Re)Conceptualizing Caribbean Cultural Identity," I was able to understand that for Walcott (and even Stuart Hall, who left Jamaica to write from hegemonic London) these alternative models of identity seek to "elevat[e] the inevitability of syncreticism or intermixture over the necessity to recuperate racial / cultural purity" (24). Clarke goes on explaining that because Caribbean identity was given a new paradigm, and the considerations that identities are culturally and historically mutable were kept, such circumstances are "open to deliberation and liable to provoke sometimes acrimonious debate" (23). With that in mind I ask: is this sustained act a masking of the black experience, a self-imposed oneness of the Caribbean self? Or is it only the object of a "passionate research," as once declared by Fanon<sup>32</sup>?

Since the 1980's, the idea of creolization has been *transformed* by the Caribbean diaspora discourse into "a tool capable of challenging nationalist projects, *forging* more supple theory of non-essentialist identity formation and transnational belonging" (Ahmed, quoted in Kirndörfer 9; My emphasis). While extending the basic idea of creolization as struggle against the colonial domination to a more general level of meaning and global sphere, there is the concern not to miss to relate these new developments to the Caribbean origins. Identities acquired a status of "transnational belonging," but these identities are not *global* in the sense of an international, worldwide citizenship, but belonging in the Caribbean. Thus creolization does not mean globalization: "if the world is in creolization the Caribbean, paradoxically, might have some catching up to do" (Stewart 4). This

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Franz Omar Fanon (1925-1961) was a Caribbean psychiatrist born on the isle of Martinique. His writings are concerned with the decolonization struggles that took (and are still taking) place in the Caribbean after World War II, analyzing the role creolization can play in forming humanist, anti-colonial, non-assimilationist, and counter-hegemonic cultures. His passionate contributions became notorious as he strived to find his own place as a black man from the French Caribbean while living in France, inaugurating "an anti-racist humanism era" (Web. Jan. 30. < <a href="http://www.iep.utm.edu/fanon/">http://www.iep.utm.edu/fanon/</a>).

rather intriguing observation by Stewart poses that, while advanced Western capitalist societies have experienced a technological, political, and economic change, the Caribbean experienced a change of a crossfertilized nature, in a deterritorialized attachability to globalization. In other words, though sociological global changes occur, they may not contribute to the legitimization of social identification in the Caribbean because most Caribbean communities may simply (and when it conveys) "belong to" and not "possess" the control of the resources of the land they live in. What globalization proposes is that people can be culturally controlled (or to be less incisive, influenced) by some center outside the place where the majority of the people live (Hall, "Negotiating..." 2). The questions of transnationalism and transnational identities are more related to the economic and political spheres than the questions of creolization are. The words of Ahmed (et al) can give us an overall perspective of "how creole" the Caribbean has become:

In sum, creolization has transmogrified from a politically engaged term used by Caribbean theorists, located in the Caribbean in the 1970s, to one used by Caribbean diaspora theorists located outside of the Caribbean in the 1980s, and finally to non-Caribbean 'global' theorists in the 1990s. (Quoted in Kirndörfer 9)

As not all Caribbean theorists partake of a fruitful common ground, which is different from a consensus, it leaves us readers with dissatisfaction—not because of diversities, or of possibilities and multiplicities, but—because of the uncertainties, the contradictions, and the ambivalences created by the "conciliatory eschewing of polarities, and the resisting of prejudicial essentialisms (MacDonald)." According to Martinican historian Édouard Glissant, creolization constitutes a mutual penetration of cultural elements in form of "clashes, harmonies, deformations, retreats, repudiations and attractions" (Kirndörfer 6). For Glissant, créolisation is not a "concept," an "idea," but rather, a more tentative definition of postcolonial "imaginary" that goes beyond the acculturation and interculturation described by Brathwaite. Introduction à une poetique du divers (In Vianna 110), Glissant classifies the American continent as being composed of three major Americas: Mesoamerica, the one with the native peoples, the Amerindians; Euro-America, distinguished by the presence conservation of European ethno-cultural traits and traditions, namely

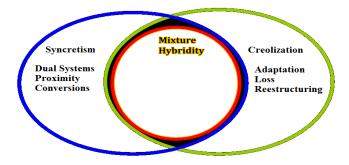
Canada, USA, part of Chile and Argentina; and the Neoamerica, that went (and is still going) through the "creolization process" because of diasporas, African slavery, the plantation and peopleling systems, such as the Caribbean islands, the Northeast of Brazil, Curação, The French Guyanas, the Caribbean coast of Venezuela and Colombia, great part of central America, Mexico and the south of USA, particularly Louisiana (Vianna 110; Alves 174). By categorizing the continent into these major divisions, Glissant revealed a great knowledge of the peoples and the contrasts wrought upon the land. What is in accordance with all the theories above is that the Caribbean region is not defined yet: as Glissant affirmed, "one can indeed foresee the outcomes of a métissage, but one cannot foresee the outcomes of a creolization" (Kirndörfer 6). The outcomes cannot be foreseen because there is no outcome yet, neither can a nation rise unless there is political and social recognition of such métissage, other than in the imaginary of Caribbean literature, or even creolization discourses only.

The account fails because of the fractionized, unneutral nature of the elements involved, and because of the equivocated relation it is attributed to them. Social sciences are replete with reductionisms of the kind, especially when dealing with postcolonial theories. Terms as black and white, master and slave, colonized and colonizer, oppressor and subaltern, and so on, only contribute to a "natural" desire of blending two distinctive and mutually excluding forces for the generation of a final "product," the "result" of such a theoretical encounter. Concepts such as "liminality" (or in no-(wo)man's land), "hybridity," "border," "creolization," and "mestizaje" have emerged from oppressive struggle to theorize as well as rhetorically acclaim a promising new era of human agency, democratic community, and cultural innovation amidst "hybridized webs of meaning" (Keri E. Iyall Smith and Patricia Leavy 346). Besides, the basic feature of unpredictability implies that creolization can never be thought of as static but characterizes itself through its resistance against essence and absolute identities, which somehow confirms my previous assumption of motion in stasis. Configurations around identity-making, though, are not simply an anthropological reflex of fragmented social subjects thrown up together in a corner (as literally were the slaves), but a vital process of the people who compose it as a product of humankind. To such an interrogation of assumptions, Palmie points out that "creolization theory is ultimately a mere reflex of the very conditions it seeks to denounce and supersede – and so, once properly conceptualized, might itself be more profitably

regarded as an object of, rather than a tool for, anthropological inquiry" (448). With Hall, I raise the questions:

Can the concept of *créolité* be applied to describe each process of cultural mixing, or is it peculiar to the French Caribbean? Does it constitute a genuine alternative to the entrenched paradigms that have dominated the study of postcolonial and postimperial identities? Do "*créolité*" and "creolization" refer to the same phenomenon, or does "creolization" offer us a more general model or framework for cultural intermixing? Should "creolization" replace such terms as hybridity, *métissage*, syncretism? In short, what is its general conceptual applicability? ("Créolité and the Process of Creolization" 27)

The answer to them all is: "it depends." Actually, it depends not only upon mapping the concepts across frontiers (both geographically, as in Glissant's Americas, and theoretically, as in how the concepts have changed from the original coinage), but also it depends upon the given historical context, the model of society, and the cultural configurations involved. As discussed before, creolization is a process, and as a process it is still going on. Though there are different conceptualities for this historically imposed European episteme Hall is concerned with, they all have something in common: they seek to name and capture the reflections of this current phenomenon which, though started long ago, is not over yet. Stewart ("From Creolization" 3) attempted to create a diagram that he called "Spheres of Creolization, Syncretism, Hybridity and Mixture," in which he depicts a sketch of understanding of these cultural blends in contemporary theory:



How can we relate this diagram with the multiplicity of identities? The question is similar to "when is abstraction in theorizing identities enough?" Because the effects of these (power) relations are unstable by nature, the multiplicity of identities is characterized by marking differences rather than articulations between fragments. Creolization, in this sense, meaning "adaptation," "loss," and "restructuring" is subdued to the exercise of social, political, or religious authority which also hinders access to whatever material resources originated from transcultural encounterings, diffusing them into mixture and hibridity. On the other hand, syncretism relies upon a different conception, implying the maintenance of "dual systems" that function together in "proximity," seeking a conversion of forces, but without mingling the elements into a real mixture. Perhaps Mignolo has said it best:

A crioulização compreende e supera todos os contrários possíveis (...). A crioulização compreende o seu contrário – a unicidade – que está no princípio das dominações. Mas a própria ideia de crioulização combate esse princípio<sup>33</sup>. (126)

Unlike *Dadaism*, creolization will never end for the fear of being acceptable, complete, or even whole. That is what makes it so intriguing, and why identities keep fragmenting from their reassembling, as said by Walcott (See 31). Identities keep moving and maintain their unfixed state, being fluid, growing toward "being" and "becoming," from the old to the new world, and in the future to come, always along and marginalization. What this with homelessness, resistance, dissertation has hypothesized so far is that creolization is motion in stasis. The motion is the mobility of (imported or rooted on the ground) cultures, societies, and all the movements created and sustained by poets, social studies, migration (once imported slaves), acculturation, interculturation, and métissage. The stasis is the gravity that regulates the on-the-groundness of a locale, a geographically determined space where, according to Ahmed, everything has been going on under the same sky:

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 $<sup>^{33}</sup>$  "Creolization comprises and overcomes all possible contradictions (...). Creolization comprises its own contrary – unity – which is immanent to the domination principle. However, the very idea of creolization fights against this principle" (My translation).

[...] a movement away from origin, a process of modification, involving rejection, adaptation, accommodation, imitation and invention, ending eventually in a dynamic new 'type' which is recognized as belonging to the locale but continuing to interact with new influences [...] grounded in movement, difference and transformation rather than statis or permanence. (Quoted in Kirndörfer 11)

Ahmed's (et al) definition is in conformity with what Stewart depicted in his diagram (above), as well as with the "transformation of imagery" that such entanglements provide. Every now and then a new batch of creolization is brought out of the multicultural furnace and left out to dry in the sun. In the Caribbean, however, (it does) not dry out, but (melts) instead, for there is no need of genesis, myth, or pure lineage. New creolized forms then become the ingredients for a new mixture of another batch that, unlike (the) Titanic, goes on and on. It is renewed by mixture and landscape. Notwithstanding all these affirmations of creolization as movement, as cultural syncretism, as defiance against hegemonic paradigms, etc... I must confess: it seems that resistance to category is a beauty creolization cannot afford, and that a Caribbean epistemological supremacy can never be sustained because of the conventions of the spectacle in which it appears. It looks to me that Caribbean creolization is the greatest metonymy of all time.

All that is left is hope in *Créolité*, or literary expression, which feels more real than creolization, somehow, with all its theoretical assumptions and unfinished syncretism. Caribbean literature endeavors to take hold of it all, but, as creolization, it is not standardized either. It is filled with the imagination of its writers whose development of identity is carried out within and between cultures, as insiders, outsiders, immigrants, exiles, and travelers. Such imaginary realm forces cultural identity, colonial and postcolonial (re)presentations of the Caribbean peoples, borders, languages, and traditions to hold strict relation to what is written and said about it. In other words, the Caribbean was *told into history*. This "report" resembles to have started with the first travel writings of Columbus, whose mixed historicality and fiction, in a great deal, contributed to the invention of America. The inherent intertextuality of Columbus writings has become, as Márquez calls it, a "magic realism:"

La llamada literatura mágica de América Latina, que es tal vez la literatura más realista del mundo, está circunscrita a un área cultural muy concreta, el Caribe y Brasil. Se piensa que su carga mágica se debe al elemento negro. Pero en realidad es anterior. La primera obra maestra de la literatura mágica es el "Diario de Cristóbal Colón". Y ya estaba tan contaminado de la magia del Caribe que la propia historia del libro es inverosímil<sup>34</sup>. (Marquez 196)

As literary critic Northrop Frye argues, "[t]he world of literature is human in shape...where the primary realities are not atoms or electrons but bodies, and the primary forces not energy or gravitation but love and death and passion and joy" ("The Educated Imagination" Part 1). Certainly, Caribbean literature is replete with "magic realism." It is an inherent aspect of its configuration, and it tackles the very assumptions Westernized schools of thought have impinged upon Caribbean otherness for centuries, "educating their imagination." "Western thought," says Wlad Godzich, "has always thematized the other as a threat to be reduced, as a potential same-to-be, a yet-notsame" (XIII). Walcott's literary endeavor has been considered crucial in demystifying its own representative aspects, contributing to the forsaking of a colonial ventriloguism held out for so long. Walcott's poetry should rise from the ashes, anew, like a phoenix, to tell the Caribbean story, that its people are no longer silent images, or an object of gaze before Westernized viewers. However, what happens is that his "ventriloguism" lies upon the fact that he decided to "assimilate" Western thoughts, beginning with the English Language and the literary tradition, which now gives way to a different type of canon: that of cultural identities, and minority groups. Writing in English, under canonical patterns, and declaring himself undecided as to his identity, makes his rearticulation of normativity look more like theatricality than nonconformities. Many critics believe that through Walcott's literature, the encounter with the Caribbean scenery is retold from inside out, from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> "The so-called magical literature of Latin America, which is, perhaps, the most realistic literature of the world, is limited to a very specific cultural area, the Caribbean and Brazil. It is thought that its magical toll is due to the black element. But in reality it is earlier. The first masterpiece of magical literature is the 'Journal of Christopher Columbus.' And it was already so contaminated with the Caribbean magic that the very history of the book is unlikely to be true" (My translation).

a standing position where he "[...] not only reclaims the land that the conquerors stole, but like them, he also rediscovers it" (Tung 94). From my understanding, this last quotation suggests that Walcott (re)discovers the stolen land with his apparent intention to dismiss the imperialist view of otherness impinged upon the Caribbean, and by reconciling with his African and European ancestors, as shall be explored in the next chapter. With the rediscovery of his land also comes to surface the rediscovery of the poet's self, and consequently, of his otherness. In the ekphrastic retelling of his otherness is the extended invitation to come and see, not just to stare and wonder. In the words of Barthes:

Imagery, delivery, and vocabulary spring from the body and the past of the writer and gradually become the very reflexes of his art. Thus, under the name of style, a self-sufficient language is evolved which has its roots only in the depths of the author's personal and secret mythology, that subnature of expression where the first coition of words and things takes place, where once and for all the great verbal themes of his existence come to be installed. (*Degree Zero* 10)

More than geologic related stories of fire and passion encrusted upon a book of archipelagic watery covers, *White Egrets* is a life that comes to life through "all the great verbal themes of [Walcott's] existence," as well as the unpredictability, or even intangibility of his identity. The next chapter analyzes how Walcott rearticulates Caribbean otherness through ekphrasis, suggesting his positioning in the postcolonial realm, and the important role of literature to sustain an imaginary world of ethnicities. It will also point out how otherness is part of ekphrasis (Lessing's paragone foments opposition, while Loizeaux's model proposes companionship), as well as how Walcott's (self-claimed) creolization reveals both a racial and a synergetic side of otherness.

## 3. EKPHRASIS THROUGH OTHERNESS

"Undying accents repeated till the ear and the eye lie down together in the same bed" (William Carlos Williams).

If Caribbean syncretism, mestizaje, and creolization gave way to a new imaginary of identities, being born, or even forged out of distinct-but-not-original sources, then one can say Caribbean identities have gone beyond the originary. "Beyond the originary" is the heart of ekphrasis, since it addresses an already idealized work of art—not the real/original object in the world per se—going beyond its boundaries, formulating/anchoring in its very own practice metafictional theories of depiction and description. In the words of Loizeaux: "Writing on a work of art differs from writing on a natural object in that the work of art constitutes a statement already made about/in the world. The ekphrastic poet always responds to someone else's work" (5). As Caribbean poets and writers like Walcott shift their look from fixed forms, or from what Bhabha, in his famous essay "The Location of Culture," called "singularities" and "organizational categories," and begin to focus on those "moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences," a sort of literary third space or an ekphrastic selfhood genesis emerges (Introduction). By observing the creolization process rather than creolized forms, going with Bhabha into "the realm of the beyond" (1), and expressing it through poetry, Walcott embraces an ekphrastic attitude toward the Caribbean and toward himself. As Richard Stein pointed out, "the writer now mediates between an external object, an acknowledged personal perspective on it, and a felt need to create a new public context of values" (quoted from Loizeaux 5), something "beyond" politics and the aesthetics, the precontextualized and the renewed.

All things considered, this chapter will seek to show how the "object of contemplation" is Walcott's own otherness caught in the moment of social/cultural articulation between his multifaceted identity as a creolized African/Dutch descendant and his English literary background. In fact, his literary background is so dear to him that it constitutes his memory of imaginary identity, as if the "snow and daffodils . . . were real," more real than the heat and the oleander because they "lived on the page, in imagination, and therefore in

memory" (Clarke Is Massa... 25). Even more intriguing, we find in Clarke's next line another declaration from Walcott himself: "There is a memory of imagination that has nothing to do with actual experience, which is, in fact, another life" (25). Creolized Caribbeans are already "someone else's work" in the sense that they are a product of history, cultural mixture and, social labeling, and that by responding to these already-made identity statements (or another life), Walcott creates a new public context for Caribbeanness, or the sense of belonging to the Caribbean in spite of its controversial and complex definition of itself. Therefore, this chapter will first attempt to demonstrate in what ways I view the presence of ekphrasis in Walcott's poems. I will primarily focus particularly on how some of his poems are ekphrastic at key moments when issues of identity and otherness are suggested (represented/depicted/portrayed). Second, I will seek to analyze how creolization as movement (or contemporary representations of culture in constant motion) is (re)configured in the making of (his) identity in the poetic act. Finally, I will seek to display Walcott's poetry in a universalized scenario, and analyze how his poetry distorts the density of space and time, fomenting derivations of "[. . . ] history, myth, culture, and the personal life with the realm of aesthetic vision" (Balakian 351). For these purposes, this chapter is divided into 3 sections: into depictions of creation; into depictions of movement, and; into belongingness.

## 3.1. INTO DEPICTIONS OF CREATION

This first section of chapter 3 will analyze the ekphrastic traits in the selected poems. The selected poems below deal more straightforwardly with an "ekphrastic approach," rather than the identity trope (destined to 3.2, though not totally left aside here). For this section, I have chosen 5 poems that appear to reveal the proposed "companionship" between poetry and painting, and in order to demonstrate how I see it, I will present 5 arguments, one for each poem. However, before the analysis, allow me some more few considerations.

Whenever circumstantial language intervenes to describe and/or depict life, it can either be interactive or passive. If language creates reality, then reality is not what it is. Even thought, actually, is not what we think it is. The abstract becomes tangible when it takes shape in space, delineating a "framing", that is, a paralyzing moment to which it starts to belong. Here is where ekphrasis comes in: the so-called

"pregnant<sup>35</sup> or silent moment" is frozen in space and time for the contemplation of the gazer. We often see a similar process in painting, when, for instance, St. George is about to kill the dragon in Paolo Uccello's "St. George and the Dragon" (1460<sup>36</sup>), or when *Orpheus* avoids looking at *Eurydice* to bring her out of *Hades* (See Introduction). Nowadays, a simple pause on a DVD going is enough to exemplify how the image can be paralyzed right before it "gives birth to or start moving toward" its peak action scene. How does Walcott do that (?) is what I am trying to demonstrate, under the risk of being misinterpreted as returning to the practices of totemism, fetishism, idolatry, animism, or even ventriloquism.

The hypothesis that conveys to be in the collective subconscioussness of ekphrastic poets is that *the image* needs *the word* to be represented when it cannot represent itself. Loizeaux, in her extensive introduction to *Twentieth-Century Poetry and the Visual Arts* calls this need "hereness":

From early Pound and the imagists to the postlanguage poets, poets have seen in works of art an immediacy, a presence, a 'hereness' that they have wanted for words, but that they suspect words can only gesture toward. (4)

Though poets in general may suspect language can only name what pictures show, and that words can only suggest the "hereness" poets seek for poetry, ekphrastic poetry arises to dramatize in social terms the "afterness" words attribute to images that cannot represent themselves without the mediation of discourse. It is as if the picture or the image has something to say, but cannot say it, as so convincingly described by Mitchell in "What Do Pictures Really Want?" (1996). In it, Mitchell corroborates Loizeaux's idea that, by shifting the question from what pictures "do" to what they "want," from the model of the dominant power to be opposed, to the model of the subaltern to be interrogated,

<sup>36</sup> U. A. Fanthorpe (1989), wrote a poem about Uccello's painting in which he totally distorts the act of creation by giving voice to the dragon, the girl, and the knight, each with their own perspective and opinions. "Not My Best Side," as it is titled, is an ekphrastic poem that shows how these moments in time and space are concealed with the imagination of its own depiction.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> As much as an allusive subject treated extensively by Mitchell and Cheeke, the study of gender politics (the "male word" violating or giving voice to the "female, silent image") will not be explored in this research. By the word "pregnant," the intended meaning is when the climax of the image may suggest a narrative of movement (See 31).

images are actually being invited to speak out. Is it not what ekphrasis stands for? When the image gets the chance to "speak out," and stand in for the object of representation, we as readers find in ekphrastic poetry an exquisite interaction that could otherwise have passed us by. In traditional ekphrastic poetry the object is already outlined in space (a painting, a drawing, or a sculpture), and is more easily retraceable, so to speak, depending on the poet's skills to describe and depict, and also upon the given context and the audience it is intended to. Of course, the object in Walcott's *White Egrets* is not one big picture of his otherness (which is already abstraction enough), but a whole mosaic of his self-portraits. As Walcott's otherness is manifested or even outlined in parts contained in each poem, each poem becomes a different self-portrait of the overall picture of him. This "whole picture" of him, like a mosaic painting, is composed of "many ekphrases" that keep pace with the modulation of his otherness.

I begin with poem 24<sup>37</sup> because it suggests the idea of words evoking the visual or being taken from a visuality that mingles from real objects to art to imagination. It also makes a transition shift in imagery as it mentions real painters and their work. In this poem, the speaker (which unavoidably will be treated as the author himself, given the autobiographical nature of the work, as well as what this analysis is bound to) is going to the beach when, on the road, something calls his attention. He often goes there and sits on a bench facing the sea. Such moments make him think about many things, but mostly of memory itself, and how it gets blurred away:

The sorrel rump of a mare in the bush, her neck stretched out in a shuddering whinny is straight out of Uccello or Marini, this salt-promised morning on the road to the beach A fine mist carries me to other places— 5 that haze which means it is raining in Monchy, and perhaps on the cobbled streets of (here memory pauses). What was that seafront hotel facing Syracuse? It will come back like her cheekbones, her face's aboriginal symmetry, it will all come back, 10 the obsession that I prayed I would lose, the voice that stirred like a low-tempered cello,

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup>As poems begin to be presented in the discussion, it is informative to know that the poems in *White Egrets* were not, apparently, placed by the author in any specific chronological section, nor do they all have titles. They are mentioned here by their number and page in the book, and also by their title when they have one.

and the esplanade's name... help me, Muse.
Who'd have thought this could happen, the yellow fading hotel, and now, Christ! her name?

Only the sun on the seafront stays the same to an old man on a bench for whom the waves are not news. (55)

My first argument that there is companionship between poetry and painting in Walcott's poetry is that, by mentioning the painters Uccello and Marini, the poet makes an allusion to Renaissance painting that apparently does not have much implication upon the imagery of the stanza, but that actually does. The speaker observes the scene on his way to the beach, and mentions his familiarity with the painters, as the mare reminds him of them. However, the words "straight out of Uccello or Marini" (line 3) are an affirmation of his knowledge and interest in painting, as well as a possible "borrowing" from the imagery in their work in an attempt to verbalize, or translate into words the imagery he sees. He could have simply said he saw a mare shuddering her neck in the bush, but then it would just be a "simple mare," not the kind of mare "eternized" in the paintings of Uccello or Marini. By granting the word "mare" a more "picturesque" quality, the poet made use of ekphrasis as a resource to help him think of ways to express his poetry, turning to painting as an alternative, valuable resource, thus allowing certain companionship for representation. More than a figure of speech (as in the apostrophe to the Muse<sup>38</sup> in line 13), the rhetorical situation in the next lines provided rhetorical questions addressed to his own absence of memory. The "pauses of memory" (line 7) reflect the changeable nature of the image, something as the Caribbean itself. By acknowledging the difficulty to remember, and his obsession to keep looking "until it all comes back," reveals the poet's poetic process of creation. As he looks at the mist, it "carries [him] to other places," such as *Monchy*, in France. The "haze in here" means "raining in there," "and perhaps on the cobbled streets of somewhere else." The speaker/poet seems to declare that everything looks like something else, and that everything we look at reminds us of some other things, from another time and place. As we reread the first lines, we begin to conceive the possibility that the mare looks like a painting, and that the haze and mist represent the foggy state of mind of the forgetful. According to Melville, the negotiation of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Possibly referring to Paul Cézanne's *The Dream of the Poet Or, The Kiss of the Muse* (1859-60) - (oil on canvas). Cézanne, Paul (1839-1906) / Musee Granet, Aix-en-Provence, France / Giraudon / The Bridgeman Art Library. Web. Jan. 30. 2015. <a href="http://paulcezanne-art.tumblr.com/post/70395434713/the-kiss-of-the-muse-1860-paul-cezanne-">http://paulcezanne-art.tumblr.com/post/70395434713/the-kiss-of-the-muse-1860-paul-cezanne-</a>.

meaning occurs when "[t]he visual and the textual are tied together by a rhetoric that is understood in terms of neither literary nor painterly meaning, neither narrative nor design, but which aims instead at presentational expressivity" (9). The presentational expressivity is taken here as more than an intersemiotic, or multimodal genre, but as thematic or relational.

The color vellow, as shall be seen with other poems, is constantly present, indicating the fading of the image. When things fade away they begin to die. They all go from whatever color of their youth to yellow, then grey, then black. Those fleeting, agonizing moments are kept in stone as the poem gets hold of its imagery. Like the hotel in Syracuse that fades in his memory, so does this woman's facial symmetry, though the sound of her voice is still ringing in his mind as "a low-tempered cello" (line 12). The sound of her voice is not enough to maintain the memory of her name alive, which suggests that language cannot always "voice" the symmetry of the image. It also reminds me of a song: "Now I'm sitting staring at the wall afraid for my sanity / The sound of your voice, the touch of your skin is haunting me / \Gamma m still trying to come to my senses / but I can't look back so I'm taking my chances" (Europe – I'll cry for you). Staring at his memory wall, as it were, the poet looks to be relinquishing over the fleeting nature of the image, trying to come to his senses with the hope that "it will all come back." When image depends upon words to be remembered, captured or reined in, it is like the Muse<sup>39</sup> of history he spoke about long ago. The only thing that does not change is "the sun on the seafront." The sun, however, has already turned yellow. Yellow, in painting, has a great deal of connotation in van Gogh, whatever his reasons<sup>40</sup>. Is the poet, who is declaredly fond of van Gogh, looking at the yellow sun and afraid for his sanity? As an observer, I wonder if he does not see himself about to scream, locked inside Edvard Munch's painting...

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Walcott contends that "some writers" reject the idea of history as time for its original concept as myth, the partial recall of the race. For them history is fiction, subject to a fitful muse, memory. Their philosophy, based on contempt for historic time, is revolutionary, for what they repeat to the New World is its simultaneity with the Old (Clarke, Richard L. W. "The Muse of History." *Is Massa Day Dead? Black Moods in the Caribbean*. Ed. Orde Coombs. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1974. 1-27).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> "van Gogh's proclivity for exaggerated colours and his embrace of yellow in particular are clear from his letters and, in contradistinction to chemical or physical insults modifying perception, artistic preference is the best working hypothesis to explain the yellow dominance in his palette." <a href="http://www.nature.com/eye/journal/v5/n5/abs/eye199193a.html">http://www.nature.com/eye/journal/v5/n5/abs/eye199193a.html</a>>. Web. 16 Oct. 2014.

Poem 34 might slightly point toward this imagetic notion. The speaker is now at a coffee table somewhere looking at illustrated paintings when suddenly, another burst of sensations lead him to conjecture about his search for identity, both as the painter he wanted to be and as a *créole*:

Willows in scratchy lines of a van Gogh drawing, striped farmyards, bridges, canals, a spray of rooks, a man in clogs with a barrow, barges at their mooring; my half-ancestral country in coffee-table books; and once on a vague visit, windmills and dykes, skeletal, engraved with a sharp Northern misery that burst into yellow and madness. I turn pages for some spasms of heritage, the days when I painted in the furnace of noon. All that was ages ago, before I became more acquainted 10 with love and the suffering that love likes, the terror of a field with clamorous, cacophonous cawing. (66)

My second argument that there is companionship between poetry and painting in Walcott's poetry is that the ekphrastic characteristic (of this poem) might not be because of its strong images (and the question of identity and heritage as a backdrop), but because of its intertextuality with painting itself. It is not that the poem "becomes" a painting, but that through the ekphrastic act of depicting self-description the poem brings immediacy to the reader. Notwithstanding the pretentiousness of a visual, pictorial immediacy (the mentioning of van Gogh inevitably brings the painter or a painting to mind), poem 34 above leads us to believe that what makes Walcott's poetry ekphrastic is not metrical craftsmanship with its lyrical linearity, but the sting of visual, painterly otherness incrusted in every look. His otherness is exposed in the lines: "I turn pages / for some spasms of heritage, the days when I painted / in the furnace of noon," revealing his desire to find a link with his "half-ancestral" past—Dutch:

Silly to think of a heritage when there isn't much, though my mother whose surname was Marlin or Van der Mont took pride in an ancestry she claimed was Dutch. (64)

Since the identity issue is recurrent in Walcott's work, even if we did not know his declaration in poem 33 (excerpt above), the "windmills and dykes" that he saw "once on a vague visit" (almost an anagram) in poem 34 would have given it away he was referring to

Holland (line 5). Still, the declaration which made him worldwideknown insinuates to be his main trope and motif: "I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me, / and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation 41." Yet (back to poem 34), this half-ancestral past was being searched in "coffee-table books," pages of yellow-distant cries that can lead one to madness. The distance of these pages's cries lie both in the fact that his ancestry is from a long-lost line, and if they are displayed in "coffeetables" it means they are tourist pamphlets, an ekphrastic attempt to represent the unseen. The yellow pages, however, were not in a phone book where he could easily find an address (or his roots). What if the vellow pages were also his old fresco paintings of the windswept island painted "ages ago?" The poet says he "turn[ed] pages for some spasms of heritage, the days when [he] painted in the furnace of noon . . ." (lines 7-8), as if he would not stop painting until the whole picture of his heritage would form under the yellow light of the sun. Speculations aside, the figures in the poem are definitely in the style of van Gogh<sup>42</sup>. The way he portrays the people and the landscape reminds us of *The* Pollard Willow (1882), with that sombre landscape, the stagnant pond, and the dead tree. Or of Bridges across the Seine at Asnieres (1887), with its "bridges," "barges at their mooring" (lines 2-3) and that "Northern misery that burst into yellow and madness" (lines 6-7). In poem 34, the poet characterizes his rootless past by "mirroring himself on the model of van Gogh, whose visionary artist's eve transcends nationality, origins and history" (Weststeijn 192). This may sound like an oversimplification of motifs, but one of Walcott's "regrets" in White Egrets is not having become the painter he always wanted to be, or at least, conciliated his talents in similar proportions (even though he worked in "the furnace of noon," violating any possible trade union working hours to get it). This is exactly what the next analysis will show in poem 18, delving into a deeper discussion about ekphrasis and art itself (See Statement. . .).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Derek Walcott, "The Schooner Flight" (*The Star-Apple Kingdom*, 1979), in *Collected Poems*, 1992, p. 346.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> "In the fall of 1881, van Gogh briefly resided in Etten (Dutch Republic), where he produced a number of drawings of local peasants and laborers performing routine, humble tasks." See drawing of *Road in Etten* at <<a href="http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1975.1.774">http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1975.1.774</a>>; See *The Pollard Willow* at

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.sunexpressnews.com/van-gogh-museum-unveils-new-willow-watercolor/">http://www.sunexpressnews.com/van-gogh-museum-unveils-new-willow-watercolor/</a>; See Bridges across the Seinet Asnieres at

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.vangoghgallery.com/catalog/Painting/49/Bridge-across-the-Seine-at-Asnieres.html">http://www.vangoghgallery.com/catalog/Painting/49/Bridge-across-the-Seine-at-Asnieres.html</a>>. Web. 16 Oct. 2014.

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According to Mitchell, a name is the supplement that stands in for the absence rather than the presence of that which it names (Iconology 29-30). The instability of meaning in this apparent dualism reflects the poet's plain intention of granting a richer expression to his already metaphorical poetry. I dare here to say, at my own peril, that Walcott's poetry makes allusion to a modern Dorian Gray that is not decaying in corruption, but that, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde's preface, uses "vice and virtue as materials for his art." And Wilde continues: "It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors" (The Picture of Dorian Gray 6). Poets, somehow, are quite sensitive to record feelings, and manifest their impressions upon those feelings. Walcott, however, goes beyond: he never ceases to impersonate nature, to seek for that light in Tiepolo's hound's thigh<sup>43</sup>, that Wordsworthian prelude that makes the poem an object of self-contemplation. In order to verify these statements, poem 18 is quoted entirely. In the contemplation of the self exposed in the poem, ekphrasis manifests in the hereness of the moment, taking the words to that level of projection, as the gazing of a portrait would grant the attentive viewer. Here we can see both painting and poem "freeing" themselves from the limited enclosure of the form, in an unbounded spatial temporality. The speaker is on the porch swing, on any given afternoon, when the sunlight strikes some old paintings, and that becomes a metaphysical experience:

The angle at which the late afternoon light fell across both canvases revealed the coarse impasto of the paint, a crudity that now showed so late in life, when I had imagined I would master portrait and landscape by this time, I'd be seventy-eight and had done some more than tolerable, I thought, things, sold, exhibited them, but the scabrous surfaces were like some dread disease the paint had caught that suddenly in that hour raked scenes and faces

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> "Tiepolo's Hound, published in 2000, is a book-length poem that combines the stories of two painters—told in verse—with Walcott's own watercolor and oil paintings. Written entirely in alternately rhymed couplets, the imagery of Tiepolo's Hound is informed by the landscapes of St. Thomas, St. Lucia, and Paris, while the story of the poem follows two narratives: one of the Caribbean-born painter Camille Pissarro, the other of Walcott himself, taking up the persona of a poet and failed painter. Pissarro's great urge in the book is to move to Paris to pursue his painting career, a journey Walcott describes with an Impressionist's vivid, delicate sensibility. Meanwhile, the Walcott character recalls a painting he saw when he was a young man visiting New York City: 'Then I caught a slash of pink on the inner thigh/of a white hound entering the cave of a table' See more at

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5936#sthash.aUDkY73U.dpuf">http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5936#sthash.aUDkY73U.dpuf</a>.

to nothing, not a style, just a crass confidence—
a thickness, not of skill as in van Gogh or Bacon,
that showed the self revealed for what it is;
the revelation came so quietly. There was no sound
in the studio, only the sea now chafing outside
with disappointment, with numb dissatisfaction —
a truth that went beyond despair or pride.
At least the grief I felt was my own making,
determined to find purity in putrefaction,
still one that cracked the heart and left it aching. (49)

My third argument that there is companionship between poetry and painting in Walcott's poetry is what I call "Dorianic allusion," which shall sink in in a moment. Allow me to proceed with the analysis of the poem above: The late "afternoon light" came in an angle that "revealed the coarse impasto of the paint." As it "fell" from above, the light struck the speaker with introspection, a moment of profound reflection upon his art, and the things he had accomplished before his old age—sold, and exhibited some paintings. Because "the light showed so late in life," and revealed the crudity of his art, the speaker became thoughtfully disappointed with himself, and with the achievements he thought he would have made by the time he was seventy-eight. The frustration is reflected on the way he sees his painting—not a nevervanishing painting of skill as in van Gogh or Bacon, but a reduced form, not a style, whose only thing it did for him was to give him "a crass confidence" (line 10). Here we see his current old man's attitude contending with his earlier, youthful ambitions and motivations.

On account of the fact that the poem does not mention what the canvases are about (presumably some landscape representations), but what has happened to the paint (it has caught "some dread disease"), it matters more in the poem what the speaker experiences with the canvases rather than what they are about. When the "revelation came" (line 13), it produced a cleansing of emotions, granting a self-encounter which made the speaker see the painting's crudity as a representation of the self—his other self—or the absence of the self he thought he would become. By transcendence, the ekphrastic act between the speaker-artist-painter and the poet-writer transformed the moment in a catharsis, and the object of contemplation in an extension of the poem itself—an epiphany that provided an experience "that showed the self revealed for what it is" (line 12).

The paintings are real, which gives us the actual type of ekphrasis, but the tone of the poem is notional, for the poet seems to see

the layers of the "coarse impasto" being raked, that is, being gathered one over the other as with a rake on the grass at a backyard, "to nothing, not a style, just a crass confidence." When we rake the grass we only do so because there is something covering the grass, and it is usually unwanted. Here again, it is possible to see the faces and scenes in the surface of the painting reconfiguring themselves because of "some dread disease the paint had caught," which brings that "Dorianic allusion" I spoke before. It is almost as if a multifaceted self is trying to get rid of the frame, an indication of the impossibility of a final self-portrait that would not be temporal, but spatial. Continuing with the analogy, what Oscar Wilde did in The Picture of Dorian Gray was an inversion of the aesthetic notion about art that was just as present then as it is in today's criticism. In Wilde's assumption, art should not be limited to the mimesis of what is considered moral or ethical, and all that respectful middle-class plethora of manicheistic principles. The Picture of Dorian Gray reflects the decay and the immorality of consciousness. What makes it somewhat ekphrastically controversial is that the stasis of the moment in the picture suffers the effects of time, thus redirecting the ut pictura poesis (as in painting, so in poetry) theory to an antagonistic view of the paragone. Besides, what Wilde suggests with his work is that when the painter puts too much of her/himself in the painting, her/his intentions should be of hiding or concealing the *real* artist, not revealing her/him. Walcott, however, is his own critic at both the highest and the lowest forms of autobiography.

As seen so far, the image-word relation in the paragone is a troublesome one. It attributes to painting a "more natural" mimesis because of the usage of natural signs, i.e., images that work as language and that can more thoroughly give an account of "reality," or what can be seen and touched. Naturally, the notional ekphrasis of Wilde's fictional painting aims at picturing more controversial and less imagetic aspects of such reality. In other words, what *The Picture of Dorian Gray* does is "depicture" less materialized abstract ideals, since the painting shows the corrupted character of Dorian Gray. It is usually difficult, for mostly anybody, to think on the matter of consciousness, morality, and the like without the mediated embodiment language is capable of providing. It is almost a semiotic curse, or as Barthes would put it: "[...] there is no meaning which is not designated, and the world of signifieds is none other than that of language" (*Elements of Semiology* 10-11).

Let us now go back to the poem and see how poet and persona find their place. In the rhyming of "surfaces" with "scenes and faces"

the poet brings his life as the ekphrastic object into the frame of the poem. The poet says the surfaces are "scabrous," which means they are covered with scales, rough to the touch. It is the very wrinkling of the actual painting that, under the afternoon light angle, projects different shapes, and allows different perceptions. These perceptions have to do with multifaceted identity, since the same painting can trigger distinct representations interrelated with the mood of the observer, as well as on the "mood of the light," acknowledging the painting with organic features subject to the agents of time. As in poetry, so in painting for what it seems: a companionship between the mediums. It is through ekphrastic poetry that such impossibility of giving rise to a museumcaged frame becomes evident. The stillness and the movement are forever imprisoned behind the words. Perhaps the disease the paint had caught refers to his old age, and now because of the light of wisdom life brings, the object reveals its crude mortal condition, searching for "purity in putrefaction" (line 18).

Amazingly enough, the raked surfaces are sensible to touch, which turns it into a pseudo-sculpture (line 9). The speaker experiences the painting by touching it, and not only observing it from the outside, as a naïve or possibly curious, yet lacking-in-intention observer. Somehow, he experiences the pictorial realm with the same eagerness the image comes out of it. The poet is "determined to find purity in putrefaction," never leaving behind the attempt to master what he can do best: painting with words. The poem, I believe, must be talking about painting as a metaphor for control: the paint(ing) may wither and vanish, rot and disappear, but the ekphrastic glimpse of the poet's otherness had to be engraven with "a truth that went beyond despair or pride" (line 16). As a writer, he hopes that his poem will never catch a disease, nor have its surfaces made rough by the rake of time. In the words of Octavio Paz:

Los estilos nacen, crecen y mueren. Los poemas permanecen y cada uno de ellos constituye una unidad autosuficiente, un ejemplar aislado, que no se repetirá jamás. El carácter irrepetible y único del poema lo comparten otras obras: cuadros, esculturas, sonatas, danzas, monumentos. A todas ellas es aplicable la

distinción entre poema y utensilio, estilo y creación 44. (5)

Though the ink may vanish upon the printed page or the paper may organically decompose, the poem will endure because it can be recovered through the use of memory. Memory provides the language backup so that the poem may be spoken out and rewritten once more. However, if the picture fades, how can it speak out? Such "selfcontained unit" does not remain with paintings, for details tend to get lost when out of sight. It is the consciousness of the moment that makes the speaker state "at least the grief I felt was my own making" (line 17). Here the ekphrastic paragone bends before the power of poetry. The power of the image in the painting is fleeting when compared to the image in the ekphrastic poem that can last longer in the collective memory. A picture, therefore, may not be worth a thousand words. This, somehow, "ekphrastic revenge," is what I take to be Walcott's greatest pictorial irony (Rose 6). Yet, in the end, nothing is free of "grief," "pain," "disappointment," and "numb dissatisfaction." Though one of the canvases was "dying in sickness," the other one still "cracked the heart and left it aching." Once more, "the perpetual ideal is astonishment 45, (White Egrets 8). And astonishment it is. As we look at the next poem in the collection (poem 19), we begin to convince ourselves that the painter-poet ekphrasis himself.

Blindness, which is not the opposite of vision, falls to ruin as the excess of colors fades under reason's daylight sun, and all we as readers and the poet as writer can see is our own reflection upon our own vices and virtues. The reflection upon any surface is meaningful per se, since it transcends your self, and becomes a new, different, and autonomous self. This autonomous self is connected with you, thereby transcending both the boundaries of reality and those of representation, since reality itself is already a representation of its representative supposed authenticity<sup>46</sup>. As an intrinsic, ekphrastic nature, the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> "Styles are born, grow, and die. Poems remain, and each poem is a self-contained unit, an isolated item, which will never be repeated. This unique and unrepeatable character of the poem is shared by other works: paintings, sculptures, sonatas, dances, monuments. Unto all of them, the distinction between poem and utensil, style and creation is applicable" (My translation).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> White Egrets (Poem 4), p. 8. The statement claims that the stasis condition is continuous amazement and motion, symbolizing the ekphrastic act, and the reason why Walcott writes: to disturb.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> More about the issue can be found in Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, page 150, where he discusses how Althusser rethinks ideology through Lacan's "imaginary," explaining that "misrecognition" is just as vital for the image of the self than its own reflection.

reflections of the self, as well as self-reflections of the speaker in Walcott's poetry could not be better portrayed other than mingling with painting, a partnership that bears good fruits.

In the embellishment of poems pitched throughout the same fluent first person, and in a criss-cross rhyming of enjambments, Walcott chronicles his life ekphrastically, as in the making of a self-portrait. The following analysis will step into issues of identity only to show how ekphrasis imagetically relates self-analysis with moving reflection. This next poem deals with the insatisfaction of an artist facing his self in the mirror, always adrift, in a self-imposed exile from the art of painting he used to be so skillful at:

I come out of the studio for blue air that has no edges, for a sea white with lace, shaken again by still another failure. My mirror seems to want some other face. The usual bristling halt, my joy upset 5 by some rhetorical passage in the painting, too crude, too vain, at which the brush went, Stet! Blood sugar low. Next thing  $\Gamma$ ll be fainting. What glares in there now has taken months to make, drawing and draft and structure that leapt 10 into belief with faith that youth had once that it would soar while lesser talents slept. The elongated figures of an ascetic straight from El Greco, his skull-echoing face well, imitation is its own aesthetic, 15 less theft than tribute, as they say these days. The failed canvases turn their shamed faces to the wall like sins. A square of sunlight slowly passes across the studio floor. I envy its patience. (50) 20

My fourth argument that there is companionship between poetry and painting in Derek Walcott's poetry is the analogy of the mirror. The speaker's multifaceted self in the poem above faces the mirror with dissatisfaction. The reflection of his face is unbalanced by the accumulation of his "failures." The ever-increasing and always-present self-demand that pervades his expectations could not rest on a single image, which reveals the *nonfixity* of the image of identity. At this time of life, Walcott's poetry is openly confessional, committed to acknowledge his literary legacy and the sense of otherness through

European sources. According to Alvarez, these autobiographical manifestations present:

[...] an artistic intelligence working at full pitch to produce not settled classical harmonies but the tentative, flowing, continually improvised balance of life itself. But because such a balance is always precarious, work of this kind entails a good deal of risk. And because the artist is committed to truths of his inner life often to the point of acute discomfort, it becomes riskier still. (257-258)

Walcott's artistic endeavor to "use his skin for wallpaper" has carried his confessional work to a self-analysis display of his otherness. If that is truly "a risk" as Alvarez suggests, then it is "just as riskier" as this metaphor from criticism. When the precarious "balance" appears—"the usual bristling halt"—the excitement disappears (line 5). The sensation of goosebumbs, and shivering down the spine is no longer the reaction produced by the speaker's painting—probably his own. The speaker is shaken by his "failures," and he seems to lack confidence in his abilities as a painter. So he leaves the studio for the "blue air," where the sky has no "edges" as a painting has, and where the sea—an upsidedown reflection of the sky-has its borders framed by "white laces" (lines 1-2). Thus, the epistemology of failure takes hold of the speaker. and rebounds in the self-recomposing of a multifaceted subject. As the spectator of his own fragmented-never-to-be-whole art of rebuilding (or searching for) identity, and as a poet concerned with the rediscovery of his past that is long gone (as if the image of that past was already effaced), he has to fail. A mixture of biography, poetic incorporation of self-examination, and aesthetic projection, this poem captures the anxieties and the expectations of an artist whose desires are palpable in testimonies about his lived experiences. The confession of these inner truths does not seem to be "discomforting" to the speaker, but revealing, especially when he speaks about the mirror.

Why would his mirror want "some other face"? Personifying the mirror as something other than a mere addendum without any optical theory, but as a demanding extractor of "human essence," refining and making expressive the outward form, resembles a prelude of the ekphrastic fragmentation of the self. By considering the mirror his self-portrait, this will unavoidably redirect the analysis towards the *paragone*, and the rival mediums of representation mentioned before.

Bodily changes and adjustments to the expressive muscles of his face are presumably not the reason for the disappointed reflection, since his joy was "upset by some rhetorical passage in the painting" (line 6). This gives me some room for more speculations about ekphrasis. How do you paint your self-portrait? Supposedly, you can paint your self-portrait by looking at one picture of you, or as with Velasquez, you can look at your reflection in a mirror—that unless you have a photographic memory. Once the painting is done, either or by some other way, a poem can then be written about it. At any rate, ekphrasis would then become a textual mimesis, that is, the poem would be about a painting that was not based on the "original" face, just as Leonardo da Vinci's famous *Mona Lisa*, which, by the way, was made out of many drawings. In Elaine Scarry's book *On Beauty and Being Just* we find:

A beautiful face drawn by Verocchio suddenly glides into the perceptual field of a young boy named Leonardo. The boy copies the face, then copies the face again. Then again and again and again. He does the same thing when a beautiful living plant – a violet, a wild rose – glides into his field of vision, or a living face: he makes a first copy, a second copy, a third, a fourth, a fifth. He draws it over and over, just as Pater (who tells us this about Leonardo) replicates – now in sentences – Leonardo's acts, so that the essay reenacts its subject, becoming a sequence of faces: an angel, a Medusa, a woman and child, a Madonna, John the Baptist, St. Anne, La Gioconda. (Quoted in Cheeke 185)

Ekphrasis in Walcott's biographical self-portrait is both an act of creation through imitation and a critical act of description, argumentation, and revelation. In this sense, the poem is not a recreation of the stillness of the image, but a companionship to its motion, since his mirror keeps wanting some other face, and the image does not rest. The image does not rest because it is looking for that essay that "reenacts its subject." In Walcott, however, the subject is fragmented, and the essay cannot come up but a piece at a time. To go even further, there is an intricate, scary relation between the picture and death, or as in James Elkins's<sup>47</sup>, the object "stares back from the dead." Assuming the death

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Based on <<u>http://www.alanrobbins.com/UI/Readings%20PDFs/Elkins.pdf</u>>. Web. 22 May. 2012.

of the depicted self, we would then be talking about a "dead self," no longer immanent or eternized in, here again, the stasis of the moment, but a *nature morte vivante* portrait. What Elkins suggests in his work is that there are three irreducible elements of vision: the subject, the act of seeing, and the object that is seen. Yet, he presents this challenging notion that there is no such thing as an observer looking at an object, if seeing means a self looking out at a world. To see is to be seen, and everything we see is like an eye, collecting our gaze, blinking, staring, focusing and reflecting, sending our look back to us, "dead and alive" at the same time. In the process of reading a poem, the same principles can be applied. This, perhaps, is better illustrated in the words of Mário Quintana who once declared: "[u]m bom poema é aquele que nos dá a impressão de que está lendo a gente... e não a gente a ele! 48."

Still about the invasion of "some rhetorical passage in the painting," would it sound like a protuberant leap of semanticizing here to say that poetry was overwriting painting in the making of the selfportrait, although poetry is already rhetorical? Well, maybe, but what seems to be the case is that the speaker was "being inspired" to write while he was painting. Because of the impossibility of painting with words (and the words coming from the Imperial English language legacy) the passage would look "too crude, too vain, at which the brush went, Stet!" Stet means "let it stand," an attitude of resignation with which the speaker would attempt to regain his joy. He then mentions his diabetes, a disease that can take your sight away, or cause blurred vision. In such condition, it is common among hypoglycemic diabetics to see some distorted spotlights, and for those with retinopathy, to present more severe impairments in color distinction, or potential blindness<sup>49</sup>. I mention this because what comes next in the poem is "what glares in there has taken months to make" (line 9), a contrastive scenario of light's refraction and reflection upon the canvas. The contrast between the glaring of the painting with the low blood sugar effect may suggest ekphrasis itself in its difficulty to dramatize the arts. The "drawing" became a "draft" and then a "structure that leapt into belief with faith that youth had once" (lines 10-11). The painting was given life as it received colors from the rhetorically contaminated brush. The act was difficult to make, it took months, an indication that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> "[a] good poem is the one that gives us the impression that it is reading us... and not that we are reading it" (My Translation). <a href="http://poetamarioquintana.blogspot.com.br/2009/01/mario-">http://poetamarioquintana.blogspot.com.br/2009/01/mario-</a> quintana-um-bom-poema.html>. Web. 26 April. 2012.

49 For more information, see <a href="https://www.nei.nih.gov/health/diabetic/retinopathy">https://www.nei.nih.gov/health/diabetic/retinopathy</a>>. Web. 26

April. 2012.

youthful hope that painting would "soar" has sunk in. What emerges as a figure is that of "an ascetic straight from El Greco." An ascetic is someone who lives in self-discipline and self-denial, especially as a manifestation of religious devotion. The figure has a "skull-echoing face," possibly referring to the work of Greek painter Doménikos Theotokópoulos<sup>50</sup>, who lived and painted in Spain during the sixteenth century for most of his life, and whose work would constantly make allusions to death by the portrait of a skull. It is also possible to attribute to the speaker the qualities of an ascetic, given his self-imposed serenity in judgment. From the European perspective of El Greco, the image on the canvas is that of an "elongated figure," one that is deformed—almost unpleasant to sight—which exposes the otherness from which his self-portrait cannot escape. Moreover, what is intriguing is the insinuation of one art imitating the other. Or, was he imitating El Greco?

"Well, imitation is its own aesthetic," says the speaker (line 15). Alan H. Goldman<sup>51</sup> has proposed a "list" of aesthetic properties works of art should possess, from which I quote:

- 1- pure value properties: being beautiful, sublime, ugly;
- 2- formal qualities: being balanced, tightly knit, graceful;
- 3- emotion properties: being sad, joyful, angry;
- 4- behavioral properties: being bouncy, daring, sluggish;
- 5- evocative qualities: being powerful, boring, amusing;
- 6- representational qualities: being true-to-life, distorted, realistic;
- 7- second-order perceptual properties: being vivid or pure (said of colors or tones);
- 8- historically related properties: being original, bold, derivative. (125)

What more subjective than these "properties" could there be? Were we to consider number 8 of the list first, would an "original, bold, derivative" work of art escape or be destitute of imitation? Afresh, the responsibility lies on the beholder's shoulders. The capacity of perception and pattern integration to form connections may hinder the whole existing possibility of an aesthetic property. As the speaker says, it is "less theft than tribute, as they say these days." If art imitates life, what when the artist imitates his own life using "one of his arts" into the "other"? Once again, is he saying that he is imitating El Greco as a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Web. 26 April. 2012. <a href="http://www.joslyn.org/collections-and-exhibitions/permanent-collections/european/el-greco-saint-francis-in-prayer/">http://www.joslyn.org/collections-and-exhibitions/permanent-collections/european/el-greco-saint-francis-in-prayer/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> In Blackwell – A Companion to Aesthetics. Second edition. Edited by Stephen Davies, Kathleen Marie Higgins, Robert Hopkins, Robert Stecker, and David E. Cooper. Malden, MA 02148–5020, USA. 2009.

painter, or that his personified art is imitating El Greco's art? Or what when the rhetoric invades the visual, and the perception of the forming characters lies between the word and the sign? Usually the central focus is on the otherness of the ekphrastic object, and how language responds to it. In poem 19, the inquiry is not about the medium of representation, but about the object. Thus, the object is antagonistic to the "expected antagonism" between verbal and visual representation, being opposite to the still and fixed format, being active and mutable before the viewer instead. If Goldman's list above declares the properties a canvas should have, then perhaps this is why the canvases have "failed," and had to "turn their shamed faces to the wall like sins" (lines 17-18). Recalling Wilde, it is pledging allegiance to the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors its true object. In the restlessness of the object lies the gaze of the observer who, in turn, turns the gaze back to himself. Silence suggests, indeed, a sense of unlimited space. Nevertheless, the absence of sound in a picture may not last too long as imagery inspires the gazer, stirring up emotions, and provoking thoughts. The next poem to be analyzed—poem 25, entitled "On Capri"—seems to induce the same foreshortening perspective that of *Renaissance* master painters.

Here we find the speaker in Italy, where, from the balcony of a hotel, he watches a public space full of people talking about painting guidebooks. He then redirects his look toward the characters in the books until he hears the characters themselves begin to talk, as if they were alive:

Light frames itself in little squares; a journal.

Past the white terrace the crowd jerks to the prose of a guidebook; they file from the frescoes: cardinals, nuncios, infantry captains, the occasional dwarf, corn-plaited madonnas, assassins (bead-eyes, bumpy nose); 5 they pour from paintings and bring them up to date their silent language startled into noise, as if a bent finger stirred them or a wand conducted articulate limbs, gave breath and voice to flaking paint and flexion to each hand

10 carrying a shopping bag; Mantegna<sup>52</sup>, Crivelli<sup>53</sup>,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Andrea Mantegna (b. 1431, Isola di Cartura [near Vicenza], Republic of Venice [Italy]—d. Sept. 13, 1506, Mantua). Mantegna's invention of total spatial illusionism by the manipulation of perspective and foreshortening began a tradition of ceiling decoration that was followed for three centuries. Mantegna's portraits of the Gonzaga family in their palace at Mantua (1474) glorified living subjects by conferring upon them the over-life-size stature, sculptural volume, and studied gravity of movement and gesture normally reserved for saints and heroes of myth

the face of a tourist by Andrea del Sarto<sup>54</sup>: their duty made the commonplace immortal, and the women, the women! Hard to see them as that only, that one, for instance, paused at shop door in shades, at a glance. just a tanned girl or Proserpine<sup>55</sup> at spring's portal. (56)

15

My fifth argument that there is companionship between poetry and painting in Derek Walcott's poetry is that there is an ekphrastic nature in poems and works of art: they cling on to past, present, and future. By lowering the horizon (as Renaissance master painters used to do), from the light in the "white terrace" where he stands, down to the guidebooks (subject of the crowd's prose), and into the pictures inside these painting guidebooks, Walcott "gave breath and voice / to flaking paint and flexion to each hand / carrying a shopping bag" (lines 10-11). Suddenly, a commonplace such as a square full of people passing by became an "immortal place" (line 13). He gives the idea of seeing the

and history (The Britannica Guide to the 100 Most Influential Painters and Sculptors of the Renaissance. Ed. Katheel Kuiper. Britannica Educational Publishing, New York, USA. 2010. pp. 107-117).

Among a number of exceptional 15th-century Venetian painters, Sir Carlo Crivelli (b. c. 1430/35, Venice [Italy]—d. c. 1494/95, Ascoli Piceno, Marche) was probably the most individual, an artist whose highly personal and mannered style carried Renaissance forms into an unusual expressionism. There is an exaggerated expression of feeling in the faces of his figures, usually pensive and dreamy but sometimes distorted with grief, and in the mannered gestures of their slender hands and spidery fingers; this expression is closer to the religious intensity of Gothic art than to the calm rationalism of the Renaissance. Some of Crivelli's more important works are Madonna della Passione (c. 1457), in which his individuality is only slightly apparent; a Pietà (1485); The Virgin Enthroned with Child and Saints (1491), the masterpiece of his mature style; and the eccentric and powerful late masterpiece Coronation of the Virgin (1493) (The Britannica Guide, p.98-99).

<sup>54</sup> Andrea del Sarto (b. July 16, 1486, Florence [Italy]—d. before Sept. 29, 1530, Florence) was notably short in stature and known to his friends as Andreino. With two brief exceptions, his working life was spent in Florence. He was a pupil of Piero di Cosimo and was greatly influenced by Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, and Fra Bartolommeo. His art, rooted in traditional Quattrocento (15th-century) painting, combined Leonardo's sfumato with Raphael's compositional harmony in a style that was typical of the Cinquecento (16th century). He began to produce independent work about 1506—not precociously (The Britannica Guide, p.248-253).

<sup>55</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). Proserpine (1881-1882), oil on canvas 39.2 x 78.7 cm (15.43" x 30.98") Private collection. This is a perfect example of a "dimensional portal" of ekphrastic creation. The painter-poet wrote a Petrarchan sonnet with a strict rhyme scheme about his own painting. For more about Rossetti's aesthetic attempt to create a mood of darkness and mythology, see Christopher Nassaar`s article <a href="http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08957699909598052?journalCode=vanq20">http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08957699909598052?journalCode=vanq20>.</a>

The painting can be viewed at

<a href="http://allart.biz/photos/image/Dante\_Gabriel\_Rossetti\_1\_Proserpine.html">http://allart.biz/photos/image/Dante\_Gabriel\_Rossetti\_1\_Proserpine.html</a>>. Web. 15 Aug. 2012.

pictures coming out of the paintings, alive, mixing with the living, shaking hands, and so on, to eventually becoming them, as did the "tanned girl or Proserpine at spring's portal." Such theme in this poem shows the dynamic nature of ekphrasis as the speaker seeks relations between the paintings on the guidebooks and his position as public living reminder, as if past and present were face to face.

The liminality<sup>56</sup> of past and present configures both the space and time of the ekphrastic situation: "their silent language startled into noise" (line 7) reveals the enchanted realm of ekphrasis, where the imagination of the speaker preached to him from the pulpit of his memory. The power of the images to literalize memory brings the dead bodily back to life, making the absent present, restoring that which has been lost. In the public space of the poem, ekphrasis is a place of meeting, of unexpected reunion—a place of communion between present and past, viewer and artist, viewer and painted subject, almost a dimension in time. I suggest diving a little deeper: if one could be as familiar as Walcott with the painters in the poem and their work, as well as their painting techniques, and their love for (and evident influence from) sculpture, the ekphrastic condensation of art and artist, poetry and poet, might become more evident. When (or if) in possession of such background knowledge, the interpretation, interaction, and visualization that naturally come along would not be (to anyone else, I suppose) a guarantee of an ekphrastic experience in Italy. The poet's ekphrastic experience is to the mind's eye like a light that "frames itself in little squares" (line 1), promoting complicity, delight, and enticing the achievement of higher levels of distinction between supposition and significance<sup>57</sup>. Poem 25 portraits Walcott having an encounter with his literary background tradition. Though there are people with "bead-eyes," or a "bumpy nose," this does not make them assassins, neither does it make other people look like "cardinals, nuncios, infantry captains, the occasional dwarf," or "corn-plaited madonnas:" they are not described as a misconception, or an oversimplified conception of Renaissance Italy. It has to do with the poet's ekphrastic look at the past, which ends up reconfiguring the very rhetoric of imagery.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Definition of liminal: *adj*. 1 relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process; 2 occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold. *noun*. Liminality. Web. 15 Aug. 2012. < <a href="http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/liminal">http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/liminal</a>>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Based on Paul Vincent Spade's *Thoughts, Words And Things: An Introduction To Late Medieval Logic And Semantic Theory.* 1996. 241-270.

# 3.2 INTO DESCRIPTIONS OF MOVEMENT

After my 5 arguments for the companionship between poetry and painting have been presented in the previous section, the reader is now encouraged to keep them in mind for the next analyses, for all poems possess each and everyone of these "qualities." In this, the second section of chapter 3, I will focus on one of the effects of the companionship by analyzing the illusions of (silent) movement in 4 different poems. Allow me to begin with an allegory between movement and otherness.

There is an old saying that says wherever you go you always take yourself with you (Gaimon 48). You can change your hair, change your clothes, change your profession, your spouse, your name, and so on, but there will always be a part of you looking back at you, lurking in the corners of your soul (or as you wish). You try to fight it, but you cannot win, so you avoid it. You run away. Yet it is always there with you. It is not until you decide to domesticate your own otherness that you can stop in front of the picture and look at it in the eye. The picture, then, becomes your "Wilde's picture," a mirror, looking back at you. It is a moment of terrifying light that brings a grief not to despair, and a pain not to suffer, but a self-contemplation of ekphrastic truth: you and the other, you. However, before we all can do that, that is, being able to face our own otherness, we need to start noticing it, observe it, as if it were some sort of self-portrait hanging on the wall. The portrait moves as you move, and different paintings of you appear according to the situation you are living in the great gallery of life, so to speak. As moving visuality, this allegory also takes hold of ekphrasis while ekphrasis seeks to uphold creolization as movement or motion. What comes next is the analysis of poems that deal not only with the immanent image of a changing, fragmented identity, but of the speaker's self. The speaker's experiences with his own self can instigate the reader to see, for instance, more in nature than the imagery of landscape. Walcott's experiences somewhere other than his homeland resignify his understanding of who he is but did not know, creolizing his identitary convictions under that indigenous drama mentioned in the introduction.

As Walcott travels (moves) to different places, his literary text undergoes a variety of forms—temporal, spatial, cultural, aesthetic, imaginative—and it gives way to wonderings about attitudes toward traveling and migration, cultural imagination, the memory of home, and how, by his traveling abroad, his poetry "migrates away" from established literary conventions. However, wherever he goes, he takes

himself with him, always wishing to come home. Home, somehow, acquires an epic perspective so common to ekphrastic depictions of the journeys of the self, along with landscape, language, culture, and the encounter with the unknown, or the other. I chose poem 2 (untitled) to begin the discussion because it deals with strong metaphors of coming home. Here are the last lines:

Accept it. Watch how spray will burst like a cat scrambling up the side of the wall, gripping, sliding, surrendering; how, at first, its claws hook then slip with a quickening fall to the lace-rocked foam. That is the heart, coming home, trying to fasten on everything it moved from, how salted things only increase its thirst. (4)

Not only this poem renders the visual with immediateness, as it also gives us the illusion of the movement (can you see the cat jumping, gripping, sliding, and then falling?). This reinvention of cultural archetypes of homecoming such as in Homer's *Odyssey*, Margaret Atwood's *Penelopiad*, or in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, for instance, occurs when journeys of the self, articulated through the navigation of space, displacement, and identity promote the othering of the self, its self-fracturing, and the eventual reconciliation. Whenever the speaker in the various poems of *White Egrets* is in a foreign land (i.e. having tea in London, or a hair cut in USA; visiting canals in Amsterdam, or wherever else he has been to in Europe), his rhetoric has the tone of responsibility so that ekphrasis can accommodate cultural differences and otherness in a society that cannot give a proper account of its own protagonism.

As discussed before, you may travel and live anywhere in the world, but you will not be able to call a place "home" unless you are able to negotiate your own identity. Walcott knows that too well. According to Robert Elliot Fox, there is a sense of exile or isolation inherent to Caribbean literature,

[...] for it is necessary to realize that there is also a literature of exile produced by those who remain at home and yet who are, seemingly, rootless ... To know *where* you are, but not *who* you are; to struggle with the present while still not being able to fully comprehend the past – this, too, is a form of exile. (56 emphasis in the original)

Despite the sense of isolation, this does not seem to be the kind of exile Walcott refers to. The poet's identity is fractured when abroad in face of the encounter with the other, but reassembled back again when able to recognize something that reminds him of home. Then what happens is that this reassembling of the self allows the poet to visualize his own otherness in every piece of the remaining fragments, bringing the "who" and the "where" closer together. Even more evident in his poetry is how much identity is more of a choice of origins than a birthright. The love for the people and the land of Saint Lucia is his declared motif shared openly, and the kind of isolation (or even exile) it produces is not a segregation of exclusions, but rather a sort of homecoming exile. Surely he is no immigrant writer writing about the immigrant experience, "but one who has lived it, one whose response is an irruption in words, images, metaphors, one who is familiar with some of the inner as well as the outer workings of these particular contexts" (Itwaru 25).

I cannot afford not mentioning linguistic aspects in the promotion of movement in imagery. The next poem will deal (in its I and II stanzas) with the sensation of movement (motion) in diasporic cultural representations, that is, the encounters between representations of communities, nationalities, and, of course, identities. In the words of Hall (1997b), it seems that Walcott's way of addressing representation through language is not so much in how language and representation produce meaning, but "how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constrains identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied" (6). In poem 16, entitled "In The Village," there is an example of how language can promote such imagetic glimpses, and how Walcott conceives his poetic oeuvre in this recurrent obsession that the vision discourse is to Caribbean writers. It emerges from sensorial perception through diasporic conditions, as well as out of cultural (counter-) encounters. Walcott's travels to colonized and colonizing countries make room for introspective visual perceptions of world representations (ethnicities and nationalities) that may lead meaning into the realms of self-recognition through identified mirrored surfaces. In other words, it matters that he sees what he sees, but most importantly, why he sees it. In the poem below, the question of postcolonialism is openly exposed, and a reflection on otherness is proposed throughout the poem so that local and universal notions of life become intertwined.

I

I came up out of the subway and there were people standing on the steps as if they knew something I didn't. This was in the Cold War, and nuclear fallout. I looked and the whole avenue was empty, I mean utterly, and I thought, 5 The birds have abandoned our cities and the plague of silence multiplies through their arteries, they fought the war and they lost and there's nothing subtle or vague in this horrifying vacuum that is New York. I caught the blare of a loudspeaker repeatedly warning 10 the last few people, maybe strolling lovers in their walk, that the world was about to end that morning on Sixth or Seventh Avenue with no people going to work in that uncontradicted, horrifying perspective. It was no way to die, but it's also no way to live. 15 Well, if we burnt, it was at least New York.

The poem invites the reader to ponder upon the "horrifying vacuum" on the streets that warns people that "the world was about to end" in that "uncontradicted, horrifying perspective." The word "Village" in this context refers both to the Greenwich Village in NYC, as well as it retraces a simpler place, where the provincial has not vet been taken by the cosmopolitan, and where there might still be "singing birds." In this particular event when Walcott visits the USA, he comes in touch with the Latin American search for identity. People, in this continent are all connected, whether Afro or West Indian Americans. There is this fear of unrecognition that being American is anything less than European or African. Such a cultural encounter takes bigger dimensions as we allude to how we imagine communities. Coined by Benedict Anderson in the early 1980's, the phrase "imagined communities" deals with the actual impossibility of face-to-face contact when a village becomes a city, cities become a state, and states become a nation:

All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined [. . .] imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion. (4)

One must agree that when under "face-to-face" encounters, cultural identities can be "more easily" outlined and identified. I say more easily because the idea of barriers, walls, cultural separation, or perhaps, segregation, and self-detachment can be viewed<sup>58</sup> as something almost physical, or more objectified, as Bhabha described it in "The Location of Culture" (42). When the other is there before our very eyes—local facing local—the human encounter is (mostly mistakenly) understood through what people do (gestures, posture, wear, possessions, language, etc...). With it comes the mental belief that what people do is who they are, and otherness problematizes that pretty well. Hall states: "Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eve of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself" (In Nakayama 14). The way we construct our narrative about identities is strictly related to how we understand difference. Sometimes we exaggerate with imagination, sometimes we suppress them or pretend they are not there, but mostly, identities are constructed when "silence multiplies," and we keep their representation to ourselves. By comparing the streets to "arteries" in poem 16, Walcott brings movement through an image of a living being, with the pulsating blood that vibrates life, and "multiplies the plague of silence." It also implies that the people of New York are living in small parts of the city, but all likely terrified of the war. This particular moment in the poet's life shows how determined his staying in the Caribbean has become:

Everybody in New York is in a sitcom. I'm in a Latin American novel, one in which an egret-haired viejo shakes with some invisible sorrow, some obscene affliction, 20 and chronicles it secretly, till it shows in his face, the parenthetical wrinkles confirming his fiction to his deep embarrassment. Look, it's just the old story of a heart that won't call it quits whatever the odds, quixotic. It's just one that'll 25 break nobody's heart, even if the grizzled colonel pitches from his steed in a cavalry charge, in a battle that won't make him a statue. It is the hell of ordinary, unrequited love. Watch those egrets trudging the lawn in a disheveled troop, white banners 30

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Let us not forget the extent of perception of the verb which, among many other meanings, may mean "a way of showing or seeing something as from a particular position or angle."

trailing forlornly; they are the bleached regrets of an old man's memoirs, printed stanzas showing their hinged wings like wide open secrets. (46)

The artificiality of a sitcom pervades the strange depiction of New York. A sitcom<sup>59</sup>, or "situation comedy," usually features characters sharing the same common environment, such as a home or workplace, with often humorous dialogue. The speaker feels that these small, metafictional realities contribute to separate its people even more as if this is merely a highly compressed trailer from a much longer story. His heritage, instead, is that of "a Latin American novel." A novel 60 is a long narrative normally in prose, which describes fictional characters and events, usually in the form of a sequential story. When the poet affirmed he is in a Latin American novel, he projected his self to a Caribbean ekphrastic frame, with its own realm of identity plot. Tim Liardet<sup>61</sup> can help us:

> The visual dominates the popular consciousness as never before. Largely as a result of the Internet, image and text, pictures and poetic thought (or at least a species of poetic thought) have been brought together as never before, as if ekphrasis is finally honouring the pledges it has been making to rhetoric since the days of Homer. As a result, ekphrasis has become the transcription of the hyperactive imagination. ("Ekphrasis Ekphrasis" New Welsh Review 72)

More than "hyperactive imagination." Walcott's "parenthetical wrinkles" (line 22) confirm his ekphrastic fiction, leaving his identity as its backdrop. By chronicling about his life "till it shows in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Brett Mills, in his recent work *The Sitcom* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009) takes a global view of sitcom, examining international examples as well as those produced by the more dominant British and American broadcasting industries, in order to explore the relationships between sitcom, nation, and identity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> A fictitious prose narrative of book length, typically representing character and action with some degree of realism: the novels of Jane Austena paperback novel. 'Web. 10 Oct. 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt; http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/novel>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Tim Liardet is Senior Lecturer in Creative Studies at Bath Spa University. He has produced five collections of poetry. His fourth, To the God of Rain, was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation for Spring 2003. He won an Arts Council England Writers Award in 2003 and The Blood Choir, his fifth book, is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation for Summer 2006. Web. 10 Oct. 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=19323">http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=19323</a>.

his face," Walcott approximates his otherness to the otherness of the other in the comparative framework of nationalities. Fact is if your otherness is manifested because of the other, then the other's otherness is manifested because of you. It is the story of an "unrequited love" we are all (imaginarily) living, and just because we imagine it, it does not mean it is *imaginary* (Nakayama 14). An unrequited love is a one-sided love that is not reciprocated. Nevertheless, the speaker affirms he will not "break nobody's heart," even under threatening conditions. The unrequited love of the other is like a false idol, a statue that fails to come to life, holding words and physicality in high indifference. They only "speak out" when we decide to give them a voice, or listen to them. This sentiment of abandonment and despisal the speaker experiences (the same feeling diasporic figures forcefully brought to the Americas must have felt) is dressed up with the image of the egrets walking heavily across the lawn (Lines 29-33).

The movement in the poem now takes a turn and *moves* toward a more plastic imagery: the egrets are like white flags of surrender that represent his regrets scattered along his life's path. This clever metaphor, let us agree, of egrets as "bleached regrets" form the tapestry of the left-overs of his poetic memory. These "old man's memoirs" are "printed stanzas," which suggests his regrets have acquired the standard of poems, and therefore, have become an ekphrastic object for contemplation. Likewise, the image of the "hinged wings" turns the egrets' wings into pages of a book that can be flipped through, showing that this old man has no secrets to hide, even from himself: "printed stanzas / showing their hinged wings like wide open secrets" (line 33). His regrets are printed on his self-portrait book, which invites the reader to fling open its doors through the poem onto the vacant and immense spaciousness of the American continent, his own Latin American novel.

The speaker, an egret-haired *viejo* (line 19), accepts his "failures," and "shakes with some invisible sorrow, some obscene affliction" the burden that has been heaped upon his grey head (Lines 19-20). It is as when one is suddenly struck with the (invisible) memory of a mistake, an embarrassing moment, or a failure, and immediately shakes their head in order to send the thought away. This is the moment in which the poem brings to the mind's eye the movement and the stillness of the image side by side, confronting the Lessing tradition of immobility, or stillness. As previously seen in Mitchell (See 22-23), the language employed in poem 16 equally takes on temporal and spatial plasticity in a different notion of what it is to emulate nature. According to Krieger, "[t]he poem as emblem, under the ekphrastic principle, seeks

to create itself as its own object. And yet no object" (25). For what it shows, the presence of a notional ekphrasis in the next stanza works as an attempt of translating the movement of the image, or the image in movement, without silencing it completely:

#### Ш

Who has removed the typewriter from my desk, so that I am a musician without his piano 35 with emptiness ahead as clear and grotesque as another spring? My veins bud, and I am so full of poems, a wastebasket of black wire. The notes outside are visible; sparrows will line antennae like staves, the way springs were, 40 but the roofs are cold and the great grey river where a liner glides, huge as a winter hill, moves imperceptibly like the accumulating years. I have no reason to forgive her for what I brought on myself. I am past hating, 45 past the longing for Italy where blowing snow absolves and whitens a kneeling mountain range outside Milan. Through glass, I am waiting for the sound of a bird to unhinge the beginning of spring, but my hands, my work, feel strange 50 without the rusty music of my machine. No words for the Arctic liner moving down the Hudson, for the mange of old snow moulting from the roofs. No poems. No birds. (47)

The word choice and arrangement in the poem cannot be neglected for images to begin to form. The "spring" has come, and the poet's "veins bud." This image of flowers sprouting from his arms, neck, and legs portray a poet "full of poems" but incapable of collecting them because his "typewriter" was "removed", and the poems are now lost inside a "wastebasket of black wire" (it is black but not completely, for there are spaces between the woven wire—probably an allusion to race, or himself as a recipient full of holes, incapable of holding the poems, or a resentment for not being considered "black enough"). The singularity of the moment of poetic creation vanishes so easily that it has to be recorded to endure. That is why poets write, to take it out of themselves. It is almost a physical need, like eating, drinking, or even breathing. When the "Artic liner" (line 52) was passing by, it kept on moving away "down the Hudson," never to come back-unless the moment were eternalized, framed, recorded in the form of a poem. The poet, however, was unable to write. Supposedly, there could be other ways for the poet to write without the "rusty music" of his typewriter, but the beauty of this poem lies in the ekphrastic illusion that many other poems got lost, when actually they gave way to this one. Metapoetry is always a strong literary tool because it shows that poetry does not claim to be able to portrait everything. Yet, it is temporal, as the flowers in spring, or the snow in winter, and it remains "behind the glass" (line 48). The speaker said he was waiting for the sound of birds to announce the beginning of spring, but they did not show up. If the birds did not come, neither did spring. Yet, what does that have to do with his typewriter and the fact that there were no poems because it was removed from his desk? Perhaps his typewriter was a type of bird too, that when it sang its rusty music it would launch the spring of poetry, bringing all its flower poems. Then "the notes outside" would finally become "visible," unhinging the book of nature itself.

This is even more imagetic: a musician can play notes. The piano is the typewriter, and the notes are visible outside, meaning the poet can look at the world's tablature and be able to play the music of life, gliding through its rhythm, in a tempo speed so "imperceptible" to the imperceptive ear as "the accumulating years" (line 43). In the act of transcribing the notes from the tablature of nature, the poet translates them in the form of a poem. The poem itself becomes a sheet of music. We could go on, allured by this enticing reverie, but how ekphrastic is this comparison between music and poetry? Is this the aesthetic revolution "where the ear and the eye lie / down together on the same bed," as suggested by William Carlos Williams?—a symphonic ekphrasis, a Shelleyan "melodious hue of beauty<sup>62</sup>?" With Mitchell, we can only wish this ekphrastic hope will break down the walls and withdraw the barriers between the object and the observer, as well as between the senses. Whether sounds or the rhythmic movement of notes can promote the creation of images, and what kinds of sounds are evoked by poetry may lead us to a more sophisticated type of ekphrasis: multimodal—of which I shall not speak. The significance of such discussion merits another presentation in another literary tradition. For now, just let it be.

As this section about movement comes to a close, the next 2 poems (33 and 31) will portray a chagallistic view, with a mixture of stillness and movement, identity and ekphrasis. As pointed out, when it comes to the differences between images and words, the stillness and the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> "On The Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci," by Percy Bysshe Shelley. (Read in Loizeaux 20; 67). Web. 22 June 2012. <a href="http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/shelley/medusa/mforum.html">http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/shelley/medusa/mforum.html</a>>.

movement suggested by the frame of pictorial representation cannot but allure before the impediments of its own verbal existence. That is, images can presumably instigate more contemplation and visualization in the gazer than words in the reader, but the images are rooted in and spring forth *from*, or even *out of* the words. Murray Krieger observes in *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*:

Ekphrastic ambition gives to the language art the extraordinary assignment of seeking to represent the literally unrepresentable. Yet every tendency in the verbal sequence to freeze itself into a shape—or can we use 'form' or 'pattern' or some other metaphor borrowed from the spatial arts—is inevitably accompanied by a counter-tendency for that sequence to free itself from the limited enclosure of the frozen, sensible image into an unbounded temporal flow. (9-10)

It is as if Ekphrasis was imagery on the run willing to have its ticket punched at every stop on the reading train, or "the gliding cruiseboat," as shown below with poem 33 ("In Amsterdam"). Moreover, the romantic, ekphrastic image of motion in stasis creates an imagination paradox in which the imaginative, mythic insight is capable of embodying the basic and fundamental perception we make of us all, of art, of nature, and of eternalizing moments, as if (they were) engraven upon a cold-marbled Grecian Urn<sup>63</sup>. So it is with ekphrastic imagery. The romantic attitude of immobility is a useless shunner to keep lovers away from dancing. Ekphrasis leads otherness through the ballroom of paraphrastic suggestions, swirling around at the beat of the rhythm of the poem, while the idea of art keeps changing in the backdrop through time and space. The rhythm flows and gives life to the poem as it invites the reader and dancer to sway with the music it smoothly sings, as if the poem were a painting without frames, without limits, and to see what things look like to the left, and to the right. When life is fake and art is truth, there is no such a thing as the "art of living," or "the life of a work of art," but rather, this approaching and refusing the human condition which is everywhere, and "has no today nor yesterday tomorrow: it is

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Keats, John (1795-1821). "Ode On A Grecian Urn." In that 1819 poem, Keats shows "[...] how the romantic attitude of immobility in relation to the external world of society and nature remains a central issue." In José Roberto O'Shea. "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and Go Down, Moses: an intertextual inquiry into John Keats and William Faulkner. *Fragmentos*, número 25, p. 085/101. Florianópolis/Jul-Dez, 2003.

always," and then what there is "is human man<sup>64</sup>." Walcott's poetry is art that allows us to see more nuances of life, or maybe get ready for some other things we might not be aware of, such as individual reaction to the idea of death. In poem 33, entitled "In Amsterdam," the poet gazes at the landscape and reflects about how much time he has left:

I

The cruise-boats keep gliding along the brown canal as quiet as prayer, the leaves are packed with peace, the elegant house-fronts, repetitive and banal as the hotel brochure, are still as an altarpiece.

We cruised it with Rufus Collins once, a white macaw on his piratical shoulder. Rufus is gone.

Canals spread reflection, with calm at the core.

I reflect quietly on how soon I will be going.

I want the year 2009 to be as angled with light as a Dutch interior or an alley by Vermeer, 10 to accept my enemy's atrabilious spite, to paint and write well in what could be my last year.

П

Silly to think of a heritage when there isn't much, though my mother whose surname was Marlin or Van der Mont took pride in an ancestry she claimed was Dutch. 15 Now here in Amsterdam, her claim starts to mount. Legitimate, illegitimate, I want to repaint these rubicund Flemish faces, even if it's been done by Frans Hals, by Rubens, by Rembrandt, the clear grey eyes of Renee, the tree-shade on this side, 20 the chestnuts that glitter from the breakfast window, why should I not claim them as fervently as the pride of Alix Marlin an early widow, as a creek in the Congo, if her joy was such? I feel something ending here and something begun 25 the light strong leaves, the water muttering in Dutch, the girls going by on bicycles in the sun. (65)

The movement in the poem begins with the image of cruise-boats "gliding along the brown canal as quiet as prayer." The speaker is on one of these boats, and as they glide, it is "the elegant house-fronts" that seem to pass him by (line 3). Though there is this illusion of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> "Comigo, as coisas não têm hoje e anfontem amanhã: é sempre. O diabo não há! É o que eu digo, se for... Existe é homem humano." Rosa, Guimarães. *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. Editora Nova Aguilar. Botafogo, RJ. 1994. 191; 875.

movement (he being still, and the landscape moving past him), he is able to declare that these house-fronts are "repetitive and banal as the hotel brochure," which is "still" as an altarpiece (line 4). The brochures must have been pamphlets containing information and pictures about the place, an iconography of the old world evoked through a reference to ancient painters. This particular moment in the poem makes reference to the *Ut pictura poesis* tradition where painting is silent poetry, poetry is eloquent painting (See 16). The form and the vibrating alliterations of the poem reshape its surface as the original canvases of the masters did reshape their sense of belonging. The persona presents itself with form and force, centralizing the poem around the self, but as part of the painting as well. He wishes light will illuminate his life on the way ahead as in a Dutch alley, writing and painting well in the year 2009, that could be his last year. He wants the end of the road to be full of light as he crosses the threshold from whence no traveler returns. And as the painting endures after the painter is gone, so will light remain in the alley after the grey swan enters the lake for its final, agonizing dance. He then moves to issues of heritage and identity, as previously discussed (See 48).

A particular characteristic of this poem is its musicality. The musicality of the poem provided by the rhyme scheme and the alliterations elevate the tone to a dramatized act, as ekphrasis itself. This bardic performance of the self has the intent of turning poetry into something public, read out loud, such as "girls going by on bicycles in the sun" (line 27), leaving us with the thought that, for Walcott, a poet must sing at the highest pitch of her/his voice. Sing out there, in the open spaces where the music can be heard, and where art should matter. If you cannot name metric, or the Latin scansions, it does not matter. You count on your fingers and the rest is accident, or hopefully divine. The ekphrastic frame does not only sustain the objects of value perpetuated by culture as it consistently gives birth to more condescended ones. The extension and endurance of the values otherness projects into this frame is upheld by the pillars of the poem, where language works as a fence protecting its property. The poem encloses a circle within which the meaning circulates. Prose is linear; poetry is cyclical and goes beyond history and meaning (Paz 83). You can read around the poem, or around the center of its arena, but this temporality will only dismiss the image. It is only when you stand still and stick to the center of the circle that the hereness of the image is accessed. The words of the poem work as pillars whose shadows face the center, and whose responsibility is to keep the meaning within its rhythm, moving non-stop, as "girls going by on bicycles in the sun."

As the speaker moves out of his circle of identity, that is, his known and accepted tradition, he steps into the unknown, and begins to "think of a heritage," even when "there isn't much" (line 13). His wanting "to repaint these rubicund Flemish faces" shows how much the speaker refuses to be represented by "a legitimate, illegitimate" ancestry that claims to be Caribbean's own mythology (line 17). To accept such a heritage, he has to "claim it as fervently as the pride of Alix Marlin, or as a creek in the Congo." Alix Marlin, whose ancestry was Dutch, was Walcott's own mother (An early widow. See 3), while the creek were a Native American people formerly inhabiting eastern Alabama. southwest Georgia, and northwest Florida, now located in central Oklahoma and southern Alabama. The Creek were removed to Indian Territory in the 1830s<sup>65</sup>. Here we see how Walcott feels about his ancestry: though it is silly to think about a heritage "when there isn't much," now that he is in Amsterdam, his ancestor's claim "starts to mount," that is, begins to "speak out" of its shadowy places, calling upon his roots, declaring that Amsterdam, with its "Flemish faces," could also be part of his family album. The "picture" of Amsterdam is given a voice, and even the water along the brown canal begins to "mutter in Dutch" (line 26). The same conviction is also claimed "fervently" by the creek in the Congo. How much pride would a Native American claim to have if s/he were a slave in Congo, just like the African Caribbean descent in the Americas? As a lost root to the Caribbean, the Congo has proved to be independently strong, with a sense of colonial identity that resembles emblematic paradigms in the Americas. Here is the impression I have of what Walcott constantly does: he plays with cultural and linguistic boundaries, only to be seen for what they stand for, never for what they are. The representations of a creolized identity in this poem rely on the fact that it is an autobiographical poem, and one can trace the speaker's heritage line. Jane King, once more, clarifies:

Walcott contemplates his own Dutch heritage and wonders why he shouldn't claim that ancestry "as fervently . . . as a creek in the Congo." And with the quietness of that question, he refers to all the vexed issues of race and ancestry and the Caribbean attitudes to them he once ranted about

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<sup>65</sup> Web. 22 Sep. 2014. <a href="http://www.thefreedictionary.com/creek.">http://www.thefreedictionary.com/creek.</a>>.

in chapter nineteen of *Another Life*. Walcott is fully cognizant of why it is people feel he ought to suppress his Dutch ancestry and prioritise (if I may borrow a bureaucratic word) his African antecedents, but he has reached a point where he is able to look at himself squarely and paint exactly what he sees, without histrionics, without fuss, as Rembrandt was able to look at his every wrinkle and wart and put it down on canvas simply and honestly because it was there. Let others make of it what they may. We may have lost some of the fabulous ranting, but we are gaining a new sort of quiet, sometimes understated clarity. A dignity, even in sometimes embarrassing situations. (King 24 Nov)

The dignity with which Walcott carries on with his legacy was beautifully described by King. He is able to "look at himself squarely and paint exactly what he sees, as Rembrandt." Let me remind the reader that Rembrandt was a Dutch painter who died October 4, 1669 in Amsterdam, the very place the speaker refers to. As a skillful painter, Rembrandt was an expert in self-portraits, being his own the most simply and honestly ever made. However, what does this have to do with Vermeer, or Frans Hals, or Rubens, or Rennee also mentioned in the poem? Johannes Vermeer was also a Dutch painter, mostly known by the light effects he would produce on canvas in works such as A Girl Reading a Letter by an Open Window (1657-1659), and Woman with a Pearl Necklace<sup>66</sup> (1662-1665). Peter Paul Rubens (Died May 30, 1640) was a Flemish Baroque painter, and "a proponent of an exuberant Baroque style that emphasized movement, color, and sensuality<sup>67</sup>." He lived in Antwerp (Belgium), and was the governor's official painter. Frans Hals (Died 26 August 1666), was born in the Southern Netherlands (today Belgium) in 1582. His style consisted of brushwork portraits, particularly depicting the nobles from Dutch Golden Age. Renee Magritte<sup>68</sup> was a Belgian-born painter who studied at the Academie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, under Constant Montald<sup>69</sup>, but the oil paintings he produced during the years 1918-1924

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Web. Dec. 20. 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.essentialvermeer.com/vermeer\_painting\_part\_one.html#.VJYtlsAAA">.</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Web. Dec. 20. 2014. <a href="http://www.peterpaulrubens.org/">http://www.peterpaulrubens.org/</a>>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Web. Dec. 20. 2014. < http://www.renemagritte.org/biography.jsp>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Constant Montald (1862-1944) was the most important figure in Belgium Symbolism.

were influenced by *Futurism* and by the offshoot of *Cubism* practiced by Metzinger. Most of his works are female nudes, then evolving to less pessimistic works as he signed the manifesto of Surrealism in Full Sunlight in 1946.

What is interesting about all these painters is that Belgium was the same country which colonized and exploited the Congo in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under king Leopold II, and traded indigenous populations to the Caribbean. The Congo, under Leopold's rule, was more than a productive colony: it was an imperialist and colonialist model for other colonies in Africa, thus posing as a portrait of power to be emulated. In this greenish gloom ruled by the White king, the rubber was red in blood, and death was as black as the departure of human rights. It was the worse place on earth, where slaves were severely punished, suffering with several types of torture, 70 and killed by the millions. The place was described in Joseph Conrad's 1890 novel as The Heart of Darkness<sup>71</sup>. As ugly as history may have been posing itself, it happened, and what Walcott can do is to "to accept [his] enemy's atrabilious spite" (line 11), and ask "Why should I not claim them as fervently as / the pride of Alix Marlin an early widow, / as a creek in the Congo, if her joy was such?" (lines 22-24). Since his identity is multifaceted and composed of various self-portraits, he is as if he was the object of these painters, a colonized figure depicted by the colonizers. I believe this is what he means when he said he wants to "repaint / these rubicund Flemish faces, even if it's been done / by Frans Hals, by Rubens, by Rembrandt, / the clear grey eves of Renee" (lines 17-20). The ekphrastic situation now takes a turn: he is the painter who is both black and white, who can paint with light and honesty, including himself in the portrait. The result thereof will be a creolized portrait, a mixed medium loaded with an inheritance that is more "claimed" than "accepted," more political than biological, just as the closest international relation between two nations in the entire world: Belgium and The Netherlands. Such "positive mixing" in Walcott's

Web. Dec. 20, 2014. <a href="http://www.musee-orsav.fr/en/collections/works-in-">http://www.musee-orsav.fr/en/collections/works-in-</a>

focus/painting/commentaire id/symbolist-landscape-

<sup>10783.</sup>html?tx\_commentaire\_pi1%5BpidLi%5D=509&tx\_commentaire\_pi1%5Bfrom%5D=84 1&cHash=a94438d059>.

<sup>70</sup> Genocide scholar Adam Jones comments: "The result was one of the most brutal and allencompassing corvée institutions the world has known . . . Male rubber tappers and porters were mercilessly exploited and driven to death." Leopold's agents held the wives and children of these men hostage until they returned with their rubber quota; Those who refused or failed to supply enough rubber often had their villages burned down, children murdered, and their hands cut off. Web. Dec. 20. 2014. <a href="http://www.yale.edu/gsp/colonial/belgian">http://www.yale.edu/gsp/colonial/belgian</a> congo/>.

<sup>71</sup> Web. Dec. 20. 2014. < http://loki.stockton.edu/~kinsellt/projects/hod/incongo.html>.

attitude, as already discussed, is what challenges otherness as inheritance and ideological binarisms, as if identity or inheritance is something one can "think of." In the Caribbean rhizome identities, there is an epistemological break from "traditional" roots, and each and every identity is primarily shaped by its relation to others, not simply linked by their common, historical past. As defined by Richard L.W. Clarke:

The rhizome, by contrast, is an underground horizontal stem, often swollen and tubershaped because it stores food reserves, and as such a useful trope to connote the richness and inevitability of the self's relation to otherness. The use of the trope of the conceptualizes identity less in linear diachronic or historical terms, that is, less in terms of possessing a single source in the distant past, than in geographical or synchronic or spatial terms, that is, in terms of relations that more often than not commence in the past but continue to exist in the present. ("(Re)Conceptualizing..." 3)

When Walcott says it is "silly to think of a heritage when there isn't much," this same apparently unpretentious comment is followed by the convicted "why should I not claim" this heritage that was so joyful to my mother? Once in Amsterdam, the poet saw and felt the people and their past, and while thinking to himself ("legitimate, illegitimate") he wanted to repaint them. The rhizome spread through the cannals and crossed the sea of history, reaching the cavities of his heart. His identity representation was challenged, and because it matters to him, he was able to reconfigure it. Well said Hall<sup>72</sup> concerning the matter: "Representations sometimes call our very identities into question. We struggle over them because they matter – and these are contests from which serious consequences can flow. They define what is 'normal', who belongs – and therefore, who is excluded" (In Howarth 2).

If traveling on a boat gave Walcott an ekphrastic perspective, as seen with poem 33, what now that he *is* the boat? In poem 31 below (untitled) the speaker faces deep introspections about his current condition as a Caribbean, a poet, a *créole*, and of his freedom to choose whom to be. The analysis of the poem below has not the pretension to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Originally published as Hall, Stuart. Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. London: Sage. 1997. 10.

discuss the problematic of Caribbean identities since they are in constant process of change, but rather how Walcott decides to *stop* the process and remain "in monody":

My climate now is the marsh, the leaden silver water that secretes in reeds or moves with a monody that happily might deaden endeavour and envy and the waste of noble deeds for reputation's sake; my frenzy is in stasis, 5 like a shallop with a staved-in hull. I fly like the slate heron to desolate places, to the ribbed wreck that moss makes beautiful, where the egret spreads its wings lest it totter on the aimed prow where crabs scrape for a perch, 10 all that vigour finished with which I sought a richer life than this half-hearted search. I am thinking of a specific site that is Hunter's Cove: away from the road a frog shoots its tongue at the stars 15 and traffic; of a marsh in marsh-light with charging dusk and the boom of a toad in the reeds at the firefly-flecked night and a heaven improbably swayed in mirroring water. (62)

In this poem, I see movement related with Walcott's "own pace" toward the creolization of his otherness. The speaker declares he is a boat with a "stave-in hull," sailing on "monody" waters on a "halfhearted search." The boat cannot go far because the hull is broken, and the water does not move. Well, if it does, it moves in monody, slowly. Where to go or who to be (or not to be) are questions that no longer matter because they do not capture any image, but speak of essence instead. What matters is his decision to remain in-between. His climate now is "the marsh, the leaden, silver water that secretes in reeds or moves with a monody that happily might deaden endeavour and envy and the waste of noble deeds for reputation's sake" (line 5). "For reputation's sake" is a political decision. This decision implies that "the leaden," or the inertia of the silver water is actually what gave him "that vigour" (line 10) over more than 500 articles about the Caribbean myth, identity, and culture he has written for The Washington Post, and also throughout his entire oeuvre—undoubtedly a "noble deed" (line 4). It all now has turned to "frenzy in stasis." Human lore is in stasis when concerning classifications of twisted, unified segregations. The issue of duality of legacy, of split-mindedness, of cultural division, or even of

creolization is never off the table. In the lack of better definitions or classifications, cultural knowledge (though in movement like water) remains islanded within its own frontiers: like "Hunter's Cove<sup>73</sup>." The water reflects the sky like a mirror, but the water sways, which gives movement to the image. This movement is "improbable," probably meaning the reflection is not the thing itself, or that it is hard to believe or to get a hold of (line 19). As Oscar Wilde would say, "man can believe the impossible, but can never believe the improbable 74." The specular inversion of modern aesthetics (Banea 7) lies on the fact that, though he acknowledges that blackness is required for its constitutive other in the postcolonial frame, the image of his i-dentity is altered by the water and the movement of the commotion of the Caribbean sea of cultural migration. If the Atlantic is black as suggested by Paul Gilroy<sup>75</sup>, then the Caribbean marsh is silver. Such a further voice (Banea 7) gives him freedom to create, unleashed from the old shackles of binary racial impregnation, making identity grey, as the dusk at a firefly-flecked night. By taking responsibility for his condition, or his "climate," his self-awareness escapes literary conventions, and defies the traditional sense of Caribbean belongingness. According to Zenaida Seguin Pedraill:

[. . . ] the assertion of identity in a creolised colonial and postcolonial society may imply conflicting states within the individual. The dual character of the sociocultural context in which the individual develops his/her social experience may reflect internally a divergence between his/her self and his/her other, the other that he/she comes to be at some time and place. This dichotomy of self and other within the individual is especially ratified in. (13)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Hunter's Cove is one of the many inlets along the St. Lucian coast, either the one next to which Walcott himself lives or another not too far from there, named after Hunter J. François—lawyer by training, music lover by nature, politician by calling, also considered the "father" of the St. Lucia School of Music. Web. 23 Jul. 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.thevoiceslu.com/cannels/2012/september/29\_09\_12/A\_Tribute.htm">http://www.thevoiceslu.com/cannels/2012/september/29\_09\_12/A\_Tribute.htm</a>.

 $<sup>^{74}\</sup>overline{\text{From}} < \underline{\text{http://quotations.about.com/od/stillmorefamouspeople/a/OscarWildeQuotes.htm}}>.$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993. Gilroy's work is a landmark in social cultural studies, exposing and exploring the black experience among black cultures, considering more where people are than where they come from originally.

In the poem, the marsh indicates this conflicting state, and his dual character. The marsh is static, and every natural element points to the impossibility of Walcott finding a cultural identity for himself, resulting in a "half-hearted," "staved-in" effort. Does it mean he decided to remain uncreolized, or in constant creolization? When "coming home" and "going away" can no longer be conceptualized as simple oppositions, then we are left with the poet "flying like the slate heron to desolate places, / to the ribbed wreck that moss makes beautiful, / where the egret spreads its wings lest it totter / on the aimed prow where crabs scrape for a perch." Such declaration, somehow, points toward a *spectrality* of the self: a reverie to be—not being, and not to be—being.

#### 3.3 INTO BELONGINGNESS

At this point of the discussion a question arises: how much can the sense of belonging to a community, or culture dictate some kind of essence of the self common among its members? In this final analysis section, I will present the last 4 chosen poems (8, 10, 20, and 13). The poems ekphrastically explore the aspect of the belongingness of the self, either mesmerized by the modern, contemporary world, or tormented by colonized slavery memories. Here again, we can see the struggle with the configuration of identity, the imagery of otherness, and the subjectification of culture.

According to Markus and Kitayama, such a common essence exists due to the interrelation of individualities that, when brought together in a similar cultural context, produce what is known as the "construal of the self." I am afraid the quotation needs to be this long:

People in different cultures have strikingly different construals of the self, of others, and of the interdependence of the 2. These construals can influence, and in many cases determine, the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation. Many Asian cultures have distinct conceptions of individuality that insist on the fundamental relatedness of individuals to each other. The emphasis is on attending to others, fitting in, and harmonious interdependence with them. American culture neither assumes nor values such an overt connectedness among individuals. In contrast, individuals seek to maintain their independence

from others by attending to the self and by discovering and expressing their unique inner attributes. ("Culture and the Self" Introduction)

Either Asian or American cultures recognize there is connectedness individuals. How harmonious this among interdependence becomes, however, has to do with deep historical processes in the formation and maintenance of such relations. Whether "sociocentric, holistic, collective, allocentric, ensembled, constitutive, contextualist, connected, or relational" (227), these construals of the self embody an important aspect of creolization, that is, the *need* to discover and express unique inner attributes. In White Egrets, Walcott's construal hovers between fundamental relatedness and independence from others as, in many moments, it might suggest you cannot tell his caribbeanness just by looking at him (Hall "Negotiating Caribbean Identities" 3). Hence his need to express his uniqueness, but with a constant concern to keep him part of (or declare his belongingness to) a creolized collectiveness. Is creolization that connectedness that brings Caribbeans together? And if it is, how do individual identities relate in that "harmonious interdependence"? Perhaps poem 8 ("The Sicilian Suite") can shed some light on the matter. I am afraid, though, that for reasons of space, justice cannot be done to the poem by only quoting an excerpt from it. Though short, this specific part of the poem fits the discussion. The speaker is in Italy, at a Sicilian Suite, and just for a change, contemplating the world through the bedroom window:

### VI

There never really was a "we" or "ours"; whatever each enjoyed was separate: a drizzle's drift, the slant of arrowing showers on a hot road, on roofs, made them elate, but with a joy defined by separation—

the languor of a glittering afternoon when a bay's bowl is full of glittering coins, or a white road is paved by the full moon, the same delight that separates them joins without conversion, but close to happiness in accidental gusts that made the leaves agree unanimously with one green yes, yet made a dark division of their lives. (18)

For what it seems, communities that give way to cultures, identities, and a sense of belongingness are socially and historically

brought together as "the leaves that agree unanimously with one green yes," as the speaker mentions. Everything in the imagery of the poem points toward this joint-separation: the rain that falls in drops when it drizzles or in arrows when it slants, or the cobblestones that form the roads and the tiles of the roofs—they are all together, but they all have spaces between them. This complementarity that separates and joins "without conversion" (line 10) is probably one of the various motives for collectiveness among humans, and especially in Walcott's poetry, such imagery should be read as synecdoche rather than description. It also reminds us of Stewart's diagram (See 37), with a strong inclination toward syncretism. Yet, the speaker affirms that "there never really was a 'we' or 'ours'; / whatever each enjoyed was separate" (lines 1-2). This indicates that the sense of community (and by extension creolization) is what is available for the collective but that can only be experienced individually. These local aspects of cultural identity construction may, for a moment, describe an individual's characteristics under specific local conditions. It is just as local as the rain that falls from the same cloud upon the same ground, on the same cobblestone street, in the wet season, on a glittering afternoon. Considering that people tend to "change" when they change their community context for either adaptation or reaction to otherness (different cultures are not received as they are, but as they ought to be—the very claim of creolization, and again, Stewart's diagram), it would be, perhaps, more pertinent to contrast and/or compare cultural notions of identity formation between individuals in their living place, rather than between the individuals and their relation with the transnational. Notwithstanding Walcott's epistemes may have grown and taken up roots in Castries, this does not hinder his perceptions from notions overseas, since every supposed universality, or transnationality is conceived out of local origins, and epistemology is actually not able to define identity. Though race is mankind's problem, one can never forget where he or she comes from, what he or she is made of. This is the postcolonial subject recollecting her/his past continuously in order to exist.

The intentionality with which Walcott dives his poems into lies less in a dip in the surface of "sociocultural context" than in a plunge of depthness into his own otherness. As Borges said, the theme chooses the writer, <sup>76</sup> and Walcott is all about this internal divergence between his self and his other, his heritage and literary tradition. Walcott's

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<sup>76</sup> Web. 21 June. 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="https://sites.google.com/site/jimeikner/home/borges/a-conversation-with-jorge-luis-borges">https://sites.google.com/site/jimeikner/home/borges/a-conversation-with-jorge-luis-borges>.</a>

paradigms do not derive straight from essential literary tradition, but from his Caribbean identity experience. In "In Italy," poem 10, stanza IV, line 13, the poet says:

[...] I have come this late to Italy, but better now, perhaps, than in youth that is never satisfied, whose joys are treacherous, while my hair rhymes with those far crests and the bells of the hilltop towers number my errors, because we are never where we are, but somewhere else, even in Italy. (28)

Taking his self to Italy, with his otherness following like a shadow, Walcott confirms his self-fractured construal: "we are never where we are, but somewhere else, even in Italy." "But better now" appears to be an acknowledgement to wisdom acquired in the course of years of life experience, and everything reminds him of his self-acceptance of his old age. His hair rhymes with the far crests, suggesting that he has become ripe as a poem, and one with the landscape, ready to be there, not ashamed of his senile condition. The titanic serenity with which he handles these concealed emotions offers no treachery, but self-acceptance of the errors counted by "the bells of the hilltop towers." For those who live in small villages, or in the countryside, the sound of the bells ringing on a hilltop is what marks the passage of time. It becomes a beckon for living, reminding the people of their daily endeavors. It is a sound loaded with a longing for belonging, but it is also a warning when somebody passes away. He continues in the next line:

This is the bearable truth of old age; but count your benedictions: those fields of sunflowers, the torn light on the hills, the haze of the unheard Adriatic, while the day still hopes for possibility, cloud shadows racing the slopes. (28)

The speaker gazes at the landscape and counts his blessings for being able to be there, and also feel the awareness of the possibilities that still lie ahead. It is as if he is craving for one more day of light and warmth in an expression of a cheerful gratitude and contentment. The "torn light on the hills," and the "fields of sunflowers," are like images on a canvas, resting upon the bearable truth of old age, a reasoning that stands still, solid for its conviction. The Adriatic cannot be heard because it is far away from him, and you can only but see its haze, as in

a shadow of an Italian painting. The shadows "racing the slopes" make a vivid image of the passing of time, and the struggle for life against death that comes near. The poem goes on, in XII stanzas, 193 lines, talking about the beauty of the landscape, the projections of his alterity, declaring how his reaction was in a new environment, so familiarly strange. From stanza VII, line 9:

> You seemed wrong for the crowd: separate, distinct, You belonged to the spring-freckled hills outside Recanati. Your pert, tanned body wrinkled Under its floral print, your look said: 'Why must they feel that love is a great sorrow? Don't sparrows dart with joy around this house, Though more lugubrious pilgrims come tomorrow? (30)

The "very nature of individual experience," as pointed out by Kitayama, including cognition, emotion, and motivation, made the speaker feel "wrong for the crowd." Being separate and distinct, he did not belong in Italy, but "to the spring-freckled hills outside Recanati." However, how does ekphrasis encompass the imagery of otherness? The self-contemplation of his otherness emanating from his Caribbean poetic epistemes is manifested in the way language is used to capture the projection of the poet's experience upon current thoughts and feelings, and not because language functions as a description or a depiction of an already anthropized object, that is, something personified and given human qualities as in "your look said." In consequence, ekphrasis in this poem is actively involved in the reconstruction of the mental, spatial, and cultural processes of human experience, chronicling about portions of life as if it were spread through a great museum, or a "wide open lawn<sup>77</sup> "

The apparent arbitrariness of Walcott's lines is dealt with that confronting irritation to make things personal, and to find in the contradictory and in the complex the very reason for excitement, this being translated into visuality by his poetic skills. When the backdrop faints and the frame opens wide, the speaker emerges out of the poem, like someone coming out of water. Not only the encounter with other places (or himself) makes Walcott think about his identity, but also what he becomes after the encounter. There is always some sort of experience that changes his perceptions, sometimes metaphorically. This leads us to poem 20, and the questioning about metaphors. The poem suggests these

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> The "open lawn" is a constant allusion to the world in *White Egrets*.

questionings: "What kind of metaphor are you?" "What do you stand for?" Mitchell affirms a person can be a metaphor for ideology or power, as well as for weakness and subjectivity (Iconology 161). If an iconic image on a website can be a metaphor for a posthuman<sup>78</sup> technology, so can a culture be a metaphor for society as a whole. Poem 20 below deals with iconography at a cultural and personal level for Walcott. Due to his experiences as a poet and as an observer of his own geographical (mis)placement, his identity representation calls for a little bit of homesickness, a little bit of the familiar landscape of Saint Lucia in order to acknowledge its individuality. The speaker is now in Switzerland, observing from the window of his hotel in Zermatt how the green hills will soon turn to white as the Matterhorn<sup>79</sup> already has. All the flowers, so varied and so different in colors as creolization itself. will take upon themselves "the color of envy" (line 9). What does he mean by white being "the color of envy?" What are "the strange contradictions" that grow "sillier and sillier?" Contradictions of color, race, and ethnicity arise as soon as every year the change of seasons does not mean the change of what has always been:

Mist and the spectral peak coming and going, in the white rain gone completely, so that at any second now it could start snowing—
the Matterhorn from my window in Zermatt, snow on the ledges as hedges of bougainvillea
whiten and freak like Queen Anne's lace, the strange contradictions grow sillier and sillier, the green hills whiten to an Alpine range the colour of envy, the stream's cascade is echoing like an avalanche; this is not absurd;
my craft and my craft's thought make parallels from every object, the word and the shadow of the word makes a thing both itself and something else

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Mitchell proposes a discussion on post-humanism: "Mitchell indicates in his chapter on 'biocybernetic reproduction,' with the forces of biotechnology and computerization working together new life forms are emerging that could produce a posthuman era. In a digital culture, culture, technology, and even human and natural life are up for grabs, generating new types of texts, cultural forms, people, and images, providing critical cultural and communication theorists an ever-expanding agenda" (International Journal of Communication 1. 2007. Book Review. 162-169). <a href="http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/204/104">http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/204/104</a>>. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> A mountain in the Alps, on the border between Switzerland and Italy. Rising to 4,477 m (14,688 ft), it was first climbed in 1865 by the English mountaineer Edward Whymper. French name Mont Cervin; Italian name Monte Cervino. Web. 22 Sep. 2014. <a href="http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Matterhorn">http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Matterhorn</a>.

till we are metaphors and not ourselves
in an empirical language that keeps growing,
associations so astute they frighten
us as in that flash when I saw Petit Piton
for one second with a tingling of the scalp,
a shape that rhymed with its identical alp
till, more than for one instant I, too, whiten. (51)

As explained in the introduction, nature plays a crucial role in Walcott's way of verbalizing his inner convictions. The analysis of poem 20, above, will delve into these inner convictions at a surface level, that is, only by what words *suggest*, rather than what they might reveal about his (melting) creolized condition. By convincing himself that the sudden changes in nature such as rain into snow, green into white, and so on are "not absurd," the poet begins to see flashes of his own homeland such as in "a tingling of the scalp," as he thought to see in the Matterhorn "its identical alp," Petit Piton<sup>80</sup>. What is intriguing is the declaration: "more than for one instant I, too, whiten" (line 20). Does he mean he becomes one with Switzerland with its white snow because it is as familiar to him as Saint Lucia? Though it never snows in Saint Lucia . . . If so, why is white the color of envy? There might be something related with race that, by whitening, makes him become creolized . . ., but I dare not jump into conclusions. If whitening means growing old, it has to be "more than for one instant," for its effects are permanent, though they take place slowly, in constant movement. The snows of time will eventually cover the old man's head, as he wishes to stand tall as a mountain, eternized in an empirical language that keeps growing, "till we are metaphors and not ourselves." Walcott is a poet, and because of his "craft," that is, his skill in writing, his "craft's thought" makes parallels "from every object" (lines 11-12). When "the shadow of the word," "makes a thing both itself and something else," there we can find the most exquisite ekphrastic metamorphosis of word and image: and it was there all the time, like a peak, or a pillar. The shadow does not mock the word in a mimetic wordplay ("bougainvillea," "sillier," "frighten," "whiten;" "alp," "scalp"), but as Barthes (Degree Zero) points out, pillar words, that is, poetic polysemes, project themselves even higher and have their shadow go before them. If we take shadow to be "the rough image cast by an object blocking rays

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Petit Piton is one of two mountains overlooking Soufrière Bay in the southwest of Saint Lucia, with its peak at 2,437 feet.

of illumination<sup>81</sup>," or even a lesser, "darker" version of something, we would fall into the traps of patriarchal language, and the implications of color and race. Nevertheless, polysemic words and deriving "messages" or cultural and racial worldwide interpretations of what the poet might be saying from the standpoint position of a Caribbean, Crèole writer, would best be categorized under Stuart Hall's model of encodingdecoding. In it, "Hall demonstrates the 'lack of fit' between the circular process of encoding (by producers and reporters) and the decoding (by audiences) and the ways in which this opens up possibilities for polysemic values and oppositional accounts to develop" (Howarth 8). Representations of identities are not encoded-decoded in the same way. for it is never satisfactory to look at one's shadow and guess their ethnicity. It took the poet to "whiten" to begin to think these "parallels," and become frightened with the astuteness of these "associations." Since when their shadows were projected against the cave walls under the light of fire, men and women have subverted their own signifiers. Furthermore, perhaps, lies the fact that white hegemonic power tends to remain unaltered with time as generations move on, just as the snow over the valley tends to whiten to an Alpine range every season. The status of identity representations in the Caribbean have acquired in the last 40 years—due to scholars, social theorists, and writers—a stable, continuous, and relatively consistent condition of resistance to change. However, what is at stake here is how Walcott (re)presents himself by the choices he makes with words, and the astuteness of their associations, which might not stand for him at all. How do the words in poem 20 project/represent the imagery of identity? How does ekphrasis get manifested through such arrangements of individual entity? The following statement by Barthes may clarify Walcott's ekphrastic choice:

Within any literary form, there is a general choice of tone, of ethos, if you like, and this is precisely where the writer shows himself clearly as an individual because this is where he commits himself. A language and a style are data prior to all problematics of language, they are the natural product of Time and of the person as a biological entity; but the formal identity of the writer is truly established only outside the permanence of grammatical norms and stylistic constants, where the written continuum, first collected and

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<sup>81</sup> Web. 21 Oct. 2014. <a href="http://www.thefreedictionary.com/shadow">http://www.thefreedictionary.com/shadow>.

enclosed within a perfectly innocent linguistic nature, at last becomes a total sign, the choice of a human attitude, the affirmation of a certain Good. (*Degree Zero* 13-14)

By committing himself to writing as an individual, Walcott's "craft and craft's thought" reveal "the choice of a human attitude," the attitude of a lover of nature and his homeland, of attempts to describe the indescribable, and moreover, the fervent wish to be like it, or as he said, to "whiten." When the speaker saw Petit Piton in that flash "for one second" (line 18), he had an ekphrastic encounter where visuality was not what was in front of him, but what it could be if depicted on a canvas with "the tingling of the scalp." When we have a tingling sensation in our skin, it is as if a scalp, or pins and needles are poking us. This sensation then changes to a numbness, or there may be a combination of decreased sensation (numbness) but with heightened sensations at certain times or with stimulation<sup>82</sup>. The same happens with an ekphrastic vision: the image strikes as with a tingling, but increases its numbness until it becomes whole, taking hold of all our senses, making impossible to forget its visuality once it is formed in our memory. Depiction or description then fails at the intention. It is rather an overflow of calculated occurrence, finding similarities between dissimilar things through the employment of recurrent language devices, or until the ear and the eye lie down together in the same bed. These associations keep growing, and the poet's job is to give them shape and make them rhyme out of imagetic glimpses. Walcott has been acclaimed a worldwide clever poet because of his capacity to observe the phenomena of nature and civilizations, and make use of "an empirical language that keeps growing" with creolization itself. Poem 20 shows that identities are in the way one looks at him/herself, the way (empirical) words are employed to (re)present individual traits, working as shadows "till we are metaphors and not ourselves."

In face of the theorizations about creolization, and otherness we have come across during this research, as well as the figures of speech employed by Walcott to refer to himself or the Caribbean, would it sound presumptuous by now to say that language, somehow, is the other of the self? Figuratively, one could borrow "different others" by making specific uses of the language, as the signifier may not always be correlated with the signified, disguising words with a cunning beyond

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<sup>82 &</sup>lt;http://www.rightdiagnosis.com/sym/scalp\_tingling.htm>. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.

semantics. We see that everyday when we talk about ourselves, our professions, our likes and dislikes, about how we describe and define ourselves through language. It would surely not be enough to just show a picture of us to someone and say "Look! I'm the one in the picture." We clothe our image with language, and there are different clothes for different occasions. This rather unusual occurrence of language impersonation may become distinctively acknowledged in the surface of a poem: words may pose for a given significance, convey arbitrary meanings, or, in the ekphrastic posture of their "surface," show "another face" that faces the beholder (Mitchell "What Do Pictures Really Want?" 72). That is the self, embodied in conveyance, manifesting a spectrality that haunts the subject's speech, as in an inherent and disturbing inheritance from the collective imaginativeness—a ghost that appears and disappears, "possessing" both the self and the other in an echo of reverberating significance. This leads to the last chosen poem to be analyzed: poem 13, entitled "The Spectre of Empire."

Since poem 13 is quite long (5 stanzas and 83 lines), I have selected a small portion to show that it sustains a phantasmagorical persona throughout the entire narrative. This "ghostly presence in absence" of the self in the motion of the subject is a more contemporary venture toward framing a notion of the mobility of the self through the fixity of recurrent thoughts, as in the fragment below:

Down the Conradian docks of the rusted port, by gnarled sea grapes whose plates are caked with grime, to a salvo of flame trees from the old English fort, he waits, the white spectre of another time, or stands, propping the entrance of some hovel 5 of a rumshop, to slip into the streets like the bookmark in a nineteenth-century novel, scuttering from contact as a crab retreats. (38)

With dramatized images of the fall of the British Empire, a Conradian<sup>83</sup> exile clothed in spectral white and disgraced by the smoky grime of history, ekphrasis picks on haunted scenes of a long-lost power. The poem works as a metaphor for the impersonation of the empire itself ("he waits, the spectre of another time") as it is for the English language which evokes from the distance after the sorrow of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> The reference to Joseph Conrad becomes more evident as the poem gives photographic rendition of the desolation of both body and territory, culture and history, inheritance and the blind journey of the self through the jungle of identities, so to speak.

natural and human exploitation ("or stands, propping the entrance of some hovel / of a rumshop, to slip into the streets / like the bookmark in a nineteenth-century novel, / scuttering from contact as a crab retreats"). Poem 13 is a crossed reference to another of his poems called "Sea Grapes," published in 1976. In "Sea Grapes," Walcott uses similar vocabulary and imagery, and points out that "[t]he classics can console. But not enough" (297). Thus, the poet otherizes the unforgettable painful beauty that the English language is to him, just as sweet and bitter as the sea grapes. Being offered plenty of food for thought as if "caked in leaves of sea grapes" (a tradition in Jamaica where the poet lived and was educated), the reader is invited to a feast where her/his experience can be enhanced through pondering upon the ingredients of intention, text, and context (line 2). Akin to this contemplation of meaning are the last two lines of the second stanza of "The Spectre of Empire," where Walcott makes allusion to the harvest remains, leftovers from the British invasion: "He crosses a cricket field, overrun with stubble / launching a fleet of white, immaculate egrets" (lines 33-34). A cricket field is a circular-shaped grassy ground where the sport is played. As in a game, the empire played its conquest and left spoils behind when the game was won. Such imagery can be compared to a fleet of white egrets that look like a fleet retracing troops of soldiers who are as white as the phantasmagorical spectre they leave as they march on. This makes me believe there has never been an abandonment of the meaning of whiteness in creolized America. It is a ghost forever engraved upon creoles' skin and mind, an ideologized concept designed to maintain hegemony under a ghostly, non-hegemonic channel. Such "internationalization" of society might not suppress savage customs completely, but install a more, I would say, "civilized oppression" camouflaged through divisions of race, class, and the perpetuation of the white power (Coser 168). The matter insinuates to never end. Although créolité (See 26; 36-39) has proportioned a greater good to fight for, which is inequality, self-expression, the recognition of art in all its manifestations, it still looks not visible enough.

Whether the subject in Walcott's poetry is given by birth or conceived in individual or social terms, the "progressive original" concept seems to blend the *made* with the *given*, emphasizing the changing nature of the self, which becomes what it is through its

particular acts. It is the self that identifies the self<sup>84</sup>. This notion of constantly becoming can be perceived already in the first stanza:

> [...] I just missed him as he darted the other way in the bobbing crowd disgorging from the ferry in blue Capri, just as he had fled the bay 15 of equally blue Campeche and rose-walled Cartagena, his still elusive silence growing more scary with every shouted question, because so many were hurled at him, fleeing last century's crime. (38)

The ability to "not miss him as he darted the other way" is a somewhat manifestation of the subject. The speaker can not only "see" the spectre of an embodied entity embedded in the figure of the British Empire, as he can go beyond popular culture into an aesthetic expression of value. Such an act of abstraction, idiosyncratic in nature, is an act of both silencing as well as remembering. More precisely, the words of Hall (1993), in an article for the Centre for Caribbean Studies at the University of Warwick, state that:

> Silencing as well as remembering, identity is always a question of producing in the future an account of the past, that is to say it is always about narrative, the stories which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they came from. The one way in which it is impossible to resolve the problem of identity in the Caribbean is to try looking at it, as if a good look will tell you who the people are. (3)

As the speaker addresses the issue of violence and rapture, he is "producing an account of the past" from the diasporic ("a nineteenthcentury future word" to account for "a seventeenth-century past scattering") perspective of the other. Whether this diasporic notion is sustained throughout White Egrets, here I leave it to more mature reflections. More astonishingly, I leave it at the mercy of ekphrasis. However, Walcott's irony here questions "last century crime." It is

York. Introduction).

<sup>84</sup> From the studies of Diana Fuss (Identification Papers, 1995) who borrowed [her] "working definition of identity from Jean-Luc Nancy: identity is 'the Self that identifies itself." For Fuss, identification is "the psychical mechanism that produces self-recognition. Identification inhabits, organizes, instantiates identity. It operates as a mark of self-difference, opening up a space for the self to relate to itself as a self, a self that is perpetually other" (Routledge, New

usually the criminal who flees the crime scene, but who's the criminal anyway? And what are these questions "hurled at him" that make him want to flee? Are the questions asked through the poet's voice in an attempt to dismiss the Empire's control over language, politics, and representation itself? Is the "bobbing crowd" an allusion to creolization and diasporic movements? In "The Spectre of Empire" though, there seems to be more of looming immortality than diaspora and creolization, for it apportions this threatening massive image that comes distorted through the fogs of history:

[...]An image

more than a man, this white-drill figure
is smoke from a candle or stick of incense
or a mosquito coil, his fame is bigger
than his empire's now, its slow-burning conscience.
Smoke is the guilt of fire, so where he strolls
in Soufrière, in Sumatra, by any clogged basin
where hulks have foundered and garbage-smoke scrolls
its flag, he travels with its sin,
its collapsed mines, its fortunes sieved through bets.
He crosses a cricket field, overrun with stubble
launching a fleet of white, immaculate egrets. (39)

A rhetorical exploration of the powerful black / white, holiness / sin dichotomies in the poem maintains that "stories retold from other cultures involve not just questions of trampling on religious beliefs in quest of some vague intercultural understanding...but also involve misapprehension and misapplication of metanarratives" (Stephens 7). The ghostly image of "The Spectre of Empire" conceives in its essence a metanarrative of great proportions, traveling in "sin," with its conscience burning slowly, as (discoursive) tentatives of redemption are made by the poet whose fame is now "bigger," meaning his voice is heard not only by the old empire, but also in Soufriére, in Sumatra, in Capri, in Campeche, in Cartagena, and actually, in the entire Caribbean. Another image, as line 4 suggests, is that the "he" is the empire itself, personified in the ghostly figure of a man. Not only the impersonation of the empire calls the reader's attention, but its personification—in the form of a present-yet-absent figure entitled with self-consciousness. In a Shakesperian way, the past always returns. Unlike Hamlet, the spectre is not granted a voice, but his task is to be around, haunting the memory of the Empire's remains. Could it be that the spectre's "guilt" is Walcott's

self-othering? This spiritual relation Walcott's poetic tradition maintains with the Faustinian in Marlowe, the shadow in Milton, the skull of death in Webster, or the revolutionary in Blake is, somehow, given in "The Spectre of the Empire" a more contemporary consciousness. It is an ambiguous "slow-burning" conscience that dresses the contemporary speaker with negation of his condition, as well as with a morbid nostalgia a la Baudelaire (line 27). Maybe that is just something this critic would say, and not a poet. Poets may not be concerned with whom their influences come from, though we can retrace their lines back to those who may have said it first. The disbelief in a ghost might tear its existence apart. Seamus Heaney says:

Derek Walcott has moved with gradually deepening confidence to found his own poetic domain, independent of the tradition he inherited yet not altogether orphaned from it...The Walcott line is still sponsored by Shakespeare and the Bible, happy to surprise by fine excess<sup>85</sup>.

Walcott's "fine excess" has excellent sponsors, and it is never tired of brightening the dark and darkening the bright in the corners of history. When the splendor of the old Empire is ekphrastically contrasted with the fallen state of its ruins, it is possible to sense the colonial heritage's breakthrough. The "hulks" or old ships, have sunken, and from their garbage smoke rises as a flag of surrender. There is nothing left, only the guilt of a past long gone, but that will never be forgotten, instigating the movement of memory. The mines "collapsed" or fell inward, making all the riches go through the sift of "bets," the upcoming decline of the English power. What once was a cricket field, a symbol of English identity impregnated upon the land, is now abandoned to the "stubble," remains from the harvest of a field (line 33). Thoughts and images walk around the city, almost as empty as Eliot's "The Waste Land," or in a metafictional cult of Caribbean origins. Here the Cartesian<sup>86</sup> ghost promotes the liberation of the sensitive world to that of the sensible. Is this an apparition of Plato in his declaration that the function of poetry is to torment the city? A conjecture... From the Renaissance to the Romantics and to the Surrealists, what has been

http://www.acognoscenta.com/months/june10/24.html>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> < http://www.ecognoscente.com/months/june10/24.html >. Web. 21 April. 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> According to Nakayama, the Cartesian view is a "dualistic tradition that characterizes Western thinking and in which the self is separated from the object and from the natural world" (227).

conceived as the function of poetry is this reformulation of the imaginary consciousness, what the Créole Caribbean is all about. Maybe the speaker is well-aware of that, and he wanders around the imaginary, pursuing the consternations of his memories, engaging with his own conflicts and struggles, knowing that the contemplation of his otherness reveals the "coarse impasto" of his portrait: an "elongated figure" that, at times, and in stasis, effaces ekphrasis through its absence. How long will this absence of identity, this spectrality of the self, this ghostliness of otherness haunt the Caribbean? As the daylight dawns on this dissertation, one last wondering that prevails is whether the spectre might represent Walcott's mind and positioning on the whole matter of Caribbeanness. His poetry would then be (or look) like a ghost: sometimes invisible and "elusively silent" as a "white-drill figure," sometimes frightfully sinful and criminally guilty. The timelessness of a land in stasis is but a fantastic painting on the canvas of a rising sunset. In the words of Andre Bretón: "What is admirable about the fantastic is that there is no longer anything fantastic: there is only the real<sup>87</sup>."

 $<sup>^{87} &</sup>lt; http://www.tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T340/SurManifesto/ManifestoOfSurrealism.htm>. Web. 21 April 2012.$ 

## 4. CONCLUSION

Walcott reconceptualizes the individual, but within the 'frames' of the aesthetic dilemma his poetry exposes and illuminates; accordingly, he retains an ambivalent stance toward the epic form, [exploring] through ekphrasis, the significance of seeing for a history of conquest and the resulting creolization of peoples and cultures. (Emery 189)

This study of ekphrasis and otherness has engaged into "a maddeningly elusive and endlessly tempting subject" to bring before the reader's eyes the appropriation of the visual with which Walcott so artistically garnishes the subject (Krieger xiv). Even though the main scope of this dissertation was not reading, or reading reception, I must open a parenthesis to say that when upon reading his poetry, the intelligible perception of an ekphrastic approach to otherness allows us readers to visualize and encapsulate imagery in concreteness. This concreteness of imagery comes to pass precisely because and through intelligibility, not as ornament to random ideas, but as an urn that shreds a garment over naked thinking.

If I may, I wish to give a voice to the speaker in his "naïve narrative painting" (poem 36), hypothesizing (or making use of ekphrasis myself) what for me he seems to be saying in all the analyzed poems: Everywhere I look I see fragments from paintings, some of which I wish I had painted myself, for they narrate my own heritage, or perhaps, because it is the only way my heritage would make sense to me. It feels like those historical, distant pictures compose and reveal the crudity of my own life, my dissatisfactions, my disappointments, my failures... I sometimes hear those figures in the paintings speak their silent language, as if they were whispering to me a long-lost tale that insists upon my memory, blurring my vision into a shapeless yellow. What is left for me is to look at my own reflection on a mirror whose surface seems to want another face...The thing is, all I want is to go home, though I feel it everywhere. I see rivers and flowers, mountains and hills, villages and cities, beaches and the sea, and it is not strange I own them all when I write. It is as I am a character of some epic novel, but with a desire to change my talk, to speak my own mind on matters that seem not to matter anymore; perhaps I am too old for fashion, so I imitate my own achievements. I want to repaint my regrets, to sing them into songs of elation, so my father would be proud, and my mother at

peace. I never wanted to be different, but I am happy now. I will embrace my distinctiveness, and I will not fall into the trap of old age: I will rather look at my self-portrait and count my benedictions because I know light shows itself in little squares, a piece at a time. All I have to do is contemplate and stop wondering.

My prose attempt falls short when its rhythm tries to take over those of poetry and its rhymes. It does not seem to instigate imagery, or evoke ideas just as much. However, some of these ideas were analyzed under an ekphrastic approach in which the appropriation of visuality was more than an intellectual/aesthetic response, but a "very active, dialogic and emotive encounter" (Freiman 10). The general objective to be investigated in this research was how the ekphrastic characteristics of Walcott's poetry in White Egrets promote more companionship than antagonistic views between poetry and painting. The specific objective was to analyze how ekphrasis transforms the imagery of Derek Walcott's créole identity into an aesthetic object of contemplation, depicting it in the similar way of a work of art. Depending on particular occasions of contemplation in this analysis, ekphrasis and creolization might have shared some things in common. Based on the findings of this research, I will give the reader two reasons: First, the creolization process occurs when society in general contemplates and examines its own past and cultural mixture, and acknowledges its changes perpetuating their effects on, for instance, language, class organization, and politics. The effects followed that "Patois" is spoken today by more than 9 million people in the Caribbean islands, before English, French, Dutch, or even Spanish, and in the French territories, sugar-cane factories were left to the Whites, driving Caribbeans to fight against a "globalization88," under US leadership toward a "mondialisation" for the preservation of their identity (Confiant 3-7). In this sense, just as Walcott struggled with words to depict and describe the immanent immediateness of the image, Caribbean people were (and still are) induced by creolization to resist self-imposed patterns and keep striving to mingle, adapt, but also to cross boundaries—an ekphrastic act indeed, rather than silent resignation, or conformity under one's own given paradigm. Second, as imagination is required of the poet to verbalize and signify his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Globalization insists upon the material, the economic aspect of the phenomenon since it is based upon the word «globe», while *mondialisation* is the impact of the phenomenon on the people, on the populations, the «mundus» (Confiant, Raphael. "Creole identity in a globalized world." 2006).

visions on specific matters thus being the mediator between image and words, so is imagination required of cultures. Ekphrastic imagination was (and still is) required of Caribbean cultures to form, specify, and then finally deal with identities as socially recognizable embodiments, being responsible for their own mediation/creolization process, for the shift is *in the look*, not in the people. Once again, the myth is not in the origin, but in the relation. As a Brazilian who lived in the Northeast of Brazil (RN, PB, CE), I sense that as long as there shall be jargons such as "multiculturalism," and divisions such as "the French Caribbean," "the Dutch-speaking Caribbean," "the Spanish, the English, the African, the European, the Asian, the Brazilian Caribbean," and so on, creolization will allow coexistence side by side, but not living together, I am afraid. What Walcott's whole experience in *White Egrets* has shown is that:

the communications technology revolution and the tremendous improvement in travel facilities have dictated the urgent need for people to learn to live together, to deal with the dilemma of difference in ways that will serve the enhancement of the quality of life for human beings, and to ensure positive human development well into the third millennium. (Quoted in Kenneth Hall and Myrtle Chuck-A-Sung 487)

Whether local or global, the modes of relating should focus on interculturalism, rather than multiculturalism. Such intercultural relation has worked under (and was articulated as) a metaphor in *White Egrets*, where the companionship between the sister arts (held for so long as inappropriate, or even impossible) finds a creolized common ground, as to what human relations across the globe should be like, according to every great thinker studied in this dissertation. Before learning how to live together, however, one must learn how to live with her/himself: from the individual to the collective, and from the collective to the individual, the cycle is bound to constant *movement* and *transformation*.

The whole Caribbean experience in Walcott's construction of identity in his *créole* ekphrastic poetry revealed the *nonfixity* of the image, and its constant motion in stasis that leads to issues of otherness and belongingness hereby embodied in creolization. Reiterating some of my findings in the analysis of poem 18, for instance (See 50), Walcott

believes he is not as good of a painter as he is a poet: "just a crass confidence— / a thickness, not of skill as in van Gogh or Bacon, / that showed the self revealed for what it is" (lines 10-12). As this research sought to "reveal" his cultural self or identity "for what it is," I am confident to say that, as a poet, he is not so "confident" in delineating (or painting) his identity because the purpose is to leave the reader with something s/he can guess, or imagine from his poetry. It would be possible to affirm that, as a poet, he is an excellent bad painter of a not good picture of himself. In fact, considering the poetic skills analyzed in this investigation, he manages to be a bad painter of his own identity. His identity is designed to keep that way: undefined, in process, in constant creolization and transformation. As a consequence, his otherness also gets transformed because, as seen in many instances, creolized identities never get fixed, and his self-portrait will keep hanging on the (memory) wall of an unfinished ekphrastic syncretism, "beyond the confines of space and time." Further investigations might venture toward the postcolonial frame in which Walcott's poetry is embedded, seeking how imagery gets delayed (Derridean deferral), and how his otherness keeps getting prevented from (re)configuration.

I believe the general and the specific objectives were met because the companionship relation of his poetry is vital to his identity portrait in the making. The more he writes, the more he wishes he could see his painting done. The painting, however, never gets done because he never stops writing, and the reader is left with a page that "goes / white again and the book comes to a close" (poem 54 line 13). In the hope that the transformation of imagery will never leave Walcott's poetry, the last poem in the collection (poem 54) departs from the page and goes upwards until it reaches the sky, to become *white* again:

This page is a cloud between whose fraying edges a headland with mountains appears brokenly then is hidden again until what emerges from the now cloudless blue is the grooved sea and the whole self-naming island, its ochre verges, 5 its shadow-plunged valleys and a coiled road threading the fishing villages, the white, silent surges of combers along the coast, where a line of gulls has arrowed into the widening harbour of a town with no noise, its streets growing closer like print you can now read, two cruise ships, schooners, a tug, ancestral canoes, as a cloud slowly covers the page and it goes white again and the book comes to a close. (86)

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