

Landscape as a Chaotic Representation of European Influence in Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*

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ABSTRACT

Landscape is used as a tool to bring to the fore the reverberations of the past and is employed as a vehicle for cultural interrogation and native evaluation. What is imperative in the analysis of Caribbean poetry, is the heightened attention that is placed on the natural landscape of the islands. This paper discusses how landscape is manipulated and presented as the frame for the search for identity which the speaker in *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* grapples with. Césaire, or more specifically, the speaker, uses landscape both metaphorically and literally to evaluate and define identity. Studying the complexities of Landscape is not a new feat with regards to *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*, however this paper takes it a step further as to situate landscape as the binding force of all other branches of thought that the speaker presents in the poem.

1. INTRODUCTION

Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* chronicles a search for authenticity framed by the harrowing representation of a postcolonial island. The speaker grapples with recovering his black ancestral heritage. The notion of recovering one's black ancestral heritage is trying to understand what it means to be a black person by drawing upon the ideas, values and traditions of his ancestors. Furthermore, the speaker demonstrates the extent of European influence on his country through his portrayal of the landscape itself. Throughout the poetic epic there lies a longing for some measure of authenticity which factors into the recovery of his black ancestral heritage.

These representations of the landscape are used as a vehicle for introspection and native evaluation, as well as to cope with the imposed liminality that burdens the postcolonial being. The epic poem is centered on the observations of a narrator who details the ruptures in the natural and/or original landscape which highlights his disdain for the French influence on his people. This relentless probing of the Antillean setting and the impositions of French oligarchy on its topography turns into a search for self-independence that sees the speaker developing a sense of awareness which encompasses that of one's land and surroundings. Such concerns usually evolve from the macro-level of landscape and society to the micro-level of self. Dionne Brand states best the position of the narrator in Césaire's *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* in her statement:

Inhabited by British consciousness, we are also inhabited by an unknown self. The African. This duality was fought every day from the time one woke up to the time one fell asleep... One had the sense that some being had to be erased and some being had to be cultivated. Even our dreams were not free of this conflict (p. 17).

The narrator in *Notebook* seems to fight this duality, thereby seeking not some, but a total erasure of French culture in order to cultivate the African culture, creating an avenue for the cultivation of what Édouard Glissant characterizes as the whole being. Édouard Glissant who is also a French writer from Martinique, just like the narrator in *Notebook*, comes to yearn for "the ban on the unsaid of our histories should be lifted, in order that we may enter, all together and all freed, into the Whole-world" (Glissant). Ultimately at the culmination of the epic, wholeness of being and unification becomes the end goal of the speaker and words posited by Glissant in his speech at the International Literature Festival in Berlin helps situate Césaire's role as bearer of the poetic, as Glissant says "the poetic intention has always brought us to the absolute prescience of the Whole World. Every poetic intention leads straight to a narrative of the whole world, for which narrative is not a narrative, but a state of relatedness of the differences within a delimited space" (Glissant). Postcolonial writing has brought this dynamic into fruition, however, evidence that the

wholeness of being that is associated with recovery of his black ancestral heritage, and eventual unification that the speaker has longed for being actualized is not provided within the poem, or contextually.

Landscape is used both metaphorically and literally to evaluate identity, French influence and masking¹. It is also the main tool used to re-evaluate the island. Christine Chivallon writes that the social chaos portrayed in the poem is not that of a “dehumanized disorder, but that of a mobility, a lightness where nothing is fixed or rigid” (Chivallon, 1997). Illuminating the hybrid, diverse nature of identity in the Caribbean, it represents “both order and disorder, unity and multiplicity, chaos and coherence” (Chivallon, 1997). This quote is evident in the basic understanding that even among the racial inequality and abject conditions of the poor, the society still functions, survival is still maintained and there is a level of “chaos and coherence” working together. This may not reveal anything specific about the functioning of the poem, but it does reveal a lot about the functioning of the Caribbean society, which is what the speaker in the poem attempts to describe at length before turning to self-introspection.

This essay aims to prove that the narrator seeks to unravel the “unknown self” by unpacking what he knows; the town, the mountains, the architecture, the Eurocentric behavioral patterns, the hunger, the corruption and the Antilles itself. He does so to reveal the disorder masked as order, and the chaos masked as coherence to show how unity and a reconnection with the authentic self can be attained. Glissant iterates that “my landscape changes in me; it is probable that it changes with me” (145). If this is so, only through the successful rehabilitation of the native self can the speaker be a return to any semblance of a native land. The Caribbean topography is a natural entity manipulated by human activity and interference. Taking this into consideration my argument is that landscape acts as the central force by which the speaker introduces the reader to the pain of the island, himself, his people and the notion of Negritude. Negritude from Césaire’s definition, “is rooted in the specificity and unity of black people as historically derived from the Transatlantic Slave Trade and their plight in New World plantation systems” (Negritude 2015). The significance of this concept to the argument for landscape as central metaphor and a chaotic representation of European influence is

understanding why the speaker feels the need to recover his black ancestral heritage. However, negritude and its idiosyncrasies cannot be thoroughly detailed in this essay without it derailing the point of discussion, landscape.

I use the phrase “longing for a measure of authenticity” because truthfully, it cannot be retrieved. A connection can be made to the ideas, values and traditions of ancestors, steps can be taken (as detailed in the poem) to reconnect with these ideas and traditions, however the return to a native land will remain, theoretically in the notebook, as connecting with norms and values of ones ancestors does not negate the effects of history which would have already manipulated the psyche of the Caribbean being.

Compartmentalized into 4 sequences *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* is carefully structured as a progression, from chaos to uprising. The poem begins from the ground with the landscape and external forces that affect the aesthetic of the island working its way into the second sequence which grapples with how external forces affect the internal, the being. The third sequence builds upon what the first two have addressed and shows the speaker grappling with the definition of blackness and the implications of such a definition, or definitions. The fourth and final sequence becomes not only a question of housing, or a question of living conditions but a question of hope for the future, a theoretical ascendance of sorts. The Western structure of the epic is used in Caribbean Literature, more specifically this poem as tool to almost write back to the empire, a form of using the master's tool against him, which goes against the idea posited by writer and civil rights activist Audre Lorde, that “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde, 2007). This perspective is debatable, as once used correctly and with the right intended purpose, tools created by oppressive forces can be used against them, especially as these tools have been proven effective for persuading and influencing the masses. Walcott would follow a similar structure of a stream of consciousness type poetic epic in *Omeros*, which also chronicles the journey of a Caribbean man, and explored humanity's relationship with history and landscape. *Omeros* which was published in 1990, almost acts as an updated and more layered version of *A Notebook of a*

¹ Masking is identified primarily as what Europeans performed when they masked imperialism as a means of a civilizing mission. What the term connotes is layered as a black individual is considered to be masking when looking at the world through the

white gaze, attempting to view his/her reality through the frame of a white man.

Return to a Native Land. The similarity in attention to landscape and recovering and reconnections to history situate these two epics in a unique pool of attempts to use landscape as a driving tool in unravelling the history of the Caribbean.

*Landscape as Victim*²

Landscape as represented in *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* incorporates both flora and fauna. The speaker incorporates both topography (arrangement of the land and physical features) and wildlife (the dove, the horse, the antelope, and monkey). Césaire, or more particularly, the speaker in the poem, circumvents the notion that “nature is consistently represented as outside humanity’s purview, as a monolithic and essential reality men and women are alienated from, in awe of, or have to transcend (through labor)” (Mardorossian, 2013). A view which seems limited and does not wholly describe the distinct connection between nature and the human being. The poem presents the landscape in a manner that supports the notion that landscape is as much a victim to European imposition as the people, and this circumvents the idea Mardorossian describes because it does not represent nature as “outside humanity’s purview”, the poem places nature within the purview of men and women, rather than alienating the being from the landscape. Therefore, I have decided to use landscape as a representation of European influence, an influence which is primarily human.

Dionne Brand articulates the idea of the Caribbean landscape as victim best when she says, “No matter what the landscape it seemed they imposed the same plan of narrow streets, cobbled alleys, squares, and circuses. Then they laid government buildings along in the same brown-and-red-bricked way. Then they filled these buildings with quiet incompetence, occasioning long queues and fuming patience until graft and bribery suffused all transactions” (Brand, 2003). Brand’s statement proves inarguably applicable because her statement about the roadways and buildings is proven in the speakers’ example of roads, streets and houses which is almost synonymous with Brands. For instance *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* the speaker explains in that:

This joy of former times making me aware of my present poverty, a bumpy road plungin

into a hollow where it scatters a few shacks;
an indefatigable road charging at full speed a

morne at the top of which it brutally quicksands into a pool of clumsy houses, a road foolishly climbing, recklessly descending, and the carcass of wood, which I call “our house,” comically perched on minute cement paws (Césaire, 2013³)

A return to anything native, speaks to the lack of rootedness to the ancestral state, whether it be land or culture. This in no way alludes to the idea of someone merely leaving their country to study abroad and then return searching for rootedness to their culture. An individual who seeks to return to a native self, would inherently feel that lack of rootedness to the state as inhabited by their ancestors. Whether they leave to study and return or remain in their homeland, that need and longing for a native land would stem from a feeling of disconnect or in the case of the speaker, disconnect and his experience and observations of European imposition. Observations which became clearer when he left his homeland. Rootedness and the lack thereof, shows the search for authenticity and selfhood which the narrator attempts to work through as he even characterizes the black subject as “those who have known voyages only through uprootings” (Césaire, 2013).

When grappling with the notion of rootedness one must turn to, interrogate and understand their landscape as the primary cultural archive. An archive as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is “a collection of historical documents or records” (Soanes 2018) originating from the Greek term *arkheia* which means ‘public record’. The colonized landscape as a cultural archive is a basic trope in Caribbean literature as history is metaphorically and physically situated in the landscape. Derek Walcott when describing the sea as history also alludes to landscape (the sea) as claiming and becoming a dossier for history. In this sense, a secondary cultural archive would be what Césaire attempts, documenting history in the form of art, literature. Landscape and art as cultural archives have been examined through the years by poets Derek Walcott, Eric Roach and Martin Carter.

Just as there exists a postcolonial being, there exists a postcolonial landscape which has a similar colonial woundedness that is detailed in Notebook. In the first section of the poem, the narrator employs land, sea and wildlife not as the idealistic welcoming exoticism that is usually linked to the Caribbean islands, but as a

² The Oxford English Dictionary defines a victim as “A person who has come to feel helpless and passive in the face of misfortune or ill-treatment.” (1). Landscape is personified in this poem as

passive in the face of ill-treatment on the part of external European forces.

³ Referencing strophe number

representation of chaos, death and frustration. The speaker laments:

At the end of daybreak, the extreme, deceptive desolate eschar on the wound of the waters; the martyrs who do not bear witness; the flowers of blood that fade and scatter in the empty wind like the screeches of babbling parrots (Cesaire, 2013).

Placing "at the end of daybreak" almost as a repetitive punctuation in the first section of the poem, creates a visual for the reader portraying a continuous cycle of ruin and chaos at the beginning of each day. The phrase "at the end of daybreak" signifies a sense of ending, the deterioration of the day, again and again perpetually maintaining the island as a skewed microcosm of France. Why France? France is a European country, Martinique (the island of focus in the poem) is a region of France, therefore the European influence which frames the speaker's statements and by extension this paper would be the French influence. Martinique being heavily influenced by French culture and oligarchy is a skewed microcosm of France. Skewed because it is not totally defined by the French influence as the population descended from African slaves, however, the speakers' point of contention is the fact that the French influence eclipses that of the native culture. As daylight appears, complete disorder and bedlam spreads throughout the island. The narrator goes on to say, "At the end of daybreak burgeoning with frail coves". The cove acts as a fitting example of the complex dichotomy which the island landscape comes to represent. A cove is a symbol of coastal beauty particularly defined by a small narrow or restricted entrance, situated within a larger bay. Therefore, a cove is a microcosm of a larger entity; sheltered, restricted and subjected to external forces. The narrator pointedly characterizes the coves as frail, this image of a frail microcosm is further developed in his following interpretation of the Antilles:

the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded. (Cesaire, 2013)

Political theorist Chantal Mouffe claims that "every identity is irremediably destabilized by its exterior" (Qtd in Brand, 2003). As European forces imposed on

the island disease and vice during the Atlantic slave trade, the speaker attempts to show how they have destabilized the identity of the native land as well. The advent of smallpox led to a decline in the Amerindian population, causing an eradication of the Caribbean native while the general population increased with the arrival of West African slaves. In order to fully describe the Antilles, clearly a level of detachment was involved as the speaker is speaking from having left the island⁴. The introduction of the text describes the first twenty-four strophes as a panoramic representation of the island. This gives the reader a sense that the speaker is now an observing with a wide view, a view that is limitless and would have been constrained if he were to interrogate the land while being physically on it. Benitez-Rojo describes the psyche of the Antillean as one who may "tend to roam the entire world in search of the centers of their Caribbeanness. The Antilleans' insularity does not impel them toward isolation, but on the contrary, toward travel, toward exploration, toward the search for fluvial and marine routes. One needn't forget that it was men from the Antilles who constructed the Panama Canal." (Benitez-Rojo, 2006) This is not only proven true with the Panama Canal, but also with Aime Cesaire himself and a host of other literary scholars such as V.S Naipaul and Frantz Fanon who explored beyond the boundary of the Antillean landscape.

Intersection of Land and Self

The second sequence acts as the juncture where the land and self-intersect. Focus is shifted from a direct study of the landscape and the spotlight is now on the speaker. However, although focus has been shifted, the speaker does not forfeit the interrogation of landscape to build on the so-called heroic self-image that critics such as Jacquelyn Pope point out. In strophe (26) there lies a consistent application of metaphorical links to the landscape with examples of the speaker comparing "the shack chapped with blisters" to "a peach tree afflicted with curl, and the thin roof patched with pieces of gasoline cans, which create swamps of rust in the stinking sordid gray straw pulp". Maintaining the framework of chaos and disorder that was presented in the first sequence, the speaker now extends this to his interrogation of his home as not just a civil space with a family but one which visually speaks to the reader as an extension of the wounded landscape which cradles a hungry people. The speaker goes on to characterize the beach

⁴ Noted, is the fact that this can be interpreted not only as him leaving the island to attain a more accurate "view" of what he intends to interrogate; his self-removal from the island both figuratively and literally can be also a distancing between the

speaker as a member of the high class and the poor blacks in Martinique.

as a blight, the sea pummeling over the black sand “like a huge dog licking and biting the shins of the beach”. This visceral imagery of the sea pummeling over the black sand conjures images of the seas ravaging and swallowing the bodies of slaves who may have jumped or were thrown overboard during the middle passage. In this analogy, the black sand represents black bodies that lay on the seabed. The black sand is a direct side effect of volcanic eruptions however it can also be interpreted as symbolizing the black bodies which cover the ocean floor as the sea pummels over them. Whether or not this was the intention of Césaire when molding this poetic piece, the language used when referring to landscape, connotes a myriad of possibilities and evokes memories of events not directly mentioned.

The second sequence also incorporates the scene of the old man in the streetcar being laughed at by white individuals who are also in a streetcar. Even in this scene which critics have gone to lengths to analyze and dissect many times over, landscape is used as metaphor to drive the story and heighten the effect of the imagery to the reader. The speaker describes the black man’s nose as a “drifting peninsula” while his “negritude is discolored as a result of untiring tawing” the speaker goes on to describe him physically as “a big unexpected lop-eared Bat whose claw marks in his face had scabbed over into crusty islands”. Here we see Césaire cleverly positions the island together with the black man who is being laughed at by the women in the streetcar, making the statement that they are not solely laughing at the individual, but at the island, they are laughing at Martinique. Michelle M. Wright in *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* goes on to say that “the facial features and the body are described in ways that render them disjointed and fantastic pieces of art, but in the racist reading of “primitive art”: exotic and Other” (Wright, 2005). Therefore, these descriptions of the facial features become dual in message, revealing true attitudes of the whites towards not only the black individual but the island while also revealing what Wright considers the workings of the black feature as a work of art which can also be interpreted through the Western lens of the white gaze as a level of abnormality and exoticism. As comical as this scene is relayed, embedded are subtle shades of critical observations which through observing the references to the landscape, one can deduce these nuances.

Building off critical advances in thought and inspection which summarizes the second sequence or second progression, the sequence ushers in a shift in tone for the speaker. The third sequence which has the most Biblical and spiritual allusions in the epic poem, remain true to the central framework of landscape as the centralized entity used to reveal chaotic representations of European influence. This sequence presents itself almost as a spiritual middle passage towards the transformation which characterizes the fourth and final sequence. In this sequence the speaker turns to the land once more as a metaphor for this new-found rootedness of purpose through negritude as he states:

My negritude is neither tower nor cathedral

It takes root in the red flesh of the soil

It takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
(Césaire, 2013)

The speaker places the concept of negritude not in easily retractable or removable items but in fixed cornerstones of the landscape such as the soil and the sky. Rootedness becomes important in the dissemination of the speakers’ message of native return and unity, which encapsulates negritude. Chaos represents the European influence on the landscape, and “chaos looks toward everything that repeats, reproduces, grows, decays, unfolds, flows, spins, vibrates” (Benitez-Rojo, 2006), and in order to calm chaos the concept of negritude cannot be a stone, it cannot be fixed as “its deafness” will not stand against the clamor of the day” (64). Therefore, negritude in this poem is an entity which is ceaseless, it is continuous, and it cannot combat the chaos which has now come to represent European influence on the island without constant interrogation and observation of one’s surroundings, without that longing which the speaker exhibits in his tone, without some level of revolt and a solidification of self. A fitting example of landscape as not only a central metaphor, but also a useful companion to biblical and spiritual allusions which encompass this sequence, is seen when the speaker adopts a tone of that similar to a preacher or politician as his commanding and directive tone bears its head in this sequence through the repetition of “o” “eia”⁵ “hear” “it is” “make” “grant” “see” as preambles to his phrases

⁵ Characterized as ritual language in the introduction to 1939 text, the use of “O” and “eia” harken back to Afro-Caribbean religious rituals such as Voodoo and Santeria which have been skewed by Western media as devil worship and dark magic. The speaker

using these spiritual registers hallmarks the beginnings of character development from interrogating to commanding.

And see the tree of our hands!
 it turns for all, the wounds cut in its trunk*
 the soil works for all

and toward the branches a headiness of
 fragrant precipitation! (Cesaire, 2013)

Once more, landscape as metaphor is cleverly incorporated in the prophetically toned statements by the speaker. Rootedness becomes a focal point in this sequence as the speaker steadily comes to the realization that it is only in the advancement of self and black identity can one reconnect or rediscover for want of a better term with the authentic self. He situates himself in the landscape as he asserts “see the tree of our hands”. This intersection between landscape and self, works well throughout the poem in a myriad of ways. Terminology used and repeated such as references to the “tree” the “soil”, “branches” the sea and the sky, not only in this sequence but in the poem prove important the concept of rootedness and landscape and acts as a glue to the concept of negritude plastered against the meshing of landscape and man.

From first read, *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* can be argued to be a poem about poverty, one needs not go further than the first sequence to determine that the speaker, through Cesaire attempts to shed light on the disenchantment and penury which the island suffers with. Poverty is defined simply is the state of being extremely poor, being poor is usually acquainted with the lack of material possessions, inclusive of money. This classification works against the messages that the speaker and by extension Cesaire aim to disseminate via the poem in the first place. The layered nuances that Cesaire conflates into the poem attempt to convey to the reader not only images of abject poverty, but abject affluence. As much as poverty is evident in the landscape and people, landscape both flora and fauna and the black being when unmasked are presented as rich in value and values, rich in hope and strength. The speaker goes on to articulate life before poverty as he waxes nostalgic about

our idiotic and insane stunts to revive the
 golden splashing of privileged moments, the
 umbilical cord restored to its ephemeral
 splendor, the bread, and the wine of
 complicity, the bread, the wine, the blood of
 veracious weddings.

And this joy of former times making me
 aware of my present poverty. (Cesaire, 2013)

Apart from the clear reference to rootedness by mentioning “the umbilical cord restored to its ephemeral splendor”, we get limited evidence into the class of the speaker as he mentions “my present poverty”. This evidence works against other poetic insights that seem to position the speaker as a member of the higher class, such as distancing himself from the black man in the street car, and his opportunity to be able to leave Martinique then analyze the island he left. On the other hand, one can also deduce that the speakers “present poverty” may be a metaphor for his lack of rootedness to the native land. As with many poems, the language can be ambiguous, leading to many interpretations and conclusions. However, if we were to deduce that the speaker is indeed of a higher class, it places the speaker in the unenviable position of being furthest away from an authentic self as he would have adopted a much more Europeanized psyche than those who have remained poor. If the poem is indeed about poverty, this assumption leaves no room for the evaluation of the speaker who is not poor in the sense of economic standing. However, the speaker does suffer with ancestral cultural poverty and the link between himself and his native land is poor in connection. Thus, critics alike should prepare to find a balance between the poem being about poverty in the economic sense, but also poverty in the cultural sense. A poem about poverty only scratches the surface as a critical observation.

The structure of this poem resembles that of a stream of consciousness as written in someone’s notebook. As a companion to the extensive exploration of the island and the self which characterizes this epic poem, the reader is afforded assistance by the mechanical employment of metaphors (apart from the central one identified in this paper), repetition and ellipses in deducing the messages the speaker attempts to convey and by extension how Cesaire attempts to bring the multiple messages together. While this is true of all literary writing, especially poetry, not all poems would have repetition, ellipses or anaphora. Therefore, pointing out the specific figurative language tools employed in the poem helps filter out any generalizations. For instance, referring to a phrase discussed previously to zone in on not just meaning but rhyme, now paying attention to the use of anaphora as seen in the phrase “at the end of daybreak” adds emphasis and unity to the clauses which follow. It complements the poetic nuances with a rhythm that seeks to reinforce the ideas and visuals presented in the first sequence. Landscape as metaphor pervades the text while oppression both systematic and internalized, hide in the isolation of open space as identified with examples of the streetcar, the food, the

disease, “the inert town”. “Piled up fears” have been maintained by European forces and the speaker utilized these nuances that hide in plain sight as a potent means of critiquing the island and searching for an authenticity of self. These figurative devices are matched with a tone of anger which steadily snowballs into hope and a measure of insurgency, detailing the progression of the speaker from interrogating to asserting:

Then, strangling me with your lasso of stars
rise, Dove
rise
rise
rise
I follow you who are imprinted on my
ancestral white cornea
Rise sky licker
And the great black hole where a moon ago I
wanted to drown
It is there I will now fish
the malevolent tongue of the night in its still
verticity (Césaire, 2013).

While the culmination of the poem still situates the speaker in a position of longing for authenticity, he now clearly identifies the avenue by which this authenticity can be achieved; through rediscovering one's history and rejecting any forms of assimilation. The incorporation of the dove symbolizes devotion, peace and rebirth. Devotion to the cause of reconnecting with forgotten histories, doing this through a peaceful revolt as identified with the messages of unification and equality for all races as he proclaims, “no race has a monopoly on beauty, on intelligence, on strength” (Césaire, 2013). These revelations become the cornerstone of his rebirth, the functioning of his thoughts and observations have come full circle to construct a “spiritual renewal” (16) of sorts as “after centuries of exploitation, now the speaker sees ahead of him a welcoming world and a promising future. Returning to the roots, the feeling of belonging to a common heritage, and above all attaining an identity, no longer seem futile and unrealistic.” (Minkler, 1990). As the poem comes to a close, the daybreak which was repeated at the beginning of the poem and tethered the beginning of a day to chaotic remnants of European influence, now transform into dusk as the speaker proclaims:

Embrace, my purity mingles only with your
purity so then embrace!

Like a field of upright filaos at dusk our
multicolored purities. (Césaire, 2013)

The imagery of multicultural purities mingling like a field of filaos at dusk signify this sense of unification that transcends self-introspection and reconnection and now signals an end with dusk representing the close of the day which acts as a binary opposite to daybreak which ushered in chaos at the beginning of the day. This is so as daybreak and dusk are not synonymous, in fact daybreak refers to “The time in the morning when daylight first appears” (Daybreak 1), while dusk refers to “the time before night when it is not yet dark” (DUSK, 2018). Therefore, the end of daybreak is after daylight first appears and the day is in full swing. Despite the two moments of day looking bearing similar visual aesthetic, they are not the same. The field of filaos represents the coming of a new day. The selection of filaos to portray this image is itself another means of landscape as a metaphor for European chaos as filaos are considered invasive plants that are easily susceptible to disease. The plant represents the European brand of being an invasive species while also representing the victims of this imposition: the colonized and the island as they become susceptible to many disease and vices, turned into the hungry Antilles. Filaos representing the turn of a new day while representing disease is dual in meaning and does contribute a level of ambiguity that is present in most poetry. This embedded duality that one tree comes to symbolize works in tandem with the notion of double consciousness. As introduced by W.E.B Du Bois, double consciousness specifically refers to African Americans, but the term has since been used and applied to other peoples, such as Caribbean people of African descent. In *A Notebook to a Return to a Native Land* the speaker himself seems to grapple with double consciousness, which, as coined by W.E.B Du Bois describes internal conflict that someone who is a member of a marginalized or subjugated group. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* describes it as follows

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-
consciousness, this sense of always looking
at one's self through the eyes of others, of
measuring one's soul by the tape of a world
that looks on in amused contempt and pity.
One ever feels his twoness (1)

Many indirect links are made to this mental state throughout the poem as evident in the scene depicting

the man in the streetcar, the third sequence which is drenched with biblical and spiritual allusion and details the speaker's internal subconscious battle with self and even this final scene which references multicolored purities.

As much as the speaker preaches for the repudiation of assimilation, as the poem progresses into the final stanzas, less angst is displayed, and unity is identified as the focus of discussion. As indicated before with the imagery of the filaos, unification seems to eclipse the distancing of oneself from European powers. The final scene seems to suggest that the speaker now intends to stimulate and promote the mingling of all races which will by default give a measure of wholeness and legitimacy to the black identity. Losing the native cultural origin and thereby embracing the culture, norms and values of the European "mother country" feeds into the double consciousness of the black individual. This embrace has been a one-way street for many years, with the black subject being forced to embrace the culture of the mother country, however postcolonial studies and writings aim to circumvent the normative order by attempting to place the subjected being on a level playing field with the oppressor, as seen with the statement by the speaker in *Notebook* when he says "my purity mingles only with your purity so then embrace!". Here the speaker is referring to the European, proclaiming that not only are they pure but he is also pure, "so then embrace". At this juncture the speaker has shifted from a tone of questioning, detailing, defining and self-analyzing to a commanding tone, it acts as the pinnacle of character development and suggests to not only the reader but fellow subaltern beings that this journey of home and self-discovery is vital to the safe and successful return to a semblance of the native land and the authentic self. However, what must be noted is the fact that unification (as voiced by the speaker in this poem) does not mean aborting this longing for some measure of authenticity which factors into the recovery of his black ancestral heritage. Unification between races and people from varying cultures can be attained while maintaining some level of authenticity among each culture. The African can unite with the European for the progress of a better world without eroding their authentic cultural norms, values, ideas and ways of living.

Bringing focus on fauna once again, as an extremely vulnerable aspect of landscape within the poem is vital to the interrogation of landscape as metaphor and how the speaker links animals to people. An appropriate example of this is the example the speaker gave in the first sequence describing the "the flowers of blood that

fade and scatter in the empty wind like cries of babbling parrots" (2). These babbling parrots can be interpreted as a reflection of the Martiniquan people. The mimesis that parrots come to signify act as a metaphor for the island which has slowly become an imitation of the European culture. Vulnerability is also ascribed to the black man in the street car who he describes as a monkey stating "I turned, my eyes proclaiming that I had nothing in common with this monkey. He was comical and ugly," (31). Interesting enough is the distance the speaker maintains between the "comical and ugly" black man and himself, almost as though the speaker is not susceptible to scrutiny from the white oligarchy, while the man in the street car is. The distance the speaker maintains between the black man works in favor of the argument that the speaker is of a higher class, once again placing some level of ambiguity within the poem. Therefore, any answer as to whether or not the speaker is of a higher class or of the lower class (as those in the poem that he refers to) can be debated, as evidence for both exist.

Gendering of landscape works as an excellent tool in constructing imagery and situating the mentioned topographical movements around either feminine or masculine traits. Caribbean poets such as Lorna Goodison and Derek Walcott have gendered landscape. For instance, Grace Nichols in her poetry collection *I is a Long Memoried Woman* chronicles the spiritual evolution of an Afro-Caribbean woman and characterizes landscape ideally as feminine. In her poem "In My Name" the female speaker says, "I squat over/ dry plantain leaves/ and command the earth/ to receive you" (Nichols, 2012). The image of the woman/ the mother figure commanding the earth has *arguably* become conventional in Caribbean Literature, whereas *Notebook* which was written in 1939 genders landscape a bit differently. Steering away from conventional representations, Césaire, who chronicles the development of a male speaker, does not solely characterize the landscape as feminine or masculine, he maintains a balance between the masculine and the feminine throughout the epic. Describing the sun as "masculine" and the moon and "feminine" he sustains these binary opposites. Hedy Kalikoff explains that "the way the poems complex imagery is gendered, one arrives at the point of a reversal of terms, where what was once masculine becomes feminine and vice versa" (Kalikoff, 1995). This observation is indeed sound as evidence supports this dynamic of a reversal, which Merriam-Webster identifies as a synonym to opposite is used to "invert or to change to the **opposite** position" (Reverse) as the speaker elicits masculine ejaculation in statements such as "the volcanoes will explode" (4) while

touching on the “maternal anxiety to protect this impossibly delicate tenuity separating one America from the other” (34). The implications of this balanced gendering of the landscape are far reaching. Césaire evades Western norms of feminizing the landscape by attempting to find a middle ground. It also resonates with the notion that both man and woman are vital to the functioning of any society.

The notion of Landscape as the central metaphor in *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land* is not a popular argument, as the central metaphor that seems to stick out is that of masking, where the speaker interrogates the black boy and the landscape through the white gaze. This phenomenon does pervade the poetic epic and helps situate the speaker in the realm of the liminal space that has been imposed by European forces. However, the tables can be turned and the same can be said for how landscape is used as a mask, as the speaker engages landscape as a broad lens to perform this masking, unmasking and eventually philosophizing of negritude as the groundwork for understanding one's purpose in society and connecting with the ancestral culture. Opposing views may put forward the idea that landscape may just be a side effect of analyzing how the French ruptured the native land and the black being. It can also be argued that landscape should not eclipse the multitude of other tools employed by Césaire to bring forward the voice of the speaker and by extension the message. However, this paper aims to explicate the idea that landscape does not eclipse masking, double consciousness and spirituality, but prove that it works as a relatable and recognizable tool to bring those ideas and nuances to the reader in a more digestible manner, especially when produced via metaphor.

2. CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that landscape remains a potent aspect of the poem up till the end, the intensity to which the speaker focuses on the landscape wains significantly after the first sequence. Landscape as metaphor becomes more prevalent in the final three sequences compared to landscape as the focal point in the first sequence. One can assume that the speaker, as he progressively becomes more ‘aware’ of his negritude and ascends into the sky, he loses touch with the ground, thereby losing touch with the landscape and connection with the true poor black beings that live in the middle of the chaos. As landscape is a reflection of self, this slow distancing from landscape at the culmination of the poem can be interpreted as a distancing from the current state of inauthenticity which the landscape has come to represent and present through western ill-treatment.

Studying the complexities of Landscape is not a new feat with regards to *A Notebook of a Return to a Native Land*, however this paper takes it a step further as to situate landscape as the binding force of all other branches of thought that the speaker presents in the poem. In a world where the importance of landscape and climate change become imperative to the functioning of a society, re-configuring how postcolonial literary texts use landscape as a driving force can be fruitful to contemporary conversations about landscape. As the colonial imagination has appropriated the Caribbean landscape for many years through various forms of art forms and media, intellectuals such as Césaire and Walcott take the reins and redefine what landscape can and should portray when evaluating the Caribbean landscape. This goes undervalued and under evaluated throughout Caribbean literature, and when it is evaluated, attention is usually paid to the works of writers who directly use landscape as content and not metaphor, such as Olive Senior and Lorna Goodison.

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