AFRICA IN THE CARIBBEAN IMAGINATION: A STUDY OF THE POETRY OF EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE, NICOLAS BATISTE GUILLEN AND DEREK ALTON WALCOTT

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research. It has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and all sources of information are acknowledged.

AKUSO, EZEKIEL SOLOMON

DATE

CERTIFICATION

This dissertation titled “Africa in the Caribbean Imagination: A Study of the Poetry of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Nicolas Batiste Guillen and Derek Alton Walcott” by Akuso, Ezekiel Solomon meets the regulations governing the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary quality.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and to my wife Afiniki Ezekiel Akuso for their love, care and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the depiction of Africa, as a reality and as an idea, in the creative works of the Caribbean writer, using multiple theoretical approaches such as Post colonialism, Formalism, New Criticism and the Representation theory. The dissertation argues that the image of Africa in the European and Western discourse was prejudicial and preposterous due to its presentation of Africa as primal and savage, without history, as permanent and fixed and thus imperious to modification and change. Over the years, Caribbean writers have with varying degrees of success, challenged this dominant regime of encoding or representing Africa by re-inscribing a range of positive images of Africans and Black people, Black life and culture. This dissertation further postulates that the works of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Nicolas Batiste Guillen and Derek Alton Walcott reveal a shift of emphasis from mere documentation of African survivors in Caribbean writing to an identification and foregrounding of an authentic Afro- Caribbean tradition and aesthetics. The contributions, of these West Indian poets therefore lie in the repositioning of Africa, not as a contained identity or exclusive entity but as a conglomeration of several things all of which have been

significantly influenced by such negative experiences as slave trade, colonialism and imperialism. These have reshaped the African experience, identity and character as evident in the poetry of the three selected major Caribbean poets.

The discourse in the dissertation spans five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which explores the concepts and the context of the study.

Chapter two analyses Brathwaite's poetry. It focuses on how Brathwaite's textuality is anchored on personality formation or the re-inscription of the self. Chapter three explores Guillen's *Man Making Words* with special emphasis on the African image and Black identity.

Multiculturalism and cultural schizophrenia is examined in chapter four. Here it is argued that Walcott in his poetry, gives due recognition to how the combination of European and African heritages have influenced identity formation in the Caribbean. His art generally reveals the hybrid nature of the West Indian's culture and the schizophrenic situation that pervades the Caribbean society.

Chapter five, the concluding chapter, brings together the central arguments and findings of the study. On the whole it is established that both Africa and the Caribbean are signified as habitats or home in Caribbean Poetry: the former, ancestral, which gives spiritual and

psychological strength; the latter, real, providing the physical environment for realizing dreams, aspirations and forging new identities.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONCEPTUAL PREMISE

This chapter examines the historical origins of the West Indies. It highlights the multiple racial and ethnic groups, disparate yet connected, and the manner of their inscription into the peculiar West Indian personality. In this context, the study examines the poets' portrayal of the attempt by the various Caribbean peoples to define themselves and their society and to create a common, yet dynamic, heritage in all facets of life. This chapter also contains literature review and theoretical framework. Generally the study employs postcolonial theory as an epistemology for the analysis of West Indian poetry. Allied to this are elements of literary interpretation derived from Formalism and New Criticism for the evaluation of the formal properties of the texts and the poets' attitude to the West Indian condition. Critical emphasis is laid on the works of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Nicolas Batiste Guillen and Derek Alton Walcott.

This study is also concerned with how Africa has often been projected in the Caribbean imaginative writing both as a reality and as an idea. Eurocentric forms of representations have presented Africa as synonymous with primitivism, and as primal and evil. Thus reduced to nature and equated with darkness, Africans were considered to be outside history, permanent and fixed and not in any way open to transformation or change. Over the years Caribbean writers have, with varying degrees of success, challenged this dominant regime of representation by substituting a range of positive images of the Africans and Black people. They have reconstructed a image of what has been relegated. Consequently, not only has there been that yearning and deep longing for origins and roots in the works of Caribbean writers but as Tagoe (1998) puts it also, emphasis has shifted from mere categorization or the use of Africa survivors in the Caribbean writing towards an identification of an Afro-Caribbean tradition and aesthetics.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CARIBBEAN

Safra et al (1998:592) describe the three major physiographic divisions of the West Indies as:

a. The Greater Antilles, comprising the Islands of Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic), and Puerto Rico.

b. The Lesser Antilles, including the virgin Islands, Anguilla, Saints Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, and Grenada.

c. The isolated Island groups of the North American continental shelf, The Bahamas including the Turks and Caicos Islands, and South American shelf, including Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curacao, and Bonaire.

Although geographically not a part of the West Indies, Bermuda has common historical and cultural ties with other islands and is often included in the West Indies. The islands of the West Indies are, therefore, formed by two main chains of mountains, one chain runs West-East and forms the islands of the Greater Antilles, while the other chain trends North-South and forms the Lesser Antilles. These mountains chains are

now mostly submerged by the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, with only the higher peaks visible above the water. Describing the peoples that make up the West Indies Safra et al say:

> *The population of the West Indies is racially heterogeneous* and *largely described from an early population society based on slave labour. Most of the blacks are descended from African slaves while many of the whites are descended Spanish, French, British, or Dutch Colonists. The West Indies' Creole languages evolved from pidgin variants and European languages have become the common languages of the people. The French and English Creoles are a blend of these languages with African and West Indian languages.By contrast the major Spanish language communities – Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic – speak pure Spanish, Papiamento, a Spanish – Dutch – Portuguese English Creole, is widely spoken in Aruba and the Netherlands, Antilles, East Indians constitute a substantial minority in the region, especially in Trinidad and Tobago, where they make up forty percent of the population. Chine constitute a smaller minority, and whites account for some seventy percent of the population of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Roman Catholicism, is the predominant religion in the Spanish and French-speaking Islands, while Protestantism, is the predominant norm in the English-speaking and Dutch territories.*

There were three different groups of Indians living in the Caribbean when Christopher Columbus, acting as an agent of the Spanish monarchy, first landed in 1492; the Arawak, The

Carib, and the Ciboney. The most numerous were the Arawak, or Taino, who inhabited the Greater Antilles, the Bahamas, and the Leeward Islands. The Arawaks practiced agriculture and were seafarers. The Carib also practiced agriculture and were seafarers, but, unlike the Arawak, they were war-like. The Ciboney were fishermen and, when forced away from coastal regions, became hunters and gatherers. Columbus established the first permanent European settlement in the West Indies in 1493 on the island of Hispaniola, and Spanish settlement expanded to other islands in the Greater Antilles during the early 16th century.

However, in spite of their diversity in ancestry and language, the countries of the West Indies share a largely common culture, the result of their somewhat parallel experiences as plantation colonies. The islands take pride in their lively African cultural scenes, with dances, parties, and festivals culminating in annual carnivals.

Since Christopher Columbus claimed to have discovered the islands in the fifteenth century, they were seen as objects to be exploited rather than as places to be developed. The main aim of the Spanish was mining for gold and other precious

metals, but they found the Arawak unsuited for the continuous hard labour they tried to enforce upon them. As a result, by the early sixteenth (16^{th}) century, there was a mass importation of African captives to work as slaves in the newly formed sugar and tobacco plantations as well as in the mines. Moore (1969:x) submits that the Atlantic slave trade forcibly transported at least twenty million human beings from Africa to the Americas and endured for some three and a half centuries. This slave trade is indeed responsible for the presence of the blacks as the major racial group in the region and this was effected by the traumatic effects of history in the Caribbean. The history of the West Indies cannot therefore be divorced from the common relations or contact between Africa and the West in the fifteenth Century. The contention here is that Africa helped to develop Western Europe in the same proportion as Europe helped to underdeveloped Africa. The trade was nothing but the extension overseas of European interests due to greed and capitalism. In accordance with the international trade act, an Atlantic trade was established which was a historical link between Africa and the Caribbean. The Europeans instilled a feeling of racial superiority over other races especially the

blacks. This led to cultural and racial inferiority, as well as lack of self-esteem by the slaves and their descendants.

With the gradual decline of Spain as the pioneering power, the Caribbean became the principal object for the intense rivalry among such European powers as Britain, France, Denmark and the United States. Safra et al (1998) further elaborate on the stages of Caribbean colonization. The first stage of English and French penetration of the Spanish and Caribbean Empire was undertaken by privateers who carried out armed raids on Spanish possessions between 1536 and 1609. In the second stage, colonies were founded in the Lesser Antilles, an area that had not been settled upon by the Spaniads. Between 1630 and 1640 the Dutch claimed Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, Saint Eustatius, Saint Martin, and Saba. In the same period, the British claimed Barbados, Nevis, Antigua, and Montserrat,while the French claimed Martinique and Guadeloupe. Each nation tried to keep its colonies from trading with any other country and between 1697 and 1814; there were numerous conflicts between the United Kingdom and France about their Caribbean possessions.

The involvement of the United States in the West Indies, which began with the occupation of Cuba and Puerto Rico during the Spanish – American War (1898), grew in scope during the early 20th century. The United States bought the Danish Virgin Islands from the Danes in 1917 and occupied Haiti (1915-35) and Dominican Republic (1916-22). They also established United States military bases in the Caribbean in order to protect Western interests and their investment opportunities during the World War II.

The manner in which the European colonizers scrambled and carved out territories for themselves remained indeed the dominating event in a series of movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This brought in the Caribbean under European colonial rule; it was a place of struggle for economic monopoly, material gain and political subjugation. There were also on this Islands the East Indians, Chinese and Portuguese and others whose ancestors came from what is now India and Pakistan who were settling down and working as overseers and planters in these plantations. Most of these colonizers were looters and criminals who were either repatriated or fled from

their own lands as a result of unemployment or religious persecution.

It is within this multi-cultural situation that the Caribbean personality has emerged. The cultural and social lives of the Island are very complex with each racial group having its own distinctive culture and beliefs. It is this situation that has also made C.L.R James in *The Black Jacobins* (1963) to state that:

> *The West Indies has never been a traditional colonial territory with clearly distinguished economic and political relations between two cultures. Native culture there was none. The Aboriginal Amerindian civilization had been destroyed. Every succeeding year, therefore, saw the labouring population, slaves or free incorporating into itself more and more of the language, customs and outlook of its masters.*

George Lamming in Wa Thiong'o (1973), speaking on the Island's ethnic composition also says that:

> *The Islands are a cocoon of confusion. First a population composed entirely of emigrants i.e. people, slaves or otherwise who had no indigenous link, no ancestral claim on the soil which was to become their new home, a diversity of people organized by different European powers, contending in a scramble for supremacy over them.*

Hall (1997:239) commenting on the contact between the Black people and the West states that:

> *There are three major moments when the 'west' encountered Black people, giving rise to an avalanche of popular representations based on marking of racial difference. The first began with the sixteenth century contact between European traders and the West African kingdoms, which provided a source of Black slaves for three centuries. Its effects were to be found in slavery and in the post-slave societies of the New World. The second was the European colonization of Africa and the 'scramble' between the European powers for the control of colonial territory, markets and raw materials in the period of high 'imperialism'. The third was the post-world war ll migrations from the 'Third World' into Europe and North America. Western ideas about 'race' and images of racial difference were profoundly shaped by those three fateful encounters.*

The history of the Caribbean Islands has been a history of a displaced people who over the years have tried to forge an identity for themselves. The social strata and inter ethnic relations in these Islands have been moulded by the Islands' history of migration, plantation and miscegenation which to a large extent have contributed in shaping the lives of these people. Comprehending the historical background of this region therefore, demands that reference be made to the historical matrix from which the Caribbean society has developed.

However, the West Indians, finding themselves in a dilemma vis-à-vis the culture of their colonizers have in the

course of their history, struggled to fashion out a culture, which is as unique as it is dynamic. The Black West Indian writers have also focused their attention on the economically deprived and culturally depressed as the authentic West Indians.

In summary, the historical background in all the Islands could therefore be said to have followed the same pattern. 'Discovery' and conquest by the Spaniards, extermination of the native Indian populations and their replacement by slave labour from Africa, colonial scramble, partition and occupation, the introduction of sugar and the emergence of sugar estate, emancipation, independence at various dates and subsequent post colonial experiences.

Acholonu (1989) postulates that the colonial experience is the common heritage of the Blackman, be he in Africa or in the African Diaspora. Together, they share the Blackman's burden. However, colonization in the West Indies, as well as in other black communities of the African Diaspora, was much more traumatic than in Africa. While the African was colonized, the West Indian was enslaved and this meant a complete lost of his personal and cultural identity. The West Indians, finding themselves as double exiles and outsiders have in the course

of their history, struggled to fashion out a culture which is unique as it is dynamic and buoyant. All the Islands have known the common experience of colonialism, uncertain economic growth, political frustration, poverty, racial discrimination, inequality, injustice, nationalism and rapidly changing social circumstances. The Caribbean people therefore have engaged themselves in an effort at redefining themselves and their society and in creating a common heritage in all facets of life.

1.3 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF STUDY

This dissertation examines the projection of Africa in Caribbean literary imagination. While the study is restricted to the Caribbean, references are made to other regions of the world, which have in one way or the other contributed in shaping the destiny and character of the Caribbean or the West Indies

The choice of the West Indies for study is made because of its relationship with Africa and the little attention that is usually given to it in African studies. The history of the West Indies cannot be divorced from common relations or contact

with Africa. Africa is therefore central to Caribbean literature and as such deserves attention. In addition, the choice of poetry was necessitated by the fact that this is the genre of literature that scholars have shown the least interest in studying over the years. Very few works have been done on the poetry of the West Indies especially in Nigerian universities, probably due to the dearth of materials or the myth of poetry being difficult. Edward Brathwaite, Nicolas Guillen and Derek Walcott have been chosen because of their position in the West Indian literary scene. Brathwaite's poetry is the culmination of major developments in modern West Indian Poetry. His trilogy *The Arrivants* gives a representative picture of the major themes and styles of West Indian poetry. Nicolas Guillen, on the other hand, continuously stressed the African and black identity theme even within socialist Cuba. Derek Walcott is a versatile intellectual who has written on a variety of subjects. While other writers of the 1950s became expatriates, Derek Walcott stayed within the Caribbean working on his poetry and plays. His mastery of the techniques of English verse has been supplemented by the selected use of dialect and patois and

bound by a vision of 'the America' as a new beginning. He was also awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992.

All the three poets present a comprehensive African world which they cannot return to but to which they feel related. This awareness has helped to purge their fear and shame about the past and has led to the evolution and acceptance of their West Indian Identity.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

J. David Singer (1961:15) states that the objective of any research undertaking is the acquisition and codification of knowledge whether to aid in solving human problems or to satisfy intellectual or aesthetic objectives of the researcher. With this in mind, the aims and objectives of this research therefore are, to contribute in broadening existing knowledge of Caribbean literature. The study particularly contributes to the ongoing attempt by black writers to popularize and project the African image in the West Indies. In the context of discourse on identity and nationhood this preoccupation is anchored on the recovery of the self by Blacks and their constant celebration of their roots of origin and those virtues that unite and give them

strength. In this way the historical links between Africa and the Caribbean will retain some affinity and by so doing integrate their emotional and psychological impulses as well as steel their will to freedom and positive assertiveness.

1.5 LITERARY DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Caribbean literature is a product of as well as is a comment upon the socio-historical forces that have shaped and are still shaping the Caribbean society. Since history informs the writer's art, literature cannot be divorced from the various social formations and productive relations from which it emanated, in the first place and to which it reacts. Consequently, Caribbean history, literature and society are mutually connected. Caribbean literature has its origin in the history and experience of the Caribbean people and its content are derived from the cultural, economic, political, social and psychological complexities that pervade the Caribbean society. The Caribbean experience has thus produced a literature about a community whose development has been essentially defined by slavery, colonial experience and complex inter-ethnic and racial relations.

Varying socio-political struggles have given rise to the material culture or cultural practices of the West Indies. The nature of the colonial ideological onslaught on the various West Indian communities has affected the nature, scope, form and the ideological orientation of literary practices in the Caribbean. Caribbean literature is thus defined by diversity. The experiences explored in West Indian poetry for instance, are not the same. Different languages are used in writing the poetry. These include languages such as English, French and Spanish. However, there are some common experiences upon which the poetry of this area is based.

There is also White Indian poetry, written by the white poets and conveying white sentiments, which is not our preoccupation in this dissertation. Our emphasis is on Black West Indian poetry in relation to the socio-historical process that has shaped the experience of this area. Since the eighteenth Century when shiploads of slaves were transported to the Americas where they worked on plantations, the Africans were physically uprooted from their own culture, tradition, myths, religious beliefs and customs and transplanted into their

new environment. Keyes (2004:23) describes the incorporation of African customs into the West Indian life thus:

> *Enslaved blacks lived primarily on plantations in separate quarters from whites, with occasional interaction. The environment fostered the maintenance, reinforcement, and continuation of African-derived practices in Music making, oral narratives, material culture, philosophy, and belief systems. When unsupervised by the whites, blacks retreated to their traditions in such contexts as the, "invisible church", secluded places in the words aptly termed "brush harbours" or makeshift religious structures called "praise houses, and secular celebrations.*

The poetic language of the African peoples eventually flourished in the New World as testimony of enslavement. Black vernacular expressions that documented the peoples' existence, hopes and desires also emerged. In many parts of America today, especially in Cuba, there have survived and in some cases remarkably intact, certain African cultures. Guillen (1972:114) affirms that:

> *The African element in this land is so profound, and so many essential currents are found in our well-irrigated social hydrography that it would be the work of a miniaturist to decipher the hieroglyphics.*

Herskovits (1941:50) points out that the Negro slaves were favourites of the Spanish and Portuguese planters; from which it follows that it is logical to find Yoruba customs

preponderant among the African survivals in these countries. For example the sango tradition is very well rooted in Cuba. Also in Brazil and Haiti there have survived the gods of Yoruba pantheon and religious tradition to this day. Alejo Carpentier's poem, 'Liturgia' reads:

The power is destroyed
Olorun be praised!
The drums are beating
and the dead are awake
in Babaluwaye's house.
The cult leaders confirmed it,
Praise be for Thee, Olorun O!,
with yellow cast
on the doorframe
The cock died
Olorun be praised!,
on the red altar
of the great Obatala.

In this poem African elements such as drums are used. African divinities such as Olorun and Obatala are also named. An African style, marked by repetition and 'a statement-response format', recalling in a way the Yoruba chants like *Ijala,* a genre of oral poetry, used to sing the praise of divinities and individuals is employed.

Guillen (1972:114) tracing his origin declares that:

I am a Yoruba, I cry in Cuban Yoruba.
Since I am a Yoruba from Cuba,

I want my Yoruba tears to spread to Cuba
I want the happy Yoruba tears
Emanating from me to spread to rise.

The important point to note here is that Africans transported to far away lands have maintained the essence of their original tradition. However faced with the need for developing a new culture, the descendants of Africa fused certain aspects of their African culture with the European culture. This cultural fusion has culminated in the emergence of such phenomenon of language as Black American English, Creole in the Caribbean and French Patois in the French speaking areas.

The earliest traditions of writing in the Caribbean belong to the category of travel narratives and armchair romance. These were works written in Spanish, French or English and which could be traced to as far back as the sixteenth century. Predominantly they were written by travellers who lived for quite sometime in the West Indies and who tried to document the lives of people in the area. Writers such as Kinsley and Trolough featured prominently at this period. There were also the writings of descendants of ex-slaves who were regarded as

the indigenous settlers of the Caribbean. Commenting on these early West Indian writings, Sander (1978:32) states that:

> *The West Indian magazines are tangible proof that we still have a long way to go; there our immaturity assumes concrete form. An unmistakable characteristic of these magazines is the almost complete absence of anything of true artistic worth in them. Poetry is crude and immature; sentimental rather than emotional. There is a conspicuous absence of vision; the consciousness of the West Indian is rather jejune.*

This describes the aesthetic qualities of the travelogue. It lacks depth and vision and could not capture the West Indian consciousness. Also at the forefront of literary activity in the early stages of the region's literature were the white Creoles, a minority group with the training and economic power to create a Creole literary tradition. However, they were often weakened by their cultural allegiance to the metropolis and by ambivalence towards the Islands

. According to Burnett (1986) William Francis is the first black poet in the literary tradition of the Caribbean. A freeborn Jamaican, he was chosen by John, second Duke of Montagu, to become the subject of an experiment 'to discover', whether, by proper cultivation, and a regular course of tuition at school and the university, a Negro might not be found as capable of

literature as a white person. He was dispatched to England for education, studying eventually at Cambridge, and when he returned to Jamaica the Duke appointed him in the Governor's council. He wrote the first known black poems.

From the nineteenth century onwards there was widespread interest in Black poetry. M.J. Chapman published his poems *Barbados and Other Poems* (1833) in which he painted a vivid picture of his society on the old pastoral model, giving a landscape, which the happy Negroes are, picturesque additions to the sylvan scene; and watched over by a paternalistic planter. The Scottish-born William Hosack published *Jamaican Hermit and other Poems* (1833). His work is significant because as Burnett (1986) says, it was the first Caribbean poem in the literary tradition in which the foreground is almost entirely occupied by Black figures. Whereas earlier writers, including Chapman, would glance at the black community in passing from one aspect of the planter's life to another, Hosack's *Jamaica* seems to be almost entirely peopled by blacks. In Guyana Egbert Martin wrote *Poetical Works* (1833) and later published *Lyrics* (1886). James Grainger also wrote during this period. Also at the turn of the

nineteenth century anthropological stories of Leo Frobenius, a German and Gustar Le Bon, a Frenchman aroused new interses in what was called the 'primitive cultures of Africa.' Interest was also aroused towards artistic tradition of Africa. A renowned artist Pablo Picasso was fascinated by the African culture and adapted many of its traditions into his artistic work. Dramatists such as Eugene O'neale sort African subject matters for their plays and this aroused the interest of the western public generally towards African tradition. Also in France particularly during the first and second world wars black musicians publicized black musical traditions such as jazz and blues from U.S.A, and calypso from Trinidad. There was also a fascination with African tales and legends in the West. This aroused new feelings in the Caribbean blacks for values from their oral traditions to develop new cultures using materials from their own culture. Not only the songs and stories but also the rhythm of black musical tradition were employed for written poetry. This led to the literary movement in the Harlem Renaissance under Langston Hughes and the Haitian Renaissance under the leadership of Jean Price-Mars. This also led to the Negritudist Movement in Cuba under the

leadership of writers such as Roman Guirno, Jose Tallet and Alejo Carpentier. These movements were manifestations of a new pride in being black.

Also the eighteenth century witnessed the development of publication industries in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad. In Jamaica particularly, there were a number of light, satirical, topical publications such as *Politics and Patriots of Jamaica* (1718) and *The Election* (1788) both written by anonymous authors. In terms of aesthetics, these art forms were more western than they were Caribbean. The poets wrote without much of a West Indian context, perspective or tradition. The stories, novels, poems and dramatic sketches though treated subjects or themes from the Caribbean, were based on neo-classical tradition of English poetry, the Romantic and later the Victorian models. Wilson-Tagoe (1987:14) adds that:

> *The poetry of this period fared even worse in social awareness and in responsibility towards a tradition, and the problem was not just the problem of an imitative and derivative poetry drawing its inspiration and forms from a metropolitan tradition: it was an absence of vision and direction.*

Between the seventeenth and eighteenth Centuries artistic production in the Caribbean was characterized by a

situation in which art explored the predicament of society while its aesthetic and cognitive dimensions were derived from an external social environment. However, the first writer to break the pattern of foreign models and develop an inward looking artistic form, which express militant black viewpoint against imperial assumptions, was the Jamaican poet and novelist, Claude Mckay (1890 – 1948). This can be seen in his novel *Banana Botton* (1933). Mckay was influenced to write this way by his experience with racism in the United States of America and his involvement in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, with which most of his work is concerned.

The twentieth century witnessed a great and most spectacular achievement in the literary development of the Caribbean. The art form especially, the novel, was substantially domesticated at this period and was dominated by the exploration of what Wilson Harris regarded as *victor- victim-stasis*. This deals with the relationship between the dominating whites and the dominated blacks on the one hand and the Caribbean society and colonialism on the other. Most of the writers who emerged at this period concentrated on the various aspects of this stasis. For example Harris's novel *The Guina*

Quartet recreated the various aberrations of history in the consciousness of both the oppressor and his victim, enacting not just the linear drama of conquest and defeat but also the dualities and paradoxes of confrontation, as well as the possibilities for rebirth, reconciliation and a new community. Maran's *Batouala* (1921) was also written to explore this stasis. The preface and certain parts of this novel openly denounced and attack French colonialism. As a pioneering work *Batouala* serves as a catalyst to other writers to condemn colonial rule. Mercer in (Maran 1952:3) commenting on Maran's art generally says that:

> *When one rereads the works of this pioneer … with their wealth of information on Africa, one realizes that subsequent French West Indian and* African *novelists are more indebted to Rene Maran than they perhaps know.*

Rene Maran was the first Black man in France to have dared to condemn colonialism and expose its harsh realities. Having worked as an administrator in the French colonial service, Maran learnt first hand and proceeded to expose in his creative works the various forms of indignities the blacks were subjected to under French colonial policy. In *Batouala,* for

instance, Maran nostalgically recounts the bliss of the days before colonization thus:

> *What beautiful days were those! Not a*
> *Worry! No portering. No rubber to make*
> *nor roads to clear. We thought only about*
> *drinking, eating, sleeping, dancing, hurting,*
> *and mounting our women*
> *"Yaba! That was a great time … The first*
> *whites appeared. And then my people and their vassals, carrying fetishes, cooking pots, chickens, mats, dogs, women, goats, children, and ducks,retreated to kre'be'dje.*
> *"I was quite little then. There were fighting*
> *to wage against neighboring populations,*
> *houses to build and fields to sow. We hardn't*
> *yet begun to breathe in peace when some 'boundjous' appeared out of nowhere, set foot in kre'be'dje, and established themselves there for ever.*(p-72)

The Africans were living peacefully and making the best of life out of their own environment but this was disrupted by French colonialism.

Two dominant publication avenues, located in Jamaica, sustained the literary creativity of this period. The first was *The Jamaica Library* established in 1904 and the second was *The Jamaica Times*. They were however, unsuccessful avenues because the Jamaican Library had to close in 1910 after publishing only four novels.

King (1979:1) describes the 1930s as the vigorous period in the literary history of the Islands. These were years that marked the rise of political consciousness in the West Indies and the anti-colonial agitation, which heralded demands for political change. There were also unemployment marches in Trinidad and Jamaica, strikes in British Guiana, disturbances in St Vincent over a rise in custom duties and a strike by coal hauliers in St Lucia. In 1937 there was widespread rioting in Barbados. It was also at this time that the 'Beacon Group', a political, radical and creative organization emerged. This group was active in labour movement and identified with the independence struggle. It brought in new perspectives and urgency to literary activity in the Caribbean. Among these political activists were also novelists, poets, short story writers and historians who saw writing as part of the anti-colonial struggle and social relations. Alfred Mendes's *Pitch Lake* (1934) and *Black Fauns* (1935), and C.L.R. James *Minty Alley* (1936) widened West Indian perspective by raising questions about the colonial society and giving new depths to the social realism, which had informed earlier novels like De Liser's *Jane's Career*. Influenced by the Russian Revolution and the Indian nationalist

movement, which attempted to marry creative writing with local radical politics, their fiction realistically portrays the lives and the speech habits of the lower middle classes and the poor.

In poetry the increased self-consciousness and social awareness of this period were reflected in new dimensions, especially in the poetry of Una Marson and A. J. Segmour where, for the first time, the clichés of pastoral tradition were giving way to personal exploration and political statement.

King (1979) also posits that from the 1920s running through the 1940s the Caribbean society experienced a period of economic recession and this manifested itself in the high rate of unemployment especially for the blacks and this created an atmosphere of uncertainty and led to the impoverization of the peasantry. This depression was caused by a hurricane and drought which caused much havoc on the sugar industry, which was already losing to foreign competition in the world market. In spite of high levels of unemployment, planters in Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad imported East Indian indentured labourers, often at public expense, rather than pay wages high enough to ensure a continuous supply of local labour. The depression in the agricultural sector led to movements

especially of blacks to towns and to the mother country, America. In Jamaica the movement was mainly to the Panama Canal and the banana republics of Central America or to Cuba and the United States. In Barbados, St Lucia and Grenada the movement was mainly to the Brazilian sugar plantations and to the Port of Spain, which was thriving in shipping activities. Migration and the condition of exiles therefore became one of the predominant concerns and themes of Caribbean literature. De Liser's *Jane's Career* (1914) and Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) capture this trend.

The economic depression also accelerated the pattern of moral fermentation. In the 1940s or beginning from 1941 three developments occurred. First, most of the Caribbean migrants began to return. Second, mesmerized by Indian nationalism, most of the Indian indentured labourers began to rebel. Third, the world war veterans were also returning. All these features manifested in the growing disenchantment with the Caribbean society. The Caribbean Islands were no longer capable of allowing the individual to realize his potentials. This led to widespread unrests which assumed violent dimensions. This violence spread to Jamaica, Trinidad, St. Lucia and other parts

of the Caribbean. This is captured in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin.*

Between 1944, when Jamaica's new constitution was granted and 1962, when the West Indian Federation broke up, new trends began to emerge. King (1979: 17) sees this period as the most eventful decades in modern West Indian history. The new Black professionals were establishing themselves as a class with growing political power, and during this time literary and political developments were harmonized. Almost every publication at this period was fired by a new regional ideal, which for a while transcended class and geographic barriers. A sense of pride in the history and culture of the Caribbean became fashionable as the new middle class tried to build its own traditions.

Similarly the Calypso, which was essentially culture bound, began to assume a satiric posture. It became politicized and served as another medium of voicing out this disenchantment within the Caribbean elites. Dabydeen and Wilson -Tagoe (1987:72) define the Calypso as part of a tradition of verbal arts and biting commentary in the West Indies which is also historically linked to the post-emancipation

'takeover' of Carnival, first by freed slaves and later by the urban folk in the city's yards. As subject and theme, the Calypso has functioned in West Indian literature as a depiction of an aspect of West Indian life. It has often been evoked to illustrate and confirm observations and judgements held by the general mass of the population. Its special techniques as a folk and oral form have helped to give shape to a number of West Indian imaginative works. Indeed there is in West Indian literature what is called a "Calypso style", usually involving a certain way of presenting a situation and a particular way of manipulating both language and audience. Works such as Naipaul's *Miguel Street* (1959), Brathwaite's Poem 'Calypso' (1967) and Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979) evoke the Calypso both as social commentary and as caustic satire.

Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoa (1987:54) further add that even the Rastafarian movement which can be traced back to 1935 and which is associated with the plight of the growing black middle class and dispossessed urban slum dwellers later became the symbol of one aspect of the challenge to the new establishment. King (1979) argues that the Rastafarian movement was established after the coronation of Emperor

Haile Selasie 1, and was seen by some of Marcus Garvey's followers as the fulfillment of a prophesy which had earlier been made by their leader concerning the redemption of the African race from bondage in the West.

The movement assumed a political dimension, as it became a medium of political propaganda and conscientization. It also assumed a historical dimension because it regarded Africa as home, digging into the roots of the Blackman. King (1979:16-17) traces the circumstances that led to the emergence of the Rastafarian movement to the Italo-Abyssinian war in 1936. England's refusal to go to the aid of Ethiopia was seen as the ultimate betrayal of the Negro race. Also the uprisings and strikes over a rise in customs duties contributed to its emergence. The attraction of Rastafarian ideas and speech was part of a wider process of racial assertion, which swept through the Caribbean in the wake of the Black Power Movement in the United States of America. Claude Mckay's books *Home to Harlem* (1928) and *Banjo* (1929) reflect this quest for racial assertion. Margaret Perry (1976) describes Mckay's *Home to Harlem* as:

> *A vagabond novel, full of colour, noise, and vitality, rounded out by a touch of intellectualism and social criticism. It is an antithetical world, which Mckay paints, a world rendered in dispirited sentences, slang, and elliptical Negro phrases that ring with authenticity.*

Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoa (1987:53) argue that in this novel Mckay is mostly preoccupied with black existence and place in a predominantly white society. His Caribbean character, Ray, is the classic black intellectual tortured by a sense of alienation and feelings of unbelonging. His entire experience in the American city is a process of racial, social and political awareness. Banjo (1929) is also characterized by such probing. The most important segments of the book deal with Ray's tirades against the Black American for his aping of whites and discursive conversations that explain Mckay's sentiments about Harlem Renaissance. For example the dialogue between Ray and a Martiniquan student reads:

> '*In the modern race of life were merely beginners. If this renaissance were talking about is going to be more than a sporadic and scabby thing, w' llhave to get down to our racial roots to create it.' "I believe in a racial renaissance," said the student, 'but not in going back to savagery.'*
> *'Getting down to our native roots and building up from our own people,' said Ray, 'is not savagery. It is culture. '"I can't see that,' said the student. 'You*

> *are like many Negro intellectuals who are belly aching about race,' said Ray. 'What's going wrong with you all is your education. You get a white man's education and learn to despise your own people….*
> *'You're a lost crowd, you educated Negroes, and you will find yourself in the roots of your own people.'*

In spite of this concern with the Negro theme, it was not until the 1950 and 1960s that a more vigorous examination of the colonial experience was more systematically embarked upon. It was a period that witnessed the combination of anti-colonial perspective with a search for new identities and values in the Arts. For example in Guyana, Martin Carter's Poems of Resistance (1954) established a strident anti-colonial voice as part of political statement and protest.

Claude Mckay offered significant directions with his experimentation with dialect and folk forms in the 1920s and in his articulation of the divided Afro-Caribbean consciousness especially in his poem titled 'Outcast'. However it was not until the 1960s with the poetry of Louise Bennett, Eric Roach, Derek Walcott and Edward Brathwaite that these forms and themes began to be handled with maturity and complexity. Louis Bennett explored the various dimensions of the tradition of folk

poetry, exploring the orality of the form and enhancing the performance of poetry and song.

Walcott on the other hand grappled with themes of displacement and spiritual impoverishment in the *Castaway* and was looking for ways in which the artist could transcend these in his effort to be creative.

One other major poet of the 60s was Edward Kamau Brathwaite. He responded to the situation in the region by exploring the creolising process itself and searching in the adjustments and adaptations of slavery and colonialism creative possibilities that could provide a context for exploring history and provide source for a tradition of poetry. His trilogy *Rights of Passage* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969) recreated and appraised the new world experience revealing its manifestations in the variety of Caribbean musical structures and in the very language of the creolised folk with its distinctive love of perception and sensibility. Summing up the achievements of the creative energy of the 1960s, Tagoe (1987:20) says that:

> *The explorations of 1960s, the personal dialogues, the experiments with song, dialect, sermon and ritual, established a tradition of orality in written*

poetry, creating an authority to which poets of the 70s and 80s could refer in their search for forms based on indigenous models. Poets of the 70's in spite of striving to establish a tradition relying for instance on external metropolitan models, wrote with a sense of an already existing tradition.

Caribbean literature therefore, emanated from and reacted to its historical background. In addition, however, the greatest influence on contemporary West Indian poetry has been the complementary relationships between oral and written traditions. The distinctiveness and greatness of Caribbean poetry are derived from its recognition and exploitation of the 'ordinary-speaking- voice' as an expression of feeling and perception.

Since literature is primarily a reflection of the circumstances and norms of the society from which it emanates, the status of the Blacks in the Caribbean remains a major preoccupation in Caribbean Literature

1.6 BLACK IDENTITY AND CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

In the Caribbean marginalisation and racial discrimination were common phenomenon. The native blacks were alienated and misrepresented. This negative propaganda about Africa

accounted for the awakening and revival of Africa's identity in the Caribbean and all over the world. Many scholars have attempted to reconstruct African history and challenge this negative stereotyping of the Blacks. There is therefore that striving in West Indian poetry to achieve relationship with Africa and a deep psychological yearning for origins in most writers of the Caribbean. Poets such as Edward Brathwaite believe that it is only through this kind of link that the West Indian can enlarge his consciousness and meaningfully assert his dignity. .Cartey (1991) lamented that the Blackman has often been projected in Spanish literature as:

> *A figure to ridicule, a slow, dumb, witless clod, a caliban. And 'Negro' became an epithet of scorn, and 'black' was synonymous with Negro.*

From the above assertion it is clear that Spain's portrayal of blacks was rather contemptuous, bias and received surface treatment. The defamatory stereotype in which the Negro was presented and by which he was further blackened by his white masters is depicted in the above lines. Hall (1997) expatiates on this negative presentation of the Blacks thus:

> *Popular representation of racial 'difference' during slavery tended to cluster around two main themes.*

> *First was the subordinate status and 'innate laziness' of Blacks 'naturally' born to, and fitted only for, servitude but, at the same time, stubbornly unwilling to labour in ways appropriate to their nature and profitable to their masters. Second was their innate 'primitivism', simplicity and lack of culture, which made them genetically incapable of 'civilized' refinements*.

Killlens quoted in Ojo-Ade (1996:4) also elaborates on the various forms of indignities the Blacks were subjected to (over six million lost their lives in transit) and the negative ways in which the West projected them:

> *The unwilling passengers ate, moved their bowels, vomited, urinated, slept in their own defecation, sickened and died in their cramped allotted space (…) The reason the rest of the civilized world did not rise up in protest was that the victims were pagans, a savage race deemed fortunate to be brought to America, under whatever conditions, where they could be civilized and christianized. But the Blacks did not believe in their good fortune.*

In the same vein Frederickson (1987:49) sums up the complex and sometimes contradictory set of beliefs about racial difference by defenders of slavery:

> *Heavily emphasized was the historical case against the Black man based on his supposed failure to develop a civilized way of life in Africa. As portrayed in pro-slavery writing, Africa was and always had been the scene of unmitigated savagery, cannibalism, devil worship, and licentiousness. Also advanced was an early form of biolo argument, based on red or imagined physiological and*

> *anatomical differences – especially in cranial characteristics and facial angles – which allegedly explained mental and physical inferiority.*

However, in the 1920's and 1930's, great poets and intellectuals arose to challenge the negative stereotyping of the Blacks. Writers such as Marcus Garvey, Jean Price-Mars, Nicolas Guillen to mention a few, have set out to place in proper perspectives the importance and value of the Black man and his role as a powerful and vital force to be reckoned with. These writers were all from the Caribbean and their poems depict Africa's full beauty, grace and charm. Specifically, in the poetry of Marcus Garvey and Jean Price-Mars there can be found underlying current of affirmation of the Black man and an attempt to dispel his inferiority, instilling in the minds of black people a sense of pride in the greatness of their cultural heritage and potentialities. Marcus Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the 1930s. Garvey advocated for a physical return to Africa where he would establish a government and become the president. The Universal Negro Improvement Association gave impetus to the Rastafari Movement, which was another back to Africa

movement. However, both Rastafarianism and Garveyism over-idealized Africa. They did not take cognizance of the ancestral duality of the Caribbean society. Furthermore, great movements such as Pan – Africanism and Negritude served as bonds between Africa and the Caribbean. Tracing the roots and aims of Pan-Africanism, Mugabane (1987) states that:

> *Pan-African consciousness emerged when some – Blackfolks, because of common experiences (inherited shared), felt and articulated the dignity of their interests as between themselves and as against other men whose interests were different from theirs. Africans at home and abroad were victims of European developed system of racism, which ruthlessly exploited them as a group.*

The Negritude Movement on the other hand from the very beginning sought to postulate that the black man did not fall down from the jungle trees and that his ancestors were not monkeys cavorting in the wilds of Africa. Its proponents, prominent among who are Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Leon Demas, argue that Africa had an original civilization, which was superior to most of the current models.

Both Negritude and Pan-Africanism movements, spearheaded by African intellectuals and Black revolutionists from the Caribbean and America, converged to affirm that Africa had a common civilization and that Africa must struggle together at home and in the Diaspora. These movements also served a great deal in redefining Black identity in positive and proper perspectives. Particularly Negritude has been the tendency to consider all black writing as constituting one homogenous and uniform literary bloc. Negritude clearly responded to the desperate desire to be free of the colonial past and also provided a much-needed feeling of solidarity. Ojo-Ade (1989) argues that Negritude was weakened by the very fact that it started off on the defensive, having to prove a point to ears that were quite immunized against hearing. According to Ojo-Ade embedded in the proud roots of Negritude was a potentially dangerous inferiority complex. Their works though couched in negrified rhetoric, have always been to attain that apogee of civilization exemplified by French society

. In the same vein Mphahlele (1974) condemns this idealization of Africa. He argues that he cannot see the

western world, or any sizeable portion of it one day coming to squat at the shrines of African wisdom. What Africa has today is irrelevant to a world in which power operates on assumptions that resist traditional African humanism. This humanism should only be developed for African edification.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.7 CRITICAL POLEMICS

Although Africa and the idea of Africa have featured in the historical imagination of the Caribbean Island, It is only recently that the engagement has moved to such a mature level of subtlety and seriousness (Wilson-Tagoe 1998). However, criticism on the works of Edward Brathwaite, Nicolas Guillen and Derek Walcott has ignored the centrality of the African theme. There is no any work of this magnitude that has devoted its attention to the study of Africa and the fate of the Blackman in the imagination of these three great West Indian poets. This study is therefore an attempt to fill that gap.

Preoccupation with Africa in the Caribbean is rooted in the Black experience in the America which include the involuntary transatlantic crossing; the experience of slavery and

resistance to it; the systems of racism, oppression and the segregation in the United States which deprives Black people of the conditions for the fulfillment of their personalities and lives.

George Lamming, a Black West Indian novelist, has defined Black as synonymous with originating in Africa. He states further that the Black aesthetic of African origin evolved in its own way in the course of interaction with other cultures and aesthetics.

Wilson-Tagoe (1998:253) opines that the writers' imaginative relationship to Africa and the ancestor has in the last two decades progressed from self-conscious evocations of a private and mythical Africa to mature and subtle probing into the ways in which an African consciousness modified and transformed itself in the physical and psychological situation of slavery and colonialism. There is therefore that striving to achieve relationship with Africa and a deep psychological yearning for origins in most peoples of the African Diaspora. Writers such as Brathwaite believe that it is only through this kind of link that the West Indian can enlarge his consciousness of self and meaningfully assert his dignity. Brathwaite (1975:1-11) says:

> *In the Caribbean, whether it be African or American the recognition of an ancestral relationship with the folk or aboriginal cultures involves the artist and participants in a journey into the past and hinterland which is at the same time a movement of possession into the present and future. Through this movement of possession we become ourselves, truly our own creators, discovering word for object, image for word.*

However, according to Wilson-Tagoe the controversy that this concern with Africa has generated reveals the measure of the complexity of the West Indian's relationship to the past as well as the complex cultural forces that create an ancestral African history. The exploration of Africa if nothing else, has helped in the formulation of a valid perception of Caribbean identity. Brathwaite's poetry aims at achieving this.

Ramchand as cited in King (ed) (1974:196) summing up the focus of Brathwaite's Trilogy says:

> *In Rights of Passage (1960), Brathwaite express the social and cultural dispossessions of the New World Negro; Masks (1968) is a record journey to Africa by a West Indian Negro and, and a dramatization of an intellectual survey of Africa history and traditional culture; in Islands (1969), Brathwaite satirizes Christianity and the other European institutions as well as the initiative culture of the West Indian middle class, attempting at the same time to demonstrate and invoke as a viable alternative the African culture and religion in the Islands. A greater knowledge and understanding of African history and*

> *culture, the trilogy seems to say, will not only remove the self-contempt of the Negro, it will stimulate the racial memory and help to bring about a recognition of elements of that culture still functional in West Indian society, and help to create a proper measure of the intimate bearing that heritage ought to have upon the discovery and creation of an authentic identity for the West Indian.*

Ramchand opines further that Brathwaite's preoccupation in *The Arrivants* is part of a new exploration which sees the West Indies as an area of plural cultures, the cultures corresponding more or less to racial groups. By recognizing and reviving the suppressed culture of the majority, it might be possible to find a way out of mimicry of European cultures, and shape a Creole society whose culture will reflect the ways of seeing and feeling of the majority more truly and democratically than an existing pattern which carries biases determined by the plantation system and colonial rule.

Irele (1994) argues that Brathwaite's poetry represents a reformulation of the abiding preoccupations of black literature in its most emphatic thrust. He adds that we might infer from this conscious alignment of his work to that of his illustrious predecessors (Guillen and Cesaire) that Brathwaite has sought to give further resonance to a common theme of Black

expression, pitched anew to the actualities of his own time and circumstance. But his poetry does much more than reformulate or even complement by relocating its point of emphasis, an antecedent testimony of black experience. Its importance resides in the fact that it offers the first and still the most comprehensive exploration of his experience in contemporary literature.

Kubayanda (1990:124) on the other hand transcends the general view that Africa is central to the Caribbean search for signification to an examination of the ramifications of the African theme in the work of two great poets Nicolas Guillen and Aime Cesaire. Their work is seen not only in its function as counter discourse of Western representations of the black race, but more fundamentally as a focus for an enlivening sense of antecedents, beyond the degeneration of slavery, in Afro-Caribbean consciousness. Kubayanda's exploration therefore suggests that for both Guillen and Cesaire, Africa functions ultimately as a symbol of personal redemption and as a source of new poetics and spiritual values. However, Kubayanda singles out Edward Kamau Brathwaite as the most significant extension of the expressive field defined by the poetry of the

two old writers and concludes that “of the contemporary Caribbean writers in English, the Barbadian Edward Brathwaite perhaps most effectively articulates the Negritude consciousness of ‘race’, history’ and language”.

Wilson – Tagoa (1998:184-185) opines that even as a historian, Brathwaite writes with an artist’s eye for possibility and the future, revealing a perspective that was to influence his mythical re-arrangement of history in *The Arrivants*. Certainly only the imaginative leeway of the poet could have allowed him to link periods of African, Caribbean, and American history in the simultaneous presentations he achieves in sections of his trilogy. In his poetry Brathwaite’s purpose becomes more ambitious, intent on breaking the historical boundaries of space and time to offer West Indian man a wider conception of himself in history. The deliberate and epic arrangement of *The Arrivants* reflects this purpose, just as the multiplicity of point of view, moods, tone, and voice reflects the variety of historical experiences he draws upon.

Wilson -Tagoe further adds that the trilogy’s first section, *Rights of Passage,* an exploration of African response to the New world, is enclosed by a prelude and epilogue, showing the

point from which the poet begins his examination and portending the direction of his movement. *Masks,* its most unified section and therefore deliberately placed in the centre, traces the evolution of the West African people simultaneously as it enacts the modern West Indian's personal and psychic return to his African origins. Such simultaneous perceptions of periods in time enable Brathwaite to make connections between the past and present and to deduce historical lessons without being limited or circumscribed within the aberrations of particular periods. The trilogy's last section, *Islands,* is, in the context of the first two sections, a beginning. The poet's consciousness widened by his encounter in Africa and by the trilogy's underlying perspective of circularity and continuity, re-explores his previous themes as he gropes towards wider dimensions of historical experience and their correlation in poetic form.

Critics on Guillen have viewed him from two broad perspectives. Ellis (1983) argues that Guillen is a Cuban poet and the Afro element is secondary or subsumed in the national whole. Jackson (1979) on the other hand asserts that Guillen is very much an Afro-Cuban poet with black consciousness that

has the potential to become another type of black aesthetics. Ojo-Ade in Jones (1978) after studying Nicolas Guillen's works maintains that:

> *To experience the authentic voice of Afro-Cuban poetry of Nicolas Guillen, one need only open the pages of any of the many collections of Nicolas Guillen, perhaps the most important writer in Cuba today. In Guillen one finds sincere human emotions and profound consciousness of the African heritage. To this body created by others he has provided a heart and a soul. He is the only poet of this negritudist group for whom the Negro theme was neither a form nor simply a particular theme, but the generating center of all his creative writing.*

Nicolas Guillen started writing before the 1930's and that is significant because it was during the Harlem and Haitian Renaissances. These were movements aimed at cultural revival and assertion of human dignity in the USA and Haiti. Guillen was part of these literary movements. The Negritude movement also influenced Guillen. In an interview he granted to Raquel Tibol and in response to a question of the genesis of his interest in negritude, Guillen affirms that:

> *At that time began in Cuba the fashion of Black things. The poet and musicians of the avant-grade, grouped together in the Avance journal, began to show interest in black themes. They saw the Black as an exterior form: rumba, extroverted rhythm… It was then that I began to look for something that*

> *would express more fundamentally the Black element … I heard surging forth from the roots of my search and of my disquiet, a rhythm: Negro bombon, Negro bombon and when I woke up the following morning I wrote the first poems of my real poetry, already with the rhythm of 'son'.*

Guillen (1972:231), however adds that:

> *I deny any art that only sees in the Negro a coloured motif and not an interesting human theme. Without doubt, the Negro theme offers plastic qualities of the first order to the painter, extraordinary rhythmic elements to the musician and new values to language. But let us not forget that there are millions of Negroes struggling in the most terrible slavery.*

King (1975:30) elaborates further that Guillen's chief contribution to the dialogue about Cuban identity has been his insistence that Cuba's culture is Mulatto or Metizo, a precipitate of the Latin-Hispanic and the African, now neither one nor the other. In an article in the newspaper *Hoy,* organ of the communist party, in 1959 Guillen confirms this:

> *The Spaniards contributed their genius – already so complex and varied - their language, their culture. But the blacks also contributed, and not less either; in addition to their labour on the plantation and in the factory while in a merciless state of servitude. The national melting pot is not only the result of the easy coupling of master and slave woman, which shows up in the most exclusive families, but another more deeply rooted cross fertilization which comes from our mixed roots. For this reason, in Cuba the*

> *white is Mestizo, the black is Metstizo and the Mestizo is Mestizo.*

Speaking further on the African element in Cuba Guillen (1972:114) asserts that:

> *The African element in this land is so profound, and so many essential currents are found in our well-irrigated social hydrography that it would be the work of a miniature to decipher the hieroglyphics.*

Guillen identifies himself with the oppressed and Black people of the Caribbean in spite of his mixed background. In an address he made at the second International Congress of Writers for Defense of Culture held in Spain in July 1937 Guillen submits that:

> *Well, I have come here, Comrades, to bring voice of one of the groups confined to that circle, which has suffered; perhaps more than any other, from injustice of men; which for centuries has seen it muscles paralysed by slavery, which for centuries has had its intelligence paralysed, far from any culture which might liberate and enlighten it. I come, I repeat, as one exploited and persecuted, but as a man who cares for his freedom and knows, like his racial brothers that only by breaking down the walls that exist between the present and the future, can he achieve it completely. I come as a black man.*

In 1947 Guillen became a member of the communist party in Cuba and this had a lot of influence on his literary world, which was supposed to be used to raise the political consciousness of his readers. Speaking on the role of art in society Guillen in Cartey (1970:117) postulates that:

> *Art is always a political expression, even though the artist may ignore that fact, or knowing it may deny it. The Divine Comedy is political, Quijote is political; the verses of Miguel Hernandez or of Antonio Machad are political, and even the work of artists who seem to be absolutely a political, Joyce's Ulysses. The intellectual cannot remain oblivious to the struggles of his time. His place always ought to be at the side of his people.*

Cartey (1970:118) focuses his attention on Guillen as an example of the miscegenation that has blended so many of the peoples of the Caribbean society. He argues that his poetry is an attempt to give spiritual force to this blending. Guillen, he adds, has a grandfather with his fetishes and exorcisms, his laughter in sadness and suffering and a Spanish forbear with his pseudo refinement and ruffles, his passions, and his sad vibrant denies. According to him this is the social reality of Cuba. In the same vein Marquez and Mcmurray (Quoted in Guillen1972: xi) declare that while it has always been plain to

the point of common place that Cuba is a lively protean synthesis of white Spanish thesis and Black anti-thesis, no one before Guillen had advanced such a bold affirmation of the latter. Alberto Lamar Schweyer (Quoted in Augier 1965) elaborates on the relevance of Guillen in the Cuban literary scene as follows:

> *Nicolas Guillen is the revelation--- he is Cuban in body and soul. He is our first poet to discover a rhythm, extract an observation, create a form. He is equidistant from France and Spain. He is not Dario or Chocano, nor Juan Ramon Jimenez. He is Guillen. And when the attempt is made to sketch a history of our poetic evolution and many names fall away into silence, drowned in the mediocrity of their work and in the poverty of their creation, the name of Nicolas Guillen will remain. And with Nicolas Guillen his book of revelation, Songoro Cosongo --- Among us only Nicolas Guillen has created and discovered anything. He is the poet of Cuba whose muse is mulatto.*

Napolean Galvaz (1965) however transcends the above assertion and states, “He is a national poet. His lyric poetry cannot be confined to the ‘mulatto muse.’ According to Galvaz Nicolas Guillen can, and must be, the Rabindranath Tagore of Cuba”. This dissertation accepts this view as the most realistic approach to Guillen’s poetry. He has written on a variety of

subjects and as such could not be narrowed down to one particular aspect.

The study of Derek Walcott's poetry has generated various disputations by critics. While English and American critics have often been ambivalent about his use of western literary tradition, Walcott has also drawn criticism from Caribbean commentators, who accuse him of neglecting native forms in favour ot techniques derived from his colonial oppressors. Walcott (1996) has responded to these criticisms by saying that:

> *I am primarily, absolutely a Caribbean writer. The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of imagination: it is the property of language itself. I have never felt inhibited in trying to* write *as well as the greatest English poets. Now that has led to a lot of provincial criticism: the Caribbean critic may say, "You're trying to be English," and the English critic may say, "Welcome to the Club." These are two provincial statements at either end of the spectrum.*

Walcott (1996) explains further on his poetic language that:

> *What is more important, however and I'm still working on this was to find a voice that was not inflected by influences. One didn't develop and English accent in speech; one kept as close as possible to an inflection that was West Indian. The*

> *aim was that a West Indian or Englishman could read a single poem, each with his own accent, without either one feeling that it was written in dialect.*

Furthermore on vindicating West Indian culture but refusing to reject European heritage Walcott argues, “yet I feel absolutely no shame in having endured the colonial experience. There was no obvious humiliation in it. In fact, I think that many of what are sneered at as colonial values are part of the strength of the West Indian psyche, a fusion of formalism with exuberance, a delight in both the precision and the power of language… I think that our early education must have ranked with the finest in the world. The grounding was rigid-Latin, Greek, and the essential masterpieces, but there was this elation of discovery. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Horace, Vergil-these writers were not jaded but immediate experiences. The atmosphere was competitive. It was cruel, but it created our literature” (Meanings 50).

To be sure, his early works seem overpowered by voices of English Poetry, and his entire oeuvre respects the traditional concerns of poetic form. But if his poetry sometimes betrays a significant relation to tradition, it also manifests an elegant

blending of sources both European and American, Caribbean and Latino, Classical and contemporary. Later apprentice works, including *In A Green Night: Poems 1948-1960,* reveal a poet who has learned his craft from European tradition, but who also remains mindful of West Indian landscapes and experiences (Adorno. html).

Derek Walcott was a descendant of two white grandfathers and two black grandmothers. In "What the Twilight Says," an autobiographical essay published in 1970, Walcott writes on the two worlds that informed his childhood:

> *Colonials, we began with this material enervation that nothing could ever be built among these rotten shacks, barefooted backyards, and moulting shingles; that being poor, we already had the theater of our lives. In that simple schizophrenic boyhood one could lead two lives: the interior life of poetry, and the outward life of action and dialect.*

Walcott's art arises from this schizophrenic situation, from a struggle between two cultural heritages which he has harnessed to create a unique 'creolized' style.

On America, colonialism, and identity Walcott in (Jackson: 1996) says:

> *The whole idea of America, and the whole idea of everything on this side of the world, barring the native American Indian, is imported; we're all imported, black, Spanish, when one says one is American, that is the experience of being America*

> *no that transference of whatever part of the whole idea of colonization. Because the easiest thing to do about colonialism is to refer to history in terms of guilt or punishment or revenge, or whatever, whereas the rare thing is the resolution of being where one is and doing something positive about that reality.*

According to Breslin (2001:331), Walcott's poems and plays aim at re-imaging West Indian society since its emergence from colonial rule, its ill-fated attempt at political unity, and its subsequent dispersal into tiny nation-states.

Walcott's work is centrally concerned with the West Indies' imputed absence from history and lack of cohesive national identity or cultural tradition. In his poems and plays, West Indian history becomes a realm of necessity, something to be confronted, contested, and remade through literature.

Walcott has also studied the conflict between the heritage of European and West Indian cultures. His poems are characterized by allusions to the English poetic tradition and a symbolic imagination that is at once personal and Caribbean. In his Nobel lecture, 1992 Walcott asserts that:

> *"Poetry, which is perfection's sweat but which must seem as fresh as the raindrops on a statue's brow, combines the natural and the marmored: It conjugates both tenses simultaneously: the past*

> *and the present, if the past is the sculpture and the present the beads of dew or rain on the forehead of the past. There is the buried language and there is the individual vocabulary, and the process of poetry is one of excavation and of self-discovery.*

Moore (1969:20) declares that the St. Lucian Derek Walcott, the outstanding West Indian poet of today, situates much of his poetry imaginatively right upon the beach, where land, sea and sky encounter each other. Walcott is the solitary man, the castaway, who must learn to know the Island upon which chance and history have stranded him; but his eyes are ever fixed upon the sea, which vomited him up. Thus he is both a spokesman for a generation endeavouring to throw off racial and colonial inhibitions in the search for a distinctly West Indian existence, and the great reminder of the loneliness imposed upon them by space and time. It is their very loneliness, their exclusion, which forces self-discovery upon them. One of the subjects Walcott has continually returned to is the multicultural mixture of identities.

However, Walcott has rejected the label of “voice of the Caribbean people”, saying: “I’m not even interested in sharing

feelings of the people, because those who have been asked to share the feelings of the people are the ones who get shot first."

In "A Far Cry From Africa" (1962) he asks:

> *I who am poisoned with the blood of both,*
> *where shall I turn, divided to the vein?*
> *I who have cursed*
> *The drunken officer of British rule, how choose*
> *Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?*

From this poem we could discern Walcott's acceptance of his dual heritage. He is a product of three loyalties, the Caribbean where he lives, the English and his African origin. This view is further expressed in the poem titled "The Schooner Flight". A Schooner is a sailing ship with two or more masts. Therefore, the title of this poem suggests to the reader that the poem is written based on a voyage experience. In this case it is the personae who seems to have embarked on a journey in search of his lost history or roots:

> *In idle August, while the sea soft and leaves of*
> *brown Islands stick to the rim of this*
> *Caribbean. I blow out the light by the*
> *dreamless face of Maria conception*
> *to ship as a seaman on the schooner flight.*

It is from this search quest that the persona has come to terms with the realities of multicultural identities. This discovery

is given expression in “Adio Carenage” a sub-titled poem in “The Schooner Flight” thus:

> *I’m just a red nigger who love the sea*
> *I had a sound colonial experience*
> *I have Dutch, Nigger and English in me*
> *and either I’m nobody, or I’m a nation.*

Walcott’s poetry recognizes the combination of European and African heritages in the formation of identity in the Caribbean. His works presents an integration of several cultures. Walcott (1972:0) states that “Mongrel as I am; something priceless in me, when I see the word Ashanti as with the word Warwickshire, both separately intimidating my grandfathers’ roots, both baptizing this neither proud nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, this West India.” His poetry therefore deals with matters of hybridity and cultural schizophrenia.

King (1979:144) takes up this matter of hybridity and reiterates that Walcott had a thorough grounding in European history, art and literature, and was also in contact with the Black Africa-based culture of the St. Lucian majority. He was not European, and circumstances kept him somewhat apart from the majority of the St. Lucians; they were Black, he was part

white; they were overwhelmingly Catholic, he was Mehodist; and he was a lover of English on an Island where the mass of the people speak French patois.

Wilson-Tagoe (1998:130) elaborates on Walcott's relationship to history by stating that Walcott does not necessarily popularize what is lost, nor does he dramatize, as Brathwaite does in *Rights of Passage*, the image of a receding past and consciousness. For Walcott the loss of place, self, and identity is subsumed in the all encompassing image of the "amnesiac blow" which not only strips and denudes the New World man of his past but also leaves him with the possibility of new creation. Thus in Walcott's "Laventville" the survivor of the middle passage is caught in a limbo between two worlds, neither of which he truly possesses. Speaking on his kind of writing Walcott says:

> *I am a kind of a split writer: I have one tradition inside me going in one way, and another tradition going another, The Mimetic, the Narrative, and dance element is strong on one side, and the literary, the classical tradition is strong on the other… I tried to fuse them…(Meanings 48)*

Stressing the place of Walcott in the discourse of the Black New World, Okpewho says that:

> *It is perhaps, fair to start by saying that he is one with the likes of Harris and Gilroy in seeing New World history as an ongoing process, its identity as continually evolving, rather than as something to be arrested as a point in time decreed by a dominant imperial culture.*

Okpewho believes that the search for a proper identity for the Caribbean is itself beset with obstacles that must be overcome. For Walcott, the answer lies neither in the all too easy but false image of the Caribbean as a tourist paradise ("prelude," Green Night 11), nor in an appeal to the discredited survivors of European vandalism – the Indians and their violated sanctuaries ("The Voyage Up River": Castaway 50). Nor does Walcott find Africa any more attractive as a point of reference. Although his roots lie partly there, he feels it is not a place to return to physically especially in the light of its contemporary post independence record of horrors ("A Far Cry from Africa," Green Night 18). Walcott opts for an inclusive geopolitical framework that recognizes contemporary realities. Wilson-Tagoe (1998) lends support to Okpewho's view. According to Tagoe Walcott's imaginative relationship to Africa and Africa's past serves mostly to accentuate the illusionary and false nature of the West Indian's assumed identity and the

necessity of forging a separate self from the unique situation and circumstances. Pollard (2001) commenting on Walcott's view of postcolonial condition in the Caribbean says that:

> *Post colonial literature has often been viewed by writers and critics alike, as a stripping away of colonial Eurocentricism, including the principles of modernism to revive indigenous cultural assumptions, Walcott rejects this simplified narrative of the post colonial condition: instead, he splices together the multiple and overlapping legacies of the colonizer, and the colonized in the Caribbean to claim the rich diversity of the region's cultural resources while still recognizing the trauma of the colonial experience. Walcott renews and broadens cosmopolitan modernism by representing how the Caribbean experience has been shaped by the myths and histories of Europe, Africa and the new World.*

Both Brathwaite and Walcott have also commented on each other's works, acknowledging each other's status but also distancing themselves from each other. Their responses on each other's works thus become opportunities for them to reiterate their aesthetic positions in poetry. For instance writing about Walcott's *The Castaway* Brathwaite (1965) notes that:

> *Walcott naturally takes his inspiration from his society, and his voice is often speaking away from that society rather than speaking in towards it. I think this is one reason why many people claim that poetry is irrelevant.*

Also in “Timehri” Brathwaite calls Walcott “a brilliant exceptional creatively expressing through his work the pressures and dilemmas of his plural society…. He is concerned with converting his heritage into a classical tradition, into a classical statement.

Walcott (1967) in his review of *Rights of Passage* condemns Brahwaite’s poems on the whole as “slight in their musicality and vague in feeling.” He postulates further that:

> *Mr Brathwaite’s ambition is astounding but as the reader settles into the poem his ear becomes accustomed to its modesty of expression…. Self-pity, in itself, a kind of folkways blues, very seductive to colonial poets alternates with another kind of attraction, four-letter fury.*

In his essays “What the Twilight Says: An Overture (1970) and “The Muse of History” (1974), Walcott criticizes “the new magnifiers of Africa” and the “pastoralists of the African revival,” represented among others by Brathwaite’s position, for their idealism and nostalgia, as opposed by his own more complex vision.

From the foregoing it can be discerned that although much has been written on the poetry of Brathwaite, Guillen and Walcott, little has been written on Africa in the imaginative

works of these three West Indian poets. This present study attempts to fill that vacuum.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the study of the poetry of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Nicolas Guillen and Derek Walcott has been a subject of heated controversy. The dispute has culminated in a diversity of approaches to their creative works. This study therefore explores the Post colonial theory, Formalism, New Criticism and the Representation approach and uses their insights to discuss the poets in reference because they represent and enunciate the dominant views advanced in analyzing Africa in the poetic imagination of these three West Indian poets.

POSTCOLONIALITY

Over the years much has been written about post-colonialism. The field of post-colonial studies gained prominence in the 1970's with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978. This book is an influential critique of Western constructions of the Orient. In his study of how Europe

constructed a stereotypical image of 'the orient', Said (1978) argues that nature became interchangeable. This was their 'true nature' and they could not escape it. They were a people tolerated though not admired. He further stated that stereotyping of Black in popular European representation was so common that cartoonist illustrate while caricaturists could summon up a whole gallery of 'black types' with a few simple essentialized stokes of the pen.

The appearance in 1989 of *The Empire writes Back: Theory and practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* by Bill Aschroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin consolidated the growing interest in post-colonial studies. With this development cognate terms such as 'Common Wealth', and the 'Third World', which were formerly used to describe the literature of Europe's former colonies, became unpopular. The term post – colonial has itself been the subject of considerable debate over the precise parameters of the field and its definition. However, in a general sense, it can be said to be the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized. The world was affected to some degree by the

nineteenth century European imperialism, which held sway over more than 85% of the rest of the globe.

The widely divergent experiences of these countries which range from settler, partially settled and non-settler colonies has also made Post Colonialism to transcend the boundaries of strict definition. The second college edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as “of, relating to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony.” In practice, however, the term is used more loosely. The denotative meaning suggests not only the period after the departure of the imperial powers that concerns those in the field, but also that before independence. Moreover, the “post-colonial” sometimes includes countries that have yet to achieve independence, or people in the first world countries who are minorities or even independent colonies that now contend with “neo-colonial” forms of subjugation through expanding capitalism and globalization. In other words the enthusiastic embrace of independence has not halted the march of neocolonialism in the guise of modernization, increasing globalization and trans-nationalism. If looked at from these senses, the post-colonial, rather than indicating only a

specific and materially historical event, describes the second half of twentieth-century in general as a period after colonialism.

It is also a term used to signify a position against imperialism and Euro centrism. Post-colonial analysis therefore, draws upon a wide range of theoretical positions and their associated strategies and techniques. The field is now used in wide and diverse ways for the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialism, the discursive operations of empires, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects and most importantly, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre and post independent nations and communities.

While its use has tended to focus on the cultural production of such communities, it is becoming widely used in historical, political, sociological and economic analysis as these disciplines continue to investigate the impact of European imperialism upon world societies. The prefix “post” also continues to be a source of vigorous debate amongst critics. The simpler sense of ‘post’ as meaning ‘after’ colonialism has

been contested by a more elaborate understanding of the working of colonial cultures which cut across the historically defined periods of the pre-colonial and the colonial and post-colonial from its commencement in 16th Century up to and including the neo-colonial present. Slemon (1994) thus argues that “post-colonialism,” is now used in various fields, to describe a remarkably heterogeneous set of subjects, positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises. Yet the term still continues to be used from time to time to mean simply ‘anti-colonial,” and to be synonymous with ‘post-independence’, as found in reference to the post- colonial state, for example.

Key figures in post-colonial discourse include Frantz Fanon, Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, Loomba and Barry to mention a few. Fanon (1961) analyses the gross misrepresentation of Africans in European discourse. He argues that the true story of African history has not been told because the Europeans falsified facts and celebrated only those aspects that seek to demean the Africans. His work therefore is a call to all the colonized nations to reclaim their past and reconstruct their own history.

Smith (1999:23) lends support to Fanon's view. He opines that post colonial discourse aims at decolonizing our minds so that we can recover ourselves and 'claim a space' in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity. He adds further that the discourse is a form of 'writing back' or 'talking back'. It is an attempt to know the colonizer and try to recover 'the other' through the struggle for self-determination. In other words the discourse, seen from this perspective, is a way of reasserting the image of an individual, a race, culture or a country. It is from this perspective that this theory is relevant to this discourse.

Webster (1999) argues that the relevance of post colonial discourse lies in its being a critique of imperialism. This view concurs with Said's Critique of Eurocentric Universalism in his *Orientalism* (1978). Eurocentric Universalism advocates the superiority of what is European or Western and the inferiority of what is not it (Barry1999).

FORMALISM

Formalism is a school of literary criticism, which flowered in Russia in the years before the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and

which flourished throughout the 1920s. Russian formalists included Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, Osip Brik, Yury Tynanov, Boris Eichenbaum and Boris Tomashevsky. They were a militant, polemical group of critics, who rejected the quasi-mystical symbolist doctrines that had influenced literary criticism before them, and in a practical, scientific spirit shifted attention to the material reality of the literary text itself. To them, criticism should dissociate art from mystery and concern itself with how literary texts actually worked. They argued further that the literary work was neither a vehicle for ideas nor a reflection of social reality or the incarnation of some transcendental truth. It was, instead, a material fact, it has its own specific laws, structures and devices, which were to be studied in themselves, rather than reduced to something else. A central tenet of formalism therefore was that the vitality of art depended on its devices. Other criteria or tenets according to Bennett (1979) include:

a. establishing the study of literature on a scientific footing, to constitute it as an autonomous science using methods and procedures of its own. This entailed as their primary concern, the question of "literariness", that is, the

problem of specifying those formal and linguistic properties that could be said to distinguish literature and poetry from other forms of discourse and particularly from prosaic or ordinary language.

b. at the level of method, they held that the question of literature's specificity could be resolved solely with reference to the formal properties of literary texts. It was not necessary, they argued, to take into account the historical forces operative in the construction of such texts.

c. the formalists aimed to undermine the cogency of the concern with mimesis in literary theory by arguing that literature was not and could not be a reflection of reality but only a particular, semiotically organized signification of it. Far from reflecting reality, the formalists argued that it was the ability to defamiliarize the forms through which we customarily perceive the world that uniquely distinguished literature from other forms of discourse. The majority of their studies accordingly set out to reveal the formal mechanism whereby this effect of defamiliarization was produced. They subjected

particular sentences or verse structures to meticulous analysis in order to reveal the precise nature of the transformations which they effected on the categories of ordinary language. For example Shklovsky (1917) argues that the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived, and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the literariness of an object: the object is not important.

The purport of Shklovsky's thesis therefore is defamiliarization (making strange). He argues further that to retain the freshness of our perceptions of objects, the demands of 'normal' existence require that they must become to a great extent automatized. Shklovsky distinguishes literature from 'practical' language in its constructed quality. Poetry is treated for example as the quintessentially literary use of language; it is speech organized in its phonic texture. According to Shklovsky in

studying poetic speech in its phonetic and lexical structure as well as in its characteristic distribution of words and in the characteristic thought structures compounded from the words, we find, everywhere the artistic trademark, that is, we find material obviously created to remove the automatism of perception; the author's purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception.

d. closely related to the aforementioned, the formalists argue that literature should be regarded as a practice which, though a variety of formal devices, enacts a transformation of received categories of thought and expression. Subverting the particular patterns of thought or perception imposed on reality by the categories of ordinary language, by dominant ideological forms or by the codes of other literary works, literature is thus said to make such forms strange and, in so doing, weakens their grip on the ways in which the world is perceived.

Benett (1968) elaborates further that the ultimate concern of the Formalists was with the concept of literariness. They approached particular literary texts not as ends in themselves,

to be understood on their own terms and for their own sake, but as vehicles for the exemplification and development of this concept.

Jakobson cited in (Miller 1999) lends support to this view He distinguishes poetry from poetic function, but believes that poetic function finds its full expression in poetry. While the poetic function of language has a peculiar emotive power, the poem also offers a special freedom in terms of its content that is not present in other kinds of verbal acts. In “What is Poetry?” (1933), Jakobson explains that, “because the poeticity of the verbal act makes it very clear that communication is not of prime importance, “censorship” here can be relaxed, toned down”. He adds that poetry highlights the inadequacy of the sign’s ability to “fall together” with the object, the inadequacy of words alone to constitute a poetic message. Later, he writes in “Linguistics and Poetics” that “poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total re-evaluation of discourse and all its components whatsoever”.

NEW CRITICISM

New Criticism is the American Version of Formalism and shares some general precepts with Russian Formalism. A single orthodoxy for the New Criticism as a broad movement does not exist, but several key tenets articulated by major Anglo-American critics can be discerned. (Davis 1986). The works of these critics spanned the 1920s and 1950s which was the height and period of New Criticisms active development. The main advocates of New Criticism are I.A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, W.K. Wimsatt, John Crown Ransom and Allen Tate. I.A. Richards laid the theoretical foundation for the New Criticism in his works *The Principles of Literary Criticism (1924)* and *Practical Criticism (1929).* Richards maintained in these works that although its subject was not grounded in verifiable facts, literary criticism should learn precision from the sciences and that by isolating the text; the critic could examine it more objectively. On the nature of poetic language Richards distinguishes between the “referential” language of Science and the “emotive” language of poetry.

Davis (1986) argues that Brooks remains the quintessential New Critic. He is famous for his *The Well-Wrought Urn (1942*). Brooks and Robert Penn Warren also coauthored *Understanding Poetry (1938*) and *Understanding Fiction (1943*). Also Brooks and W.K. Wimsatt wrote *Literary Criticism: A Short History (1957)*. His essay "The Language of Paradox" (1942) taken from *The Well-Wrought Urn* exemplifies the kind of close reading hat the New Critics valued and emphasized. In this essay Brooks echoes Richards's distinction between referential and emotive language. He also clearly points out that scientific language contains no trace of paradox, while paradox is, "appropriate and inevitable to poetry. (Brooks quoted in Davis 1986). It is these ideas of critics about the nature of literary criticism that have ultimately become the tenets of the New Criticism. The new discipline has as its basic tenets the following:

a. emphasiziing the close reading of texts, elevating it far above either authorial intention or reader response.

b. advocating the displacement of content in literary analysis and the treating of form in a manner analogous to empirical research. Unlike the Russian formalists who avoided any focus

on content, the New Critics posited paradox and irony as controlling figures and, in effect, turned them into content.

c. organizing the larger, generic forms of literature in accord with the inner ordering of works as revealed in specific analysis or "close reading."

d. reliance on "imagery" as a concept with which to define form. New critics like Cleanth Brooks made the literary image the primary material or constituent of form itself, Drawiing heavily from the modernists' ideas about imagery the new Critics created a formalism that viewed literary form as arrestable, with a content that may be examined more or less directly.

e. believing that a work can be read objectively and accurately in light of its actual structure or form. According to the New Critics, a work can have a single, or "correct," interpretation. They emphasize on the concept of aesthetic wholeness and unity as well as unified or single interpretation of a work. According to them a work, properly read, will always be unified by a set of tensions, as expressed in paradox and irony.

Since the focus of this dissertation is not primarily on style, Formalism is therefore important as a tool of analysis only in that it gives the basis for the study of the formal properties of

literary texts being studied. As an aspect of Post Structuralism, Post colonialism gives flexibility to finding meaning in the text from divergent angles.

REPRESENTATION THEORY

The Representation theory is the most appealing and relevant to this study. Indeed all the other theories used as instruments of analysis are forms of representation. Representation has come to occupy a new and important place today in the study of culture. Stuart Hall (1997) defines representation as an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully. Hall (ed) (1997) further states that:

> *At heart of the meaning process in culture, then, are two related "systems of representation'. The first enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things people, objects events, abstract, ideas, etc. – and our system of concepts, our conceptual maps. The second*

> *depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts. The relation between 'things', concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call 'representation'*

Hall identifies the following three approaches to representation of meaning through language: the reflective or mimetic approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist or constructivist approach.

The basic tenet of the reflective approach is that meaning lies in the object person, idea or event in the real world. Language functions like a mirror, to reflect the meaning, as it already exists in the world. This conforms to the mimetic theory as propounded by the Greeks. Aristotle in his Poetics redefines art as mimesis or imitation. For him, art is the real portrayal of an object and not the shadow. Aristotle therefore argues that epic poetry; tragedy, comedy and all other kinds are all in their general conceptions modes of imitation. This imitation here means the representation of the countless forms, which the lives of the human spirits maintain.

The instinct of imitation is inborne or implanted in human beings from birth and this is one differing factor between human beings and other animals. It is through imitation that we learn as children. Man has the highest capacity for imitation. In fact, man derives pleasure in being able to imitate something. Aristotle's theory of mimesis has three different levels:

a. Imitation can make a thing better than the original,

b. Imitation can deliberately distort as art can imitate life at a meaner level. For example comedy represents men lower than they are.

c. It is possible to make an exact imitation of an object or situation.

Aristotle believes that there is an instinct for imitation in man and when that instinct is satisfied it gives pleasure. Mimetic theory also states that language simply works by reflecting or imitating the truth that is already there and fixed.

The intentional approach on the other hand is based on the assumption that it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. Words mean what the author intends them to mean. In other words, this approach emphasizes the fact that we use language

to convey or communicate things, which are special, or unique to us, especially to the way we see the world.

However, this approach contains some inherent weaknesses. Hall (1997) contends that the author cannot be the sole or unique source of meanings in language, since that would mean that expression be made in entirely private languages. But the essence of language is communication and that, in turn, depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes. Language can never be wholly a private game. The private intended meanings, however personal to the writer, have to enter into the rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood. Language is a social system through and through. This means that private thoughts have to negotiate with all the other meanings for words or images which have been stored in language which the use of the language system will inheritably trigger into action.

The third approach is the constructionist or constructivist approach. This approach, unlike the second one, emphasizes the public and social character of language. It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don't mean:

meaning is constructed, using representational systems – concepts and signs. According to this approach, the material world, where things and people exist, must not be confused with the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate. Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning; it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. It is the social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningfully to others.

Hall concludes by saying that representation is a practice, a kind of work, which uses material objects and acts. But the meaning depends not on the material quality of the sign, but its symbolic function. It is because a particular sound or word stands for, symbolizes or represents a concept that it can function in language, as a sign ‘d’ convey meaning – or, as the constructionists say, signify. The constructionist or constructivist approach has been used as a tool of analysis because it provides the premise for constructing meaning or for

exploring the mode of by representing the Caribbean society in its proper perspective through the language system.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the historical background of the Caribbean society. It has traced the centrality of Africa in the inscription of the multiple racial and ethnic groups, disparate yet connected into the peculiar Caribbean personality. It has shown the attempts by the various Caribbean peoples to define themselves and their society and to create a common, yet shifting heritage in all facets of life. The various colonial occupations on the Caribbean Island and the way these have influenced the literature of the region were also considered, in addition to the description of various theoretical approaches to the study of Literature such as Post-colonialism, Formalism, New Criticism and Representation theory as tools of analysis.

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CHAPTER TWO

RE-INSCRIPTION OF THE SELF IN BRATHWAITE'S *THE ARRIVANTS*

2.1 PREAMBLE

This chapter explores Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *The Arrivants,* tracing the complex Caribbean heritage and its African roots. It is argued that the movement, physical and spiritual, of Brathwaite from the West Indies to Africa and America and back to the West Indies linked him to his origin and paved the way for him to relate with his history and enhance his self-awareness. Through these movements a new man has emerged with a new personality and with a deeper perception of the Caribbean identity. In this context, Brathwaite's textuality is anchored on personality formation or the re-inscription of the self.

2.2 AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Edward Kamau Brathwaite was born Lawson Edward Brathwaite in Bridetown, in 1930. His date of birth is significant

to his poetry because it coincided with the second phase of Caribbean writing in which there was a gradual shift from concern with dispossession to support for the possibility of creolisation. He was the son of Hilton Brathwaite, a warehouse clerk, and former Beryl Gill. He is a poet, playwright, critic and historian, who has examined in his works the *complex* Caribbean heritage and its African roots. His profession as a historian has influenced his poetry as he writes from the point of view of a historian who has researched into African history. Brathwaite made his breakthrough in writing and came to the limelight with the publication in 1973 of *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1973).

The Arrivants, unlike most West Indian writings, is structured in the form of a trilogy. It is a set of three long poems made up of *Rights of Passage (1967), Masks (1968), and Islands* (1969). Each of the poems is divided into numbered cantos which are in turn sub-divided into numbered poems. Each of the individual poems is further divided into numbered groups or stanzas. Through this complex structure, Brathwaite introduced a new structure to West Indian poetry. His poetry

outlines a crucial shift in sensibility different from the obsessive sense of loss, violent protest or inverterate cynicism of the writers who preceded him and whose preoccupation he considers different from his. Brathwaite's poetry moves towards a more speculative vision of 'wholeness' in the Caribbean.

ANALYSIS OF THE POEMS

2.3 Rights of Passage

Rights of Passage (1967), concentrates on the history of Africa as it relates to the Caribbean as well as the colonial, political and economic development of the Islands. References are also made to Europe as a force responsible for the situation or conditions in the Caribbean. Brathwaite uses personal experience to comment on the situation in the region. The poems of this section are clustered around the theme of spiritual dislocation, concern with the removal of amnesia in the West Indian psyche and the creation of an awareness of the injustice perpetuated in the region. (King: 1979). The poem 'Postlude/Home', for example, is an exile poem, full of recurring images of alienation and disillusionment. In this poem, there is

a deep search for racial origin and space which is brought out through the use of rhetorical questions:

Where then is the nigger's
home?
In Paris, Brixton, Kingston
Rome?
Here?
Or in Heaven
What crime is that dark skin hiding?
Will exile never
end?
Will these spent
tears
poor pauper's pence,
earn him a little
solace here---

The persona in this poem is eager to end the "loveless toil" (exile). The images of "pauper", "poor", "nigger", 'exile' express the degradation of the blacks and their inscription as the other. Paris, Brixton, Kingston are mentioned because they are sites of the plight of the Blacks in the Diaspora. Whereas France and Britain are major European powers that colonized Africa, they inevitably, symbolize oppression. The rhetorical question invokes ambivalence about identity and location and their unsettled form for the Negro. The persona questions the doctrine of heaven because even the church could not provide the route of escape for him.

Moore (1969:126) describes *Rights of Passage* as the only first part of a poetic trilogy in which Brathwaite traces the process whereby millions of Negroes became disenfranchised of language, culture and home; of everything which distinguishes one man from another, except the colour of his skin.

Wilson -Tagoa further adds that its first section, "*Rights of Passage",* an exploration of African response to the New world, is enclosed by a prelude and epilogue, showing the point from which the poet begins his examination and portending the direction of his movement. *Masks,* its most unified section and therefore deliberately placed in the centre, traces the evolution of the West African people simultaneously as it enacts the modern West Indian's personal and psychic return to his African origins. Such simultaneous perceptions of periods in time enable Brathwaite to make connections between the past and present and to deduce historical lessons without being limited by or circumscribed within the aberrations of particular periods. The trilogy's last section, *Islands*, is, in the context of the first two sections, a beginning. The poet's consciousness widened by his encounter in *Masks* and by the trilogy's

underlying perspective of circularity and continuity, re-explores his previous themes as he gropes towards wider dimensions of historical experience and their correlation in poetic form.

Wilson – Tagoa (1998:184-185), lending her voice on Brathwaite's preoccupation in his trilogy says that even as a historian, Brathwaite writes with an artist's eye for possibility and the future, revealing a perspective that influenced his mythical re-arrangement of history in *The Arrivants*. The imaginative leeway of the poet allowed him to link periods of African, Caribbean, and American history in his simultaneous presentations in sections of his trilogy. Brathwaite's purpose thus becomes more ambitious, intent on breaking the historical boundaries of space and time to offer West Indian man a wider conception of himself in history. The deliberate and epic arrangement of *The Arrivants* reflects this purpose, just as the multiplicity of point of view, moods, tone, and voice reflects the variety of historical experiences he draws upon.

The analysis made above points to the fact that Brathwaite's *The Arrivants* is consciously structured not only to enhance organic links between Africa and the New World but also to weave interactions into the New World consciousness

and code of values. This is achieved via the poet's memory which travels backward and forward, connecting the past to the present. Brathwaite's deliberate structuring of the poems suggests a "relationship between creativity and history, recovering the spirit of the past and creating new symbols and words for the present and the future.

As a critique of imperialism, post colonial discourse aims at re-defining the African experience from the perspective of the victim. In a similar way Brathwaite traces the contact between the West and Africa as a prelude to his preoccupation with the duality of the Caribbean experience. In this context, Brathwaite's recourse to history is intended to resolve the ontological question by highlighting the powerful process of polyvalence or multiculturalism. In '' New World A-Comin'' Brathwaite takes the reader into the contact between the West and Africa. He depicts the trials and tribulations of Africans who were uprooted and rendered helpless, heroless and leaderless. He shows how they were chained and transported to the new world under despicable conditions:

> *---to the stars by which this ship floats to new worlds, new waters, new harbours the pride of our ancestors mixed with the wind and the water the*

flesh and the flies, the whips and the fixed fear
of pain this chained and welcoming port.

Brathwaite also posits in this poem that Africa was helpless and could not resist the white invaders of Africa. He is lamenting the process of uprooting the Africans from their original homeland because they were not able to challenge the invaders. He is nostalgic about Africa when he says:

It will be a long time before we see
this land again, these tress
again, drifting inland with the sound
of surf, smoke rising

It will be a long time before we see
these farm again, soft wet slow green
again: Aburi, Akwamu,
mist rising.

Although fascination with Africa is not a new theme in West Indian poetry, Brathwaite's recourse to history and his research into pre-colonial Africa and slavery gives his own poetic rendition of this optical experience, its eloquence.

In 'The Journey, the poet starts by mentioning African countries such as Egypt. He depicts the journey of the slaves from Egypt, which symbolizes Africa in its entirety. Through these journeys Africans were uprooted from their origins and

taken to an unknown land in slavery. The poet psychologically transports the reader into the Ashanti town of Ghana and. to, Timbuktu, Niger and the Congo.

In ‘South’, which is constructed in a more conventional eight-line stanza, Brathwaite focuses on the migratory impulses of the Caribbean people which is given expression by the rivers and oceans. He thus signifies the seas and oceans and the spirit which keep them moving in a reflective tone.

But today I recapture the islands
bright beaches:blue mist from the ocean
rolling into the fishermen’s houses.
By these shores I was born: sound of the sea
came in at my window, life heaved and
breathed in me then
with the strength of that turbulent soil.

In ‘Wings of a Dove’ Brathwaite as the champion of the Rastafari Movement, reveals the paradoxes and the illusion behind Rastafarianism and the social perceptions that give rise to it. His portrayal uncovers the strong self-awareness and the recognition of the rootlessness of the middle class that inspire their dream of escape and rebellion (Dabydeen and Tagoe 1987). Through the descriptive language and images Brathwaite paints the picture of the ‘Rastaman’ or ‘Brother-man’, with an indication that ‘Brother-man’ is the truest spade of

all. The Rasta movement emerged in the New World as a reaction against slavery, deprivation and cultural repression. It advocates for a return to Africa as the solution to the plight of the Blackman in the diaspora. Unable to repair this cultural and psychological bridge, the Rasta man rebels and preaches violence from one part of the world to the other. He is ultimately exiled from Jamaica, Africa, and from Britain and sacrifices his position in the real world to occupy an exalted position in some imaginative realms where actions and movements are invalidated and where solutions are more religious than revolutionary.

The Rasta man opposes the dominant slave work ethics of the church. He also rebels in order to assert his being outside the dominant structure. Brathwaite associates with Brother man's creativity, religious syncretism and political rebellion. There is a constant re-interpretation and redefinition of the place of the black as enunciated in the Bible. Therefore, in this poem Brother man is peace-loving, dove-like and non-violent in behaviour. However, in some cases the same Brother man illustrates yet other contradictory impulses. In the poem,

Brathwaite gives him several names such as prophet, singer, the scourge of the gutter and the guardian of the oppressed:

And I
Rastafar – I
in Babylon's boom
town, crazed by the moon
and the peace of this chalice, I
Prophet and singer, scourge
of the gutter, guardian.

The musical traditions of the New World such as Reggae and Calypso have influenced Brathwaite's composition in this poem. This is discerned in the musical renditions of his lines. He has also captured the various dialects and varieties of English with their difference in syntax, vocabulary and grammar that is also typical of most of the New World. For example '*And I' and* '*Rastafar – I' are typical Rastafarian idioms.*

From this Rastafarian theme, Brathwaite explores the profiteering and exploitation by multinational corporations' which contributed to the dehumanization of the Islands. This is depicted in the poem 'Calypso.' Prosperity was quite common in the Caribbean but was restricted to the very few whites. People who contributed to the prosperity of the New World are alienated:

It became an inland dance
some people doin' well
while others are catchin' hell
o the boss gave our Johnny the sack
though we beg him please
please to take him back.

The racial theme becomes very obvious in this poem:

But what of black Sam
with the big splayed toes
and the shoe black shiny skin?

He carries bucketfuls of water
'cause his ma's just had another daughter.

And what of John with the European name
who went to school and dreamt of fame
his boss one day called him a fool
And the boss hadn't even been to school…

For we who have achieved nothing
work
who have not built
dream
who have forgotten all
dance
and dare to remember
the paths we shall never remember
again: Atumpan---
the tribes of Ashanti---
dreaming the dream of
Tutu, Anokye----

Here Brathwaite depicts the longing by the Africans who have been taken away to return to their native land. Such African names in the poem as 'Atumpan,' 'Tutu' and 'Anokye'

are meant to capture the dual identity and cultural heritage of the Blacks in the Caribbean.

The theme of emigration is treated In “The Emigrants”. Brathwaite in this poem recounts the ordeals of the emigrants as manifested in their mental diminishment and lost of identity. The sense of impersonality and invisibility, which the emigrant experiences, is for Brathwaite a bar to his full development as a person (Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe 1987). Dispossessed, homeless, aimless and without any culture to identify with, they looked to the white world for survival. But even here, they are cheated, slighted and battered:

Where to?
They do not know,
Canada, the Panama
Canal, the Mississippi, pain fields, Florida?
Or on to dock
at hissing smoke looked
Glasgow?
Where do they go?
They do not know,
Seeking a job
they settle for the very best
the agent has to offer:
Jabbing a neighbour
out of work for four bob
less a week.

There is humour in the poem as the poor Blacks are depicted roaming about aimlessly in search of good jobs only to settle for the best jobs the agent has to offer. At the end of the poem, they are still searching for identity. However, Brathwaite expresses hope for a better future with the efforts of Afro-American Civil Rights Champions, such as Jimmy Baldwin and Martin Luther King. The last two lines of the poem state the tragic bitterness of the protagonist:

> *Our colour beats a restless drum*
> *but only the bitter come.*

According to Brathwaite the irony of the black man's lot is that though he has given much in terms of labour and natural resources to the technological and economic advancement of Europe and America, Africa is itself in dire need of development and a more humane treatment. The absence of advanced technological and scientific know- how is the result of the unwholesome relationship that has existed for so long between Europe and Africa.

Rights of Passage, (1967) the first part of *The Arrivants* (1973) is therefore informed by the disquietude, restlessness and meaninglessness of life in the West Indies. The image of

Africa evoked in this section of the collection is that it serves only to emphasize the despair of the West Indian and the desolateness of his existence. It is this situation that leads the persona to embark on a journey to Africa, a journey that constitutes the second part of the Trilogy.

For a long time the black people in the Diaspora in general and in the Caribbean in particular have yearned to be identified with their African heritage. This is as a result of the total subjection of Africa and the black race to white consciousness through political, cultural and economic domination. It is this longing which takes Brathwaite to Africa in search for his roots. The next section *Masks* is concerned with his return to Africa and his experience in the Africa world.

2.4 *MASKS*

The poems titled *Masks*, the second part of Brathwaite's collection, are located in Africa, particularly in the Ghanaian society. Here the poet is reunited with Africa and has began the process of self-discovery and self-identification. While *Rights of Passage* concentrates on Blacks in the America's moving from the West Indies to the United States and back, Brathwaite

reverses the middle passage voyage in Masks by returning the reader to Africa. *Masks* opens with the poem 'Prelude'. Here he invokes the names of various historical and legendary figures who occupy in this case the place of ancestors both for the Caribbean and African peoples. The poem is in a form of a prayer being offered to gods and goddesses. It is also a form of sacrifice and within it there are references to traditional objects of this sacrifice. A number of things are involved in this poem, the prayer, the invocation of gods and goddesses and the names of ancestors:

> *A sase yaa,*
> *you, mother of the Earth,*
> *on whose soil*
> *I have placed my tools*
> *on whose soil*
> *I will hoe*
> *I will work*
> *The year has come round*
> *again:*

A sase yaa, is the earth goddess of the Akan people. Brathwaite sets out in this poem to reconstruct the history of his ancestors and the origins of the Blackman generally. The poem repudiates the eurocentric ascription of savagery and primitivism to Blacks and Africans by describing the growth and

dynamism of the African heritage. The poem thus refers to the kingdoms of Congo, Ghana and Mali and the growth of these civilizations with the historian's eye in order to set the records straight. (King: 1979). Central to *Masks* is the poet's encounter with the African universe and his initiation into a world of rituals and mystery.

Masks represents the point around which the collective adventure recounted in *The Arrivants* revolves. The ritualized passage to some form of self-knowledge suggested by the title of the first volume only begins to take on its proper meaning in the second, in which the poet narrates in precise terms the phases through which he advances toward an integration of the self through a reconciliation with history. (Irele 1994)

Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe (1987:34) opine that *Masks* is as an enactment of the Caribbean man returning to Africa, an experience that Brathwaite broadens with a simultaneous evocation of the circumstances of the middle passage and of Africa's own historical progress and development up to that time. These three areas of experience to which the poet persona responds through his borrowed Mask present a comprehensive African world, which the Poet cannot possess

but to which he feels himself related. This awareness and acknowledgement of kinship not only purge his fear and shame about the past but also lead to an understanding of the sources of his West Indian identity.

In *Masks*, Brathwaite explores traditional rituals of libation and heroic deeds of Africans. The general theme of quest for what was it in the history of Africa, which made slave trade possible, pervades the volume:

Out
of this
bright
sun, this
white plague
of heaven,
this leaven,
this leaven
ing heat
of the seven
kingdoms:
Songhai,Mali;
Chad, Ghana,
Tim-
Buctu, Volta,
and the bitter
waste
that was
Ben-
in, shout
comes
this song.

This same pattern is continued in ”The Making of the Drum” in which poem Brathwaite organizes the experience around the drum as an object in itself and as a metaphor for the black heritage. The African essence and image is brought out through African oral and aesthetic materials. The drum here is symbolic of the poet’s quest for his roots in Africa. The drum is a binding force because it allows communication between the living and the dead and between Africa and Blacks in the Diaspora. The drum is produced by the Blackman in order to articulate his existence and to communicate with the gods. ‘Making’ connotes creativity. So the drum is also a creative process. To get the skin for the drum Brathwaite says:

First the goat
must be killed
and the skin
stretched.

In fact a substantial portion of the poem “Atumpan” is actually composed of the repetitive, evocative drum salutation of the Akan people. Brathwaite in this poem sets out to reconstruct the history of his people. He uses their indigenous medium of communication. He has immersed himself within the various cultural patterns and modes of the Akan people and this

poem manifests his indebtedness to these cultural forms. The process of creating drum is not only suggestive of creativity but also with the ritual associated with drum making. The drum in this essence serves a very important social and religious purpose. Through recourse to oral tradition and the invocation of the tree deity the poet celebrates the African cultural and religious myths:

Kon kon kon kon
kun kun kun kun
Funtumi Akore
Tweneboa Akore
Tweneboa Kodia
Kodia Tweneduru

Funtumi Akore
Tweneboa Akore
Spirit of the Cedar
Spirit of the Cedar Tree
Tweneboa Kodia

The poet uses this poem to extol and glorify African rituals and values. The predominant style to articulate this is the frequent use of repetition. The poem is a lyrical oral art which is designed to be sung in praise of an African deity.

The next concern in Mask is with slavery. In the poem “Ougadougou” Brathwaite projects the devastating theme of slavery experienced by the Africans. The poem paints a graphic picture of confusion and terror as a result of the arrival of the

colonial master through the Niger River. Written In a narrative form, the persona in his shock and disillusionment asks some thought provoking questions thus:

> *--- where are the dancers*
> *the flutes; read voices*
> *cut from the river, the songs'*
> *achievement of cymbals?*

This connotes the pandemonium that accompanied colonialism and the gradual eroding of the royal musicians in the face of this new threat. The poem ends in the form of a historical commentary:

> *They came riding, porcupine driving*
> *our errors before them; too soft,*
> *too blandished, too ready for peace and for*
> *terror.*

Herein lies the contradiction of slavery and colonialism in Africa. The colonialists came to proclaim the gospel of peace on the one hand but had the sword to conquer and dominate on the other.

"Tano" explores the theme of exile. The poem reveals the traumatic experiences of the blacks in exile, especially the brutal treatment meted on to them on the plantations by colonial oppressors. Images of 'death' 'orphan',' whips', 'darkness'

‘blood’, ‘night’ are used to capture the hostile and frustrating conditions of exile.

Whom does death overlook?
whom does death overlook?

I am an orphan
and when I recall the death
of my father
water from eyes
from my eyes
falls upon me

The underlying tone in this poem is that of despair, pathos and hopelessness.

The poem “Masks” opens with the exaltation and praise of the African gods thus:

God of the path
way,
god of the
tree
god of all part
ing, we
greet you

Your tree
has been split
by a white axe
of lightning
the wise
are di
vided, the
eyes
of our elders
are dead.

The central theme of this poem is disconnection. The poem is here lamenting the detachment of the black Caribbean from their ancestral gods as a result of colonialism. 'The white axe' symbolizes the white colonial masters. Though the poem takes an initial mood of lamentation, the end of the poem reveals some optimism and hope that reconnection with the African gods by Africans in the Diaspora will be effected once again.

In "Legba" the fusion comes out clearly. Here the Yoruba *Eleshin Elegba* has been transplanted into the Caribbean Island and has become an important god in Haiti, relevant both to Africa and the Caribbean. In Yoruba mythology, *Eleshin Elegba*, is a god, who mediates between men and the spirit world. He is the passage way i.e. mediator. He is a god of change associated with certain characteristics such as ability for speech. According to Brathwaite, the god plays an important part in ceremonies and voodoo worship. In this poem there is also concern with the ways in which colonialism has affected every sphere of life in the Caribbean. Those who have fought and contributed to the development of the West have nothing to

show for it. For example Legba had participated in imperial battles and other wars but his children still suffer economic deprivation and hunger:

He had fought in the last war
and has ribbons to show for

It; knows Burma, Malaya and has been
to Singapore; gets a small pension

But apart from that
not very much attention.

His children eat dirt,
are pot-
belied,knobble
kneed sticks down.

Those who risked their lives fighting for the colonial masters are the worse hit in society. Their children eat dirt and are pot' bellied because of malnutrition. Their progress is truncated. Their school system is bankrupt characterized by lies and falsified history. Those whose skins are brown enough find themselves in the world of books, banks, insurance and business. Brathwaite here introduces the racial theme. One can only make it in this society based on the colour of one's skin and not by his contribution.

Post colonial critics reject the claims of universalism alluded to Eurocentric discourse on identity and canonical western literature. Instead, they seek to show the limitations of its outlook. In Brathwaite's poetry, this concern is depicted through satire and mockery. In 'Caliban', for instance, Brathwaite paints a stereotypical picture of the Blackman as it is obtained in racist literature. However, the image of the Blackman in this case clearly has a different explanation, as his intention is to satirize the racists. The poem is divided into three parts. In the first part, sterility, poverty and disjointed psychology of the Africans are presented. The vast majority of the Blacks in the Caribbean are poor:

Ninety – five percent of my people poor
Ninety – five percent of my people black
Ninety – five percent of my people dead
You have heard it all before o Leviticus o
Jeremiah o
Jean – Paul Sartre

'Ninety - five percent of my people' is repeated to emphasize the fact hat in spite of the fact that the Blacks constitute the largest in terms of population; they are the least in the social ladder. The economy is concentrated in the hands of the few whites who also have the political power. In the

second stanza there is a comment on the various revolutions staged in the Islands but subverted by forces against change. There is a great deal of game as Brathwaite plays with words, sounds and the Carib jah pattern:

And
ban
Cal –
iban
llike to play
pan
At the car-
nival;
pran –
cing up to the lim
bo silence
down
down
down
so the god won't drown
him
down
down
down
to the is –
land town.

Brathwaite's portrait of the masquerade dancer points to the dancer's potential for spiritual regeneration but Caliban prefers the dance of escape, the dance or descent into the self as a means of obliterating an oppressive present (Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe 1987).

Brathwaite's post-coloniality is widened by the consciousness generated by his experience in Africa. He has come to the realization that a physical return to Africa is not the answer for the Blacks in the Diaspora. Instead, the solution rests in staying there and trying to make the best of life out of their new environment. It is this realization which made him to return to the New World which the final section *Islands* focuses on.

2.5 *ISLANDS*

Islands (1969) the third section of Brathwaite's trilogy captures the poet's return to the West Indies in his new quest for

the meaning of Black existence. Brathwaite's return reveals the progression to a full ethnic consciousness. The experience he acquired during his sojourn and his return lead up to a view that any authentic or mature cultural identity in the Caribbean involves the harmonization of European and African sources. The acceptance of this cyclical wholeness of history enhances the quest for meaningful existence for Blacks. According to

Dabydeen and Wilson- Tagoe (1987:29-30) Brathwaite's poetry in *Islands* challenges the colonial view of the Caribbean as an uncreative product of the imperial order. His sensitivity to the creative areas of West Indian experience and his recognition of a numinous spiritual quality in peasants' sensibility inspire his hopes of redemption and restoration. The poems reflect this vision, alternating between visions of sterility in which all memory is lost and visions of hope in which the poet himself becomes a priest, attempting a recovery of the 'word'.

This final section contains a European song mode. Apart from the association to dance, music and carnival, which the

song suggests, there is also a playful use of words for example 'limbo' is used over and over again:

And limbo stick is the silence in front of me
limbo
limbo
limbo like me
limbo
limbo like me

limbo
limbo like me

The poem ‘Tizzic’ depicts the lifestyle of the unemployed Blacks and the average Caribbean. They often resort to all forms of vices in order to survive. For example the persona is portrayed in the following manner:

An’ then there was Tizzic.
he prefer the booze
an’ women
it shame muh heart to think
how many tings he had wid chile
shipley, Bots phosphorine
yet you know, mister man Hick Tizzic
was one, de few hard back
man got livin down hey

you could trust (except wid yuh daughter).
all dat rum soacin up in he liver
into he bile an’ he blood stream.

In order to cope with the harsh realities of life in the Caribbean Tizzic resorted to drunkenness, womanizing and parties. Tizzic’s carnival dance is thus just an escape route to an imagined and borrowed heaven as he failed to exploit the potential of the dance. There is also the calypso theme in this poem and the fracturing of words and phrases.

In “Islands”’, Brathwaite captures, with nostalgia, the island with vivid and light imagery. The sudden invasion of the

Island and the relics of that invasion are brought to depict time and history:

Looking through a map
of the Antilles, you see how time
has trapped
its humble servants here. De-
scendants of the slave do not
lie in the lap
of the more fortunate
gods. The rat

The representation theory states that it is the language system we are using to represent our concepts which conveys meaning. In a similar manner, Brathwaite in this poem makes much use of symbols and imagery with some interjections of African pastoral words that are common to the people of the Caribbean society in order to make the world meaningful to them. Brathwaite is also concerned with the issues of 'roots', which informs the use of such words that refer to places in Africa such as Nairobi, Timbuktu and Arawak.

"Ananse"' has the theme of loneliness and separation of the Negro from his ancestral root. The Negro mind wanders in a vague and strange environment as he tries to recapture past memories of his native place of Africa:

With a black snake's un

Winking eye
Thinking, thinking through glass
Through quartz
quarries of stony water
with a doll's liquid gaze, chrysalis
storing leaves,
memories trunked up in a dark attic,
he stumps up the stares
of our windows, he stares, stares
he squats on the tips.

Brathwaite in this poem creates images of African life.

In "Jah", the theme of forced emigration of Africans via the slave trade is subsumed in some form of lamentation about Africa and its lost glory. In the minds of the victims, the poet creates poetic scenes giving reference to African countries and other places where the journeys of slavery took them viz:

Nairobi's male elephants uncurl
their trumpets to heaven
toot – Toot- takes it up
in Havana
in Harlem

The tone of lamentation of loss of the folkways of Africa and identify is captured in the following lines:

For the land has lost the memory of the most
secret places we see the moon but cannot
remember its meaning a dark skin is a chain
but it cannot recall the name of its tribe, There
are no chiefs in the village.

Williams Walsh (1973) describes Brathwiate as a "Prophet, Missionary and Propagandist and says that his poems attempt to dramatize not only the pain but the wound to his being and the damage to human nature caused by the deracination of the Negro soul---". In the poem "Trade Winds" Braithwaite captures this assertion. Through rich use of imageries he brings out the "deracination" of the Negro slaves in an auction market: As it is common with the New Critics, Brathwaite in this poem, relies on imagery as a concept with which to define form. He has made the literary image the primary material or constituent of form itself.

At the desk

in this cell
in this womb

the slave sweats
cotton field of Oxford
whip lash of political officer

The blacks are subjected to various forms of indignities:

Demerara bleeds
Anguilla bleeds
Kingston breeds felonies

There is also the subtle questioning of the religion of love, which finds expression in the "Ten Commandments"

Thou shall not covet thy neighbour's ox nor
his ass nor his wife nor any thing that is thy
neighbour's

The hypocrisy and deception of the white colonial masters are exposed in this poem. They preach and teach what they themselves do not practice. They are thieves in disguise. The word 'disguise' almost assumes a musical tone because of its frequent repetition.

Brathwaite's poems are also stylistically impelled on a tide of rich rhythmic resources. There are patches as expected in any long poem, which are flat and perfunctory and also moments of considerate power and intensity. The poem ''The Cracked Mother" is a long poem. Mother is used in allegorical terms to couch, in an extended metaphor, to mean Africa and the partition of the continent. The word 'Crack' stands for this partition.

The three 'nuns' represent the Germans, the French and the Britons, the major occupying forces of colonialism in Africa:

I cried. But on the sea
three nuns appeared
black specks stalked the horizon of my fear
Santa Marias with black silk sails.

These colonial powers came with their ships and forcefully shipped the Africans away in very unfavourable conditions. References are made to Christopher Columbus, the great explorer, who 'robbed' the world. The brutality of the colonized is captured thus:

> *Were these the swift ships sent from harbour?*
> *was this the fleet my pride unfurled?*
> *Pirates in smiling ships, they'd rob the world I*
> *ruled and not a trick I brought could bribe their*
> *cruel slaughter for still the black silk walked*
> *towards me on the water.*

While the Africans were crying the colonizers came with smiling ships. The blacks were the trapped fish caught in the net of these happy Pirates.

"Ancestors'' recalls the search for roots and identify. The persona here attempts to rediscover his 'pride' by retracing his ancestors who he believes were Africans. He attempts to examine the lost African values, and compares them with the cultural values of the white men. The black were living their own lives in their own way till the white man intruded. Things began to fall apart.

> *--- great caterpillar tractors clatter down*
> *the broken highway now; a diesel engine*
> *grunts where pigs once hunted garbage.*

Brathwaite uses ‘my grandfather’ in this poem to symbolize the ancestors of the black West Indians. The death of the persona’s grandfather is also used to symbolize the loss of the African values and cultural heritage.

The poem is written in short verse, which allows the reader a sense of ease and easy understanding of the poet’s meaning. There is also detailed description of events. The repetition of words, such as ‘I’, ‘He’ and ‘She’ runs through the poem for the sake of emphasis.

The rhythm of the Caribbean song especially reggae and the calypso is also conceptualized in this poem:

Come - a look
come - a look
see wha’ happen

sookey dead
sookey dead
sookey dead o

sookey dead
sookey dead
sookey dead o

him a - wuk
him a - wuk
till ’e bleed o

Written in three lines stanzas the song is rendered emotionally to depict the travails and brutal treatment of Africans in the Caribbean, which has resulted in the death of many. The general tone of this song is that of pathos. Reading this poem arouses a feeling of pity and sympathy for Africa.

This is closely followed by the poem “Ogun”. Ogun is the Yoruba god of iron. It is believed to be the custodian of the Yoruba people. It guides and protects them, especially in time of war and calamity. By alluding to the Yoruba Ogun, the poet is simply tracing his roots to Africa. This poem expresses the historical event of slavery and depicts the gruesome life of the Black Caribbeans. The European ‘s presence even after the era of slavery, still plagues the Caribbean world. The poem attempts to depict the rate of economic instability and the adverse effect of colonialism on the West Indies:

> *But he was poor and most days he was hungry*
> ---
> *dry shuttered eyes, slack anciently everted lips, flat uined face, eaten by pox, ravaged by rat*

The theme of poverty is heightened by the way the colonialists enriched themselves with the labour of the blacks.

They used their ill-gotten wealth to develop their homelands at the expense of the Caribbean Island. The blacks work and work very hard but only end up hungry and living as beggars.

Formalist criticism shifted attention to the material reality of the literary text itself. It argues that criticism should dissociate art from mystery and be concerned with how literary texts actually worked because the vitality of art depends on its devices. This fact is illustrated in Brathwaite's poetry through his use of imagery and symbols. For example images of 'Mahogany,' 'Sand paper'; 'Saw' are used in this poem to depict the suffering of the black West Indians. Creativity is also suggested.

The poem "Anvil" further expatiates on the themes of exploitation, oppression and brutality of the black West Indians. This is captured through Tom:

Here old Tom lived: his whole life
tight house no bigger than your
sitting room. Here was his world
banged like a fist on broken
chairs, bare table and the side-
board dresser where he kept his cups.
One wooden only door, still latched,
hasp broken; one window, wooden,
broken; four slats still intact.
Darkness pours from these wrecked boards

and from the crab – torn spaces underneath
the door.

Tom the slave is symbolic of all the suffering black slaves in the Island. The blacks are languishing in squalor and their living conditions are quite degrading. They live in a harsh world. Brathwaite makes elaborate use of rhymes in the poem, which gives the composition a lyrical touch. It is a long poem of forty-eight stanzas, which are constructed in an unequal length.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Brathwaite, like so many other poets of the Caribbean, senses that what the Black of the West Indies needs, is good knowledge about his past and present conditions. The quest to search for identity and a sense of longing is believed by this poet to be the basic needs of the West Indians. With convincing details, Brathwaite has written about the dilemma of the Black man in the face of European oppression. However, it is worth noting that whether the black West Indian's ancestors are from Africa or elsewhere what is important is that he must learn the shape and feeling of his new Caribbean environment and make himself a part of it. Therefore by tracing his roots back to Africa

Brathwaite has found something with which he can connect, something from which his life and art can feed and grow, but the Islands are still his own real and sufficient world. *The Arrivants* is therefore consciously structured not only as a means of enhancing organic links between Africa and the New World but also as a means of weaving interactions into the New World consciousness and code of values.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE AFRICAN MARK: NEO-NEGRITUDISM IN GUILLEN'S *MAN MAKING WORDS*

3.1 PREAMBLE

This chapter evaluates Guillen's *Man Making Words* with emphasis on black consciousness, the plight of African-Americans in the USA, and the black culture. Guillen asserts that Cuba was made up of Negro and Spanish cultures and that each had contributed equally to the development of Cuba, which was a symbol of cooperation between the two cultures. Here also, the question of identity and the fate of the Blackman even within the context of a revolution are considered. To Guillen, there is an extent to which even within a revolution there can be racism. His brand of negritude differs from such poets as Senghor because Guillen advocates the fusion of both Spanish and Negro cultures. Negritude which was born in the 1930s, traces its origins to W.J.Cesaire. It began as a search fro roots and an attempt for self-recognition in the West Indies. Apart from the West Indies, there were also some Africans such as Leopold Sedar Senghor who advocated for a return to the

true self after a long stay in Europe. To the Africans negritude became a means of liberating themselves psychologically and recreating their cultural totality. The purport of negritude therefore was the cultural glance backward. Slaves taken away from Africa began to look back with nostalgia on their culture and roots. Guillen's neo negritude considers both Africa and the Caribbean as home, one ancestral, and the other real. He advocates for the fusion of both Spanish and Negro (African) cultures for a genuine identity.

3.2 AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Nicolas Batiste Guillen was born in the town Camaguey in July 1904, of a middle class, mulatto parents. His parents were both descendants of Africans and Spaniards. His mixed blood and background as a metizo has influenced his literary world, as evident, in his poetry which advocates for the fusion of Africa and Spanish cultures.

His father was a Senator of the Republic from 1908 to 1912. He was involved in politics, journalism and literature and thus his genuine link to Cuban history. He was killed in 1917 during a minor revolution. His life also influenced his son

Guillen who became a member of the Communist Party in Cuba in 1947. This also had a lot of influence on his literary world which aimed at raising the political consciousness of his readers. Guillen in Leiva (1975:116-117) asserts that:

> *Art cannot be an abstract. It must carry a message, must be utilitarian and actual and human, must create an immediate reality, the inevitable fusion of which is action. Any art without human content, without a message, has for me the value of a white sheet of paper that no one can read…poetry is a weapon. The poet's of our era ought to employ it not only for defence, but also for the attack.*

This explains the revolutionary stance of Guillen's poetry. As a post colonial poet his poetry is an offensive weapon against imperialism and oppression and a medium of mobilization and conscientization. His first collection of poetry "Mituros de Son" and "Sangoro Cosongo" both came out in 1951 and since then he has produced many more. He became the national poet of Cuba in 1961 and later the President of Cuban writers.

The poem "Elegy for Camaguey" is primarily an engaging nostalgic tribute to the people and events of yesterday, of the poet's youth:

Oh Camaguey, oh gentle
Place of shepherds and sombreros!
I cannot speak but I am beckoned
by this mystery, by this night.
I cannot speak but am obliged
by father's profile and his pointing hand.
I cannot speak but I am called
by father's prudent voice, by moans upon the wind.
Oh Camaguey, oh sacred,

Sacred, sacred ground! I kiss
your worldly stones and blackened face
with footsteps of return
with round-trip fell I cross
your grand breast of repose

.

Guillen in this poem identifies specifically with the common people of his hometown and, by implication, with common people everywhere when he says that:

People of daily needs,
voices, throats, nails
in the street; limpid, quotidian, unheroic
souls; bedrock of history:
know I speak and dream of you.
Know I seek you in the middle of the night …
the night, this silence
in the middle of the night, and hope.

In spite of his designation as Cuba's national poet, Guillen has devoted much of his attention to the subject of Blackman or Negritude. In order to make his poetry reach the common people he identifies with Guillen adopted a popular art form

called the ‘Son’. The next section concentrates of this form and the style of Guillen generally.

3.3 THE SON TRADITION AND GUILLEN’S ART

The son tradition can be described as that which the words and the music of the people culminate into song. It is a passionate dance which originates from the Negro-White encounter in the Caribbean Island. The ‘Son’ evolved from the fusion of African and Spanish cultures i.e. Negro and white cultures in contact. The choice was not accidental because the Spaniards and Negroes constitute the largest population in Cuba. The ‘Son’ therefore was a mixed artistic creation of the two races that make up the Cuban population. It was a popular medium for expressing experiences of citizens of Cuba and has always been concerned with people’s life. The adoption of the ‘Son’ as popular art attracted public interest because as Phylon (1951:x11) argues in form and content the ‘Son’ runs the full gamut of every aspect of Cuban character. It touched the lives of the Cunans.

In pre-revolutionary Cuba, the population was largely illiterate and because of the low level of education, Guillen

decided on earlier to adopt the ‘Son’ the expression of the Cuban spirit. Cartey (1970:117) re-iterates that Guillen wanted to be accessible to his people. He wanted to speak directly to them so he chose a medium, which was common to them, a popular medium, the ’Son’.

At the time of the socialist revolution, there was a debate about the role of literature in articulating social revolution i.e. literature had a special place which was even recognized by the government. The ability of literature to influence the minds and shape policies was given serious consideration in this debate. Critics and writers took part in this debate as to what role literature should play in the revolution. It was not limited to Russia but spread to China, Eastern Europe and even those communities where socialism had not quite taken root. The effort was to create an official policy for literature writing. While opinions differed, it was commonly agreed that literature that would be revolutionary, should not show excessive concern with language, style and form in the way that the twentieth century writers did at the expense of political works and social relevance. These Marxist writers did not totally advocate ignoring form and style because as Mao Tse Tung argues, that

the work of literature has to show some form of style. Style should not however be allowed to detract from the ideas of the work.

The discussion in the Communist bloc influenced Guillen's poetry. A striking quality of Guillen's poetry is the simplicity of the poems and clever word play. For example the first stanza of the poem 'Litany on the Death of Senator McCarthy' reads:

Here lies Senator McCarthy
dead upon his bed of death,
watched by four monkeys;
here lies senator McMonkey
dead upon his bed of Carthy,
watched by four buzzards;
here lies senator Mc Buzzard
dead upon his bed of Monkeys,
watched by four Ponies;
here lies senator Mc Pony
dead upon his bed of Buzzards,
watched by four frogs:
Carthy Mc Carthy.

This simplicity is in line with the intention of remoulding the minds of men especially in a country where the vast majority are illiterates. His poetry is not out to impress with highbrow artistic qualities. The focus is always with the idea of the subject of what he is dealing with and craftsmanship is not

allowed to disturb the understanding. The poem is rendered so simple that when the idea is grasped there is nothing else to discuss. The reader does not need to read through the whole poem to know that it has to do with the death of Senator Mccarthy. The plain form of the poem and the very playful form of the language undermines the seriousness of what Guillen has to say about what Senator McCarthy represents. The clever word play is expressed thus “here is Senator Mccarthy on his death bed flanked by four monkeys,” then is “Senator McMonkey flanked by four vultures”; he is also called “senator Mc Vulture” “McBull-dog”, “McGangster”, “Mc Pig”, “McSnake”, etc. The poem ends:

Here lies Senator Mc Carthy,
dead Mc Carthy,
Mc Carthy dead,
dead and double dead:
amen.

The poem is a lampoon i.e. poetry of insult. Senator McCarthy represents the worse form of irrational, right-wing hatred of the liberties of others to be different.

The adoption of the ‘Son’ was also important because writers in Cuba had tended to ignore the Negro contributions to Cuban culture. In an attempt to feel accepted and get into the

mainstream of Cuban life, Negro writers of the nineteenth century tried to assimilate Spanish culture. Writers such as Juan Francisco Monzamo and Gabriel de la Conception Valdez deliberately went out of their way to keep away Negro ways. Before the communists they had advocated that there should be no white and Negro communities existing separately. Guillen was concerned with showing that Cuba was made up of both Negro and Spanish cultures and that each had contributed equally to the development of Cuba, which was a symbol of cooperation between the two distinct cultures. In the 1920s there was this new evolution, Black Consciousness, which led to the literacy and cultural revolutions in Haiti and USA. This new consciousness also spread to Cuba and manifested in Cuban poetry. For instance, the poetry Jose' Zacarias Tallet and Roman Guiaro expressed these sentiments. They were writing using exotic sounding, onomatopoeic and so called primitive rhythm associated with black culture. They were engaged in a phenomenon that was wide spread in the USA but there was genuine interest in Negro life and experiences, but only artistic contribution of Nicholas Guillen was to bring in a new note in Negro culture to the Cuban life and to give

expression of what it means to be black within the capitalist system.

Marquez and Mcmurry in Guillen (1972:xi) argue that while it has always been plain to the point of common place that Cuba is a lively protean synthesis of the white Spanish thesis and the Black African anti-thesis, no one before Guillen had advanced such a bold affirmation of the latter. According to them, all along, this poetic itinerary Guillen has demonstrated an uncommon versatility. Beyond the son, his formal mastery extends to the decima, the letrilla, and the romance, as well as the sonnet, the ballad and free verse. His ability to blend and juxtapose these forms effectively is evinced in the richly suggestive filegies. If in such poems as “Governor,” “Little Rock”, and “Short Grotesque Litany on the Death of Senator McCarthy” Guillen is caustic or malicious, others like “Bars”, “Paul Eluard”, and “Sunday Reading”, indicate his capacity for human affection. While “The Flowers Grow High” and, indeed, a great portion of the poet’s work is intensively public, such pieces as “Exile” and “Little Ballad of Plovdiv” find him more quietly personal. “Sputnik 57” is a reaction to the scientific present, “My Last Name” explores an unrecorded past. If there

is mordant condemnation in “Wu-sang-kuei” and whatever time is past was worse,” there is spirited praise in “Five Chinese Songs” and “Thus Sings a Mockingbird in El Turquino.” The coldness and severity of “Mau-Maus” or “Execution” is balanced by the vibrancy and warm sensuality of “Ovenstone,” “Ana Maria” or “words in the Tropics.” And while “Soviet Union” is specific and partisan, the spirit of “Sell Me?” is more general and nonsectarian. All this is not simply to assure there is “something for everyone” in the work of Nicolas Guillen, but rather to underscore the richness of its texture. For while he maintains a consistent mass appeal, the poet has managed to avoid confusing simplicity with simple-mindedness, the genuinely popular with what is merely populism.

Guillen therefore has reevaluated discourse by drawing upon popular musical or metaphysical form that is at the same time “suspect” poetic form. The “son” form is not simply imported or incorporated directly into his poems, but rather is examined as experimental form in itself, and is thus reinvented and recreated. If the formalist concept of defamiliariazation, can be defined as the placements with popular rhythms, and a challenge to traditional musical and literary codes (Buxo 1978),

then Guillen's experiment with popular rhythms is a challenge to traditional musical and literary codes. At the same time, because poetic language has the capacity to reify the message, to impart it with a "quality of permanence", the emphasis in Guillen on forms of Africa – American expression suggests the possibility of offering an alternative history through the medium of the poem (Miller (1999).

3.4 BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND GUILLEN'S POETRY

As earlier mentioned, Guillen started writing before the 1930's and that is significant for one thing. It was during the period of the Harlem and Haitian Renaissances. These were movements aimed at cultural revival and assertion of human dignity in the USA and Haiti. Guillen belonged to these literary movements. The Negritude movement also influenced Guillen. In an interview with Raquel Tibol Guillen affirmed his interest in Negritude thus:

> *At that time began in Cuba the fashion of Black things. The poet and musicians of the avant-grade, grouped together in the Avance journal, began to show interest in black themes. They saw the Black as an exterior form: rumba, extroverted rhythm… It*

was then that I began to look for something that would express more fundamentally the Black element … I heard surging forth from the roots of my search and of my disquiet, a rhythm: Negro bombon, Negro bombon and when I woke up the following morning I wrote the first poems of my real poetry, already with the rhythm of 'son'.

The upsurge of Black Consciousness in the 1920s led to the literary and cultural revolutions in Haiti and the USA. The development also spread to Cuba and manifested in Cuban Poetry as evident, for instance, in the poetry of Jose Zacarias Tallet, Roman Guiaro and Alejo Carpentier. These were Spanish writers who expressed the same sentiments. They studied the Negro, wrote about him, about his way of life and his ancestral home in 'Guinea'. In their writing, they used exotic sounding, onomatopoeic words and rhythms associated with Black culture. For example Ramon Guirao's 'Bailadora de Rumba' reads:

Rumba dancer,
Black – skinned girl,
Purity of the bongo
With laughter on her face,
She shakes the maraca
With her young fingers,
Her white teeth shining in the sun.
Red handkerchief
-silk-
white shoe

-starch-
enthralled by an Afro-cub rhythm

The above 'canto' mixes the sound of the drum (rumba) with the noise of the girl's feet as she dances to the Afro-cuban rhythm. The very nature of the poem asserts the everlasting presence of Africa in Cuba's cultural manifestations (Jones 1978).

However, according to Ojo-Ade in Jones (1978:51), the writings of Carpentier, Guirao and others lack depth and, at times sincerity. The most significant affinity their works have with Africa is in rhythm and incorporation of African images and allusions.

Alejo Carpentier in Jones (1978:54) also expresses this lack of depth and understanding of his subject when he says:

> *In a period marked by a great interest in Afro-Cuban folklore … I wrote a novel – i Ecue – Yamba-o! whose characters were Negroes of the rural class of that time. I must observe that I grew up on the Cuban countryside in contact with sons of Black Peasants; that, later, very interested in the practise of Santeria, and of naniguismo, I attended in numeral ritual ceremonies. With that documentation I wrote a novel that was published in Madrid, in 1933, at the height of European primitivism. Now then: after twenty years of investigation about the*

> *sincretic realities of Cuba, I realized that the profound, the essential, the universal of the world that I had claimed to depict in my novel had remained out of my reach … (p.54)*

Ojo-Ade therefore argues that to experience the authentic voice of Afro-Cuban poetry; one need only open the pages of any of the many collections of poetry of Nicolas Guillen, perhaps the most important writer in Cuba today. In Guillen's poetry human emotions and profound consciousness of the African heritage are expressed. Guillen is the only poet of this (negrist) group for whom the Negro theme was neither a form, nor simply a particular theme, but the generating centre of all his creativity. Guillen (1972:231), says that:

> *I deny any art that only sees in the Negro a coloured motif and not an interesting human theme. Without doubt, the Negro theme offers plastic qualities of the first order to the painter, extraordinary rhythmic elements to the musician and new values to language. But let us not forget that there are millions of Negroes struggling in the most terrible slavery.*

3.5 THE THEME OF BLACK OPPRESSION

In the poem titled "The Governor" the brutality of the whites and their dehumanizing acts and the training of domestic animals into beasts used to inflict pains on the African

descendants is showcased. The image of the Blackman is here depicted as that of a helpless innocent victim:

When you've trained your dog just right
to pounce upon defenseless black.
and tear his liver out with a bite;

The poet further reveals the white man as a brutal animal that is just as good as the animal he trains:

When you yourself are part of the pack,
And wag your tail and howl at night---
You qualify, whiteman filled with hate,
to run for governor of your state!

The image of the Blackman is so pathetic. He has been reduced to a prey and beast of burden. There is an irony, which depicts the white man filled with hate, yet qualified to run for governorship of his state.

In "Ancestry" a sharp contrast is made between Blackman and white man. The black is synonymous to suffering, evil and all manner of vices:

My grandpa, on the other hand,
Was a demon with his masters.
Yours died cudgeled.
Mine they hanged.

The white man is referred to as an archangel with his slave. The persona in this poem suffered so much brutality,

exploitation, oppression that he had to commit suicide by hanging because he couldn't bear it any longer.

. Guillen moves on to talk of the fate of the Blackman in the contemporary world in which blacks are still subject to hunger and disease and are still held down by fragments of chains or enslaved. In " I came on a slave ship" Guillen is even more explicit on what blacks have suffered in history in the hands of white men through transportation in the high seas and hardships on the plantations:

I came on a slaveship
They brought me.
Cane, lash, and plantation
A sun of steel
Sweat like a caramel
Foot in the stocks.

Images of 'cane', 'lash', 'plantain', 'sun', 'sweat,' suggest the hardships and sufferings of the Blacks.

The poem titled "Elegy for Emmet Till" captures the theme of black oppression and man's inhumanity to man. The setting of the poem is America. Emmett is only fourteen years old, thus the persona emphasizes his innocence when he says:

This adolescent angel
on whose shoulders
had not yet healed the scars
of where there once were wings.

Emmet was kidnapped, murdered and mutilated by the white oppressors. He represents the fate of the black man in the Caribbean and the cruelty, violence and brutality he is subjected to. The tone of the poem is that of rage and anger. Guillen speaks with rage and indignation to an unpardonable act of savagery. The poet condemns, in strong terms, the inhuman treatment of the blacks including even the innocent. The mood of pity and sympathy is also evoked in this poem. The reader empathizes the predicaments of the blacks in the West Indies.

The river Mississippi is personified and referred to as the "ancient brother of the black":

The Mississippi flows
O ancient river, brother of the Black,
with open veins beneath its waters,
the Mississippi flows,
It's grand breast heaves
And from its deep guitar,
the Mississippi flows,
Come sobs of bitter tears.

A poignant juxtaposition of the victim's youth and vulnerability with the hellish brutality of the boy is accompanied by the plain allegation that this "ancient river, brother to the

Black" has borne witness to a good many more incidents of the same nature. The repetition of 'the Mississippi flows' is meant to stress the symbolic relevance of the river.

The plight of the Blackman also finds expression in the poem "Elegy for Jacques Roumain." There is the constant use of blood image to express the fact that the blacks in the West Indies are victims of death and frequent killings by the colonial apparatus:

Blood on the boots of the Yankees
Blood on the knife of Trujillo
Blood in the sky, on the sea, on the mountain
Blood on the river, and in the trees.
Blood in the air.

This shows that in the Caribbean,death is imminent everywhere. In order to change the status quo, Guillen summons his power of composition and style to create consciousness. He further describes the lot of the blacks when he says:

barefoot Blacks on the Champs-de-Mars…
and on the brown and lukewarm way to
Petianville;
Or further up, or the cold, white road to
Kenskoff.
Blacks not even born:
Shadows and zombies,
languid ghosts of cane and coffee;

anxious, tearing, primary,
swampy, vegetable flesh.

Here the Blacks are projected as the wretched of the earth. Their poverty is expressed by the fact that they are barefoot. They suffer on the white man's cane and coffee plantations. They are inhumanly treated.

In the last stanza, he calls for a mobilization of the black men. He mobilizes them to revolt against colonial domination and subjugation.

3.6 THE THEME OF BLACK RESISTANCE

The theme of black resistance is explored in the poem "Angela Davies". Ronald Reagan jailed Angela Davies. The fate of this woman symbolizes the oppression of the black man by the United States government. The white man is projected as a predator who takes delight in killing and crushing every revolutionary voice:

I have not come to tell you you are beautiful
I believe you are beautiful
But that is not the issue.
The issue is they want you dead.
They need your skull
To decorate the tent of the Great Chief,
beside the skulls of Jackson and Lumumba.

And, Angela,
We need your smile.

The poem ends with a message of solidarity as Guillen talks of all black men reaching out their hands to Angela Davies in solidarity.

Angela, I say your name, vociferate. I join my hands
not in pleas, entreaties, supplications, Prayers
to your jailers for pardon
but in applauding action, hand meeting hand,
hard and strong, very strong,
hand meeting hand so you will know I'm
yours!

In "I came on a slave ship"' Guillen glorifies the black revolutionary leaders who have led revolutions against slavery and all forms of colonialism such as Aponte, way back in 1811 who led a rebellion against Spanish oppression:

Aponte, smiling, spoke to me.
I said: "count on me!"
Oh death! Afterwards silence.
Shadows after.
A long violent sleep!
A harsh sleep.
The Yagruma
of snow and emerald
beneath the moon.

and Maceo who was not only a Cuban and fought in Cuban rebellion but whenever there had been rebellion in the

Caribbean he fought well and became a Major General in the various wars he fought against the Spanish:

Maceo came on horseback.
I was in his retinue
Long the howl of the wind.
Loud the thunder.
A splendor of macheteros.
I was among them.
The Yagruma
of snow and emerald
beneath the moon.

Stanzas two, four, and six have a chorus attached to each of them.

There is also Menendez who was an organizer of the sugar-cane workers' uprising, a rebellion that took place in the 1840's. He was killed in one of these rebellions in 1948. These men were symbols of Cuban civilization and culture.

I see Menendez stretched out
Immobile, tense,
The open lung bubbles
lje chest burns.
His eyes see, are seeing
The corpse lives

. In another poem " Elegy for Jesus Menendez " Guillen celebrates the heroic image of the leaders of these rebellions. Born in the cane fields, Jesus Menendez died fighting for them:

At last vital blood is spilt,
dissolving over sugar in a bitter pool.
At last the ruptured artery,
blood reported one morning
on the New York
Stock Exchange. Blood reported
on vertiginous tape
that crawls and poisons like
an endless viper, its swift skin tattooed
with scars of numbers and crimes.

Menendez was the greatest leader of Cuban sugar-cane workers who was killed in 1948 on Batista's orders. Jesus is shown as a symbol of the patriotic Cuban, and more obviously as a symbol of Christ, accessible to all, interceding for all:

He speaks to you always like a daily
God, whose damp flesh you can touch
as it stirs with life, little butterflies
of fire fluttering in his veins; he
speaks to you always, like a true
friend, who never vanishes.

So Jesus Menendez assumes the proportions of a myth, and reports come from all over, from Chile, Colombia, Haiti, Brazil, Puerto Rico and Mexico- the people report that they have seen him and spoken with him. The phenomenon of Jesus Menendez as a symbol of the oppressed is being established in Guillen's mind. More than that, he is a symbol of the victory to

come. His death is captured through gruesome images of 'blood spilt', 'ruptured artery'.

In "Mau-Maus" the strength of the black man and his ability to resist oppression is revealed. Mau Mau was a revolutionary movement in Kenya, East Africa. This was an indigenous movement, which aims at resisting human degradation and exploitation and to recover stolen lands from the whites. Guillen is here celebrating the courage and bravery of the Kenyans in fighting foreign domination and oppression:

Tall type tells
that Mau Maus
took British houses
of tropical dream
and in fire, blood and death.
In a barbarous assault
One hundred English died…

The images of "fire", "blood" and "death" depict the emergency, speed and rage with which the Mau-Mau force carried out its onslaught against the whites. There is a sense and feeling of pride and superiority as the Mau-Mau gorilla fighters sweep over the houses of the white oppressors. The revolutionary spirit in them was just like a raging fire. Guillen is here suggesting that with determination, organized resistance and

collective struggle the blacks in the Diaspora and elsewhere can be liberated from all forms of oppression and domination.

The poem titled ''A Negro Sings in New York City'' is a poem in which Negroes of the United States reject the image of Jim Crow and Uncle Tom. Jim Crow represents the kind of Blackman that the whites like to have in the US. So Jim Crow is a symbol of subservience – a symbol that radical Black men have always fought against:

Dove, I have a piece of verse,
a poet left to me:
Dove, with that verse
I plan to make
A hymn and a song.
(The hymn against Jim Crow.
The song of peace and peace again.)

By making the blacks in the United States reject the image of Jim Crow, he was asking them to reject subservience. He was mobilizing them to reject all forms of oppressions of the Blackman all over the world.

3.7 THE THEME OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Guillen's interest in *Man Making Words* is not only related to Cuba alone but also with international issues especially the

broad ideological conflict in the world. In this collection Guillen feels that there was no class conflict in Cuba and write about Cuba in relation to the outside or international community. Capitalist and socialist ideologies are constantly at the crossroads.

Guillen devotes a large section of his collection to condemn capitalism and what it brought to the world system. He is much concerned with the ills of capitalism. This is because Cuba is close to the citadel of capitalism and has suffered more than any other state in the hands of the USA. Guillen praises the Soviet Union. This is because of her non-exploitation of other nations. In the poem 'Soviet Union' Guillen describes the Soviet Union as always ready to stretch a hand of friendship to all oppressed people of the world against the exploitation of the capitalist system represented by the USA:

Never have I seen a Soviet trust in my country
Nor a bank,
a ten cents,
a central
a naval base
or a train
I've never once found
A banana plantation
Where on passing you might read:
MASLOV AND COMPANY, INC

WHOLESALE BANANAS. OFFICES IN CUBA:
CORNER OF MACEO AND SUCH AND SUCH A STREET

This attests to the fact the Soviet Union doesn't exploit other nations unlike America.

Guillen ends with a radical affirmation of the eventual defeat of the enemy:

Thus we march together and free
against an enemy we too will defeat

Typical of a revolutionary writer, the poem ends in an optimistic and revolutionary tone.

As against the system represented by the Soviet Union, Guillen sees the Western powers especially the USA as a symbol of man's in humanity to man and exploitation. Right from the early poem called "Exile" the concern with the politics of the Caribbean has been central to Guillen's poetry. In "Exile" he talks of himself in exile desiring to return to the Caribbean. He tries to image the country he is returning to in terms of a cloud with four knives dripping blood:

Blood shines on the breast
of a cloud that moves
slow in the overcast sky.
Dressed in mourning,
rent by four recent knives,

it's from the Mar Caribe
--- a pirate, cannibal sea,
a tough sea of sightless eyes
and murdered sleep.
oh, to return with that cloud,
her four knives,
and dress mourning!

The image symbolizes what the Caribbean is suffering from the hands of the USA. The Caribbean sleep has been murdered and also blinded by the economic system of the West. Indirectly in the poem he was already attacking the western system. However, this attack is more direct in the poem titled "Rivers". The poem starts as an address to the USA:

With the Rhine, the Rhone, the Ebro,
My eyes are filled
With the Tiber, the Thames,
the Volga, the Danube,
my eyes are filled.

By mentioning these European rivers Guillen was simply acknowledging his European precursors. The second stanza starts with a contestatory phrase "But I know", and then he lists South American Rivers:

But I know the Plata,
and I know the Amazon bathes
But I know the Mississippi,
and I know the Almendares,

and I know the San Lorendo bathes
I know the Orionco,
I know they bathe
lands of bitter slime where my voice blooms,
America, I drink from your cup
from your tin cup,
great rivers of tears!

These rivers serve metonymically to invoke African-American experience in the United States. “Lands of bitter slime where my voice blooms,” and “Slow forests imprisoned in bloody roots” are the longest verses of the poem in which Guillen invokes these rivers metaphorical power to bathe the bitter lands where his voice grows or flourishes, to wash history’s bloody stain. Nevertheless, this trans-American river water, composed of currents from both North and South, and drunk not from a crystal goblet but from a tin cup, is composed of legrimas, of tears (Miller 1999). The names of the rivers refer to those rivers spread all over the powers of the USA i.e. wherever the spread of US domination and exploitation has reached.

The special case of the Cuban relationship with the USA is treated in “Cuban Elegy” where the Eagle from the North symbolizes the power from USA. The power, which Guillen

claims, brings death maggots and the Cross-into these areas of Latin America. In this poem Guillen refers to the history of resistance in which such black men as Martin Luther King, Maceo, Peralejo had played important parts to the Cuban heroic resistance to capitalism.

In 'The Flower Grows High' the capitalist exploitation in South America in general is described and the establishment of neo-colonial regimes in Bolivia, Peru, Argentina etc. These are countries that have embraced USA policies. Guillen believes that through gorilla warfare in the same way that Cuba overcame her enemies, these regimes could also overcome the USA and capitalism. The USA is considered as the quintessence of imperialism. It is Cuba's arch-enemy. There have been a series of United State's interventionist policies towards Cuba. However, Guillen's response to the presence of United States in Cuba varies according to the circumstances in question. He speaks with harsh censure in 'Song for Puerto Rico,' revolutionary confidence in 'Far Off,' militant resolve in 'The Flower Grow High,'and triumphant celebration in 'Thus Sings a Mocking-bird in el Turquino'.

3.8 THE THEME OF IDENTITY AND RACIAL AFFIRMATION

The question of identify also comes up very clearly in Guillen's poetry. The selection *Man Making Words* was written specially to project the image of Cuba outside especially for the African readers. The emphasis in *Man Making Words* is Black consciousness, the suffering of Negroes in USA and Negro tradition. This emphasis is meant to project the image of the socialist and communist governments against the capitalist government of the West.

The theme of racial discrimination gets very subtle treatment in such poems as "What Color?" The subtle attack is directed at a Russion poet called Yeatushenco who wrote an "Elegy on the death of Martin Luther King". Luther was a black American civil Rights Leader. He is described in this poem as a Blackman with a soul as white as snow

Such a white soul, they say,
that noble pastor had
his skin so black, they say,
his skin so black in color,
was on the inside snow,
a white lily,
fresh milk,
cotton.
such innocence
there wasn't one stain
on his interior

(in short, a handsome find:
"The Black whose soul was white," that
curiosity).

From Guillen's point of view, such an image of the black man did not feature well. Both Post Colonial and Representation theories react to Eurocentric assumptions about Africa and the Blacks. Over the years the colour white has always been associated with something pure and holy and the colour black associated with evil, unholy and impure. The colonialists have often projected the Africans through images such as "dirt", "putrefaction", "monkeys", "cannibals", etc. Guillen here punctures the idea of everything white as good. Black is also good.

From this attack Guillen moves on to talk of a Blackman in Cuban cultural land. In the poem 'My Last Name", Guillen asserts that his culture does not only come from Spanish but also from African culture:

Well then, I ask you now
don't you see these drums in my eyes?
Don't you see these drums, brightened and
beaten with two dried up tears?
Don't I have, perhaps,
a nocturnal grand father
with a great black scar
(darker still than his skin

a great scar made by a whip?
Have I not, then,
a grand father who's Mandingo, Dahoman,
Congolese?

For example the symbol of "drums in my eyes" and also his root in what he calls "his nocturnal grandfather" affirms his African ancestry. In this way Guillen is showcasing the values and contributions of African culture to Cuban civilization. However, western misrepresentations have tried to undermine and relegate these:

Ah, you can't remember it!
You have dissolved it in immemorial ink.
You stole it from a poor, defenseless Black.
You hid it, thinking that I would
Lower my eyes in shame.

According to Guillen, the contribution of Africa is a source of pride to all the Black people of the world. He emphasizes the fact that his forefathers were slaves and the Black stars in Cuban history but the West has dissolved this fact in 'immemorial ink'. Through this poem, Guillen is reaffirming his blackness. The poem is dramatic. He seems to be speaking to an audience that is silenced by his questions. The tone is

harsh, revealing the anger in the heart of the poet as he recounts his experiences and that of his ancestors.

According to Marquez and Mcmurray in Guillen (1973:89) “My Last Name” stands as one of the most quietly moving and sensitively conducted pieces. It is a pilgrimage beyond the ‘notary’s ink’ from which “I know there will come distant cousins,” an execution of “my subterranean galleries/with great moist rocks/… where I feel the pure rush/of ancient water.” Reaching into his deepest self and at the same time, far beyond himself to the multitudes who have the same or an analogous racial composition. Guillen’s discovery is: “My name, foreign,/free and mine, foreign and yours,/ foreign and foreign and free as the air.” Through this poem Guillen is reaffirming his blackness. This poem is dramatic. He seems to be speaking to an audience that is silenced by his questions. The tone is harsh. Revealing the anger in the heart of the poet as he recounts his experiences and that of his ancestors.

In “My Little Woman”, Guillen’s, stance is one of healthy racial affirmation. Here he tries to redeem the image of the black woman and exalts her beauty and unique colour with contentment and a sense of fulfillment. Contrary to western

stereotypical assessment and conclusion that everything black is evil, Guillen, in a typical post colonial rewrite, reverses this position by extolling the virtues of the black woman. The persona in this poem seems to be addressing his white counterpart and expressing the fact that with a fine black woman at home, he need have nothing to do with white women:

Black as she is,
I wouldn't trade
The woman I got
for no other woman
She wash, iron, sew,
and, man,
can that woman cook!

Post colonialism is a process of reasserting the image of an individual, a race, culture or a country. Similarly, in this poem Guillen reasserts the image of the black woman as that of fulfillment and contentment. She possesses better qualities than the white woman. She is humble, obedient and submissive which are rare qualities to be found among white women. Through this Guillen criticizes the racial prejudice that predominates western thought.

In the poem "Small Ode to a Black Cuban Boxer," Guillen is admonishing that beyond his expression of admiration for the

skills and triumphs of a particular boxer, the Black people in general should take into account, even take advantage of, the "Negro Craze" which had begun to make itself felt on the Island. The poem ends with lines of racial exaltation and disjointed rhythm:

The negro reigns while boulevards applaud!
Let the envy of the Whites
know proud, authentic Black!

This theme is further explored in the poem "Ballad of the two Grandfathers". Here Guillen resolves the Blackman identity issue:

Shadows which only I see,
I'm watched by my two grandfathers.
A bone-point lance,
a drum of hide and wood:
my black grandfather.
A ruff on a broad neck,
a warrior's gray ornament:
my white grandfather.

Here Guillen accepts not just the blood of the Black ancestry but also that of the white slave owners. The Black is imaged as a drum of hide and wood, but the white is imaged as the warrior with great ornaments. Both of them are of equal sizes and at the end he embraces both of them in one culture:

Don Federico yells at me
and Taita Facundo is silent;
both dreaming in the night
and walking, walking,
I bring them together.
"Federico!

Facundo!" They embrace. They sigh,

they raise their sturdy heads;
both of equal size,
beneath the high stars;
both of equal size,
a Black longing, a white longing
both of equal size,
they scream, dream, weep, sing.
They dream, weep, sing.
They weep, sing.
Sing!

Post coloniality elaborates hybridity and cultural polyvalence, a situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture. In the same way, Guillen in this poem reveals that the Cuban race is formed upon in the fusion of the blood of people like Don Federico and Taita Facundo. Each in his way is shown to be equal to the other, at least in the devotion to their grandson, who is making a plea for their equality in social reality. It brilliantly reflects the spirit of national integration of historically belligerent creatures, master and slave, both the same stature in the poet's mind. This seems to be the most realistic Black revolution. Guillen advocates the

fusion of both Spanish and African cultures and the acceptance of each other in order to forge a new identity and character for Cuba.

3.9 CONCLUSION

Nicolas Guillen's *Man Making Words* is poetry of integration. In this collection, Guillen has attempted to synthesize the Hispanic and African elements into a national identity. It is Guillen's position that Cuba was made up of both Negro and Spanish cultures and that each had contributed equally to the development of Cuba. Guillen accepts both his Spanish and African ancestry and embraces them together into a common whole. His own brand of Negritude is that of cultural fusion, the Spanish cannot do without Africa nor Africa without the Spanish. Through the use of the son Guillen has made an argument for the African element in contemporary Cuban character or Cubanidad. However, as to whether it is possible to have a national identity in Cuba, to borrow the words of Ojo-Ade, a mestizaje of equal Black and White parts remains debatable.

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CHAPTER FOUR

MULTICULTURAL MIXTURE OF IDENTITIES IN WALCOTT'S POETRY

4.1 PREAMBLE

This chapter elucidates Walcott's poetry with emphasis on the formation of identity in the Caribbean and how this has been influenced by the hybrid nature of the West Indian's culture and the schizophrenic situation that pervades the Caribbean society. His poetry recognizes the combination of European and African heritages and the integration of several cultures. This chapter also unfolds Walcott's attempt to re-imagine West Indian society since its emergence from colonial rule, its ill-fated attempt at political unity, and its subsequent dispersal into tiny nation states (Breslin 2002). It focuses on the West Indies' absence from history and lack of cohesive national identity or cultural tradition.

4.2 AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Derek Alton Walcott was born on 23rd January 1930, in Castries. Saint Lucia. He is a West Indian poet and playwright noted for works that explore the Caribbean cultural experience. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1992. Walcott was

of mixed Black, Dutch, and English descent. He was educated at St. Mary's College, St Lucia, and at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. He started writing poetry at an early age, taught at schools in St Lucia and Grenada, and contributed articles and reviews to the periodicals in Trinidad and Jamaica. Production of his plays began in St. Lucia in 1950, and he studied theatre in New York City in 1958-1959. He lived thereafter in Trinidad and the United States; teaching for part of the year at Boston University.1 He was the posthumous child of a civil servant and a school teacher, and the descendant of two white grand mothers. Though his first language was a French-English patois, he received an English education, an apprenticeship in language that his mother supported by reciting English poetry at home and by exposing her children to European classics in an early age. In "What the Twilight Says," an autobiographical essay published in 1970, Walcott writes on the two worlds that informed his childhood thus:

> *Colonials, we began with this material enervation that nothing could ever be built among these rotten shacks, barefooted backyards, and moulting shingles; that being poor, we already had the theatre of our lives. In that simple schizophrenic*

boyhood one could lead two lives; the interior life of poetry, and the outward life of action and dialect.

Walcott's art arises from this schizophrenic situation, from a struggle between two cultural heritages, which he has harnessed to create a unique 'creolized' style.

4.3 WALCOTT'S CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

Walcott is a versatile intellectual and a prolific writer who has written on a variety of subjects. He is best known for his poetry, beginning with *In a Green* celebration of the Caribbean landscape's natural beauty. The verse in *Selected Poems* (1964), *The Castaway* (1965), and *The Gulf* (1969) is similarly lush in style and incantatory in mood as Walcott expresses his feelings of personal isolation, caught between his European cultural orientation and the black folk cultures of his native Caribbean. *Another Life* (1973) is a book length autobiographical poem. *In Sea Grapes* 91976) and *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), Walcott uses a terse, more economical style to examine the deep cultural divisions of language and race in the Caribbean. *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981) and *Midsummer* (1984) explore his own situation as a Black writer

in America who has become increasingly estranged from his Caribbean homeland. Walcott's *Collected Poems*, 1944-1984, was published in 1986. In his book-length poem *Omeros* (1990), he retold the dramas of Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey* in twentieth century Caribbean setting. Of Walcott's approximately thirty plays, the best known are *Dream on Monnkey Mountain* (1967), *Ti-Jean and his Brothers* (1958), and *Pantomime* (1978). Many of his plays make use of themes from black folk culture in the Caribbean. It is these numerous contributions that have brought Walcott to the limelight in the world literary circle.

4.4 HYBRIDITY AND CULTURAL SCHIZOPHRENIA IN WALCOTT'S POETRY

Walcott's mixed heritage and education within the British colonial system have shaped and influenced his art as evidenced in his poetry which deals with matters of hybridity and cultural schizophrenia. Faced with a lost history and torn between differing influences, the recurring image in Walcott's poetry is that of the 'divided child'. This is explored further in the essay 'What the Twilight Says (1998) where Walcott

negotiates with the differences and points of intersection between black and white identities in the Caribbean, alluding to a grey space in-between the cultures. By this Walcott attacks, undermines and reverses cultural assumptions. For example the speaker in “The Fortunate Traveller” (1981) declares that:

> *The heart of darkness is not Africa*
> *The heart of darkness is the love of fire*
> *In the white center of the holocaust.*

Walcott’s “A Far Cry From Africa” (1962) still illustrates the dilemma of the postcolonial “hybrid subject.” Individuals find themselves asked to choose between incompatible cultures, or dispersed amongst multiple cultures: they cannot lay claim to a singular, unambiguous, and unmixed identity.

In the first stanza of the poem, Walcott recounts the brutal violence that often accompanied the break from colonial rule, while also condemning the history of British imperialism in Africa:

> *A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt*
> *Of Africa, Kikuyu, quick flies*
> *Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.*
> *Corpses are scattered through a paradise.*
> *But still the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:*

'Waste no compassion on these
separate dead

Here Walcott invites sympathy for the settlers, members of the oppressing class who may nevertheless be innocent, like "the white child hacked in bed." But the next line notes bitterly that black "savages, expendable as Jews," have also been victims of mass murder. Walcott describes himself as "poisoned with the blood of both" and asks hopelessly, "where shall I turn, divided to the vein?" The trauma and bloodshed of the independence struggle presents him with an impossible choice between two versions of self-betrayal. He concludes that "How can I face such slaughter and be cool? \ How can I turn from Africa and live?

4.5 WALCOTT'S POETRY AND HISTORY

There is also an emphasis on Walcott's use of history. Here his approach to historical materials has revealed his social vision. Aristotle points out in his *Poetics* that while history is concerned with things that had happened, poetry is concerned with things that might happen. While history deals with facts, poetry deals with universal truths. It is however, the contention

of this dissertation that one cannot talk about what might be without talking of what had been before. Universal truths are not metaphysically realized. The attitude of the poet nay artist to historical materials should either be one of the following:

- Celebrative - To look at the pass with nostalgia and try to preserve historical materials lest they die out.
- Documentary - To document historical facts just as they exist
- Analytical - To analyse them in the context of the changes they are undergoing. One can take a form and modify it to bring out a message. One can also borrow the content, paradigm or even narrative structure of historical materials in order to view reality.

History therefore, provides source materials, with which the poet patronizes. The task of the poet is no simpler than that of the historian because he is also involved in the task of historical analysis or reinterpretation. The function of the poet therefore, in using historical materials is to put them into their proper perspectives.

This leads us to the other dimension, which is a sense of history. By sense of history we refer to a situation in which there is a discriminatory consciousness of man as a product of

history, that is, belonging to time and place and actively involved in the production process and his awareness of his role in the collective matrices of his class. In other words are the people concerned imbued with a sense of their capacity in transforming the situation in which they find themselves? The writer's sense of history is perceivable from the nature and perception of human relationships. The writer's approach and opinion to the source material he is treating determines the sense of history. It is from this sense of history that the writer's social vision, which is analytically and ideologically arrived at, is revealed.

Walcott in an essay titled "The Caribbean: Culture of Mimicry?" (1974) clearly states his view of history:

> *In the Caribbean, history is irrelevant, not because it is not being created, or because it was sordid; but because it has never mattered. What has mattered is the loss of history; the amnesia of races, what has become necessary is imagination as necessity, as invention.*

From this view it can be discerned that Walcott conceived of history as a series of moments, with each moment offering the possibility to create something new from the material that the

natural and cultural environment presents. According to Walcott the ideal creative man or woman, therefore, is one who is aware of his or her place in the world.

Donnel and Welsh (1974:354-58) argue that the idea of history that Walcott rejects is one that is based on a concept of civilization as continuous progress embodies in Europe. According to this view of history, the Caribbean is defined negatively by amnesias and fragmentation and the only way it can achieve a culture is through mimicry, either by imitating European cultural achievements or by rejecting European achievements or by rejecting European culture and defining itself in opposition to it.

Walcott's imaginative relationship to Africa and Africa's past serves mostly to accentuate the illusionary and false nature of the West Indian's assumed identity and the necessity of forging a separate self from his own unique situation and circumstances (Wilson-Tagoe 1998).

In "The Sea is History" Walcott defines the boundaries of Caribbean history within the context of the Caribbean itself:

> *First, there was the heaving oil,*
> *Heavy as chaos;*
> *Then, like a light at the end of a tunnel,*

The lantern of a caravel,
And that was Genesis.
Then there were the packed cries,
The shit, the moaning:

Exodus
Bone soldered by coral to bone,
Mosaics
Mantled by the benediction of the shark's shadow

4.6 THE IMAGE OF ROBINSON CRUSOE

Among the subjects Walcott has continually returned, is the story of Robinson Crusoe. Walcott rewrites the story from his West Indian perspective. This rewrite is the most obvious example of postcolonial authors 'writing back' to the imperial center. Since the culture and education of these writers were dominated by imperial rule, their first tendencies were toward imitating the literature they had learned (Ford 2002).

Walcott elaborates further on this view when he writes that "the writers of my generation were natural assimilators. We knew the literature of Empires, Greek, Roman, British, through their essential classics."(Muse 4). The next step was 'writing back' reacting against those European literary standards, even after the imperial power was decimated

(Ashcroft 1989). Walcott chooses Robinson Crusoe as the center of his rewrite. *Robinson Crusoe* was written by Daniel Defoe and held popularity for a long time. It became a myth of great potency and wide application (Ellis 1969). Martin Green (1989) expatiates on the book's popularity in saying that:

> *Of all the stories of the British Empire, the most widely read, not only across the Empire, but across Europe, was that of Robinson Crusoe. Indeed it seems demonstrable that the Robinson story has been one of the most widely read in the world. In the National Union Catalogue, fifty-four pages are given to listing different editions of Defoe's book, whereas only four go to perhaps the most famous literary novel of the nineteenth century, Middlemarch, and another four to the most famous eighteenth century novel, Clarissa.*

Robinson Crusoe shipwrecked on a remote Island, created a home for himself by using the things he found on the island and whatever he could salvage from the wreck of the ship. Walcott tackles the Crusoe story from his own angle. He sees Crusoe as a kind of actor that plays many roles. In a lecture entitled "The Figure of Crusoe" Walcott (Quoted in Hamner 1981) explains his views on the various facets of Robinson Crusoe's character:

> *My Crusoe, then, is Adam, Christopher Columbus, God, a missionary, a beachcomber, and his*

> *interpreter, Daniel Defoe. He is Adam because he is the first inhabitant of a second paradise. He is Columbus because he has discovered this new world, by accident, by fatality. He is God because he teaches himself to control his creation, he rules the world he has made, and also, because he is to Friday, a white concept of Godhead. He is a missionary because he instructs Friday in the uses of religion…. He is a beachcomber because I have imagined him as one of those figures of adolescent literature, some derelict out of Conrad or Stevenson… and finally, he is also Daniel Defoe, because the journal of Crusoe, which is Defoe's journal, is written in prose, not in poetry, and our literature, the pioneers of our public literature have expressed themselves in prose.*

Above all, Walcott's metaphor of Robinson Crusoe is meant to accentuate the illusionary and false nature of the West Indian's assumed identity and the necessity of forging a separate self from his own unique situation and circumstances (Wilson-Tagoe 1998). However, Okpewho (2001:40) contends that in spite of the fact that the figure of Robinson Crusoe served Walcott's programmic conception of the Caribbean artist struggling to fashion out something out of the apparent cultural vacuum in which he has been marooned, the figure is derived from a classic work of colonial fiction and for a 'black' artist to use a ' white' colonial figure as a prototype of the Caribbean

creative imagination does not raise question as to what side the artist is really on.

4.7 WALCOTT'S POETIC LANGUAGE

New Criticism emphasizes the close reading of texts, elevating it far above either authorial intention or reader response. It relies on imagery as the concept with which to define from and makes the literary image the primary material or constituent of form itself. In essence, this presupposes a fusion of the aesthetic in the cognitive. One of the fundamental dimension of Walcott's poetry is a strive at achieving fusion. He does this by a distinctive use of metaphor. He uses words to suggest multiple correspondences. In his poetry images that have the capacity to incorporate multiple meanings abound. He combines the objective presence of reality with a subjective vision and joins different cultural or social perspectives derived from colonial and postcolonial history. This is evidenced in "Laventille" and "Crusoe's Journal". A close reading of the second part of the first section (lines 15-25) of "Crusoe's Journal" reveals an evocation of an untouched "green world," distinguished from a world translated into metaphor in which

case the green world" implies freshness. Crusoe is likened to Columbus, the discoverer and colonizer. He is also likened to missionaries bearing 'the word to savages'. The word also has several meanings as it could be understood as referring to the Christian gospel as well as to English language and literacy. The phrase "whose sprinkling alters us' reveals the poet's identification with the colonized, the Black people, who are changed by the process of colonization. "Alter" which means change also sounds like "altar" which implies sacrifice. "Good Friday evokes Christ's death. Through this language use in 'Crusoe's Journal' therefore, Walcott has been able to weave together different perspectives acknowledging the adjective presence of the natural world as well as the different expressions of the experience of a colonial encounter. Walcott attempts to find a way of using and fusing elements of an inherited language and imagery to establish a relationship between a subject, the reader and a place which encompasses the different perspectives and by so doing he generates new significance. Formalist Criticism states that the teachque of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar' or 'strange'. It emphasizes that

the vitality of art depends on its devices. This is an important principle of Artistic composition.

Walcott's poetry also explores an oral tradition, utilizing the speech rhythms of the West Indian language with the effect of transforming "The Queens English." For example, in *The Schooner's Flight* Walcott oscillates between Creole and English languages such as in "he ain't recognize me" and so spits at him: "A spit like that woth any number of words. "But that's all them bastards have left us: words"/ by careful mimicry might become men".

The use of oral tradition also finds expression in "The Sea Is History" from *The Star-Apple Kingdom (1979).* Phrases such as "the ocean kept turning blank pages" as it is "looking for History. When asked where is your Renaissance?" the Caribbean writer answers: "sir, it is locked in them sea-sands " there was the sound' like/a rumour without any echo" capture the speech rhythms of the localized voice. What is discerned in this poem is an alternative language and an alternative history. The sound without echo captures the metaphor for silences caused by imperialist invasion. Walcott's creativity however, is not concerned with preserving or rejecting tradition but with

using material of tradition to establish a new relationship between the West Indian and his place. The idea is based on the conviction that the language and "the rhythm by which we remember" ("The Caribbean" 53), which the Caribbean people have inherited from the old world (Europe and Africa) can be used to create new meanings. Walcott in *What the Twilight Says* states that "what is needed is not new names for old things, or old names for old things, but the faith of using the old names anew…

Walcott's poetry alludes to diverse influences such as Baudelaire, Cesaire, Gauguin, Homer, Joyce, Rhys and Wordsworth. For example Shabine's multiple linguistic inheritance is outlined in *The Schooner's Flight* (1979) as a rusty headed sailor with sea-green eyes". The name Shabine is "the patois for/any red nigger". Walcott's ability to merge various linguistic influences such as Creole, Latin, Greek and English gives his poetry structure commensurate to the demands of his themes

. In "A Far Cry from Africa" Walcott uses irregular rhyme and metre. The poem contains four stanzas of mostly iambic tetrameter. The starting of the poem is in iambic pentameter, a

common form of English poetry, but it soon veers off course metrically- a change that reflects the changing scene and perspective in the poem- with lines of varying length and number of stresses. A point of consistency is Walcott's use of masculine endings (lines ending with accented syllables) and masculine rhymes (one syllable rhymes). For example stanza one of the poem reads:

> *A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt*
> *Of Africa. Kikuyu, quick as flies*
> *Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.*
> *Corpses are scattered through a paradie.*
> *But still the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:*
> *'Waste no compassion on these separate dead'*
> *statistics justify and scholars seize*
> *The salients of colonial policy.*
> *What is that to the white child hacked in bed?*
> *To savages, expendable as Jews?*

The rhyme in this poem is as irregular as metre. For example the rhyme scheme of the stanza above is rendered ababbcdecd or ababbaccad. The title of the poem is symbolic. The poet hears the "far cry from Africa" (a cry from Kikuyu or white settlers or both) and cannot fix its meanings. Walcott himself, the descendant of slaves, brought up on the former British colony of St Lucia, is himself "a far cry from Africa" in

terms of both geography and culture. In this poem he tries to respond to Africa's turmoil.

Another predominant technique in Walcott's poetry is the use of the epic form. An epic is a long narrative poem presenting the adventures of a hero, and heroic events that contribute to the formation of people or society. *Omeros (1990)* is an epic poem. It takes its title from the Greek word for 'Homer', and recalls the dramas of Homer's Illiad and Odyssey in a Caribbean setting. The central characters are two fishermen, Achilles and Philocrete. Among its subjects are sufferings of exile and contemporary Caribbean life. The task of the bard in this poem is to sing of lost lives and a new hope.1 (http:/www.kirjasto.sci.fi/walctt.htm).

Omeros is written in terza rima, the verse form used by Dante in *The Divine Comedy.* Three – line stanzas are interlinked by a regular rhyme scheme, with the second line of each stanza rhyming with the first and third of the next. It consists of sixty-four chapters divided into seven books. Book One has Chapters 1-13, Book Two has chapters 14-24, Book Three has chapters 25-32, Book Four has 33-36, Book Five has 37-43, Book Six has 44-55, and Book Seven 56-64. The

chapter numbers are given in Roman numerals and each chapter has three sections. Each section is usually 12-20 stanzas in length, though some are as short as 3-6 stanzas, and others are more than thirty stanzas in length. There are recurring images in the poem of 'almond tree', 'the egret', 'the laurel tree', 'the iguana', 'the sea-swift, 'ants', 'orchids', 'the canoe', 'the rusty anchor' and a host of others. These images serve to bring unity in the poem, and to reinforce its major themes. A unifying element in the poem is the image of the sea-swift. The swift is a fast-flying bird with long, narrow wings. Achille, also, appears at the beginning and end and is also a unifying subject of the poem

As it is a typical characteristic of epic of poems, *Omeros* is rich in humour. For example the native dialect or patois spoken by the fishermen, with its disjointed syntax and slang is rendered humorously. Humour is also enhanced in the misspelled motto on Achille's boat, "In God We Troust." There is also humour in Hector's chariot, the *Comet*, a van with leopard skin seats. Hector drives the van recklessly, until he has a crash. Another example of humour is the character Maljo, a fisherman-mechanic who runs for political office, and

who is nicknamed “Professor Static” or “Statics” for the way in which his campaign speeches are short-circuited by broken syntax. Underneath all this humour Walcott presents to the reader the complexity and richness of Caribbean culture

. Walcott’s poems are preoccupied with physical voyages. He is equally concerned with the links that connect past and present and the journeys of the mind between them. He therefore fills his verse with ruminations on the nature of memory and the creative imagination, the history, politics and landscape of the West Indies, his own life and loves, and his enduring awareness of time death. Theses themes are explored with insight and tact; they are also, in Walcott’s hands, infused with the rarest of qualities, a sense of place. Walcott’s style is melodious and sensitive. (-http:/www.nobel.se/literature/ laureates/1992/press.html.)

In his introduction to the first volume of his plays Walcott calls himself ‘a mulatto of style’. His art arises from the crossing of two greatly differing traditions, the first a tradition he allowed himself to be adopted by, the European lineage from Homer via Dante, the Elizabethans, and Milton and Auden and Dylan Thomas, an elaborate tradition discernible in lavish

metaphor and luxurious sound and rhythm, the second a domestic ageless tradition, an elementary language where, like a new Adam, the poet gives things their names, perceiving how the speech sounds take shape (Allen 1997).

Representation emphasizes the fact that meaning is constructed using words, concept, signs and images. However, it is the social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representation systems to construct meaning to make the world meaningfully to others. It is in this light that Walcott's poetry has often been characterized by the search for a poetic language, a form that is appropriate. It is this search for form that has made him to use the dialect form. Walcott (1965) on this states that:

> *The West Indian poet suspects the raw spontaneity of dialect as being richer in expression, but is not willing to sacrifice the syntactical power of English. Naturally enough, where the conflict is realized the poetry is strongest. The dramatic ambivalence is part of what it means to be a West Indian now.*

Walcott has therefore continued to write both in dialect and in Standard English. Sometimes, a fusion of the two serves to suggest the dramatic ambivalence. For example in *Another Life* this fusion is presented as follows:

But I tired of your whining, grandfather,
In the whispers of marsh grass,
In the deep ground bass of the combers.

'Tired' is a standard English past tense but is also a dialect present indicate for 'I am tired': as the persona is addressing a white grandfather (whose ancestral language is English) and a black grandfather (whose descendant speaks dialect). Walcott had a thorough grounding in European history, art and literature, and was also in contact with the black-African-based culture of the St. Lucian majority. He was not European; and circumstances kept him somewhat apart from the majority of the St Lucians: they were black, he was part- white. (King 1979:144-45). This was responsible for his opting to fuse dialect with Standard English.

4.8 THE PROJECTION OF THE BLACK IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Walcott's poetry is also preoccupied with projecting the plight of the black man. *The Castaway and Other Poems (1965*) begins with "The Castaway". In this poem Walcott depicts a lonely man, a Blackman to be precise on a sand bank looking out to the sea for rescue. He is lost. He has come to the

Caribbean through the sea; therefore he looks to the sea for rescue and deliverance. The persona sense of lost is a reflection of the of the lost of the Blackman in the Caribbean and his quest for identity and meaning in life. He is "godlike annihilated godhead, art / and self, I abandon…." The Blackman is isolated, confused, rejected and his 'self' reduced to nothing.

"The Glory Trumpeter" captures the suffering and agony of the Blackman in the West Indies. Walcott describes the face of old Eddie as being "wrinkled with river lights…" Apart from Eddie, Walcott also examines: "those who sighed as if they spoke into their graves/About the Negro in America…" The last line in this poem reveals what life in the Americas is and how the blacks feel about sojourning there: "that living there, I never could look up".

In "The wedding of an Actress" the persona in this poem witnesses a wedding conducted in a culture he is forced to embrace. This new culture is represented by the Church:

Slow sitting at the knee, I kneel.
Knowing I am a guest in the Lord's house….

In this poem Walcott tends to project the loneliness and isolation of the Blackman from the lifeless and insensitive world of exile. The personae is cast as an actor just as the woman that is wedding is an actress:

> *We too are actors, who behold*
> *This ceremony…/Faith, we were told like art*
> *Feeds on illusion.*

"Laventville" is a poem that depicts the environment of the Blacks. Laventville is a slum that climbs up the mountain above Port of Spain in Trinidad, caught between the life of the city and wealthy suburbs. The physical situation perfectly mirrors the situation of the slum-dwellers, caught between the past and future, powerless to be born. The shimmering tin roofs glitter like sea and remind Walcott that they are still in the power of the first journey across the sea, the Middle Passage:

> *…The inheritors of the middle passage*
> *stewed*
> *five to a room, still clamped below their hatch,*
> *breeding like felonies…*

Walcott introduces us to a sordid ceremony of baptism of black children with no hope of a new life. In the same way the

baptism of the ‘middle passage’ has been abortive: “We left / Somewhere a life we never found.”

“Codicil” is another poem and the last in *The Castaway and Other Poems.* The poem captures exile and its effect on the blacks. It exposes the uprooting of the blacks to a rootless land: “I watch the best minds root like dogs..” Walcott in this poem also explores the theme of disenchantment and disillusionment of the Blacks: “Once I thought love of country was enough/ now even I chose, there’s no room at the trough”. There is also a call for the blacks in the Caribbean to have a unique language and way of life that is distinct and different from that of the whites: “To change your language you must/ change your life.”

“Elegy” in *The Gulf and Other Poems* also captures how the blacks in America are treated. They are victims of various forms of torture and deprivation. In this poem the whites canonize the killing of the blacks. The blacks undergo both private and public pains: “Some splintered arrowhead lodged in her brain/ sets the black singer howling in his bear trap.”

This theme is further explored in “Blues”. Here the indiscriminate brutality of the black nigger in America is

expressed. The Black is dehumanized and discriminated. No matter how coloured the black is, he is still a nigger and an object of oppression and subjection: "…but not too bright / for a nigger / and not too dark, I figured were all one…" The dehumanization and brutality the Blacks suffer is captured thus: "They beat this yellow nigger / black and blue / my face smashed in, my bloody mug / pouring…"

In "New World" *Sea Grapes*, Walcott calls on the blacks to make opportunity out of the Island they are living on. He compares the Island with New Garden of Eden. The old Eden in this case being the root of the blacks: "So when Adam was exiled / to our New Eden, / He and the snake would share the loss of / Eden for a profit."

"Names" is another poem that depicts the plight of the Blackman in the West Indies. Walcott in this poem captures the displacement of the Blackman from his root to a new one: "My race began as the sea began / But now my race is here / in the sad soil of Levantine eyes…" Walcott progresses to state the attempt made by the white man to extinct the black culture and the efforts of the Blackman to recover and assert his cultural

dignity: "… to trace our names on the sand / which the sea erased, again to our indifference."

The predicament of the Blacks also finds expression in "Shabine Encounters the Middle Passage." This poem explores the transportation of the Blacks through the sea. In the course of their voyages at sea, the slaves also came across other blacks in pitiable and degenerated conditions. The image of suffering is depicted in their appearances: "I saw men with misty eyeholes like cannons, / and whenever their half-naked crews cross the / sun, light through their tissue, you trace their bones…"

In "Ruins of a Great House" Walcott describes his experiences exploring the ruins of one of the houses that once formed the center of plantation. His reaction in this poem is that of anger revulsion. This is because many slaves, Walcott's ancestors have died in this house. The house is: "the remnant of 'the leprosy of empire'. "It smells of dead limes": "The world's green age was then a rotting lime / whose stench became the channel gallon's text / the rot remains with us, the men are gone."

This concern with the plight of the Blackman is further explored in “Negatives.” In this poem the Nigerian civil war is depicted and the negative eyes through which the whites have judged the war is examined. They have misrepresented the war as an act of savagery. Imperialism has accorded the West the power to construct the world in its own image. However, representation just as post colonialism reacts against previous approaches to the analysis of colonial experience. It is from this perspective that Walcott in this poem condemns colonial misrepresentations of Africa and the Blackman generally. “The Royal Palms” does not only showcase the physical trauma the blacks suffered in history especially during the slave trade era but also explores the psychological and fragmented effect of the western imperialistic activities in Africa:

> *Chained hands from exile lost whatever skills*
> *They first passed to pattern stone or bronze,*
> *Knit ceremonial masks; from hand to mouth*
> *Was the last way to share the tribal truth.*
> *No arches praise those origins but palms*
> *With their Corinthian plumes and earthen plinth*
> *The columns of our racial labyrinth.*

The occupation of the Blacks before their enslavement is traced and contrasted to the suffering and traumatic and

exploitative experiences they got in the hands of the slave masters through forced labour on the plantations.

In “A Far Cry From Africa” Walcott confronts his own ambivalent, anguished responses to the African struggle for independence in particular the Kikuyu insurrection in Kenya in the 1950s. The poet struggles to locate a place of ethical certainty from which to respond to African’s turmoil. It recoils from the brutal violence that often accompanies the break away from colonial rule, while also condemning the history of British imperialism in Africa. Thus the lamentation of the persona and or the poet: “Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?” Furthermore, the memories of hundreds of slaves who died during the middle passage from Africa to the Caribbean is projected in “The Sea Is History”. In this case the sea becomes a metaphor for historical erasure as:

> *That child who puts the shell’s howl to his ear,*
> *Hears nothing, hears everything,*
> *That the distortion cannot hear, howls*
> *Of all the races that crossed the water*

A major theme of *Omeros* is that of human identity which is defined by ancestry. The knowledge of our ancestry helps the West Indians to define their human identity. In Book Two,

Chapter xxxiv, section III, Achille sees the ghost of his father's face, and this leads him to ask himself about his own identity. When Achille journeys to Africa, he could not remember the names of the river-and tree-god in which he steers his canoe. When Afolabe asks his son what the name "Achille" means, and Achille responds that he doesn't know, Afolabe says that "a name means something," and that if one's name means nothng, then "you, nameless son, are only the ghost of a name" (xxv,III). This loss of knowledge of ancestry reflects man's loss sense of his place in the universe.

Hamner (1993) describes Omeros as an epic of the dispossessed because each of its protagonists is a castaway in one sense or another. Regardless of whether their ancestry is traced to the classical Mediterranean, Europe, Africa, or confined to the Americas they are transplanted individuals whose separate quests all center on the fundamental human need to strike roots in a place where one belongs.

4.9 CONCLUSION

Walcott in his poetry recognizes the combination of European and African heritages that have influenced the

formation of identity in the Caribbean. His poetry generally explores the hybrid nature of the West Indian's culture and the schizophrenic situation that pervades the Caribbean society. Walcott's perception of Africa in his poetry is revealed by the metaphor of Robinson Crusoe, who shipwrecked on a remote Island, created a home for himself by using the things he found on the Island and whatever he could salvage from the wreck of the ship.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This dissertation examines Africa in the Caribbean writers' imagination. It has explored the poetry of Edward Brathwaite, Nicolas Guillen and Derek Walcott especially, in their various projections of Africa in their works. The general thrust of their poetry is that both Africa and the Caribbean should be regarded as home: one, ancestral, which gives spiritual and psychological strength: the other real providing the physical environment for realizing their dreams and aspirations and forging out new identities. In their repositioning of Africa, these poets demonstrate that Africa should not be viewed as a contained identity or exclusive entity to which physical return to it as home is possible. Despite the different approaches to the African theme, each of the poets views Africa not as a goal in itself but as a means of realizing the true Caribbean culture and identity. The study also reveals that the African continent is a conglomeration of several things and the multiplicity of experiences because the slave trade, colonialism and

imperialism have equally reshaped the African identity and character.

Multiple theories such as Post colonialism, Formalism, New Criticism and Representation have provided the basic theoretical framework for this study. The postcolonial theory has as one of its basic tenets hybridization or double identity of the colonized. In this case the colonized is related to the colonizers because of his exposure to their values and is also part and parcel of the colonized by virtue of his origin, tradition and culture. Formalism broke away from the quasi-mystical symbolist doctrines and in a practical, scientific spirit shifted attention to the material reality of the literary text itself. New Criticism is closely related to Formalism as it also advocates for the close reading of texts. Representation has to do with the way in which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It means using language to say something meaningfully about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people. Because of their close affinity to one another, and because of their emphasis on culture, hybridization, language usage and meaningful representation,

these theories therefore provide a basis for considering Africa in the Caribbean imagination.

This study has also explored the socio-historical processes that shaped and continue to shape human experience in the Caribbean. It traced this phenomenon to slavery' particularly from the fifteenth century when shiploads of slaves were transported from Africa to the Americas where they worked on plantations. Although these Africans were physically uprooted from their culture, they took aspects of African culture with them especially the musical tradition, myths, religious beliefs and customs which they transplanted into their new environment in order to forge an identity for themselves.

This study further reveals that although the works of Brathwaite, Guillen and Walcott were bound by common concerns, they express these through different approaches. The three poets recognize the fragmentation and the impoverishment of the region that emanated from its colonial history as a challenge. Consequently, they regarded creativity as a means of restoring an experience of wholeness and a sense of the sacred and the numinous. Brathwiaite, Guillen and Walcott can therefore be said to search for an authentic

Caribbean form of expression, derived from a newly discovered sense of location, a relationship to the place as a way of taking possession.

The poets however differ in their assessment of the implications of the state of Caribbean culture and society and their approaches to their poetic task. Walcott, for instance, argues that the fragmentation and isolation in the society are irreversible facts from which the poet has to begin, working with what he has without looking back. Acknowledging the historical harm done, he refuses to linger on it. For Guillen the damage done to his Cuban society by colonial encounter can only be confronted positively when the people understand that Cuba was made up of Negro and Spanish cultures and that each has contributed equally to the development of Cuba. Brathwaite on the other hand opines that the wound inflicted by the colonial history on the Caribbean people cannot be readily left behind but must be healed. Perceiving that earlier Caribbean writers described and analyzed their rottenness and dissociation from Caribbean reality, he sees it as the task of his generation to transcend this state and heal the wound.

The assessments of the cultural situation and orientations of the three poets also differ. This dissertation states that whereas Walcott is centrally concerned with Caribbean man, with his present and his Island world, Brathwaite is haunted by a vision of the historic destiny of the Negro race, not only in the Caribbean but everywhere. His poem begins in the Sahara, with images of drought and sharp glitter, then moves into the damp silence of the forests, the savage encounter with the armed intruders, the enslavement and the passage to the new world, the last a literal image of hell. Later it picks up the cyclical rhythm which seems to dominate the literature of the Islands, the cycle of Discovery, Departure and Return. But Brathwaite's discovery of the new island home lacks the joy which Walcott imparts to it. The Negro islander soon finds himself facing a new exile, to the urban slums and self-discrimination of America and England. Finally, he returns to the island, only to confront once more their poverty, hopelessness and squalor. To Brathwaite therefore the historical severance from Africa was a final one. The West Indian can revisit it, draw strength and inspiration from it, but cannot in the fullest sense return. Also while Walcott 's poetry

focuses more on the individual, finding aspiration in isolated figures as creators, such as, Robinson Crusoe, and proceeding to create metaphysical images incorporating multiple correspondences. Guillen's and Brathwaite's poetry, by contrast focuses on community, taking inspiration from collective experience of loss and calamity and proceeding to find a voice to articulate it.

The study also unfolds that while Derek Walcott obviously obviates changes of sentimental exoticism by virtue of his sustained emphasis on the gulfs between the West Indies and Africa, or between West Indian dreams of an undiluted African heritage, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the hybrid nature of the West Indian's culture. This contrasts with his contemporary, Edward Brathwaite, who handles Akan materials in his *Masks* with an authoritative touch that has earned him commendation for his African realism. Guillen also deserves praise because he feels and communicates the sentiments and idiosyncrasies of the Cuban Negro and Mulatto. He is proud of his ancestry

. One basic thing however, that is common among these West Indian poets is link with the past. It was this desire for a

link with the past and origin and concern with restoring a holistic vision that prompted Brathwaite to embark on a journey to Africa. Walcott does not necessarily popularize what is lost, nor does he dramatize, as Brathwaite does in Rights of Passage, the image of a receding past and consciousness. For him the loss of pace, self and identity is subsumed in the all encompassing image of the “amnesiac blow” which strips and denudes the New World man of his past but also leaves him with the possibility of new creation. Thus in Walcott’s “Laventville” the survivor of the Middle Passage is caught in a limbo between two worlds, neither of which he truly possesses. The search for identity and racial origins can only be fully appreciated in the context of Achille’s dream visit to Africa. By sending Achille to Africa Walcott has not only come to recognize the primacy of the African factor in Caribbean identity but has also ultimately embraced the archaeology of knowledge that has been central to the thought of Cesaire and Brathwaite. However, Achille himself is caught between conflicting pulls. One of the pulls draws him to a sense of home in Africa; another intrudes with the dualities of his own wider history.

For Nicolas Guillen, obsession with origin and pursuit of birthright are not the ultimate issues. This is because, inspired by filial relationships to the racial ancestor, he is also impelled by the necessity of birth either of European whiteness of African blackness. He therefore advocates for cultural fusion.

Also from the structure of Brathwaite's *The* Arrivants this study traces the complex Caribbean heritage and its African roots. The movement (Physical and Spiritual) of Brathwaite from the West Indies to Africa and America and back to the West Indies is considered as an attempt to link with origin that could put the West Indian man in a meaningful context in time and space and enlarge his consciousness of self. Through these regressive (journey to Africa) and progressive (going back to the Caribbean Islands) movements, a new man has emerged with a new personality accepting world dimension of the Caribbean identity.

Guillen in *Man Making Words* emphasizes on Black consciousness and Negro tradition within the context of socialist Cuba. He asserts that Cuba was made up of Negro and Spanish cultures and that each had contributed equally to the development of Cuba. To him, Africa is a source to be

remembered, not a place to be returned to. His Neo-Negritudism views Africanity, not as a goal in itself, but as a means of realizing, in conjunction with the Spanish element, the true Mestize culture of Cuba. In *Man Making Words*, Africa is used as an inspiration, a means of assimilation, of a fusion, so that a true Cuban society can be effectuated. The African elements cannot be separated and viewed separately without placing them in the Cuban context, and without taking cognizance of the Spanish element.

Walcott on the other hand recognizes the combination of European and African heritages that have influenced the formation of identity in the Caribbean. His art generally reveals the hybrid nature of the West Indian's culture and the Schizophrenic situation that pervades the Caribbean society. Walcott's perception of Africa in his poetry is better discerned from the metaphor of Robinson Crusoe, who shipwrecked on a remote Island, created a home for himself by using the things he found on the Island and whatever he could salvage from the wreck of the ship.

From the poetry of the three poets it can be discerned that Brathwaite has the closest affinity to Africa. Brathwaite's

long stay in Africa in search of root of origin, his adoption of the name Kamau and the fact that his poetry makes use of techniques characterized by the symbolic language of the folk/oral tradition of drum poetics marks him out. In *Masks* for example his poetry draws heavily from the art of drumming.

Nicolas Guillen writes from the revolutionary and Marxian perspective. His poetry aims at enhancing revolution and condemning the evils of capitalism and all forms of oppression. His poetry emphasizes Black identity as well as celebrates the contribution of Africa to Cuban civilization and the fusion of African and Spanish heritage in Cuban identity. In Guillen's Poetry aspects of diaspora are projected from the perspective of the socialist ideology.

Derek Walcott on the other hand does not engage the African theme in his poetry. He rather offers a sympathetic and humanistic approach to the whole issue. To him, neither Europe nor Africa could resolve the existential and ontological questions but one's own kind, the West Indian who is facing the West Indies. Consequently, he attributes this challenge to a new world man with a capacity to straddle and cope with the variety of human experiences. His award of the Nobel prize for

Literature by the Swedish Academy and the way he uses the metaphor of the second Adam and Robinson Crusoe to resolve the Black identity issue in the Caribbean point to the direction of his loyalty.

The figures Adam and Robinson Crusoe are derived from classic works of colonial fiction. Also Walcott's use of white colonial figures as prototypes of the Caribbean creative imagination depicts his loyalty to the West rather than Africa.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW

TALKING WITH DEREK WALCOTT

Derek Walcott, last year's winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, was born in St. Lucia in 1930. He graduated from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. The poet-playwright established the Trinidad Theatre Workshop

where he directed his own plays. "Dream on Monkey Mountain," now considered a Caribbean classic, went on to New York where it won an Obie Award for the best foreign play of 1971. Many people in the Virgin Islands will recall Walcott's work with the Courtyard Players in St. Croix.
Along with his **Collected Poems** *which appeared in 1986, Walcott has published 10 books of verse:* **The Castaway and Other Poems** *(1965);* **The Gulf and Other Poems** *(1969);* **The Gulf** *(1970);* **Another Life** *(1973);* **Sea Grapes** *(1976);* **The Star-Apple Kingdom** *(1979);* **The Fortunate Traveller** *(1981);* **Midsummer** *(1984);* **The Arkansas Testament** *(1987); and* **Omeros** *in 1990.*
When this interview was taped in 1978, Derek Walcott was correcting the galley proofs for **The Star-Apple Kingdom***, a volume of verse that seems to represent a pivotal point in his career*.
A*t the time, Walcott was not recognized as the world class poet he is today. He was well-respected but still considered a regional poet. These days one would hardly describe him as the "West Indian who lives down the road," as he referred to himself then. He had just begun teaching at several U.S. universities, something that was to enlarge his audience exponentially*.
We talked at intervals over a period of several days at a beach resort in St. Thomas.

CF: One reviewer talked about the Caribbean of your poems as a sort of fallen Eden. Is that true? Do you see the Caribbean as a fallen Eden?
DW: Most of the Caribbean is still a primal

experience. It is still a place where you can find a beach that is totally deserted, and it still looks as primal, Edenic, as when it first happened.

I remember driving in St. Lucia along a coast road and looking up at the hills—the mountains, really, because they're steep enough to be called mountains. It's the feel of it that's a mountain. And I just felt that quite likely nobody has ever gone in there—I mean ever. Probably not an Arawak or Carib, probably not anybody exploring and probably not even a St. Lucian woodcutter, and so there are whole tracts that remain untouched, unprinted. And in that sense, if you are overlooking a valley in St. Lucia, away from the road, and you see nothing but just mountains, the hills, the sky, that's an experience, an Edenic expenence.

You know we have three things going that create that sense of awe, of being diminished in their presence. And that is a very vast sky, a really large sea and, of course, the landscape you are standing in.

What we were taught as young colonials, is that our awe was inferior. We were taught that the sky in Italy was superior, that the light of their sky was really superior to the light in Barbados or somewhere.

I think I got rid of that feeling of inferiority extremely early as a painter practicing the actual skill of painting light, which is what painting really is about, at least representational painting.

The blue of some of the bays in the Caribbean is incredible. You really believe that if you went down there and put your finger in it, your hand would be stained. And if you are painting

the intensity of that blue, or the intensity of that light, which is extremely difficult, then you are doing a whole new thing. And it affects the way you do your art.

When asked if it's a fallen Eden, I would say that wherever the landscape offers a genuine feeling of beginning, in that sense it is Edenic. You know, in terms of the history, what history has happened here.

Most of the history of the Caribbean—the physical history— took place on the sea. The battles for the islands, the forts at the edge of the sea—it's just a fringe kind of history on the edge of these islands. And the inside part of it is not where the original sin in the landscape took place; it took place on the water—right in the battles and stuff like that. And so these things keep getting more and more quickly erased. There 's a big difference between a sea culture, like the Aegean and a sea culture like the Caribbean and, say, a plains culture or mountain culture. And we are a sea culture. So this renewal of the sea is a strong thing for me. So, in terms of the isolation of the poet himself in that kind of setting, the kind of figure that one is drawn to is the Crusoe figure, the explorer figure.

But not in the historic sense of white men coming and finding, the imperialist discovering a paradise. That's not the kind of process one is talking about. One is in that paradise and owns it. The sense of possessing it is great too.

For us, my generation of writers—Naipaul, Lamming, Reed, John Hearne—I think that there was and there is still in us, although we are all getting middle-aged, an elation that is in the best sense a child-like elation of having

behind you a tradition which you knew, which is the English tradition. And not belonging to it but certainly being much a part of it because of the language and its customs.
And also the whole creation and exploration of an identity which may be—in Naipaul's case, for instance—a very bitter rejection of a reduction of that identity. But still, a process of exploration though it may be in other writers an elation—in the landscape, the newness of the landscape, the width of the landscape; and by landscape, I include the sea, the whole panorama.
CF: How do you feel about referring to specific island plants that maybe mainland readers don't have any idea about, any relationship to? How do you deal with that?
DW: That's a complicated thing. It depends on how you relate yourself to this. The whole struggle is to not remain inferior, not to be made to feel inferior. Then the next phase is to resent also being called equal which is really like being called inferior. And the next phase is, of course, to be superior. Now I think that no matter how aristocratic it is, a writer has to cultivate an intelligence that is in its nature superior, in the sense that it is more organized. He has to learn more. He has to know everything. The more he knows, the better for him. Both about life and about literature. So this whole process of agony and refinement goes on in the writer. And a colonial writer should have behind him, not only the knowledge that he is beginning something, but all the knowledge that preceded him as well.
In terms, then, of coming to botanize the landscape around you, to say that this is such

and such a plant and such and such a thing and someone else not knowing it, you come to the very old dated idea that if I said "snow," whether I needed to experience it as a child to appreciate it.

In terms of a poem, for instance, a poem about snow can be perhaps more of a sensual thing for [someone like] me who has never seen it, who hadn 't seen it, or who had to imagine it. One can't imagine cold if you live in a hot country, you know. But the effort of trying to do it is a thing that makes it more beautiful. It all depends on the poem. A poem or a piece of work can transport the reader, the child, the young person, to the experience of snow or whatever.

Okay. So if you reversed that and say, here I am—I'm writing in a country that has one kind of climate, that appears to have a certain lack of subtlety, of psychological experience of a race, subtleties of language, of graces; then I am a privileged person, a superior person, because I'm writing.

Then, I write down mango or breadfruit or pineapple, which used to have a comic association because you were taught to look at these things as inferior and inferior things are comic, right? So that you ascribed, as a colonial, a comic indignity to a mango when you said it, or a breadfruit or whatever. A breadfruit is a sculptural shape, a sculptural shape without trying to be superior. Putting both things next to each other on a ledge, sculpturally a breadfruit is infinitely more interesting as a shape than, say, a cantaloupe. But the colonial looking at it, having been taught that there's a literature that talks about the cantaloupe, the melon, the apple, the

peach, knows there's no poem about breadfruit. Then you begin to feel, well, despite the fact that this particular fruit sculpturally is more interesting, it carries with it an inferior kind of association.
CF: But what about the reader who doesn't even have an idea what it is? I mean whether it's little, red, yellow...
DW: It's not a problem. The question is a question of power. Power and poetry. Or power and literature. If I put down either a word, which may be a part of speech or conversation, or I put down a word which may be a name for a tree or something and somebody in England doesn't understand it, that person has to look it up somewhere, then what am I doing? Do I have to explain? I think not. I think that one can be obscure or regionalistic just for political reasons. To say—well, I'm asserting my identity when I write like this. I don't believe that. I shouldn't write a word that I think would satisfy the English reader when I know that the word that I have to write down is something different. It is up to the reader who likes the poem or wants to know more about the poem to find out about what it is. Because if I take another word, I'm going to lose not only the truth of it, but more than that. I'm going to be losing not only meaning but the line's actual sound. You can't make those sacrifices just to say, well everybody's got to understand what I'm writing. Luckily one is writing in a language that is spoken by millions of people all over. And it's a question of tone, I think.
CF: You mean West Indian English?
DW: No. Well, not West Indian English. West Indian English, American English, Ceylonese

English is a matter of the individual tone of the race that is speaking it, and I think what a writer goes for if he wants to be true is the sound of his voice, which is the sound of his own race without any artificiality.
So Frost sounds American, Edward Thomas sounds English—even if they resemble each other. And so the inflection, the tone of the poet is not an artificial tone. And a lot of bad poetry is written or has been written because a West Indian poet or a colonial poet really, when he wrote the poem, would be speaking internally in an English accent. But if it is your personal inflection and the inflection of the race that you are writing in, then I think you are trying to be as honest as you can.
And then if you come across a word that is inevitable—and it's absolutely the right word—then it's up to someone else to find out what it means. I think it does come to a point where you say, yeah, all that is true but who in New York or London or Paris is going to check out the meaning of a particular word? And that's where you get into areas of influence, of power, of authority in poetry. I would think it doesn't matter.
CF: But a lot of times, can't the whole poem carry the words through so that individual words don't matter? I mean you can read "Star-Apple Kingdom" and not know what a star-apple is and not even want to know. And still get something from the poem.
DW: Yes. But right now I'm doing a dialect—what may be called a dialect poem. It's easy to write a dialect poem because to write a dialect poem all you've got to do is take the language off the street and put it in meter. That's easy enough.

I'm working on a poem called "The Schooner, ‘Flight ," and it's been agonizing because parts of it become too literary in terms of the character speaking. And right now, my publisher was telling me that the typesetter thought that certain sentences needed plurals or whatever, changing the tenses. But when I'm writing, the sound I hear is of a West Indian moving between—in a kind of, not a twilight, but a brighter thing than that—our own grammar and standard English, if you want. Now, sometimes I'm looking for the force that can happen in what appears to be the ungrammatical but which, in terms of its contradictions, is more authoritative.

You see, the discussion about the evolution of language is a sociological and political problem. It is not a problem for a writer. Because he has a new tone; he has his own voice.

Words shape themselves. If extra effort is required of the body, the body is going to drop those dead ends, and that's how tenses are formed. Tenses change, words change, language changes. Languages change. And they change because of physical attitude because more people begin to speak them. Now I ll just give you maybe one quick example.

This poem has been giving me a very hard time. I want to write it as true as I can in terms of not faking it by doing it in dialect, an easy dialect. I'm trying to find a sort of blend. Now it may not work but it ll be on record as some kind of experiment. Now one of the lines that I like, that I really feel is a West Indian line, a Trinidadian line [is] "and a wind start to interfere with the trees." Now, to interfere with

the trees in the particular context of the poem is like the hand of the wind—to interfere with a girl, for instance, is to trouble her, to put your hand up her skirt and to do something.
The image for me, of the wind ruffling up the skirts of the trees and making noise, has a sort of West Indian sensuality. It also means at that point that the trees are stilli—t's early morning. And they are ruffled by the wind poking around in them. Ahh, making the sound. Interfering with the stillness of the trees.
To say then in a straight grammatical way, "the wind started to interfere with the trees" changes the meaning of the word interfere. It doesn't work. Or "a wind interfered with the trees" has the tone of a judge pronouncing on a court case about what the wind did. It's more lively to say, "A wind start interfering with the trees."
CF: Let's talk about "The Star-Apple Kingdom," the title poem of your new collection that's coming out this spring. It reminds me so much of *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, and you were telling me that there is a relationship between that and your book. The selling of the Caribbean Sea and all that.
DW: Yes, I want people to think of that. The thing is, I have to make up my mind whether I want to put it down in the book as a preface saying this, like Lowell has done. I was thinking about this last night and I don't think I need to do it anymore because if someone recognizes it, that's fine. But whenever I have read it, I've always prefaced the reading with "this poem came, or developed from reading *The Autumn of the Patriarch*," which is a book that astounded me.

I had begun *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. I couldn't finish it. At one point I put it down and I didn't know where I was. But I read *Autumn of the Patriarch* and it really bowled me over because I don't believe in the prose poem as a thing. And what it did was fantastic. Plus I felt an immediacy about the Caribbean. So that the poem was detonated by that book, came out of that book.

In "The Schooner `Flight ," for instance, the sources are there. I think it's obvious someone can look at it and say, "oh yeah, you're trying to write a small *Odyssey*." Because here we are in the Caribbean which is like the Aegean in terms of the light and the number of islands. And here 's this guy traveling up the islands and it's the the Odysseus thing. But you see, a fisherman who is traveling actually on a schooner between Trinidad and, say, Antigua, which is a helluva long trip, is not thinking he's really Ulysses; he's really on a boat going between islands. You know what I mean?

CF: Worried about the water in the bilge.

DW: Yes. Actual stuff like that. It's not my fault that the Caribbean is an archipelago. It's not my fault that the light is like this. It's not my fault that people take journeys by boat and so on. That's the only way we used to, and still in a sense, relate.

Now someone looking at it can say, oh, yeah he's trying to write a small *Odyssey*—to accuse one of a kind of ambition. That's not the point. I mean the actual parallel, the thing that came closer—even if you want derivation or imitation, it doesn't matter to me—came from *Piers Plowman* by Langland, which is a journey taken by pairs of plowmen through England—

medieval England—and making a spiritual journey like a *Pilgrim's Progress* journey in a poem.

Now I don't parallel that section by section but the very first line in the poem is modeled on that. I'm still changing the line around. I don 't know quite what I want yet. I have variations like "In idle August, when the sea soft." Now I want to be able to know that a man can say that. He mightn't say "idle August." "In something August, when the sea soft." If I said in English "when the sea is soft," it becomes fake Keatsian. But you can hear a man saying "when the sea soft." There's no trouble: the sea is calm. And I'm talking about a big tough sailor saying the sea soft. I'm not talking about a young poet with a tie and a flower saying the sea is soft.

CF: It makes a big difference.

DW: Exactly. Now the beginning of *Piers Plowman* is "In a summer season when soft was the sun." Now I do that deliberately because I want that kind of echo to happen for those people who know *Piers Plowman*. And naturally when it comes out, people are going to say this comes from *Piers Plowman*.

Now that's fine with me because that just makes me continue my belief that English is not a property of the English. And so English poetry doesn 't belong to an Englishman more than it does to me in any way. And if I continue English by saying I'm writing a poem that has the same force, if possible, as the beginning of *Piers Plowman*, it's deliberate. I do that deliberately.

CF: The poem "The Star-Apple Kingdom" starts with this pastoral painting. How do you get from that to the Caribbean? From paint to

words. Is that a fair transition? Are you asking too much of your readers that way? First of all tell me about *custos*.

DW: Custos is an example of the things that happen in language in the Caribbean. A *custos* is a custodian. A Latin custos—custodoes meaning a god. It's an old Jamaican word which may still be used for someone in charge of a parish, appointed by the government, I think. The custos of a parish is the guard. Now this is a large word, an imperial word from England. So this person would've been appointed to be the district officer or custos of a place. I think that's what it is.

Here's a purely surviving Latin word. From one empire to the other, Roman to British to Jamaica. In active survival. Here's the custos—here's a man talking a Latin word. Someone can say, well this happens all over the world but it doesn t.

It's more focused in the Caribbean. Because of the very intensity of the space. It is a small place. Each island is smaller— the intensity or variation from one island to another makes each language sometimes a completely different language, a difference between, say, Martinique and St. Lucia.

St. Lucia—and I'm going on a bit but I just want to make a point—St. Lucia is closer in spirit to Guadeloupe and Martinique than it is to Barbados. St. Lucia is a French island but here we have the people talking English. Now when you have all these things going on at the same time you get some fantastic combinations, comic perhaps, but also viable speech.

For instance, a man saying that he had "scattered peas." He was trying to talk affected

English but all he meant was that he had a few peas. And "scattered peas" is fantastic. Or smashed potatoes, which is a mistake but it is stronger now because it's newer. Now, some linguists say of course that "smashed" potatoes is inaccurate. But smashed potatoes in the context of the guy talking—the guy who was serving him was angry—makes a lot of sense. The guy was served *smashed* potatoes. "Oh, I didn't have too much to eat; I had some scattered peas." A few beans—that's creative.
CF: It is. It's very creative.
DW: Rather than saying they served him a handful of beans and they gave him some mashed potatoes. The thing's contracting anyway. Now that's *custos*, an example of a word that survived. I don't want to change the word.
All right now, just to jump to the other thing about the painting. The painting is on a saucer. It's a saucer souvenir like a coronation plate. Bicentennial plate of cows—on a mantlepiece. And then outside, beyond the windows of the house, the greathouse, there are real cows, really grazing.
Now this may be an example of a humor that Mб rquez as a Caribbean writer—because he's on that side of the Atlantic—and the colonial Spaniard, for instance, would experience. This is the joke in it—in a bigger sense of joke—that the cows outside, the real cows outside, like the breadfruit, are inferior to the painted cows on a saucer imported from England. That would be the inflection in a greathouse, right? That the painting of a great lady in her lace and her bonnet is more because it's art than the guy outside cutting the grass.
CF: I think you often find that what's painted

is more real. You know how people say pretty as a picture.

DW: Not only that. In terms of the whole social thing, the whole experience. You see, people never painted black people in the Caribbean.

So that part of the poem is simply a comparison between all the bric-a-brac inside the greathouse with the people outside. And then there's a picture, a photograph, tinted and old, of the greathouse family. And outside the photograph, the frame, there is a sound, which is the sound of the people who've been left out of the photograph.

CF: That's just marvelous the way that poem flows in that section.

DW: That's just what frames the picture and that sound is heard or not heard later, the scream outside the painting.

CF: Who's the "he" in "The Star-Apple Kingdom?"

DW: The *he*? Now let me make this a little clear without being defensive. I remember being in fact in St. Croix, and I hadn't read that book—*The Autumn of the Patriarch*. I remember writing lines that are in the poem now on Rainbow Beach in St. Croix, beginning it there. And I didn't know what it was going to be about.

I hope I'm right. Maybe, maybe not. But the germ of the poem, the thought of the poem is not out of M6rquez. The poem did not come out of that. I think it was generated and accelerated having read the M6rquez.

CF: Maybe as just a sort of catalyst.

DW: Yes. The Star-Apple Kingdom is a constant place— Jamaica. "He" is Manley, my friend. A young ruler as opposed to the old

despot in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. You know Michael Manley, a young person in charge of a country.

CF: What's your concept of history? What does it mean: "he wanted a history without any memory?" Why? Ignorance is bliss? You believe that?

DW: Not happy oblivion. Our tragic affliction when talking about the history of the Caribbean is to be told we have no history, which one would imagine to be the best possible situation because one can then be separate from original sin and so on. Teaching history is very important to guilt, suffering, anger and remorse.

This is wrong. We should be beyond that because we were slaves in the beginning and it's over. Wiping out the past is a sin— for the ultimate meaning of history is original sin. And what is interesting is not what they did but why.

CF: The poem seems to end with a wry upbeat smile, the cracking of an egg. Does this mean you're really optimistic after all?

DW: Well, it's just an act. I really don't know what happens then. The cracking of an egg is the opening of a world. You have that image and then I don't know what. Anything can happen. A man eating an egg for breakfast.

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