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African Caribbean Theatre of Land Rights in Dennis Scott's *An Echo In The Bone* and David Edgecombe's *Kirnon's Kingdom*

Dannabang Kuwabong
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

Land ownership and received notions associated with its efficient utilisation for sustainable economic growth and development within contemporary globalised economics are fundamental to a broader understanding of independence and nation building in postcolonial Caribbean nations. However, Huggan and Tiffin (2010) explore the ambiguous nature of the Western driven concepts of development (pp.27-28) and contend that development is "a form of strategic altruism in which technical and financial assistance from the self-designated First World is geared toward its own economic and political interest", as well as being a constructed propagandistic discourse that perpetuates and consolidates the social, economic, cultural and political hegemony of Western nations (p. 28). But from a more liberal and benign perspective, Huggan and Tiffin (2010: p.29) draw on Amartya Sen's (2000: 2-3) idea that development is not all about economic figures but also about human liberation and freedom.

David Edgecombe's play, *Kirnon's Kingdom* (2001) and Dennis Scott's *An Echo in the Bone* (1985) explore the ecological and environmental malpractices imbedded in neocolonial ideas of development: diversion of natural resources, tourism, mono-cropping, and real estate development. As Huggan and Tiffin argue, "development is generally recognised to be a strategically ambiguous term, adapted to the different needs of those who use it…based as it all too often is on the enormous cultural assumptions and presumption of the West" (Black cited in Huggan & Tiffin, 2010 :p. 27). In other words, the notion of development in the Caribbean is tied to the Euro-Western concepts defined by an ideology of "catching up" by the so-called developing countries (p. 31). These types of neocolonial developments, Huggan and Tiffin state:

> Far from putting an end to old-style imperialism. . . modern (post-war) development finds new ways of instantiating it, e.g. through the ongoing collaboration between national governments and gargantuan transnational companies whose economies exceed those of all but the largest 'developing' countries, and whose financial and technical assistance is provided in terms that continue to favor the West. (p. 30)

Indeed, Caribbean nations fall into such economic traps set by multinational companies, which create an illusion of "development" that is juxtaposed to a country's social and political "backwardness." Simply put, neo-imperialism operates through coordinated systems of hegemonic ideologies of development in order to control the natural resources of poorer nations.

In these strategies of development praxes offered to Caribbean nations, there is a denial of the consequences of racialised history, economics, ecological, and socio-cultural relationships between poorer nations of the south and richer nations of the north. *An Echo in the Bone* (1985) and *Kirnon's Kingdom* (2001) are both dramas that agitate for development praxes defined by ecological and cultural consciousness derived from Afrocaribbean historical experiences. Development then becomes an emotional, cultural, spiritual, and a sustainable entitlement to land, not the type of entitlement Griffiths (1997: pp. 151-152) glibly labels "as a legislative mechanism for the recognition of affective ties to land and place that are confirmed by historical continuity of association." Entitlement is not bourgeois pastoralism invented as part of a conquistador patriarchal ideology of fictive attachment and preferences for the simplicity of lives in colonised spaces. The bourgeois notion of entitlement views Caribbean landscapes as pastoral and uncorrupted "fictions of contentment and social harmony" which are enunciated "through …pleasingly domesticated images of working farm[s] and fruitful garden[s]" while 'conveniently' erasing the deep and warring historical, gender, racial, economic, cultural, and sexual "division of labour that make such productivity possible, allowing instead for the charming development of a 'beautiful' relation between rich and poor" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010: p. 83).

An Echo in the Bone is Scott's (1985) challenge to these false representations of the Caribbean landscape as a paradise where there is total harmony between the races, and where the history of racism and plantation slavery is irrelevant. Master Charles, heir to plantation slavery, returns from England, committed to ignoring the new situation of a Caribbean without slavery. He tries to reassert his entitlement to the land, its free African peoples, and their labor and reproductive potentials. His position as a neo-Euro-imperialist, is "expressed [through] the idea of

unchangeable social and cultural hierarchies" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010: p. 84) choreographed through international agencies to which Caribbean nations are coerced paid members. In *An Echo in the Bone*, Scott (1985) further critiques the legitimation of "highly codified relations between socially differentiated people: relations mediated, but also mystified by supposedly universal cultural attitudes to land" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010: p. 84) and highlights the issues of the "crisis of ownership" (p. 85). Huggan and Tiffin opine:

> The tensions between ownership and belonging in . . . colonial and post-colonial contexts: contexts marked, for the most part, by direct or indirect engagement with often devastating experiences of dispossession and loss. (p. 85)

Often categorised as ritual drama, *An Echo in the Bone* stages post-emancipation struggles of Afro-Caribbean people for land rights (Kuwabong, 2009: pp. 118-122). Thus, I frame my reading of this play within the concepts of African-derived ritual drama. I lean on Victor Leo Walker Jr.'s assertion that:

> Most black Africans in the Diaspora who create performative rituals do so to reaffirm the life force of the community by engaging the community in an experience that reinforces the collective worldview in which the natural rhythms and the cosmic balances of the community, despite periodic disruptions, are in harmony. (Walker, 2002: p.14)

Performative ritual transcends religiosity and rises to encompass what de Graft (2002) identifies as tools provided to humans through word, action, and silence "to empathize physically, emotionally, and intellectually with the forces that threaten [their] very existence" (p. 21). To de Graft, humans combat psychological disorders caused by traumatic experience, whether natural or human made, at the "deepest levels of consciousness" through performative ritual (p. 21). Performative ritual thus becomes the `motive force' (p. 21) that guarantees psychic equilibrium; it emanates from `apprehension' and stimulates acts of "propitiation, purification, and exorcism" (p. 20). Through performative ritual drama:

> Participants seek …social solidarity, …through which they …reaffirm, keep alive, or commemorate …facts [of life], relationships, and attitudes as the community considers vital to the sanity and continued healthy existence. (p. 23)

Corollary to the above, I see performative ritual as undoubtedly an enabling force that creates the necessary space for entry into spiritual negotiations with the community's cosmic environment. (Kuwabong, 2011: pp. 200-203; Soyinka, 1976: p. 149; Wright, 1987: pp. 13-28) Thus, Lawal (2002) agrees that within the African's world, performative ritual encodes `ideas and ideals' through word and image, and through them, one can "mediate between the human and spirit worlds…" (Lawal, 2002: p.41). On the one hand, in the process of mediation, the actor's corporeality transforms into a threshold of multiple entrances and exits. *An Echo in the Bone* (Scott, 1985) enacts rituals of race memories through performance, rooted in the memories of the plantation landscape that retraces the journey of their histories of disempowerment to the seascapes of the Middle Passage. On the other hand, these memories, as they get translated onto the ritual and performative funereal space of the nine-nights ceremony, insert a counter-narrative that calls for a restructuring of relations with the land, the stage of their earlier disempowerment to move toward re-empowerment.

Each actor reveals how the blood and sweat of their African ancestors and themselves have created a new association with the land that would guarantee entitlement and historical and cultural rights as marks of their citizenship in a Jamaica in which they are no longer enslaved. They recognise that without this new relationship with the land that guarantees their survival as a people, they cannot really talk about liberation as a people. They will continue to be dispossessed of their rights to life as a free people and eventually be re-enslaved to the whims of their former white enslavers. *Kirnon's Kingdom* (Edgecombe, 2001) enacts a politicisation of that race memory. In these performances, reality is mythicised and politicised to become multiple racial, cultural, social, and economic histories.

Moreover, as Harrison (2002: p. 194) argues, African Diaspora theatrical performances are "imbued in the life experience [as] race memory". He echoes Locke's (1927) prescription that the:

> Finest function…[of] race drama would be to supply an imaginative channel of escape and spiritual release, and by some process of emotional reinforcement to cover life with the illusion of…freedom (p. iv)

Harrison stresses that "the aims of the black theater are inspired by a social ethic which is diametrically opposed to the presumed cultural hierarchy of the Western world" (p. 195). *An Echo in the Bone* (Scott, 1985) is set in a domestic funeral space where the characters perform their histories of struggle from plantation slavery to neo-colonialism. The

community performs the traditional Afro-Caribbean "nine-night" wake to celebrate Crew's death in defense of their land rights. Thus, in situating the play's action in this way, Scott also realises the theatricality of both secular and religious ritual performances through the appropriate use of the creative resources of Afrocaribbean performance and theater.

Having established a reading methodology of *An Echo in the Bone* as ritual drama, it is my assertion that the African-derived cosmogony that informs the performance of this play translates the funeral space into a ritual space. I am aware that all funeral spaces in African-derived cultures are also spatiotemporal spiritual spaces in which ancestral spirits and gods receive the spirit of the newly departed from the community of the living. In *An Echo in the Bone*, that ritualisation of the performance space is guaranteed by the nine-night wake. At such wakes, there is performance of music, dance, drumming, storytelling, divination, spirit possession, and revelation (Wright, 1987). The nine-night is a penitential and salvific last rite of passage for the dead during which the breach between the worlds of the living and dead caused by a member of the community dying is healed. The drum is a central prop in the nine-night wake. Hence, the first member of the community to arrive at the funeral ground is Rattler, the sacred drummer with his drum. Used in the ritual performance, the drum's sacerdotal rhythmic sound opens invisible portals of interaction between the world of the gods and ancestors and that of humans. There is also the performance of libation as an invitation to the gods and ancestors to bless, ward off evil, and join the community during the performance.

Rattler (*An Echo,* p. 79) dips his finger in rum and makes the sign of the cross on the floor facing the door, first as acknowledgement of the divinity of earth, second, to bless anyone entering the house, and third, to prevent any evil from entering the ritual space. Dreamboat complicates the performance when he tries to wrest the bottle of rum meant for libation from Rattler, and in the process the bottle falls, breaks and the rum spills. Dreamboat's action breaches protocol. Dreamboat must undergo disciplinary exorcism of the spirit of drunkenness manifested in his inordinate disrespect for tradition:

> '[DREAM *in silence, pants loud and fast. The others watch him motionless. His head begins to swivel on his neck, slowly till the whole body is weaving on the spot. His feet shuffle a little, the . . .*]' (Scott, 1985: p. 80).

Possessed by Crew's spirit as retribution for his undisciplined behavior, Dreamboat now performs a trancelike dance of spirit possession, accompanied by Rattler's drum beats while a purification ritual is

performed:

> Madam: Hold him, Stone! He inside the boy trying to get out and the heart will break open if the oil is not put on his head and his mouth.
>
> Stone: Help me, then.
>
> Madam: Hold the candle in front of his face.
>
> [P *does so*. STONE *grapples with* DREAMBOAT. *They lurch together then fall*. STONE *pins him down, the candle is held close triumphantly, Madam makes the sign of the cross on the boy's head, then wets his lips with oil*. DREAMBOAT arches his shoulders, shuddering, lies quiet. RACHEL is at the door gripping the arm of SONSON, the two girls behind them close. RACHEL enters dressed in white, with her head tied. The drum is still] (Scott, 1985: pp.81-82).

Sacramental objects for ritual purification are assembled: water, oil, candle, pipe, and marijuana. While Rattler's steady drumbeats keep the spiritual portals open, Rachel, the widow of Crew, distributes communion in the form of marijuana to smoke. The sharing of marijuana binds the community together in their celebration of Crew's life, and `communitises' his sacrifice. The hallucinogens in marijuana and the alcohol in rum help break down their human physical limitations enabling them to make direct contact with the spirit world. The post-communion incantatory ritualised call-and-response performance engages spiritual allusions that symbolify the community's post-emancipation aspirations: free access to the natural resources of the land. Symbolification is facilitated through spirit-possession in which Sonson, Crew's son, is possessed by Crew's spirit and is transfigured into Crew. Sonson is able then to relate and revivify his father's story. The narrative of Crew's act of defiance and sacrificial death justifies and legitimates the collective protest at their continuous oppression (Kuwabong, 2011: pp. 119-12).

Both *An Echo in the Bone* and *Kirnon's Kingdom* (Edgecombe, 2001) articulate this absence of real emancipation through compensatory land distribution. For Rachel, Crew, Jacko, P, Sonson, and the rest of the Afrocaribbean community in *An Echo in the Bone*, these rights to land are non-negotiable. Therefore, Master Charles' attempts to resurrect his entitlement to a plantation lifestyle based on slave labor, and his insensitivity to others' needs, coalesce to uncover traumatic memories of enslavement, rape, torture, dispossession, deprivation, and murder. By deliberately

trying to rewrite the history of the place and its role in shaping the worldview of the formerly enslaved, Charles becomes an obstacle to Afrocaribbean agency.

Consequently, his suicidal actions initiate his death by accident and subsequently lead to Crew's. Rachel laments: "I beg him not go, you see, but he was a good man, and the only way he could find to save the little piece of land and feed us was to shame himself in front of that man" (p. 97). Brigit historicises this further: "… Black people used to work this land for nothing and they used to treat them like beast, they coulda mount them anytime. I not breeding for any man just of pleasure" (p. 115). Her argument collapses Caribbean landscape and the Afrocaribbean body, both male and female, exploited for centuries for the pleasure and leisure of European Caribbean peoples. Brigit's position is validated in Master Charles' desire to re-control Rachel's body and labor, and ultimately to disrupt her newly acquired sense of self and belonging. Rachel is firm in her rejection of his corrupting offer and leaves him seething with the squealing of a castrated male:

> Ask around, hell! I know what I want. Of course, it will take a while to change the place into the kind of home it should be. But there's no reason to wait. I need some good home cooking right now to fatten me up (p. 118).

Realising that Rachel will not crumple under persuasion nor threats, he takes revenge by diverting the flow of water from Crew's farm, thus ensuring that what he cannot have by force, he must sabotage through ecological imperialism. By this act, Charles childishly believes he can bring Rachel to her knees. But what he fails to reckon with is the newfound self-assertiveness of both Crew and Rachel, and by extension, the African Caribbean population. It is this that propels Crew to seek a dialogue of understanding in the share of the water resources that historically both are entitled to. Crew articulates this through Sonson. When Rachel earlier suggests that Crew leave and look for work in town, he cannot believe his ears: "Leave here? I can't do that! How I will live? My navel string bury here, woman. Give up the land? You don't want me to do that?" (Scott, 1985: p. 128):

> Crew: I know every step of it. Every bush; like the back of my hand. Is a history behind every foot of it. Look at me, woman! I don't have nothing except what I get from the ground. I born by it and marry by it and one day it going to kill me. Maybe even now, but what I know , it is what nothing can change…..I only can trace the line here in the hard dirt, see?

> And the line going from here to there, and this end is where them bring my great grandfather, here, and this is me. If you take away the line from the ground I am nothing. I am nobody! (p. 128)

Master Charles's bullying tactics and his awareness of Crew's vulnerability is symptomatic of present-day exploitative bullying of poor nations by rich nations through commodity price controls and trade barriers. Likewise, when Caribbean nations are tricked into emulating development patterns of rich Western nations, which subsequently results in a collapse of their primary products-based economies, the incentive to hold on to the land weakens. Subsequently, family lands with their histories are liquidated in favor of Western owned and operated enterprises, such as tourism.

> Stone: Aye, man, what man to do? You work sun up to dark, and the money come trickling and go out like the river washing in space. You grow a little corn and potatoes, and take it to the market, how much you can sell for? The white ladies, all of them go into town to buy their goods [imported], nobody in the market to take the provisions off you hands except poor people like you, hungry same way, poor same way… (p. 108)

Stone expounds and rationalises further why most African Caribbean people therefore constantly leave the land to go seek jobs in town or emigrate and bequeath the land by default to new land prospectors interested in buying the lands to build tourist resorts, holiday homes, or to grow export crops such as coffee, bananas, and cocoa:

> Stone: You should get yourself a little piece of land, and that's what Crew tell me, last time we was together. Settle down, Stone, he say, and raise a crop. For what? I ask him that, you see. I watch how the big landowners they corner up with their own and sell the sugar back to us for four times what it cost us to raise. I know. I see the inside of the offices sometimes, and the big house that they build from two hundred years ago, when all of us worked the land for nothing, like animals. You think things change any? (p. 109)

But Stone's position does not invalidate Crew's rejection of Rachel's appeal not to fight for his land:

> Sonson: It is everything! Everything! I will tell you! My father and his father sweat for it, year after year. It is my birthright that say I am not a

> slave anymore. I don't have to work for no man, I don't have to beg no man for bread to pass down to my children. And my woman don't have to go slave in any whiteman house, I don't care how much they pay you! Rachel me love, don't take that away from me. (p. 128)

What Crew however fails to perceive is Charles' contempt for these so-called birthrights based on historical realities and user rights: "Thirty years. Thirty years of a man's life!... Father sun is your time now, Jesus, I dry…" (p. 124). To Charles, and others like him such as the unnamed and dying generation of plantocrats, such a declaration by Crew is meaningless (p. 124). Charles tries to kick him out like a dog, trips and falls and Crew kills him. Crew then proceeds to sacrifice himself at the same river whose water Charles denies him. Crew's death becomes meaningfully enshrined in the liberation consciousness of his people. His actions have re-emancipated them and allowed them their free share of the water.

While Scott's play (1985) is situated in the immediate post-emancipation struggle for land, Edgecombe's *Kirnon's Kingdom* (2001), explores unsustainable land use practices and their negative impact in post-independence Paran. Harold Kirnon, a sharecropper, unable to pay for his son's education, decides to pick at night and without permission of the landowner, some of the cotton which they farm. This action is necessitated by the fact that the land where Harold farms his cotton does not belong to him, though his enslaved ancestors had worked on it for centuries. Calvin argues right before they go to `collect' the cotton that `it would not be stealing, Daddy. We would only be reaping what we sow. Taking up what we put down' (Edgecombe, 2001: p. 213). As established in the stage direction, "the action occurs on Paran, an imaginary Caribbean island", the time is set up to cover from the "1940s – 1970s" (p. 203). Harold states:

> I didn't own any land so I couldn't even vote, far less run for office. You see, in those days it was only the well-to-do, specifically people with land, who were allowed to vote (p. 210).

The ownership of land and the right to participate and/or to collaborate in the economic growth of the country, and by extension to escape the economic dire straits of Harold and his people echo what Crew and Stone articulate in *An Echo in the Bone*. Like Master Charles in Scott's play, Mas' James in *Kirnon's Kingdom* believes and legally has absolute proprietary rights to the land on which Harold is a sharecropper.

Edgecombe's play advocates a more equitable distribution of land. Thus, Harold, like Crew and Stone in *An Echo in the Bone*, rejects the

continuation of the "gud ole days", the system of plantocracy that enslaved Harold and his African ancestors. Unlike Crew, however, Harold decides to fight this through the ballot box, by politicising the issue of decolonisation and equal distribution of land.

> Harold: Is a hard struggle, Calvin. You been out there in that cotton ground with me so you know how much work it is. Me and my father since before you were born clear all that land. He wid a four-rib cutlass sharpen back and belly, me wid a smaller three-rib cutlass… One whole week it took us to clear just a tass of land, but we kept at it till all the land was ready for planting… After he died, me alone, or me and your mother and sometimes you. We must find the money to buy cotton-seeds to plant. Then we must weed the cotton, take care of it and pray God nutt'n destroy the fruit of our labour . . . And in a good or bad year, half of everything… must go to Mas' James. And what work he do? What risk he take? Except sit down on his behind and stretch out his fat han' for his half when time come. (Edgecombe, 2001: p. 212)

Harold, like Crew, visits Mas' James hoping to get a loan to pay Calvin's exams fees. Unlike Crew however, who is looking for a break in his dependency on Charles, Harold seeks further entanglement to Mas' James through a loan. It is only when the loan is refused that he begins to think. "Poor people mean less than dirt to him," squeaks Harold to his wife, Martha, when she asks about Mas' James and the loan (p. 211). Disturbed by Mas' James lack of understanding, Harold and Calvin decide to go and `collect' some of the cotton and sell it in the market to pay for Calvin's exams fees. Calvin is caught and is temporarily imprisoned. The importance of land possession and its use has different implications for Harold and Mas' James and as Tiffin succinctly explains:

> … some important (if broad) distinctions can be drawn between the `landscape' of the indigenous peoples and those of the migrant, that is, the ancestrally or recent translocated . . . for colonized peoples who are also ancestrally migrant, any coming to terms with the `new' landscape frequently involves a journey back through the depictions of that land by the imperium whose perceptions and representations of it exert a powerful hegemonic influence on the colonized. (2010:199)

Although for Harold Kirnon the landscape and the working of it represent generational acquisition of agrarian knowledge that gave some economic relief, the reality that he does not have full usufruct rights to the land means continuous enslavement to Mas' James, for whom land

possession is the basis for the oppressive labour conditions of the share-croppers that he needs to maintain his lifestyle. Thus, like Master Charles and his dying father, Colonel Charles, Mas' James is a symbol of a dying imperialism represented by recalcitrant white colonisers who:

> Were historically cast in dominant positions where their attitudes to the land and landscape – both to their homescapes and to the tropics and the Caribbean – necessarily exerted a powerful influence on the majority populations of African and Indian descent. (Tiffin, 2010: p.200)

Thus, in *Kirnon's Kingdom*, land is perceived as a destiny changer, not only for individuals, but also for a nation's future. Land is more than a commoditised piece of earth; it is a tool to freedom from oppression. Harold Kirnon enters politics with this vision about land and becomes Paran's first Chief Minister and "by then, even the poorest families owned some kind of land" (p. 227). In this neo-colonial setting, Mr. Kirnon encounters the reality of false independence. Immediately following his victory, the price and the demand for cotton subsides, the citizens of Paran migrate to Canada because they see "no money in farming" (p. 227). Harold's popularity declines severely because of external forces that cause economic uncertainty for his people. He is advised by foreign development aid experts to gamble away his nation's future through the re-prioritisation of his primary cash crop, from cotton to a perishable tomato controlled by a monopolistic Canadian company, Sodders Inc. with a purchase price guarantee of "one cent a pound" (p. 227).

The insulting monetary compensation is compounded by this undemocratic and unsustainable development approach, and further undermined by Paran's inability to control the prices of this perishable single commodity. Harold's gullibility is beyond compare:

> I agree it sounds like a small figure, but the company is introducing a new variety known as Roma Tomato… the owners of the factory are going to assist with mechanical land preparation, planting and reaping. They are also introducing a new fertilizer which tests have shown dramatically increases tomato yields. (p.229)

It is a female farmer who diagnoses the cancerous nature of the assistance. She realises the farmers have become heavily indebted to the company but cannot pay and hence they mortgage their lands. This leads to trauma as the people have been defrauded of the little portions of land from which they could have eked out a sustainable life.

As Benítez-Rojo (2005: p.43) contends, the ecological and

environmental problems generated by the economic development strategy of mono-culture have a clear source. He asserts:

> The responsibility for this ecological catastrophe lies primarily with the sugar-making machine. But a machine is an ensemble of indifferent parts moved by a motor.… Responsibility must be sought in the power groups that controlled it, whether of Spanish, Creole, or North American origin.

One of the most severe calamities highlighted by Benítez-Rojo is the loss of traditional herbalism in the Caribbean or wherever else single crop production has been promoted as the agricultural savior of a country. Concerning this, Benítez-Rojo asks: "How many traditions disappeared when the small rural property-holder became a sugar-making proletarian?" (2005: 44).

But Harold Kirnon's lust for power blinds him to his betrayals of his people's hopes. He fully embraces an even more disruptive neocolonial economic proposal, the sale of land to North American real estate developers in Paran. Al Majors' plan of turning the arable land of the country into pieces of real estate is emblematic of what is happening to land in the contemporary Caribbean. As Edgecombe argues in the play:

> Well, what this Majors man has done is to chop up the estate into about fifty or sixty lots…A few of those Americans have started to build houses. Carpenters and masons are in demand. (2001: p. 235)

Thus, in altering drastically the agricultural basis of Paran's economy to that of estate development for foreign occupation, Harold inadvertently creates a future of servitude for his people. Braziel (2005) comments: "the lure and the allures of 'island' tourism, however, are not always so neatly aligned with the principles of sustainable development or environmental protection" (p.111). Harold's confrontation with his cousin Arnold exemplifies how far he has sold his nation to neo-imperialist greed. Arnold after years in England returns to Paran with the dream of building a house on the land that he left Harold to take care of. He is left flabbergasted by Harold's stupidity:

> Harold: Listen, Arnold, it's not that I'm unwilling to sell you some land … that whole Lincoln area is earmarked for new housing development project … We can't have cattle and goats running all over people's nice lawns … All lands have now been zoned. Some for hotels, some for housing, some for agriculture. But apart from that … you doan own de land at Lincoln anymore. (Edgecombe, 2001: p.244)

Harold Kirnon's endorsement of neocolonial takeover of his nation, signals a dangerous reversal of all the potential gains that could have come with independence. His power lust makes him re-submit the country to the domination of transnational corporations, thus further creating a nation of landless people.

Both playwrights stage the rising determination of former enslaved Africans in the Caribbean to gain true independence by creating ambiguous performances in new post-plantation economies. The plays reveal how class, race and gender play roles in the struggles for true freedom and degrees of dignity by staging "'more knowing [or] adversarial sense of 'environment' rather than 'nature', 'countryside' or 'landscape'" (Gifford, 1999: 174) through their characters. Thus, the two plays are informed by ecological principles of interconnectedness, as well as educated understandings of the "symbolic link between environmental and social justice" (Huggan and Tiffin, 2010: p.115). Also, the plays succeed in their reinsertions of the traumatic histories of Caribbean islands as:

> Fractured spaces in which the natural relationship between people and their environment [land] was wrenched apart, not only by brutalities of the plantation system, but also by the moment of `Discovery' and the sickening violence it brought in its wake (Huggan and Tiffin, 2010: p.116).

The two plays acutely dramatise the near-impossibilities of maintaining revolutionary praxes of land use through transformational imaginaries and emotional reattachments to the land saturated with their ancestors' blood and sweat (Tiffin and Huggan, 2010: p. 117-118). They envision that through a process of realignment to land, the Caribbean may yet "recover some degree of agency for their actions, as well as some amount of individual and collective proprietorship over their land" (p.118).

The project of European predatory colonisation in the Caribbean partially succeeded because they were temporarily successful in expropriating Caribbean lands and cruelly exploiting the unpaid labor of enslaved indigenous peoples and Africans in the plantation economy they set up. Post-emancipation, and post-apprenticeship implied that the ex-enslaved were also now entitled to the land which they had worked on for centuries. For as Amilcar Cabral (1994: 54) argued, for any formerly colonised people to truly gain both cultural and political liberation, they also need to seize control of the modes of production that the natural environment grants them by right of citizenship. No true cultural and economic liberation is achievable without repossession of the land. Scott's play re-affirms

that this struggle as Cabral (1994: 56) insists, must be won.

This struggle is ritualised in *An Echo in the Bone* to link the past, present, and future, the material and spiritual worlds to the political and economic struggle by African Caribbean peoples to gain their agency of permanence in their landscape. The blood of Crew is the sacrificial and enabling blood of a martyr of the second liberation struggle in the post-plantation Caribbean. For in his dying he succeeds in removing the last remaining physical obstacle that has stood between the people and their claim to land rights. The play thus generates a conversation among the actors and audience about who really has moral legitimacy to the resources of the environment, the one who works the land or the one who exploits the people without any knowledge of how to work the land? For Crew and his people, Scott's play is a provisional staging of Cabral's argument that the liberation fighters need to "return to the upward paths of their own culture" (1994,p. 56) seen here performed in the nine-nights ceremony. The performance of oral history Cabral maintains:

> [Are all] nourished by the living reality of [their] environment, and which negate … both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign [or domestic neo-colonial] subjection (1994: p.56).

The play suggests that the battle has begun to assert and claim their rights to land and subsequently, retake the "productive forces [of their society and land] … to determine the mode of production most appropriate for them" (1994: p.56).

But while Scott's play is willing to suggest that blood sacrifice is necessary for real liberation of the land for the benefit of the people, Edgecombe's play laments the regression that has become normative in Caribbean political, economic, and cultural development in which the land is both consciously and unconsciously restored to the hands of the colonisers. If the struggle in Scott's play is for land rights to produce food as a way of becoming independent from the former slave system, *Kirnon's Kingdom* is a dire warning that the Crews of *An Echo in the Bone* must have died in vain. The unwitting embrace of unsustainable agricultural development through monocropping that targets only the outside market, to the neglect of sustainable mixed-cropping agricultural practices, is in evidence everywhere in the Caribbean. The over-reliance on mono-export crops that have taken over the most arable lands of the Caribbean has seen the economies of various Caribbean islands collapse.

Edgecome's play portrays a nationalist struggle as well, this time not against a visible Master Charles, but the invisible transnational banking systems that have infiltrated fragile Caribbean economies and

undermined any attempts at genuine independence. Through Mr. Kirnon, the island has become a subsidiary and subservient province of a new-imperialist, a Canadian fronting as the new adventurer conquering new economies for his Canadian banks and businesses. Thus, when the tomato crop is left to rot in the fields, the farmers owe their land as collateral to the foreign banks and they are pressured to give the land away for real estate development, there seems to be no hope. However, Edgecombe is not a prophet of inevitable doom.

The family drama that now ensues between father and son, suggests that the future can still be saved, and the land can be reclaimed for the younger generation, who are beginning to see the evil machinations of these so-called development experts from the so-called developed nations. Edgecombe's play is strategically placed within a materialist theory of political economy, that reveals a new struggle for freedom by post-colonial Caribbean nations against the faceless, non-corporeal imperialist: multi-national and trans-lateral corporations and banks located in the metropoles of former colonial empires who use subterfuge in the form of loans, grants, development advisors, control of the markets, and threats to retake lands lost by their ancestors a century earlier. They find gullible and corrupt politicians to be their internal allies. While the two plays share many thematic and ideological similarities, their dramaturgic execution and ideological stances are different. Nonetheless, they both strategise to conscientise Caribbean people about the urgent need to keep control over their lands. To lose that control is to lose the major foothold of their resistance to a new and more insidious foreign domination. They do not preach a struggle for land as a marketable commodity. Land is presented in both cases as the archive of their collective histories, cultures, spiritualities. Land is the invaluable warranty of their futures. Land in both plays then is agency, it is real freedom, and it stands as the solid foundation of Caribbean peoples' national and cultural identities. To lose their lands would mean emancipation without liberation.

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