

Third Space: Derek Walcott's Formation of Identity in *Omeros*

تشكيل الهوية لديريك والكتوت في *أوميروس*

إعداد

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Abstract: This research article discusses the form of hyphenated identity during the third stage of Derek Walcott's poetry, which refers to the occupation of an in-between space between the two parties of hyphenated identity. Therefore, the study in this research article is based on one of the related notions of Homi K. Bhabha, which is the concept of Third Space, to be the critical basis for studying the poetry of this stage. Among Walcott's works of art, which he produced in the last quarter of his poetic career, *Omeros* is selected for analysis. The research article examines how such concepts of neutral identity and third space are represented in the artistic composition of the poem by analysing its theme, sub-themes, protagonists, and language, in addition to studying the elements of narration, setting, figurative images, and the music of rhythm and rhyme. Moreover, it explains how *Omeros* settles the relationship between the traditions of Western literature and Caribbean culture as the dual origin of the poet. Thus, this research article revolves around the question: Does the third-space approach achieve salvation from the crisis of hyphenated identity, or will the suffering continue? At the end of the research article, the results of the analytical study of the poem are presented; they reveal a sense of cultural maturity.

Keywords: hyphenated identity, third space, neutral identity, *Omeros*, postcolonial cultural maturity.

المُلخَص :

يناقش هذا البحث شكل الهوية المزدوجة خلال المرحلة الثالثة من شعر ديريك والكوت ، والذي يشير إلي إحتلال مساحة بينية بين كلا طرفيها . و لذلك ، تستند الدراسة في هذا البحث إلي أحد أفكار هومي بابا ذات الصلة وهو مفهوم (الفضاء الثالث) ليكون الأساس النقدي في دراسة شعر هذه المرحلة . ومن بين نتائج الكوت الشعرية التي أخرجها في الربع الأخير من مسيرته الإبداعية ، يتم تحديد قصيدة أوميروس لإجراء البحث عليها . فيتطرق البحث إلي دراسة كيف تمثل مفهوم الهوية الحيادية أو الفضاء الثالث في التركيب الفني للقصيدة من خلال تحليل الموضوعات والشخصيات واللغة المستخدمة ، هذا بالإضافة إلي دراسة عنصر السرد والمكان والصور المجازية ، وأيضا عناصر الموسيقى مثل الإيقاع والقافية . علاوة علي ذلك ، يتم توضيح كيف ان أوميروس في جمعها بين التقاليد الغربية والكاريبية تعكس الهوية الثقافية للشاعر صاحب الانتماءات المتعددة. وبناءا عليه ، يدور هذا البحث حول السؤال : هل يحقق منهج الفضاء الثالث الخلاص من أزمة الهوية المزدوجة ، أم تستمر المعاناة ؟ وفي نهاية البحث ، يتم تقديم النتائج المستخلصة من الدراسة التحليلية للقصيدة حول مضمون الهوية المزدوجة في هذه المرحلة .

الكلمات الدالة: الهوية المزدوجة، الفضاء الثالث، الهوية الحيادية، قصيدة اوميروس، النضج الثقافي فيما بعد الاستعمار.

Theoretical Grounds

The poetic persona, in this stage, adapts to the dual or diverse nature of his identity and does not suffer from any conflict or cultural disorder. On the contrary, the poetic persona lives in a state of self-balance between his contradictory affiliations as a result of his resort to mediation between his different cultural ties and negotiation between them. The poetry reveals that the speaker takes advantage of the features of both his cultures (local and Western) in creating a third exceptional cultural model that expresses his own mark. This method that the persona uses to deal with his hyphenated identity at this stage is in harmony with the strategy that Bhabha's Third Space calls for. In his *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha's Third Space stipulates taking a border location between the original identity and the identity imposed by the colonial regime, which results in the formation of a complex self-identity that arises from the interaction between the two cultures and is affected by the characteristics of both sides, but, in the end, it has an unfamiliar character.

Zehra Sayed sees this border position that Homi Bhabha's notion of Third Space is targeting as "a site that evades categorization within the binary framework of East / West or colonizer / colonized" (60). In the sense that standing at the threshold of two civilizations, or rather, The Third Space doctrine makes it possible to get rid of the burden of cultural duality and the division between African identity and the European one, or in other words, it handles the sectarian or polar status of post-colonial identity. In this case, ethnic and cultural diversity loses its negative impact and turns into a positive motive; the impurity of cultures is invested in the formation of a conciliatory identity that works to compromise the dispute between the discordant roots and unify the bilateral lines. According to Michaela Wolf, "The 'clash of civilizations' concept is substituted by a concept of harmony created in the space-in-between . . ." (139). Under the negotiating policy and being in the middle, the concept of Third Space guarantees harmony and reconciliation between the two

poles of hyphenated identity, and the gap resulting from the disparity in the degree of urbanization and progress between the intertwined cultures is bridged, which is reflected on the psychology of the holder of hyphenated identity, who finally reaches inner psychological peace and feels a kind of self-stability. Briefly, the concept of Third Space with all its consequences can be felt on a large scale from the poetry of the third stage of hyphenated identity.

Omeros: Swaying between Cultures

The third stage of hyphenated identity is represented in Walcott's poetry in the period from 1990 to 2010, which is considered the culmination of his poetic victories, and in which he published volumes such as *Omeros* (1990), *The Bounty* (1997), and *White Egrets* (2010). It is worth noting that this is the period when Walcott was awarded the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature as an appreciation of his influential role in spreading awareness of the concept of hyphenated identity through his poetic works and a reward for reaching such a level of artistic achievement, which reveals that it is a unique stage of poetry characterized by idealism and wisdom in dealing with the concept of hyphenated identity. As Patrick Bixby comments,

Since winning the Nobel Prize, Walcott has continued to write prolifically, producing a new epic poem, *The Bounty* in 1992 and three more collection of poems, including *White Egrets* which won the T. S. Eliot prize in 2011. In these works, he continues to explore the complex legacy of colonialism with a poetic vision that recognizes the range of traditions comprising his beloved West Indies, and with a Poetic voice that harmonizes the discord between the English canon and his native dialect. (Bixby)

Each of these three volumes reflects a noticeable development in the poet's consciousness in dealing with the question of diverse cultural affiliations that shape his destiny, as well as his success in absorbing the task of the writer going through the experience of pluralism in postmodern societies. They all illustrate a large scale of understanding between the local culture of Saint Lucia and the traditions of Western literature, and thus, indicate reconciliation between the poet's Caribbean identity and his colonial one.

Specifically, this research paper analyzes *Omeros* (1990), which was published in the length of a complete volume, since it shows the hyphenated identity in its final phase, in addition to being a noteworthy model that can thematically and stylistically convey the concept of Third Space. All the pillars of the poem indicate that the poet was able to take a path between his intersecting selves or origins, which will be clarified below.

Third Space in *Omeros*

Critics and reviewers differ in their evaluation of *Omeros* between considering it as an extension of the classical European Homeric epics or a modern epic depicting the Caribbean society and having no connection with the traditional epics. In this context, Paul Jay argues that

debates about its status as an epic have played a key role in structuring the critical discourse about *Omeros*. . . . Traditional classicists . . . have been attracted to the poem's epic structure, see it as a major strength, and are untroubled by its supposed Eurocentric roots. . . . [Different] set of critics, including . . . Walcott himself, have played down or denied altogether the poem's epic qualities. Finally . . . [some] critics argue that while *Omeros* draws on conventions of the classical epic, it remakes the form into something specifically Caribbean and postcolonial. (1)

It is clear from Jay's expression that the formulation of *Omeros* in an epic frame is the factor behind the differing opinions of critics about it and their division into more than one team in judging it. Being in an epic frame, the poem draws the attention of some critics to its similarity with the epics of Western literature, and then they accused *Omeros* of relying on the notion of mimicry and adopting the traditions of European heritage and literature. But others, even the poem's author, consider that the epic formulation of the poem does not call for considering it traditional, as it does not adopt the mythological customs that permeate the Homeric epics, but rather depends on the reality of Caribbean people and depicts the actual spirit of that society. Therefore, this group of critics has excluded comparing *Omeros* with the classical European epics. Another group of critics notes the skill of *Omeros* and its role in reformulating the traditional European epic to suit the Caribbean culture and postcolonial conditions.

In general, the relationship of *Omeros* with its classical Homeric ancestors cannot be ignored, but at the same time, it cannot be attributed also to the lineage of traditional European-style epics. *Omeros* does not rely entirely on the legendary epics, but rather quotes some features from them, which calls for consideration in Jay's question: "After Dante, Wordsworth, Whitman, Joyce, and Hart Crane, why another epic poem based on tropes from Homer, especially from a postcolonial location?" (2). The answer to this question lies in understanding the way Walcott deals with the pattern of hyphenated identity in this third stage of his poetry. At this stage of poetry, Walcott seeks idealism, which is, in his view, achieved through a compromise between the two sides of hyphenated identity by deriving the best fruits from both cultures (European and Caribbean) and trying to present them in a new innovative way. This requires the adoption of a neutral perspective, such as Third Space, which is one of Bhabha's notions and the most important of them to deal with the postcolonial identity.

Thus, the study suggests that *Omeros* occupies an interfacial or border zone between the European classical epic and the Caribbean experience, or in other words, ranging between the imperial mimicry and local authenticity. *Omeros* employs the familiar structure of mythical epics prevalent in Western literature in a way that embodies the local Caribbean nature, which gives it a unique status. Therefore, it should be noted that the Western epic structure of the poem does not contradict its Caribbean character; the clue is the poet's craft of negotiating between the two cultures. Margaret H. Beissinger and others point out that "there is in *Omeros* no black or white, but only black and white. Its roots are not in Europe or Africa, but necessarily in both Europe and Africa. Consequently, it is not epic or novel, but only epic and novel" (Beissinger et al. 287). These writers assert that *Omeros* does not represent only one pole of the two poles of postcolonial identity and is not confined to the mantle of one culture, but always takes into account the balance between the two models, accordingly, it cannot be classified as a traditional epic, nor can it be considered entirely different in a way that excludes its epic features; it must be classified as a modern and modified form of traditional epic. It is known that all the previous epics represent Western literature, but *Omeros* is the first poem that addresses a local community such as the Caribbean islands in an epic image that imitates Western literature. In this sense, the poet values both his heritages, mediates between them, and creates an unparalleled model that leads him to the Nobel Prize.

Concerning the controversy over the spread of the notion of mimicry in the poem, the study clarifies that the emulation of *Omeros* with the mythological style of the European classical epics cannot be considered a blind mimicry by the poet merely to follow the masters of epic poetry in Western Europe, nor can it be considered aimless or devoid of meaning, but in the poet's consciousness, mimicry is one of the necessary pillars for the formation of a sound Caribbean identity side by side with local authenticity and evoking the reality of the Caribbean community. The hyphenated Caribbean identity cannot reach perfection and

cultural maturity except by balancing both sides of it. Accordingly, mimicry becomes legitimate and an integral part of the canon of Caribbean identity.

Hence, the fact that *Omeros* negotiates between the traditions of European epic and the Caribbean culture is the main idea that the study is interested in following in all the factors of the poem in addition to reviewing the images of Third Space that lie in the poem.

The concept of Third Space is realized in all the pillars of the poem starting with the title. When analyzing the title of the poem "*Omeros*," it turns out that the poet has deliberately divided the title into three syllables according to vowels (O/mer/os) to demonstrate his approach to mediation and taking a third interfacial space between two cultures. The first and third syllables of the title symbolize the two sides of the hyphenated identity of the poet, while the middle syllable refers to the negotiation between the two poles of dual heritage (Caribbean and European). In his poem, Walcott defines the meaning behind each of the three syllables of the title as follows:

I said, "Omeros,"

and O was the conch-shell's invocation, *mer* was
both mother and sea in our Antillean Patois,
os, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes

and spreads its sibilant collar on a lace shore. (*Omeros* 14)

The first syllable "O" represents the nature of the Caribbean experience as a whole, from suffering to recovery and healing. "O" reflects the journey of Caribbean characters in the poem, which begins with confronting the illness, evoking the causes of the ordeal, and ends with the discovery of the cure. In his article

"'Circle Yourself and Your Island': The 'O' as a Generative Tension in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*", Daniel Benyousky explains the significance of "O" as follows:

It signifies the circular, cyclical orbit of the poem through personal, cultural, and geographical wounds, while ultimately seeking a sense of healing and belonging. The "O" embodies both sound and signifier, as the characters in the poem circle back to their ancestors by vocalizing "O" sounds that give voice to the inarticulable colonial and postcolonial circumstances Caribbean inhabitants have faced. Walcott therefore uses the "O" as both image portraying and sound giving expression to lived experience in the Caribbean. . . . (1)

According to Benyousky, the poet employs "O" in the text as a sound and an expressive symbol that embody the nature of Caribbean culture. On the one hand, "O" can be considered as a sound expressing the feeling of pain and harm incurred by the Caribbean people as a result of living through a bitter colonial experience, in addition to bearing the consequences of post-colonialism. It is a voice that recalls the history of conquest, oppression, slavery, and usurpation of land, and also conveys the suffering of the problems of fragmentation, cultural diaspora, and the sense of non-nationality, which invade the modern era. On the other hand, "O" is a symbol of a closed circular loop whose beginning and end meet at the same point, revealing the nature of the path taken by the Caribbean characters in the poem. They take a path towards salvation that starts from the place of pain. In other words, the journey of cultural healing is metaphorically completed by completing the shape of the circle, and therefore by going back to the past and opening its wounds to purify them.

As for the third syllable "os", it represents the European culture side, because it is taken from the Latin language, meaning "bone" (*Omeros* 14). This symbolizes that the Caribbean characters of the poem are dyed with the Greek mythological landmark of the heroes of Latin epics and myths in Western literature. Benyousky

comments, "Adding a human element to this incantation, 'os' plays off of the Latinate root for bone, fusing human existence and the ocean" (4). Benyousky's comment emphasizes the need to decode the poem's title in order to find out what the poet is aiming for behind it. It also clarifies that the third syllable of the title "os" indicates that the protagonists in the poem belong to a Latin origin in some way, which hints at taking into account the European race and recalls the features of European culture in the poem.

Walcott points out that "mer" is a French Creole, a slang word in the West Indies language meaning "mother" or "sea" (*Omeros* 14) and therefore a symbol of the embrace of both cultures (Caribbean and European) and neutrality between them. Moreover, the choice of a local Creole dialect to be the middle syllable between the other two syllables of the title announces the poet's policy of reconciliation and compromise between the two extremes during this stage of hyphenated identity; the stage which is based on bringing features from one culture with features from the other one and formulating them in a third form Unique and imaginative. Creole is an innovative form of language that negotiates between the elements of a standard European language and the local dialect traditions of the Caribbean community. Also, this policy is evident in composing the poem's themes.

Omeros raises the theme of connectivity with roots and individuals' pride in blood ties as well as kinship with their lineage. It depicts the importance of connectedness between the offspring and parents. It is a borrowed idea inspired by the Homeric epics, such as *The Iliad*. "The heroes of *The Iliad* are obsessed with their own ancestry and are bent on proving that they measure up to the standards set by their forebears" to be able to complete their glorious path and to prove that they deserve the honor of belonging to them (Beissinger et al. 287). For the Homeric heroes, the ancestor is the motive behind achieving a high position, prosperity and loftiness.

But *Omeros* does not copy or repeat this thought without renewal; instead, it takes advantage of it to serve the nature of Caribbean culture, which ensures the realization of the principle of negotiation and settlement between the two cultures. In the poem, "Achille" imagines that he is on a journey to Africa, where he meets the people of his race and his African ancestors, who inform him of the essence of their culture and pass on to him some of the legacies that distinguish them as in the following lines:

Then the fishermen sat near a large tree under whose dome
stones sat in a circle. His father said:

"Afo-la-be,"

touching his own heart.

"In the place you have come from
what do they call you?"

Time translates.

Tapping his chest,
the son answers:

"Achille." The tribe rustles, "Achille."

Then, like cedars at sunrise, the mutterings settle. (*Omeros*
137)

The previous conversation reveals the moment when "Achille" gets acquainted with his predecessor "Afolabe", and the reception of the African tribe individuals to him. Through stating names, there is a kind of circulation of the legacies of African culture and colonial culture among themselves. The poem's narrator also misses his father, who died when he was young, and expresses his strong yearning for his presence by creating some scenes in the poem that depicts his invocation of his father's ghost by imagining him or embodying the dream as follows:

Tears blurred my sight;

head lowered, I stopped. White shoes are blocking my path.
I looked up. My father stood in the white drill suit
of his eternal summer on another wharf. (*Omeros* 186)

The previous lines depict a scene that the narrator weaves in his imagination with his father coming and standing in front of him. In this way, the narrator achieves his desire and meets his father, who tells him the history of his European civilization and tells him about its glories and colonial achievements. He also recommends traveling to and inspecting the centers and spots of the empire to acquire an adequate background about his European heritage.

All these images symbolize the importance of the past and its role in the lives of Caribbean personalities. Individuals in post-colonial societies are forced to return to the past and invoke its symbols to help them discover their roots and investigate that vague and ambiguous aspect of their disjointed identity. Then they will be able to realize the reality of their existence and understand themselves well. All this is due to their suffering from the problems of belonging and rooting created by the colonial conditions. These circumstances contribute to disintegrating the identity of that society and destabilizing the souls of individuals between the different entities. By adding this local touch to the themes of classic epics, the concept of the Third Space is realized even at the thematic level of the poem.

In the same vein, Walcott, in his *Omeros*, amends the common idea of homeland promoted by the epics of Western literature to cope with the multi-belonging Caribbean identity. The classical epics depict the homeland as a conception that suggests psychological and cultural stability as a result of being the destination to which one belongs and does not belong to another one. This reinforces the idea of a pure national identity or a specific affiliation in these epics. Characters in the Homeric epics have an explicit national identity that makes them give all their loyalty and devotion to one specific country. Therefore, for the Homeric heroes, the homeland is a sacred land that needs to be defended and fought for against any intruder at any cost.

From another perspective, *Omeros* clarifies that the conception of a single homeland is unrecognized in the culture of the West Indies. On those islands, there is no room for pure identities or specific affiliations. Therefore, the poem resorts to switching the conception of homeland in traditional epics to the conception of non-homeland, which suits the code of Caribbean hyphenated identity. The constitutive history of this region distorts the conception of homeland in the minds of Caribbean people, who suffer from the dispersal of their loyalties between different countries and the diversity of their origins and identities. In this sense, "Omeros poetically deconstructs the notion of 'home' and refigures it in a form that incorporates a sense of permanent exile" (Callahan 64). All the protagonists in the poem do not have a share in experiencing the sense of stability provided by the pure national identity. Instead, they are defeated by a feeling of lack of belonging and rootlessness as a result of multiplicity that generates a sense of diaspora and displacement.

In Book Four, the narrator says, "I had nowhere to go but home. Yet I was lost" (*Omeros* 172). With these words, the narrator expresses his sense of dissipation and confusion as well as his deep feeling that he is homeless. Where should he take refuge? And which country should he go to? He has a strong desire to settle somewhere, but he does not know its destination. The choices in front of him are manifold, but he does not know how to choose.

Mainly, the design of the spatial setting and geographical location in the poem supports that thought. The poem roams among various geographical spots and includes many countries and locations to demonstrate the phenomenon of the multiple nationalities and affiliations of the inhabitants of Caribbean islands. For example, "Achille" travels with his imagination from the Antilles to West Africa to consolidate his relationship with the culture of his African race and learn more about his African roots. The narrator also moves among many locations in the poem, sometimes in New-England and other times in the West Indies, in

addition to visiting European power areas, such as London, Lisbon, Dublin, and Toronto to broaden his perceptions about his Western civilization and gain more experience in his colonial homeland, which appears in Book Five of the poem:

I crossed my meridian. Rust terraces, olive trees,
the grey horns of a port. Then, from a cobbled corner
of this mud-caked settlement founded by Ulysses---

swifts, launched from the nesting sills of Ulissibona,
their cries modulated to "Lisbon" as the Mediterranean
aged into the white Atlantic, their flight, in reverse,

repeating the X of an hourglass, every twitter an aeon
from which a horizon climbed in the upturned vase.
(*Omeros* 189)

The narrator clarifies his movement towards Lisbon, a colony of the imperial government and one of the ancient European capitals, which was known in the past as "Ulissibona" after its discoverer, Ulysses Caesar, and then its name changed over time to "Lisbon" (*Omeros* 189). Moreover, protagonists such as "Helen", "Hector", "Philoctete", and "MaKilman" appear in the village of Gros-Îlet, while they, like other protagonists in the poem, live in Saint Lucia, a former colony of the European Empire.

But it is worth noting that in the end, all these characters return to their Caribbean sanctuary, as migratory birds return to the nest and choose to live there and adapt to such notions of multiple homes and national connected identity. As if the Caribbean land has become for them a home that gathers or unites all these

scattered homes and places. In a more precise sense, the characters have come to take it as a common space or a Third Space between all their separate nationalities:

Now, running home, Achille sprung up from the seabed
like a weightless astronaut, not flexing his knees
through phosphorescent sleep; the parchment over head

of crinkling water recorded three centuries
of the submerged archipelago, in its swell
the world above him passed through important epochs. . . .
(*Omeros* 155)

In the previous lines of Book Three, "Achille", is waking up from his profound slumber and trying to gather his forces to rise and return to the Caribbean, as if it is going to be the last leg of his imaginary expedition in Africa. Thus, the protagonists of *Omeros* succeed in reaching a decision that frees them from the dilemma of choosing between linked affiliations, unlike the persona in "A Far Cry from Africa" who is obsessed by the question: "how choose / Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?" (*Collected poems* 18). What distinguishes *Omeros* from Walcott's other poems is that it is a poem that presents the problem and then the solution.

Battles and wars are considered an essential element in the culture of classical Homeric epics, namely an indispensable epic basis, otherwise the epic character will fall from the literary work. Therefore, this is Walcott's proof behind not classifying *Omeros* as an epic. In Walcott's opinion, the text of *Omeros* does not include military battles, so this excludes the poem from comparison with traditional epics. Callahan states,

"Best," in *The Iliad*, means best in battle. . . . Remove the battles from *The Iliad* and the remaining work could scarcely be thought of as comprising an epic. As Walcott himself asks of *Omeros*, "Where are the battles?" (Bruckner 17). Since the warlike hero is absent from West Indian

folklore, and all but absent from West Indian history, he certainly cannot appear in a text which documents West Indian cultural sensibility. (63)

Callahan's statement clarifies that the exclusion of the "warlike hero" phenomenon (Callahan 63) is due to the fact that it is neither representative nor relevant to the Caribbean culture and therefore cannot be the subject of a work focusing on everything that is local as *Omeros*.

Truly, *Omeros* does not depict the traditional combat battles and wars waged by the heroes and commandos in the legendary epics, but it presents a battle of another kind, more dangerous and risky, which is the war with the soul. It depicts the battle raging within the human psyche due to the presence of more than one identity and reveals the underlying conflict that the individual faces in post-colonial societies due to the self's cleavage between different cultural ties. Thus, the poem embodies the moral war of *Omeros* protagonists; the holders of hyphenated identities.

This moral war is capable of vanishing and destroying them, but the resistance of these characters and their desperate efforts to struggle the fragmented state of their identities and to triumph over the hyphenated identity crisis as well as their aspiration for survival reveal their valor and give them a heroic trait that puts them in the same place of their classical counterparts. For this reason, *Omeros* ascribes to its Caribbean protagonists the names of Homeric epics' heroes, such as "Achille", "Philoctete", "Hector", and others, as a sign that their role is no less important than the role played by the great warriors and heroes, and that their achievement is equal to what these warriors do.

Walcott designs *Omeros* protagonists in a Homeric template that revives the role of mythical gods and heroes and ensures their European identities, but with an Antillean spirit that reflects their ties to the Caribbean nature and their affiliation to the local culture. Hence, the outcome is modest social models nourished by the features of the sea, sand, and Caribbean beaches. They

practice simple crafts and suffer from complex interweaving cultural history, but at the same time, are holders of the ancient Greeks' names who made their prominent place in the history of classical epics. In reference to Aliosha Pittaka Bielenberg's expression, "throughout *Omeros*, the St Lucian protagonists – Philoctete and Helen, Hector and Achille –are drawn against the background of their heroic counterparts" (Bielenberg). Consequently, Walcott presents models that carry extracts from each culture and confirms the meaning of syncretistic identity. In Book Six, the poet expresses:

Why not see Helen

as the sun saw her, with no Homeric shadow,
swinging her plastic sandals on that beach alone,
as fresh as the sea-wind? Why make the smoke a door?
(*Omeros* 271)

The poet's vocabulary in these lines hints that the character of "Helen" in the text has a complex identity influenced by European and Caribbean culture alike, and that at this stage it cannot be formulated with a pure identity that represents the local culture only and ignores European ties. Analyzing the character of "Helen", it is clear that she is an attractive woman with charming local features who worked for a while as a maid in the house of "Major Plunkett", but soon leaves her job due to her frequent disagreements with "Maud", the wife of "Major Plunkett", to work then as a waitress in a Caribbean bar. But her name and plot in the text as a center of attraction and engine of competition between "Achille" and "Hector" strengthens her ties with the mythical "Helen", who inhabits the Homeric epics.

The character of "*Omeros*" is also a vivid example that embodies the policy of negotiation practiced by the poem between the norms of European classic epic and the Caribbean experience.

It is assumed that the character of "Omeros" is a character that supports the traditions of Western literature in the poem, because at first glance it embodies one of the figures of the European classic epics, namely the great poet "Homer", but providing this character with an additional personification inspired from the Caribbean environment breaks this perception. Michael Thurston describes the double structure of the character saying:

The tutelary spirit the Narrator encounters at the beginning of Book Seven is . . . "compound". . . . Its appearance goes through a protean shifting of shapes –what first seems to be a marble bust of Homer becomes, when the sky darkens and the shallows change "to another dialect," the St. Lucian blind seer Seven Seas. The figure shifts shapes, alternately "marble with a dripping chiton" and a fisherman wearing a modern undershirt (281). . . . (129)

In his composing of the character of "Omeros", Walcott alludes to the fact that he has been influenced in the poem by the masters of epic poetry, from whom he has learned the epic axes. At the same time, he points out that he does not merely follow the footsteps of the classical guides, but he modifies the epic tradition to take on a local and modern dimension. This is evident when Walcott designs "Omeros" as a character appearing at first in the form of an antique statue glorifying the spirit of Homer; the classical poet. Then, his features change to play the role of a popular icon burdened with the nature of Antilles, in a costume that goes with modern life.

Not only does the transformation in the character's appearance reflect the transgression of the limits of European classical epic to what represents the local culture and the modern world, but also the distortion of the Greek name from "Homer" to become "Omeros". In addition, "Omeros" is given another name that evokes the aspects of Caribbean environment, namely "Seven Seas". This also suggests the renewal of epic tradition and the inclusion of Caribbean experience.

This shifting in appearance is represented in Book Seven when "Omeros" notices the narrator's fascination with the island of St. Lucia and offers him to have a picnic around it. While watching the island and its charming landmarks, "Omeros" suggests joining the narrator in chanting the island with him:

And Omeros nodded: "We will both praise it now."

But I could not before him. My tongue was a stone
at the bottom of the sea, my mouth a parted conch

from which nothing sounded, and then I heard his own
Greek calypso coming from the marble trunk,

widening the sea with a blind man's anger. . . . (*Omeros*
286)

As the previous lines explain, the suggestion of "Omeros" does not receive an answer in the narrator's soul. The narrator cannot interact with "Omeros" in singing. At that moment, the companion of the narrator adopts the role of his Greek teacher, Homer, and appears in his archaeological figure representing only one aspect of the narrator's hyphenated identity, but as soon as the character transforms from "Omeros" to the blind hunter, "Seven Seas", who continues singing in Greek, the narrator then senses the completeness of all aspects of his cultural heritage and becomes able to join the singing of "Seven Seas", as he expresses, "I heard my own thin voice riding on his praise . . ." (*Omeros* 286). What can be deduced from that scene is that the launch of the writer's poetic voice at this stage is based on a balance between his European identity and his local one.

In *Omeros*, Walcott draws three-sided relationships among the protagonists. For example, this triangle is represented in the relationship among "Achille", "Plunkett", and the narrator, who form together the three sides of the triangle. The character of the

narrator "Walcott" in the poem is a Third Space between "Achille" and "Dennis Plunkett". The poet presents "Achille" to be a representative of the African heritage and forms "Major Plunkett" as a model of the European race in the poem. Then the poet plans to make the character of the narrator as a point of intersection between the two categories. The poet designs the character of the narrator "Walcott" with a hyphenated identity that bears features of African culture and European one. Thus, this character takes a border position between the two identities and becomes a symbol of balance between them:

[The poet] divides his poetic persona between Achille, the descendent of African slaves, and Dennis Plunkett, the exile from England, in order to explore the African and European roots of his identity. The autobiographical figure in the poem, the writer/ narrator "Walcott," dramatizes the struggle to negotiate a kind of reconciliation between these two figures, a hybrid . . . figure who is at once African and European, Caribbean. . . . (Jay 4)

The poet creates the character of the narrator in the poem as a common character that bears links with both the character of "Achille" and the character of "Major Plunkett", and thus, it is a symbol of reconciliation between the African self and the European entity. The multi-belonging nature of this personality and its proper treatment with this plurality validate maturity in handling the concept of hyphenated identity in this stage.

Since the character of the narrator in the poem reflects the character of Walcott in reality, it is so obvious that Walcott declares, by using his technical skills, the nature of the approach he has believed in handling the issue of hyphenated identity in this stage. The narrator "Walcott" in *Omeros* is presented as a vivid example of what has been questioned in an earlier stage in "A Far Cry from Africa" when Walcott says, "how choose / Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?" (*Collected Poems* 18). The narrator's character illustrates Walcott's protest against confining himself to one culture and his resistance to the bias to one identity

at the expense of the other. It reflects a state of full awareness reached by the poet in dealing with the concept of Caribbean hyphenated identity through the conciliation between the two sides of identity.

Similarly, Walcott designs an intertwined trilateral relationship among "Helen", "Achille", and "Hector". "Hector" and "Achille" race throughout the poem to win "Helen's" love and strive to impress her. As a result, Helen becomes the crossroads of the conflict between two completely different competitive personalities. The threads are interweaving among the plots of three characters; "Helen", "Achille", and "Hector". "Helen" is the focal point that bridges the distance between the plots of the two divergent personalities ("Achille" and "Hector"). In this sense, "Helen" is a symbol of Third Space between "Achille" and "Hector".

The negotiation of her relationship with these two characters occurs at the end of the poem after "Hector's" death through her decision of engagement to "Achille" while keeping her fetus from "Hector" in her womb. Thus, "Helen" takes an in-between space between the two entities.

Walcott assigns the task of narration in the poem to two models; "Major Plunkett" and the narrator "Walcott". Each of them is interested in conveying the Caribbean experience and exploring the history of the Caribbean region. Each of them has his own style of narration, but in the end, they both are equivalent in dealing with the narration in a manner that comports with the concept of Third Space and in a manner that aims at settlement and reconciliation between the two sides of hyphenated identity:

Walcott uses Plunkett and his autobiographical protagonist to foreground different strategies for writing about the Caribbean. Major Plunkett's approach is his ostensibly empirical and historical, informed by dogged research and a pretense to impartiality, while "Walcott's" is, of course, overtly poetic, steeped in metaphor and symbol and

drawing regularly on a range of Homeric parallels. It would be a mistake, however . . . to Plunkett's as exclusively historical and "Walcott's" as purely poetic or mythic. (Jay 5)

At first glance, it seems that "Major Plunkett" presents his narration in a stereotypical style that relies on reviewing the historical phenomena and data of the region without adding any poetic touch, while Walcott recites the Caribbean facts poetically depending on the figurative language, music effect and adding the author's imagination to the written material. In this, he simulates the style of the poets of legendary epics, such as Homer. But on the contrary, and more accurately, it is clear that each of the two characters seeks to balance the role of the historian and the role of the poet in the narration. In this sense,

each recognizes his poetic project in infected by the discursive principle driving the other. Plunkett's positivist, research-based history is, in the end, driven by a reliance on the same mythic parallels underwriting "Walcott's" project. Plunkett ends up having to find a way to reconcile the "historian's task" with fiction and emotion, while "Walcott" worries that his literature might be guilty of history. His desire to move "beyond metaphor," moreover, has its parallel in Plunkett's desire to move beyond history. (Jay 6)

"Major Plunkett" narrates the Caribbean history in a way that hides the brutal colonial realities and imperialist abuses on the region due to his sense of remorse for being a part of this beneficiary European colonial entity. As a result, in his reporting of the Caribbean history, "Plunkett" resorts to the poet's imagination and symbolic tools that contribute to presenting history from a positive perspective that appreciates the islands of the Caribbean and covers the disadvantages of colonialism. In addition, there is an element of ramification and verbosity in "Plunkett's" model of narrating the Caribbean history, meaning that he goes on to narrate the Caribbean history dealing with more than one topic and touches on many issues. It is the same method

that the narrator "Walcott" employs in his poetic model to narrate the Caribbean history, following the poets of mythological epics.

The long and branched narration draws attention to comparing *Omeros* with the traditional mythical epics in Western literature, which favors a lengthy explanation and an exaggerated expansion in telling the story and events. But, for the narrator "Walcott," the narration of the Caribbean history, evoking manifestations of the Caribbean civilization, and presenting stories of local characters balance the meaning and put it in its right context. Thus, both "Plunkett" and "Walcott" (the narrator) negotiate between their European identity and their Caribbean one acquired by the residency in the Caribbean community.

Walcott uses these two examples of the characters in the poem to embody his own vision of narration. He seeks to reconcile two opposing forms of narration, or in other words, he seeks to reach a form of narration that combines the local historical impact with the Western mythical poetic style. In the end, he produces a third and unique form of narration formulated by both of them. In this sense, Walcott deals with the narration in *Omeros* in the pattern of Third Space for mediating between his both cultures. Thus, he states his impression about identity in this third stage of his poetry; he desires to invest the concept of Third Space to deal with the post-colonial Caribbean identity.

Speaking of the narration factor in the poem, it is necessary to discuss the narrative language, which oscillates between Creole and English. In general, postcolonial writers exploit Creole in their writings for pointing to the cultural pluralism engrained in their societies, but Walcott's intention behind employing Creole in this third phase of his poetry goes beyond that general trend; Creole at this stage of Walcott's poetry is his literary means to express a more conscious message through the language of the poem. This message is concerned with his current methodology in this stage which is characterized by full maturity in dealing with the postcolonial identity. Walcott invests Creole (English or French) to hint at following Third Space between two distant cultures.

For Walcott, Creole is the outcome that results from the interaction of the elements of the standard language with the elements of the popular dialect, and therefore it symbolizes the poet's mediation between the colonial heritage and the national culture. In reference to John J. Figueroa's words, "For me one of the marks of genius in Walcott was his very early willingness to draw on all aspects of his cultural heritage" (159). Figueroa explains that Walcott's adoption of balance and compromise between his multiple cultural ties by absorbing the features of each culture and remolding them by adding his personal touch is among the factors that help him reach a stage of cultural maturity and full awareness of the concept of hyphenated identity in his poetry. This principle is realized on the linguistic level in the poem and can be seen in the following example from *Omeros*:

I felt like standing in homage to a beauty

that left, like a ship, widening eyes in its wake.

"Who the hell is that?" a tourist near my table

asked a waitress. The waitress said, "She? She too proud!"
(*Omeros* 23-24)

In the previous example, Creole which is confined in these two verses: "'Who the hell is that?'" and "'She? She too proud!'" (*Omeros* 24) presents a maneuver between Standard English and the oral customs of the colloquial dialect which is represented by using obscene language and the accent which is circulated in the Caribbean. As if Walcott adds to the language of the empire a Caribbean character to achieve the desired goal. Figueroa comments on the same stanza saying:

Note in the following extract from Walcott's *Omeros*, not only the vulgar 'Who the hell is that?' taken in contrast to homage, and not only zero copula in 'She? She too proud!', but also the special West Indian intonation with which this dismissive remark by a 'carry down artist' must be said. (161-62)

Figueroa points out that Walcott's mediation between his belonging to the European heritage and his belonging to the local one in the Creole verse, "'Who the hell is that?'" (*Omeros* 24), appears by adding a prosaic common form in the vernacular to the formal polite form of standard English. As for the verse, "'She? She too proud!'"(24), the negotiation between the two cultures appears through formulating an English sentence in a way that announces the Caribbean tongue by rigging the standard language grammar and adding the local accent to the sentence.

This is in addition to the fact that the narrator in these lines descends from the writers' official language to the common people's language for representing characters of the Caribbean community, which is another image that confirms the poet's mediation between his global culture and his national one.

Thus, Walcott's motivation in using Creole has achieved a kind of development as usual in the three stages of his poetry. It is necessary to think of the endeavor behind the use of Creole in Walcott's poems because it reveals his concepts and impressions in each stage of his poetry. This endeavor clarifies Walcott's perspective of the concept of hyphenated identity during each stage, whether this stage deals with the hyphenated identity from an ambivalent, or a hybrid perspective, or takes a border space between different cultures.

There is a perception by some critics that all texts written in English in post-colonial societies are texts devoid of awareness of the concept of hyphenated identity, neglect the original cultural identity, and they only support belonging to the empire and the colonial legacy. Consequently, those critics consider that these texts adopt the notions of Mimicry of the European culture and Ambivalence, but do not pay attention to the principle of Third Space. In this context, Naglaa Abou-Agag argues,

When Aschroft et al put together the examples of literary texts written in the former colonies and created a theory around them, they emphasized the use of the English language to write back at the Empire, which would raise questions regarding the validity of the voices of these writers who are writing in a foreign tongue about their cultural identity. They use the language of the "Other" to address the "Other" and to describe themselves, which keeps them imprisoned in the dichotomy of "us and them" and hints at the superiority of "them". . . . (33)

This means that, in the newly independent colonies, the writers' resort to the English language in writing their works indicates a defect in the awareness of their identity and the duplicity of their affiliation between their local culture and colonial heritage. This even confirms that the legacy of the empire has had the greatest influence on them. But discussing *Omeros* as a text of postcolonial literature that presents the Creole language confirms the poet's tendency to free himself from being trapped in a single lingual structure and his desire to give his local culture a voice in the lingual model of the poem. Thus, he creates for himself a neutral position between his cultures, and satisfies all his cultural ties.

Even the English language itself in *Omeros* does not contradict the poet's logic at this stage of hyphenated identity and does not fall under the sign of Mimicry or bias to the culture of the empire, but it rather announces the Third Space approach. Abou-Agag's expression validates this hypothesis when she says,

Postcolonial Literature, written in English or translated into English, may be viewed as a Third Space in which postcolonial writers describe their own cultures in a foreign language. . . . Postcolonial literature, in this case, inhabits a Third Space, where it is involved in continuous efforts to find its identity. (41)

She confirms that the texts which are written in English in the former European colonies do not present only the concept of Mimicry, instead, from a deeper look, these texts can allude to the concept of Third Space and support the notion of mediation between dual cultures. Expressing the local culture through the language of the colonial heritage is a method that guarantees the settlement of the conflict between the writer's two sides and achieves the negotiation between the two cultures. Thus, this style becomes the writer's artistic ploy and one of his literary behaviors that contributes to defining the nature of the intra-identity in the poem.

What supports the thought that *Omeros* negotiates between the traditions of the classical European epic and the Caribbean culture, and that it is not confined only to the repertoire of the Homeric epics, is the fact that *Omeros* surpasses the common model of the classical epic; it formulates innovative ideas, which contribute to its uniqueness and distinguish it from the rest of the traditional epics. In reference to Line Henriksen's expression:

In a number of instances, *Omeros* exceeds the limits of the epic and includes elements of other genres. Achille's conversation with his ancestor in Africa is presented as drama, and the death of his rival Hector is given in the form of a film-script. The poet-narrator's musings about a lost love are lyrical . . . while major Plunkett's interior monologue employs a form of discourse typically found in the novel. (238)

Henriksen supposes that *Omeros* is a unique and unfamiliar model of the epic because it breaks free from the constraints of the traditional style of the classic epic, or in other words, develops it by adopting some extraneous features. The epic model of *Omeros* is not only limited to the traditions of Western epic poetry, such as other traditional epics, but it also deals with features from other literary genres, such as drama, cinema, novel, and the lyrical genre. It is worth noting that *Omeros* exploits the characteristics of these literary genres only to depict the diverse nature of the

Caribbean community. For example, *Omeros* borrows from cinematic films the flashback technology that conveys the manifold presence of the characters and also draws a scenario of each character that highlights its dual roots. It also makes use of the lyrical poetic style in giving the tone, melody, and musical styles to the narration in a way that is appropriate to express the tragic love experience that the narrator suffers from as a result of his multiple affiliations. *Omeros* is an epic poem in the end.

Omeros also adopts the characteristics of dramatic plays by depicting the acting performance of the various cast that suggests a plurality of Caribbean identities or embodies a post-colonial identity. This epic poem also approaches the novelistic genre when it resorts to multilingualism through the techniques of monologue and dialogue. The traditional Western epic is always satisfied with only the standard language, because it represents the Western society and evokes the language of the empire. But *Omeros* handles different vernacular dialects in the Caribbean when representing the characters' internal speech or discourse with each other, as well as the alternation between the standard language and colloquial dialect when the narrator slips from the formal style of the writers to the popular form of the protagonists gives the poem the feature and appearance of the novel. The novel, unlike the traditional epic poem, accommodates multilingualism and acknowledges the hyphenated identity experience of the individual.

In this sense, Henriksen prefers to refer to *Omeros* as a "novelised epic" according to Bakhtin's description and not a traditional epic, as the novel is the basis of all literary genres as follows: "In Bakhtinian terms, a text that harbours such as a double generic identity may be defined as a novelised epic" (Henriksen 234). In Henriksen's opinion, this title gives the poem a post-colonial feature and announces its contribution to the reconciliation between the traditions of Western heritage and the local culture because it illustrates that *Omeros* benefits from the European literary heritage but in accordance with the style of postmodernism.

The following lines illustrate this point:

"*Mais qui Ça qui rivait –'ous, Philoctete?*"

"*Moin blessé.*"

"But what is wrong wif you, Philoctete?"

"I am blest

wif this wound, Ma Kilman, *qui pas ka guérir pièce.*

Which will never heal."

"Well, you must take it easy.

Go home and lie down, give the foot a lickle rest." (*Omeros* 18-19)

Clearly, *Omeros* presents a novelistic dialogue between "MaKilman" and "Philoctete" to shed light on the diversity of the slang dialects in the Caribbean between French Creole and English Creole which appears by inserting the word "wif" instead of (with) and the word "lickle" instead of (little) (*Omeros* 18-19). Simultaneously, this dialogue is formulated according to the familiar meter of the traditional epics.

Similarly, the novelistic monologue in the opening stanza of the poem alludes to the negotiation between the Caribbean identity and the acquired European identity in more than one form:

"This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes."

Philoctete smiles for the tourists, who try taking

his soul with their cameras. (*Omeros* 3)

The word "them" in the previous monologue reveals "Philoctete's" English creole (*Omeros* 3). In this sense, Henriksen comments, "Philoctete speaks in an accommodated vernacular. . . . The opening line . . . uses 'them' for 'those'" (243). Thus, "Philoctete's" colloquial and weak discourse highlights his local Caribbean identity, while the narrator's standard and eloquent style in narrating reflects the European identity.

On the other hand, the use of the word "canoes" in the previous stanza evokes aspects of the local Caribbean environment and depicts the primitive nature of the West Indies characters who still work in simple crafts such as fishing. While words such as "tourists" and "their cameras" refer to the imperial civilization and depict the way in which the coloniser who have more developed nature look at the colonised people (*Omeros* 3).

Interestingly, Walcott alludes to a strategy for the Third Space in the poem by including suggestive and expressive images that serve his purpose in conveying the concept of mediation between two separate cultures or being on the sidelines between the hyphenated identities, such as shadow and dusk /twilight.

AFOLABE

Would every sound be a shadow that crossed your ear,
without the shape of a man or a tree? What would it be?

.....

ACHILLE

What would it be? I can only tell you what I believe,
or had to believe. It was prediction, and memory,
to bear myself back, to be carried here by a swift,

or the shadow of a swift making its cross on water,
with the same sign I was blessed with, with the gift
of this sound whose meaning I still do not care to know.
(*Omeros* 138)

The poet employs the meaning of shadow in the poem to indicate that, in this stage, he seeks to evoke flashes from the cultures of each ancestor, or that he picks some fruits from each inheritance (African and European), then reshapes them in a way that reveals a new identity. This is what "Achille" expresses in the previous conversation when his predecessor "Afolabe" asks him about the nature of the identity he has adopted, which is supposed to carry only glimpses of each culture. "Achille" replies that the identity that he has embraced and believed in is an identity based on the mechanism of shadow which ensures reconciliation between his disparate cultural ties by making use of certain legacies from each origin.

Callahan explains the phenomenon of the shadow saying that it is "the result of the interaction between a light source and an opaque object. It is not a blend of the two, sharing nothing with the light source or the opaque object, but dependent upon both for its existence" (108). In this sense, the shadow in *Omeros* can be considered a symbol that indicates the concept of Third Space between the hyphenated identities. The shadow, according to Callahan, is a phenomenon that arises from the mutual influence between two components, which leads to the formation of a compound, not a mixed or hybrid formation, which is affected by each of its components, however, it bears an exceptional identity. Figuratively, the critic's definition indicates that the shadow does not suggest the hybridity of cultures or embrace them holistically, nor does it represent, in an explicit manner, any of the two poles of the dual heritage, but it only hints at the manifestations of each culture or includes some indications of them. Hence, the shadow indicates the inter-existence and the embrace of a marginal location between the two bounds of the hyphenated identity.

In the dialogue between "Afolabe" with "Achille", "Afolabe" says, "I am not here/ or a shadow" (*Omeros* 138). "Afolabe" tells his great-grandson "Achille" that he is nothing but a "shadow" or a ghost for him ("Achille") to remind of the past and his African legacy, but actually, he is not present. Therefore, the word

“shadow” in the previous line symbolizes merely features of the African culture and refers to touching but not encompassing it completely.

Undoubtedly, the image of the shadow in the poem reflects the progress of Walcott's vision of the concept of the hyphenated Caribbean identity and indicates his acquisition of full awareness of how to deal with his multiple selves. It suggests a negotiation between the two sides of the identity, which gives this stage of Walcott's poetry the mark of maturity and genius. "Afolabe" says:

No man loses his shadow except it is in the night,
and even then his shadow is hidden, not lost. At the glow
of sunrise, he stands on his own name in that light.

When he walks down to the river with the other fishermen
his shadow stretches in the morning, and yawns. . . .
(*Omeros* 138)

The previous lines show that the appearance of shadow is related to the presence of light, and for this reason, the phenomenon of shadow disappears when darkness prevails. Thus, mentioning the image of the shadow in the poem confirms that *Omeros* lies in a stage of cultural enlightenment and refers to a rebirth of the culture of postcolonial identity.

Dusk, in *Omeros*, is also one of the noteworthy images of the concept of Third Space. In Book two, the poet uses the image of dusk when he alludes to "Achille's" project to search for the history of the Caribbean and to relive the past in order to know his African identity:

Once, after the war, he'd made plans to embark on
a masochistic odyssey through the Empire,
to watch it go in the dusk. . . . (*Omeros* 90)

The image of dusk in the previous lines symbolizes taking an in-between space between the culture of the empire and the African culture. Dusk is a cosmic phenomenon that lies at the border between brightness and sunset. Raj Kumar Baral defines dusk as "a time of day immediately following sunset: a transition between day and night. It evokes the idea of intermediate condition of being between two points" (30). This phenomenon is manifested in the temporary period that emerges after the demise of the daytime and before the evening time. Therefore, it is a border phenomenon that bears the characteristics and features of both periods in another distinct form. Accordingly, the poet uses the image of dusk in the poem under study as a metaphor that reflects the adoption of a border position between the poles of the dual heritage.

Calling back these previous lines, especially the expression, "to watch it go in the dusk . . ." indicates that "Achille's" imaginary adventure of reopening the records of the colonial history and investigating the African identity is only to equate between his affiliation to the culture of the empire and the culture of the African ancestors. The Depiction of the empire "go[es] in the dusk" suggests that the era of the empire's dominance over "Achille's" entity has passed and that "Achille" is about to start a new era governed by the policy of balancing the multiple affiliations (*Omeros* 90). This means that the identity imposed by the empire will be, for "Achille", as one of the sources contributing to the formation of his new hyphenated identity that is inspired by the dusk, and the other source is the identity that is inherited from his African origin. The imperial identity does not become the recognized one or that which takes over the largest part of his belonging. Hence, "Achille" creates a hyphenated identity that matches what the dusk suggests.

Similarly, the poet deals with the image of twilight in the poem with the same meaning that he intends when using the image of dusk. The twilight in the cosmic orbit is the first stage of dusk after sunset. Benyousky describes Walcott's vision of twilight, which is mentioned in his famous article "What the Twilight Says", as follows:

In Walcott's seminal "What the Twilight Says" . . . he depicts the twilight as a dusky and mysterious, yet generative space. The twilight in part demonstrates the displacement that St. Lucians experience as a result of their ancestors' dislocation from Africa because of the Middle Passage and the colonization of their island by imperial powers. . . . Near the end of the essay, he describes the experience of the twilight as a tension that is potentially obscuring, though one that might also lead to wholeness, self-understanding, development of identity. . . . (2)

Benyousky explains Walcott's intention behind the use of twilight in his poems. Twilight, according to Walcott, is the space that results from the interaction between two alternating and opposing periods. Hence, the twilight in Walcott's poems symbolizes the state that the individual in a Caribbean community has reached to deal with his/her separate roots (African and European); it is the mediation between the two margins of hyphenated identity for overcoming the experience of colonialism and preparation for post-colonialism. Although the twilight or dusk (twilight's twin) appears as an ambiguous image symbolizing an intricate process of intercultural interaction, it ensures, figuratively not literally, that the individual reaches the highest level of awareness of the hyphenated identity suggesting a unique creative identity.

Walcott does not neglect his negotiating strategy when preparing the elements of meter and rhyme in the poem. *Omeros* depends on the pillars of versification on which the European mythological epics are based, but with some modifications that will allow the Caribbean identity to appear in the arena of world literature:

Formally, the poem is a hybrid form: it is in loose hexameter much like Homer's, but with occasional pentameter and tetrameter lines which suggest a more folk-like character. The stanzas are mostly tercets reminiscent of Dante's *Divine Comedy* without, however, the strict rhyme of *terza rima*. ("*Omeros* by Derek Walcott")

Walcott composes his poem in accordance with the familiar meter of traditional Homeric epics, which records six feet per line. However, in some parts, he deviates from the norm and rebels against the restrictions of the epic hexameter by installing pentameter or tetrameter on the metric measure to put his manifold Antillean fingerprint on the meter of the poem. Walcott also borrows the *Terza Rima* style that constitutes *Divine Comedy*, the most important classic epic work of the Italian poet, Dante Alighieri. *Terza Rima* means to design the poem in tercet stanzas with a rhyme scheme based on the half-rhyme category, such as aba-bcb-cdc. But Walcott in taking up this Dantean style does not adhere perfectly to the rhyme scheme laid down by *Terza Rima* and prefers to retouch that epic tradition through scattering rhymes contrary to the standard context of rhyme.

Consequently, in *Omeros*, Walcott employs a type of free verse that deconstructs the conventions of classical epics and deviates from the norms of Western literature in favor of representing the rhythm of natural speech in popular culture.

In Book one, the poet creates a scene between the narrator and his father "Warwick" gazing at the hills of Castries, the capital of St. Lucia. Meanwhile, "Warwick" evokes the sight of working women struggling to cross these hills to reach the coal mine at the top: "he had seen women climb/ like ants up a white flower-pot, baskets of coal/ balanced on their torchoned heads, without touching them . . ." (*Omeros* 73). "Warwick" believes that the poetic task of the narrator is very similar to the nature of the work of those women. The narrator has to make some effort in his literary work to achieve the desired goal, and therefore "Warwick" urges the narrator to do the following:

- Kneel to your load, then balance your staggering feet (a)
and walk up that coal ladder as they do in time, (b)
one bare foot after the next in ancestral rhyme. (b)

(*Omeros*75)

The father gives the narrator some advice that carries a figurative meaning which hints at the style that the poet must follow when formulating the meter and rhyme of the poetry of this stage. From "Warwick's" expression in the previous lines, it is a style characterized by mediating between the two sides of the cultural heritage. The poet has already implemented this method when formulating his current poem, which is represented in the techniques of this stanza. Commenting on these previous lines, Thurston says:

The puns on poetic meter ("feet," "foot"), the simultaneous naming and deployment of "rhyme" (emphasized by the disruption of terza rima's sound pattern), and the vigorously figurative language of the tercet all consociate the women's work and the Narrator's vocation. (128)

In this stanza, the poet balances between the meter that he has inherited from his classical predecessors, who built their legendary epics on it, and his modern touch in designing the meter of the poem. Moreover, he makes use of the outer frame of the terza rima pattern, but with a change in its substance by modifying the regular rhyme scheme of this style from aba to become abb. Thus, he replaces the musical rhythm or the resonant tone caused by the "ancestral rhyme" in the narration to match the real and random discourse of the islanders (*Omeros* 75). In addition, "Warwick", who speaks standard English and is a holder of European identity, depicts the aspects of simple Caribbean life by describing the work of Caribbean women in the coal mines and their quest to earn a living to support their families. All these stylistic efforts are the poet's artistic mechanisms that he employs in his poem to negotiate between his European heritage and his

local inheritance to reach the greater goal which is to handle the concept of hyphenated identity. Consequently, the poet adopts his father's perspective and reinforces the concept of Third Space between the two different cultures, even at the technical level of the poem.

It is worth noting that the advice from a father to his son is always the right action, so presenting this negotiating stylistic approach in this scene in the form of advice from the father to his son reinforces that it is the ideal method for dealing with the concept of hyphenated identity in poetry. This supports the hypothesis of the study that the concept of Third Space is the best way to deal with the phenomenon of hyphenated identity and that this stage of Walcott's poetry raises to maturity and perfection.

There is no doubt that even when coping with the classical epic standards regarding the elements of meter and rhyme in the poem, the poet does not set his Caribbean culture aside. He employs that epic tradition in a way that serves the concept of negotiation taking both cultures into account. In this case, Walcott considers this epic model of meter and rhyme as a framework that encapsulates the main theme of the poem which is the connectivity with the island of St. Lucia. In Book one, the poet states,

Because Rhyme remains the parentheses of Palms (a)

shielding a candle's tongue, it is the language's (b)

desire to enclose the loved world in its arms. . . . (a)

(*Omeros* 75)

The meaning and the actual stylistic formula of these lines combine together clarifying that repeating the Western rhyme law of terza rima which states the harmony of the end of the first line with the end of the third line, can refer in one way or another to the concept of Third Space between the two poles of the hyphenated identity; this happens by giving it an Antillean flavor to express the identity of "Helen of the West Indies", namely the identity of St. Lucia.

Omeros raises the issue of the injury and cure to shed light on the impact of Third Space in treating the hyphenated identity crisis that clings to the individual in post-colonial societies. Donald Edwin Barnard notes, "the wound and its healing are a major trope in the poem" (50). Walcott creates the wound in more than one character in the poem, ranging from superficial wounds such as the wound of "Philoctete's" leg and the wound of "Plunkett's" head or moral and internal wounds such as those that lie in "Achille" and the narrator "Walcott". However, all these different wounds symbolize the suffering of the protagonists from the burden of the dual discordant identities and the cultural diaspora in the Caribbean. As for the remedy, it is only presented by following the Third Space pattern which helps the protagonists solve their crises and heal their wounds.

For example, "Philoctete's" wound, Walcott says, "came from the chained ankles/ of his grandfathers. Or else why was there no cure?/ That the cross he carried was not only the anchor's// but that of his race . . ." (*Omeros* 19). "Philoctete's" wound results from the legacy of enslavement left by his coloniser and colonised predecessors; both of whom share in the formation of this legacy. Therefore, "Philoctete's" wound symbolizes the rupture and conflict of his cultural origins. What confirms this meaning is that his wound forms a scar in the form of a "cross" that suggests the intersection and collision between his opposite affiliations. Spiros George Pappleacos sees, "Philoctete's sore is a 'rootless' past, and the ensuing misunderstanding and shame come from not having a history. In that manner he has the same affliction as Achille" (45). Pappleacos attributes the damage that befalls "Philoctete" to living through the bitter colonial experience that has affected his cultural awareness, disintegrated his affiliations, and confused his sense of identity creating a wound that continues to bleed in the present even after the demise of colonialism and maintaining independence. All the Caribbean characters in the poem suffer the same matter, including "Achille".

"Achille" suffers from the same wound as "Philoctete", but not the physical one; he suffers experiencing a fragmented identity and self-disintegration between his African race and his colonial legacy. In other words, "Achille" collides with the dilemma of the loss of self-identity in the postcolonial world. Pappleacos explains, " he senses something is wrong with his name, himself, his very being. . . . While Achille is not carrying an outward symbol/wound of colonialism of the sort that Philoctete is, he has a greater problem of his name . . ." (39). This "problem" is reflected in the comment of "Achille" on the question of his African predecessor "Afolabe" who expresses his astonishment at the name attributed to "Achille" and asks about its meaning as follows:

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

"Achille's" expression indicates that there is a defect or disturbance in his awareness of his identity as a result of his blind submission to the legacies imposed on him by the ruling imperialist entity, which causes the erasure of the features and details of his original identity and, indifferently, holding the pillars of an identity acquired by colonialism. Jennifer J. Kramer agrees with this sense when he analyzes the statement of "Achille" saying:

These are the words of the colonizer and the colonial cultural system. The West Indian people have accepted the Imperial language and its words without regard to their meaning. For the West Indian people, accepting this imposed language has meant oppression and subjugation. The West Indians have lost their native languages, the names of their ancestors, and more importantly, the meaning their words implied. (38)

On that account, "Achille's" wound arises from his sense of confusion and his unwilling compliance with the cultural invasion that has negatively affected his African identity and led to destructing his awareness of it.

Consequently, the wound in the poem is symbolic of the hyphenated identity crisis that the individual suffers from in the Caribbean community under colonialism. As for the healing, "Philoctete" is immersed in a therapeutic bath that includes an African herb planted in the land of St. Lucia. "Ma Kilman", his old friend and the owner of "No Pain" cafe, helps him get that herb and takes care of his wound throughout the period of his injury. The other factor that participates in healing the wound of "Philoctete" besides the African herb is the "basin" in which he stays to take his bath; "The basin/ was one of those cauldrons from the old sugar-mill . . ." (*Omeros* 246). The importance of this "basin" lies in being an indicator of the colonial experience and the practices of the European entity. According to Thurston, "the pot is a relic of colonial exploitation. Walcott describes it in military terms (it resembles a helmet knocked off during an infantry charge) and calls its mouth 'the scream/ of centuries'(246)" (143).

This means that this container reflects the violations committed by the European empire in the Caribbean region and represents the encroachments of the occupying soldiers during the colonial conquest. Thus, "Philoctete's" wound will be healed by bringing objects that represent both the African culture and the colonial one as a kind of reconciliation and balance between the two sides of his cultural heritage. It is a direct and explicit proof of following the Third Space to escape from the hyphenated identity crisis.

In the same vein, "Achille" invests this same wise policy to get out of his cultural impasse. "Achille" gets over his cultural schizophrenia and heals his hidden wound through his decision to adopt a neutral space between his unequal identities by stopping the unconscious drift towards the colonial identity and consolidating his connection to his African identity. He plunges

himself into a dreamy adventure towards Africa in which he restores the foundations of his innate culture and revives his stagnant black identity. But it is worth noting that after setting his feet on the ground of reality and waking up from that adventure and after knowing his African cultural heritage and mastering its customs, "Achille" neither abandons the features of his European identity nor tries to change it to be in line with his fresh African identity, but he remains wedded to the legacies of his colonial heritage and does not let them go. Levine argues:

Granted, Philoctete's healing through the African herb transplanted to St. Lucia represents re-accessing his heritage. But this line begs the question: what is his right name? The poem does not tell us. Even Achille, who admits to his ancestor Afolabe that he doesn't know what his European name means, keeps that name after he returns from his dream journey to Africa. He can give an African name to Helen's child . . . but Achille cannot change what he himself is and has been. . . . (Levine)

In his adherence to his European name despite his African ties, "Achille" believes that the most appropriate solution to deal with his hyphenated identity is a settlement between its two sides, not sacrificing one side for the sake of the other. It is the same logic of "Philoctete" in dealing with his identity, accordingly, the concept of Third Space is the only treatment for the protagonists' wounds in the poem and the best solution to deal with the concept of hyphenated identity.

By discovering the cure, the poet's exploratory journey for finding a solution to the issue of hyphenated identity has been completed and reached its final anchor. Over the course of his poetic career, the poet has embarked on a journey from the unconscious to awareness and from mimicry to creativity.

Conclusion

In the light of the previous analysis, the study concludes that the hyphenated identity during the third stage of Walcott's poetry adopts a negotiating pattern that suggests balance and reconciliation between both ends. This pattern is consistent with Homi Bhabha's concept of Third Space. The hyphenated identity, in this stage, does not reflect any Ambivalence between cultural ties, or even a mere Hybridity of different affiliations. But it alludes to taking a border position that reconciles between black and white, civilized and primitive, Western and local, and coloniser and colonised. Thus, the approach of hyphenated identity helps break down the ethnic barriers and transcends the structural inequality between identities, which grants this kind of identity the status of human identity. The law of human identity rejects racial discrimination and exceeds the disparity between identities for the sake of reconciliation with the other.

The poetic persona embodies this human identity during the poetry of this stage. The protagonist strips off his black mask, deviates from prejudice towards the identity of his African race, and shows his tolerance towards the identity of hetero-race; his white opponent, achieving what the human standards call for. Hence, in this stage of hyphenated identity, the conflict is settled and the gap between the separate selves is bridged by ignoring the difference in color, race, and culture and focusing only on the common space that results from the interaction of these binaries. This space is guaranteed by following the Third Space approach confirms that the poet has reached a stage of intellectual and cultural maturity in his poetry. He has entered a stage of poetry that is fully aware of the concept of hyphenated identity and reflects wisdom in dealing with the cultural diversity rooted in a society such as the islands of the Caribbean.

Accordingly, the study concludes its investigation by presenting Homi Bhabha's Third Space as a solution to the dilemma of hyphenated identity. According to the analytical study and surveying the concept of hyphenated identity over the three stages of Walcott's poetry, the study can assert that the concept of Third Space is the ideal method to deal with the issue of hyphenated identity in postcolonial societies and in all societies which embrace ethnic and cultural diversity. The concept of Third Space has proven its worth in handling the cultural schizophrenia and hostile division resulting from the intertwining of unequal identities by adopting a neutral space between the contradictory identities that allow the multi-identity person to benefit from the features of all cultural ties. Among all the other concepts of Homi Bhabha that he proposes to discuss the postcolonial identity that the current study touches upon, the concept of Third Space is the only one that succeeds in ending a state of conflict and in extinguishing the raging battle between the two sides of hyphenated identity.

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