

## CHAPTER- 4

### “Finding our Tongue”: Negotiating Contradictions in Language Politics

The new cultural and creative consciousness lives in an entirely polyglot world. The world becomes polyglot, once for all and irreversibly. The period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end. Languages throw light on each other: one language can after all see itself only in the light of another language.

-Mikhail Bakhtin.

What I wrote had nothing to do with what I saw. While I loved and honoured them in my mind, i could not bring myself to write down the names of villages, of fruits, the way people spoke because it seemed too raw.

- Derek Walcott

As Walcott grew up in an island-society which was a melting pot of cultures and languages, he was acutely aware of the historic humiliation involved in the hierarchization of language. The power of language within colonialism suggested a radically contrasted identity between the coloniser and the colonised and also widened the division within the West-Indian society between the Middle class and the poor mass. Social hierarchy constructed by fixed linguistic markers was repudiated by the playwright himself: “I don’t think you can say that a thought is more subtle in an imperial language than it is in a colonial dialect. I know a feeling cannot be” (786) Walcott knew that there is no such thing as universal or unambiguous language and firmly argued that no nation should have a single, unmixed vocabulary as such. Like Bakhtin, he considered unitary language to be a vehicle for centralising power as in case of Europe that has maintained its hegemony through the cultural control of languages like French and English. Such languages tend to become closed or “deaf” to other voices of difference. In lieu of it, the various speech registers and rich heteroglossia could effectively undermine the authoritative position of a particular language. In many colonised cultures the language of the theatre was heightened and ‘proper’ English was considered normative as it

signified privilege in the wider social realm. But the postcolonial theatre that Hill or Walcott sought to forge was a rebuttal of the privilege of the imperial language by allowing dialogue of languages which intersect in many ways could dislodge superiority of the colonial language. By forging a new dramaturgy, artists deploy all registers and manners of speech code. In order to displace authority radically, the West- Indian artist had to forge “(an) other” language of various overlapping creoles which may be described as ‘comprehensive linguistic continuum’ (Tompkins 185) - one which is capable of bearing the cultural weight of multilingual social world and could completely disregard of the question of option, “Creole or English”?, popular in the context of the political turmoil of the 60s and 70s. Such language, increasingly practised by the islandic artists, could offer resistance to domination and asymmetry of power relations.

The fluid and ambiguous potential of language helped Walcott step across the boundaries of identity. By his own confession, he was “madly in love with English” (11) and his mind was drenched in Jacobean verse, but the mood and awareness of Caribbean life required ‘fresh language’ from the young artist. He did not advocate return to pristine, flawless English rather a hybrid of local variants which can abrogate the privileged centrality of English. Standard English is a centrist construct and berates the values of local and regional English. As one of the earliest of dramatists to attract the acclaim of the global audience, he imbued the creole variants with a new prestige, turning it into vehicle for the complexity of regional representation. A passionate manipulator of languages, he looked for more inclusive linguistic register that coalesces both folk and standard English and can embrace the cultural and political realities. Seamus Heaney in his essay “The Murmur of Malvern” has described this linguistic gift as “sign of Walcott’s mastery that his fidelity to West- Indian speech now leads him not away from but right into the genius of English” (7). As he’s extensively assimilated Western literary tradition, English was to him a language that had to be appropriated as it could not be disclaimed. Though Heaney is fervent about the mastery of deeply ‘sonorous’ language of Walcott, as St. Lucia born poet and playwright, Walcott was keen to translate his inherited heterogeneity into a new collective utterance of theatre which can inscribe his people’s difference in syntax and grammar:

The smell of our own speech,

the smell of baking bread,

of drizzled asphalt, this

odorus cedar...

*(Another Life, 185)*

Writers in the Caribbean have engaged in an ongoing evolution of strategies to lend verisimilitude to the linguistic position. Before them, on the one hand, multiple West Indian language registers was felt to be unworthy, secondary. At the outset of his career, Walcott found that French-creole or patois, the vernacular of most of the St. Lucians, was yet to be ‘fully mined in Caribbean writing’ (Breiner 8). All pidgin and creole variations were kept under the rubric of marginal languages. They were often identified as ‘baby language’ or stigmatised as ‘unnatural’ languages. On the other hand, the reliance in International English was a profound index of the colonial mental residue; it was a useful cultural medium of the creative regional writers. Confronting these conflicting legacies, the creative writers had to devise strategy that can appropriate and integrate various linguistic ideas- one that that can encode the class and ethnic tensions in the Caribbean societies. As Laurence Breiner has commented, “Walcott from the very beginning trained himself to be a part of the European tradition, but his linguistic setting in St. Lucia presents an extreme from the general West Indian case”(173). Discussing appropriations of the dominant language by the postcolonial writers, Ashcroft and Tiffin have suggested that language is a horizon into which all speakers may enter in different ways along different trajectories. Caribbean region presents a rich assortment of Creoles having historical affinities and rich linguistic diversity of European languages like Spanish, French or English. As a consequence of different histories of colonisation over the centuries, it has become a region of extensive creolisation. The use of regional linguistic standards and distinctive Creoles has become a means of articulating shared communal values and local cultural heterogeneity. As language appears to be a versatile tool for a Caribbean writer, he set himself the task to transform the paradoxes of Caribbean heritage into art. As George Lamming puts it, “ If language was the major instrument of empire, it is the very flexible and varying ranges of language, the subtle and exquisite manipulations of native rhythms of speech which have won over writers a very special attention”(29). Lamming, Braithwaite and Selvon similarly sought to deploy all aspects of ‘creole continuum’ very effectively as they sought to steal power way from ‘top down’ monolithic imposition. As a St. Lucian, he drew from the heritage of two indigenous vernaculars, English and French creole (or Patios) as well as two standard European

languages, in constant interplay with one another. An artist of Walcott's stature could not be unaware of insularity of islandic variant and by utilising manifold spectrum; he forged a unique theatrical language. As creative encounter of difference is at the heart of Creolisation, Walcott has reconfigured the language of drama as to fracture the normality of English and infuse into it marginal or 'creole' variations. Only by extending the concept of creole continuum could the privilege of Standard English be displaced and the mechanism of colonial power be destabilized. It is no wonder that Walcott's affinity with and exuberant love for Standard English and the language of his community in the plots helps him articulate "not only his own locus but the wider world, and not only his separateness within it but his sharing" (Burnett, 126). By the late 50s however there are indications that he is working towards a generalized West-Indian, an accessible grapholect, revealing on syntactical features common to every islands. For his native audience, the rhythm and syntactic expectation were fulfilled. And at the same time the aesthetic balance was restored between the formal English and the island patois. Walcott was a major exploiter of multiple linguistic heritages and paying attention to linguistic registers and speech acts, Walcott faced challenge "to harness or devise loan translations from non-English lexified Creoles to project new levels of mood and awareness of Caribbean life and ritual enactments of Caribbean world views" (34).

Walcott once described Caribbean people as 'ashamed of their speech'; like actors, they 'awaited a language'. No doubt, the centrist scorn had forced them to feel ashamed of it like racism and class prejudice. Domestic language, though multiple, was felt to be unworthy and inappropriate for serious study. Pidgins and creoles were scorned as mere corruption of metropolitan languages. As the Jamaican poet Mutabaruka so inimitably puts it "The language we talk we can't write; and the language we write we can't talk" (qtd. in Breiner 22). Walcott was sceptic about language habit as sign of cohesive identity or language and repudiated static model of artificial linguistic. His multiple language heritages were not only resistant to linguistic hegemony but an affirmative sign of sharing in disparate traditions; it was an acknowledgement of an inbuilt Caribbean cultural necessity. Ashcroft has described Caribbean novelists and poets as "among the most energetic transformers of language" (ref.68); the inventiveness with language informs almost all the artworks of Walcott. It has been often pointed out the dramatic works of Walcott is itself a microcosm of the gradual change towards the greater exploitation of the language varieties available to the West-Indian writers. Walcott had distanced his art from the Caribbean writers who "cannot separate the rage of Caliban from the beauty of his speech" ("Culture or Mimicry"?25). For him the

empowering stance is neither the refusal of language nor using it for revenge; it had to be deauthorised from the imperial enterprise and also from serving the cause of 'reverse colonialism'. Working within the creole continuum, Walcott already had an access to broad spectrum of linguistic culture and he had to negotiate between them in order to make it adequate for imaginative writing. This linguistic continuum reflects the social and cultural continuum of St. Lucia or Trinidad. This continuum allows the playwright the dual advantage of abrogating Standard English and appropriating English as a significant literary discourse. It dismantles the static model of language formations with English as the core and other dialects as only peripheral entities. Every tribe and ethnic clan would find their belonging in such an inclusive language, or they will find the cadences of their speech in them. Like Harris he believed that the mutual erosion between the dominated and dominating culture lies at the heart of aesthetic project. In developing specific ways to express the cultural reality, Walcott recognises the distance/ gulf rather than bridging it. This is Adamic celebration of language, invoking the poet's excitement in establishing original relations with his new universe. Instead of finding language in terms of master-slave dialectic, he "proposes an adamic celebration of language, invoking the poet's excitement in establishing original relations with his new universe, the newness qualified of course by the prior experience of the old" (Tiffin 50). He did not endorse Creole or patois as dramatic language because of the limited comprehensibility and insularity of it across the various islands of the regions. The Jamaican Sestern theatre devised a language conforming to the culture and linguistic habits of the working class. The creole that they deployed was devised to give back their 'voice' denied through slavery. Likewise Braithwaite's proposed "Nation Language" was forged to revolt against the mastery which was deeply inflicted by the African and rich oral heritage. Braithwaite has referred to the English based on Creole as the nation language of the Caribbean and maintains that its origin is in oral cultures. While Walcott's another contemporary, Earl Lovelace discarded the burden of colonial education and vigorously defended the emergence of Caribbean Creoles that nativise English, French, Spanish and Portuguese as signifying "our humanity as proactive bearers of culture, not mere zombies-passive receptacles of the will of the enslaving other"(Cooper12) Unlike finding a categorical 'aletrnative', Walcott's language undergoes metamorphosis and gets continually re-created. As Delueze and Guattari maintain language is not a concrete and predetermined entity but expands into web of connections:

“There is no language in itself, nor any universality of language, but a discourse of dialects, patios, slangs and special languages. There exists no ideal competent speaker- hearer of language, any more than there exists a homogenous linguistic community”. (Qtd. in Tompkins 200)

Since the dominant language registers power and exerts the ideological domination, Walcott stressed on the local speech habits and its bent toward coalescing of languages. Like Walcott, Reid was caught between desires on the one hand, to invest the narrative voice with the intimacy suggested by the vernacular and on the other hand to use Standard English to ensure international access to his works. When he used Standard English, he infused it with lexical and idiomatic Jamaicans. The end impression for Reid was in listening to a quintessential Jamaican voice and experience.

From the very beginning of his career, Walcott drew on the whole language continuum that he inherited. The hallmark of his poetry and early plays is inventive approach to the vernacular speech. Walcott’s attachment to Patois or French Creole as literary medium enables a condition of verisimilitude to St. Lucian folk lives. In such local languages his culture’s stories and concerns are powerfully retold. His manipulation of linguistic practices of this stage is succinctly expressed by Ned Thomas: “In the first place, it must reflect a commitment to the salted vigour of the ordinary speech... However, compared to many West-Indian poets, Walcott achieves this effect by a very few touches drawn from West- Indian syntax and verb-forms, devices that in no way lose Walcott his international audience.” (88). Here most of these works allow the orality of the indigenous culture to be powerfully expressed; sound and rhythm of the islanders’ speech is deployed with consummate skill. Working in the performance of drama, Walcott had to attempt direct rendition than the contemporary novelists like C.L.R James or George Lamming who had to maintain some distance from the lower-class lives of their subjects. As Trinidadian Freddie Kisson or Eric Roach had fashioned a different dialect and voice quality for the vernacular used by underprivileged classes. As the Creole was gaining the formal space, the authors were using spelling departures. Walcott, particularly in case of *Ti- Jean and His Brothers*, relates how the plot is based on verbal joke as the story was narrated to him by a fellow schoolboy which “doesn’t work in an English translation”. Walcott, very consciously, turned away from the prevalent language choices between orality and the literary as they were split on class and race lines. Through a fusion of orality and scribality, he reconfigured his mentors like Synge

or Kuroshwa. In the 50s and early 60s, local story telling frame and classical forms were fused to articulate the inescapable cultural reality of hybridisation: “heterogeneity is with him a grace, almost a way... His powers long to travel and his sensibility enlarges everything to its widest limits. At the level of style alone Walcott offers God’s plenty” (Broadsky,320). In exploiting his native cultural resources, George Lamming, also, modulates from Standard English prose to the open communality dialogue, carried out in Caribbean dialect as was found in the conversation between the boys, in the discussion in the barbershop, in the shared intimacy of the women. Considered usually a landmark of West-Indian theatre, *Henri Christophe* (1949) brings to the fore Walcott’s artistic representation of the society in which he himself grew. Here the theatrical traditions and Jacobean tradition outweigh ‘patois’ or the vernacular of the low life characters. Hence focus should be turned on the cultural and social elements reflected in the language.

Five years later, Walcott made major breakthrough with French Creole; in *Sea at Dauphin*, he elevated the creole form from a lower status, which was not yet recognised as objects of prestigious publication in Paris or London. It is generally observed that this drama exhibits the most thoroughgoing exploitation of vernacular speech because of the performance inherent in it. Many Anglophone writers judged creole as unaesthetic and restrictive in communicating with the international audience. Very significantly, he elevated St. Lucian vernacular speech form and Trinidadian “Picong” to the status of art form. The French based creole is the primary language of the rural areas and of dominantly black and Catholic region. Though he was aspiring after reaching an international audience, he never ignored creole as the language of his people and his country. First staged in 1954, the play depicts a day in the life of Dauphin, a remote fishing village. Like its model, *Riders to the Sea*, it aims to reproduce the language of the people. Set in the cultural milieu among St. Lucian fishermen, Walcott knew the magnitude of translating the vernacular speech into beautiful lyrics. It employs local registers, blending Francophone patois elements with Anglophone creole; it is steeped in everyday experiences of the St. Lucian sea beach. Even when performed in Jamaica, its idioms faced the audience with a problem. After the first publication of 1960, Walcott revised it for the Farrar Straus edition of 1970 and removed some French- creole idioms and gave it closeness to English. Inspired from Synge, Walcott stresses that his play would be a venture, a new experience in linguistic experimentation and much of it would be Caribbean equivalent of the Irish peasant culture:

“When I read Synge’s *Riders to the Sea* I realized what he had attempted to do with the language of the Irish. He had taken a fishing port kind of language and gotten beauty out of it, a beat, something lyrical.... If you know very clearly that you are mutating such and such work, it isn’t that you are adopting another man’s genius, it is that he has done an experiment that he has worked and will be useful to all writers afterwards. When I tried to translate the speech of the St. Lucian fishermen into an English Creole, all I was doing was taking that kind of speech and translating it, or retranslating it, into an English inflected Creole, and that was a totally new experience for me, even if it did come out of Synge”.( qtd. In Breslin85)

As the play issues out of different cultural milieu, where lexicon and syntax are very different, it marks its points of departure from its predecessor text. And instead of direct transcription, he was devising “a medium that could communicate features of spoken Creole while remaining readily comprehensible for any Anglophone reader” (Breiner6). Though he was strongly aware of the limitation of the Creole and Patois as comprehensible language, in the edition of 1970 the two fishermen Garcia and Afa start their conversation by greeting each other with ‘*bon matin*’ which is considered less appropriate than ‘*bonjour*’ as French formal way of saying good morning. Though this phrase may be informal greeting between the workers as it also denotes “bright and early’, as the fishermen have met at very early hours in the morning. There is also exclamation like *Bon dieu* (Good God) or phrase like *Eh bien*(well then) or creole expression like “*faire nasse*” for fish with a net or as Hounakin calls the fellow fishermen “*Mes enfants*”, meaning ‘my children”. Some of the patois vocabulary are concerned with instruments used in fishing ‘calabasse’(calabash), cooyon(fool), grace(beach). In the 1970 edition the extended patois song of the Dauphin women is given glossing with English translation. Breslin comments that in this edition Walcott was more considerate for his international audience. In his well- nuanced analysis of the linguistic structure of the play, Breslin in *Nobody’s Nation* relates how upon asking a group of fishermen to suggest suitable names for his Prologue hero, the playwright misheard the Creole pronunciation of Arthur as the exotically African Afa. Though heightened dramatic speeches are in English creole that was already existent in St.Lucia, whenever needed, he provided the Standard English version. As Laurence Breiner observes, “He sought a representation of Caribbean speech on the page which balances accuracy with inaccessibility”. (6) And Walcott was countering the impact of the orality movement which sought to promote the distinctive national language. Here, the speech of the fisherfolk is

transmuted into a suitable medium for the printed page or mimetic representation of the local speech.

Walcott himself described *Ti Jean and His Brothers* as his “most West-Indian play” and it is unsurprising that the language that Walcott deploys here covers a spectrum of West-Indian speech registers, from Standard English to Anglophone creole. Sometimes straight French creole is accompanied by their Anglophone translation. Here he shows a remarkably inventively approach to St. Lucian vernacular speech. Like the early play here he has made authorial intrusion by parenthetical translations of individual lines, especially in the speech of the Devil and the demon’s voice. As for instance,

DEVIL: “Bai diable-la mnger un’ti mamaille”

(Give the devil a child for dinner)

(8.69)

Or,

DEMON’S VOICE: Bolom, faire tout ca mwen dire ous”!

(Child, do all that I ordered you)

(12.97)

Such glossing foregrounds the cross cultural reality of the text, as the play opens with Frog, Cricket and Firefly, a Bird – suggestive of African storytelling tradition with allusion to the Greek dramatists. Though in the scene 3, the off stage voice of the Devil remains untranslated and indicates the centrality of the French Creole in the St. Lucian folk life. And some of its meaning we can figure out from the preceding conversation. Ngugi also refused to gloss the song about Gikonyo and Mumbi which registers a sense of cultural difference and embodies a cultural situation. In the Prologue, wordplay alternates between folkloric and classical allusion, oral convention and Western literature. In *Malcochon or Six in the Rain* also such glossing is used for probably allowing some concession for the international audience, in the very opening words of Chantal, the wood-cutter

\$Me’me si’ous crier moin Chantal

Nom moin i'c'est Tarzan  
Pis moin jetter ti m'ielette crachard  
A dans yeux un magistrate  
Eur mettaient moin la jaule!  
( Even is Chantal you call me  
My true name is Tarzan  
And just because I hawked and spat  
In the eyes of the magistrate  
They give me a year in jail. \$

(11-15.174)

The musicians and Conteur easily move between English and creole. Walcott was always insistent on the fact that plurilingual perspective can affirm the social-cultural resources and possibilities that may emerge with it. Such linguistic exploitation, as Glissant described in a lecture delivered at the university of West Indies on 30 th April, 1992: “resulting (in)n something else, another way” The proponents of cultural studies have reminded us that an effective communication begins in ‘difference’ rather than in identity.

One of Walcott's early masterpieces, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* has garnered a fair share of attention, for its emphasis on the split between English, the language of the courtroom or other nodes of authority and patois, the language of the marketplace used by the ordinary mass. Power and authority are maintained/ conducted through the use of Standard English; while, the quotidian lives are defined by patois. Here again cultural distinctiveness is enforced through contrastive registers. In any community we find that language use ranges from highly inventive and idiosyncratic to what is trite and regular.. An artist of Walcott's calibre could exploit all the possibilities that language can offer. In the Prologue, Corporal Lestrde passionately upholds unequivocal authority of the white race and superior values of the white civilization. In the Prologue, he proclaims to be doing ‘white people work’ and condemns the blacks as “animals, beasts, savages, cannibals, niggers’. Assumption of the

dominant discourse can erase the names and replace with pejorative forms of address. By the bestial association Makak or Moutique or Tigre are denied of any subjectivity. As Gilbert and Tompkins observe: “The interpellative process of European languages frequently resulted in a reductive and simplistic construction of colonised subjectivity as ‘other’, here also these native people are stripped of their cultural being or personhood” (165). The governing machinery of the Corporal and its mental control enforce a language of cultural opposition. When all the inmates of the cell fervently appeal “Let us hear English”, it vindicates their alienation from the original culture and desire for the glory of imposed culture. In the public space of law and administration cultural hegemony can be maintained only by excluding all other linguistic variations. Clearly, Lestrade’s role and language fit Foucault’s concept of the ways in which society acts out to control and exclude by using language to disguise its designs. Contrasted to him, Chorus and the Conteur use non-standard English with syntactical variation and depart from Standard English spelling with ‘de’ and ‘dat’ for ‘that’ and ‘the’ as soon as he assumes the official authority he uses creolised English with the two felons, Tigre and Souris,. His linguistic superiority is very much pronounced. When Makak is interrogated about his income, ambition, race, it is again Lestrade who corrects him, reminding the credibility of only Standard English in completing formalities.

CORPORAL: Where is your home? Africa?

MAKAK: Sur morne Macaque

CORPORAL: [infuriated] English, English ; for we are observing the principles and precepts of Roman law. Let me repeat the query: where is your home?”

(10-14, 216)

English is one of the potent symbols of metropolitan control; the dominant way of structuring the world.. Supremacy of English can be attributed to the fact that it is the language of educational institutions, the official agencies of government, the religious establishment and of business. It is imposed with clear intention of making it Standard in terms of others as non-standard or less prestigious. Only by answering in English, he can aculturate himself ; otherwise, he mostly remains silent whenever he fails to understand. As Fanon suggests, [t]o speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilisation”.(117-118). Between these polar positions are placed Souris and

Tigre, working as interpreters of the white officer's command. And from their relatively marginalised position, they seek to affiliate with the authoritative command.

Here in characteristic fashion, Walcott deploys hybrid registers and regular code-switching which capture the rhythm and syntax of the Caribbean speech pattern. A single dramatic vocabulary, univocal language or cultural purism did not conform to Walcott's aesthetic project. In an interview with Edward Hirsch he explains: "On every island there is a dialect, a patois which can become a world of fascination for someone who may want to write or use, or absorb into the whole West Indian idea of language."(286). In Market scene the commoners converse in vernacular English. There is minimal difference of power between them and the vendors talk to each other in vernacular English. But when Lesrade visits them, he names a melon a pawpaw and the vendor has no choice but to accept it:

INSPECTOR: That was a melon.

CORPORAL: I know. But in the opinion of the pistol, and for the preservation of order, and to avoid any argument, we both satisfied it was a pawpaw".

(1.3: 15-18.260-261)

In the later part as he's shaken off his the white part of his identity, he begins to sing the glories of the black race and his command of Standard English begins to falter:

" too late I have loved thee, Africa of my mind, sero to amavi, to cite saint Augustine who they say was black.

( 2.2/ 9-10.299)

The power of naming and recovery of one's own tongue is suggestive of the redemptive power of Walcott's language. The discourse has labelled him 'Makak' or monkey; only at the time of his retreat he recovers his name Felix, meaning Happy. The racist identity of Makak is reinvested with positive significance. He claims not to have found himself 'free' only but also ready to return to the mountain home of Morne Macaque. The play celebrates the recovery of one's original home and name and as Paula Burnett observes, "It is once again, at the heart of language itself that the process of redemption is initiated"(147).

*Pantomime*, the celebrated comic skit of *Robinson Crusoe* inverts all the binaries that enforce the linguistic hegemony; it questions the linguistic features as stable markers of cultural identity. By speaking the colonial language with an accent and diction that differentiate them from the colonizers becomes an important marker of self-identification. And thereby the post colonial subjects disrupt and confront the authority of the colonial languages. Through the colonial discourses social categories are identified as essential, fixed and hierarchical. Walcott's polygonal use of language beneath the sparkling wit and humour mirror the post-colonial reality of the West Indies. Though the society deems Jackson (servant) to be inferior of Harry (master), the narrative charts how he acquires agency through language. In this flipped rendition of *Robinson Crusoe* Jackson emerges as the debunker of the stable assumptions that are borne out by the way a person speaks, intonates, changes register and communicates. His background of calypsonian performer allows him to speak on the colonial dynamic, distancing himself on the British culture and establish a culture of their own. Megan K. Ahran in his well-nuanced analysis in her essay "Insubordinate Speech: Mimicry as Bourdieauian Heterodoxy" argues how Walcott distinguishes between language as expressive mode of identity and language as disruptive and parodic. The more Jackson participates in pantomime, the more he overshadows his master. Megan has placed him in the latter category performer who subverts by deft manipulation of language which straddles different registers deforming the standardized accent and diction.

Jackson advances his way through role playing and calypso performance which is marked by subversion, resistance. Jackson, through his consummate performance mounts a deconstructive attack on language as cultural system and code. As Walcott considered it much-needed for reclaiming dignity: "Once the New world black had tried to prove that he was as good as his master, when he should have proven not his equality but his difference. It was this distance that could command attention without pleading" (Twilight, 9). Jackson is the very embodiment of this 'difference'. He commands our attention by his better linguistic gift, through innuendo, picong and improvisation and humour and has revised Harry's text. As he says,

"Just picture a lonely island

And a beach with its golden sand

There walks a single man

In the beautiful west indies.”

(1. 7-10,132)

. He spells out a rejoinder to Harry’s version; in a long counter-interpretation which is a profanation of the sacred poetic utterance he performs carnivalesque subversion:

“He not sitting on his shipwrecked arse bawling out... ‘O silent sea, O wondrous sunset’ and all that shit. No. He shipwrecked. He desperate, he hungry. He look up and see this and he see this fucking goat with its fucking beard watching him and smiling, this goat with its forked fucking beard and square yellow eye, just like the fucking devil standing up there... And Robbie ent thinking ‘bout his wife and son and O silent sea and O wondrous sunset; no, Robbie is the First Creole, so he watching the goat with his eyes narrow, narrow, he say blehhh in you goat-ass.”

(I.33-36.153)

Jackson’s anti-poetry not only counterpoints Harry’s lyricism, but critiques the image of West-Indies churned out by the tourism industries. As Shalini Puri observes, “Jackson creolizes both the vocabulary and the grammar, depoeticizes the language and borrows freely from Spanish and slang alike”(125). As earlier in the play, he strongly opposed the idea of walking naked before the tourists- ‘carnival but no cannibal’(). Kincaid in her *A Small Place* sounded strongly critical of the romanticisation of poverty and the exoticisation of the local culture by the tourists in the Caribbean. If Jackson has slipped into slang, creolised vocabulary, his command of ‘standard’, perfect English is also assured in his course of versatile performance. By appropriating the language of the imperial centre, he can reorient it expressive purpose, as when he impersonates as Harry’s ex-wife, he assumes British accent to banter Harry:

JACKSON: “(weeping) I love you, Harold: I love you, and I loved him, too. Forgive me. O God, please. Please forgive me... (As himself). So how it happen? Murder? A accident?”

(1.32-36.151)

His linguistic virtuosity is a sign of greater cultural freedom; in acts of improvisation he’s found the liberating discourse. From his position as underdog, he seeks to reclaim a

space of linguistic mastery. When he mimics the British speech, it not only re-enforces the static conception of essential speech pattern but also destabilizes the identity categories reified by the coloniser. Jackson's effortless code-switching interrogates metropolitan coloniser's monopoly of language and authority. He is driven by need to counter the easy assumption of affiliation to a particular social group through speech-habits. As Ahern explains: "This sort of speech both affiliates the speaker with a particular group and expresses an inhabitable identity"(4). Such linguistic versatility is displayed by Sweet William in *The Cake Man*; in the introductory speech he changes register to parody the stereotypes of the Aborigines. One of the most common methods of inscribing alterity is also the process of appropriating it and switching between the two or more codes. Naipaul's narratives also fuse Standard English and Trinidadian dialect where the dialogues move along the 'creole continuum'; but another contemporary of Walcott, Sam Selvon in his first novel *A Brighter Sun* had dared to make a breakthrough in literary language by code-shifting from the standard English to creole as a vehicle for introspection. In Earl Lovelace's masterpiece *The Dragon can't Dance*, the first person narrator's voice shifts effortlessly between standard and vernacular which was common habit of West-Indian speaker in everyday speech situation. The racial and cultural tension are generated and it bears the impress of mass language. Walcott's sailor protagonist, Shabine in *The Schooner Flight* also switches from the vernacular to the Standard English. This approach to the linguistic medium is less inhibited and more flexible. Jackson's versatile linguistic gift enables him to evade the cultural domination of his master. He poses strong challenge to the on-going legacy of the post-independence days:

JACKSON: "And that is why all them Pakistani and West Indians in England in England, all them immigrant Fridays driving you all so crazy. And they go keep driving you go keep crazy till you go mad. In the sun that never set, they's your shadow, you can't shake them off".

(1, 11-14, 133)

Time and again, he steps over the panto script of Harry and recombines standard and dialect accent easefully;

JACKSON: Mr. Trewe? (English accent). Mr. Trewe, you scramble eggs is here! Are here! (Creole accent) you hear. Mr. Trewe, I have wild your eggs(English accent)

(1, 11-14,133).

In a more manipulative way he spells West-Indian diction with/ in British accent:

JACKSON: (*in exaggerated British accent*) “I go and try and make it back in five, bwana... I saw a sign once in a lavatory in mobile, Alabama. COLORED. But it didn’t have no time limit. Funny, eh?”

(2..46-56. 147)

With such subversive strategies can the political power and dominance be rejected and essentialised identity destabilized. But by such code-switch, disruptive mode of speech, Jackson pokes fun at the hierarchy of identity categories connoted by those linguistic features.

As comically played out in *Pantomime*, the tension between ‘high’ language and Creole runs through the plot of *A Branch of Blue Nile* (1983). The plot is deft enweaving of various lects, poetic and picong. Like Murray Carlin’s *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, it addresses the question of how to replay the Shakespearean text, though its canonical target is *Antony and Cleopatra*. As in the opening scene while rehearsal is going on of a scene from *Antony and Cleopatra*, creole interventions disrupt and subvert the elevated manner of speech. The troop of the native actors, while mounting a stage version of *Antony and Cleopatra*, fails to maintain Shakespearean tone in appropriating Shakespearean tone. The actors slip into West- Indian dialect, it evokes laughter. Similarly, Sheila, playing Cleopatra recites Cleopatra’s speech after Antony’s death in Act-IV, she manipulates the Bard’s language by modernising the tense:

“The soldier’s pole is fallen: young boys and girls

Are level now with men; the odds are gone”.

(1.1. 3-4, Location:4640)

It is the English director who reminds him of the “correct’ form: “the odds is gone, singular, Marilyn, please”. But not only with the Shakespearean English but also when a parallel stage- product is attempted, the actors are having difficulty with the dialect as well:

“I know it’s beneath us now”.

“ Beneat! No It! You stubborn bitch! Beneat!

She ain’t from England”

( 1.4. 3-5, Location: 5154)

In *Pantomime*, here too, variable speech patterns, intonations and medley of standard, slang and dialect drive the rich dramatic heteroglossia to a peak. When Trinidadian accent is injected into Shakespearean text, performer’s vernacular clashes with exalted language of Shakespeare. Amalgamation of performer’s natural language with the language of the staged text enact “an agonistic encounter between local and received traditions”(Tompkins30) . Director Harvey interweaves local, dialectical and fragments the production into subtexts. Though Gavin is reproached for his habits of American slang and Chris advises him for sticking to “your roots, your language, your childhood, because you ass, that’s where every artists start from”. (249). But more innovative attempt is made by Harvey who has re-written the clown’s lines in indigenous dialect even at the cost of incurring the critical banter :

“...since the Bard had swiped a prose hunk off old Plutarch and since in old Will’s day the clown spoke dialect, and since our dialect is so Jacobean” ( 2.3. 8-10, Location-5647 ).

He calls into question the ‘sacredness’ of the Bard’s language and its supposed ‘purity’. It also underlines how Shakespeare’s multiple registers falsifies the claim of ‘pure English”. It is not merely replacing the ‘standard’ for the ‘dialect’ or producing some cultural exoticism. Any cultural form when transported to a new region, planted in new cultural milieu, it becomes full of new resonances, transforming it into a rich hybrid cultural product. Walcott in a conversation with Baer(110) has mentioned the high quality of intonation of Shakespeare of the West-Indian actors:

“Some of the finest Shakespeare I have ever heard was spoken by West-Indian actors. The sound of Shakespeare is certainly not the sound we now hear in Shakespeare, that androgynous BBC type, high –tone thing. It’s a coarse thing- a great range between wonderful vulgarity and a great refinement, and we have that here. We have that vulgarity and we also have the refinement in terms of diction”. Soyinka’s seminal essay “Shakespeare and the Living Dramatist” also argues for the attempts to locate him in a continuing conversation- a location that is neither wholly local and particular nor entirely global and

universal. Walcott's text exhibits, how Shakespearean texts could be re-formed and replaced within the new cultural locus. With performance and appropriation of the 'master's tool', Shakespeare's text is hybridised.

Even though Jordan, the protagonist of *Remembrance* is a staunch defender of King's English, he recollects his life and teaching career while preparing for an interview in Trinidadian dialect. Here in this plot, effective communication and official dignity not only contend but also intersect here. In *The Last Carnival* Victor's standard speeches are set in diametric opposition to the earthy, vulgar creole of his brother Oswald. The socio-cultural values of the Caribbean people could only be justified by deconstructing the assumption of the hegemonic system. Even when Walcott rewrote Homer on stage, his narrator Billy Blue or Eurycelia is marked out for their macaronic speeches. They sound like Jamaican or Trinidadian. Walcott as poet has faced bantering from a group of critics as Helen Vendler. In her essay "Poets of Two Worlds" (1982) she has dismissed "macaronic strategy" as it is not sustainable for a long time in case of poetry. But drama allowed him to evolve towards a greater exploitation of the language varieties available to the West-Indian writer. As in *O Babylon!* Walcott drew on Rastafarian language and on number of different local vernaculars which repudiates the claim that Walcott was hostile to the culture of orality prevalent in the region. At a time of the political independence with linguistic insularity becoming dominant, Walcott struck a compromise between creole speech and accessible medium of Anglophone audience. The lyric blend of English and Patois is the defining quality of language register of the *Joker of Seville*. As the slaves sail across the Atlantic, they sing in English-based creole, popular language of the mass. As Tiseba meets Juan for the first time, she switches from metaphorical language to bashful creole reply: "Me? Oh, I ent nobody, sir, Tiseba. A poor fishergirl"(1.4). Thus, all Walcott's late plays are informed with his passionate habit to oscillate between dignified literary register and earthy, popular expression.

A self proclaimed "mulatto of style", Walcott's plays bear witness to the artist's "world-ensphering mind" (Baugh, 28) and dexterous appropriation of the master's language has enabled him fashion an alternative craft. His works assemble fragment of languages, reflecting the variety of the world rather than only Caribbean variety- one that expresses a new way of being, confronting domination and asymmetry of power relations. Thus at the site of language cultural identities are blurred and hierarchial categories collapse

into each other. As Walcott explained in a conversation with Robert Hamner on the false dichotomy of particular and universal:

“No, I think that in the real theatre no matter who the writer is , he is inevitably parochial and regional and very focal in particular things- whether it is Odets writing about people in Brooklyn or Pinter writing about his types. The more particular you get, the more universal you become” (*CDW*,24).

This negotiation of the polarities of regional and global is a salient quality of the collective utterance of theatre. By vibrant incorporations of wider speech range, peripheral forms and speech acts break down the false dichotomy between particular and universal language. In Western education he had found a liberating energy which could vibrantly mix with West Indian creole or French patois offering accessibility to his home and international audience alike. In developing an egalitarian style of performance, Walcott has gone on extracting from the linguistic continuum in a way that it undermines the polarities between standard and folk, oral and scribal. The Caribbean artist *per excellence*, his negotiation of the plural linguistic identity affirms the West Indian difference and affirmation of Caribbean language, as Paula Burnett describes it, as “a striking example of heteroglossia, distinctively in process, unfinished and evolving(127)”- one that goes well beyond servitude to claim a cultural identity of its own. As in Grace Nichols’s oft- quoted line:

“ I have crossed an ocean  
I have lost my tongue  
From the root of the old  
One  
a new one has sprung”.  
- i is a long memoried woman

## CHAPTER - 5

### Postcolonial Predicament of Living Between Cultures: Reading *Remembrance* and *The Last Carnival*

Walcott's dramas of the 70s and 80s - the plays written in the post-Trinidad Theatre Workshop years attempt a more nuanced interpretation of Caribbean culture and society. By this time his artistic vision had evolved out of deep distrust of the structures of power and political side taking. Robert. D. Hamner has noted, very significantly: "the fact that Walcott's life coincides with the Caribbean independence movements makes his career significant for historic and aesthetic reasons" (121). Belonging to this period, Walcott's two plays *Remembrance* and *The Last Carnival* share a common thematic premise and structural pattern; their unmistakable quality is sophisticated dramaturgy. Trinidad and Tobago became the setting of these plays and the plots address the politico-social challenges of the newly emerging nation. Edward Baugh has described them as "challenge of change". At the time of the decline of empire and political gerrymandering of heterogeneous people into nation- state identification, Walcott became preoccupied with generational differences, clash of values and threats of globalisation. Politics of racial identity, the legacy of colonialism in the days of newly achieved independence are the contemporary issues that receive more direct treatment here. The pressing political contexts and exposure to new ideological currents, as Patricia Ismond points out, mark Walcott's "responses to the post-independence scene" and it emerges "as a scrupulous evaluation of change, checking and balancing the society's progress so far". (89)

Gray's Elegy works as *leitmotif* of the plot *Remembrance*- a play that has evoked extremely varied and mixed critical response. In fact, the play ends on choric recitation of Gray's memorable lines as it opened with Jordan's solo recitation. As the action opens and darkness envelops the retired school teacher protagonist, Jordan ruminates over his identification with 'mute, inglorious Milton'. It provides commentary on Jordan's life as wasted and unfulfilled; a sense of sad resignation validates his identification with unknown and obscure mass. But Walcott has come a long way from imaginative engagement with the obscure, disempowered lives and Judy Stone's observation about the book is worth pointing out that at last Walcott has written a work on a middle-class protagonist. Unlike those plebeian figures and their redeeming potential and survival instinct, Jordan stands out as an

ideological failure, a misfit, and an anachronistic idealist who remains enmeshed in past. Unlike them, he has willed himself into insignificance and continues to live with a family life of cultural alienation. His favourite self-image is Gray's flower, born to blush unseen. He has missed the glare of reputation and has been sealed into inessentiality. He impels his son Frederick to leave Belmont for the United States with white mistress Anna but without success. His personality disintegrates; he is split between his image of the self and the reality of his position. Walcott's lines in *In a Green Night* may well describe his predicament:

“... Each spring, memories  
Of his own country where he could not die  
Assaulted him. He watched the malarial light  
Shiver the canes. In the sea-coloured pool, tadpoles  
Seemed happy in their element. Poor, black souls  
He shook himself. Must breed, drink, rot with motion.”

By dramatising one such retired school-teacher figure in Jordan, Walcott has also shed light on many other cultural issues that surfaced in the 70s in Trinidadian life ; the play mounts a trenchant critique at the state of the society at the end of Empire. Amidst the upheavals of emerging Black Nationalism, the increasing Americanisation of the indigenous society an artist could hardly remain indifferent.

Walcott's own note to the 1979 Trinidad production states that the play was meant to pay respect and “honour of the great teachers[ he] had the privilege of knowing in [his] own boyhood...”; it is meant to be a ‘tribute’ to the teachers in the colonial society who lived a life of marginality and obscurity in the newly independent society. The work is meant to be an artistic tribute as Walcott's mother was one such teacher of his generation. As Edward Baugh has put it, “For whatever was admirable in the ideals and values, however contested, which they inculcated in their students these teachers have occupied the status of a legend”. (129) Walcott knew that such figures were fast disappearing in the changing times or was suffering a deep cultural crisis. The heart of the plot of *Remembrance* is penetrating study of a stripped, lonely figure; he is a major confronter with the emerging values whose self-contradiction makes him a figure of extra-ordinary psychological complexity. Moreover, the

plot here “evinces nostalgia for some of the values it[ colonialism] has instilled”(Thieme 223). *Remembrance* was commissioned and premiered by the courtyard Players in St. Croix in the US virgin Island and it appeared a year after Walcott had parted with Trinidad Theatre Workshop. The play’s structure is often considered simple and naturalistic and the political allegories too obvious. Critical opinions are divided over the play’s dramaturgic merit. Thieme has denied it much merit from view point of performance, though he admits that as a monodrama it has been a successful stage production. The difference from the early St. Lucian plays has been attributed by Lowell Fiet in his essay “Mapping a New Nile” to the demands characteristic of US productions; “tightly-knit, one-set, small-cast ‘realistic’ plays that concentrate on conflicts between characters in family, work...” (140) The Prologue opens with interviewer meeting Jordan with a tape-recorder and a microphone which deeply annoys Jordan. And his own utterances are recorded for the publication purpose as he goes on to recount the stories of his life, undertaking a journey through the time. Patricia Ismond in her essay “Walcott’s Later Drama: from ‘Joker’ to ‘Remembrance’” has described it as a brilliant piece of stagecraft and its plot very deftly designed. Here, the plot intermeshes past with present and the past comes live on stage and their interaction make it “imbued with the atmosphere of reverie and trance” (98). It is a lyrical and somewhat poignant celebration of the old colonial schoolmasters who contributed to the society significantly and were manipulated into replacement by the well-informed civil servants. The multiple techniques of memorising, telling, writing, story snatches demonstrate Walcott’s technical novelty. In his interview he discloses that the only machine he ever trusted was his old Raleigh bicycle. He even considers its use as a fad of the young people as somewhat irritatingly he tells the Interviewer: “All young Trinidadians does so handle a machine without reading a book” (1. Prologue.3-4.Location-72). Pedagogic and wordy, he wants to ‘talk out’ his life story. In recounting his life story, he straddles past and present. The device of projector and tape-recorder and the microphone continually intermesh various time-sequences, traverses passage of time as he looks back to the days thirty years before when he had written his story book, *My War Effort*. The devices add to the evocation of the good old days of empire through several flashback effects. The temporal border breaks down as Jordan relives the past youthful romance with Esther Hope. His published books are focused on the projector and the interviewer reading a snatch of it unveils the past of the protagonist as a writer. While the interview goes on, he steps out of his present and begins re-enacting the life of the days of school teaching. Even before the Interviewer, he picks up a book, reciting his own favourite poem amidst the voices of the school children. Then he suddenly turns to the young

Interviewer and seizing a ruler commands to spread out his hand. The books that encompasses his life-story is not unvarnished reality; he confesses to have inflated with the hue of imagination. He lapses into play-acting to animate the past that he is recounting. When the Interviewer asks, “[C]an we say that the work of Albert Perez Jordan was his life? Jordan replies, “It is a fiction. I always added a little truth to my stories”. (1.1-3. Location135)

In *Remembrance*, the colonial school teacher Jordan, aged sixty five is fast losing importance and intellectual authority in the newly independent state and occupies a peripheral position in his society. He is upholder of the old, solid values which survive all politico-cultural turmoil. As he reads an extract from his own story he discloses that he was not English though considered himself to be such. The England that he adored was Miss Esther Hope. The title is indicative of the past-obsession of most of the characters and the nostalgia that permeates this two-act drama makes the narrative poignant. In fact, the action opens on the Remembrance Day, the very occasion of his deepest personal tragedy of Jordan, the protagonist that pushes forward the Interview; it is intended to be an exposition of the personality of the reputed teacher. He is revealed to be a staunch defender of the traditional ways and values. The use of machine and apathy for books cause ire in him. He is only fiercely proud of the old Raleigh cycle even though he tells that it's been dumped in the backyard. He is so opinionated that he rejects the idea of his publisher friend that with ageing, his eye sight may have dimmed but not the power of his memory. But nothing annoys him as much as the din and noise of the rubble, observance of the 70s February revolution. As it claimed his son's life, he's deeply shocked and opposed to the idea of radicalism, ultra revolutionary or oppositional ethics of Black Power movement. He is so rigid about his values that he has never visited his son's grave for seven years; he still believes that his son was only led by the “bush-headed niggers”. He puts the question: “And when he dead, those same two-faced niggers want to make him a martyr. They ask for the body of my son. To do what with? Play carnival and ole mass?”(1.1 .7-8.Location 558). He charges his editor friend for brainwashing his son with revolutionary political ideas. The clash of values and traditions force him to live through the trauma generated through the Trinidadian Revolution. He is steadfastly hostile to militant radical politics. He is so unreconciled to the loss of his son and its proper circumstances that he's never accompanied the family to the grave. He is an adherent to old colonial values and a lover of canonical literature. As he is found to be brooding over past glories, it runs counter to his advice to his wife that life marches on. The background voices describe him as ‘honky- donkey white nigger man!’

(Prologue.location122) In the final moments he encourages Fredrick to leave the place and avail of the opportunities with Anna. He appears desperate to find in their romance what he himself failed to realize. Frustrating affair with Esther hope has haunted him from the beginning of the action. His Anglophilia is gratified especially when Esther praises his flawless English accent. Still, for the major part he remains an epitome of contradictions. J. Thieme has pointed out several of them as he's avowedly rejected creole registers, stoutly defended the Queen's English but uses it before the interviewer or he prefers scribal form yet for the most part in the First Act talks through speaking voice. He considers his marriage to be 'thirty odd years of total misunderstanding' but again compares his wife with great-souled fictional women. Though his favoured medium is poetry both the books reveal his potential as a prose-writer. Though his wife and son have not uncritically supported him, they ultimately endorse his policies and views. When he says "We born alone. We suffer alone. We dead alone". (1: 2 .1. location 613), it seems his own invented loneliness, a peculiarly sentimental gesture. On basis of his utterances on several occasions, Lowell Fiet has considered him to be suffering from self-aggrandizement and rhetorical posing. Always in grip of past, he has failed to live up to the ideals of his life; he admits that his writerly ambition has not been fulfilled. It has left him with the impression of a resigner of life, with crippling despair. Though Patricia Ismond credits him with overcoming racial cowardice and exhibiting strength in accepting Anna, the American hippie. A rejecter of Americanism and disapproving of American hippy culture for his son again shows his dividedness which may have turned him a perpetual loner. He lives at odds with the reality, the culture and society, unable to live up to changing times.

However one single episode in the first act reveals Jordan as a more integrated personality and Frederick with clear personality traits. But more importantly the tension between neo-colonial Americanism and local culture and institution is clearly articulated here. His second son Frederick is a painter and looking for an opportunity to sell his work to a visiting American art collector. What he has painted on the roof is a travesty of art and provoked Jordan to bitter satiric retort. His mural on the rooftop invites jibe from Jordan as "the greatest thing since Picasso" .His exultant mocking reaction is issued from a sense of deep hurt at the idea of American flag painted on his roof. As soon as Barrley appears to settle the deal, Frederick withdraws and dissents even when he is offered a blank cheque. His steadfast refusal attests to the energy of resistance. Here Americanisation is very strongly

pronounced when Barrley leaves the family with a card which as he says sums up his own life's principle. It reads:

\$When things get rocky and things get rough,

If the future looks like it might be tough,

If independence ain't what you expect,

Just call the United States, collect.\$

(1 :1. L: 5-8, Location 4)

The sweep of neo- liberal economics in the Caribbean provokes an angry reaction in Jordan: "You American think you can buy any blasted thing." (1:1 L:1-. location-410). Frederick's role is repeated by Otto in Walcott's another major work *Beef, No Chicken* . He ,as a restaurant owner and mechanic, resists the corruption from the highway and upholds local values over the American policy of global consumerism. In *The Wine of Astonishment*, Earl Lovelace portrays a figure of champion stickfighter from pre-war days who gets embittered when the cultural norms are fast disappearing , encouraged by Yankee-dollars. Here, Walcott is taking a dig at the American interventionist policy and crass materialism. It is too obvious that his two sons offer two strong contrasting youths- one has denounced the Father's ideals and the other is carrying his legacy by remaining at home. They manifest the twin sides of Walcott's own position- Jordan vents much of Walcott's own antipathy against bandwagon militancy and at the same time he refuses any change to the values. No observation sums up the character of Jordan as beautifully as does his editor friend, Pilgrim: "He sits there like an old spider in a chair spinning remembrance" (2 .1, 2-3. Location.1097). The relatively static impression of the narrative is rooted in the dogmatic stance of the protagonist.

The portrayal of Mabel marks Walcott's engagement with rounded, complex women-figures who assert their difference in a male-centred drama. Jordan's hopes, his longing for success or failure cannot undermine her role in his life. She plays the part of a measuring-rod with full claim to dignity; she is never a mere echo of her husband's voice:

“My mother said it when I married you; I burned out my talent in domesticity. I have wasted my life”

(2.2 .2-3.location 1296).

Both in appearance and speech she is ungainly and full of earthy vulgarity. To call her mere nurturer and provider would be to undervalue her practical or worldly wise dynamism. As mother and wife she articulates her independent views. She does not appeal as a model of desire like Esther. Rather she is strong-willed and the mainstay of Jordan’s life. Edward Baugh observes, “Mabel commands our respect and sympathy without any appeal to glamour or sentimentality” (132).

She is shrewd enough to brush aside the idea of selling off the roof. She forgives husband’s lapse of temper by advising her to eat and sleep in an orderly manner. Though she fails, she reminds Jordan of visiting the grave. She is dignified without being domineering; poised without sounding sentimental .Though she knows that her stories alludes to his British beloved Esther Hope. As Miller’s Linda Loman, she is full of emotional sanity and as Linda can diagnose his rapid failure, Mabel has brought her extravagantly romantic husband to see clearly his own situation:

“I just was not good enough. That was what makes my work small. I am a small man, Mabel.” ( 2.3. location-1299)

When Frederick is vexed and blames his father, she reminds him of the stature of the man. Despite affection and loving care, she is critical of his pride and she balances the excess of romance in the family circle. In her figure, Walcott finds a balance between emotion and reason; her personality has an aura of its own.

Compared to its companion piece, comic two-hander *Pantomime*, the plot of *Remembrance* ends in relative *stasis*. With Frederick’s withdrawal from journeying, despite Jordan’s exhortation, things return to sombre, grave seriousness to the lines of Gray’s *Elegy*. The final impression is the individual loneliness of each member, with overlap of past and present, reality and fantasy. It is unmistakable how the plot from the beginning promotes *stasis* as most of the actions are conducted through reminiscences and in Jordan’s recalling. As Thieme insists in his analysis, the later section drifts into the ‘elegiac’, what comes to the fore is that the protagonist is suspended between an undesirable concrete reality and

metaphysical plane of distant and unreachable possibilities. He mostly broods over the past and his self-image hardly conforms to the reality that he lives. He is never lifted out of the compartment of value-system or never attempts to get involved in the cultural order of his society. His motivation to Frederick for realising his romance is rather an attempt to set right his own mistaken course of action. The lugubrious air underlines the suspension between tangible reality and imaginary structure of Jordan's mind. It is not too much to say that the family is fettered in 'verbal prison'; much of their verbal energy restricts the action and undermines other performative elements. This perpetuation of illusion marks the characters of Arthur Miller's *Price* or *Death of a Salesman*. They inhabit an unchanged space and remain locked in the grip of illusion." (80) Jordan and his family members, like Miller's characters stand at the impasse of actuality and possibility.

Often considered to be a more complex work of his mature period, *The Last Carnival* more directly engages with the issue of ethnic tension and new nationalism. In the volatile period of the late 60s and 70s, the racial dualism peaked and Walcott had to concentrate on the assimilation. The historic-cultural challenge of the time had to be combated by the representing collective identity as "a performative act rather than a static product" (Steevens 465). Unlike the early piece with elegiac ending and relative *stasis* of the action, the plot explores interface of culture and politics and their jagged contradictions. Its lively narration explores the interfaces of the dwindling influence of the planter class and the rise of the black underclass, the fast fading elite European culture and emerging Black Power politics. The narrative is posited at the interstices of Trinidad's colonial past and revolutionary present. What makes the play particularly interesting is that it explores multiple subject positions and synthesis of old and new perspectives. Jean is representative of the new Black political class, Sydney, the Black rebel, Agatha the British colonialist, Victor, the French aesthete. Truly the play recognises that in Caribbean culture "there are also critical points of deep and significant difference" (Hall 394). Walcott always upheld the idea that Caribbean culture represents a combination of mixed differences, culturally interdependent and interconnected spaces. As in the tumultuous days of the uprising of Black Power what preoccupied and inspired Walcott, as Judith Stone phrases it, was "the validity in the West Indies of European culture, and the rightful place there, if any, of the colonial descents." (qtd.in Burnett245) Walcott spent his curfew hours working on a play in which, by alternating his scenes the black and the white milieu, he contrasted the militant extremism of the Black Power movement with the gentle decadence of the French enclave. Thus the plot moves beyond the naturalised conceptions of

spatialized cultures and affirms that “cultural differences produced and maintained in a field of power relations in a world always already spatially interconnected...” (Jameson, Gupta 17)

The opening scene unravels West Indies as a place of abiding serene and sensuous natural beauty. It takes Agatha’s breath away: “The light’s astonishing. So clear! All this./ It’s as if the world were making a fresh start.” (1, 1. Location106-107,). Victor is a self-proclaimed impressionist, devoted follower of Watteau, renowned for his mastery in bucolic painting which is antithetical to the political vision of Agatha. In his artistic preoccupation, he’s indifferent to the plight of the down-trodden plantation labour. He is changeless and frozen as his picture frame itself. Locked into a *stasis*, his vision fails him and his accomplishment leaves him disillusioned. It leads him to self-immolation: “... he painted his whole culture as if it were a sunset, but all embarkation is a fantasy. You see those pilgrims in the painting? They can’t move. It’s like some paralyzed moment in a carnival”. (1.2.Location375-386,). His Francophone pride makes him reject creolised forms and he pours out his scorn in the shadow play he composes, recreating Watteau’s “A Voyage to Cynthera”. But when it is performed by Oswald and Agatha, the play slips into the carnivalesque. His angry yell underscores binary pairing of high/ low, civilised/ vulgar:

You bitch! You vulgar little Cockny bitch!

As for you, boy! Anything you see worthwhile,

You think is your duty to coarsen and vulgarize,

Or jeer it to shreds, to creolize quality

And not recognize it.

(1.4. Location-1089)

Victor plays the part of the imitative colonial artist, resigned to mimicking European aesthetics, whereas Agatha and Oswald play out the process of creolization and enact the transformative possibilities of re-doing the metropolitan script. He is the head of the French-creole family, the De La Fontaine; his ancestors were forced exiles who fled the war-torn Haiti at the time of slave revolt to settle in Trinidad. The French cultural values are articulated through literature, music and theatre. Measuring himself against his icon Watteau, Victor has become deranged. He has shut himself off from the political and cultural

realities of Trinidad and finds his art pieces only cheap and uninspiring: he indicts himself: “I am not an artist but a mortician. I paint all of this, the pasture, the mango trees getting rusty, the church spire[...] everything I touch with my brush is born dead”( 1.6.Location- 1229). His maladapted vision, marginal artworks, as Camilia Stevens argues, makes him a ‘mimic’ artist in a Naipaulian way, only capable of sterile mimicry and resigned to uncreative imitation. As the realities of the tropical island are at odds with the artistic vision, Victor gets mired in frustration. Burnett attributes his sad tragedy to the lack of self- reconciliation to his exile while his earthier brother Oswald escapes by easy adaptation to Trinidadian life and culture. His view of art and experience, inertness to the changing social and artistic world encapsulates the predicament of the effete French-Creole family in the days of nation-making. He returns to the final moments of the play in the conversation of his children who reflects upon the artist father’s life. Clodia is less critical of him and he believes his despair to have stemmed from his inability to express in colour his love for the place: “... may be my father was no great shake as an artist, but he was not damn so lizard to change when colours changed”. (2.2. L: 8-9, Location 2048). In her words, Walcott may have articulated “sunset sadness which he feels for the passing of empire” (Baugh, 107). Here, Walcott has underlined the European heritage as inextricable in the cultural make-up of the West Indies and part of Trinidad history and the integrity of some figures like Victor in the midst of political opportunism. The predicament of the trading family in Salem’s story in Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River* in the face of anti-colonial politics, their silence in the decolonizing politics, also underlines the two overlapping historical frames and the stranglehold of the two incompatible ways of acting in the world.

Agatha, the British governess is more complex portrayal, more dynamic and draws people around her in the alien land. She is the axis of the early part around whom other male members revolve. She assumes a vital political role besides the professional duty of a governess, a distinctive position which has merited attention. Patricia Ismond has described her as the “main conscience of the play” (Race-containing 143) because her sensibility is an issue for others and she elicits mixed review from the multicultural society. Notwithstanding all dynamism, Paula Burnett calls her portrayal ‘static’ and her politics is locked into’ past, frozen order.” But what seems more plausible is that she diverts her energy into new roles and in the De la Fontaine household she gains ascendancy. She is a social climber who uses her humble working class background to become the mistress of the great house and then as the companion of Oswald. She is the agent to initiate a process of recognition and enable

them how to “face the reality of their living, to extend themselves beyond their privilege and plantation”. (Lovelace 372). Clodia estimates her as the essence of aristocracy compared to whom they are “bunch of rich, dumb and stupid people” (2.1.5. Location1829)

Soon after her arrival, her initial fervour over the island is resonant of captivated tourist’s reaction to the exotic place. Her appreciation of the ambience is sensuous:

“Is all of Trinidad going to smell so fragrant

Mr. De la Fontaine

(I. 2.Location 90)

As she stands before the cocoa valley, Agatha recalls the good hot tea prepared from the cocoa powder and wonders whether they were exported from these islands. Her observation corroborates “the workings of empire and of international capitalism are emblematically exposed through the reminder of the third world countries’ role as agricultural primary producers, laid down by imperialism but sustained by the post-independence neo-colonial system” (250). Later on Brown the journalist dismisses her as “neo-colonialist.” Her wonder about the fact that malaria still existed in that part of the world seems a little naive. Soon after her arrival, Victor also sees her with the eyes of a captivated painter:

“Your hair was wet, your cheeks were shining. You looked like a Watteau shepherdess” (1 .1.15. Location 128).

But instead of flattering observation, what captures her notice also is the state of plantation workers as she finds them singing at their work. She, with her Marxist ideological leaning asks if they get their bonus though Victor naively believes them to be “perfectly happy”. A cockney and graduate from the London School of Economics, she raises awareness of the labour force of the estate. Her political activism triggers agitated chain of events disrupting the material security and peace of the family. Oswald repudiates her involvement in local politics and finds London School of Economics degree will not help her extend the knowledge of Trinidad. She defends her involvement by saying that she loves the place not for the privileges it offered to her but for the challenges it offered to her. Her

Marxist zeal is obvious at the moment when the federation is about to come into being: she asks:

“Why not offer your labourers

A shore in the estate?”

(1.2.17-18. Location 1055)

Under the rhetoric of equality, Agatha inscribes Jean with colonialist ideologies. She has initiated a school-teaching programme with Jean and Sydney, to raise political awareness. However, Oswald draws attention of the Interviewer, Brown that the part of Agatha is not above doubts as she made the ‘damn black people’ her comrades and never relented from supporting Jean:

“She moves Miss Beauxchamp anyway she likes.

She’d make an excellent Prime Minister

Remote control of the colonies”.

(2.2.19-22. Location 1848)

Victor was never estimated highly only ‘for being white’. (Location: 1504). The short-sighted appreciation of art and politics in the hey days of Black nationalism is laid bare by the passionate protest of Oswald. Though Jean has not whole heartedly accepted the idea of reading books for the village council elections because she prefers “Carnival to politics”. Towards the end when the volatility of the Trinidadian society is at its height and military crackdown is about to start, she even accuses Agatha for encouraging her to this political course:

“Life was so uncomplicated at Santa Rosa

Girl, this could be the last Carnival for years.

Cabinet on the verge of declaring martial law”.

(2.1. 7. Location 1644)

Immediately after the Independence, reclaiming the 'black' and 'African' elements became a touchy issue in Trinidad since here the larger population was formed by the indentured workers from India. But throughout the West-indies the sweeping movement owed much to the influence of Black Power movements in U.S. Trinidad protest, also dubbed as February Revolution, and Rodney Riots in Jamaica were two key challenges to the governance of the Anglophone Caribbean. Though Walcott's play does not offer immediate solution to the post-independence problems of Trinidad, this play probes into the entanglement of new cultural nationalisms and issues of chauvinism. The play covers a wide time-span with some important dates of political landmark; it begins in 1948, then the narrative jumps to 1962 and then on to 1970. The first date represents the postwar phase of new immigration. The two other dates are politically more significant: 1962 being the year of failures of the newly formed West Indian federation and the 1970, the tumultuous uprising of the militant Black nationalism and its squashing. The second part is centred on the 1970 moment and investigates the moment with a critical angle. This section undermines the claim that the Caribbean is a timeless zone of unspoilt beauty-, as soon after her arrival Agatha throws out her watch into the sea, deluding herself that and she is stepping out of the linear temporal course. In the changing social world the younger generation of the de La Fontaine is more drawn to 'bacchanal' culture of Carnival and its change and new value system; it lies in tension with the pictorial and artistic *stasis* and the image of timeless, exotic world. The romanticism associated with the Black Power and demagogic assertions about the past provoked Walcott's scepticism:

“Walcott spent his curfew hours working on a play in which, by alternating the scenes between the black and the white milieux, he contrasted the militant extremism of the black Power movement with the gentle decadence of the of a French enclave”(Stone 115).

As the plot unfolds to investigate volatile times, culture appears to be a highly contested site; ideologies criss-cross. Multiple legacies of colonialism, complex cultural confrontations are enacted through the episodes of Brown's interview with the De la Fontaine family and the aggressive episode of burning down of Santa Rosa which prompts the departure of Clodia from the estate.

In the later part of the play, the younger generation is more rooted in heterogenous society and culturally prefers creole to standard French. Two of victor's children, Clodia and Tony, play-act, parodically, the role of Victor and Agatha. They mock their father's self-

doubt and Agatha's manipulation before Brown, the journalist, who seeks to celebrate the artist's life and work in his column. Clodia though educated in England is in deep attachment to Trinidad and it is an impulse that she shares with her father. She interrogates the compatibility of the race with love of the country; she belongs to the country though her ancestral home was far away in France:

“I don't know what I want. Ah can't paint. I don't read no poetry, my head is pure sawdust, but I know one thing. I know I stupid. But leave me stupid, because if is stupidity to love this country, the mountains, the flowers, black people, the savannah, the sea, then I proud of stupidity! And now they wouldn't let me love it because I'm white”

(2.2. 11-14.Location 2054,)

She is free of illusions; by birth and culture she is Trinidadian and without futile longing for the home of the forefathers. Such self-awareness saves her from the cultural dilemma that so much tormented her artist father. As Brown meets her for the interview, she breaks out in sharp reaction:

“If you see a ghost with a hole in its damned forehead,

That's my father, who aren't in heaven. Tell him.

He owes his two children some other apology

Apart from his artistic despair.

People don't die for art.”

(2.1.1-5,Location 1355)

Clodia accuses that Victor's self-consuming despair has left Santa Rosa haunted. She has internalised the multiculturalism of Trinidad by speaking mostly creole rather than standard French and dances with Carnival band and taken Sydney the militant participant of the movement as her lover. The play closes upon her departure which is a clear parallel of Agatha's arrival from England; she is sent to Europe in the midst of the turmoil of the country. These two migrations, two exiles- one voluntary and the other forced destabilize the fixed category of nation- making as undifferentiated category. As Camilla Stevens succinctly puts it:

“This arrival and departure brackets the historical period dramatized in the play and invites the audience to consider how the seemingly fixed and uniform past is, in reality, as unstable as the category of nation itself.” (458)

Clodia’s brother, Tony offers remarkable change to become a designer of the local carnival; he illustrates interest in local cultural event unlike his father’s sharp dismissal of them. Like Clodia, he represents the transformative role of the indigenous culture. Other minor figures like Jean or Sydney compel attention. Jean, Agatha’s protégée has been transformed from the maid to a minister of the new Government of Independent Trinidad. Her rise offends Oswald as she calls him by first name and appropriates the colonial language when takes it over and decentres it from the privilege of the white people. But she does not enjoy complete freedom in assuming a position of political privilege. The revolutionary hope of Sydney is dashed to the ground as he directly becomes a member of the movement. He grew up among the servants and developed a sense of inferiority and began to nurture a desire for revenge.

Even after finding the *The Last Carnival* a “strong and textured play”, Earl Lovelace faults Walcott for incomplete characterization and argues that the play fails to press home, indeed plunge into, those truths that are within the social fabric of the play. But much more interesting criticism is directed at the Black Power Movement and its exclusionary politics in the midst of the atmosphere of the Carnival. The burning down of Santa Rosa is the crudest manifestation of the politics of reprisal; as a violent and destructive phenomenon, their political ethics is questioned by Oswald:

“Black people don’t know what arse they want!

Contrary is a black country, the government black”.

(2.1. 10-12.Location 1428)

As the old order began to crumble away and Black Nationalist Movement is in full swing, Brown cautions against the feeling of arrogance and fast creeping intolerance. He believes the rebels to have adopted roles with specific costumes: it is ‘another carnival’. It has become directionless and unresponsive to the local realities. Like Carnival, it has little to offer to the Trinidad’s political future. Clodia satirically dismisses it as some frivolous role playing:

“Oh, God!

Black Power, pang-alangalang! Che Guevara! Pang-alangalang

Go home, honky, pang-alangalang!”

(2.2. 17-20. Location 1311.)

The final scenes very powerfully articulate the wrong-headed heroic idealism of radical black activism. The power structure and political control are effectively undermined and the backwater of empire undergoes cultural change. Along with *Remembrance* this play is energised by very personal, autobiographical stance on the connection between race, culture and politics. They explore the interface of decaying white minority culture and militant extremism and also the possibility of reading the personal life along the line of history. Thus Walcott’s exploration of the colonial and the postcolonial resists the colonial, racist ideology that structures identity in the post-independence days. They both attempt to yoke the world of politics and art- the stories of movement and stasis, arrival and departure in the well-crafted plot. The ethos of racial and cultural superiority and the popular reactionary nativism and the consequent cultural oppression drove Walcott to articulate alternative ‘militancy’- the ‘militancy of art’- as he famously proclaimed in his seminal essay “What the Twilight Says”.