

Communication Images
in
Derek Walcott's Poetry

Sadia Gill

Vernon Series on Language and Linguistics



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for Vicky

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Abstract

This book investigates the potential purpose of recurrent communication images—**page, book, noun**, etc.—in the poetry of Derek Walcott. The recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1992, Walcott is one of the most important postcolonial poets of the 20th century. His poetry delves into the dynamics of Caribbean marginalization and seeks to safeguard the paradigms characteristic of his island home. The tiny island of St. Lucia has found its renown considerably enhanced by the global eminence of its native son. Several major studies have examined Walcott's use of poetic devices, notably his use of metaphor and related imagery, which he typically locates in the nature of the tropics.¹ *Omeros*, 1990, which can be considered his masterpiece, has been studied with respect to its relationship to the epic genre and its themes; but the images of communication in the work have not been studied. This lacuna can be seen in the critical literature devoted to his entire collections as well.

I shall develop in this book that Walcott's poetry expresses the emergence of a worldview that contemporary theory considers postcolonial. The role of memory is crucial to his imaginary: "poetry is communication and communication is memory."² I propose to examine the means the poet brings into play in order to demonstrate the relevance of the Caribbean in the contemporary

¹ Patricia Ismond, *Abandoning Dead Metaphors: The Caribbean Phase of Derek Walcott's Poetry*, University of the West Indies Press, Kingston, 2001; Robert D. Hamner, *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1993.

² "An Interview with Derek Walcott" by J. P. White, 1990, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, edited by William Baer, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1996, p. 163.

world—firstly through a study of communication imagery and secondly through an examination of the conclusions he reaches through these means.

The quantitative table I have developed demonstrates that Walcott was especially reliant upon images of communication from the 1980s. Extensive textual analysis indicates that the place and contextual meaning of communication images, for example **page**, mirrors the historical plight of the Caribbean region; likewise, **line** expresses an identity deficit. Finally, my book will demonstrate that Walcott's extensive use of images of communication in his poetry contributes to a fluid notion of *self* that embraces multiculturalism while maintaining the imaginary intact.

Acknowledgements

*"I felt such freedom writing."*³

Derek Walcott

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³ From "The Acacia Trees" in *White Egrets*, Faber and Faber, 2010, p. 11.

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Foreword

Derek Walcott is the poet of the dispossessed, the marginalized, the migrant, the human beings who feel left out, alone with their pain and suffering. The author from the tiny island of Saint Lucia speaks of the very local experience of the Caribbean region—its postcolonial wounds, the suffering of its fishermen and other ordinary, working-class people, its tensions with the colonialist power, and its natural grandeur and beauty. And yet his localized poetry, which is often profoundly anchored in the Caribbean region, transcends its geography, invoking other timeless stories of dispossession around the globe, and propelling the local stories to a universal dimension, transforming human hopelessness into splendor. Walcott speaks particularly to those who have experienced the hardships of loneliness, exile, and, obviously, colonialism and its complex impact on culture, the people and the mind, but he also speaks to those who have difficulties feeling at home in a harsh, difficult modern world. Ultimately, his voice speaks to the wounds of the human experience beyond borders.

When I first heard Walcott at the University of Iowa campus in 2002, I was a doctoral student working on issues of identity conflict and processes of nation-building in the multi-ethnic island of Trinidad. Everyone in the audience in the large university lecture hall—a mixture of professors, writers, and students from a wide array of cultural origins and personal backgrounds—was transfixed. Complete silence and reverence in the room welcomed Walcott and his words. He read excerpts from his masterpiece *Omeros*. His voice was powerful and dignified. His words moved us to the core. He left us feeling shaken but also stronger, our souls strengthened by his hopeful and aspiring poetry.

The author of this book, Sadia Gill—like many of us, a citizen of the world in continual transit and personal quest for meaning and belonging—was also touched by Walcott's rare emotional beauty.

Originally from Pakistan and living in Switzerland through many hardships as a young woman in exile, Gill undertook a task of passion and dedication, reading, interpreting, and making sense of Walcott's difficult poetry and its vast scholarship, and producing here a remarkable book based on a meticulous analysis of Walcott's use of specific imagery of communication. While several other scholars have focused on Walcott's predominant use of Caribbean imagery (its land, nature, vegetation, and fauna), as well as various postcolonial issues (e.g., history, memory, violence), Gill focuses on images taken from the semantic field of communication, distinguishing five significant categories of the field of communication and their associated words that are ubiquitous and also crucial in Walcott's liberatory poetics: writing tools (with words such as *pen*, *page*), narratives (e.g., *fiction*, *book*), poetics (e.g., *stanza*, *meter*), language (e.g., *speech*, *dialect*), and grammar and punctuation (e.g., *syntax*, *hyphen*). Walcott is on a quest for the imaginative manufacturing of a new language away from the colonial empire's impositions on speech and mind, and such words are, as Gill demonstrates, pivotal to his poetic exploration and re-creation of the English language, a re-creation that is central to his poetic mission and universe. Each chapter focuses on one of these five categories taken from the field of communication, using an innovative quantitative and qualitative approach that reveals the importance of such imagery in Walcott's work. Gill addresses the question of Walcott's overall intentions when he uses words such as *pen*, *book*, *parenthesis*, *prose* incessantly throughout his work and argues that Walcott "stitches the old world with the new one through these images." Gill's study is an exploratory journey of Walcott's verbal stitching. Readers and scholars of Walcott will enjoy her engaging examination of Walcott's poetic craft.

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List of abbreviations

AL	<i>Another Life</i>
CP	<i>Collected Poems 1948–1984</i>
IaGN	<i>In a Green Night</i>
M	<i>Midsummer</i>
O	<i>Omeros</i>
SG	<i>Sea Grapes</i>
TAT	<i>The Arkansas Testament</i>
TB	<i>The Bounty</i>
TC	<i>The Castaway and Other Poems</i>
TFT	<i>The Fortunate Traveller</i>
TG	<i>The Gulf and Other Poems</i>
TH	<i>Tiepolo's Hound</i>
TP	<i>The Prodigal</i>
TSAK	<i>The Star-Apple Kingdom</i>
WE	<i>White Egrets</i>

PAGES MISSING
FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Chapter 1

“Blank pages turn in the wind”⁷ - Images of writing (page, paper, pen)

Introduction

Page, paper, and pen are the articles used for writing. They essentially communicate thoughts and visions in a verbal structure. This chapter investigates three images of communication in the hypernym of writing (given here with their frequencies)—**page** (148), **paper** (81), and **pen** (54). Images of writing in Walcott’s poetry create a communication pattern through which he makes an effort to endorse cosmopolitanism. As a postimperial poet, he traverses these images of writing, which appear to help him deliver his notions on history, the Caribbean, identity and travel. The theories applied in this chapter to understand the images of writing are communication, postcolonial, and ecopoetry. The theory of communication defines communication as a “semiotic process” in which individuals make an effort to strive for a stable “and even shared view” (Sell 3). Sharing is perhaps another distinct possibility for why Walcott continues to opt for communication imagery in his poetry.

The challenges of postcolonial literature in the colonized region are based on the tie “between imported European and local” and also “between language and place” (Ashcroft et al. 144).

⁷ Derek Walcott in *Collected Poems 1948–1984*, 1986, Faber and Faber, Boston, p. 11.

Postcolonial writers who belong to the ex-colonized regions encounter trials based upon the relation between the two different worlds, centered on diverse cultures, languages, and social elements. Walcott's verse scrutinizes the tug-of-war between the colonial region and the native one, and in turn captures the multiculturalism of his postimperial land. The theory of ecopoetry analyses a bond between nature and humans that “reports emotions of it from the inside” (Bach 111). Writers from postimperial countries additionally engage in accentuating the inner emotions of their people and landscapes as both have been wounded either by imperialism or by its extended version in the disguise of development in this era. Walcott's poetry is quite ecopoetic as he concentrates on the tribulations of his land brought by human activities both during and after imperialism, and tries to protect nature in his land to keep the imagination intact. He knows that memory is wounded; therefore, he desires to rectify it with his imagination and evinces it graphically via images of writing in his verse. Perhaps he engages these images for evocative purposes to convey his chief thoughts for the benefit of the reader's sensibility and psyche. This chapter inspects and answers the following research questions:

1. What are Walcott's overall intentions in using images of writing?
2. Why is **page** often associated with blankness?
3. Why are negative connotations constantly attached to **paper**?
4. Why is **pen** characteristically given living attributes?

The trends in supporting examples are:

Themes	Page	Paper	Pen
History	22	8	4
Caribbean	8	0	0
Identity	14	5	13
Travel	5	0	0

Hyponym 1: Page

The importance of **page** in the context of emptiness is researched in this hyponym. For Walcott, "the world is always a page," henceforth the "only heroism lies" in poetry (Mason). The poet uses this image to represent different dimensions of history. **Page** also facilitates the lack of native literature, life as a journey, and Europe as the center of industrialization.

Page History

Main example

*Clouds, log of Colon,
 I learnt your annals of ocean,
 Of Hector, bridler of horses,
 Achilles, Aenéas, Ulysses,
 But "Of that fine race of people which came off the
 mainland
 To greet Christobal as rounded Icacos,"
 Blank **pages** turn in the wind.
 They possessed, by Bulbrook,
 "No knowledge whatever of metals, not even of gold,*

They recognized the seasons (CP 11)

One of the most habitually applied images of writing, **page** facilitates the depiction of Walcott's views on the troubled history. While researching **page** in relation to these lines, one comes to know that the poem *Origin* is based on Walcott's unpublished poem "Africa, Patria Mia" (King 110). The poet is troubled by an outsider's perception of the value of the natives' knowledge since, upon being assigned to excavate the island of Trinidad, English archaeologist John Albert Bulbrook believed that the natives had no knowledge of their valuable natural resources, though they could comprehend the seasonal cycles. In this scenario, **page** stands for history and origin, and by relating it to the adjective "blank" it signifies the hollow sector of history brought by colonizers' exploitation of the natives and their land. Symbolically, the use of the "blank **page**" and connecting it with "turn in the wind" indicates the unwritten history of the natives, as the colonizers plunder the islands' natural resources, virtually leaving them empty. Visually, **page** represents ships' sails as the turning of **pages** connotes ships sailing, and aurally the sound of turning pages relates to the sound of a ship sailing. It may also allude to there being fewer significant pages that can be easily moved away by the wind. Walcott seems to have a direct conversation with the colonizer, and the main speaker appears to be the poet, and the other is the voice of the colonizer. One notices in *Northern Irish Poetry: The American Connection* that the colonizers' culture has always been recorded, unlike that of the natives' history, which stays as "blank pages"—therefore, in the "European texts" in fact "the native is spoken for by others" (Kennedy-Andrews 83). Hence, the image "blank **pages**" attests to the undocumented natives' history. Moreover, whatever is documented is through the European lens, which results in the marginalization of the natives. Walcott learns from his colonial education that "a gap" exists due to missing native history (Tynan 9), and the poet applies **page** to present this gulf. He desires to bridge this divide by constructing a pattern of images that can communicate a unified definition of

history. In *Epic of the Dispossessed: Derek Walcott's Omeros*, these lines evoke a type of “racial memory” and present the lack of a Caribbean model, which does not bother him because he does not feel that he writes within a void (Hamner 23). Despite acutely acknowledging the vacuum in the history of his people, Walcott is able to cultivate his verse without being overshadowed by it. I believe this is one of the strongest reasons the postcolonial mind can be watered through Walcottian verse—its prosaic positivity and fertility can mend dehydrated mental states.

Jamie Olson’s view is understandable—that is, “Cristóbal Colón” is credited to “Christopher Columbus,” “log” to Columbus’s journals, and “annals” to “European history and literature, and that in addition the poet makes a “dialogue with Europe” on the “basis” of “literature,” which sounds contradictory as the Caribbean is devoid of any literature (119). Through painting **page**, Walcott tries to fill the blankness in the Caribbean, and to internalize it as a part of the West Indian literature. One can appreciate the half rhymes, “colon” and “ocean”, “horses” and “Ulysses” as the ending consonant sounds rhyme and the preceding vowels have different sounds. This device could be linked to colonization in the sense that the poet depicts a clash of cultures, and the fact that the end words only half rhyme, symbolizes the imperfect communication between the natives and the colonizers. In a word, his message is multilayered because he graphically sketches it so that his readers can easily retain it in their memory. If communication is a “semiotic process” of message transference (Sell 3), it seems to be at work in Walcott’s hand, as he presents **page** in its blankness and perhaps inscribes a customized version of history to fill this void. Maybe, he opts to use the domain of writing specifically, and communication in general, to provide a balanced view in order to direct the Caribbeans towards a unifying concept of their history.

Supporting examples

Walcott in *The Prodigal* applies **page** to highlight agitation on the historical troubles. Firstly, **page** is amalgamated with the tension

of waves: "a rising sea in wind, the spinning **pages** / of remorseful texts, Bligh's log and cannonballs" (TP 84). **Page** presents a visual image of the turbulent sea, a maelstrom or whirlpool in fact, which carries connotations of fusion and disorientation, and symbolizes colonialism. At the same time, **page** ascribes to Bligh's documentation of the munity in his ship as his protégé expels him. Secondly, **page** is appended to distressed native history such as: "a bird flock halted, / as wind spins their **pages** backwards into spray." (TP 91). The word "spray" is often joined with turbulent weather. Since it is tied to a flock of birds, it is likely to be sea spray, and it represents the turbulence of Caribbean history. The idea of **pages** being spun backwards into the spray could be suggestive of history repeating itself, or alternatively, it could be alluding to the importance of revisiting history, so that it is not lost forever. Finally, **page** manifests the division of the Caribbean in this example: "walking along its flag-flapping streets / a figure in white fog dividing this **page**" (TP 97). This Caribbean split is due to "white" colonization, and the use of alliteration and fricative sounds in "flag-flapping streets" reckons a tone of agitation and restlessness that he experiences when he sees the "fog," another sign of colonization. On the one hand, the act of walking, and on the other, flapping, reiterates the tautness of the colonized situation.

Page blueprints various angles of imperialism in *The Bounty*. It evinces lack of history such as: "still as the white wastes of that prison / like **pages** erased by a regime." (TB 64). The word "white" is used ambiguously, and here it is not necessarily interconnected to a racial reference; it is more likely a cataphoric reference to **pages**. The interconnection between **page** and "white wastes" is interesting, as it suggests the futility of **pages** that have been "erased" or wiped clean of writing. This suggests that the written word is an extremely powerful tool. The use of the temporal adverb "still" suggests "subtle and unobtrusive relationships between present and past" (Greenwood 132). One can understand how the past can haunt the present—both are not only interlinked but also, at times, the present overshadows the past. It seems to be true in

the postcolonial Caribbean. However, Walcott, being an incurable optimist, tries to craft his page in such a way that it might get mightier than the past, and can bring the focus back to the present, which will subsequently lead to the future, by reshaping the historical past. **Page** specifies the loss of normal life due to colonialism here: “Perhaps the hills were greener / then, and the trees turned **excited** pages.” (TB 70). The colonizers arrive with their ships to colonize the natives as slaves, thereby destroying their natural way of life. There is a wistful and reminiscent tone that evokes exciting stories and times in their lives, thus symbolizing lost glory. He connects the trees with natives to show that, due to colonization, both the way of life and the natural landscape are demolished.

In *Omeros*, various aspects of Caribbean colonialism are affiliated to **page**. It is annexed to sea because: “The galleon’s shadow rode over the ruled **page** / where Achille, rough weather coming, counted his debt” (O 43–44). It demonstrates the colonizers’ means of arrival via trade or war ship (galleons) to conquer the island. Possibly, it reflects Achille as a fisherman counting his dues because, with the arrival of the colonizers, fishing as a primary occupation becomes less profitable, especially at the onset of “rough weather.” Clearly, “ruled **page**” refers to the ocean’s waves or breakers and metaphorically it symbolizes the colonizers’ regime. The poet’s writing and **page** are incorporated: “nib scratching the **page**, beaking the well for a word, / Maud with her needle, embroidering a silhouette / from Bond’s *Ornithology*” (O 88). It is bracketed with writing, and the violence of “scratching” suggests that history, once written, is hard to erase. The poet reveals Maud’s constant stitching of birds from James Bond’s ornithology book, as Bond is an expert in Caribbean birds. On the one hand, the space of both **page** and cloth enables the composition, whereas on the other, stitching perchance allows Walcott to capture the essential facts of history, similar to the illustration from Bond’s renowned book describing the Caribbean birds. **Page** and leaves are cemented, as here: “When the **pages** of sea-grapes in their restlessness / lifted a sudden gust, through

asterisks of rain" (O 98). Sea grapes are plants that are naturally resistant to wind and they are being lifted due to a "sudden gust," symbolizing the arrival of the colonizers. He associates sea grapes to **pages** because of the size of their leaves; it discloses the reaction of nature to colonization. The "asterisks of rain" means it is actually providing something that has been omitted; accordingly, nature seems to react to the colonial atrocities. The beauty in images of communication is that they can be explored in more than one manner. Another angle to this example is that he compares his writing to that of "**pages** of sea-grapes," as his work is restless and now it has been lifted suddenly by an idea that is like a "gust" and the rain drops "asterisks," which means that, due to nature, something omitted has been discovered on his page. Consequently, nature directs him to comprehend colonialism through writing.

Furthermore, **page** is consolidated to writing such as: "Clouds whitened the Crow horseman and I let him pass / into the **page**, and I saw the white waggons move / across it, with printed ruts, then the railroad track" (O 175). Walcott employs the metanarrative device to venture the trespassing of whites on American Indian lands during the colonization of America. Through the help of **page**, he narrates this invasion and visually portrays the attack by joining it to Caribbean colonization. Perhaps "railroad" indicates the expansion process of the whites. The repetition of the color "white" indicates the "process of encroaching settlement" (Barnard 185). The "white" in "waggons" and "clouds" stand for the white settlers who destroy the natives. **Page** is packed with history, for instance: "The clouds turned blank **pages**, the book I was reading / was like Plunkett charting the Battle of the Saints." (O 181). The poet uses the metanarrative technique to describe his action of reading a book on Catherine Weldon's life, and conjoins it to Plunkett's registering the facts of the battle. The act of clouds turning the **pages**, which are "blank," suggests the quest of the poet to either search for the missing history of his island or for the content of his book to develop it further. Control of clouds illustrates the story formation to

demonstrate colonial density. One wonders why he correlates Plunkett's recording of "Battle of the Saints" to the narrator's book reading. The facts behind this battle indicate that the British military technique of "breaking the enemy's line," with the "perpendicular approach" rather than the "traditional parallel line of battle" (Jones 379) turns victorious. Similarly, Walcott breaks the line of history on his page through his inventive poetic vision, as he desires to coin a new world of Caribbean history. The quest for Caribbean history is allied to **page**: "Turn the **page**. Blank winter." (O 218). The literal idea of turning a **page** in the context of searching for content is fused to his hunt for history. He subsequently realizes that it is only void. The Caribbean historical blankness is bracketed to the season of "winter" and it is noticed that such a condition does not normally exist in a tropical island. However, with the colonizers' arrival, the normal West Indian life is punctured, and thus reduced to an empty and wintry state.

Walcott connects barren landscape to **page**—for instance: "as wood grew obsolete / and plasterers smoothed the blank **page** of white concrete." (O 227). He narrates the bleakness of landscape and the smothering of the spirit of his people due to the actions of the colonizers. He notes "the loss of fishing that St. Lucia's tourist marinas" (Handley 392), as imperialism destroys the native community and land. Likewise, tourism in the postcolonial times adds to the destruction of an emerging society; hence in totality there is continual damage to the page of life and land. **Page** is cohered to colonial history as: "glazed by the transparent **page** of what I had read. / What I had read and rewritten till literature / was guilty as History." (O 271). He understands that the colonizers' documentation of Caribbean history is plain, devoid of accurate facts—it is as "guilty" as their historical action. Thus he starts his own writing process to record and to rewrite the history. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, one finds that he "insistently confronts" the quest of history (Innes 129). Walcott believes that European literature fails to acknowledge his people and place; he zeros in to break away from the traditional classical models of literature in order to paint the

page of his work and land with an originality that is created out of nation and imagination. Interestingly enough, to pen down his thoughts, **page** is fused with history, for instance: "But the name Helen had gripped my wrist in its vise / to plunge it into the foaming **page**." (O 323). It unveils his deep-natured interest in finding the missing Caribbean ("Helen") history, which obsesses his thoughts and propels him to write about it. "Foaming **page**" suggests a potential and readiness to create magical words; thence he tries to create a new history for his island. Moreover, the word "foaming" suggests frothing and a frothing at the mouth may portray anticipation of excitement or the need to speak about his country's missing history. Visually, it alludes to sea but symbolically it represents words on the page.

The colonial invasion of the island in *The Arkansas Testament* is affiliated to **page**—for example: "The surf will smooth the sand's **page** and even / the cumuli change their idea of heaven" (TAT 55). Since the colonizers' invasion takes place from the sea, Walcott uses **page** to indicate the same by connecting it with "surf" and "sand," and proclaims that their atrocities can change even a heaven-like place. "Cumuli" are clouds normally associated with fair weather (white fluffy clouds) and by changing "their idea of heaven", maybe he suggests that their shifting shape can affect both literally the way one looks at the sky, and metaphorically the way one views religion or beliefs. When placed next to the image of the sea smoothing the sand, it is suggestive of something being shaped and changed. **Page** is intertwined to sea quest: "but the ocean kept turning blank **pages** / looking for History." (TSAK 26). The ocean at a micro level, and nature at a macro level explore the missing Caribbean origins. The idea of sea searching for history evokes the colonial marginalization of the colonized sphere, and the fact that the sea beholds the evidence of colonization. One finds in *Asylum Speakers: Caribbean Refugees and Testimonial Discourse*, lines that broach "the lost history of the middle passage" (Shemak 46). Walcott articulates that the sea acts as a vehicle to transport the colonizers and the enslaved African immigrants to the Caribbean, and it witnesses the loss of life and

history of both Caribbeans and Africans. In *Routes and Roots*, it is noticed that: "detemporalizing sea refuses to register a human-centered chronology" (DeLoughrey 64). Perpetually, Walcott records the narration of sea to document the history of the middle passage rather than depending on the empire to chronicle the historical events. Nature, being his constant companion, seems to converse with him, and he derives his inspiration from it to decode the narrative aspects and to log the history on the surface of his page.

Walcott frequently uses **page** to narrate different historical problems of his land. This is evident in *The Star-Apple Kingdom*: "as a mist / rises from the river and the **page** goes white." (45). He once more applies an action of the natural object "mist" to evince the vague history of his land, and subsequently **page** of his country turns "white," which means there is a totality of colonial destruction which manifests the blankness of both history and land. Additionally, in *Sea Grapes* he states: "crows circling like shadows / over this **page**," (28). He figuratively uses "crows," which are known to circle over and scavenge dead bodies, and links it to **page** to represent the loss of lives during Caribbean colonization. It is interesting to note how much space and scope Walcott's page contains as he seems to find immense ease in linking various objects with this image of writing. He once more denotes colonialism by linking **page** and coldness such as: "The snows have hardened, / the **page** is cold, it is glazed" (SG 89). One wonders why he applies the noun "snow" in the plural. One reason could be his people's continuous colonial encounter. It is worth noting at the same time that the act of snow hardening signifies the entirety of his land being under the control of the imperial power; therefore, **page** of Caribbean is now recognized as a "cold" colony, and the condition of his people is "glazed" as they are enslaved by the imperial authorities.

Connections are made between **page** and reading, for instance: "Verandahs, where the **pages** of the sea / are a book left open by an absent master" (AL 3). **Pages** and the sea are interweaved to

indicate that the sea is an open book left by the colonizers, for him yet to read and research. The "absent master" based on the "culture rooted in slavery" may be imputed to "the plantation slave master" (Punter 69–70). The poet recapitulates the troubled history of his land by denoting the architectural orbit of the imperial power and associates it with the colonial enslavement of his people, and his subsequent efforts to find a poetic solution to erase the hard trials of his people. Lack of Caribbean history is reiteratively displayed through **page** such as: "the bullock's strenuous ease is mirrored / in a clear **page** of prose," (TG 22). It is an oxymoron that exhibits the natives, like "bullocks," working strenuously without "ease" due to imperialism. Here "clear **page** of prose" is similarly contradictory. **Page** can be adduced to the lack of Caribbean history and when it is incorporated with "clear" it takes on the sense of emptiness. The interlacing of **page** and land appears in *The Castaway*, for instance: "nor this clouding, unclouding sickle moon / whitening this beach again like a blank **page**." (62). The shape of a "sickle" is compared to that of the shape of a "moon" to pour light on the colonial designs, and how the so-called harvest moon clouded the natives' land; hence the Caribbean earth is nothing but a "blank **page**." The "moon," "beach," and **page** are compared to the poetic device of simile, and this comparison in turn visually forecasts how the moonlight covers the beach; similarly, the colonizers colonized the natives.

Page Caribbean

Main example

*The **blank page** grows a visionary wood.
A parallel section, no, in fact a whole province
of far, of foreign, of self-translating leaves
stands on the place where it has always stood
the right-hand margin of the **page***

*loud, soft but voluble in their original language,
 an orchestrating lexicon, veined manuscripts
 going far back in time and deep in roots
 and echoing in the tunnel of the right ear
 with echoes: (TP 62)*

With its frequent occurrences, **page** is annexed to the adjective "blank" to represent the lack of literature in the Caribbean. Walcott maps out several trees transplanted from a distant land into the Caribbean; despite their foreign origin, these trees have "self-translating leaves" due to their innate power that can help to heal. Henceforth, language proliferation in turn helps in the writing process. It could additionally mean that pages and paper come from trees and "self-translating leaves," so it is about the process of writing and language creation. "Visionary wood" represents the growth of language, and it asserts a mixture of the language of the natives (Creole) from the ancient "manuscripts" and English ("echoes" of trees). The use of perfect rhyme with two monosyllabic words—"wood" and "stood"—carries great weight because of its simplicity. These words could reflect the staying power and rootedness of the Caribbean landscape and language. The very process of the vision moving from blankness to gaining an insight indicates how nature can revitalize the Caribbean. This mixture of language, along with Caribbean natural resources, sea and birds, foretells a new vision, which helps in the process of writing. His imaginative ink colors his poetic page, which consequently designs an improved version of the literature. It does not need to stay overshadowed, and can be brought back to the center. He "writes about the practice of his craft as an odyssey through different landscapes illuminated by the interpenetration of opposite absolute worlds of art and home" (Paquet 118). The poet seems to bring together the worlds, so that he can first comprehend the truth, and then he can cultivate it on his page for the benefit of his readers. The work of postcolonial theorists Robert J. C. Young and Homi K. Bhabha reminds us that the worth

of a human being is a long forgotten song that one needs to recall in today's times to emphasize cosmopolitanism. The basic notion in "postcolonialism" asserts that every human being "on this earth" should have equal rights (Young 2). Walcott, being a true son of his soil, knows that he needs to Adamically reenergize, and creatively coin a new literature for his land by projecting the process of the imagination to flow through his page to reach his peoples' perception.

Supporting examples

Page in *White Egrets* appears in three different, yet unified, dimensions to portray Caribbeanness. For instance: "The **page** of the lawn and this open **page** are the same, / an egret astonishes the **page**, the high hawk caws / over a dead thing, a love that was pure punishment." (9). Observing the egret, Walcott interlaces **page** to his land to gain inspiration. He introduces the egret's struggle competing with a hawk to feed itself to delineate the process of natural selection. According to Annuniação, for Walcott "the ideal of love for art is also a punishment, since writing is a struggle for words and the perfect combinations. The egret, in this battle, helps the poet to carry on with his art" (258–259). This symbolic representation of the egret's fight speaks of Walcott's effort to learn lessons from nature to enrich his work. The comparison of **page** and land can be explained by considering the size of Craven's 1939 edition of *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces*. The poet's reference to "pure punishment" invokes "high indifference" of nature whilst still "loving" his prey" (Fumagalli 247). Walcott, while loving his vocation as a poet, still struggles to create a perfect combination of words and images to convey his vision.

In *The Prodigal*, **page** and nature imagery are linked from three different angles. Firstly, it is interconnected to natural objects. For instance: "scoring sparrow-notes / on the **page** of a cloud, the flecks of blossom / on enamelled meadows the **pages** of spring," (TP 38–39). **Page** is entwined with a cloud as both contain a space. Cloud carries a sparrow's song, whereas spring contains blooming flowers, which consequently cover the space of the land.

Furthermore, graphically “scoring” and “note” create an image of music (notes of musical score on it), so the sparrows form the black notes on the musical score, which is the white cloud. All this seems to be showered in the ultimate space of his page, as Walcott celebrates nature. Secondly, nature and **page** are integrated: “made up of all these leaves and lines that / still rasp with delight with rhyme and incantation / **pages** of shade turning into translation,” (TP 63). A shadow needs to be translated, as it requires something else to be with it. Similarly, his poetic page needs help from nature to comprehend a deeper Caribbean essence. Being mesmerized by nature, his poetic page further rhymes with the rhythmic natural beauty. Finally, **page** and fishing are connected because: “too strange to quiet my fear, the skittering fish / from the first line of the open **page**,” (TP 104). He correlates the line of page and that of fishing, and indirectly equates both these characteristics to that of his land. Both the art of fishing and that of poetry require a gigantic amount of patience to go through the task—drawing a line to catch a fish and trying to write an opening line demand endurance. Being an incurable optimist, perhaps he means that the tolerance required in conquering art—whether fishing or writing—cannot minimize his zest to explore poetry and the sea.

Walcott makes frequent links between **page** and sea: “‘Light broke through the rain in Vieuxfort and horses / grazed, their hides wet,’ by breakers that foam from the **page**.” (TB 76). The space of **page** and that of the sea are affiliated, as the horses in Vieux Fort (a town in St. Lucia well known for horse racing) on the beach are wet due to the rain and probably also due to the sea. Sea waves upon hitting a breaker cause foaming or frothing, which is a recurrent image in his poems, coupled with imagination. His poetic page is well known for its inclination towards **page** of the sea. **Page** is allied to land, as when he returns to his homeland views: “The lowering window resounds / over **pages** of earth, the canefields set in stanzas.” (M 11). His lyrical page resonates with a metaphorical text, which he unites with landscape, therefrom signifying one of his poetic characteristics. From the window of his plane, he

observes the normal activities of his islanders, which Hammond says are outlined as: “these things are there; they are not nothing” (339). Upon coming back to his home, Walcott observes the ordinary way of life in his island and realizes what these things mean to him, subsequently revealing that he is primarily and foremost a Caribbean poet. Walcott’s poetic eye captures several natural beauties that an ordinary human eye can bypass, thus even the tiny details of his landscape can enrich his page, which consequently can delight his reader. It is vital to recall his belief in nothingness; it is indeed something that provides him with an opportunity to use his imagination to bring his people and land from their marginalized realm.

Nature imagery is allied to **page**, such as: “You faced the blank **page** / and trembled, you had learnt by heart / the monotonous scrawl of the beaches” (AL 109–110). Confronting the historical void of his land, Walcott finds the sea inspirational to poetically illustrate and fill the blankness. The repeated wave action reminds him to repetitively search for this missing history, and to continue his poetic efforts to seal the emptiness. Recurrently **page** is incorporated to sea wave: “evening fold the **pages** of the sea,” (AL 151). Nature in the form of the sea waves repetitiously tries to guide him to fulfill a role. He celebrates the Caribbean Sea that is unchanging and eternal, unlike humans. In *Nobody’s Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*, the ocean “continues as before” despite “the humans artifacts are mutable” (Breslin 187). Sea is a perpetual entity that goes beyond the mortal life, the poet derives his strength from this immortal unit to strengthen his page to celebrate Caribbeanness.

Page Identity

Main example

*This **page** is a cloud between whose fraying edges
a headland with mountains appears brokenly*

*then is hidden again until what emerges
 from the now cloudless blue is the grooved sea
 and the whole self-naming island, its ochre verges,
 its shadow-plunged valleys and a coiled road
 threading the fishing villages, the white, silent surges
 of combers along the coast, where a line of gulls has
 arrowed
 into the widening harbour of a town with no noise,
 its streets growing closer like print you can now read,
 two cruise ships, schooners, a tug, ancestral canoes,
 as a cloud slowly covers the **page** and it goes
 white again and the book comes to a close. (WE 89)*

This last poem of the latest collection offers a culminating observation because Walcott's **page** embraces a universal poetic identity. The connotation of "fraying edges" suggests stress and troubles in his life, which he overcomes poetically and enables the **page** of his life not to be overshadowed. Normally, a **page** is covered with words, though here, instead of words, a natural object "cloud" seems to perform this role; thence, it seems that nature remains his eternal companion, and it appears in the time of need to aid his **page**. At the same time, it is evident that this iconic image **page**, under the hypernym of writing, remains mostly quite blank in his verse; however, by the time this **page** completes its journey and reaches a final possible destination, it is amalgamated in nature, and **page** and cloud seem to become one. Conceivably, this is how one can comprehend and explain *White Egrets*, where it seems that almost all his poetic powers appear to rhyme with nature and at times even with age. He skillfully associates poetry with nature to indicate the life cycle, where both his **page** (life) and "book" (writing) seem to reach an end. He uses the image of cloud to quote the writing **page**; accordingly, it

prognosticates the telling of a story or history, and especially it could represent his life story as well as Caribbean history. One wonders why he charts a "headland with mountains" broken. The edges unravel to visually disclose the cloud thinning out, and clearing to reveal the "headland." This could be a representation of the birth of the Caribbean. The mountains appear "brokenly," which suggests a fractured, painful past but one that is resolute and proud, symbolized by the strength of the mountains. "Hidden again until what emerges" is suggestive of identity, as visualized in the headland, which is temporarily hidden and then "emerges" into a clear sky, suggesting a sharper identity for the "self-naming island."

The subsequent reemergence of the identity healed via nature indicates Walcott's Adamic naming to shape the self. The word "edges" would only create a half rhyme with words that have perfect rhymes—"emerges," "verges," and "surges." The rhythm of these end words being unstressed in the final syllable *es* creates feminine rhymes, and generates a frayed, jagged sound, and it furthermore means that phrases such as "grooved sea" and "coiled road," both of which end on a stressed syllable, stand out more dramatically to indicate the journey of identity. Words from the semantic field of nature—such as "cloud," "mountains," "sea," "valleys"—paint these lines quite Wordsworthian. Walcott, being a lover of nature, seems to follow the same path taken by Wordsworth, and allows the self to float in the realm of nature. He "weaves" togetherness of images such as "sound and silence, darkness and light," to lead out "into the whiteness of a page, like a white egret," ergo bringing closure to the book (Hart). The poet apparently combines the opposite entities to reveal how the self seems to come to terms with almost everything; hence, he seems to make a well-knit route on his poetic page to showcase the end of his mortal life and his poetic journey. Likewise, he underlines the immortal poetic identity that nature shelters eternally: "companionship relation of his poetry is vital to his identity portrait in the making" (Zago 98). For Walcott, the ties between his poetry and identity are integral as each complement the other.

One can clearly see that old age does not diminish Walcott's ability to apply his signature poetic style of imagery to deliver his ideas, which consequently reveals his positive attitude towards acceptance of self and ageing. One can collectively comprehend that, like identity, which he almost always believes to be fluid, his poetic talent is apparently not overshadowed by old age; it appears to share the fluidity of his vision, which is indeed optimistic, thereby in turn his innate altruism seemingly enables his page to flow on. He, as a "grand old man of the sea," writes as a "Victorian command of the iambic pentameter" and this book is a "farewell to a blue world" (Kellaway). Walcott seems to indicate his departure from page as well as land, as if his Adamic role is being completed, and that he can leave this Eden to enter into the other one peacefully. His concerns extend not only to an identity crisis, but also to omnipresent nature to enrich imagination, which can ultimately benefit the self. Eco-poetry as a "subset of nature poetry" observes "certain conventions of romanticism" (Bryson 5). Walcott as an eco-poet strives to create a vision on his page through which both poetry and nature can be protected. A merger of **page** and cloud graphically communicates how poetry and nature correlate to shield his all-embracing and all-inclusive poetic identity.

Supporting examples

Page mainly represents the quest of identity such as: "I turn **pages** / for some spasms of heritage, the days when I painted" (WE 68). Walcott's search for identity is mirrored in his poetry and in his artistic ability to paint. The very visual act of turning **pages** is affiliated with his metaphysical search for identity. It is worth recalling that the turning of **page** in the theme of history indicates history-less-ness, whereas the same action of **page** manifests identity search; consequently, one can now defiantly notice that **page** under the hypernym of writing contains a vast elasticity, which subsequently facilitates the documentation of his main thoughts. To betoken his identity as a man, **page** is intertwined with white: "Desire and disease commingling, / commingling, the white hair and the white **page** / with the fear of white sight," (TP 7).

Here **page**, when juxtaposed with "white hair," indicates old age, and the repetition of "white" stresses his distress about ageing. He worries that, due to advancing years, he might suffer from the ailments of old age. He uses the gerund "commingling" to vividly illuminate the blending of his thoughts and fears, and also to indicate a process, a cyclic nature of thoughts unified to ageing. The interconnection of his poetic identity and his country is presented through **page** as: "knee-high in the foam of the **page** / wading by sounding caves." (TP 84). In this example, **page** stands for the sea, which is synonymous with island life, wherefore his poetic page and sea co-relate in his work. It is not foam *on page*, which might mean words, but rather one finds "foam *of a page*," which points to the power of the written word. "Knee high" can suggest his comfort in his work, as it seems to be well established. He not only physically wades into the cave, one of the significant landmarks of the Caribbean, but also conceivably wades into the metaphysical cave of his mind to polish the page of his verse.

In *The Bounty*, **page** for identity is affixed primarily to Walcott's poetic identity—for example: "like the nocturnal magnolia, white as the **pages** I read, / with the prose printed on the left bank of the **page** / and, on the right, the shale-like speckle of stanzas" (43). He presents an image of an open book—it notionally has prose on the left-hand **page**, and poetry on the right with a seam running between them. It is ironic when he says that the **page** he reads is white, but if one thoroughly analyses **page**, it can be seen that the **pages** that are "white" are compared to the white blossoms of the frangipani tree, which has the ability to amaze. Therefore, by combining these two images ("white **page**" and "nocturnal magnolia") he could be suggesting the amazing value of the literary arts, and the power of poetry. **Page** is conjugated to his poetic life: "when the silver knot is loosed / from nerve-strings and arteries, and cloud-**pages** close in amen." (TB 44). "Silver knot" can suggest the precious life as well as his writing gift, and its loosening indicates that it is about to diminish, though he believes that his writing ability is his life-long companion. Hence, the "cloud-**pages**" suggest the journey of his life as a Caribbean poet;

moreover, he indicates it coming to an end, as it closes in “amen.” Furthermore, one can notice that he combines **page**—the image of writing—with cloud—the image of nature—to convey the cyclical quality of nature, both a journey of life, here in the context of his tale, and nature, specifically from the Caribbean angle. It is now noticed that the extensive space of **page** universally envelops his views and his entire poetic journey. **Page** connects poetry and religion in this instance: “My colonnade of cedars between whose arches the ocean / drones the **pages** of its missal,” (TB 68). The auditory imagery conveyed through the sounds of the cedar tree pillars swaying, and the sea is interlaced with the **pages** of a hymnbook to reveal his faith in nature. For him, his poetics is as holy and as significant as religion, thus he intertwines nature and religion to strengthen his faith in nature, which he elects to communicate through his poetic identity. To enhance his poetic writing, **page** is coupled to sea’s inspiration: “The one light we have / still shines on a spire or a conch-shell as it falls / and folds this **page** over with a whitening wave” (TB 75). He urges the light of faith to be as omnipresent as the sea and to let it envelop him and his entire land so that it may strengthen the belief of his people to build a better identity. One wonders why he insinuates a **page** folding over the wave. One distinct possibility is that nature, being his eternal teacher, in the form of repetitious movement of sea waves instructs that humans need not give up. Interestingly, his **page** seems to perform the same action as that of the sea waves because quite often he poetically opts to erase the old identity crisis to build a new self.

Walcott uses **page** to represent a store of feelings tied to identity. The sea and **page** are connected—for instance: “A wind turns the harbour’s **pages** back to the voice / that hummed in the vase of a girl’s throat: ‘Omeros’” (O 13). The poet’s remodeling of Homer is based on the Caribbean Sea, which is reckoned as “harbour’s **pages**.” One wonders why he engraves the space of his **page** with the sea, as he continues to unite both quite repeatedly. One of the obvious possibilities is to attach fluidity as well as the permanence of sea with his poetics. He continues to travel on the

PAGES MISSING
FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

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