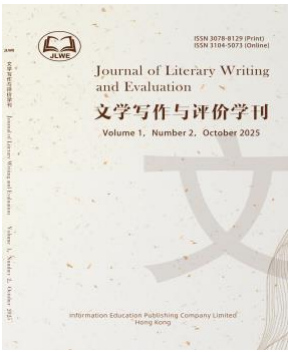

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From Crusoe, to Shabine, and to Achille: The Evolution of Walcott's Drifting Mission

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Abstract: Derek Walcott stands as a preeminent literary figure of the Caribbean region. Throughout his lifetime, he endeavored to recreate the Caribbean through diverse artistic mediums -- poetry, drama, and painting, while awakening self-awareness and identity among his people. This study centers on the poet's verse, excavating the pervasive theme of "drifting" from the perspective of its distinctive maritime and insular aesthetics. From Robinson Crusoe's archetype through the original creation of Shabine to the mythologically charged Achille, the concept of drifting persistently threads through most of Walcott's oeuvre and interconnects with his literary journey. Through the analysis of the representative drifting paradigms across different phases, this essay examines the evolving significations of drifting within the Caribbean context. The concept of Drifting is manifested as colonial mimicry through Crusoe-like survival narratives. The revolutionary Shabine persona transforms drifting into a vessel for spiritual redemption and self's retrieval. Through the long poem "Omeros", drifting achieves mythopoetic transcendence; Achille's spiritual odyssey simultaneously reconstructs ancestral memory and reconfigures the Caribbean consciousness, ultimately forging an authentic Caribbean recognition. This progression mirrors Walcott's artistic evolution from postcolonial ambivalence to identity reconstruction.

Keywords: Derek Walcott; Drifting; Crusoe; Shabine; Achille

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题目：从克鲁索到莎宾，再到阿咯琉斯：论沃尔科特诗歌中漂流使命的嬗变

摘要：德里克·沃尔科特处在加勒比地区最杰出的文学王座上，他终其一生，致力于通过诗歌、戏剧、绘画等多元艺术形式再创加勒比，同时唤醒这片土地上人民的自我意识与身份认同。本研究以诗人诗歌创作为核心，从其独特的海洋岛国美学中发掘出贯穿始终的“漂流”主题。从鲁滨逊·克鲁索的原型，到独创的沙班形象，再到背负神话使命的阿喀琉斯，漂流这一意识始终串联着沃尔科特的创作，并与诗人的文学生涯相互关联。本研究通过分析不同时期具有代表性的漂流范式，探索这一意象在加勒比语境下的内涵嬗变：漂流借克鲁索式的生存叙事呈现殖民摹仿的表征；具有革命性的沙班形象将漂流转化为精神救赎与自我寻回的载体；通过长篇史诗《奥麦罗斯》，漂流最终实现神话诗学意义上的超越 -- 阿喀琉斯的精神漫游在重构祖先记忆的同时重塑了加勒比意识，最终铸就真正的加勒比认同。这种演变轨迹映射出沃尔科特从后殖民矛盾心理到文化身份重构的艺术升华。

关键词：德里克·沃尔科特；漂流；克鲁索；莎宾；阿喀琉斯

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Derek Walcott (1930-2017), a Nobel Laureate in Literature in 1992, was a Saint Lucian-born poet, playwright, and visual artist. Growing up in a Caribbean bilingual environment of English and French, with mixed ethnic heritage, his creative works naturally incorporate multicultural perspectives. After self-publishing his first poetry collection at 18, he studied literature at the University of the West Indies and later became an influential figure in Trinidad's cultural sphere as both educator and drama critic. Walcott's oeuvre consistently engages with colonial history, cultural identity, and maritime imagery. His epic work "Omeros" elevates lives of Caribbean fishermen into a postcolonial cultural allegory by reworking the Homeric epic framework. Founding the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, he produced over 30 plays that synthesize European dramatic traditions with Caribbean performance styles. Beyond literature, his watercolor depictions of Caribbean landscapes also develop into an artistic practice demonstrating "intertextuality between poetry and painting". His creative reinterpretations of literary classics gradually evolve into integral components of Caribbean artistic expression. Within the Caribbean's potent maritime context, Walcott pioneered a distinctive paradigm for regional literary development by systematically integrating motifs of displacement with classical literary traditions. Through his profound literary and artistic achievements, Walcott establishes himself as a seminal figure whose works exemplify "cultural hybridity" in postcolonial literature, where exists "this struggle for assimilation of two cultures, poles apart in their constitution and execution of cultural doctrines is utterly painful and fraught with festering wounds of colonial rule" (Chaudhary, 2016, p.297). Therefore, the poet attempts to conquer this tremble accompanied by the struggle with his "drifting". This research focuses on the "drifting" motif, tracing the voyage's evolution in Walcott's creation.

1. Drifting Traditions in Western Literature and Colonization

For centuries, humanity's exploration of the world has never ceased. The transition from terrestrial to maritime exploration marked the expansion of human civilization, rendering drifting both a medium of discovery and the inception of colonial expansion. Colonialism does not entirely equate to bloodstained historical tragedies; from the perspective of cultural development, the migrations of diverse groups through

drifting fostered cultural prosperity. In Western literature, the motif of drifting persistently embodies humanity's dual quest—physical displacement across geographical spaces and spiritual pursuit of existential values. This narrative tradition has engaged with ontological inquiries since the epic era: Odysseus' decade-long wandering in Homer's epics, navigating divine-imposed physical barriers and the Sirens' spiritual temptations, constructs a hero's journey of identity reconstruction. His homecoming ultimately metaphorizes humanity's perpetual struggle to define subjectivity amidst existential chaos. Virgil's Aeneas transforms the physical exile following Troy's fall into a spiritual mission of imperial restoration, with his fleet symbolizing the symbiotic relationship between individual trauma, colonial conquest, and civilizational migration. The grafting of Trojan cultural genes onto new lands allegorizes the violent yet creatively charged tensions inherent in colonial cultural transplantation.

During the Age of Exploration, drifting narratives became deeply intertwined with colonial discourse. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* reframes drifting as an allegory for capitalist expansion and reconstructs spiritual discipline of bible-like faith through cultivation and domestication. Crusoe's imposition on Friday's name and linguistic education epitomizes colonial erasure and reconstruction of indigenous cultural identities. The island's transformation from "Other space" to plantation mirrors colonial cultural hegemony achieved through population displacement and territorial appropriation. *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift explains this logic through bodily metamorphoses that deconstruct colonial rhetoric—the Lilliputian wars parody European colonial conflicts, while the Houyhnhnm society inverts the "civilized-savage" dichotomy, exposing the inherent fallacy of cultural superiority in colonial drifting. This process repeatedly manifests the spiritual disillusionment of colonizers in foreign lands. Romanticism infused drifting narratives with ontological reflections while retaining colonial critique. In Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", the cursed voyage intertwines supernatural themes with humanity's innate fear of the unknown sea, ultimately leading to a spiritual ritual of religious redemption. In Melville's "Moby-Dick", Captain Ahab's relentless pursuit of the white whale shatters the reverence for the spirit of nature, precipitating a profound spiritual crisis, which is consistent with endless exploitation that human makes to nature under the context of industrial advancement. Joseph Conrad uses the Congo rainforest as a symbol of the spiritual desolation wrought by colonialism in "Heart of Darkness". In Yann Martel's "Life of Pi", a harrowing ordeal at sea serves as a dramatic stage for the interplay between ethics and reason in the face of life and death, while the coexistence of the Indian boy and Bengal tiger metaphorizes potential reconciliation in postcolonial cultural conflicts.

This theme seems to have never strayed far from humans. The diachronic evolution of drifting reveals a dialectical logic of dual exploration: within the colonial context, drifting signifies both the violent physical displacement across geographical boundaries, such as the slave trade, exile systems, and labor export, and the metaphorical diffusion of cultural symbols through population movements. From the people's fluidity of Homeric epics to Robinson Crusoe's implantation of European production models onto a Caribbean desert island, literature has consistently documented how drifting has served as a tool for colonial powers to enact cultural erasure and re-encoding. Meanwhile, colonized peoples seek to find fertile ground within the fissures of cultural collisions to root a new sense of belonging by their recreation, parody and reconstruction of cultural and artistic forms, grounded in the threads of existing civilizations. Like Derek Walcott, in his colonial narratives, seeks and reconstructs Caribbean spaces, and his journey itself resembles a process of drifting and exploration. The incompleteness of this quest mirrors colonial history itself; between the exile of the body and the return of the spirit, between the establishment and dissolution of cultural hegemony, the motif of drifting perpetually gazes upon the obscured traumas and possibilities within the progression of human civilization.

2. The Poet's Crusoe-like Reclamation in the Archipelago

Among the drifting survival narratives, Robinson Crusoe occupies a pivotal position. The modern myth embodied by this character essentially constitutes a cultural construct combining instrumental rationality, colonial logic, and religious redemption. This realistic framework allegorically represents the core of modern civilization through these narrative mechanisms. Crusoe emerges as an individualistic hero whose wilderness

survival story symbolizes the rational subject conquering nature. Through practical skills acquired from civilized society, such as calendar-writing, journal-keeping, and architectural construction, the protagonist establishes a self-regulating system. Geographical expansion serves as a crucial precondition for this narrative. The deserted island essentially expands the spatial dimensions for Crusoe's heroic deeds which maintain connections with the Old Continent through material exchanges, thus dissolving the myth of complete isolation. The protagonist's temporary seclusion actually manifests the extension of intellectual power into the physical world, through which the individual achieves the existential value of modern subjectivity. His exploration contains a process paralleling postcolonial writers' pursuit of literary self-realization. Beneath the adventure story flows the undercurrent of colonial expansion logic. The novel's spatial politics manifest colonial discourse by framing the island as terra nullius, thereby legitimizing colonial violence as "civilizing missions". Linguistic discipline, like naming indigenous people and landscapes, and economic restructuring, like introducing new crops, jointly form the colonial apparatus that transforms land occupation into "order establishment". Notably, the literary creations of poet Derek Walcott exhibit significant parallels with Crusoe's Island development narrative. In the narrative frame of poet, he has tried to "show that Crusoe's survival is not purely physical, not a question of the desolation of his environment, but a triumph of will" (Walcott, 1993, p.40).

our profane Genesis
whose Adam speaks that prose
which, blessing some sea-rock, startles itself
with poetry's surprise,
in a green world, one without metaphors;

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 75)

Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" depicts a mysterious and adventurous form of drifting. In this context, Walcott interprets Robinson's introduction of language and art to the deserted island as an act of establishing new meaning. The figure of Robinson carries profound symbolic weight, so much so that, as Ian Watt (1997) argues that Robinson has evolved into a modern myth in *Myths of Modern Individualism*. Crusoe's spirit of exploration embodies the aspirations of the rising bourgeoisie to assert dominance over society during a specific historical period in the Western world. Thus, his desert island survival, maritime adventures, and similar exploits acquire symbolic significance, serving as metaphors for both exploitation and discovery. However, for Walcott, the classical analogy holds a distinct resonance. The separation from civilization, the isolation from society, and the disconnection from his homeland caused by the shipwreck reflect the tremors of fear induced by the sea during Robinson's journey. Themes of isolation, segregation, loss, and alienation are vividly manifested in both physical and psychological dimensions within this narrative. The rupture between people and land stems from the inherently fragile bond connecting them. For Walcott, the Caribbean homeland represents a site of confusion, much as the old, civilized world does for Robinson, with their relationship mirroring this fragility. From Walcott's perspective, he himself becomes another alienated Robinson, displaced from his homeland to an unfamiliar territory. While Robinson's adventure symbolizes isolation, disconnection, and annihilation, it simultaneously underscores qualities of wisdom, creativity, and endurance in a barren and foreign land. Walcott similarly embodies these dualities. His intellectual and existential wanderings through marginalized spaces reflect an anxiety toward the Caribbean condition, evoking the sensation of being cast adrift on a metaphoric desert island of cultural void. In the poem "Air", the region's historical amnesia is distilled through laconic verse: "The unheard, omnivorous jaws of this rain forest not merely devour all / but allow nothing vain" (Walcott, 2019, p.106). Here, the tropical rainforest functions as a metonymic device for the Caribbean area, its ecological totality reinforcing the persistent theme of ontological emptiness. The visceral imagery of "hot jaws like an oven steaming / were open to genocide" (Walcott, 2019, p.106) initiates a describe the tragic history with a single word "genocide". The digestive

metaphor achieves disturbing literalization in the lines: "They devoured two minor yellow races and half of a black/ in the word made flesh of God all entered that gross/ undiscriminating stomach" (Walcott, 2019, p.106). The "yellow races" alludes to decimated Amerindian populations, while "black" refers to the fragmented African diaspora through Middle Passage trauma. This allegory of cultural assimilation depicts colonial history as metabolic consumption, where distinct identities are melted together. At the end of poem, "There is too much nothing here" (Walcott, 2019, p.106), operates as both ironic commentary on the Caribbean's perceived cultural vacuum and cathartic exposure of postcolonial anxiety. Throughout "The Castaway", this strategic negation of Caribbean "nothingness" constitutes Walcott's poetic method for confronting historical silences and negotiating cultural identity. A profound intertextual resonance emerges between Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Walcott. The poems "Crusoe's Island" and "Crusoe's Journal" interrogate the tripartite thematic constellation of shipwreck, loss, and separation. This symbolic parallelism traces the trajectory of psychic displacement through which the poet negotiates his ambivalent relationship with ancestral geographies. Through deliberate literary transposition, Walcott assumes Crusoe's existential mantle - an intellectual confined in metaphorical isolation, confronting both the existential void of culture and the solitude of colonial subjectivity. Ismond (2001, p.47) thinks that "The core of Walcott's identification with Defoe's hero rests on two main parallels contained in the original story: first, the predicament of isolation on an abandoned, desert islands, that is, unaccommodated; and second, his settling down, out of necessity, to the task of building a world."

Therefore, Walcott tries to establish a new home in the midst of desolation, as Crusoe did. He puts on Robinson's mask and explains this creative journey in "Crusoe's Journal".

Once we have driven past Mundo Nuevo trace
safely to this beach house
perched between ocean and green, churning forest

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 75)

"Mundo Nuevo" is a Spanish word, meaning "New World," which alludes to the New World of America. According to relevant research, Robinson and the Caribbean have a close relationship. In the novel, Robinson's ship departs from Brazil and is caught in a storm and drifts near Grenada and Trinidad, and it is speculated that Robinson ends up on the island of Tobago. "Green, churning forest" symbolizes the landscape of tropic vegetation, which is a shared feature among these islands.

Came our first book, our profane Genesis
whose Adam speaks that prose
which, blessing some sea-rock, startles itself
with poetry's surprise,
in a green world, one without metaphors;

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 75)

In the stanza, "Our first book" implies constructing novelty out of the wilderness, where Walcott claims his willingness on the task of saving his own Caribbean from Nothing. "Adam" in the latter sentence can be understood as a metaphor, as Ismond states that "This early Adamic concept expresses a core belief in the primal act of naming" (Ismond, 2001, p.50). Naming is a divine activity that will inaugurate new beliefs in the new world, which reveals the mythic character of Walcott's mission, and this act of framing faith like the word-making of religion, is synonymous with Christopher Columbus's discovery of the New World. In "A green world without metaphors" (Walcott, 2019, p.75), "green world" has to do with the tropical endemism and "without metaphors" means literary infertility because most metaphors come from old continent.

whose sprinkling alters us
into good Fridays who recite His praise,
parroting our master's
style and voice, we make his language ours

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 75)

"Good Fridays" here refers to Robinson's indigenous servants in the novel. The phrase "alter us" implies that the poet and the indigenous Caribbean community have become servants under the influence of the new Western forces represented by Robinson. The word "parroting" concerns those who have no languages and gradually acquire others' languages, while the parrot's competence to imitate human's voice alludes to the fact that blacks and minorities imitate and learn from advancement. Both Robinson and Walcott, explore and exploit in the emptiness of a desert island and learn how to make tools to satisfy life needs and to build a new world. The poet conveys his intention to establish new connotations for his island. "We make his language ours" indicates the poet's acquisition of English and French, as he thinks that English does not belong to anyone or is the private property of anyone, because language is property of imagination and language itself. This new land needs to reclaim with its own history. In "Crusoe's Island":

Upon this rock the bearded hermit built;
His Eden: Goats, corn-crop, fort, parasol, garden

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 79)

"The second Adam" re-take his act of naming for all of new-born. After a series of reflections and fantasies, reality returns and the constructors of the new world have been captives of others.

Now Friday's progeny,
The brood of Crusoe's slave,
Black little girls in pink
Organdy, crinolines,
Walk in their air of glory

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 81)

The descendants of Friday, who were once servants of Crusoe and other colonizers, become the residents of colonies now. At present, descendants walk on the road in their glory. They might retrieve the privilege to name things. Walcott denies void and nothing by the action of naming the people, naming the place, naming the landscape, even the homeland.

In areas where lives many ethnic minorities, the rewriting and adaptation of European literature and culture has endowed special meaning for them. Walcott writes poems in a new, unexplored territory. This writing environment fosters a sense of anxiety and loneliness for the poet. The poet's loneliness in literature is largely in line with Robinson's in exploration by himself. Thus, Robinson becomes a hidden figure in related poems of "Castaway" by Walcott. In the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, the island Robinson exploits is very similar to those in the Caribbean, which provides a just imagination space for Walcott's creation on the basis of geographical vagueness. *Robinson Crusoe* is not only a novel, but also a myth. The creativity and resilience Crusoe shows in the wilderness broadens the imagination of European expedition and exploration. As a poet of the Caribbean, Walcott is seen as a detached and outcast one from his ancestral culture, with both African and European undertones, but not belongs to either. This dilemma drives poet to ask for answer from Robinson Crusoe. Thus, the poet's identity becomes more complicated. The poet is not only the desert island pioneer – Crusoe, but also the domesticated Friday, not only master but also slave. Therefore, the figure of Robinson Crusoe evidently carries the divinity in middle area of literature and reality, and carries the metaphorical nature

in the poet's dexterous language art. The poet seems to be Robinson incarnate in an abandoned land to rebuild his home and the desert island also becomes a metaphor for the Eden. According to Katie Jones, "the artist is released from his clay prison by the fire of inspiration, a conventional image transfigured by Walcott's verbal dexterity: Yet this release is hoped for, not achieved: poet and castaway are isolated in their self-built Eden, yearning for love, companionship and fulfillment yet denied them by their loss of simple faith and by the 'mania' of their art" (Jones, 1991, p.41).

3. Spiritual Redemption of Shabine's Sailing across the Caribbean Sea

This brings nobody peace.
The ancient war between obsession and responsibility
will never finish and has been the same.

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 197)

These lines, selected from sea grapes, lay out a struggle between race and the defense of the homeland, and also showcases the poet's own contradiction towards St. Lucia and the West Indies. The metaphor of war acts more powerfully genuine for this contradiction and puzzlement. On the one hand, islanders, like poet, are full of attachment and obsession for external indulgence; on the one hand, they bravely take this mission of speaking for this home, although their efforts and achievements have not been recognized. In the poem "Sea Grapes", the poet expresses his inner sentiments under the pretense of describing the strokes of the Greek myth Odysseus. This figure of Odysseus genuinely occupies an important position in Walcott's creation.

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

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 197)

These few lines seem to tell an experience of wandering among the islands of the Caribbean: the sailors are tired of the islands, sailing in a boat on the Caribbean Sea. At the same time, it is confronted to be the beginning of the later poem "The Schooner Flight" as a prologue to Shabine's sailing story. Radically, the Caribbean is that established backdrop. However, a phrase "home-bound Odysseus" immediately appears, and then time and space seem to converge at a point, jumping from the Caribbean to the Aegean Sea. The story shifts from narrator to the mythical Odysseus, which suggests obscure similarities existing between the two.

This brings nobody peace. The ancient war
between obsession and responsibility
will never finish and has been the same

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 197)

"The ancient war" always happens repeatedly, which might refer to either trojan war in the Aegean Sea or colonial battles in the Caribbean Sea. Unlike Robinson Crusoe, which the poet borrows from Defoe, the Odysseus-like figure in "The Schooner Flight" is completely reinvented. The protagonist Shabine carries a hint of mythological tinge. But a point is definitely certain shared by two drifters, Crusoe and Shabine. They are dyed with mythology. Crusoe drifts to a desert island and then builds it from scratch, while Shabine deliberately leaves an island to embark on a rafting journey, looking for a destination of ideal home.

"The Schooner Flight" is a long narrative poem selected in *The Star-apple Kingdom*, with 11 chapters.

The story plot in the poem explicates Shabine's disillusionment on spiritual level. Shabine, the main character, suddenly leaves behind his wife, children and lover at one night, sets sail from Trinidad to the Caribbean Sea. According to poem's plots, it can be divided into two parts: the first four chapters describe Shabine's preparations for the voyage and the reasons; the rest of the section focuses on the process of journey.

The poem's title foreshadows an escape without hesitation, but this escape has an expectation at the ending of the sailing -- a new homeland, so this journey should not be considered as a negative escape. A line "this time, Shabine/ like you really gone" (Walcott, 2019, p.237), also indicates his urgence to leave and a seemingly true departure finally happens.

In the title of the first section, "adios" means farewell in Spanish, reflecting the linguistic and cultural mixture and colonial past of the Caribbean. Shabine expresses his farewell to old island. The Caribbean area apparently features multi-languages. Shabine has a lover from Dominica, named Maria Concepcion, whose name implies a new life or a new land being conceived. "Carenage" is located in the northwest of Trinidad, where Shabine and schooner Flight depart. Shabine has an obsessive love for the land, but he, not be accepted, tries to re-find his new home, to fulfil his mission.

> *I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,*
> *I had a sound colonial education,*
> *I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,*
> *and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation.*
>
> (*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 238)

His obsession with the sea prompts him to leave everything behind and set sail, as he says "I'm just a red nigger" (Walcott, 2019, p.238). Red nigger refers to light-skinned black men, who are of mixed race, usually with red hair and slightly dark skin. This group is usually of African descent and has European kinship. The poet himself belongs to this group, as Shabine says his body consists of three sources. In other words, Shabine stands for poet's incarnate in the poem, intertwining with the entanglement and confusion of inwardness. And such groups do not seem to be a minority on these islands, including those sailors of the "Rusty head". But this group often feels exiled on islands. "As the poem unfolds, it plays not only on the familiar binarism of white and black, but on a series of others: poet and sailor, sea and land, flight and return, death and renewal" (Breslin, 2001, p.196).

The third chapter mentions two groups of people who indulge themselves in power pursuit. The first wave of people refers to those white colonists from Europe, who exploit and govern this land. Blacks, or the mix-blood, are driven as slaves, and although whites later apologize for the colonial past, they simply relegate everything to the past and to what had happened. Shabine-like group, although they have white roots, cannot gain acceptance from whites. The second wave pursuing power are later blacks, who are victorious against the white colonizers, but they don't accept the mixed-race Shabines because of their light-skinned complexion. As a result, Shabine has to place himself in a middle space -- not being accepted by both sides, although he is obsessed to his land. This point has been highlighted in the third section of "The Schooner Flight". Between social presence and individual, these exists an obviously acute collision, as Paul Breslin (2001, p.201) writes: "Shabine's mulatto identity, like Walcott's, places him between 'the white man,' who chain my hands and apologize for History, and the new ideologues of Black Power, who say I wasn't black enough for their pride."

Walcott hopes that the traumatized West Indies would be linked together into a single entity—the West Indies Federation. The poet once wrote a play to celebrate the West Indies Federation's birth, but this federation didn't change anything. Instead, it provides a stage for some people to fight for and play with power, and it finally ended in internal strife. In the poem "The Lost Federation", Walcott sarcastically writes:

> *you bastard papas,*
> *how it seeps through the pores,*

how it loads the sponge of the heart

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 201)

Those so-call-papas politicians play power tricks, ignoring people's demands and anger. Shabine, or poet, in an atmosphere of disappointment, feels disillusioned with the shattered West Indies and saddened by the fact that his homeland is culturally invaded and economically dependent on others. His contradiction is obviously overwhelming, as he says he represents not the individual, but the group, or nothing at all. "Either I'm nobody/ or I'm a nation" (Walcott, 2019, p.238). "Nobody" has a special meaning here, not only referring to the unnamed, but also to the little people who are ignored. He says "I had no nation now but the imagination" (Walcott, 2019, p.241) at the opening of third section. These black powers, which actually gain the upper hand, seem to be taking the place of the old ones in governance of the island. Shabine's response to these forces is that "Tell me/ what power/ on these unknown rocks" (Walcott, 2019, p.242). Almost all of the response is wrapped in a slightly helpless sneer, and Black Power has really changed reality obviously. Certainly, Shabine parallels with Walcott, even overlaps in many qualities, and Shabine's response also comes from Walcott's heart. The contradictory undertones still stand in Shabine's heart. Those tragically shadow pasts also made him dare not look back.

I saw that the powdery sand was their bones
Ground white from Senegal to San Salvador

(*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 240)

As Shabine dives into water, the bloody results of these evil trades from the past in history flood into his head. Middle passage implicitly suggests the evils of the slave trade in the history, and the white sand seems to metaphorize bones of dead people, the remains of which lie fully from Senegal in Africa to San Salvador in the Bahamas. Obviously, it carries a little bit of exaggeration. Even, spicy irony in Walcott's writing looks outstanding: their white bones appear after the decaying bodies, which seems to symbolize their being whitened. The contrast between the tragic past and the black power in the present has formed a state of self-contradiction in Shabine's eyes. What should he do, scolding or feeling pity? When Shabine tries to trace back, he sees either the pitiless brutality envisioned or, what is almost worse, a degradation of revolution to a craving for spectacle.

Shabine lost his faith about attachment to Maria. The state of struggling stresses him, and then he leaves. All that is coddled by the island, including his family, Maria and his once obsession towards his home, become his burden, as poems say, "I no longer believed in the revolution/ I was losing faith in the love of my woman" (Walcott, 2019, p.242).

In chapter four, Shabine's journey starts. His team and him depart from Trinidad and sail to north along the Caribbean Sea. In each chapter, the sailing comes to an island of Antilles. The first island they arrive to is Saint Vincent, as the title of section four "The Flight, Passing Blanchisseuse" suggests. Blanchisseus, meaning washerwoman in French, refers to a place on the northern part of Saint Vincent, which indicates colonial color. According to Breslin, this phrase implies metaphorically "the corruptions of culture are washed away" (Breslin, 2000, p.203).

In the fifth section, Shabine's traumatic memories are awakened again. What firstly comes into his eyes are the crew in sorrow, and he sees "men with rusty eyeholes like cannons" (Walcott, 2019, p.243); when they were half-naked in the sun, the sunshine goes "right through their tissue," and "you traced their bones" (Walcott, 2019, p.243), as if all of theirs has been slit and examined. While Shabine's thought goes into deeper, he thinks of his ancestors' past of sinking to the bottom of the sea, like "our fathers below deck too deep" (Walcott, 2019, p.244). The Flight sails to Barbados on the fifth section, where the poet begins to deliberately describe the local landscape, such as "Casuarinas", a plant growing on the island. These trees stand on the low hills of the island against the wind and waves, and the local landscape signifies the island's original essence.

Shabine names this sort of tree "cypresses", while the captain calls it "Canadian cedars". The same thing has been given three different names. This provokes the poet to think about names' significance. During the colonial era, many things, people and place have been given names with other cultural colors. Do they actively accept these names, or negatively? "But we live like our names and you would have to be colonial to know the difference/ to know the pain of history words contain" (Walcott, 2019, p.245). The names given by others seem to remind them of fact that they originally have no names, as if "Nobody" and "Nothing" should be their ground color. The poet's desire to create new connotations and to give them new names has been strengthened step by step.

In seventh chapter, the *Flight* comes to Castries that is Walcott's hometown. The poet seems to have his soul reversed with Shabine's in this part. The bygone memories wake up alive, and the memories of his first love once again occupy the poet's space. In eighth chapter, a conflict happens between Shabine and a chef. The chef snatches Shabine's poem notebook and tosses it to crew to tease him. This mixed-blood chef has the same identity with Shabine. In other words, Shabine is attacked and treated unfairly by others with the same identity. The chef shreds Shabine's artistic creation and hurts the poet's willingness to fulfil the mission as a Caribbean artist. Shabine rebels against this viciousness and kills the chef with a knife. Through this plot design, it also illustrates the poet's disgust and anger for those who are ignorant and disrespect the intentions of local artists.

As the ship sails to Dominica, Shabine shows a more profound anxiety of drifting because they almost approach the end of the voyage. Dominica is the only one of the islands in the entire Caribbean archipelago where indigenous Caribbeans inhabit now.

> *Progress, Shabine, that's what it's all about.*
> *Progress leaving all we small islands behind.*
>
> (*The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*, 247)

Continuous sailing metaphorizes progressive approaching to a new homeland or getting close to the industrial advancement, but progress also means separation from their original traditions. Industrial development corrupts their nativeness and endemism. This anxiety has been seemingly confronted by the Caribs. "Progress is something to ask Caribs about" (Walcott, 2019, p.247). Perhaps, what this progress really means can be figured out from Caribs' past, but the fact may be that "Progress is history's dirty joke" (Walcott, 2019, p.247). These anxieties and pains, like salt on a wound, are extremely painful but may provide conditions of being refined and improved, at the same time. "In such fierce salt let my wound be healed" (Walcott, 2019, p.247).

At the end of journey, the *Flight* encounters an ocean storm, and Shabine regains his faith in helplessness. The strength from faith and belief assists them to resist the fear of storm, as lines say "proud with despair/ we sang how our race/ survive the sea's maw/ our history, our peril" (Walcott, 2019, p.250). The storm doesn't recede until dawn comes. The *Flight* survives safely and all crew have been saved. And in the last stanza, Shabine gets his love sublimated, and he sees "the veiled face of Maria Concepcion marrying the ocean/ then drifting away" (Walcott, 2019, p.251). Shabine has moved from a relentlessly sexual desire for Maria to a perception of her as a presiding spirit of the ocean, and moved from the desire for a resting place to a desire for the healing of the islands. Throughout the trip, Shabine completes a process of leaving home and seeking home. Although Shabine is in a state of homelessness most of time, his hope also shines all the time, because he believes a new home must be retrieved under his efforts. Ultimately, he regains his faith and regains belonging to his homeland. Therefore, Shabine's journey actually symbolizes the poet's perplexion about his tainted island and symbolizes his resolution's recapture.

From the post-colonial perspective, "The Schooner Flight" employs a Western allegorical narrative framework to chronicle a maritime exploration in the Caribbean to some extent. The poem's title utilizes "Flight" as a metaphorical reference to the protagonist's spiritually rootless odyssey. The oceanic setting manifests dual symbolic significance: serving simultaneously as the physical navigation and as a metaphorical

spiritual displacement. What constitutes the root of this disorientation? Through analyzing Shabine's African lineage, Waqar (2016) thinks there is an interpretative connection between this spiritual crisis and the diasporic predicament of African descendants. Her scholarly analysis posits that the inherent Pan-African nationalist consciousness within Afro-Caribbean communities constitutes the underlying impetus for this "voyage".

4. New "Achilles" in the Drifting of *Omeros*

In "Omeros", drifting transcends mere physical movement to become a grand narrative tapestry. Walcott's extensive experience in playwriting refines his poetic craft, evident in his sophisticated language and expansive storytelling structure. Consequently, "Omeros" exhibits distinct theatrical qualities -- a broad symbolic stage and a polyphonic cast of characters. Through Caribbean fishermen and outsiders collectively mythologizing their shared journey, Walcott constructs an epic where each figure embodies layered symbolic significance. Within this Caribbean epic framework, Achille's odyssey of drifting articulates a dynamic philosophy of identity. The act of drifting functions as a narrative nexus that binds multiple thematic layers.

The drifting is confronted with three levels in this research. First, the drifting intertwines with fishermen's living. For Achille and Hector, fishing represents an indigenous mode of existence -- a primal harmony with nature untainted by external intrusions. Their daily sailing reflects humanity's reciprocal relationship with the sea, where survival depends on nature's cyclical generosity. Meanwhile, fishing tools acquire metaphorical connotations: nets serve not only to harvest marine life but also to salvage fragmented diasporic memories. When the boats lose the directions – "The current writes what the oar cannot read" (Walcott, 1990, p.223), the loss mirrors the destabilization of self-narratives and epistemic dislocation. By interweaving nautical logs with oral traditions, such as fishermen debating navigational coordinates in Creole, Walcott achieves his intention of rewriting an endemic epic. The hybridized language itself becomes an act of resistance, subverting colonial cognitions through vernacular reinterpretations of space and history. This drifting existence serves as Walcott's critique of colonial knowledge systems, rejecting fixed cultural anchors in favor of ceaseless renegotiation to imposed thinking patterns.

The second layer of drifting emphasizes the nautical accident of Philoctete. While fishing at sea, Philoctete sustains a leg injury that permanently bars him from maritime activities. This narrative constructs a mystical bridge between the fishing villages of Saint Lucia and the Lemnos Island in the Aegean Sea, facilitating an extraordinary dialogue between the ordinary Caribbean islands and ancient Greek civilization. Through this connection, the destiny of Caribbean islands becomes intrinsically intertwined with mythological archetypes. Philoctete serves as a metonymic device of the tragic Greek figure Philoctetes. In classical tragedy, Philoctetes was abandoned on Lemnos Island by the Greek army due to his festering leg wound that delayed military operations. Both figures share the common fate of being immobilized by leg injuries: the Greek hero confined to his barren island, the Caribbean fisherman severed from his beloved sea. Their parallel wounds transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, evolving into a metaphor for psychological trauma. For Philoctetes, it signifies heroic abandonment and alienation; for Philoctete, it manifests as deeper spiritual shackles. The leg wound metaphor particularly converges with colonial trauma. As an ordinary fisherman embodying the islanders' maritime devotion, Philoctete symbolizes the existential condition of his community. Similarly, Lemnos Island in classical literature represents desolation and destitution -- a symbolic counterpart to the West Indies' prolonged perception as spiritually barren lands ravaged by colonialism. Thus, this narrative layer of drifting functions as a temporal-spatial device, creating critical opportunities for Caribbean culture to engage in mythological discourse and reclaim its obscured heritage.

Third, the connotative drifting manifests through Achille's quest for self-discovery, achieving the spiritual sublimation of both individual figures and the collective consciousness of the archipelago. Following Achille's romantic disillusionment with Helen, Achille plunges into multi-layered existential confusion. This crisis, triggered by the collapse of traditional island presence under encroaching modern forces, destabilizes the natural balance of his world. The defeat of his traditional stance in this cultural confrontation signals an existential crisis for primal island identities, mirroring their perceived trajectory toward disappearance. His

intensified anxiety epitomized by the haunting question "Where do I truly originate?" amplifies his dread regarding the island's uncertain future. Within this dimension, drifting transforms into a vessel of supernatural strength, paralleling the albatross' mythic potency in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" or the natural punishment of Ahab in "Moby Dick". During a fateful maritime expedition, Achille encounters this transcendent force through a shipwreck-induced coma. The traumatic event propels his consciousness into a critical state, detaching from physical reality while initiating profound spiritual reconfiguration. This critical voyage ultimately catalyzes his metamorphosis from fragmented individual to cultural collectives, bridging personal awakening with Caribbean renaissance.

The sea was going down with the sun
and the sun was going down with my mind

(*Omeros*, 137)

The shipwreck creates a threshold state of temporal-spatial collapse. During this spiritual odyssey, Achille regresses to the primordial African continent, confronting ancestral histories. At the stream-of-consciousness level, he inhabits the lived realities of his African forebears, engaging in transgenerational dialogue. This process constitutes a reconstructive fixing of the cultural rupture caused by colonial violence. The supernatural dreamscape facilitates this ancestral retrieval, as "I walked through the door of the past" (Walcott, 1990, p.139), which transmutes the irreversible Middle Passage of slave ships into a reversible psychic conduit, enabling Achille successfully returning back. Walcott engineers an ingenious structural paradox here: only through radical displacement or physical drifting can cultural reclamation and spiritual reconnection be achieved. The maritime accident operates as both historical tracing and psychic time-machine, dimming the binaries of past and present, exile and homecoming. This narrative strategy subverts linear narrative, positioning Caribbean identity as a fluid drifting where traumatic memory and ancestral wisdom coexist dialogically.

I walked through the door where the past was a fire,
that scorched my eyes with its genealogy

(*Omeros*, 139)

This "Modern Achilles" who is transplanted into 20th-century Saint Lucian fishing villages enacts the logic of postcolonial identity formation through dual-dimensional of spatial displacement and psychological oceanic wandering in the process of subconscious African ancestral retrieval. When the act of fishing transcends survival practice to become cultural metaphor, its drifting trajectory surpasses geographical boundaries, transforming into the poetic aesthetic trigger of the archipelago. By engaging in dialogue with ancestors, Walcott orchestrates another symbolic gesture -- the tactile completion with colonial scars. The Achille's fingers tracing these historical wounds -- whether literal keloid tissues or metaphorical cultural fissures, perform an act of approaching the past. This ritualistic touching simultaneously exposes the violence of colonial rupture, collapsing the temporal divide between ancestral trauma and contemporary Caribbean consciousness.

Old man, your scars are the map I cannot read
Then read them with your fingers, son, the voice
rustled like wind through cane-fields

(*Omeros*, 149)

The colonial past has inscribed scars upon ancestral bodies, yet Achille remains initially incapable of decoding these map-like scars. These scars function as epistemic imprints forcibly grafted onto colonized consciousness. His ancestors demand tactile engagement, and through fingertips pressed against scar tissue, he seems to

access the archive of historical suffering. Subsequently, the image of cane-fields shifts the dialogue's locus from ancestral Africa back to Caribbean plantations. This narrative pivot suggests that authentic self-discovery requires dismantling imposed narratives. In the dialogue's climactic moment, Achille's epiphany crystallizes in the declaration "I am my own ancestor" (Walcott, 1990, p.307), signaling his recognition of Caribbean identity as autochthonous rather than derivative. The African memory-fragments he carries with himself, like ancestral footprints in rainforest loam and ankle-shapes eroded by chains, are not recovered as intact cultural genes but reconfigured into a new one through symbiotic interactions with Caribbean islands. Like vegetation regenerating roots amidst plantation ruins, these hybrid memories constitute neo-indigenous formations, where trauma and resilience converge into a new identity. Walcott thus redefines cultural inheritance as active metamorphosis rather than passive preservation.

In this dimension of drifting, the soul's dreamlike traversal introduces supernatural power into the metaphorical battleground between modernity and island traditions. Through this struggle, the poet once again mobilizes Achille's presence to awaken collective self-recognition. Drifting here transcends its literal maritime associations, and catalyzes transformative renewal of the islands' life.

The fishermen's nautical wanderings, to some extent, con be considered as allegorical navigation toward renewed cultural vitality under the guide of the poet. While the poet writes on the foundation of given literary traditions, his works are not merely simple mimicry from old chamber, but the artistic masterpiece attached to the Caribbean spirit. This creative act manifests as both interrogation of residual colonial imprints and expectation of decolonial futures.

5. Conclusion

The birth of poet's Caribbean consciousness has experienced a prolonged process of labor pains. Initially, in the imitative engagement with Western canons, the act of literary drifting facilitates transposition between poet and Crusoe figures, engendering layered identity negotiations. As pioneer of island literature, the poet assumes the dual burden of cultural pioneer and artistic subject. Like early landers on the island, the poet steps forward toughly on the literary island. When coming to Shabine stage, the poet finishes a revolutionary odyssey where quests for homeland, spiritual redemption, and futurity converge in radical self-reinvention. By "Omeros", Walcott achieves full metamorphosis of Caribbean poetics. Whether borrowing mythological archetypes or excavating ancestral memory, the poet channels Achille's spiritual journey to orchestrate an epic voyage bearing Caribbean historical consciousness. As Zabus (2006, p.58) interprets the imitation of this kind, he thinks that "Rewriting changes what the text intends to tell us, which is especially relevant to postcolonial writers 'writing back' to canonical works, with the aim of redressing wrongs."

Though Caribbean communities, including the poet, have endured prolonged historical drift, Walcott's narrative posits their hard-won anchoring point. The fishermen's boats, once symbols of rootless existence, now moor securely in the archipelago's authentic narrative where ancestral memory and present consciousness achieve symbiotic balance. This resolution transforms perpetual exile into empowered dwelling, establishing Caribbean identity not as cultural palimpsest but as self-authored epic inscribed upon the sea's liquid parchment. Drifting itself for these people serves as "an epic vocabulary, from Asia and from Africa, but to an ancestral, an ecstatic rhythm in the blood that cannot be subdued by slavery or indenture" (Walcott, 1993, p.11).

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