

**Translating Legacies and Re-imagining the
Alter/ “Native” Cultural Identity: A Reading
of Derek Walcott’s Plays.**

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By

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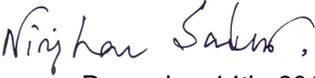
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December - 2016

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Abstract

Derek Alton Walcott, the first major Anglophone Caribbean playwright has produced a wealth of dramatic corpus, spanning over four decades of intense creativity. Recognised as fundamental contribution towards Caribbean theatre, his plays exude fresh cultural energy in the mess of cultural dislocation. Walcott was strongly convinced that drama can be a powerful tool to combat the morass of dispossession for his own people and community. And his Trinidad Theatre Workshop productions were committed to reparation of damaged consciousness and victim mentality.

As models of syncretic theatre and theatre of creolity, Walcott's plays sought to pass beyond the binaries of history. They valorize the complex array of cultural exchange and encounters, leading towards growth and development of new languages, new forms of artistic expression and new identities. Turning stage into egalitarian space, his dramas have allowed the Caribbean subjects to be awakened from the tyrannical myopias inherent in purist, historical myth of origin. His dramaturgy evinces a praxis which can accommodate various legacies and translate them into polyphony of dance, music and blank verse. This study sets out to explore how in charting contradictory subject position and hybrid identities, Walcottian dramas offer up a set of alter/ 'natives' - aesthetic, dramaturgic and performative.

Walcott has always been a passionate opponent of demagoguery and rabid Afrocentricism. His plays have trenchantly critiqued 'native' of popular discourses, destabilized race-bound discourses of identity. His dramas have always addressed the tension between a sustained cultivation of Eurocentric sensibility and theatricality of local, folk lives. Going past racial self-consciousness and assertion, they probe the overlapping, intertwined histories. A visionary artist, he was keen to forge alternatives to map the interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialisation . Aware of the archipelagal world as dispersed and fragmented, his plays reveal the radical contingency of identity categories. From the onset of his career Walcott was faced with the precious burden of his choices- between mimicry and originality, between the Old and New World. But conflicting legacies and cultures proved highly rewarding for Walcott's artistic endeavour. In order to create vibrant, eclectic performance style, he has sought to fuse the local folk rituals with high art of Western literary tradition.

Most of his narratives problematise the stereotypes of identity and revises the cultural myths underpinning the imperialist ideology. The St. Lucian society in its parochial ways sought to limit the artist to race, ethnicity and social class. And Walcott's plays interrogates all negative stereotypes, expose their contradictions. His plays and poems have continued to reaffirm Caribbean as polysemic sign, irreducible to the illusory vision of one language, one people and one identity. Walcott always insisted that culture exists in a state of transition and since the loci of Caribbean cultures are numerous and widespread there can be no single presiding form. As a colonized subject, Walcott availed syncretic language built on words, forms and grammatical constructions from several languages which were inextricable in the local history. His extraction from the whole linguistic continuum helps rebut the polarities of Standard and folk, oral and scribal. Errol Hill's unambiguous celebration of folk rituals as the very basis of national theatre did not win Walcott's favour. He was aware of some these rituals as 'provincial, primitive and childish'. At the same time he was an upholder of the resilience of the folk imagination. His early St. Lucian plays exhibit the richness of local, folk lives and the protagonists are folk-heroes, Anancy-like figures. Walcott was always conscious of averting the 'heroic' elevation of battles and warriors and his treatment of humble lives resonates cultural significance. Through them the Caribbean subjects articulate their 'personhood', undo the mechanism of inferiorization. Chapter 1 of the present study examines these plays as vibrant counter-narratives to the system of cultural imperialism and focus upon Walcott's experiments with style and material.

Chapter 2 pays particular attention to Walcott's first major intervention into the politics of essentialism and holds up the culturally imposed category of 'white' and 'black' to questions. *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, undoubtedly Walcott's greatest dramatic achievement, is no simple, linear narrative of liberation. It is a quest of a charcoal seller and set in a dream setting, it powerfully critiques colonial dualism. Like the early plays, it reaffirms the dignity of the dispossessed who has overcome the illusions of kingship and chieftainship. Here, Walcott affirms the Caribbean home as alternative of race inflicted notion of nostalgia and stages a vision of culturally unified Caribbean. Sceptic of Braithwaitean model of 'nation language', Walcott reinvented the language of the stage. Helen Vendler's pejorative epithet of Walcott's mulatto and syncretic writing as products of 'Macaronic Aesthetic' does not commensurate with the polyglossic and polyglotic Anglophone playwright. Chapter IV analyses some of the inventive

qualities, experimentation with multiple register, traces of creole inflections, idiolects and vast linguistic variations. In style and dramaturgy, Walcott was nurtured by Greek dramas or Renaissance plays; distrustful of 'originality', he identified the mega- texts of Europe and revised them in order to explode the colonial myth and imperialist ideology. In his major rewrites, discussed in Chapter IV, Crusoe myth and Odysseyan protagonist undergo metamorphosis and transcend their figural binarism.

The pressing issues of political tension and cultural ambivalence of the post-independence society are more directly handled in Walcott's two significant works *The Last Carnival* and *Remembrance*. The last chapter surveys how these narratives of volatile period and post-independence days enunciate the predicament of living between cultures and ideological cross-currents. Here his socio-political position ran counter to radical and nativist politics of the 70s and the narratives poignantly register the irreconcilable moments of fading empire. They mount strong challenges at the nexus between emerging nation and sweeping cultural imperialism in the island-states. The section of Conclusion discusses the metatheatrical strategies so favourite of the playwright to comment on the dichotomous relation between art and performance, theatre and reality, classical and creole acting. Walcott's meta-theatre becomes a significant contribution and response to an even more thorough-going sense that identity is necessarily provisional and contingent.

PREFACE

Though his dramatic corpus is considerably voluminous, the scholarly appraisal and critical reception of Walcott's poetry have outweighed his dramas. It was not until 1990s that his dramas began to elicit extensive reviews and critical expositions. By that time Walcott's dramatic fame had reached the Broadway- a four-decade long dramatic career, and his manifold theatrical contributions were now gaining prominence from relative obscurity. Reading his plays, I felt that they are informed by an impulse of articulating alter/ "natives" in the thematic, structural and performative terms- in what may be called, in Harris's terms, "new architecture of cultures". (105). Instead of chronologically reading them or doing neat generic division, I would rather attempt to read how the legacies get translated to his artistic vision. Infused by transcultural energy, how they resist construal of Caribbean identity by colonialist and nativist discourses.

Chapter-1 of the present study discusses the three short St. Lucian plays which assert the indigeneous theatrical style and imaginatively places the marginal locus at the centre of his work. It outlines the portrayal of the wretched and degraded lives which is illuminated by the vision of solidarity and rare zeal to assert selfhood beyond ethical restraints and dogmas. Thus they become subjects by "renouncing the type of individuality that was imposed on us over several centuries" (Foucault quoted in Guattari,76)

Chapter 2 is concerned with Walcott's masterpiece, the signpost of his brilliant career- *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. It carries forward Walcott's quest for artistic and cultural freedom to overcome the mechanism of inferiorization and static framework of identification within the prominent socio- historical and politico- economic context. It also surveys experimental dramaturgy , the dream structure and how its "illogical and contradictory" structure makes it straddle the alternate realms to disrupt a neat ending or assertive position.

Chapter-3 investigates Walcott's two major rewrites of Homer and Defoe- how literary transposition and their transmutation infuse creole energy. As counter- performances, *Pantomime* and *Odyssey- A Stage Version* evoke proliferation of differences and deliberately step across the boundary of language and race to open up possibilities of alter/native dramatic art.

Chapter- 4 ,instead of looking at particular text, discusses the art of forging an (“other”) language negotiating the ends of creole spectrum- overlap of englishes, French Creole and Standard English throughout his dramatic *oeuvre*. Walcott’s hybrid register dissolved the false dichotomy between particular and universal language and also resisting the hegemony of metropolitan language.

Ch- 5 looks at two late plays, *Remembrance* and *The Last Carnival*- how their politically fraught narratives become Walcott’s response to the challenges of nation-making in the post-independence days. Set in volatile times, they attempt to articulate self-transformation and self-definition of the Caribbeans. Community as expression of shared culture and identity is problematised in these two plays.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is precisely the possibility of change, the space that can serve as a spring board for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures.

- Hélène Cixous.

Walcott was born in the tiny island of St. Lucia where he did not have much of theatrical legacy worth the name. Owing to acute dearth of interest in drama or rich theatrical experience, he had to forge his own way. Against the grain, he considered drama to be a powerful cultural force and an ideal national theatre to be a significant cultural institution. He was convinced that it could offer fresh cultural ideas for both literate and non-literate countrymen alike. Whatever theatre was there in the islands under colonial rule, it had little vision and power to shape opinion or open up scope for collective participation and representation. Notwithstanding this bleak situation at home, Walcott derived artistic inspiration from his father's background in painting and his mother's interest in Shakespeare. In the Catholic dominated society, in 1958 the twin Walcott brothers were banned by the Catholic Church. Here in the background of his family, Walcott did cultivate his anti-authoritarian stance and also reposed faith upon poems and plays among all art products to generate a cultural consciousness that would break free from the clutches of the popular political, religious and cultural discourses of his time. The indigenous and identifiable cultural matrices in his hands became a hybridized cultural artifact; they retrieved the voices of historically 'mute' groups. Since the 30s, West Indian theatre began to recognize actively the local life, history, indigenous culture. Caribbean theatre attained new prominence as local custom and folklore were increasingly foregrounded. In an interview with Anthony Milne in 1982, he emphatically stated, "It is about time the experience of the theatre be expanded, and certainly it should not contract itself racially. That is a danger here as well. You can see that there is almost beginning to be a division in terms of colour in the theatre"(59). Walcott worked toward the creation of a resident professional company, an ensemble that could equal the production standards of non-commercial, regional, state-sponsored and/or subsidized repertory

companies and “art” theatres throughout Europe and the United States. Walcott’s zeal to develop a distinctively West-Indian theatre led him to multi-tasking- directing, critiquing, production arrangements and of course scripting the plays. In 1951, his own Trinidad Theatre Workshop began as an expansion of the Little Carib Dance Company. Instead of finding metropolitan production, he sought to create a world-class company. Trinidad theatre Workshop, a product of immense faith, dedication and discipline has been compared by Bruce King with “Brecht’s Berlin Ensemble”(qtd. in Burnett220). The Trinidad theatre Workshop proved a major breakthrough by making creative use of all the resources- combining West-Indian play with British, American, other European or African plays which corroborates Walcott’s astounding range of creative imagination.

Leaving behind derivative and bland imitativeness of the 18th and 19th century, West Indian literature was entering upon a new epoch, generating self-consciousness and cultural pride. West Indian literature has claimed an independent space for itself and as cultural agency it has its own dimension. And its growing stature, no doubt, gained from the unique career of Derek Walcott. The political and cultural upheaval of the middle of the century generated a new phase of poetry, fiction and drama. Kenneth Ramchand has singled out West Indian literature among the three cultural institutions which have kept alive the inchoate idea of the federation. The political federation and the emerging nationhood of various islands were closely tied to a growth of independent literary writings and many such intellectual enterprises. The literary establishment set off a flurry of anthologies as “ Federation meant a way out of the parochialism of the individual islands, meant larger audiences, meant larger audiences and better communication among writers” (Breiner 95). Walcott belonged to a generation stirred by West-Indian nationalism, with independence and federation struggling to take shape. It was an era of literary writings which combined anti-colonial perspective with search for new values and beliefs. Notwithstanding all the local differences, a vision of unified West Indianness was taking shape to subsume all experiences and local differences and contraries. Hence, what was indigenous had to be re- invented to promulgate cultural resistance to the Euro-American cultural hegemony. Assertion of Caribbean identities has been a pressing need along with repudiation of colonialist ascription of New World identities in face of strident colonial scepticism. In the 1950s rich artistic output of diasporic Caribbean writers, like Lamming, Selvon and Naipaul brought to the notice of metropolitan readers the range, depth of creative imagination of the

West-Indian artists. But the literary journals and local theatrical productions proclaimed Caribbean as a new literary terrain. When poetry and novel were striding ahead, drama too did not lag far behind. It was a time when West-Indian literature became conscious of itself and reflected upon its function. And drama had to rid itself of the cultural baggage of the touring companies. Because he felt the drama will be more widely appealing, a truly egalitarian artistic form, capable of overcoming low literacy level and poor educational opportunities. It was no wonder that local and particularistic drama entailed the audience at home as poetry did not. As a flourishing art form, it sustained the popularity of the oral tradition, local myths. Spanning over four decades his dramas exerted wide appeal; even their international productions have enjoyed local favour overwhelmingly as they speak of the communal predicament and address the public life with greater immediacy.

When Walcott made a foray into playwriting at the age of nineteen, the myth of artistic ‘ground zero’ still inhibited the creative minds in the Caribbean region. Unsurprisingly, there were very few indigenous precursors available to guide him. In fact, few before Walcott were convinced that the Caribbean stage as a cultural, ontological space could revolutionize images and identities and redefine the socio-economic realities of the Caribbean. His plays were to act as that ‘springboard’ which Cixous believed would be instrumental in transforming ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ structures. Rather than remaining chained to past, Walcott appeared as initiator of drama and founder of local theatre company, he stated his objective in very explicit terms: “When one began twenty years ago it was in the faith that one was creating not merely a play, but a theatre, and not merely a theatre, but its environment” (Twilight 6). In the post-independence years, having no stomach for foreign values, the colonized countries sought to define their culture reactively from within. A small minority of educated people stood committed to active drama and introducing the knowledge of world theatre. To the region’s emerging cultural habits and experiences, Walcott’s syncretic performance was a new thing, a new artistic experience. His unflagging devotion lasted for two decades before he settled in Boston and involved in his twin role as dramatist and director. It is commonly observed that in his hands theatre had become a sort of “contact zone”, and a sort of politico- cultural forum in the sense that Brecht wanted theatre to be. Burnett in her brilliant study “The Theatre of our lives: Founding an Epic Drama” invites a comparison of Walcott with Brecht in forging a new language for theater, in drawing upon folk forms and dialects he did not appear to be neither

purely regional nor original. Living in midst of tiny and fragmented community of St. Lucia and with scant experience of serious theatre, Walcott brothers(both Rodnie and Derek) harboured a vision to produce an indigenous, local theater, without the blemish of parochiality. “The dream”, as Paula Burnett observes “was to build the society it would serve and which would sustain it” (25). Walcott and his brother identified with relatively small educated theatre-goers, the lives of the majority of St. Lucians – the theatricality and performance-oriented public life, the informal dramas of daily lives that spurred the playwright in him:

“The theatre was all about us, in the streets, at lampfall in the kitchen doorway, but nothing was solemnized into cultural significance” (Twilight5). Determined to fashion “theatre from theatricality”, out of common, quotidian experiences in the streets of St. Lucia, Walcott and his brother Rodney established the St. Lucia Art Guild, performing both canonical and local dramas. It was in their hands that Caribbean drama moved beyond a mere device and technique and began a process of cultural de- coding and re-coding. Shaw had advised the native writers to reclaim their stage in place of English and American plays, shrugging off the modes of Western performance and culture. Because such touring performances were removed in time and space as well as disconnected from its place of origin- in spirit, climate and elements.

In America In the mid60s when Amiri Baraka popularized “Revolutionary Theatre” with hate as its guiding principle, it appeared to be largely a political weapon to overpower the white masters. Described as “theater of victims” it was designed to be an aesthetic revolt. Though Barka’s contemporary, Walcott in his dramas resolved to establish “mulatto aesthetics” and it would be rebuttal of cultural separatism, victimology and absolute valorization of the black or denigration of the whites. Unapologetic Afro-centric nationalism was not commensurate with the cultural reality of the archipelago. At a time when indigenous stage productions were rather fledgling, the New World was in J. Thieme phrase “an artistic ground zero”, an empty slate. There were little of what could be the model for indigenous theatre. Most of the touring professional performances were European or American plays. Most of theatrical representations of the previous centuries were replete with colonial myths, discourses, legends and stereotypes. Based upon mis-imaginings, the European writings only attested to the imperial visions. So the dramatists felt compelled to initiate the process of cultural re- signification. As Rob Canefield observes, “the theater of the West Indies begins with the masterscripts and with white masque, a

dissemblance of the new world and a disfiguration of Caribbean identities” (289). One of the earliest of such misrepresentations is Caliban, the disfigured image of “natives”, inept and incapable of self-representation. At the observance of the centenary year of the British rule, two of L.O. Inniss’s works, *Carmelitta, the Belle of San Jose* and *The Violet of Icacos* extolled the British rule and completely denied the presence of the Africans, the group that constituted almost eighty percent of the population. Many other plays are informed with discourses of ‘othering’, as Gay in *Polly* perpetuates imperialist and mercantilist dependencies upon constructs of the very identities so dispossessed by the Power. Another remarkably successful play *The West-Indian of Cumberland* staged the glorification of the English identity and romanticization of the Caribbean life. In the 18th century local military groups and travelling companies from England and America found a good market in the islands. There is no denying that since the 19th century and well into the early decades of 20th Caribbean theatre was merely a reflection of English and European, British, and occasionally French and American players. And these performances were mostly attended by the upper class society, like the planters, merchants, military and naval officers, govt. officials and civic leaders. The playhouse, established in Jamaica in 1682, catered to the entertainment of the British officers, rather than to the indigenous people or the native slaves. Hence, in the 19th century most of these dramas legitimized and codified the English dominance. Similarly, many travel narratives of this time bastioned the ideologies of colonial othering and discourses of difference. Resistance on the stagespace inspired the performers and playwrights to reaffirm creole syncreticity and thus disrupt “official” narrative and modes of representation staged by the colonial overlords. The use of indigenous folk traditions and mythology, rituals of folk lives and early theatres of resistance produced the mandates for national theatre. Errol Hill’s 1960 play *Men Better Men* is epoch-making as it steered away from the mimicry of European styles and deployed oral traditions, street communications and local festivals. Popular cultural events hitherto tabooed by the masters were claiming validity at the hands of the new generation writers. As new cultural contexts began to gain grounds, the notion of culture as irreducible, undifferentiated category became quite vulnerable. By shrugging off the imperial authority, they claimed to be legitimate self-representation. Instead of insular, ghettoized theatrical experience, drama would develop a syncretic model of its own. Thus, it gave voice, as Rob Canefield describes: “not only to the masses of Caribbean peoples

traditionally misrepresented in masterscript but to the very mechanisms that continue to erase and denigrate, enslave and encrypt” (297).

Walcott’s immediate predecessors like C.L.R James and Marcus Garvey initiated local dramas which would vent the spirit of anti-colonial movement. But Walcott brothers moved away and made a remarkable departure from the other noted contemporaries. Walcott also moved away from Cesaire’s theatre of the 60s as a medium for advancing the political project of Negritude movement. To engender consciousness, drama was to be local, homespun in a more egalitarian sense; it could fuse popular and high art form in a well-crafted plot. It was here that politico-cultural intervention of drama could be instrumental in transforming individual and collective awareness. As Paula Burnett states “the drama was conceived essentially for the Caribbean couched in a verbal, visual and symbolic language directed primarily to the insider”(158). In his *The English in the West- Indies* (1688) traveler- historian Froude had made a demeaning observation: “no people lived in the true sense of the word, with a character and purpose of his own” (8). For a young artist the rebuttal to such berating was to represent his people locked into negative images and thereby confront discursive construction and ascription of cultural identity. With the coming of independence and the consequent emphasis on promoting indigenous cultural heritage, Walcott strongly felt the need to be original in producing theatre. In the 30s, Caribbean theatre entered a new epoch with more of local history and life made inroads to the stage. Local drama groups and entertainers sought to exhibit more folk entertainment and deployed dialects in a far more dignified way. The focus on indigenous culture brought to the fore native comedians, notably Ernest Cupidon of Jamaica and Sam Chase of Guyana, both of whom wrote and performed comic sketches before admiring popular audiences. In the Hispanic Caribbean too the 50s was the decade of the flowering of drama and the increasing prominence of local aesthetic and artistic parameters.

Produced in London in 1936, C.L.R. James’s *Touissant L’ Ouverture* was regarded as a watershed in Caribbean theatre. In the formative years a very significant part was played by the University of West Indies. The Western-styled education became a determining element of the theatrical form and language in much contemporary drama. Its extra mural tutors helped encourage the writings and publication of local plays through the English-speaking Caribbean and initiated the practice of popular theatre using the vernacular. Like Africa here, too, the

vitality was supplied by a sophisticated use of dance, mime, costuming and music. The political leader like Marcus Garvey colluded with artists like Claude McKay and Louise Bennett who advocated the resurrection of folk culture in order to confront the misrepresentations. In developing Jamaican sensibility and identity, Bennett prioritized folk songs and stories and patois and some of his dramaturgic devices set precedence for Walcott. More decidedly, crucial roles were played by little Theatre Movement and companies like St. Lucian Theatre guilds or Whitehall players which took big strides “to promote essential Caribbean drama to dethrone the gods of Prosperan masque as they tore away the masks of colonial theatricalizations”(Canefield, 297). James was already alert to the misrepresentation of the shanty dwellers, peasants and maroons. Walcott’s artistic motif finds a resonance in James’s character Moise: “Until you cut yourselves off from all the symbols of colonialism and slavery and be truly independent, you will remain just an old man with a dream of an impossible fraternity” (102). It was James’s recommendation that a truly West- Indian theatre must meld the master- script with “the plays about voodoo” (106) - a reconciliation between ‘popular’ and ‘art’ form. It was taken up by Walcott as he recommended a stage space which will conjoin Shakespeare with banana play or carnivalized theatre. These early attempts of Caribbeanisation worked in tandem with Garveyism or Africanist movement, espousing fervently African identity as the very core of Caribbean identity. But at Walcott’s hand these discourses underwent change because they would advance racist imaginings and discourses of power- based binarism. The post- independence drama will resist such cultural mooring and distortions of West- Indian reality and experience. Errol Hill’s *Man Better Man* used the frame of calypso drama and was peppered with creole songs. Calypsonians, lower classes and folk cultures continued to supply the material for Hill. Hill turned to the folk rituals to mandate a national theatre and identity for the West- Indian drama. With the sweeping decolonialization, plays of Guyanese dramatist Gilkes focused on the struggle for identity in the archipelago and the role of resistance of the artist/ playwright in the representation of West-Indian life. After his resignation from the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, he spent his time and energy from the late 70s to get a foothold in the U.S. theatre scene, staging plays in St. Croix, New York and Los Angeles. On his departure from Trinidad Theatre Workshop, Walcott began his more prolific period with a variety of stage performances and musicals which resulted in more global appreciation. Long before Gilroy’s classic *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), appeared Walcott’s creative writings

sounded a clarion call for renouncing all racially inflicted absolutism and cultural purism. He sought to extend the Caribbean frontier beyond geography into culture and underscore the promises of cultural nationalism.

Why ‘alter’/ native and What ‘alter’/ native?

the west-indian is not one man, but is a composite, a new mixture of races and creeds.

Derek Walcott.

In the post- independence years, the euphoria over political gerrymandering of republics into federation and emerging ‘nationalisms ‘had assumed what Anderson has described “a near pathological character”; it spread its roots “in fear and hatred of Other and its affinities with racism” (129). So did happen in the Caribbean archipelagoes in the early 60s. Like the African countries here could be observed a surge of nationalist and radical movements. As in America, there was notable mobilisation of international black consciousness which inspired cultural products to turn imperial hegemony upside down. Since the 30s, as Black Power movements, Negritude movements and Garveyism were gathering momentum; notion of pure cultural practices took hold of the popular consciousness. There was a proliferation of claims which used race, nation as the categories of identity- analysis. They asserted their being in reclaiming African heritage and passionately exalted African cultural values. Along with Africanist identity formation, they reified racial polarity and monocultural identity with all its unnegotiable insularity. A common agenda that informed such cultural orientations was to resist the politics of assimilation and recognising colour as the source of common cultural heritage and racial origin. Antithetically conceived as rival to the European Great Tradition, it asserted an equally homogeneous cultural condition, grounded itself on the mythically satisfying past known as ‘Africa’. As Laurence Breiner says quoting C. L. R James’ in *An Introduction to West- Indian poetry*, “The road to West Indian national identity lay through Africa”.(142) It underscores idealization of Africa meant to be a counter-sign, the flipside of European cultural hegemony. Passive, subservient relationship to dominant culture could no longer be endorsed by the native artists.

From the beginning, Walcott believed that such cultural monolith will only undermine the hybridized racial identity of the colonized. Ideology of hatred and revenge permeated through the Protest Poetry or Negritude writings, producing a kind of 'reverse acrimony' and Walcott scathingly dismissed as 'repugnant'. If such ideology is transformed into a new aesthetic form, it will result in more propaganda than art-works. Cultural legacies of colonialism and racial mixture and the creolized nature of the population in the West-Indies found race to be inadequate as the sole determinant of unified, stable identity. Naturally, identity could not be pinned down as definitive: "A great deal of modern Negro poetry and prose belligerently asserts its isolation, its difference, and sometimes psychic superiority" (Walcott 64). Hence, Caribbean identity should be conceived as what Said has called "a geography of other identities, peoples, cultures, and then to study how despite their differences they have always overlapped one another through unhierarchical influence, crossing incorporation, recollection, deliberate forgetfulness, and of course, conflict" (330-331). Though eminent poet, like Braithwaite, found in Black Power Movement a scope of forging transnational solidarity. Uncritical acceptance of oppressive racilogies would have locked them as "forever victims, objects rather than subjects". By sloughing off the victim mentality one could get rid of ascribed identities; Walcott knew that the model of Africanism will play into the hands of exclusion and essentialist politics. He inveighs against artificial continuity between distant African homeland and present Caribbean state. Because such aesthetic orientations only helps in the "reproduction of dominant structures in subordinate languages, thereby recreating the hierarchical mechanism" (Chambers73). It was believed that Afrocentrism was cultural remedy for the wounded Black psyche, disoriented by centuries of Eurocentric historical presumption and arrogance. It was natural then only that Caribbeans should re-align themselves with the cultures of pre-colonial Africa. As Brian Crow with Chris Banfield believe such movements were only but "the ideological banner waved by reactionary nationalism, or the tattered cloak that conceals the nakedness of corrupt, incompetent and exploitative politicians" (10). These words express major imperatives for Walcott's strident challenge to ideologically convenient mythology. Instead of harking back to the ancestral memories, Walcott was sensitive to differences of culture and in valourising 'difference', he boldly asserted:

" this earth is one/ island in archipelago of stars" (*Star Apple Kingdom*,20).

To free identity from the boundaries of particularism, from the constitution of it within nativist discourse and Western representational system, Walcott unleashed a polyphonic and syncretic theatre. Much of his work throughout the 1970s excoriates Afrocentric demagoguery in politics and art and redefined Caribbean is to be perceived as a polysemic sign. As celebration for new intellectual horizons began to unfold, the model of static, rigid culture began to wear out; it was found unsuitable for the complexities of Caribbean cultural fabric. It is commonly observed that the Caribbean culture represents a combination of differences that coexist simultaneously and differently. To make this re-defining possible the discursive apparatus of eurocentricism must be displaced. Like Césaire he believed “Theatre should evoke the invention of the future” (184) and in the emerging culture of decolonization drama should play a very constructive cultural challenge and explore space for politico-cultural transformation. The attempts of cultural self-assertion mainly by reclaiming “African” in the West-Indian hybridity oppositional / adversarial nationalism, Walcott knew would be “a transitional and transitory moment in the decolonizing project” (Gandhi122). Beyond binaristic structures of identity, ‘authentic’ ‘native’ ‘genuine’ culture and communities was needed to be supplanted by alternative cultural practices. The ethnocentric view of culture and identity provoked strong antipathy in Walcott; he debunked the illusion of ‘return home’ or ‘pure’/authentic state. Idealist return to roots worked in tandem with totalizing ideologies like Nativism and Black consciousness. The heavy presence of black, African population fuelled the strive for cultural recuperation, a communityism which glories in Afro-centred history. In his articles for *Trinidad Guardian*, he vented his growing annoyance with “abuses of nationalism as an excuse for chauvinism in the arts” (Breslin27). In a review of Federal Arts Exhibition Walcott wrote: “I think there are many bad amateurs who are getting a great many fancy notions about national art without getting rapped on the knuckles”. They are dangerous and superfluous” (6) because such cultural nationalism got only entrapped in reverse discourse. Constant railing against Western hegemony, the nativists have become its party without knowing it. The cultural nationalism remains in position of counter identification and its huge cry of nation making proves inadequate. Time and time again, cultural nationalism followed the route of alternate genealogizing(170). Hence Walcott felt that new narratives, multiple in time and ensemble of polyphonic voices must be forged to articulate what Bhaba calls “the heterogeneity of its

people”. As Shabine, Walcott’s famous persona of “*The Schooner Flight*” proclaims that the nation must be re-imagined along the multiple heritage and contradictions at the origin.

“I have English, Dutch and nigger in me, / And either I’m nobody, or I’m a nation”.

(*Collected Poems 1948-1984*, 346).

Staging Transformation, Generating Consciousness

To see ourselves, not as others see us, but with all the possibilities of the new country we are making.

-Derek Walcott.

Walcott has consecrated his art to his island community because it has nurtured his prodigious literary ambition. As a communal form, theatre addresses the very practical social and cultural needs and the dramatist appears to be transmitter of collective voice. Walcott was always insistent about the transformative and emancipatory power of performance on stage. Walcott’s dramas began to be staged at an important historical juncture- the end and withdrawal of European colonialism and beginning of political independence in some of the islands. In the colonized islands, the burgeoning attention to theatre movements attests to the key role of theatre as powerful political engagement. This was eventful moment of enormous transformation- the claim and promise of sovereignty and the rapid advance of modernity. In the post-independence years with the presence of ‘boom writers’ there was an upsurge of popularity in West-Indian novels. In dramaturgy, methods and perspective, it would be a complete indigenous practice, a powerful cultural tool which can break down the tyrannical web of representations. It was the time for finding the new form for new age, a style of performance that is global in its ambition and also interrogative of political action at home. It was intended to negotiate with the complex,

overlapping culture and the creole realities of his native land. Popular ethnocentric nationalism which underpinned Black or protest literature drew on forms of identification: *us and them*, *insider and outsider*. Walcott was quite convinced that protest literature or angry writing would only distort the cultural reality and cultural richness of the Caribbean.

Nation-centered conception of culture, as Gilroy argues, is incompatible with the values of cultural hybridity. His words in the context of British Cultural studies seem apposite with Walcott's strong repudiation of political claims of identity:

“Identity becomes a means to open up the realms of being and acting in the world which are prior to and somewhere more fundamental than political concerns. Any lingering enthusiasm for the supposedly trivial world politics is misguided, untimely and therefore doomed to be frustrating. It also corrodes identity and can profitably be replaced by the open ended process of self-exploration and reconstruction that take shape where politics give way to more glamorous and avowedly therapeutic alternatives”(383).

From the earliest days of his dramatic career, Walcott's preoccupation was to release the cultural practices from ethnically absolutist orientations and narrowly culturalist definition. He had strong antipathy towards Black Nationalism and White supremacy and endeavoured to relocate aesthetics outside any traditional raciological alignments and the world of political rhetoric and vaunting. As he writes in his seminal essay “What the Twilight Says: An Overture” “... If one went in the search of the African experience, carrying the luggage of a few phrases and crude map, where it would end? We had no language for the bush and there was a conflicting grammar in the peace of our environment” (37). For Walcott, nation is no mere homogenized artifice which can subsume all ethnic cultural, linguistic, gender differences and dissonances. As he was sceptic of growing popularity of ethnic identity model or socially constructed identity, Walcott knew that identity is a process marked by endless negotiations, convergence and divergences. Unlike determinate identity, hybrid cultural identities disrupt homogeneity and essentialist discourses of ethnicity and nationalism. As Shalini Puri observes in her acclaimed critical study *Caribbean Post-colonial* with this observation: “The philosophical burden of the concept of cultural hybridity in the post-modern academy has been to correct purist, essentialist and organicist conception of culture” (19). Post-colonial identity and nation-

formation are obsessive concerns of Walcott's dramatic narratives. At a time when political decolonization and social transformation were going hand in hand, the locus of national culture was bound to be a contentious issue. Legacies of colonialism and rapid encroachment of global capitalism were regarded by Fanon as redoubtable problems of post-colonial experience. In Walcott's poems and plays, in lieu of nationalist narratives, he foregrounded *petit recit*, issues of local knowledge, marginalized social categories- a site of convergence of African, Asian, Amerindian and African origin. No wonder then that the region's literary products merited a "transcultural ethic" (Hall 7) - one that can tear down the false and superficial barriers of ethnic nationalism, race or class. In the Post-Independence days, 'valid', 'pure' culture was defined by politics and power. Walcott inveighs the contemporary cultural representational system, racialization of nation-states in explicit manner: "We have broken up the archipelago into nation, we attempt to assert characteristics of the national identity. Everyone knows that these are the pretexts of power if such power is seen as political" ("Twilight" 21). The cultural legacy of subjugation and oppression persisted even after emergence of the Federation. The experience of slavery, Middle passage or plantation Economy had impaired the cultural existence of the West Indians. At this stage drama had the potential of defining cultural personality of his people and de-mythify the fixation of colonial discourses. Amidst global capitalism, thriving tourist industry, swelling poverty and degraded social life, Walcott envisioned a theatre production that could register a kind of cultural certitude. A commercially viable and artistic theatre will be resistant to increasing fascination with "American" ways of life which had left "a deep, debilitating effect on West-Indian culture and identity" (Walcott 10). This possibility for art and culture was very emphatically laid down by Walcott in his seminal, prefatory essay *What the Twilight Says*: "West-Indian militancy lies in its art" (7) as poverty and commercialization were twin conditions out of which a rich, native theatre tradition will issue. This vision, no doubt, points towards an optimistic future. As eminent African critic Anthony Appiah believed that in African countries, art and culture will continue to flourish notwithstanding poverty and disease: despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline or despite unimaginable poverty, despite wars, malnutrition, disease and political instability (69). It was in his dramas that Walcott endeavoured to exhibit the worth and value of the calypso, steel band and creole speech and the rich gifts of cultural experiences that he came to inherit; together, they will weave the rich

texture of 'alter/native' plays. They truly attest to the fact that for the Caribbean people capacity for creativity; it is rooted in ageless appeal of human narratives and ideology.

Walcott's birthplace St. Lucia, the mountainous island changed hands between the British and the French, its cultural condition was far from homogeneous- it was a site of co-habitation of Anglophone and Francophone cultures, Afro-Carib folk forms, subaltern cultures and Europeanised cultures, standard English and Creole. It is natural that Walcott defined himself as '*The Divided child*' and proclaimed it to be a favourable condition for creativity. The creolized plurality became an enabling condition for new cultural formation. In choice and treatment of subject matter, his range was remarkably eclectic- from Shakespearean drama to Trinidadian carnival, from Noh and Kabaki to American musical fertilized his imagination. Thus it collapses the cultural distance between Europe and the Caribbean, between the 20th century and other historical periods. New forms of cultural production became imbued with transcultural energy of the non- European societies; they not only appropriated imperial discourse but also rethought difference through connection. Such cultural engagement and negotiations, by crossing boundaries of time and place could initiate cultural transformation. Wilson Harris, Walcott's famous contemporary also believed that cross-cultural dynamic by bridging the divides in Manichean paradigms of cultural superiority holds the possibility for humanizing sensibilities. With teeming intersection of cultural forces, self- estimation of the indigenous people had to be reasserted. At the nascent stage of nation-building, by throwing off the shackle of foreign rule, literature sought to displace the elite nationalist histories. By translating the various legacies imaginatively, producing remarkable counter-narratives, Walcott exhibited how literature can take over when history fails an emerging nation. Walcott, it may safely be averred, believed, like Fanon, that the birth of national culture will follow the awakening of the consciousness with an international dimension to it. By the 18th century, the historian Kathleen Wilson argues, the Caribbeanness was associated with ineffable otherness. Both Naipaul and Froude voiced deeply pessimistic view about the region's banality and non- achievement, its harsh legacy. The wealthy planters represented forms of vulgarity, backwardness and degeneracy that inverted the standards of English culture and civilization. Faced with such reductive, dismissive stereotypes, Walcott's plays exude fresh confidence in turning to alternative indigenous interests and needs; they articulate "a process by which objectified others may be turned into the subjects of their history and experience" (Bhabha 178).

In attaining decolonization, the Caribbean had to emerge not as a failing outpost of Empire but as self-invented world. Walcott was always insistent that longing for a 'pure' origin and uncontaminated culture would inhibit its growth as literary region. The literature of the 50s and 60s endeavoured rigorous examination of the colonial experience, combining an anti-colonial perspective with a search for new values and definitions. Guyanese poet Martin Carter's *Poems of Resistance* sums up two different and dominant tendencies of the literature of this period- stridently political, anti-colonial spirit of investigation of the colonial society and the colonial psyche. For a writer like Lamming confronting the past also meant envisioning future of the native people in self-knowledge and reintegration of personalities. Some mention may be made that these were pressing concerns of Walcott's art works as well. What already began in fiction and poetry, the search for a native idiom and aesthetics, for cultural experiences was accomplished by Walcott's 1949 play *Henri Christophe* and 1954 play *The Sea at Dauphin*. For Walcott imagination was necessity and invention; in absence of systematic, linear history, imaginative ventures could fill the void and deepen the awareness of meaning and significance of the West-Indian world. Possibilities of re-birth of a new community were spelt out in *The Guiana Quartet* of Harris. In these decades poets and novelists were possessed by 'colonial syndrome'. His was a singular aim to capture the nuances of Caribbeanness- in terms of lives, landscape and language. When Braithwaite found creative artistic possibilities in Creole language and folk language and rituals, closely connected to Africanist cultural practice, Walcott maintained a somewhat skeptical and critical distance from black nationalist, cultural and political projects of national reconstruction. The strong hold of revolutionary and radical ethos of the 70s could not sway his dramatist's vision, necessary to preserve and sustain the unique condition of being a Caribbean "the era of the struggle for independence was marked by a corresponding eagerness to distinguish WestIndian theatre from English literature, to establish the former identity as an on-going concern."(Breiner101). Through the creative agent of literature only, the people would emerge from the history of brutalization and dehumanization. By emptying consciousness from both European and African schemata, old automatized patterns and perception of belief, the dramatic narrative could powerfully critique the subject-constitution of the people.

Identity – A Caribbean Problematic

As David Richards has phrased, identity is “the universal lingua franca of contemporary global post-colonial discourse” (9). The term ‘identity’ has proved to be highly resonant since the 1960s in the Caribbean cultural context; it has been inflicted through various contesting political and social discourses. The proliferation of claims on identity was facilitated by the Black Power and other ethnic movements. Without challenging its basic presupposition and displacing the structure of colonial hegemony, they only inverted colonial racism. Thus, beyond a shadow of doubt, identity is a matter of political signification. Post-colonial writings seek to deconstruct the old, stable codes of identity founded upon the notions of impermeable entities, such as the nation, culture and selfhood. It reconceptualises autochthonous identity as rather ‘fluid’ and transformative, fragmentary and multiple. It is constantly produced and exists at the intersection between the individual and other determining structures and institutions. A true post-colonial identity can be forged by cultural performances as they defy all borders and promulgate a new selfhood. In his much-anthologized essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Stuart Hall makes a nuanced analysis of Caribbean identity, by repudiating the search of a singular Caribbean essence. Identity thinking, Hall believes, has two poles to it—one a shared cultural experiences and codes that determine the idea of stable, unchanging idea of identity, a sense of sameness, belongingness or seamlessness. This sense of cultural kinship was the central vision of pan African movement and Negritude aesthetics Identity, evinced by such popular cultural paradigms was only fictive unity. This imaginary unity is resistive to the fragmented and dislocated nature of the cultural life. The other pole/ side of the spectrum of identity sees identity as a process of positioning and re-positioning, “a process never completed- always in process”.(2)With characteristic suavity Hall explains that far from being eternally fixed in some timeless essence, they are subjects to play of history and culture”. (ibid) Leaving behind the enclosure of particularism, identity opens out to embrace plurality. Imaginary reunification over the experiences of dispersal and fragmentation only reifies the particularistic and monolithic identity. But it is punctuated by extreme cultural differences and racial unlikeness; even within one, single island cultural identity appears ruptured. Extreme belligerent relation between West-Indians of African and Asian descent, people of colour and mulatto and their cultural polarities made impossible notion of one nation, one language and one identity. Though certain identity

matrix is tied to race/ colour, nationality, ethnicity or language, colonialism has rendered the old grammar of identity obsolete.

Given the non-synchronous history and complex ethno cultural setting of the Caribbean region, the political ideology of “one nation” or articulation of ‘true’ national identity appeared inadequate and deficient. Post-nationalistic skepticism to nation has been critical of totalizing knowledge, totalitarian nationalisms and binaristic notion of ‘self’ and ‘other’ as new images of cultural identity emerge through dialogue of cultures. It is not an essence or a normative measure that “totalizes heterogeneous selves and subjectivities”(Radhakrishnan752); it prompts an abandonment of essentialist universalist condition called ‘race’ or ‘ethnicity’. The shared history, ancestry or common cultural belongings could not be the ground upon which Caribbean identity could posit itself. Identity, as it is reimagined, appears to be a polysemic sign and scripted against the projection of nationhood. As culture is always on the move here, rupture, discontinuity and overlapping of histories inform the formation of Caribbean states. As R. Radhakrishnan points out in his essay “Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity, “At the very outset the objection might be made that identities are monolithic and non hyphenated by nature and therefore can have only single boundaries, each identity entrenched within its own single time” (750) With official nationalism very much pronounced and populist national consciousness on the rise, the politics of ‘return’ sought to redirect the post-colonial subjectivity. Nation-centred articulation of identity or ethnic awareness of ‘Africanness’ could only retrench reductive versions of identity. With the colonial ‘other’ now eliminated, the newly independent nations began to undergo the internal dissonance of race, gender and caste. Intertwined historical developments which include a wide array of “discrepant experiences”, like colonialism, diaspora, neo-colonialism and globalization- all enmeshed with each other made the ‘imagined political community” and a shared national identity look very paltry. Walcott in his career as a theatrical director and playwright struggles against the poisonous contagion of the mythical origin. As a post-colonial hybrid he knew “a myth of shared origins is neither a talisman which can suspend political antagonism nor a deity invoked to cement a pastoral view of black life that can answer the multiple pathologies of contemporary racism’ (*Atlantic* Gilroy 99).

After colonialism's distorting mirror was removed, it became more urgent to restore people to their rightful sense of selfhood. For the Caribbean people the priority was to reinvent themselves in their own stories and histories: "because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: in reality who am I" (*Black Skin* 23).

The question that confronted Martinican revolutionary thinker Fanon also confronted his contemporary Walcott- when colonialism has psychologically debilitated the people, can the post-colonial subject achieve any kind of agency? At a time of flourishing literary activities, both Lamming and Walcott felt a distance from colonial violence. In his introduction to the *In the Castle of My Skin* Lamming makes it explicit: "The Caribbean endured a different kind of subjugation. It was a terror of the mind; a daily exercise in self-mutilation". – (xxxix,xxxvii) as colonial subjects and mostly diasporic, the Caribbeans rehearse the traumas of arrival, the impossibility of re-connection, the loss of cultural origin. Having undergone cultural dislocation, down the years they discover their identity in a state of motion/transition. Amidst the presence of competing discourses of identification, their cultural being on not have the anchorage of racial essence or the originary commonness. Identity bound by restrictive paradigms of 'politics', 'History', 'Race' will reduce the New world artists to a state of "enslavement to truth, the defenders of the history as time".(Tejumola112). Walcott believed that New world writers are compulsive challengers of the idea of "history as time"(9). History, propped up by linear, sequential time constructs the hero-victim duality, binaries like Prospero- Caliban. As he grudgingly pointed out in his noble acceptance speech, "We make too much of the long groan that underlines the past". But Walcott, a passionate opposer to the idea of unimaginative history propounded the idea of history as myth and time as ever-present. Released from the idea of past, Walcott proposes an alternative approach to nationalism which displaces the hold of imperial historiography. Walcott dismisses the linear, time- bound historiography as he goes on to combine strategic appropriation with creative, individual expression. The cultural past-lessness enabled his artistic vision to expand. Only by exploiting partial loss of memory or 'amnesia' of his race, only by constructing what Harriss calls "theatre of creolity" can the New World be re-invented. And there lies the exuberance and elation of the alter/ native artistic practices.

Power, State and State of Art in West Indies in the 60s

Walcott has likened the West Indian artists with Adam standing before his unnamed world- one who creates without the baggage of history and tradition. With the slate wiped clean, he/ she is free to assert his 'pastlessness' as a privilege. Art as vocation can only recreate the world and redeem its degraded histories, the blight of poverty. And Walcott never backed out from a proud but affirmative claim about West-Indian art and culture. In the wake of ravages wrought by colonialism, slavery and indentureship, Caribbean man must have recourse to compensatory cultural measures. Having been born into "one of the finest and most beautiful of countries" Walcott was avowed to put his native place in colour and rhyme. Because he knew that without transfiguration of imagination, the island will remain 'beautiful but dumb'. The island artists had more than a few odds to overcome- lack of good publisher, lack of public funding, true theater building, collector or patron of plastic arts. Finding himself as an artist trapped in a neglected minoritarian position, he proclaimed/responded to artistic responsibilities, "in these new nations art is a luxury, and then theatre the most superfluous of amenities" (Twilight 23-24).

In his oft-cited Prologue to *Dream on Monkey Mountain* Walcott lambasts the crass, state-sponsored commercialization of folk- tourism, fetishization of local popular performances and other nationally mediated structures of power and oppression. Like Anzaldua's Mexico, Walcott's Caribbean was not a merely a paradise of tourists. In the post –independence years the state was callously indifferent to art and culture until it offered opportunities for bringing foreign dollars. This attitude, he described "stubborn, clog- headed indifference". In the post-independence years, the prevailing philistinism, the strong hold of seasonal carnival on popular minds had disappointed Walcott. Against the background of the rise of Black Power movement and the re-Africanisation of popular consciousness, Walcott in a series of essays interrogated the preference of the racially pure art of the fervent nationalists. Especially, his seminal essay "What the Twilight Says" takes to task the appropriation of folk culture by the government. Appropriated by the state, the folk art appears a sign of 'carefree, accommodating culture" and the figures like steelbandman, calypsonian and limbo dancers became stock popular entertainers.

Before he could organize theatricality into disciplines of theatre and stage-performance, he was alert to commercialization of popular and folk forms and the popular performers. Walcott deeply bemoaned that popular forms were trapped in state version of cultural 'authenticity' and supporting new hegemonies: "in these new nations art is a luxury and the theatre the most superfluous of amenities" (16). The idea of a 'unified', 'authentic' culture, made up most notably by folk arts or performances is a fiction the state constructs in collusion with commercial interests. Walcott laid stress on the fact that the island's cultural authenticity is a consumer item for the neo- imperialist powers that economically dominate the region. Walcott's plays have been fiercely critical of the neo- colonial and tourism industry and bastardisation of folk-culture catered for passive consumption of cultural commodities. Like most post-colonial theatre, they hold up to scrutiny imperial system of governance, social and economic structures of power or local post-independence regimes. The contemporary cultural and political needs, promises of budding nationhood were negotiated by such stage performances. A newly emergent aesthetic and cultural semiotic could decode and problematise the colonial representation. Some of his later plays (discussed in the final chapter) register the tension of the traditional, indigenous life and onslaught of modernity- hype of 'progress' and 'development'. The network of globalization and local government's collaboration became a pressing concern in Walcott's later works.

Mulatto Aesthetics, Black Aesthetics and Syncretic Performativity

After the white man, the niggers didn't want me

When the power swing to their side.

The first chain my hands and apologize, "History"

the next said I wasn't black enough for their pride.

-Derek Walcott (*Collected Poems*350)

As oppositional aesthetic was completely incompatible with the Caribbean's broken histories, different temporalities and creolized identities, Caribbean artists, were driven to formulate Caribbean aesthetics- a new aesthetics which could articulate their cultural identity and at the same time pose a vibrant challenge to the poetics of anger and protest. What made their situation so unique was that they had no pre-colonial cultural heritage to fall back upon and the process of canon- formation. Robert. D. Hamner points out, " Throughout the social disturbances of the independence-minded fifties and the Negritude and Black Power sixties and seventies, Walcott kept his fingers on the pulse of the times without relinquishing his own aesthetics principles"(7). The Caribbean is in B. Rojo's famous definition a 'meta-diaspora'(15) and all having arrived from 'elsewhere'- Asians, Europeans and Africans- had serious claim to the cultural make up of the Caribbean region. Especially, the artists of Caribbean extraction, inheriting more than one cultural heritage, were torn between present 'home' and ancestral home. A sense of irreparable dislocation haunted them and suffering deprivation and dehumanization, they yearned for a cultural rehabilitation.

A large section of Caribbean writers and intelligentsia privileged the cultural and linguistic tie with Africa and thus posited a unique black difference. Besides, the glorification of peasant culture and shift towards nation language accompanied the politics of the region. Caribbean aesthetic, as Braithwaite defined it had its principal axis in black, working- class culture. It is the 'authentic' culture as it utilizes Creole language and principles of orality. Black Power Movement and its incipient aesthetic evinced a fixed, stable ideological position. As Belinda Edmondson explains its importance in her essay "Race, Tradition and Caribbean Aesthetic", "... Afrocentric theories, while they have done much in the way of political empowerment, have also functioned to simplify complex political allegiances within Caribbean society and without"(8). The political motif of liberating African-based culture from the stifling confines of European mores and claiming authenticity was the guiding motto of Afrocentric aesthetic. In its earliest manifestation, Afrocentricism sought to operate as a counter hegemonic discourse to Euro-centric epistemologies. While it tended to exclude the East Indian, Chinese and other nationalities. In the mid 60s Amiri Baraka, in his play after play defined the aspects of Black Aesthetics and demonstrated the salient qualities like absolute cultural separatism, a denigration of whiteness and passionate valorization of brotherhood. Besides perceiving black as oppositional category, Braithwaite formulated that a writer should necessarily conform to

Afrocentrism. But merely being oppositional, Black aesthetic will restrict Caribbean stage to the ruling paradigm of 'History', 'Race' or 'Politics'. As Olaniyan Tejumola stresses, such artists by such rigid involvement will remain "enslaved to historical truth" and be identified as "defenders of the idea of history as time" (8). The fashionable radicalism and betrayal of the people by the state politicians roused Walcott's deep anger. Veering away from this highly politicized and insular aesthetics and orality movement, Walcott relied on syncretisation which allowed more regular borrowing from European canon and from oriental cultural tradition. He sweepingly dismissed the proponents of Black cultural nationalism as fundamentalists who engaged in "ethnic hair splitting" and jeopardized the fragile unity of the newly- built federation:

"These are the dividers,
They encompass our history,
In their hands is the body
Of my friend and the future,
They measure the skull with calipers
And pronounce their measure
Of toms, of traitors, of traditional and the Afro-Saxons." (*Another Life*)

In his 1959 essay "The Artist in the Caribbean", C.L.R James rejects the notion of an indigenous West-Indian aesthetic tradition upon which the West-Indian writers must draw. Instead, he emphasizes the essential individuality in artistic process and argues that it is only through the individual literary work of the 'great artist' that the West-indies can achieve national consciousness. Much of this aesthetic vision of James was identified by Walcott. With a scathing indictment of black/ Afrocentric aesthetics, he espoused a counter-aesthetics and a productive, hybridized performative style that can define hybrid West-Indianness. His West-Indian theatre sought to undo "ideological manoeuvre through which imagined communities are given essentialist identities (Bhabha 294). Only by redeeming from the politics of polarity or frames of representation, new identities emerge in praxis and performance. Ideological and cultural apparatuses of imperialism were to be supplanted with a new cultural bonding of islands together- one that can flesh out its rich mixture of genealogies, linguistic innovations, syncretic religion. From his apprentice years, Walcott was adept at fusing from different cultures and

traditions- the folk traditions of the native Caribbean and the high art of the classical European canon, the theatrical conventions from Europe, Asia and other countries- all intermesh in his works. In multi- racial and polyglot societies, cultural difference could not be expressed in exclusivist, ontological black-white terms. Having both White and Black ancestors and heir to two conflicting cultures, Walcott identified with both African and European ancestry. This dual allegiance is brilliantly described by Seamus Heaney in his essay “The Sound of the Tide”. “Africa and England beat messages along his blood” (305). In Walcott’s own descriptions, he was “mulatto of styles” and his distinctly defined aesthetics entailed various cultural strands rather than giving voice to “vengeance, recrimination and despair”. The Aesthetics of the Whites or uncritical romanticism of African roots and ideological agenda that underlay it were completely parochial. Torn between aesthetic longings and preferences, a Caribbean artist might have found a better alternative in “mulatto aesthetics” to the aesthetics of the coloniser. It was a realization of aesthetics dissociated from racialised politics. Through his mulatto aesthetics Walcott did not mean outright rejection of blackness but only a repudiation of the essential black self or its strident opposition to Western world. Walcott has often proclaimed his schizoid personality; the conflicting racial, cultural inheritances have proved a strongly enabling condition for Walcott, the artist also. As Caribbean is much more than a system of binary dualism; in Benitez Rojo’s famous definition it is “cultural sea without frontiers”. Not confined to ethnic particularism, mulatto aesthetics laid stress on selective collaboration of the colonized in order to what Mary Louise Pratt has called “to hybridize the codes and episteme of the colonizer” (11). What Walcott describes as “tough aesthetics of the new world” underscores the syncretism and synthesis of local and literary languages, creole and classical in aesthetic terms. As analyzed by Olaniyan, “The aesthetics proper to this space calls... ‘mulatto’, neither purely black, nor purely white; a hybrid aesthetics free to speak in creole, English or both, or appropriate forms from the diverse cultural traditions that make up the Caribbean- European, African or Asian”. (199)

On the level of praxis, Walcott’s championing of “mulatto aesthetics” has been borne out by “creolisation’ of the stage space. Walcott was convinced that the charge of empty derivativeness or sterile mimicry can be transcended by exploring syncretic space, in coupling of the melody of Europe, the rhythm of Africa. Laying aside the performance paradigms of Europe, without confining to Western theatre spaces, he forged his alternative performance style,

interweaving a range of ethnic and cultural influences which evinces a practice with transformative possibility. About Soyinka's rich dramatic texts, J. P. Clark has observed that they had heart right at home in Nigeria and its head deep in the wings of American and European theatre (19). Both Soyinka and Walcott depended on imperializing cultures for their theatrical practice. In his earliest creative practices, Walcott defined his role as natural assimilator: "the writers of my generation were natural assimilators. We knew the literature of the empires Greek, Roman, British through their classics; and both the patois of the street and the language of the classroom hid the elation of discovery"(17). From the earliest text he had been diligently careful to appropriate forms and technique from the source tradition and indigenous practices. His dramatic repertoire demonstrates how the Western forms have been a strong imperative for him in his apprentice years, like the dramatic art of Marlowe, Synge, Lorca and Brecht. Walcott's earliest play, *Flight and Sanctuary*, written at the precocious age of sixteen is a testament to the extension of the great tradition. Written in verse, it eschewed West-Indian setting, characterization, language and story line. As Soyinka describes the process in his famous essay "Aesthetic Illusions: Prescriptions for suicide of poetry", *Art, dialogue and outrage: Essays on Literature and culture*: "When we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must begin by co-opting the entire properties in our matrix of thought and expression. We must stress such a language, stretch it, impact and compact, fragment and reassemble it with no apology as required to bear the burden of experiencing"(18). In his essay *Meanings*, Walcott also claims that a theatrical form a distinctively theatrical style which does seek to initiate post-colonial performance praxis; this newly performative was a rebuttal of the to the political debate of the 60s and 70s: "Creole or English"? The polyphonic dramaturgy was also an affirmation of vibrant cultural tradition amidst all the populist touristic entertainment, shows dished out before the Western tourists. Walcott was aware from the very beginning that such performance style will foster cultural pluralism and will be instrumental in dismantling the hegemonic cultural codes. It will confront the tyranny of a masterful imperial culture or radical political posture. Like Soyinka, he sought to invent intercultural stage-experience; his aesthetic recognize not only the African-derived cultural forms but also other contributory streams that make up the Caribbean. This traffic enables the audience to experience different constellations of beliefs, manners and languages which will destabilize the received definition of Caribbeanness. In *Drums and Colours*, written on the celebration of the birth of West-Indian federation, political

vision of unity is affirmed by the strong presence/ assortment of cross-racial figures- Ram, Pompey, Yette, representatives of Europeans, Asians and Africans. It is succinctly expressed by Mano:

“That web Columbus shuttled took its weave,
Skein over skein to knit the various race,
Through warring elements of the past compounded
To coin our brotherhood in that little place”. (18-21).

Walcott’s syncretic stagecraft ran counter to monocultural practices and eventually manage to initiate what Glissant termed as ‘theatre of creolity’(25), one that transcends the centre-periphery, insider-outsider, oral-scribal dichotomy. It embodies truly post-colonial response to the historical violence and ruptures of the past, the states of loss, alienation and fragmentation. Inspired by the values of colonial heritage, they re-evaluate cultural identities in a more egalitarian way.

Reading the Caribbean through Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation*

In his much acclaimed study *Poetics of Relation*, the Francophone novelist cum critic Edouard Glissant has proffered a theoretical model to define the way of framing and highlighting basic notion of plurality and diversity and mirroring pluralized, inchoate world of migrant subjectivities. To Glissant, it seemed that Caribbean consciousness needed to change direction, ceasing its vain attempt to plunge down towards its African roots. Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* is primarily concerned with the ways in which different cultures clash with one another in contingent historical circumstances and are transformed into new and unforeseeable entities. According to Glissant’s description: “Relation is not to be confused with the cultures we are discussing nor with the economy of their internal relationships nor even the intangible results of the intricate involvement of all internal relationships with all possible external relationships. Nor is it to be confused with some marvelous accident that might suddenly occur apart from any

relationship, the known unknown, in which chance would be the magnet. Relation is all these things at once” (170–71). In the Caribbean- a rhizomatic identity model is more relevant since identities are constantly made and re-made through intercultural contact or cultural dialogue, In the mid 60s, Glissant’s writings focused upon the idea of a ‘relational poetics’ which laid the ground for the Creolite movement. Since creolisation undermines ‘absolutes of identity’(270) or the static polarity of Same and Other, it espouses identity as a shifting term in a network of relation with other. To exist ‘in relation’ is to be an element of ever-changing and ever-diversifying process in which identity loses its singularity or essence and the claims of rootedness and monoculture are undermined. As a concept, it presupposes a natural openness to other cultures, a non-hierarchical principle of unity, a relation of equality with and respect for the opacity of Other’s difference. Identity is always a state of becoming- created through contact with each other. It welcomes opacity and safeguards other’s difference which resists attempts at assimilation and homogenization. Employing rhizome as a basis, Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* is concerned with the ways in which complex process of creolization operates. Creolization entails a dynamic process in which difference continues to function and proliferate as a constitutive reality and as a basis for thought and action. Freeing themselves from forced poetics, the conception of teleological and linear history of European traditions, the West- Indian artists must strive for self-expression. The principal of *la relation* is the non-hierarchical principle of unity, a relation of equality -“In Relation the whole is not the finality of its parts: for multiplicity in totality is totally diversity” (Glissant 10).

Glissant’s model poetics repudiates conceptualizing other as mere fodder for its drive to reduce everything to the ‘same’. Contrary to the ethos of the liberal humanism, it seeks to create a Relation which sees the Other as equal and a presence that is necessary because it is different. Operating within a totality than unity, it also works against the notion of ‘essence’. As it needs the presence of all its diverse and equal elements, it is polar opposite of totalitarianism. For Glissant, differences and their encounter do not work toward homogenizing differences upon the resolution of contradiction. Rather it foregrounds the process of identity formation as ever changing and ever diversifying. *Relation*, it demands to be stressed, not only celebrates the diversity of world’s cultures but also places a particular value on the internal diversity of these societies that include a number of ethnic communities, such as the Caribbean. *Relation*, between cultures, between the written and the oral and between each link in the chain that leads the

author's unrealized intention as manifestation of a particular people, positive products of a complex and multiple set of historical circumstances. The syncretic Caribbean culture and their essentially creolized character is the very opposite of the Sameness of European hegemonic tradition. In a lecture from 1993 Glissant stresses even more explicitly creolization's opposition to essence: "Creolization is unpredictable, it cannot solidify, become static, be fixed in essence or absolutes of identity."(pg). The static polarity of Same and Other give away in Relation, to a situation in which identity exists only as a shifting term in network of multiple relations with the others. Hence, Relation welcomes of the opacity or the "irreducible density of the Other". Thus it offers an alternative site of negotiation reveal the irrationality of what in other context Derida has called "homo hegemony". It is Glissantian break with the logics of universal and universalism and its determinism; because relation is not the universal but the presage of ideas across the individual cultural contexts. Seamless unity in identity thinking proffers the violent exclusion and subordination of the other. Caribbeanness has always been heterogenous, conflictual composite, an imbrication of opposite cultures. Walcott's dramatic texts can be read through Glissantian conceptual lens of *Relation*, a model that is non-hierarchical and a-centred and confronter of cultural hegemony. Walcott's dramatic narratives are energized by his splicing together multiple and overlapping legacies of the colonizer and colonized. The Caribbean *difference* is no longer defined in the black-white ontological terms in the complexities of race, gender and classes. In his plays, Walcott explores the infinite creative possibilities engendered by cultural tensions. Exploiting full range of creole practices, each of his play unfolds an aesthetic principle which is neither African nor American or European but a complex, multi-faceted, a rich dramatic experience. As he evinced, cross cultural aesthetics emerges from intersection of diverse and multiple- as an account of the relation of the writer to both his own community and that of the colonizer. In articulating identity, metropolitan concepts of rootedness and monoculture are exploded by contact and mutual engagement of cultures.

CHAPTER- 1

“A Literature of Their Own”: Narratives of Self-fashioning in Walcott’s Early Plays

To stride from the magnetic sphere of legends,
To change the marble sweat which pebbled
the wave blow of stone brows
for the sweat-drop on the cedar plank,
for a future without heroes,
to make out of these forests and fishermen
heraldic men!

- Derek Walcott

Turbulence is at work everywhere ... (millions of simple folk) have now become the subject of their own history, engaged in a global war to liberate their own villages, rural and urban, from the old encirclement of poverty, ignorance and fear....This is the most fundamental battle of our time, and I am joyfully lucky to have been made, by my work, a soldier in their ranks.

- George Lamming.

... this past, this endless struggle to activate and reveal and confirm a human identity, human authority, yet contains for all its horror, something very beautiful.

- James Baldwin.

From the outset of his career, Walcott felt the urge to deconstruct the existing colonial narratives, myths and legends since they occluded the process of self-definition for the Caribbeans. The nineteenth century theatrical texts on the Caribbean basin were replete with myths and negative stereotypes. They not only misrepresented or misimagined the indigenous

people but also reaffirmed European illusion for sovereignty and mastery. The ideological legitimization of colonialism or colonialist representation persistently denigrated the natives and Walcott lashed out at such mechanism by which the colonizer has always slighted the colonized: “Our myths are ignorance, theirs are literature” (“Twilight”, 39). As corrective, he strongly felt that the stagespace had to be re-designed so as to enable it intervene in the social organisation and critique the political structures. In Walcott’s hand drama became “the central cultural ritual in the decolonization” (Canefield 288); it was committed to “the enterprise of recovering and uncovering the contents and forms of the consciousness of the people”(Lazarus8).The inherited structures and institutions blurred the concept of the West Indian cultural reality as well as disfigured the cultural identity of the archipelagal people. To mend this disfiguration, folk festivals, cultural rituals, carnivals and other local customs were foregrounded; they were deployed to articulate the specificities of local experience. The brief period between 1957 and 1959, the years between his New York experience and founding of Trinidad Theatre Workshop marked a prolific period, for Walcott. At this time his plays saw the emergence of true West-Indian theatrical style. And no longer an isolated backwater of global cultural flows, in these years, the Caribbean was coming into its own as a cultural powerhouse.

In non-literate communities which formed the majority of West Indian population, stories have a central place to maintain and sustain its culture. Their songs, legends and stories testify to the cultural richness; they profoundly represent the Caribbean cultural reality. By concentrating the oral and mythic traditions, one could glean wealth of signifiers; by fashioning new art form the folk cultural practices could be saved from the touristic debasement. To emerge as makers of their own world, theatre -practitioners strove hard to discover unique modes of expanding and educating the local audience. For Walcott, a potent alternative to the grand narratives in the “history-orphaned islands” (8) was the unscripted and unperformed stories of the small, unheroic simplicities- the heroism of ordinary people’s survival. If the cultural void and abject poverty in the post-independence days offered little promise, the artists could still elicit the possibility of creative representation of the collective experience and assert the dignity of the disenfranchised. Theatre as art form was a socially committed vocation; it was effective in affirming the cultural substance of people of subordinated communities. The rhythm and beauty of boyhood life in St. Lucia offered him a counter-discursive space to the historical narratives and legends – an opportunity to break free from all ideological constraints and they marked Walcott’s life-long

commitment towards developing a uniquely West-Indian theatrical style of performance. His first published collection, *Dream in Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*, no doubt a major dramatic achievement is described by Edward Baugh as “Walcott’s foundational contribution towards a West- Indian theatre was rooted in the experience of the common people, drawing on their arts of performance, including their language, and that in the context of the colonial experience of the region” (58).

The vitality of the folklore and the scope of communal participation through the indigenous narrative had also inspired artists like George Lamming or Wilson Harris. By jettisoning the aesthetic models of Western tradition, Walcott wanted to develop a drama within a limited orbit of reference, allusions and beliefs. In his essay “Tradition, The Writer and Society”, Harris emphasised the essential role of the West Indian writer to awaken his countrymen from the oppressive legacies of racism and colonialism, to generate a truly revolutionary life in them. Walcott also set himself the task of imaginatively transforming the “unheroic” lives steeped in elemental necessity or dire poverty; with imaginative treatment of poverty he endeavoured to place the marginal locus at the center of his texts and add new insights to Caribbean culture. These plays address in a compelling manner the concrete material conditions of exploitation of the Caribbean mass. As he states in the seminal essay “What the Twilight Says: An Overture ”: “Poverty seemed a gift to the imagination, necessity was truly a virtue, so we set our plays in the open, in natural, unphased light, and our subject was bare, unaccommodated man”(7). He was always aware that drama was the forum for heightening politico-cultural awareness as the dominant structures of knowledge refused to heed the marginal, “oppressed disempowered voices”. He was also strongly sceptic of political actions as an agency of representation of his people. Hence what was needed for his St. Lucian native people was the narrative space from which as subjects they could speak and act. The artists further needed to recognise resilience of the subjects who plied their daily activities within the limits of the imperial power. With *Sea at Dauphin* (1954) Walcott left the youthful ardor for Haitian history/ revolution - an event of great magnitude and fascination for revolutionary episode. The lacuna of “single heroic warrior figure” in West-Indies is addressed with the stories of wood-cutter, charcoal burner or fishermen- the down-trodden, solitary figure captivated the imagination of the dramatist. His early protagonists in his “folk plays” are mostly derived from local legend, popular folk tales or even village scandals. As at the early days of apprenticeship,

Walcott's preoccupation was what Lamming describes in "The Pleasures of Exile" as "lives of men and women who were never thought to be sufficiently important for their thoughts and feelings to be registered" (5). Though they belonged further down the scale of hierarchy, the St. Lucian peasants had rare moral courage and immense relish for life. The historical scars of colonial subjugation, the plight of communal life and bleak future are posited at the heart of Lamming's novels; he asserted in *The Pleasures of Exile* the possibility of restoration of the peasants to the true status of personality. It was his conviction that they will act as the agents of collective action. In drama Walcott found imaginative scope to enter and share the insider's experience of the life with which he did not have first-hand acquaintance; his upper middle class status and Methodist background had erected a wall. He sadly witnessed how the West-Indian mass had met with the indifference and contempt of the politicians in the age of globalisation. To create new culture and literature about their passion and struggle was Walcott's fervent artistic urge. Like Thiongo, he set the artistic goal to articulate the right to name the world. To stage the local lives, deploy folk culture and language; he consciously shunned legends and myths. The orbit of his plots was the communal predicament of fishermen, wood-cutter and charcoal burner. For Walcott, the still disenfranchised masses were "the common people, the salt of the earth, provide an obvious basis for defining national identity ("a new people")" (Breiner11). The Chapter12 of Walcott's lyrical masterpiece, *Another Life*, opens with the image of a carpenter, the craftsman in laudatory manner: "I watched the vowels curl from the tongue of the carpenter's plane" (*CP*, 294). This present chapter pays attention to both "suffering" and "solidarity", the redeeming qualities of degraded lives as embodied in Walcott's imaginative responses to the blights of colonialism. It was Walcott's conviction that by "story-ing" their lives, by transmuting them with the fire of their artistic imagination could a writer undo the colonial structure of awareness. In his Nobel lecture, he asserts provocatively that "in the Antilles poverty is a poetry with a V, une vie, a condition of life as well as that of imagination". In the early plays their daily lives assert the importance of "compassion, mutual support, and solidarity" (Burnett,55) despite the degraded conditions of poverty. In forging creative resistance to asymmetrical relations of power, they generate what can be called in Fanonian terms "basis for hope" (*Black Skin* 25). Though dismissed as "insignificant fragments of earth", deprived of the spotlights of history, they are formidable survivors- from the Columbus era to the ringing out of the bells of federation, they demonstrate zeal for survival despite scarred existence. In *Drums and Colours*,

the emerging nation is embodied through such plebian figures- “Ram, Pompey, Yette, Yu”, epitomizing bond of all races and classes. As Paula Burnett describes them, “They are poor and chaotic, but they are well motivated and deal with adversity with wit and wisdom” (ibid. 232). Although Walcott denies poverty as a virtue, he recognizes a latent mobility in the poor who cannot escape their island exile, and despite materially deprived condition, their lives demonstrate rich theatricality. The popular folk tales that demonstrated the vital earthiness animates the plots of Walcott and redeems the native population from systematic devaluation and weakening by the legacy of the captivity. Long denied of their voice, they are recovered from their state of deposition. Robert.D.Hamner in his essay “Mythological Aspects of Walcott’s Drama” highlights this very salient concern of early Walcott: “He delineates the innermost character of a people, the essence of what it means to have been born West Indian” (35). And in so doing the playwright can address the aporias of cultural representation and rebut Freud’s stricture of the West Indians having no character.

The early plays, mostly ‘folk’ in character investigate through myths and archetypes the timeless values of Caribbean life, the emotional realities of the social life and the undivided man-nature association. Walcott firmly believed that the racial and cultural blight of several centuries have failed to undermine the dignity of New World of individual or the status of fallen Eden or the vernal space of man, nature and animal. Sometime classified as “folk plays”, Walcott’s early works valorize how his people continue to assert cultural freedom within the confines of history. Rather than fostering the spirit of anti- colonialism, they narrate the stories of resistance to deformation of the Afro-Caribbean culture. In post- independence days, the Caribbean artists were resolved to search new ways to inveigh the constraints and controls of colonial authority and its on-going exploitation and oppression. In the Caribbean, the colonial legacy laid bare wretchedness, hardship of dismal poverty. Walcott, in his native island of St. Lucia found lives of the black majority stuck in grinding poverty and sufferings of the brunt of racial injustice- what Plunkett describes in *Omeros* as “[t] here’s is too much poverty below us” (63). The suffering of the mass was Walcott’s unflagging concern ; at the same time their life rich in theatrical potentiality could be laid bare through imaginative rendering of existential struggle. These plays of the late 1950s foreground the individual life, marked by the tension of self-definition and ascription of identity by others. It was in his plays that Walcott found an opportunity to pay homage to his native countryman and affirm their personhood : “to save the

salt light of the island, to protect and exalt its small people” (*Another Life*, 56). It was in a strong desire to articulate his outward instinct for action that Walcott was drawn to the lives of unheroic simplicities: “Poverty seemed a gift to the imagination, necessity was truly a virtue, so we set our plays in the open, in natural unphased light, and our subjects was bare, “unaccommodated man” (“Twilight”, 7). Walcott was always convinced that the task of the artist is to give creative articulation to collective suffering and solidarity and affirm the Caribbean as a differentiated stage of the history of humanity. In conformity with the realities of impoverished lives Walcott set the actions of his dramas in open, natural settings. Meager props were intended to be resistant to the cheap commercialization of public shows or touristic exhibition of various folk forms; Breiner has described them as ‘poor theatre’ in terms of material resources- stripped of decorative establishment and frugal material for representation, Walcott was contravening the cheap commercialization of the folk arts. The entire action of The Sea at Dauphin is set in the open, littered beach with bamboo pole and canoe named *Our Daily Bread*. It is here that the actions start two hours before the sunrise. Spanning from early dawn to sunset hour, the dramas of the life of fishermen take place in natural light. While in *Ti-jean and his Brothers*, the action alternates between the hut and the wood; in these bare settings all the encounters take place between the brothers and the devil. Here, again the open, bare natural setting embodies the lives of stark necessities. Also in *Malcochon or, The Six in the Rain* the scene is set in “A disused copra house” on the edge of a bamboo forest. All these remind us of eminent Indian dramatist Badal Sircar’s dramaturgic reduction of stage props, set, costumes and reliance on the movements of human body embodied in open-air performance. Like Walcott, Sircar also fervently believed in the role and responsibility of the writer as the initiator of change and development in his own community. He himself was aware that facing such unpromising conditions, the small island people were used to “a precious resignation to fate” (“Twilight” 8). Instead of blind submission to pre-determined fate, their sustained resistance propels them to achieve what Edward Baugh terms “selfhood” or self-fashioning. If the world around us is a world of constant change and irreducible diversity, it is no doubt, a world of becoming, also. Around 500 B.C. Heraclitus wrote “Everything flows and nothing abides; everything and nothing stays fixed”; in the late nineteenth century Nietzsche developed the vision of a chaotic world in perpetual motion and change and becoming which undermined the notion of fixed, sovereign subject. From the early days, Walcott’s focus was on little places, the backwaters, a place like

Dauphin which Afa describes, in a violently bitter utterance : “The land is hard, this dauphin?(Caps) land have stone/ Where it should have some heart” (5-8, 61).

For Walcott the very adverse conditions to which they are born, the very parochiality that determines their lives proved to be enabling condition for producing culturally vibrant forms. In resilience and persistence in the choir of daily lives could be sought the ways to emerge from the darkness. The earthy simplicities of life, the elemental conditions faced in the daily experiences endowed the common man with heroic stature, as Walcott describes them, “A woodcutter or charcoal burner. To me this figure represented the most isolated, the most reduced, race-containing symbol”. (“Twilight’48) They merited an alternative stage/space, a theatrical language that “went beyond mimicry”, the model for which was ‘oral culture of chants, jokes, folk-songs and fables” (ibid17). Naming the “new world”, both in terms of landscape and people was a very strong artistic imperative for Walcott. “Faith in elemental man”, rather than splendor of ruins is an admirable quality in true New World Poets, like Neruda, Whitman. What drew Walcott to them was their avowed act of “adamic naming” of native region. St. Lucian life- this region with its very rawness, cultural dispositions, folk customs, carnivals, local legends, story-telling endow upon his dramaturgic practice a new significance. Local people, local custom, local legends were to be staged as corrective to the defamatory stigma of cultural mediocrity of the West-Indian subjects: “It did not matter how rhetorical, how dramatically heightened the language was of its tone were true, whether its subject was the fall of a Haitian king or a small island fisherman, and the only way to re-create this language was to share in the torture of its articulation” (“Twilight” 17). Within these narrative frameworks, this impulse of sharing is quite palpable; here all the ‘ordinary’ heroes interrogate unequal power relationship and shake the very basis of ascriptive identities. The present chapter pays attention to how life can be made worthwhile; how the peasants or working class characters exemplify “the process of self-discovery and self-renewal” (Dabydeen 89). While living in the midst of adverse natural and social environment they embody what Schopenhauer calls “affirmation of will”. In *Omeros III*, Walcott avowed to celebrate the moral and spiritual strength of those who were discarded and erased by history:

... Look, they climb and no one knows them;
they take their copper pittances and your duty

from the time you watched them from your grandmother's house
as a child wounded by their power and beauty
is the chance you now have, to those feet a voice (69-74).

The ordinary, earthy lives revolving around the arduous toil of coal carrying women are emblematic of collective suffering which preoccupied Walcott in *Another Life*. Here he has left behind the figures like Dessaline or Cristophe of the early plays- the commanding figures of grandeur, size and mania and their gripping stories of their rise and fall. His early protagonists, in Edward Baugh's phrase, "home-grown heroes" (58), struggling to survive and maintain dignity in the face of exploitation and domination. His early dramatic works are rooted in the quotidian experience of the ordinary and marginal lives; his "heraldic men" will oust the mythic "heroes". As Edward Baugh describes it, "A central motive in this endeavour was to address the apparent or supposed absence or dearth of home-grown heroes" (45).

To negotiate with this absence, Walcott, like Brecht, chooses ordinary, resilient and often non-conforming individuals as heroes who relentlessly interrogate the structures of domination. In Soyinka's early tragedies like *The Swamp Dwellers*(1959) or *Camwood on the Leaves* (1969), massive, monolithic system of colonialism are set to challenge by the young people; here, the youthful antagonists are overpowered by the structures of powers, the authoritative figures, apparatus of oppressive regime. Modelled on folk-tale heroes or Anancy figures of cunning and wit, they impress upon us as challengers to the dictatorship and tyranny- emerging from the deep, dark shadow of non-entity. Though his characters do not encounter the vices of the town life, Walcott's dispossessed inhabitants demonstrate the moral and spiritual strength and their culture survive and thrive despite the traumatic wounds of Middle Passage. With youthful ardour gone for the slave- heroes, he became preoccupied with concerns were the "heraldic men", affirming the humanity and personhood in Caribbean man. From the earliest days of artistic career, Walcott's creative works, like that of Synge and Lorca sought to translate the language of the fishermen, peasants or ballad singers. In "What the Twilight Says" he states that as there were no heroes and daily life experience was only grim encounter with poverty, hunger and unemployment around, West- Indians sought to glorify "revenge". Determined not to idealise "poverty" or ethics of "revenge" or produce strident protest in the social forum of drama,

Walcott took up the “theatre of daily lives”, the small drama and all its minutiae. Walcott’s ire is roused by the trading and bastardization of “folk” culture through state-sponsored tourism and lack of organized support for serious theatre. When he undertook the production of “serious theatre” with Caribbean Theatre Workshop, Walcott attempted a trenchant critique against the White Lord, God, planter who devised the mechanism of oppression, plight, of the people who teem the plot of these early plays. In dismissing history, Walcott sought to dramatise “the history of emotion” which welled up through the cravings for elemental necessity. Aesthetically and thematically, these narratives are hinged on indigenous material and cultural contexts. Always sceptic towards the grand version of “history”, “great actors” or “subjects of history”, he reinstated the small narratives of struggle and survival. Because such narratives can only interrogate the consensuality of political discourse or identity paradigms rooted in politics of polarity. If grand narratives promise knowledge secured on the basis of consensus, little narratives show how knowledge is both decentralized and localized.

It is here in early dramas that performances could revert to naïve traditions, or draw cultural energy from local ritual and superstition. By passionate engagement with true imaginative rendering of “local” and “folk” culture Walcott was resisting the neo-colonial appropriation of them: “The folk arts have become the symbol of a carefree, accommodating culture, an adjunct to tourism, since the State is impatient with anything which it cannot trade” (“Twilight” 7). Walcott was relentless in his strictures against the effects of neo-colonialist and imperial practices; he excoriated the appropriation of folk entertainments in state-sponsored tourism. As tourism industry seeks to add ethnic flair with some indigenous cultural traditions for the consumption of the north/ richer nations, Walcott mounted imaginative challenge drawing from the folk repertoire. His was the challenge what Naipaul had lamented in *Middle Passage* as the failure of West-Indian writers, to articulate his own place and position. In an atmosphere of cultural degradation. Walcott was keen to share the Brechtian view of man as determined by social and material forces though fixity of human nature might be unsettled. What embodies in these small but remarkable plays is cultural uniqueness of the islanders despite lingering exploitation, inequalities. His dramatic art would be one of native simplicity and integrity. Errol Hill’s dramas articulated lower class West-Indian oral tradition, street communities and street festivals in the early 60s. The essential motivation may be summed up in the words of Benitez

Rojo: “In the Caribbean, we are all performers.[...] we try to act the roles our skin reads to us” (236).

1.1. Ti *Jean and His Brothers*

Walcott’s early plays cluster around the experiences of death, loss, hunger and unemployment- the very conditions that threatened to make theatre a “luxury” in the new nation. They do not only generate native response to colonial oppression but are informed with a tension between “anger” and “compassion” as sentiments which may be the “basis for hope” (qtd. in Burnett 25). Their simple allegorical structure of colonial binary has axis on the antagonism between “white rulers” and “black, disadvantaged mass. In foregrounding a native style, a medley of story-telling, song and dance, Walcott espouses a positive mode of being that clamoured for expression in the marginal lives of native island. *Ti- Jean and His Brothers*, written in the extremely prolific decade of the 50s, thematises transformation of life under the colonial lordship and eventually secures dignity in the midst of hopeless material situations.

His “early” plays investigate the very conditions of subjection and brutality and it also calls into question global order which imprisons the two-third world in economic hardship. Here, how the narrative posits the restorative unity of Man, Nature and Animal in face of ruthless racial injustice. In a characteristic Walcottian manner the narrative closes with a new vision of humanity. Read from the perspective of Mother, the story asserts power over oneself than power over others, espoused by masculinist ideology. The plot is constantly marked by tension between the material and spiritual claim to supremacy. Towards the end, it is the figure of Bolom, a disfigured fetus who celebrates his birth towards the end:

“I am born, I shall die! O the wonder and pride of it! I shall be a man! Ti-Jean, my brother!”

(17-19,164)

The quality of compassion, to be able to feel human emotion can also redeem the devil and helps him achieve humanity as he listens to Ti-Jean's singing, inspired by the death of his mother:

“What is this cooling my face, washing it like a Wind of morning. Tears! Tears! Then is this Magnificence I have heard of, Man, the chink of his armour, the destruction of the Self? Is this the strange, strange wonder that is Sorrow/ You have earned your gift, Ti-Jean, ask!”

(21-23.162-163)

Long after it was actually written, Ti-jean was described by the playwright himself as his “most- West-Indian play”. Walcott must have meant it to be distinctively and recognizably West-Indian in both form and content. Set in motion by the bird-beast narrator, the plot plunges us into harsh actualities of the lives of the West-Indians, the “naked, voluble poverty” that surrounded Walcott's own childhood experience. When the Bird asks “How poor their mother was?” the Frog answers:

“Oh that was poverty, bird! Old hands dried up the claws Heaping old sticks on sticks, Too weak to protect her nest. Look, the four of that family [Light shows up the hut] Lived up in a little house, Made up of wood and thatch, On the forehead of the mountain, Where night and day was rain, Mist, cloud and white as cotton Caught in the dripping branches”.

(13-25,288).

Exposed to cold and rain, the mother or the old woman struggles to lift the family out of impoverished state. She is left with meager hope to alleviate the melancholic life; in the dialogue of Frog and Cricket her plight is foregrounded in stark details. Again, inside the hut the homely conversation of mother and three brothers focuses on the regular experience of hunger, starvation:

“One time again it have nothing to eat, But one dry bread to break”

(6-7.90)

At the beginning, Gros, the elder brother is found to have failed first to procure wood, dampened by weather. And Mi-Jean also returned empty handed from fishing venture. A deeply melancholic air hovers over the needy house of the family. This “starving” condition and struggling are attributed by the mother to the planter’s exploitative system; a stark contrast is outlined between them:

“Here all of us are striving, While the planter is eating From plates painted golden”.

(8-10. 91).

The contrast between riches and poverty lays bare how serious material damages have been inflicted by the plantation economy. The cricket describes her little house on the brow of the mountains where it was so cold that it would not make the frog stop singing only but all the creatures were unable to function. As the Frog narrator tells us, the pain is exacerbated by the presence of Devil living in close vicinity of the mountainside. Their life is perpetually insecure as the Devil uses to appear in different guise as emissary of death. He’s wrecked havoc on the world. He claims to be the owner of half the world and the seat of evil, intrigue and destruction. As Bolom introduces him as the prince of the “kingdom of night”, also

The devil my master Who owns half the world, In the kingdom of night, Has done all that is evil Butchers thousands in war, Whispered his diseases

(3-8, 99).

The devil’s estate is the very diametric opposite of Mother’s hut, kept warm by love and warmth of feelings. As Gros Jean describes his journey “Well I walked up through the bush then I came onto a large field. Estate-like, you know, sugar, tobacco, and a hell of a big white house where they say the devil lives” (109). He accuses the “big, white man” (109) to be cold, inhuman who coerce the black slave to most grueling toil. Like his mother, he has portrayed the planter devil as possessor of land, house, all the riches and as the supreme authority over the labouring blacks. Resentful, he interrogates/asks: “Black people have to rest, too” (109). A little later, Ti-Jean observes: “Hey, all you niggers sweating there in the canes!

Hey, all you people working hard in the fields!” (7-8.148)

The apparent binary structure of black/ white, man/ devil and their confrontation is often said to have been a literary analogue of the slave revolt. On the moral plane three encounters embody the shortcomings of brute power or bookish knowledge and the triumph of practical wisdom and earthy common sense. Gros Jean feels slighted to be considered “common man” and asserts that he can prove to be powerful and reminds him “all could be mine”. It attests to racial/ adversarial politics which professed to be in the first place as equal of white. In course of verbal duel the Planter continues to call him by names like Mac, Jo, Gross Chien, Horace, Hubert, Benton and Francis, despite his repeated reminder of his original name. This violence of naming is central to the mechanism of colonial authority. Kamau Brathwaite states in his essay “World Order Models” that the erasure of name works as a metonym for crossed out identity. The Caribbean islands were named after the name of the Christian saints like St. Martin, St. Lucia and St. Vincent as their native names were cast out. Violence, fraud and erasure of the name are commonly experienced in the Caribbean as sign of imperialist pedagogy which Bhabha calls “the right to signify” through “the power of naming” (Bhabha 33). Breslin in his nuanced analysis in *Nobody’s Nation* has read the play as the story of successive attempts to respond to colonial oppression. The first contender of the Devil is the eldest brother, Gros-Jean who is overconfident of his “arm of irons” and is subject to more oppressive toil dictated by the planter. Mi-Jean follows him and as he is proud intellectual, in his oratorical passion, he has shown signs of identification with white culture. He has no respect for the native animals and birds. Like all mimic man, he continues to beat the masters at their own game, with the self-awareness to assert the ‘difference’. In this allegorical tale of the brother-devil encounter, physical strength and intellectual ability- both have proved too inadequate responses, and empty blasts

The last challenger of the White Planter is the youngest of brothers, Ti-Jean who immediately strikes with humble and courteous gesture. His name Ti-Jean is symbolic of West-Indian little man, ordinary but rich in practical wisdom. As he leaves behind the hut, unlike others, he listens attentively to his mother and also asks for his blessing. He is befriended by animals and birds. While his brother Gros set out by kicking away the frog as : “Get out of my way, you slimy bastard!” (104). His attitude to the Frog is diametric opposite of his brother: “Why should I laugh at the frog and his base voice?” And the Frog assures him “if you need us, call us, brother, but/ you understand we must move” (138) or again, “If you need us, call us, brother, but You understand we must move” (148)

When he meets the Devil disguised as Old Man, he lectures him: “What counts in this world is money and power” expressing quintessential ethos of neo-colonial venture and market economy. It is a strident claim of the mechanism of material exploitation and Ti- Jean is empowered with common and native wit who count on nothing else on his way to overcome temptation. But capitalistic proclamation, exploitation of human and environment are triumphed over by the rapport of Ti-Jean and the bird and beast; they recreate the vision of the ordered universe. As Albert Ashalou observes, “ Fully equipped with his mother’s advice and blessings, the knowledge acquired from the smaller animals, his humility and natural instincts, and an invincible determination, he successfully beats the devil in his own game, outwitting him at every point”(123).

Ti- Jean is much more sensitive to call the beasts and birds friends and seeks their help to reach the estate of the old man. Contrasted to him, the Devil curses all “fish, flesh and fowl”. When Ti-Jean eventually wins the battle it attests to the victory of qualities like pity and fellow-feelings; it is very much antithetical to the dehumanizing proclamation of the Devil at the beginning “Give the Devil a child for the dinner!”(89). It is his song that finally moves the Devil to tears. Very appositely remarks Edward Baugh: “Ti- Jean enacts the humanity and personhood of the Caribbean subject in the response to the tradition of discourse that would deny him or her those attributes” (77). No longer a messenger of the Devil figure, Bolom’s appearance as a new born child is obviously symbolic of the emancipation of the slaves from the iron-clutches of the devil. Its coming into life is indicative of emerging West Indian consciousness- decolonized and assertive. A miscegenated offspring, an embodiment of white male’s response to the allure of exotic sexuality was described by the Mother as “child of the Devil” (94). A recurrent figure of the West-Indian folklore, this unborn fetus lives in corner or near the bed and harm at the command of its master. Possessing the folk values in abundant measure or guided by instinct, he outwits and humbles the Devil. Greed and exploitation will be replaced by native and liberatory stratagem capable of ushering “green beginning”. Such celebratory and highly affirmative moments can be said to effect transmutation of consciousness in which the straitjacket of identity looks to be worn-out. Robert. D. Hamner has this to say: “the advice of his aged mother (experience) and of lowly animals (instinct) from whom he learns to respect nature and to use his wits” (47). Native wit, compassion, earthy common sense can overturn the politics of domination and expansionism. In such figure, the West- Indian man “possesses the possibility of rich,

complex and integrated self which is his by virtue of his experience” (285). True to his name, Ti-Jean’s victorious feat becomes “little man’s” triumph over the big power class in society and he proves to be “fool like all heroes”. In a story of a folk fable, by regenerating the myth of native heroism, Walcott placed stress on transformation of consciousness. As Thieme describes the play as “an allegory of the dispossessed of the Caribbean peasantry’s fight for survival under colonialism and gradual movement towards the independent consciousness represented by Ti-Jean’s stance” (60). Through vibrant and colourful performative strategies, punctuated with song and music, it humanises the ruthless Devil.

Available critical readings of this play have shed little light on the figure of the Mother in the plot of *Ti-Jean and Brothers*, so far, casting it as a morality play of the encounter between three young black sons and the white planter. But she deserves comments as strong presence, a mixture of frailty and staunchness beside all male figures; she is far from a stereotype in Walcott’s overwhelmingly male art world. Feminist critics like Elaine Savory in an article entitled “Value Judgements on Art and the question of Macho Attitudes: The Case of Derek Walcott” takes Walcott to task for portrayal of the women as mere clichéd, stereo-typical and negative. She notes that Walcott’s women are shorn of individuality, playing auxiliary part to the male-centred drama. She contends that as passive creatures they await male appreciation and by condescending roles, they help re-enforce the male hegemony. Patricia Ismond in a kind of rejoinder in *Woman as Race-containing Symbol in Walcott’s Poetry* argues that in the work of the late 70s, Walcott began to cast women in a more positive light and in a more active role. But here much earlier in this play of 1959, appears the figure of Mother whose home-bound persona speaks in a dignified voice. She is the perpetuator of myths and stories and communicator of feelings. African and Caribbean literatures celebrate mother-figures, ones who nurture, protect and also possess secret knowledge. Catherine Obianuju Acholonu argues that the mother is at the spiritual heart of the African family with the abiding power of love, tolerance and service. Here also we find it is motherhood that stands out amidst male antagonism, her motherly role is counterpoint to the lust, greed of the devil. In absence of husband, mother tries to exert authority and dignity; she is the centre of the mother-headed family. They carry well as a family unit and interact with each other to hold out against the threatening surrounding. Though home-bound, rooted in her place, the home, for her, is an extremely vulnerable place, far removed from the place of safe, secure living. She can be easily be read as victim figure ; her instructive role in

posing spirited challenge to the Devil as they face him in succession can hardly be overlooked. Like the heroine of Armaha's *The Beautiful Ones are Not yet Born*, she is the "symbol of patient suffering". Of course, the mother is the grassroot West-Indian, a quintessential victim figure of West-Indian society. Here in the play, she is introduced as the centre in the dialogue of Frog and Cricket as pitiful mountain dweller without her husband, insecure and in the clutches of abject poverty. Denied of minimum subsistence, she stands out as the figure of composure - rock- solid in defense against the threatening devil. To quote Patricia Ismond, "Walcott here extends into the plight of women at the extreme pit of disadvantage and degradation in the society to project the image of woman as its arch-victims and underdogs" (Theatre 9). She is at the lowest rung of the society- beleaguered by the oppressive circumstances and worn-out by the hardship of daily life. She interferes as soon as her sons get locked in argument. She keeps up the hope that "God will send us something" (92) against the irreverent attitude of her sons. It is she who senses the Devil's approach, crying out "Death death is coming nearer" (94). When Bolom accuses one mother for deformed condition, she consoles her with the words of wisdom:

"Look, perhaps it is luckiest

Never to be born,

To the horrors of this life

Crowded with shadows"

(1-4,96)

Its immediate inter-text is recognized to be the line of Sophocles:

"Never to have been born is best".

The Greek God Silenius taught that life is not worth living. It is the extreme standpoint of pessimistic outlook that stresses the futility and pointlessness of human existence. Voltaire even believed life to be a bad joke, not obviously preferable to nothingness. Schopenhauer never ceased to stress that suffering is not only inevitable in life, in fact, an essence of it. She clearly understands that elimination of poverty and misery in this world is impossible and therefore it is better to wish not to have been born at all. To be born is to experience decay, decrepitude, disease and eventually death. In spelling out this ultimate futility of human existence she does not appear to be a starkly "a "nay-saying" character who must negate all values of life.

Guided by experience, age and wisdom, she corroborates an independent role in the male-dominated world of the drama. In *In The Castle of My Skin* Lamming also emphasizes on the role of mother in maintaining paternal authority in the absence of father at home. In *Omeros* Ma Kilman embodies organic connection with natural life-science, as human personification of the very landscape. She is the fostering mother, provider of the herbal magic potion to the festering ankles of Achille. Like her, the Mother of Ti-Jean, is moulded by her native soil, guided by earthy wisdom. She is, to quote Patricia Ismond, “embodiment of a regenerative, nurturing landscape” (Theatre,84). She is not beaten down by the loss and worries but makes a fine adoptability as she tells Gros Jean, “Woman life is so. Watching and Losing”; but it does not confirm her as defeatist. (102).With the passage of time, she has carried well the burden of motherhood. Love is her very forte against the terror and despair that surrounds her hut, a counterpoint the estate of the devil. Bolom sums up this quality:

“The house looks warm, old woman,
Love keeps the house warm,
From the cold wind and cold rain”;

(14-16,98)

For all her ill-fate, she is not a mere withdrawn, self-effacing figure. Rather she represents the West-Indian “Wretched of the Earth” figure, as struggling as the coal carrying women in *Another Life*, carrying loads down its “hemophilic hills’. In a life plagued by poverty, in the extremity of suffering, her loving, protective care and earthy common sense resist the greed, violence and exploitative stratagems of the Devil. Ti-Jean, in her words is “last of my chickens” (6,132) after the loss of two sons and his fate/ future is in deep insecurity. But it is Ti-jean who reminds her how it was she who taught them to be strong in adversity and be in love of god. She does not only pray for the safety of Ti-Jean but wishes “let him die as a man”.(10,158) The way she maintains her dignity marks her out as resilient and formidable mother figure. In course of the action her role appears affirmative and instructive as her sons set out to encounter the devil. She reminds Gros to praise God and seek the help of bird and insects. Helene Cixous consistently upholds the view that women inhabit a pre-civilizational world which is closer to the pulse of nature and rhythm of sensuality. She has staked a claim for true female identity by

linking women's position with that of people outside Western culture. Moreover the mother tells/warns her sons about the various impersonations of the Devil by which it deceives its opponents. And Ti-Jean profits from her practical suggestions on his way to face the devil. Thus she manages to overcome the inhibiting conditions to self-realization. Like other plays about St. Lucia, here Walcott has explored both the possibilities and limitations of the marginal lives.

1.2. *Malcochon or The Six in the Rain*

I am morality itself, and nothing beside is morality:

-Nietzsche.

(man) is ... free from all outside authority in the determination of his fate... he has nothing to lean on which to lean for support but himself.

Eugene O'Neill

- Another significant work of this period, *Malcochon or Six in the Rain* narrativizes the life of a tough and non-conformist wood-cutter, one in whom struggle is affirmed as creative force and whose identity eclipses social assumption. It proffers a life beyond the conventional moral binaries like good and evil. Chantal, the wood-cutter hero is defiant to the inflexible moral laws. Like Afa and Makak, he leads a solitary life without family; he is resolute in challenging the morality of custom. No wonder, he is described variously by those whom he chanced to meet- 'madman', 'enemy of god', 'Tarzan of the apes', 'Tiger of the Forest'(195). The popular identification of stories and folk tale -all the common appellations are subject to intense scrutiny in course of action. By revelation of the murder of Regis the planter, the plot destabilizes the much cherished values of 'truth', 'justice', 'judgement' and interrogates their eternal validity.

Instead of using truth as the highest standard of value, Nietzsche argues individuals need to develop their own power of judgement and produce ideas and ethics that will strengthen and help them live. Far from being immutable, moral values are an historical product, contingent creations of particular group of people; they are designed to serve their interests. The plot of *Malcochon* poses disquieting challenges to the established moral laws. Walcott's use of Sophoclean epigraph is clearly suggestive:

“Who is the slayer, who
The victim? Speak!”

Nietzsche also believed our every act is finally ‘unknowable’. Intention and consequence are not absolute determinant of action as ‘good’ or ‘evil’. He contended that which is conventionally regarded as good and evil in fact are relative categories or cannot be held as absolute or rigid. Finding the ethical implication analogous to the final part of the Greek tragedy, Thieme observes, “there is a movement beyond a cycle of crime and punishment, as Kuroswa’s moral relativism”(68). Walcott himself has acknowledged his debt to Kuroshwa’s classic *Roshoman*. The intention of the two murderers- one that of the Planter that took place before the start of the action and one that culminates at the end - murder of Chantal are more the acts of saving than brutal aggression. Thus Walcott’s plot unsettles the ‘slayer’-‘victim’ dualism; it seeks to revalue all values. Nietzsche claims, “an action is in itself perfectly devoid of value: it all depends on who performs it. One and the same ‘crime’ can be in one the greatest privilege, in another a stigma”(338). The Conteur who introduces the play seems to re-tell a popular tale of Chantal’s brutal murder of Regis, the planter but he offers his own version;

“Don’t believe all you heard or read
Chantal the tiger cannot dead”.

(7-8,171).

It seems that Conteur, the traditional West-Indian story-teller is resistant to the attempt to impose certain ‘true’ stories upon all. Used to a life without prestige, honour and wealth, Chantal lashes out at those who are at the helm of power. Chantal’s self-introduction stamps him as offender, a violent opposer of the law and judiciary, reminding us of Makak’s smashing of the café:

“And just because I hawked and spat
In the eyes of the magistrate
That give me a year in jail”

(18-20,172)

Chantal, as Theodore Colson describes him, is “a perpetual fugitive, with a reputation of violence and crime, a man whose name has been used to frighten the children” (128). He is degraded wood-cutter and like Makak, he has resorted to violence; as demonized figure he is ostracized from the human society. Truth and values are man-made and more often than not they are absolutist in their claim. Facing the abyss of despair, he can demonstrate positive force of will and strength. He is maligned to be monstrous and uncanny, unleashing only destructive energy; all his actions are expressive of pent-up energy/ anger against the crushing force of dominant structures and social institutions. Though some of his utterances are overtly hostile and hateful against power structure of the society, they lay bare their reluctance to reconcile to the dominant ideology.

Chantal is no doubt the one who illustrates powerful individuality, instinct and passion. In the Nietzschean sense, he actualizes himself in ways that the ‘herd morality’ of Christianity forbids. The society built on the Christian ethics or political ideologies seeks to produce dull, conformist society. Moral codes are imposed externally and reinforced with harsh punishment and discipline. In the dying minutes he refuses to be comforted by the priest; “Priest? What priest? What the priest can do now? What the priest knows that Chantal don’t know already?” (7-8,204). He will die with the peace of soul inside the forest, rather than leaving it. The vision of ‘home’ in the Monkey Mountain awaiting to greet Makak is anticipated in Chantal’s final wish. An anti-social solitary, he finds to his heart’s content a glimpse of nature’s beauty before his death. The elemental life of forest is a sign of his secure rootedness. As it is spelt out in moving utterance of Chantal:

“And look at the sun making diamond on the wet leaves. That’s all the money I ever had in this life. A man should not leave the forest,eh?”

(6-8,205).

Forest is his domain, the place of his final rest, not only a physical but a kind of spiritual home. Despite all material constraints, forest has bestowed upon him a sense of belongingness. Thus his folk heroes articulate the spirit of challenge to the money- power league/ collusion and proclaim unshakeable association with nature. As Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' forces the spectator to confront the harsh facts of a cruel world and his or her isolation, Walcott's heroes journey back to their solitary dwelling. As Artaud also believed that civilizations had turned humans into a sick and repressed creatures and the true function of these theatres was to rid the humankind of these repressions and liberate each individual's instinctual energy. These individuals explore the contradictions and hypocrisies of bourgeois society and give free rein to the 'primitive' impulses. And they also confront us with the received notions of 'savage', 'cruel' and so on. Leaving behind the social power structures, like Yank affirming the imposed identity of 'ape' in *Hairy Ape*, they affirm a primitive status. Living in the urban world, world of machines, Yank also lost the harmony with nature. After his deviation from reasonable values of good nature and social intelligence, he finds himself in the woods, stripped to barest of means. As in life, in death also, Chantal is all alone and posited 'outside' the pale of society.

This 1959 play continues incisive analysis of the Caribbean society and at the same time a universal human situation. Like the earlier play *Ti-jean and His Brothers*, poverty and hunger permeate the actions; all the characters are the victims of the material exploitation. The nephew, soon after his appearance bitterly describes his own condition as 'hungry like hell'. Chantal has spent three weeks in the forest, "eating bird, small animal and green plantain" (176). Now assembled inside a copra house the storm and rainy conditions have forced them into physical ordeal:

"Cold rain, dead leaves, cold winds, old bones.

Why time can't leave old people alone"?

(9-10,179)

Nature in all its harshness adds to the trials and tribulations. Poverty as in other plays is chiefly attributable to the exploitative of machinery of colonialism. As the Nephew sings;

"Listen, old man,

One, two, three, the white men have plenty,

When thunder roll is a nigger belly empty”.

(13-14,173)

But scars of poverty cannot thwart their zeal for self- discovery and renewal of energy. Nothing can curb their elemental and primitive forces. By Chantal’s self- confession, he’s been used to stealing and getting imprisonment. Hence the community identifies him with all the ‘immoral’, ‘unjust’, guilty acts. By all moral consideration Chantal is a notoriously ‘bad’ man; as Nietzsche defines in his *Beyond Good and Evil*:

“As a bad man, one belongs to the ‘bad’, to a mass of object, powerless men who have no communal feeling” (47). By opting for a self-chosen course of life, by stepping aside from the shared values of society, Chantal is misunderstood by the society. All other characters associate him with the legend- as a figure of terror, aggression and cruelty. Even before the action begins, Chantal is indicted as murderer; though the intention of his crime has hardly been discussed. Walcott’s play seriously questions the easy assumptions and presuppositions of morality. His protagonists are strong-willed people who resist the categories of thought foisted upon them. Julia Davis in her study on folk plays makes a very important observation, seldom approached by early critics and scholars; “The reality is that Chantal disturbs the value of western culture, by stripping the veil off the other ‘good’ citizens. He stands morally above the searchers of truth... he is the symbol of the superior moral values of the truly honest self-accepting man” (64). The vortex of the plot is the murder of Regis, the planter and the motif reveals what is contrary to public knowledge- as it was carried out to save the deaf-mute Moumou who stole the silver spoon from the brutal white planter. Conventional morality too easily condemns the act of murder, categorising all actions as either ‘bad’ or ‘good’. If the violent act were motivated by a spiteful and resentful will then the violent act is contemptible, but if it were motivated by a healthy will, then the violent act is possible. Soon after the action opens, those who have assembled in the copra, seeking shelter from rain and storm, nephew, uncle, husband and wife are locked in bitter acrimony. They accuse each other; bring charge of infidelity in marital relation. Such serious moral issues will be cross-examined by Chantal who calls himself the ‘other’ of law. Hence he assumes the role of ‘judge’ rather playfully and seeks to settle the issues between them by a mock-trial. This role-playing contravenes the normative/ moral codes , unsettles the claims of ethical ideology. Before all are given hearing, or any indictment is passed,

Moumou plunges knife all of a sudden in the back of Chantal. He misread the intention of Chantal and posed to be the savior for all the fellows present there. Thus the intention and action congruence are found to be at odds. It is Chantal who aptly expresses it: “You see how a man can have good meaning and do the wrong thing?” (202). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche argues what we think of as the conscious intention behind a moral act is needed to be interpreted further. The final/ moral judgement is suspended to the end when Chantal echoes the Sophoclean epigraph in his dying moments:

“Who is the murder, who the dead, eh, tell me...what use the truth is?”

(203)

In order to overcome this moral dictum, man must create extra- moral values; Nietzsche demanded that ‘free spirits’, ‘strong-willed’ individuals need to have resilience. As for him, the ethical question is really what sort of person or character one is. The oppressed community of St-Lucia poses challenge to values taken for granted, mere willless act of conformity. By accepting his ill-fated end, Chantal has confronted the “proven wisdom of the tribe” (Nietzsche 67). Chantal like Afa or Makak demonstrate the freedom of will, an independence from the stranglehold of moral lives. He displaces the presumed values of our ‘moral’ values. Without rank and status, these ‘lower’ type of individuals spurn the slave morality. They are strangers to weak and slavish nature. The final comments by the Conteur again questions the ‘beast’, ‘man’ dualism; ending of Chantal and the compassionate stay of the Old Man teases all – the characters and the audience out of the easy identification. When all other witnesses slip away from the site only the Old Man stays with him. It illuminates the understanding of suffering and the quality of compassion:

“The rage of the beast is taken for granted,

Man’s beauty is sharing his brother’s pain”

(206)

The closing moment throws a new light on the crime committed and underscores the contrasting emotional responses of ‘rage’ and compassion- an issue which receives a more poetic treatment in the next short play *The Sea at Dauphin*.

1.3. *Sea at Dauphin*

I am content to live it all again

And yet again.

-W. B. Yeats: A Dialogue of Self and soul

Was that life? I want to say to death. Well then! Once more.

- Nietzsche

We, however, want to become those who we are- the ones who are new, unique, incomparable, self-legislating, self-creating.

-Nietzsche.

Walcott's early plays command our attention to creative re-presentation of St. Lucian life and its existential crisis of living on the margin. Tension of hope and despair, negation and affirmation, weakness and strength animates the plot here. His imaginative treatment transfigures the Caribbean island world as self-inventing location and it no longer remains outpost of empire. The present section aims to study his one-act play *Sea at Dauphin* as creative affirmation of pain and suffering and seeks to validate how the harshness of the realities of this fishing community's life becomes a metaphor for calm acceptance and fortitude. And it aims to show how by eliminating the stigmata of non-scripted or 'unstoried' lives a fishing community can affirm the hidden potential within them even in the midst of grim encounter with death and nothingness.

Moulded after Synge's classic text *Riders to the Sea* and considered to be a masterpiece of his early years, here the plot spotlights the life of the fishermen mired in 'naked, voluble poverty'. Turmoil and perils are inalienable in their daily life in the remote village; without any organizing principles of life, illusion and promises are denied to them. Falling short of ideals, life of these fishermen appear be worthless here. Its protagonist, Afa is very commonly read by Walcott scholars as 'blasphemous' 'bitter' and 'misanthropic'. But to see him as vituperative despiser of all positive things and values, a mere 'nay-sayer', will be extremely reductive and over-simplification. Far from being the voices of *resentiment*, god-denying, hard-hearted race, the fishermen compel our attention by mastering the wild, destructive emotions. In so doing, they

evinced an ethical imperative to lead a life which cannot be dismissed as merely unjust or miserable. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche contended that life is a continuum of creation, entwining past, present and future. And the sermonizing of Christianity to say 'no' to life drains away all life-enhancing drives. It is in the ways of continuous change and passing that our earthly life may be constructed and re-constructed. In *Sea at Dauphin* what permeates the plot are the experiences of death, mishaps: for the local fishermen, terror strikes with every new sailing. The very means of survival becomes the death trap as the impoverished fishing folk regularly put out to sea, facing dire challenge for survival. Here, the plot seeks to create a meaning and value in an existence in which all hopes of redemption and transcendence have fallen away. Stripped of security and dignity, they embody the spirit of self-overcoming. Inhabiting cold, inhuman world, the 'unaccommodated' fishing folk does not merely figure as some victims of some 'nihilistic disorientation'; a group of mute sufferers in face of perilous seas. It is in grim, daily encounter with hostile and other elemental forces they re-define life as ongoing process of becoming. Afa, the domineering figure of the fishing folk seems to fulfill the affirmative purpose of creating values; though most critical reading over-emphasizes his bitterness and fuming rage.

Sea has always been a significant axis of Walcott's artistic creation. And the life of fishermen measured against sea has preoccupied him in his poems, too. In *Omeros*, the crowning glory of his poetic career, the focus is on the fishermen vying for a beautiful local St. Lucian Helen. In his early plays the narrative is grounded in the marginal, dispossessed lives- charcoal burner, the wood-cutter or the fishermen; the protagonists are quintessential West-Indian men; they are materially and culturally 'nobody'. Within the daily encounter with terror, experiences of pain and anguish, Walcott's play breaks open new modes of being for these obscure, shadowy lives. Life, as described by the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, is eternal war, polarity and tension. Willing and striving are the essences of all living and as Schopenhauer believed, "willing is a sufficient condition of suffering, because all willing arises necessarily from a want or deficiency, and to experience a want is to suffer"⁴²). The life of the fishing community is riddled with dire wants as Afa broods over it: "I born and deading in this coast that have no compassion to grow food for children, no fish enough to buy new sail, no twine". (58). This nothingness of human struggle and existence reminds us of Nora's brooding in *Riders to the Sea*: "And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and a

fisher but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking”. (101) But the fishing community’s life in Walcott’s play is not a tragic story in a negative sense, ending in failure and frustration. Instead, it is affirmatively tragic in revealing that human lives are not designed or pre-scripted, but a process of becoming. The fishermen can transcend the pointlessness of existence not by acceding to the Christian morality and by leading life “now” and “innumerable times more” and they will return though knowing that “there will be nothing new in it”, While the weak might have discovered worthlessness and loss in such life, Afa and his mates, a gritty band of sailors begin exemplifying their readiness to embrace all inevitable return of all past experiences, however repelling:

AFA: [looking to the sea] Last year Annelles, and Bolo, and this year Hounakin... And one day, tomorrow, you Garcia and me ... And Augustin...

(17-18.80)

What is spelt out here is no mere apprehension of weak-spirited sailor or a mere defeatist submission. Facing up against mortality, Afa and his mates do not only oppose subjection of life but also look forward without hope, promise or end. Instead of unhealthy obsession with the past, his rumination stresses how times are knotted together: how the present never leaves behind its past and how it is also tied to a fated future. By reminding themselves of the finiteness of life, by stripping them of illusions can they embrace all the past experiences and negotiate with the chaotic world. Resignation, defeat and clear submission to fate mark the ending of *The Riders to the Sea*, but here the ending transforms the experience of suffering into something essential and positive, a stimulant to action. Withdrawal and passivity without confronting the ordeal of life occlude the process of self-making. Dauphin life described by Afa is bleak and hopeless caught up in existential cycle of toil, pain, frustration and failure: “Every day sweat, sun and salt, and night is salt and sleep, all the dead days pack away and stink is Dauphin life” (53).

In his study of Nietzsche’s doctrine of ‘over-coming nihilism’, Bernard Reginster finds the action of Sisyphus of pushing the rock up on the mountain as life-affirming, rather than futile. Dauphin people are regularly subjected to both physical and psychological suffering; battered by loneliness, hunger, life is to them is only an ocean of suffering. In life, as Schopenhauer has also contended that it is far more correct to regard work, privation, misery and

suffering, crowned by death, as the aim and objective of our life. Striving, hindrances and failure make their daily life a never-ending ordeal. Two hours before sunrise, in the “sleep-tightened village”, the fishermen arrive barefooted, tattered- cloaked. Little late to arrive is Hounakin, appearing a picture of weakness and misery, devastated from the recent loss of his wife. Wind is ‘savage’ and early October chills at the daybreak face them with inhospitable climate. They are hurrying for an early departure with their canoe, significantly named Our Daily Bread. Almost photographically truthful, and brutal in realism, the central inspiration of the story is the ordinary lives of the ordinary people. Before they set out to sea, their body is exposed to inclement conditions, stressing needs, wants and necessities:

Afa: “poverty, dirty woman, dirty children, where all the prayers? Where all the money a man should have and friends when his skin old?”

(9-10.73)

Here Afa indicts life as painfully inadequate as it offers no hope of deliverance or redemption. Poor and outcast, the fishermen face the challenges to claim their humanity. Afa is lonely, having no wife or children and confronts too many adversaries- Sea, God, Church and White man. Trapped in oppressive circumstances, life appears only sordid and disgusting. He pours out bitterness against all who surround him; fierce hatred is so entrenched in him that he sounds almost a ‘nay-sayer’ trying to come to terms with nihilistic crisis. Beset with painful experiences, Afa broaches hard, fatalistic view of life; he broods over defeat at the hands of external forces epitomizing human predicament in general:

“Don’t ask me why a man must work so hard

To eat for worm to get more fat”.

(14-15.96)

Every time they put out to sea, the sea faces them as destroyer of human and family relation. With every sailing, they stand on the edge of disaster. Here the ever present sea stands as symbolic of the “timeless repetition of life and death” (“Twilight”). The narrative is designed to negotiate between affirmation and negation, between hope and frustration. It denies any closure or a teleological end; instead, it implies a cycle, a motion without end. Afa asks

Augustin, “Because one old man dead, the sea will stop?”(75) The mood evoked here resembles the last line of *Omeros*: “When he left the beach the sea was still going on”. The ever-flowing sea, evoking a counter version of linear time, creating “a tenseless space” may be taken as a metaphor of the Cyclical nature of existence. The sailors embody a different ethics from the individuals who come and pass and leave behind only a faint memory. It testifies to the unshaken faith to the earth, rather than craving for otherworldly realm. The central exhortation of Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathursta* is this: “I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of other worldly hopes!” (3)

Having found no possibility of organizing life around some ultimate purpose like ‘God’ or ‘social justice,’ Afa appears for the most part as confirmed cynic, an unmasker/ debunker of authority, divine or secular. More often than not, Walcott scholars have described him as ‘misanthrope’ or ‘blasphemous’. Through a major part of the action, he savagely attacks Christian morality and falseness of the Christian doctrine. He scathingly opposes prayers, ritual and reverence. His God is not ‘dead’, missing or lost but rather a ‘big fish’ eating ‘small fishes’, an inflictor of pain, a pitiless tyrant. The Dauphin life, as he bitterly describes it is mercilessly hard “the land is hard, this Dauphin land has stone/ Where it should have some heart” (61). In stark deprivation and dismal daily existence, he lashes out at the mechanism of oppression and injustice, conducted by the God or the white rulers. Immersed in pain and toil, he hits out at religious teachings and transcendental hope offered by Christianity. He has the audacity to curse ‘God’ for all ill-fate his people are used to undergo. In an altercation with the young priest, he bursts out in deep scorn against church and the vocation of the priest and all forms of moral values. Without recourse to moral values he shines in terrible loneliness, comparable to the sages only. When it comes to put out to sea, he is fearless enough to proclaim “If none going, then I will go alone.”(61) When Augustin accuses him “You have no respect for man, animal, sea or God. (61), he also explains how years of experience have turned his “heart so hard” (61). Only with a fiercely independent streak, this spirited individual can distance himself from the surrounding world. By vigorously repudiating the general and abstract system of values, he takes an important stride towards complete self-assertion or what Nietzsche calls the spirit of *ressentiment*. As a non-conformist, he questions the validity of conventional moral categories like ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Rather, he appears to have created the value of strong will. As a self-determining man, he spurns the values of morality. Desperately sad and distressed by the news of

Hounakin's death, he proclaims that no prayer or ritual can palliate the distress of such lives. His gesture of defiance, [as he "tears a scapular from his neck and hurls it to the ground] (73)" in the presence of the priest is no doubt irreverent. This sacrilegious act is suggestive of disaffiliation from ecclesiastical order, a profanity that characterizes extraordinary daring to challenge the pious life recommended by Church and the priest.

The hope of salvation, as Nietzsche contended in *Beyond Good and Evil*, will only rob the individual of his free spirit. The true noble spirit does not only live beyond every established ideal of good and evil but also remains indifferent to slights and injuries. Tame, civilized social animals believe in acquiescence but as a self-determining man, Afa decides the course of his action by creation of his own values. Nietzsche believed that only noble nature can impose their own values in the world as they are spurners of conventional morality or 'herd morality'. It is here that the powerful beings can separate them from the weak and virtuous. As Lee Spinks observes in his commentary on *Beyond Good and Evil* "The noble nature, by contrast, is not 'made for pity' because it has the strength spontaneous to affirm its own nature" (90). In course of the plot, all of Afa's words and acts may be said to "take a moral formula in a supra moral sense", a marker of Nietzschean higher man. Afa picks up a quarrel with the young priest once he mentions that the old man (Hounakin) 'had God'. As conventional Christianity espouses, death as a gateway to enter into the blessed life of eternity is immediately contradicted by Afa. In a more blistering speech, he equates God with white man:

"God is a white man. The sky is his blue eye,
His spit on Dauphine people is sea." (9-10.61)

As Afa curses 'God', it is quite obvious that his unmitigated aversion is directed at both religious and secular authority. Ziauddin Sardar in his *Orientalism* contends: "White men as God syndrome" (55) was fairly common in the colonies, especially in such recorded events as when Captain Cook was greeted by the native Hawaiians as the God Leno, upon his arrival on the shore. It seems fairly reasonable to say that the thrill and wonder associated with those events are subverted by Walcott's sailor protagonist. The colonial fantasy that equates white man with God is subverted when he describes them to be in league, engineering oppressive mechanism. Thus, the wonder and valediction at the arrival of white people have been held up to question. What it

stresses moreover is that the values associated with God or 'white men'; like all values are the products of power struggles and they are imposed onto the group of the dispossessed. He unyieldingly argues that hardships of quotidian life cannot be redeemed by any spiritual salve. Anxiety and terror of living are so familiar that they may be said to be leading what Empodcles calls "un-life". Both Afa and Garcia demonstrate the worth of life in negotiating with the phenomenal world of ceaseless striving and pain, rather than resenting pain. One way to overcome contingency and pain, as Richard Rorty has stressed in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, is to recognize it.

Now it remains to be answered, how may life be affirmed in the depth of abyssal suspicion? How can one go on loving life with so much scorn or affirm a communal life bereft of divinity? What practices guide them through the chaotic and disenchanting world? How can an individual cobble together meaning out of the nothingness of existence? This section attempts to find answer by scrutinizing parts of Afa and Augustin in the play. The futility of life has been so overwhelming that Afa scornfully rejects any moral or ethical position. But his is not merely the voice of all resentful or frustrated sentiments. As opposed to falling into resentment, he maintains dignity in venting his own views. Regret and remorse suggest an unwillingness to live life again as exactly it was. And here, Afa never appears apologetic for all his gestures and actions; his moral stance is never that of a pessimistic rejecter of life. He promises to stand by his old East-Indian sailor friend in his crisis and loss; he does not only console him in a moment of grievous loss but also advises how he will regain self-control to overcome this personal tragedy: "old man, your wife is dead and sorry make you mad. Go on the morne and count the birds like Ragamin and play bamboo under the wood-trees for you' goat... go on the morne behind the presbytery, watch goat, talk with priest, and drink your white rum after the night came"(10-12.64). Unlike the earlier impressions of his remorselessness, he sounds tenderly caring and compassionate. By forging creative unity of nature, individual and society, life may be redeemed or made more worth living. Such small gestures of compassion help us see him involved in the process of self-formation, bringing new values into being. After the day's sailing he even returns with a pail of fish and Augustin with a shell for their mate Hounakin. To call him a cynic to extreme is to endorse Augustin's observation that he is irreverent, a stranger to all common human emotions. He accuses him, "You don't have no love, no time, no child, you have a hole where man heart should be, you have no God, no dog, no friend (6-8.51)". In *Beyond Good and*

Evil, Nietzsche contended that goodness is often defined in terms of moral terms like self-restraint. The positive moral virtue is identified with weakness. More often than not, weak and insecure people stay content with traditional belief. To be good often demands suppression of free will and instinct. Nothing can tame Afa into a 'civilized animal' or curb his drives and passions. Weakness and humility are morally justified and the young priest describes Afa and his community as "hard race" (74) and in need of spiritual help. Morality, is said to be "the residue left when the constant battle of the contraries is rigidified into the religious and life-denying opposition of good and evil". Afa is deeply distrustful of inflexible moral laws as he argues that if they are imposed, it will subordinate the being of 'man' to a mere abstraction or dogma. Asserting himself over ethical restraints, Afa embodies powerful individuality of instinct and passion. All his bitterness and disgust and a degree of ruthlessness do not undermine love and compassion. This quality in Afa is stressed by Edward Baugh in his analysis: "The compassion and tenderness that cannot be altogether suppressed by Afa's hardness are crucial markers of his humanity" (69). Hounakin, a recent widower has surrendered to the chaos and confusion of his personal life; unable to shake off the despair, exhaustion, he kills himself. But what prevails over loneliness and perpetual suffering is vision of bonding between the fishermen- in their daily recreative hours of jokes, rum and meeting at Samuel Café after return from the daily chore of fishing. Meaninglessness and sense of futility can be transcended in such affirmative gestures and intensification of fellow feelings. The painful end of Hounakin cannot blur such glimpses of fraternity and bonding. It is here that we find aptness of Paula Burnett's observation when she points out how endemic condition of poverty can forge bond among the powerless which may counterpoint solidarity advocated by the ethics of globalization: "... poverty can remind us that we share a predicament with our neighbor, and it confirms the importance of compassion, mutual support and solidarity" (55). Such solidarity can only warm up the early morning chill of October. When Afa motivates the boy Jule, the son of Habal to join them in future expedition, a contrasting vision of a new beginning comes apparent. Hounakin's self-destructive end is redeemed in Jule's decision to step in her father's shoe. Moreover, it indicates a continuum between past, present and future. As the day moves towards the close, old challenges give way not to new day of untroubled calm and security but to even grimmer challenges. Death, loss can be counterbalanced by the eternally recurrent patterns and customs in life. Nietzsche upheld the Dionysian point of view which regards suffering as desirable and pain

as enabling condition to the affirmation of life. The real dignity of life is not in empty vanity of pleasure and happiness but in striving, toils and struggles. The Greeks also upheld the values of *pathei mathos* (“learn by suffering”) in social life. It is the closing moments of the action that is the centerpiece of the whole work as it interfaces death and life, stasis and motion. Past, present and future are interlocked here to create a recurrent pattern. At the sunset hour, just before leaving the sea beach, Afa recalls his lost partners whom the sea has swallowed up- Annells, Bolo, Hounakin and also broods over the uncertainties and insecurities of the island natives. Gacia reminds his friends “Tomorrow again” and Afa sets the time at four o clock – the final interaction, seemingly routinal has a deep resonance. It is not indicative of end of the day’s expedition but opens out into uncertain future. And their final action “They furl the sail” points forward to the daily chore of fishing to be continued on the next day. Afa has also mockingly reminded Augustin saying that they will return on the next day only if he does not go the church. It attests show pain and suffering can work as stimulant rather than foiling it. Thus the life portrayed here in this death-saturated atmosphere is also full of drive, forces and energies. Their final promise and commitment amply suggest how they have recognized that each passing moment is an echo for eternity rather than one brief episode in pointless succession of events. What the playwright himself calls “fatal adaptability” of the race of the fishermen seems the ability to arrive at a state of reconciliation with fate. To put it in Nietzschean terms:

“it is shown to my satisfaction that pain contributes to the nurturing of the human species as much as pleasure does, I shall say ‘yea’ to pain” (*Thus Spake Zarathrusta* iii).

Their ethical imperative is to live life by tearing off the shackle of past and to persist in their struggle- a decisive life-affirming gesture. In getting concerned with future they can act with responsibility to become what they are. This recognition of the inescapability of suffering and struggle endow upon them a positive mode of being. Since time is cyclical and each time returns in exact repetition, they appear ready to live and re-live it over and over again. In course of their conversation and action what surfaces is the consciousness of the future that already was and the past that will return with eternal inevitability. We find at the end Afa and Gacia are not merely resenting the injuries of the past but willing a return of the same. They will continue to negotiate with the phenomenal world of ceaseless striving and pain. The chaos and confusion of the daily life will be overcome in their willingness to relive such life over and over again. Afa

does not only mourn the death of his mates but knows the grim insecurity that they will undergo the very next time they sail out to sea. Thus, the motif of Afa, in course of the plot may be said to straddle between 'dying consciousnesses and 'awakening consciousnesses' which Nietzsche believed to be constitutive of continuum of a human life. The ending of the plot is underlined by this different stratum of consciousness, recalling the lost lives, yet also looking forward to early morning departure to sea. Each passing moment of life is an echo for eternity, rather than fleeting moment of life, since time is cyclical and each time returns in exact repetition. While Hounakin has ended life prematurely, others have opted for life to repeat eternally; it is through life-affirming gesture that may be staved off suicidal nihilism. Reconciliation with fate asks us to tolerate the eternal recurrence – a counterpoint to meaningful and ordered world of the religious life. Notwithstanding Afa's sustained attack on value or belief system, the narrative affirms an existence, though without promise of material change. The grim experiences of fishing community have induced in this community a complete will-lessness or indifferences to goals and purposes. Without standards and values to anchor their lives, the only ethical imperative that drives them still is the present life engulfed by 'dirt' and dismal 'poverty'. In accepting its unchanging futility, a new existential confidence is instilled in them. As old challenges will return on a new day, only the beings with exceptional strength will neither regret nor deplore his fate. In his seminal essay "What the Twilight Says", Walcott had also observed that: "that in the new Aegean the race, of which these fishermen were the stories, had grown a fatal adaptability" (17). Restless, ceaseless movement, constant striving and endless suffering endow upon their wretched lives a new meaning: "No possible satisfaction in the world can suffice to still the cravings of the will, to set a goal of its infinite aspirations and to fill the bottomless abyss of his heart" (Beer, 31). Life-denying skepticism and worthlessness of existence gradually give way to a desire for living life in its painful and horrible aspects. In the cold, inhuman world of Dauphin, in the world of its death and degradation a great amount of energy is expended over the possibility of survival. Above death and change the fishermen pose the challenge to become what they are. Their ethical imperative is only in willing the 'eternal recurrence', to welcome the return of all aspects. Nietzsche believed that the strong individual is able to embrace the inevitable and eternal return of all his past experiences- both good and evil. The Dauphin fishing community by pledging return to daily toil begins a process of self-realisation. What becomes apparent here is man's fate and freedom inextricably woven with the totality of the cosmic fate.

If evil and wretchedness are everywhere, the future is as dark as the past and the way to redemption does not lie in complete will less inaction. The ideal type of Nietzschean 'strong' man is the only being worthy of consideration as he fights the harder when fate is hostile. Dauphin fishermen have learnt to live without hope, without illusion and endured buffets of misfortune. Abundance of the adverse conditions inspires the strong man to fight with no desire to yield. Notwithstanding certain cruelty and ruthlessness, Afa has startled us with complete self-assertion. He has counseled Houkain against complete recoil from the chaotic and the disenchanted world. To tolerate the meaninglessness of the world, the response must be one of strength and not weakness. Their understanding of the chaos and confusion is corroborated by their undaunted confrontation with the world and experiencing it at its most threatening. In the process of becoming, they free themselves from the chains of the past and manage to bridge the past with future. At the end the young boy Jule who is asked to accompany them in their next sailing. Here we find their attempt to bridge the past and future. When past and future are recognized to be knotted together any individual can cast off all ill will towards the past. The sea stands as the dominant symbol of never ending cycle of life and death. It is not by evading the horrors that one can expect to cope with life. Rather in embracing the unalterable pattern of creation and destruction, we must relive the past and go on with expectation of nothing. Thus the play attests to the value of creating values, and the need to create a new, positive vision of being. In the words of the Conteur in *Malcochon, or the Six in the Rain*:

“The rage of the beast is taken for granted,
Man’s beauty comes from enduring pain” (18-19.175)

In *Thus Spake Zarasturshtha*, Nietzsche claimed that an individual life is a continuum of creation and that life is in need of being constructed and reconstructed. Here the fishermen, a highly marginalized society also exemplifies not only weariness and exhaustion but demonstrates life as ongoing process of becoming. The despairing resignation in the face of the valueless world; a sort of 'passive nihilism' is what Hounakin may have resorted to by ending his life. But what truly affirmed here is the strength which allows others to love it in the moments of hatefulness, accept the meaninglessness. Immersed in the organized flux of life they have complied with 'law of life' and willingly submitted into its decrees and thereby evincing what Nietzsche calls "formula for greatness in a human being"(12). He fervently argues that the

experience of eternal recurrence gives life meaning, makes suffering meaningful. As demanded by Nietzsche, we can contend that there appears in the final gestures and moves Afa and his mates is an acceptance of certain meaninglessness, muteness, instead of wishing such conventional solutions in "God". By releasing drives and passions, they can liberate themselves from the moral constraints. Walcott in his analysis of the West Indian psyche has emphasized this quality in his 1980 essay "Meanings": "Our most tragic folk songs and our most self-critical calypsos have a driving, life-asserting force".(50). This healthful affirmation is a kind of Nietzschean "Yes-saying"- where life is affirmed as beautiful in spite of everything" (Kaufman 507). By strong articulation of a desire of eternal repetition what have been affirmed are love and life.

Without gilding their bleak life with metaphysical hopes, grounding it upon any belief system or determinism, they have conceived life differently, attained Olympian detachment. They move beyond their existent position and surpass the limitations of temporal life. Their life is a testimony to Nietzschean process of overthrowing the old values and restoring to life's new meanings. By the time they leave the beach behind, they have created their own values and also a new valuation has been underlined by their recurrent experience of futility. Even after the disappearance of 'highest values', life may still be endowed with meaning and value. Without banishing suffering, without pre-appointed end, the sailors exemplify how to risk life and happiness while remaining absorbed in the interest of the moment. And here lies the significance of Walcott's artistic alternative, as Nietzsche also believed how every art work deals with the realities of suffering and mortality as they make human life both understandable and bearable.

CHAPTER-2

Towards Artistic and Cultural Confidence : *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

Because it is a systemic negation of the other person and furious determination to deny the other person all other attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: 'In reality, who am I'?

- Fanon

I m talking of men who have been skillfully infected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement.

- Aime Cesaire

Walcott's experiments with folk memories and adaptation of cultural models within local context- crafting truly "West-Indian play"- reached its apogee in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. First produced in 1969 and recipient of much-coveted Obie Award (in 1971), it marked a watershed in Walcott's dramatic career. It unleashes profound commentary on political and cultural deformation wrought upon by colonialism. In an interview Walcott clarifies the cultural mission of his hero and the generation of the West-Indians, suffering corrosive effects of racism: "Makak and his people he meets... are all working out the meaning of their culture; they are going through upheaval, shaking off concepts that have been imposed on them for centuries" (17). In order to separate West Indian identity out from the one habitually contrived by the Western culture and divesting the identity of all external attribution, it was urgent to liberate the mind from denigration and dehumanization. Caribbean novelists like Lamming and Naipaul were no less preoccupied with the crippling effects of memories of violent travel like Middle Passage, slavery and indentured labour. They wrestled with self-doubt and self-abasing dependency and

continued intense exploration of the impact of history on the West- Indian people. Lamming admitted that the urgent task for the writers in respect to colonialism involves the reparation of a damaged consciousness and subjectivity. They all placed emphasis on the artist's role as cultivator and carrier of cultural dignity. Also they did affirm that the art works can redeem the mass from enthrallment and cultural subjugation. In his essay "Society and the Artist" (1957), Walcott has also enunciated the urge for self-definition: "To see ourselves, not as others see us, but with all the possibilities of the new country we are making" (15). To realize these possibilities Walcott suggested that Caribbean artists should not only wallow in self-pity but should never complain dearth of opportunities and patronage of the state.

West Indian society structured by oppressive institutions of colonialism and slavery has always identified the black with a lack of being; their skin colour and other traits have turned them into a phobic object of extreme vulnerability. In the Post- Independence days when racial polarities were prevalent and widespread, the psychic tug-of-war of Europe and Africa had stunted the cultural growth of the Caribbean people. Imposition of white cultural norms and prevalent dyadic hierarchies left them with a low self-esteem and sense of rootlessness. Walcott in his essay "What the Twilight Says" describes this complexity as "contradiction of being white in mind and black in body" (12). It encouraged among the natives inculcation of Western cultural standards and deep disregard at the same time for local traditions and value systems. But to render the Caribbean experience and assert the cultural identity without craving for Western standards, it was urgent to dismantle Manichean binarism and hierarchization. The damage to the psyche of the average West-Indians was Walcott's unflinching concern. The privileged white subject alienated not only the black body but also the black psyche by the agency and arrogance. In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon examines how mechanism of racism has inculcated inferiority complex or what he terms "epidermalisation" or interiorisation of inferiority in the soul of all colonized people. In the colour- structured society of the Caribbean what was consensually accepted was the unequivocal inferiority of "negro-ness". Naipaul in his *Loss of Eldorado* attributed the value of money and race in the colour-structured and "half-made" societies and to its consensual acceptance of inferiority and debasement of negroness. What was built into their psyche was, in the words of David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson- Tagoe, a "sense of inferiority and self-abasement in his innermost consciousness" (58). Among Walcott's early protagonists, charcoal burner hero, Makak is a study in "an overwhelming awe of everything white" and an

West Indian everyman who has consented to the mechanism of inferiorisation. Wounded by brutal histories of colonialism and racism, the blacks had fallen victim to the neurotic condition—the condition of being awed by everything white. Such awe did not only impair positive sense of the self but forced to regard the self as abjected and contaminated. “The colonial values” as Oliver Kelly observes, “deny the black man not just the individuality but also humanity... he is not allowed to make himself a lack of being to become self-conscious. Rather, he is chained to being, to his body and more particularly to his skin, by colonial values” (39). Walcott’s untiring concern was not merely with the aggressive hold of colonialism on the plantation and infrastructure, but also psychic damage of the average West-Indians and consequently their struggle to escape the prisonhouse of the race and colour. His dramas were committed to the task of emptying the mind of his native countrymen of incapacitating Western values. Like Harris, Walcott’s ostentatious purpose was to illuminate the Caribbean psyche and extend its sensibility in order to overcome psychic violence. Many of his texts forged “new nationalist self-awareness and re-definition” and “explored the psychology of race and colour in the consciousness of black West-Indians almost as an exorcism of deep-seated racial inferiority” (Dabydeen 31). As racial pride and its claim of superiority would have encouraged only cultural parochialism, Walcott’s syncretic texts aimed at articulating cultural alterity, translating legacies into alter/ native cultural space. Walcott’s artistic vision recognized such cultural formations to be more conflictual than consensual, more discontinuous than unisonant. Appropriation of cultural elements, their fusion and transformative potentials could destabilize the nativist discourse. As Joseph Brodsky contends in his essay “The Sound of the Tide”, such cultural reality will prove to be “superior to the confines of class, race or ego” (36) and will decolonize the minds of the natives from colonial cultural imaginary. This early masterpiece underlines how the self can recuperate identity and cultural affiliation that is independent of racist-colonialist project.

In a foreword to the 2008 edition of *Black Skin, White Mask*, Ziauddin Sardar mentions that the ostensible purpose of Fanon’s investigation of the psychology of colonialism is the elimination of “the dynamic of inferiority”. The present chapter seeks to study how Walcott’s play passionately enacts this elimination of inferiority, shakes off psychological colonization, demystify “white”, and “black” values that prevailed in the West Indian society in the 1950s. It charts how the charcoal burner hero, Makak, relinquishing the dream of African chieftainship, is finally released to the “air of liberty” (xii) after reaching his mountain home. From the smashing

of Alcınador café to his return home on the Monkey Mountain is charted a process of how the consciousness is mutated and redemption is made possible from degradation and humiliation. It is commonly observed that Walcott is one of the earliest Anglophone Caribbean writers to have staged the problem of racism, identity and dignity. Challenges of poverty, race and lingering oppressive effects of slavery and colonialism suffuse also the fiction and non-fiction of Jamaica Kincaid and John Rhys. The crux of Kincaid's masterpiece *A Small Place* (1988) is internalisation of colonising culture and resistance to it; it probes the lingering effects of colonialism and slavery on those who descended from the slaves and the once-colonised Caribbean natives. In this masterpiece, Walcott carried forward the task of carrying forward Fanonian insights through the medium of drama. Fanon's seminal work, *Black Skin, White Masks* proves to be a useful intertext for *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Fanon strongly believed that the pathological conditions in a racist world were directly caused by colonial domination as the individuals suffering atrocities of slavery, indentured servitude and subjugation had become psycho-pathological. Walcott was strongly critical of the cultural condition that had made West-Indians black in body and white in mind- the damaging appropriation of the oppressor's racist values. It manifests the fantasy of the native to occupy two exclusive positions- "to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's avenging anger" (64-65). With "psychic tug of war" playing on their consciousness, they were more defined than self-defining. Race, ethnicity, religion or economic classes are some of the dominant external categories which not only produced hierarchies but also afflicted them with "inferiority complex". And the racist structure of oppression and domination society not only denied their humanity but identified the black as degraded and irredeemable left them alienated and anxious.

Like Chantal, the tiger, the major characters of Walcott's early masterpiece are identified as ugly beasts. If not directly by association, names like Makak, Moustique and Tigre clearly resemble monkey, mouse and tiger. By a racial phantasm, they are forced to occupy the ontological space of timeless "primitive". Their sub-human status is affirmed and this denial is sociogenic, the combinatory, oppressive forces of culture, history and language – overall, the mechanism of power has deprived them of the privilege of subjecthood. Described by racial epithet and subjected to violent interpellation, the protagonist, Makak has forgotten the legal name and is introduced everywhere with derogatory name- Makak, patios for monkey. A dweller in the forest in the Monkey Mountain, he is the obverse of the face of civilization. Patrick Colm

Hogan has supplied an important end note in his essay “Mimeticism, Reactionary Nativism in Derek Walcott’s *Dream on a Monkey Mountain*” to the name Makak. The name, he contends, is very much suggestive of denigration and it undermines African values as well. As among Yoruba communities Monkey was considered sacred and such naming evoked a derogatory image and re-enforced their sub-human status. It did also distort and devalue a culture which considers monkey to be sacred. The idea of naming, imposing identity is very effective for hegemonies; Walcott elucidates this strategic naming in an interview with Rebekah Presson in 1992: “... in adjusting names [...] You have to go through a whole process of becoming a name that you have been given. It’s the process and technique of removing identity and altering identity so you can rule or dominate” (192). Lestrade charges Makak that with two felons as companions, he has turned the cell into “a stinking zoo”. By association with savagery, barbarism, bestiality the blacks felt eager to whiten themselves. The hegemonic power justifies its subjugation, by the mechanism in which as Elleke Bohemer argues: “[T]he Other is cast as corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloging, description or possession” (269). Producing prejudiced and discriminatory structures of governance, authority recognizes its basis upon its stereotypes- ones that are associated with primitivism, barbarism and degeneracy. Thus a sort of personal or cultural objectification via body is produced. Contrasted to the prisoners, Lestrade bears his own real name; he appears to be a model of propriety, order and civilization. In the early scenes, Lestrade’s constant reminder of the dichotomy between ‘civilization’ and ‘jungle’ underscores how race thinking and colonisation leave a line of hierarchy among human types. The corporal sees this behavior as a trait of human race, and vents his opinion of the origin of the species, with the apes. Tigre and Souris are identified with animal howling, unable to articulate meaning sentence and phrase. The view at the heart of the colonial logic maintains that the black man is determined in advance by history as subhuman and ripe for domination. Their blackness has dehumanized them, impaired their individuality and mobilized the “colonizer’s ambition to civilize or modernize the native” (Bhaba 62). The way Lestrade introduces Makak, it underscores this denial of the blacks of any human status. Thus they appear to be the exemplars of fractured subjectivity, caught between the ‘otherisation’ of the western discourse and own negated traditions. In Prologue, Makak stands before the judge, introduced by Lestrade: “My Lords, as you can see, this is being without a mind, a will, a name, a tribe of its own... I will

spare you the sound of that voice, which have come from the cave of darkness, dripping with horror. These hands are the hands of Essau, the fingers like roots, the arteries are as hard as hand as twine, and the palms are seamed with coal. But the animal, you observe, is tamed and obedient. Walk round the cage. *Marchez! Marchez!*”(9-13.222). A champion of racist-colonialist ideology, he confers animality upon others. The stage- direction underscores further the role of Lestrade as “animal tamer” cracking out his “order”. The stage is re-inscribed as some circus show where animals are unleashed for display and act at the mercy of the ring leaders. Defined as “primitive”, “uncivilized”, Makak responds like automata. The ideological insistence that the dominated are necessarily inferior is driven home. As the chorus notices:

“Everything I say this monkey does do,

I don’t know what to say this monkey won’t do.

I sit down, monkey sit down too,

I don’t know what to say this monkey won’t do”.

(Prologue.10-13.223)

Having lived under soul-killing domination, the colonized has allowed to be turned into a puppet like object; his only re-action is will less submission. Perceived and fixated as the other, they are reduced to mere “objects”. Violence and other forms of coercion reduced the prison inmates to mere colonial mimic and that is how the loss of faith in the self began. Abjected and denigrated, they lose a positive sense of the self. As Fanon has stressed, in *The Black Skin White Mask*, those who are oppressed by the colonial power, stop being an “actional” person and thereby aggrandizes the self-esteem in white man. As William. S. Haney describes, “They are often at the risk of becoming mimics of one or more cultures instead of genuine hybrids capable of rising above prescribed boundaries of re-discovering the self” (112). The cell as the setting of action is undoubtedly a classic example of authoritarianism, governmentality and ideological manipulation. Here, the racist ideology and apparatus of colonialism create hierarchy of values; by turning the colonized into supine and cultureless object, European culture defined itself. The prisoners are identified as small group of subhuman, barbaric and evil creatures. Lestrade’s adulation of the white race and assumption of an attitude whiter than white themselves are evident in the early section of the play. In scene3 his opening blast vents the ideological

programme: "... we who have borne the high torch of justice through tortuous thickets of darkness to illuminate with vision the mind of the primeval peoples, of backbiting tribes!"(1.3 .3-5.256). He vaunts his unfaltering devotion to white law, language and religion and dutiful servant of "Her Majesty's Government" (217). Noticing the behavior of the convicts, like the howling from the cell, he calls them inferior to "ape", a "nigger" who has failed to evolve. Diana Lynn comments, "Ape or 'monkey man' is one of the most crude and hurtful epithets thrust at the black men by white racists or their mimics" (49). He continues to proclaim with inordinate pride: "I am an instrument of the law. Souris, I got the white man work to do" (1, 279) or little later, "Your rights? Listen, nigger! according to this world you have the inalienable rights to life, liberty and three green figs. No more, no less. You can do what you want with your life, you can hardly call this liberty and as for the pursuit of happiness, you can never hear the expression, give a nigger an inch and he'll make a mile?"(1.10-15,279). All his bombasts are balanced against Makak's introvert, almost inarticulate responses. In the Prologue, he is the *de facto* authority to force Makak to drill. He offers protection to all the villagers and promises to wrench them out of frustration. When in Sc-iii, Corporal in wig and gown stands in the spotlight, his rhetoric reveals the guise or the mask of the conqueror: "this is not another easy-going nigger you talking to, but an officer! A servant and the officer of the law! Not the law of the jungle, but something the white man teach you to be thankful for" (13-16. 280). Here in the figure of reforming Corporal is given "a comic turn from the high ideals of the colonizing mission" (Bhabha 122). Law is one of the mechanism of reconstructing the natives, as Bhaba in his "The Other Question" observes, "The objective of the colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate type on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish administration and instruction" (101). The cultural authority of the West embodied through its reformist zeal and sermonising for moral improvement is as absurdly extravagant as the figure of the mimic men remarkably crowding the pages of Kipling, Forster or Naipaul.

Inside the cell, racist identification and devaluation have driven Makak to put on the white mask, hidden in his bag. At the time the play was written, it was a common place among the black children to carry white mask, an ostentatious sign of Fanonian "inferiority complex". To train the village crowd, Moustique also points to this practice, "All I have is this, black faces, white masks"! With racist interpellation Makak has not only lost himself as a subject but identified with racist myth and fantasy. The crisis that induces such mimic action is revealed in a

monologue by Makak. He broods over his complete cultural alienation, how he's been forced to lead a life without wife and family. Full of self-loathing, self-abomination, he reveals:

“is thirty years now, I have looked in no mirror,
Not a pool of cold water, when I must drink,
I stir my hands first, to break up my image”.

(1.13-16.226)

It resonates with the words of Fanon's speaker in *Black Skin, White Masks*: “I took myself far off from my own being, very far, making myself an object” (112). He inhabits what Fanon calls the “zones of non-being”; stripped of culture and history, he is embattled with a structure that denies him humanity. With racist appellation he is relegated to perpetual inferiority. Suffering debilitating alienation, he has identified himself as the “abject” of white values. This signals, as Fanon believed, a movement towards disintegration of the psyche. Having failed to confront his own ugliness, Makak ceases to be a man in his own eyes. As Dazial R. Samad observes: “the speech indicates that Makak refuses to confront the nature of his human image not only because he is Black and thinks himself ugly, but also because he cannot confront what he really is- fragmented and eclipsed.” (231). He now shies away even from own image in utter self-disgust. This inability to face the ugliness of corporeality has reduced him into an abominable image. What Makak confesses here to have internalized is described by Fanon as “epidermalisation”, a mere sign of repulsion, a behavior which has a clear “neurotic orientation”. Tethered to his own skin colour, he is the abjected “other”, a split subject. This manner of conceiving own black body makes him what Breslin calls “anti-Narcissus”(150), a gesture that in extremity of self-loathing becomes self-effacement. Also this violent disgust invites comparison with Kriestevan concept of “abjection” towards maternal bodies in her feminist analysis of how the child leaves behind the maternal body as ‘abject ‘in order to enter the realm of father-ruled convention and codes. He seeks to propel away the bodily ugliness on the other side of the imaginary, to separate the self from what is threatening to it .To put it in kriestevan terms, “The abject has the only one quality of the object and that is being opposed to I” (1). To construct a self- image, he must expel what is so revolting in him and inhabit a space for his subjectivity, “I expel myself; I split myself within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish myself”

(Kriesteva 3). Elizabeth Grosz has also defined abjection as “a sickness at one’s own body”, at the body beyond “clean” and proper thing, the body of the subject. Makak is so sick of his ugly face that he recoils even from a reflected image of it. His body violates social propriety, disrupts codes of discipline and order. Black body is abjected not through the treatment of the coloniser but by the psyche of the black in order to negotiate with his/ her abjection within the dominant culture. His ugliness is something of a cultural taboo which threatens the integration of self-image and thus severs self from other. The black man’s body is overdetermined by history and culture in such a way that for the black man it is not the body that he wants or recognizes. It immediately brings to our mind the hysteric condition described by Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth*: “In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the world is kept on the surface of the skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular demonstration which have caused certain very wise man to say that the native is a hysterical type” (56). Here Fanon suggests how the emotions and psychic tensions are converted into somatic symptoms. Somatized hysterical symptoms are vividly articulated by Makak in his long speech where he describes how his blood is quickened after encounter with the beautiful white apparition.

Fanon has insisted that the white values, ideals enter into the very being of the colonized through their skin like foreign bodies to native culture. Having been subject to the mechanism of inferiorization, the colonized eagerly craves recognition and love: “I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white* ... I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness” (Black Skin45). His desire to possess white woman embodies an urge to be a part of white culture. In so far as the demand for recognition is created by colonial situation, the demand for recognition itself becomes a symptom of the pathology of colonization. Octave Manoni’s *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Decolonization* cites how the indigenous Malagasy of Madagascar, a group of “backward people” whose dependency complex led them to revere the French as colonizer as they once revered their ancestors. As white values and racist ideology have penetrated so deeply into his being Makak has become dependent on the white Muse for acknowledgement and recognition. She reminds him of his royal lineage and seeks to restore him to a position of pride. In a spell of trance he tells; “And, Moustique, she say something I will never forget. She say I should not live so any more, here in the forest, frighten of people because I think I ugly”(1.13-14, 236). He’s directed shame and disgust towards self. Makak’s words

attest to chronic complex of self-devaluation, as the colonial values have denied him not only individuality but also of humanity. Makak is insistent upon his ugliness to confirm that if there is absolute devaluation of the blackness, there is sublimation of everything white. Makak craves recognition from the moon goddess which can be attributed to a sort of pathological inferiority. As Oliver Kelly succinctly puts it: “The success of colonization of psychic space can be measured by the extent to which the colonized internalize- or become inflicted by- the cruel superego that abjects them and substitutes anger against their oppressors with an obsessive need to gain their approval” (10). He seeks to define himself not only by rejection of what is so repulsive but also by craving white values and white perceptions. The woman who holds him in thrall is “ the loveliest thing” ; her singing sends him to frenzy. As Brian Crow and Chris Banefield observe: “She is his savior, who has brought him identity and strength after life time of hiding away from others because of his sense of inferiority”(38). Recognition from the Whites can only elevate him from the damaging limitations imposed by their race and skin colour. This is also precisely the choice Miss Aggy makes in *Old Story Time*. When she reaches oldhood, she projects this desire onto her son Len who must climb up in his social and cultural position- first through education and hopefully through marriage to a long-haired white girl Margaret. Like Aggy , in Makak’s mind is firmly ingrained perception of self, and a consuming desire to be acknowledged by the white society, a longing to lose themselves in a mist of whiteness. This is the black psychotic hope to be a part of white culture, to desire whiteness as it is most desirable. On stage, released out of the prison cage, he is brought into Bugged with a feeling of incompleteness. Having no emotional reciprocation, Makak has fixation for the white Goddess. Long trapped in the nightmare of his skin colour he desires to break out of the prison; association with white culture has triggered hallucinations. This is precisely the choice Miss Aggy makes in *Old story Time*. As the apparition appears before his eyes, he recalls his dream in exultantly lyrical terms in the Prologue:

“As I reach to this spot

I see this woman singing

And my feet grow roots. I could move no more.

A million silver needles prickle my blood,

Like a rain of small fishes.

The snakes in my hair speak to one another,
The smoke mouth open, and I behold this woman,
The loveliest thing I see on this earth,
Like the moon walking along her own road” . (16-24,227)

This is the way “that the native converts emotions and psychic tensions into somatic symptoms” (Kelly74). Only by his association with the white woman, he can whiten himself and proclaim his manhood. White values have percolated in his soul in a way so as to develop an obsessional neurosis; in looking up to everything “white”, he further admits his own inferiority. Such dream and delirium attest to the mental colonisation that persisted in the West-Indians even in the post- independence days. In the mock court of the prologue Lestrade has already presented Makak as “a being without a mind, a will, a name, a tribe of its own”, a mere mute animal, though “tamed and obedient” (Prologue.9-11.222). By interpellating the black other as “animal” what is denied is to the black man the independent agency and mechanism of self- expression: “Willfully created and spread by the colonizer, this mythical and degrading portrait ends up being accepted and lived with to an extent by the colonized. It thus acquires a certain amount of reality and contributes to the portrait of the colonized” (Memmi 87).

At the beginning of the day we find that soon after he is knocked out of sleep by Moustique, Makak stretches out into a hallucinatory fit and talks under the spell: “I fall in a frenzy every full moon night. I does be possessed”. As a matter-of-fact interruption/ reminder, Moustique advises him to go “mad tomorrow” since it was a “market day” (1. 6-7, 232). In a long speech, he reveals how he has been gripped by the vision of impeccable beauty, how the “loveliest thing” transfixes him. Delirium and dream rule over the larger section of the plot. Her song induces a sense of manliness in him. He kneels before her in a gesture of chivalry. His hyper-aroused state makes him a visionary to such a degree that he felt a god-self in him; his psycho-somatic spell underscores the West Indian’s obsession with whiteness and perfection. Corporal’s comment on Makak’s driven state is very pertinent: “My lords, is this rage for whiteness that drive niggers mad” (7-8, 228). By colonial logic, whiteness is the ultimate ethical good and perfection and therefore, the natives struggle to live up to the ideal of whiteness. In a state of feverish excitement, he only sees the apparition what no other character can. It is the

White Goddess who has loved him and restored him to his ethnic and racial lineage. She's instilled in Makak ancestral pride that he has descended from the family of "African kings". She tells him that he should live no longer alone and since the black man is determined in advance by history, he only craves for what Fanon terms "a white destiny". This split between the body and mind, this consciousness of the black body and desire for the ideal for whiteness defines the problem of colonial identity. As Lestrade suggests: "She is lime, snow, marble, moon light, lilies, cloud foam and bleaching cream, the mother of civilization and confounder of blackness" (2.3.9-11,319). Though endowed with a sense of worth, he is manipulated into "colonial valourization of whiteness and culture". In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon explains this neurotic obsession which amply clarifies the moon-struck state of Makak, "By loving me she proves that I am loved like a white man" (45). Suffering a profound lack of self-esteem and deep psychic uncertainty, Makak effaces his self. All that he craves now are little love and understanding. Since the white man is a measure of all things, black man must define himself in relation to its "Other". It is in such circumstances when his self-esteem has completely evaporated he becomes desperate to "emulate the white man, to become like him and thus hope to be accepted as a man" (Sardar 6). In a classic strategy of Afrocentric counter-discourse, Makak compensates his non-beingness with another identity, equally fabricated or constructed.

In the post-independence years, West-Indian self-consciousness evolved within the wider context of movements like American Black Power, Transatlantic Negritude, and African independence. The discovery of "Africa" was a strong cultural imperative in the historical period of the 1960s. In the West Indian context Laurence Breiner has called Africa and its nostalgic longing as "a second parent-culture, alternative to Europe" (142). The continuity of African cultural heritage was also a creative inspiration for the writers like C.L.R. James, Edward Brathwaite. For these writers, the spiritual and cultural home was Africa, a mother's lap from which Middle Passage had ruptured the Caribbeans. Post-colonial subjectivity is often re-directed away from modernist and nationalist discourses/ paradigms considering them inauthentic and impure by the politics of "return". Radhakrishnan in his essay "Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity" contends: "The very necessity of the 'return' is posited on a prior premise; the realization to be a post-colonial is to live in a state of alienation, alienation from one's true being, history and heritage. The 'return' takes the form of a cure, or remedy, for the present ills of post-coloniality"(755). When Makak is reminded of the royal African lineage

or promises his cell-mates a return to the promised motherland, Tigre gloats over it: “Ah! Blessed Africa! Whose earth is a starved mother waiting for the kiss of my foot” (1:2. 18-20/289-290). Makak plans with his cell mates a visit back to Africa- the land of “lions”, “birds”, “sound of flutes”. He imaginatively soars beyond his material existence to claim majesty and kingship as he sees himself as “The King of Ashanti, Dahomey, Guinea”. Lestrade also flatteringly addresses him as “Dat, You mange-ridden, habitual felon, the king of Africa”. To counter the vaunting claims of the Europeans, the narrative is dotted with such triumphalist rhetoric. The romanticisation of the idyll of Africa is given a consummate expression by Makak himself: “Back into the boat, a beautiful boat, and soon, after many moons, after many songs, we will see Africa, the golden sand, the rivers where lions come down to drink, lapping at the water with their red tongues, then the villages, the birds, the sound of the flutes” (2.2.9- 13, 291). This diametrically opposed cultural location reflects the growing trend of what P.C. Hogan describes “reactionary nativism” in the post-independence Caribbean. Formidable in opposition to the adversarial politics, Walcott always reminded that uncritical affirmation of one’s own culture was nothing but colonialism in reverse. And this intense longing for African past was not repudiation of whiteness, rather re-affirmation of it. Within few years of the production of this drama, amidst violent Black Power uprisings and swelling demands of cultural nationalism, Walcott became a target of bitter attack. But he persisted in his belief that such paradigms are dissonant for the complex cultural reality for the Caribbean. Political rhetoric of identity- based programmes and essentialist identity are countered by re-imagining the community lives.

In Part1, Sc ii, in a crowded market, Makak appears in the role of shaman, a “Jesus-like healer” healing a sick man and acquires a reputation as a messianic deliverer. Josephus, a villager, a victim of snake bite is healed not by herb or bush medicines but by “putting coals under his body to make him sweat”. He saves the life of Josephus with a home-spun remedy. His healing power is not derived from Africa but burning coal becomes an instrument of his vocation. By opening his haversack, he asks his people to further his cause:

“Further the cause,

Drop what you have in there.

Look! Look! Josephus walking

Next thing he will dance”

(1.2. 14-17.251)

After the fit of miracle has been performed, he assumes a Messianic part proclaiming him as son of the soil, one among god’s chosen race. Makak also exhorts the villager to believe in themselves; thus, the petty and humble coal trader attains a new aura of dignity. After healing is over, he shows promises to be a potential leader of a people. Long condemned to be irredeemably black and inferior, Makak infuses new vigour to the dispirited people as he compares them with the process of the formation of diamond from the intense pressure of coal:

“You are living coals,
You are trees under pressure,
You are brilliant diamonds
In the hand of your God.”

(2. 6-9. 249)

Coal trading was cheapest of all trades in a society in which Makak lived. As Walcott wanted to get past the racial consciousness or the limiting notion of a class identity, what he wants to assert here is that the diamond, one of the most precious gems is formed from the pressure of coals over a great stretch of geological times. This is a very inspiring argument as Makak re- interprets the racial being of his tribe. Through this episode, the berated lives find their voice and indigenous practices are restored into position of dignity. In coming down from Monkey Mountain with good tidings, he replicates the role of the Moses. With two felons- Tigre and Souris by his side, he assumes the role of Savior. The dream episodes enable the transformative roles of Makak. Beyond his quotidian life, material existence, the various layers of Makak’s split personality is explored. As Paula Burnett notes, “When Walcott’s drama enacts such rites as healing, a quasi resurrection, as in *Dream On Monkey Mountain*, a miracle performed by the least respected person of a hierarchical racialised community, it does so as part of a strategy to mark the social deprivation but spiritual strength of a real, historic group” (103). Contrasted to his prophetic role is the impersonation of Moustique – the fake healer. Contrasted to his cheap commercialism is the spiritual guidance of Makak. He exploits his master’s gift for

personal gain and thus reveals narrow political opportunism: “So children of darkness, bring what you can give, make harvest and make sacrifice, bring whatsoever you have, a shilling, a yam, and put here at the mouth of God...”(2.1.21-24, 267).

Walcott knew well that borrowed power and fake healing was a corrupt version of shamanism and hence dangerous. Beside such dangerous ethnocentricism, Walcott was also alert to the menacing rise of sectarian tension. Makak himself points to the rivalry and factionalism that existed among the tribes of his generation after independence: “The tribes! The tribes will wrangle among themselves, splitting, writhing, hissing, like snakes in a pit...devouring their own entrails like a hyena”(2.2, 3- 4, 305). Ethnic particularism , sectarian nativism, Africans fighting Africans could attain little other than occluding the harmony and peace. Such romantic nativism narrows down the scope of identification by promulgating racist ideology.

In his seminal essay “What the Twilight Says” Walcott has expressed abiding distrust of revenge: “the West-Indian mind historically hung over, exhausted, prefers to take its revenge in nostalgia, to narrow its eyelids in a schizophrenic day dream of an Eden that existed before its exile” (18). Once the tribe has assumed the control of power they will plunge into factionalism and relentlessly pursue uncompromising “revenge”. Walcott’s mastery of parody is corroborated in trial scene, set up with Makak in royal robe and enthroned. As Tejumala sums up the episode: “History is dragged out from the deepest recesses and accused of having trumpeted blackness underfoot” (107). Ethics of revenge reaches its apex in this trial episode; it is in fantasy that the lust for “black” revenge indicts all those celebrated in the European history. Corporal claims the justice to be “hawk-swift” and “impetuous”. Basil reads out the catalogue of white offenders which includes- Shakespeare, Marlowe, Dante, Galileo, Copernicus, Aristotle and Plato- prominent among the upholders of white values. The list includes navigators, explorers and naval commanders who paved the ways for colonizers and empire-builders. As Lestrade eloquently states the rationale of the mock-trial: “Their crime, whatever their plea, whatever extenuation of circumstances, whether of genius or geography, is, that they are indubitably, with the possible exception of Alexander Dumas, Sr. and Jr., and Alexis, I think it is Pushkin, White” (2.3.11-15.312). They all are sentenced to gallows for being only “indubitably white”, formidable promulgators of power structure. Reactionary nativists upheld recrimination as the way in which power structure might be subverted. Makak’s fantasy is counter-balanced by the absurd trial

conceived in fantasy; the two being the outcomes of internalized racism. Lestrade who has already changed sides already, voices the effectivity of tribal laws and system of justice: “history is without pardon, justice hawk-swift, but mercy everlasting. We have prisoners and traitors, and they must be judged swiftly” (2. 3. 5- 6. 311). In attempt to assert difference from the colonizer’s influence, the colonised replicates the role of the colonizer. When Moustique, who is accused of selling the dream of freedom, is brought to the stand, he comments on the judgment of the tribes: “is this what you wanted when you left Monkey Mountain? Power or love? ... oh I remember you, in those days long ago, you had something there [touching his breast], but here all that gone. All this blood, all this killing, all this revenge, (2.3, 14-21.314-315). The strong Manichean division informs the scene and offers an excoriating critique of adversarial politics. Walcott’s narrative was in complete disagreement with and resistant to ideological and historical functioning of such binaries. Cultural particularism had to be overcome through an eclectic performative art. Africanism as cultural practice/ performance only roused his ire as utterly futile and barren. By accepting the reactionary Nativism as alternative to racist ideology will never help overcome the Manicheanism. He asks in “What the Twilight Says”: “If one went in search of the African experience, carrying the luggage of a few phrases and a crude map, where would it end”? (87).

The politics of repudiation of “whiteness” reaches the point of what is identified as Apotheosis; it is the firmest of all decisive actions that in Sc.3, Part ii, Lestrade goads Makak to eliminate the vision of white Muse: “If you want peace, if you want to discover your beautiful blackness, nigger, chop off her head!” (10-11.319). If she is beheaded, he will be divested of the constraints of the Western value, obsession of many West-Indian blacks- an obsession for whiteness. In this act, he proclaims to be “free” at last; his psychic space is cleared of what Fanon calls “arsenal of complexes”, propelling new self-awareness. If the myth of whiteness is unmade and its deception exposed, cultural freedom might be affirmed. His exalted claim of being “free” has been subject to political allegorisation. In America the scene was lauded by the Black Power enthusiast when the movement was at its height and articulated lust for black revenge. But such reviews were never favoured by the playwright. In an interview with J. P. White, Walcott offers a further explanation: “What he does is that he sheds an image of himself that has been degraded. When he thought he was Black, he did what he thought the black man should do. Both errors. So that the moment of cutting off the head is not a moment of beheading

a white woman. It is a matter of saying there is some act, some final illusion to be shed. And it is only a metaphorical anyway it's only a dream" (166). As it seems, American audience may have taken the violence too eagerly, too literally as straightforward act of reprisal. And the playwright was at pains to remind at the beginning of his *A Note on Production* that the play is only a dream. Alienation and anger, as firmly believed to be negative could only be eliminated by a symbolic act. To find in the killing an affirmation of violent revolutionary politics in a manner of Dessalines is to miss the whole point of psychic emancipation – a prior condition for the revolutionary consciousness to be born. Critics like Hogan felt in the act of execution an agreement with Fanon's claim of violence as "cleansing force" or cathartic. Fanon strongly argued that only through violence could colonized societies throw off their oppressors and their colonially constructed identities. As Fanon set forth his view, violence is only possible form of communication in the forces of colonialism. The act of beheading and disrobing himself of royal robe index how he can claim self-knowledge: "He is a man, his independent self, free to begin anew" (Hamner 52). Instead of leading life as 'black man', he finds the freedom in living as 'man' Getting rid of awe-inducing vision of whiteness and by overcoming race-inflicted identity, the narrative repudiates black-white essentialised cultural politics which results in what Thieme calls "the dominant discourse's main supporting pillar, Manichaeism, becomes obsolete" (Thieme 11). This is the enabling moment of history as myth; a moment when the traditions may be reinvented. Freed from the prison, his consciousness is reformed to proclaim his true belonging to be Monkey Mountain home.

Stressing its symbolic and allegorical aspects, reviewers and commentators have very different observations on the scene. J.Theime in his study *Derek Walcott* has interpreted the act of Makak as exorcising the stranglehold of European heritage and Afrocentric link before the narrative slides toward "post-colonial consciousness" (76). Walcott always believed that psychic liberation a true enabler to the condition of post-coloniality. The act of killing is described by Daizal. R. Samad as symbolic of "polarized and static romanticized vision of his ancestral past" (242). Both the studies proffer the idea of identity as static, overdetermined. As Lestrade whips up frenzied Makak's passion for violent retribution Makak's final blow may have been direct inspiration of racist propaganda: "She is the white light that paralysed your mind that led you into this confusion. It is you who created her, so kill her! Kill her! The law has spoken" (2.3.19-20.319). Walcott knew well that denunciation of "whiteness" is as reactionary as objectivisation

of the “black”. Though in 1967 when the play was first produced, the consequences of revolutionary politics was not so obvious as it erupted in the early 70s. Stressing on the symbolic aspect of the scene, Makak exonerates from what Robert. E.Fox notes, “The bondage of kingship as well as that of the dream and all externally-imposed definitions of selfhood” (209). Progressive violence not only thwarts domination and oppression but as Sartre believed in his famous introduction to *Wretched of the Earth*; it is an expression of “self-creation”. Colonialism, Fanon argued in *Wretched of the Earth*, “is violence in its natural state, and will only yield when confronted with greater violence” (48). It acts as momentum to cure the pathologies of colonialism. Unburdened by heritage or tradition, Makak rounds up his journey for finding his lost identity and original name. The very foundation of oppositional politics (in terms of race, colour) has been shaken up and no longer gripped under delusion, Makak emerges as New World man. He’s overcome colonially determined labels and left behind the dependence for self-recognition. Throughout the play, the semantic stability of the categories like “black” and “white” are problematised and various racially defined stereotypes have been dismantled. It alters, as Tejumola observes, “the terrain of production of discourse and the relations subordinated to it” (108). In Earl Lovelace’s complex allegorical play, *Jestina’s Calypso*, Jestina emerges as denier of internalization of self-defeating identity ascribed to her. She sounds self-convinced despite her black, ugly face: “long after the echo of your laughter dies, I shall be walking still, striding still, with my head up against the winds of the world, battling to become myself” (25). With all the racial tensions within and without played out, Walcott’s hero also discovers a new self-identity. His dream is a possibility, possibility of the new identity what Lloyd Brown calls “the existential beginning of a new black self-definition” (201). Such possibility of “green beginnings” is enunciated in Lamming’s novels like *Water with Berries or Natives of My Person* as they explore individual rebellion in resisting the tyranny of history. With such beginning will liberation be possible from any intrinsic racial identity and their hierarchization. And it will call into question the validity of radical politics. Dream sequences that swing between the poles of Africanness and Englishness- each a state of mind, equally constructed only reify colonial Manichaeism discourse/agenda and racial classification. Thus, Walcott’s theatre aesthetics has taken to task despotism of monoculture and political economy of identity.

Walcott, like many of his contemporaries, was pre occupied with search for ‘home’ and never ceased to exorcise the “demon of alienation and homelessness”. (Samad, 228)

“We left

Somewhere a life we never found,

Customs and gods that are not born again,

Some crib, some grill of light

Changed shut on us in a bondage, and withheld

Us from that world below us and beyond,

And in its swaddling cerements we’re still bound”.

(The Castaway, 35)

Amidst exile, displacement and xenocide, down the centuries “home” has been a problematic for the Caribbeans. Since the disappearance of indigenous population in the 15th century, the islands were populated by those who flocked, forcibly and voluntarily, here from Africa, Asia or Europe; in Braithwaitean phrase all are “Arrivants” here : “the most significant feature of West Indian life and imagination since Emancipation has been its sense of rootlessness, of not belonging to the landscape” (Tejumola 94). For all its extra-regional population, undergoing geo-cultural dispersion, homelessness and severance from the ancestral homeland have been an inalienable cultural condition. Makak describes his people “like a twisted forest, like trees without names, a forest with no roots” (1:2, 16-19248). Violently torn from distant home of Africa, they desired to locate them in Europe or America- the cultural, artistic or intellectual metropolitan centre. They looked to Africa for a reaffirmation of their identity, and as a means of dealing with their persistent sense of exile and displacement. The impulse for escape into better opportunities propelled the West-Indians to look for home in two very different, distant places. In the words of Rajeev S. Pathke, “The sense of displacement found expression in a compulsion to set off in a real and symbolic journeying, in a constant and restless search for home that might appease displacement” (89).

But Walcott vehemently confronted this popular perception of home as spatially far-off. By his own admission, all his artistic endeavours engage with “adamic” naming of the Caribbean

as 'home'. This wrestling to articulate 'home' has engaged several Walcott's contemporaries artists, like Harris or Glissant. Conditioned to dispersal and fragmentation, the West-Indian man tries to reassemble the fragments of his cultural past. In his noble lecture, Walcott himself tells us: "This gathering of the broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles. Antillean art is the restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary" (54). The meandering and convoluted plot of *Dream on Monkey Mountain* charts a return- journey to mountain "home" as its hero Makak who after a night in the prison-cell returns home at Monkey Mountain with the day-break. As Daizal. R. Samad observes, "In *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, the central character Makak attempts to re-discover the discontinuous links between the multiplicities of archetypes that reside in the oceanic layers of West-Indian culture" (18). Having redeemed himself from oppressive conditions through visions and hallucinations, he appears ready to return to home; both in literal and metaphorical sense in the Epilogue. After dream-tossed, vision- ridden night in the prison cell, he walks back home. It appears that his home is "isolated from political repression, a space seemingly outside the influence of the larger society. By returning to the animated milieu of Monkey Mountain home, he will resume his humble trade of charcoal selling. As also in his poetic masterpiece, *Prodigal*, the Caribbean home becomes a place of final rest; though here all wanderings and errantry are mental rather than physical. Towards the end, Makak has described himself as mere drifter- one swept by sea-waves, uprooted and unmoored "washed form shore to shore". Here he can claim that he has found himself to be in a tangible space or physical location:

Makak: "The branches of my fingers, the roots of my feet, could grip nothing, but now, god, they have found ground."

(Epilogue. 5-7.326)

Chorus with the refrain 'I going home' rounds up the action and what remains only is the movement of walking back to Monkey Mountain for Makak and Moustique where they left from at the outset of the action.

A quest motif underlies the circuitous, "contradictory" plot in *Dream on a Monkey Mountain*. Having undergone utterly degraded life and after all the turmoil of soul, the home to which he returns is a hallowed ground. Notwithstanding his unchanged material position, he

proclaims “Makak lives there, Makak lives where he has always lived, in the dreams of his people” (Epilogue. 11-12, 326); he has attained to the status of upholder of the causes of his community. It is the visionary spells through which he has become a prophet of his community. It is not the vision and delirium of a deranged mind, merely. In the Epilogue, once more, he is asked by the Corporal whom he confidently answers :

Corporal: What is your name?

Makak: Hobain... My name is Felix Hobain.

(5-6. 321)

He has shed the pejorative title, name of abuse, Makak. By re-claiming his name Felix, meaning “happy” he also liberates himself from the degrading name “Monkey”. This recovery is described by Breslin as a decisive transformation here in the level of consciousness: “The main sign of his freedom is that, for the first time in the play, he remembers his real name- neither the derisive “Makak” nor the secret name given by the apparition, but simply “Felix Hobain” (153). Walcott was always aware of forced and artificial re-naming which needed to be cast aside before one can proclaim his/ her personhood. Or the imposed name must be exploded before the lost identity is reclaimed. He was reduced to sub-human status by the imposed name and its association with bestiality. But recovery of original name confirms the re- installation of human identity; “The name, beginning as stigmata spell, turns into a panoply, a disguise, a protection to finally become the flag and emblem of a rebuilt community” (Loichot, 12). In a more decisive gesture, he now rejects the white mask he used to carry in his bag. It’s a sign of regaining self-definition and growing self-consciousness. Both the illusions of White Goddess and African kingship are cast off as things of past and he first can claim the cultural mulatto in himself. When he leaves behind the prison, he is no longer monkey like individual but a human being. As a true West-Indian, he now asserts where his genuine roots are. He has stepped forward towards self-realization and eventual self-identity by overcoming the mechanism of abuse and dehumanization. His closing speech with the tropes of root/ route emanates a new cultural energy: “Lord, I have been washed from shore to shore, as a tree in the ocean. The branches of my fingers, the roots of my feet, could grip nothing, but now, God they have found ground” (Epilogue, 326). Deep in the heart of the forest, Makak recovers his humanity; he has fully reconciled to the fact of being one of Afro- Caribbean ancestry. In Walcott’s plays,

understanding of self and finding rightful place in the society have been a major thematic base for creating a foundation of a new individual West-Indian identity. In mind and body he has reconciled to the reality of cultural and racial origins. The Sunday morning is the morning to awaken from what Edward Baugh has called “dark night of the soul, his harrowing of hell” (85). To resume the charcoal burner’s life, he must return to Monkey Mountain- to his profession at the lowest rung of society. In an interview with the New Yorker in 1971: “You forget Makak is a charcoal burner, he has to face a reality too. He has to come down to the market every Saturday to make a living” (18).

Despite Walcott’s exhortation to the contrary, Makak’s homecoming and claim of freedom have been opened up to an array of political, religious interpretations. Apparently, the episode can be studied as an affirmation of life of dignified simplicity, without shame or sentimentality despite all material deprivation. Makak is West Indian Everyman, as he himself claims, still living in the dream of his own people. By outdoing the demons of subjugation, he has assumed, what Crow and Banefield observe, “mythic dimension accorded to certain characters in folktales and folklore” (40). It may be inferred here that Makak has arrived into independent consciousness and overcome the “bewitching” of cultures. This emergence as folkloric hero, this native West-Indian experience liberates Makak and here Makak appears as Breslin has called, “a solitary avatar of Walcott’s Caribbean Adam”(154). He not only found his home but also his dignity and confidence or what Soyinka calls his “cultural certitude”. To put in James Baldwin’s memorable words: “This past, this endless struggle to achieve and reveal and confirm a human identity, human authority, yet contains for all its horror, something very beautiful” (84). From the earliest days of his artistic career, Walcott was aware of the need to produce counter narratives of self- definition not in order to denigrate the Europeans but to re-create and re-present the Afro-Caribbean histories that will enable them to see themselves anew. This becomes a journey into the self, to arrive at the consciousness which illuminates the root cause of alienation. He has delved deep into himself to discover his innate contradictions and complexes. His journey has carried him from the illusory past to the solid materiality of the present. Like him Lestrade attains self-discovery and self-knowledge :

“I was what I am, but now I am myself...my feet grip like roots” (2.2.299)

Moustique's advice "Go back, go back to Monkey mountain, Go back" comes full circle with the refrain of the Chorus:

"I going home, I going home

I going home, I going home

I going home, I going home

To me father's kingdom"

(17-20.326).

All the wanderings and imaginary journeys lead back to West-India home; it counterpoints the "departure syndrome" of the West-Indian intellectuals and artists' search for acknowledgement and recognition. It dates back to the time of wind-rush generation writers like Naipaul who tore away from the place of birth or origin after disillusionment with living on the periphery of black colonial culture. At a critical juncture of the history of the region, Walcott's play articulated a new Caribbean ethos. Monkey Mountain is not a mere physical 'home' but a space of cultural in-placeness. As they walk back home, the memory of both the sun of Empire and African moon begin to fade away. No longer tethered to the past and repudiating other alternative homes, Makak's homeward journey is much more complex than the home advocated by the political nationalists. As Daizal. R. Samad observes: "For Walcott, home is the Caribbean, fragmented but potent. We live there and strangely the Caribbean lives in a manifestly splintered presence within the oceanic layers of our psyche: a presence which will arise in us and address us in rainbow ways which we may not always comprehend, but which we must always put to creative use as we attempt to grapple with tortured existence" (21). In the first scene, Makak was woken up by Moustique for daily chores of selling coal. It is here that Makak must return to, not to some "Edenic" zone of ancestors but a familiar location, marked by small clearing with a hut and small signal of smoke. We are told Makak is going "back to the beginning, to the green beginning of the world" (Epilogue,326).Critics have read into this episode various symbolic meanings, despite Walcott's very personal interpretation of the ending as a mere return of a coal trader to the choir of daily trade, a commonplace return. Makak has not only recovered home and name in the Epilogue, when Lestrade asks him Makak replies that he now believes in God. Though his is not the Catholic god of those who introduced Catholicism to the island, nor any

African deity which has been re-introduced to replace the Catholic God. Now he can clearly spell out his name or religion: "... Yes, Oui. Hobain. Sur morne Macaque, charbonier, I does burn and sell coals..." (12-13.322) No longer a king, prophet or shamanic healer, he has returned to his original identity of a down- to-earth, poor charcoal seller. But in a way this reclamation of the self opens up the exhilarating possibility of a New World man. It is quite obvious that, paradoxically, the ending of the narrative is rather a beginning. Cultural independence beyond mimicry or derivativeness may have been an aesthetic goal by the side of waves of de-colonisation. Contrasted to the mutation of consciousness that takes place in Makak is contrasted another kind of transformation in the character of Lestrade, a real "straddler" between two cultural locations. At the end of the plot, he appears in a new guise; almost in a *volte face*, he claims to be a champion of the tribal leadership of Makak and black leadership: "You had a rough night, friend. But is a first offence. Now, what is this? [holds up the mask] Everybody round here have one. Why you must keep it, cut it, talk to it?" (Epilogue, 10-13/323). Unlike Makak, his is not a transformation of consciousness but a side- taking which also underscores political opportunism. His racial or cultural identification is motivated by cheap self-interest, positional advantage. Patricia Ismond puts it very succinctly: "The externals change but ethic remains the same: he looks to black code to regulate an order obliterating all native contradictions" (257). At a time of volatile political situation in the 70s such "nativism" was surging up and Walcott knew such categories to be mere constructs that reify exclusionary politics.

Throughout his career, Walcott endeavoured to un-construct the myth of white superiority and black inferiority. Like Makak, a Caribbean artist is Adamic man in need of naming the objects and enunciating the cultural vision of his people. Makak in his final speech, describes himself only as an "old hermit" very different from prophets: "Other men will come, other prophets will come and they will be stoned, and mocked, and betrayed, but now this old hermit is going back home, back to the green beginning of this world." (12- 15,326). Makak has never lost his spiritual inclinations even from his grassroot experience. Focusing on these visionary experiences, William. S. Heany has called the 'home' here to be "literal and anagogic" (97). Though full of redeeming potential, he renounces the role of prophet and visionary. The ending, as Paul Breslin has also noted, leaves open the question whether he has lost his heroic size in resumption of his old trade. But re- grounding himself on the native soil embody a kind of

New World heroism, heroism of unaccommodated man which also paves the way for assertion of culturally deprived Caribbeans. It is the heroism of Walcottian “nobody”. In absence of “king”, “tribal chief” as model of story, his humble charcoal burner is re-coded as dignified fictional “hero”. As Walcott asserts in his essay “Meanings”: “This was a degraded man, but he had some elemental force in him that is still terrifying; in another society he would have been a warrior” (49). By dramatizing the healing performance and winning a place in the mind of the people, Makak has definitely outgrown the external and imposed standards and rediscovered his roots’. Old perceptions and beliefs give way to powerful influence of hybrid reality and Makak’s story issues out a challenge to disrupted and devalued self. Walcott’s home is not nostalgic romance for a concrete, ancestral space but something re-invented and redefined as he knew, “the West-Indian mind historically hung over, exhausted, prefers to take its revenge in nostalgia, to narrow its eyelids in a schizophrenia daydream of an Eden that existed before its exile” (18) . The definitive closure as it is commonly assumed does not leave us without some ambiguity. In returning to Mountain “home”, Makak will return to the old, hierarchized society of material deprivation, the same place where he “lived like a wild beast in hiding. Without child, without wife” (226). If he’s found the “ground”, then he must have overcome “big, big loneliness” (318). If there is “edenic promise”, his fresh beginning is only a “hermit” like withdrawal and it will not matter if he is forgotten “like a mist”. And it may be affirmative of Walcott’s unwavering faith that there existed a space outside, a world apart from the twin pulls of Africa and Europe and there lay the hope of fresh beginnings. It may be suggestive of finding one’s “voice” as he is no longer near-mute, subdued figure of the Prologue, or can claim to belong after encounter turbulence outside, futile searches. In an interview Walcott has clarified the point further: “I say, he goes back to his mountain. It belongs to him. He has another name and now he can say it... I’m talking about the sense of ownership that allows him to feel that when he walks on that road, it belongs to him” (167).

A Dramaturgic Venture:

Walcott from the beginning was an accomplished craftsman and this play marks an advance in Walcott’s dramaturgy. In *Caribbean Discourse*, Glissant had already observed,

“experiment is for us [in the Caribbean] the only alternative; the organization of a process of representation that allows the community to reflect, to criticize, and to take shape” (209). *Dream on Monkey Mountain* appears to be that much-needed experimental alternative, a stage-product that encompasses the folk lives in myth, hopes and dream. Here, his stagecraft has left behind realism of some earlier St. Lucian plays for experimenting with expressionistic technique- more syncretic, self-reflexive, belonging to multiple levels. By parting with conventional modes here he sought to bring his native audience to a new experience of drama. Walcott’s instructive note on Production involves the audiences and actors alike in the performance structured in a complex and illogical way: “The play is a dream, one that exists as much in the given minds of principal characters as in that of its writer, and as such, it is illogical, derivative, and contradictory. Its source is metaphor and it is best treated as a physical poem with all the subconscious borrowings of poetry. Its style should be spare, essential as the details of a dream”. Walcott has himself stressed that the play is a scripted dream. Much of its narrative is a dramatized subconscious. In this intricately structured text, the contrary impulses of the subconscious can best be explored in dream devices. Psychological complexity and the rich symbolic design make the play a divided structure. The axis of the plot is dream; visions, delirium and hallucinations carry forward its non-linear narrative and their locus is in disordered and deranged psyche of the old charcoal seller. Makak’s fragmented personality and de-ranged psyche is the locus of action. In lieu of well- made structure or causative line it fuses prose, poetry, reality and fantasy, sanity and madness. By a creative fusion of disparate artistic traditions, by crafting into “Coherent deformation” (in Allan Weiss’s vocabulary), it appears as formless as the plays of Buchner or Strindberg. Private areas of experience, inner idea or vision shatter the facticity of the world and linearity of the plot design. Like any expressionistic drama, most of the episodes issue out of the mind of the dreamer. Though Walcott here adds the visions and dreams not of his protagonist alone but of the other characters that inhabit the dream atmosphere. In the Prologue, Makak relates his mental state before the Corporal: “Sir, I does catch fits. I fall in frenzy every full-moon night. I does be possessed” (3-4. 226). His words provoke the judges into laughter and while Corporal seeks to claim his notice by mention of charges, he gets rapt in his speech. The apparition, like Banquo’s ghost, appears before him and to none else as the Corporal mentions that he cannot see anything. The dream has implicated the entire community rather than remaining as individual derangement/delerium. As Lloyd Brown points out: “[O]ur revolutionary dreams are not a form of escape. They are also, paradoxically, psycho-existential affirmation of

self, a Black selfhood. However overly idealistic his revolutionary cause may be, and despite the romanticism of his 'royal' African heritage, Makak affirms his human identity precisely because the capacity to dream has survived within him" (59). Hence, the focus must be shifted from Makak's hallucination and delirium to the dream of the community. There is no doubting that the plot, seeks to articulate selfhood for the community, long held under the thrall of colonial rule. As Francophone writer Glissant stressed, "individual delirium and collective theatricalization, as forms of cultural resistance are the first 'catalysts' of this consciousness" (195). Makak's dream utterances and gestures embody the emerging consciousness that leaves behind the baggage of history completely forever.

A quick overview of the plot will enable us to understand why Walcott stated the play structurally to be "illogical, derivative". The two parts consist of three scenes, each, locked by Prologue and Epilogue. Though Walcott has denied such structuration/ division and describes the entire play as a "dream". Most of the actions take place in jail cell where Lestrade is keeping surveillance on Makak and his two fellow felons, Souris and Tigre. Sometimes the cage vanishes out of sight, to add the stage design to be part of surrealistic theatre. The three scenes of the first act focus on Makak's vision of white beauty and the next three scenes shift to the pursuit of dream and kingship in Africa and his treatment of a sick man. The contradictory dream world extends in the part2 as Makak escapes to Monkey Mountain after murdering the corporal with his cell-mates and subsequent jailbreak. The series of fantasy reaches the climax in an elaborate and mock trial for indicting the crimes of the 'Whites' against the civilization. The Epilogue returns again to the cell and with the daybreak as the night is over, Makak gets ready to walk back home. Walcott's reminder about the structure of the whole play blurs the line between the "realistic" plane and "surreal" situations; it straddles between workday world and the dream world, the world of matter-of-factness and insanity. Being a non-linear narrative, it is markedly different for the psycho-expressionistic treatment of O'Neill's play *Emperor Jones*. The opening and ending are marked off from the 6 scenes of breathless suspense. unconscious or collective memory erupts as the hero runs through jungle and unnervingly encounters spectre or spirit. Jones's visions and hallucination are entirely his own and plunge him in a complete isolation from his community ; he is not only enmeshed with not only in his individual past but also ancestral past. While Jones' is a personal tragedy, Walcott's play is rooted in the fractured psyche of the native West-Indian community. As when Lestrade accuses the resurrected Moustique of betrayal, Lestrade says, "You have betrayed our dream" (314).Some of the

characters jeer at the vision of Makak and offer own comments on it. It is Moustique who has sought to exploit the visionary gift of his comrade in his impersonation and spurious performance of a prophetic healer. He also knocks Makak down from his dreamy state, reminding him of the market day and their trade responsibilities. By pitting reason, practicality against madness, Walcott denies the plot any structural cohesiveness. To liberate drama from the straitjacket of convention, it abandons order, clarity and the disjointed scenes capture the truth hidden in the recess of mind. Each dream episode is not technical novelty but a part of his quest for independent identity. Almost in a carnivalesque reversal, the poor charcoal seller appears in royal robe. Thus dream becomes an agency for imaginative reversal. Robert. E. Fox illustrates the episode through historical facts, citing from Naipaul's *The Loss of Eldorado*. Naipaul mentions a widely popular cultural practice among the slave society in the nocturnal ceremonies and revelries in which slaves play-acted as kings and queens. And in their masquerade, they would mock and jeer at their masters. This revelry allowed them to topple down the hierarchy of master- slave. It was a palliative against the bitter, oppressive realities. By allowing Makak a royal title in fantasy, Walcott opened up possibilities of reclaiming identity and offers alternative to the bounded space of realities of lived experiences. As Makak confesses his madness in a pleading manner: "All I have is dreams and they don't trouble your soul" (225). In the Apotheosis scene, the fantasy trial suggests an alternative to crude, physicality of racial reprisal. Very significantly, the act of beheading is rather "symbolic"/ metaphoric and such act could cleanse the oppressive mentality and thereby redeem the down-trodden. It is what also enables Makak's return from the realities of everyday world. Here, Walcott's surrealistic renderings become purgative of the revenge-politics and racial tussle. Walcott never ceased to lash out at the process of identity formation grounded on Black Power politics.

Stylistically, in using dream structure Canadian playwright, Thomson Highway's significant play *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* resembles Walcott's masterpiece. In both of them what is required is heavily physical form of acting to be embodied through a trickster figure. Walcott's famous contemporary, Wilson Harris, also in his masterpiece *The Palace of Peacock* deploys the narrative strategy which blurs the dividing line between historical and mythic strata. It wrenches the readers free from the gravity of history and prepare for a psychic journey. Here, also, Walcott accomplishes novelty in allowing a novel stage experience for his audience. The absence of narrative linearity owes much to its affinity with the poetic texture. Walcott had always stressed the proximity of the poem and drama and he defined drama as a

form of enacted verse. In his note, Walcott lays stress on the role of the “unconscious” in structuring a play that negotiates between lyrically inspired moment and prosaic, official rhetoric or continuous veering between realistic and poetic realms. The play is a series of dream within dream, play within play and justifies its “contradictory”, illogical nature. It is a dream that transforms Makak and Walcott’s artistic vision. Walcott was always sceptic of teleological history as the linearity of the narrative perpetuates the hegemony of the colonial culture. His hero, Makak in his recital of dreams overcomes the dictum of history and the limits of racism lift him to the plane of sublime realization:

“And this old man walking, as ugly as sin

In a confusion of vapour,

Till I feel I was God self, walking through the cloud”

(5-7,-227).

It is undeniable that the entire dramatic corpus of Walcott has seldom allowed such poetic treatment of his native material. Readers have faced some degree of difficulty in reading this play. Its complex design can be attributed to the combination of “modern drama of consciousness of the modern western dream play with the convention of West Indian folk story, the world of Frantz Fanon with the firelit face of the storyteller in the village compound”(Brian Crow with Chris Banefield 40). As they stress the interpretative difficulty of the narrative, Breslin also denies its allegorical significance. As he comments: “That unforgettably powerful registration of divided consciousness, rather than a narrative of liberation, may be the greatest achievement of this play” (131). If the Epilogue finds the hero speaking for himself, proclaiming his “difference”, the play still compels our attention by refusing to escape the “divisions between sanity and madness, reality and dream” (Baker 16). Veering between alternate realms, the plot leaves the audience in the precarious position between dream and reality, rather by leaving behind an impression of liberatory narrative. Walcott’s rich dramaturgy espouses how he resisted uncritical adaptation and restored the eclecticism at its very best. On the levels of both theme and craft, the Manichean frontiers of both Afrocentric and Eurocentric discourses are dismantled and thereby it offers up more effective forms of resistance.

CHAPTER- 3

Interrogating and Reinventing for New Resonances: Walcott's Major Rewrites

I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again), books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.

- Umberto Eco

why do we need it?/ It's not what I set out with/ or what you carry./[...] The true story lies/ among the other stories./[...] the true story is vicious/ and multiple and untrue/[...] don't ever ask for a true story.

- Margaret Atwood

Postcolonial rewrites are often informed by imaginative challenge to cultural hegemony. They identify the mega-texts of Europe as deeply inflicted by ideological bias and exclusionary politics. Walcott, an assiduous reader of classics, was also aware of the fact that the classics not only ideologically and instrumentally validate the imperialist causes but also live on the sensibility and consciousness of the colonizer and colonized alike. With contestation and revision of such texts, the postcolonial artists did deconstruct the myths of Empire and imperial narratives. In constant imitation and dialogue with classical tradition, he endeavoured to forge an independent West Indian literary space. They identified how they could be appropriated and abrogated by the colonized in order to oppose the canon and revise its content. They are propelled by an impulse of transfiguring the master works through literary mutations; they preempt the possibility of closure. Long before the trope of 'writing back' became popular, Wilson Harris, Rhys, Lamming, Selvon and Derek Walcott appeared to contest the asymmetries of their culture and stereotypes spawned by a handful of British historian or travelers and canonical texts.

Their major artistic imperative was to explode the colonial myth and ideologies of Western superiority embedded in the mega-texts of Europe. Following the days of recently won independence, the familiar narrative or generic structure was transposed by the postcolonial artists to a strange or unfamiliar locale. As far as Achebe's novels have been identified as African invention, they use English and Western structure in response to the paradigm of the Metropolitan centre. Walcott considered drama to be suitable for counter-discursive intervention and he was aware that any re-writing of a specific colonial text requires both 'unwriting and rewriting' of the texts of the canonical discourse (Marx 89). The creative confrontation between the texts results in symbiosis of incommensurable traditions and incompatible cultures. Walcott's works by unsettling the simple binarism of 'mimicry' and 'originality', synthesized various cultural intertext. As it results in syncretist formations, Walcott's plays stage the transgression of national, racial and language boundaries and raise questions about narrative forms and ideas of character that problematize the categorical affirmation of cultural identity. Unlike the national and colonial models of binary constructions or homogenization of cultural complexities, creolized revision and counter performance evoke proliferation of differences and articulates alterity.

Since the early days of his career Walcott engaged with the European classics to nurture his creative writings; Western literature proved to be a rich and inspirational zone for the young playwright as many of his poems are widely allusive. As a young artist he had described himself a "houseboy" stealing from 'the house of literature' (*Collected Poems* 219); to "prolong the mighty lines of Milton and Marlowe" was his towering ambition. Harold Bloom, in his famous articulation about the articulation had contended that the poets engage constantly with their predecessors; the young poets wrestle with his strong predecessors or old masters before he/she can find an original poetic vision, they select the source text and is eventually urged by a desire to wrestle with them and ultimately to surpass them. Walcott embodied this quality as he was always sceptic about straightforward line of identification or what Said calls 'affiliative identifications'. Bloom identified the "strong" poet to be capable of transposing to new cultural milieu the works of his literary forefathers and thereby ridding them of authority and assumed originality. When Walcott was extending the literary and cultural traditions linked to the history of colonialism and imperialism, his unifying imagination strove hard to conciliate it with the post-colonial present of the Caribbean islands. In countering the European representation, he

sought to translate the colonial legacy and all its borrowed influences to open up an alternate cultural space. To negotiate a sense of national and cultural self-definition the past must be seen not in isolation but in continuum. In 'revisionary swerves' from his artistic father figures, his narratives progress along the past-present continuum. As Said affirms, "post-colonial writers bear their past within them... as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a new future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly native speaks and acts on territory taken back from empire" (31). The predecessor texts that fertilized his artistic imagination were not chronological but simultaneous because for Walcott, art appreciated chronologically will only develop separatist and ethnic cultures. Traducing linear genealogies, he argues in his much acclaimed essay "Muse of History", "But if you think of art as simultaneity... then Joyce is a contemporary of Homer" (62). Hence his literary works unsettle the notion of straight literary lineage; his motto was never "writing back" in the oppositional sense because "canonical counter-discourse is one method by which colonized cultures can refuse the seamless contiguity between a classical past and a post-colonial present that the empire strives to preserve" (Tompkins 51). Walcott's re-writes are the products of very kinetic process of transposition and transmutation. Re-writing conflates nearness and opposition, originality and mimicry, the dichotomies that were central to colonialist discourse. Like other Caribbean artists such as Rhys or Harris, Walcott repudiated the unidirectional link of the source text and its 'con-text' and created an 'opening' to subvert the closure of the text. His appropriation and adaptation of Homer, Defoe or Synge allowed him to break away from the hegemonic cultural control of the metropolitan centre. It demonstrates that the intertextual link is by no means a one-way process, but should be envisaged as plural and multidirectional. The master texts were also unstable subjects and could be constructed anew by a parodic reversal of ideological significance of the classical works. Without being combative, such works opened up fissures in the supposedly solid foundations of the 'pre-texts'. Like Harris or Carpentier, Walcott never ceased to argue against "the profound ineterpellation of the racial other into Western discourse"(Tompkins,36); their narratives are re-worked to invest them with more local relevance. In staging tension between use of European or classical tradition the conservative, unbroken authority of the European situation is critically interrogated.

In an essay entitled "When we Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision", Adrienne Rich has argued that re-vision enables to look at the old text with a new critical look and thereby the 'hold

over” the tradition is broken/ruptured. She insists upon ‘Re-vision’ as an “act of survival’- as far as it is an issue of cultural survival; post colonial texts impede the closure of canonical texts and fragment and disperse their authority. By entering into an ambivalent dialogue with the canonical texts and by a parodic reversal of the cultural assumptions these classics are fragmented and reassembled. Transplanted in a new cultural milieu, they issue out polyphonic utterances. They fructify each other and infuse in the work hybrid energy. Belonging to the later phase of his career, Walcott’s two major re-writes, *Pantomime* and *Odyssey- A Stage Version*, take two European mega-texts as points of departure. They seek to cast a new, critical look at Defoe and Homer- expose the logic of discursive oppression, interrogate cultural values. These thematic ancestors when transported to the Caribbean present, they underwent certain alteration or mutation. As Lorna Hardwick comments, “Walcott’s later plays rework these traditions, using classical referents as the basis for new work which includes the idiom of the Caribbean”. (239) Both these works of post- workshop years marked a very important transition to creolising *Robinson Crusoe* and *Odyssey* two time-honoured cultural icons. From the late 70s Walcott entered a new phase with success both locally and internationally. Developing more sophisticated stagecraft, these works attempted creative confrontation with their ‘pre-texts’. Walcott advocated aesthetics and performance for the Caribbean “where someone could do Shakespeare or sing Calypso with equal conviction” (46). Melding of incommensurable traditions is the very essence of the process of creolisation or what may alternately be called ‘Caribbeanisation’ of the stage. His encounter with classics opened up a way to read them no longer as classics but as relevant to his own social milieu. His *Omeros* not only wrested away Homer from an exclusive European tradition and then incorporated Homer and Joyce in hybrid cultural condition of the West Indies. The acts of literary adaptation and appropriation, foregrounding of the local culture were attempts at countering the interpellation of the subject people by the dominant discourses and overhaul of the dichotomous colonial thinking. These plays may have been driven by the motto to correct the misrepresentation of their culture or through appropriation and adaptation they may have intended to confront cultural authority as self- empowering act.

The creative confrontation between classical and post-colonial texts and contexts is a major dynamic of Walcott’s dramatic works; it operates in a way to create new aesthetics and images. His plays did not merely descend from the canonical original but are produced through

creative dialogue sought to produce what Brathwaite calls evinced “nation performance”. His literary masterpieces are informed with the uncertainty of his own desire to belong to a tradition so closely allied with colonialism. In subject matter and style, they re-defined the Caribbean stage; they sought not merely to re-present the masses commonly. They misrepresented in master-scripts but interrogate very mechanisms that continue to erase, denigrate, enslave and encrypt. Thus theatre could determine for the Caribbean subjects a style of performance that is expressive of affiliative impulse rather than filial acceptance; they could supplant the imposed theatrical tradition and violate the canonical authority. Gilbert and Tompkins have contended that in attempting to redress the situation, post-colonial performance texts often violate the canon, set up “an agonistic encounter between local and received traditions”. (21). The non-Western performances like Balinese dance, Shadow play and Yatra tradition of Bengal have revised the hierarchies implicit in the colonial texts and wrested the privileged position of the European classics. The canons of distant European centres have helped perpetuate the inferiority of the socio-cultural life of the colonized territories and thus gradually erase whatever was considered “other(ed) knowledges”(ibid20). Therefore, performance art in the Caribbean region resulted in a heightened awareness of cultural difference, cross-cultural interdependence. Such theatrical performances hybridize traditions to bring about new cultural experiences. John Theime states, “post-colonial societies have been, and are, the ever-changing syncretist outcomes of varied cultural formations and their writers of multiple ethnic, gender and communal and other backgrounds” (2). As a strong de-colonising strategy, the defining tales of the Europe were adopted and mutated and their basic assumptions were dismantled. Thus literary ‘take-over’ was in its way a bold refusal to cultural dependency. It signified that the powerful paradigms represented by Europe’s canonical texts could now be mobilized in defense of what had once been seen as secondary, deviant and primitive. When Walcott re-worked Homer or Defoe or Shakespeare on Caribbean terms, he’s staking a literary claim to European tradition from and beyond its conventional boundaries. But at the same time, rewriting the characters, the narrative, the context allows the playwright an opportunity of performative intervention and reclaim the heterogeneous and hitherto excluded elements of culture. Thus these texts articulate a tension between mega-texts of Europe and their local enunciation of the cultural content; only by specially conditioned performance differences in place, culture or language could be wiped out. A set of plays belonging to the later phase- *Joker of Seville, Pantomime, Odyssey- a Stage*

Version, A Branch of Blue Nile exemplify what is often termed 'performative counter-discourse'. This chapter concentrates on how powerfully through voice, body, discourse, accents of speech - the whole semiotic network disrupt the authority of the imperial canon and creates new resonances in them. Performance has been credited with disrupting and dishonouring the traditional sanctities of the author, text, actor and also undermining the illusionist technique or realist theatre. Rather than passive engagement with their intertexts, they mobilize the awareness of cultural difference. Walcott's plays reveal significant correspondences and differences with their "pre-text", because he recognized that "awareness of the past can have a deadening as well as the liberating effect on poetic energy and their concern is to ensure that his energy is nurtured and released" (Hardwick 348)

In the Barthesian sense, the original meaning of the very word 'text' is 'a tissue, a woven fabric'.(qtd. in Graham Allen's *Intertextuality*159). In traducing originality, Walcott always believed a text is always woven out of the threads of the 'already written' and 'already read'. Many of his dramatic texts exist in transformative relation with other text/ texts. In order to avoid the reduction to mere 'influence' Walcott did not only utilize previous textual units but transformed them or 'transposed' them into new signifying system. In fact, from antiquity to the present- from the Bible and ancient Rome to Hardy, Pasternak to Nailpaul- Walcott's artistry embraces a rich, three- thousand year span of cultural activity dependent on Europe. Walcott's representative object was very different and when he turned to mega-texts, he could radically alter them. *Joker of Seville*(1974, along with ' *O Babylon*'(of 1976),) represents Walcott's foray into the form of the musical. With music by Galt Macdermot Walcott plunged himself into the pursuit of the musical. It was to be an adaptation of Torso de Molina's [El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra](#) (*The Trickster of Seville* and *The Stone Guest*) who re-created from various legends the figure of Don Juan, a hero-villain- a seductive libertine who devotes his life in seducing women taking great pride in his ability. The original was a play set in the fourteenth century Spain. Walcott re-vises the legend, commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and in an interview he explains, "I did not want to produce a play purely for the Shakespeare company or English actors and audiences. I wanted to write a play that could also be produced in West-Indies." So, what I have done is put Don Juan, or the Joker of Seville, in a West-Indian setting and indeed, one of the runs in the story is: Don Juan is a stickman." .

Though its first premier was given by Walcott's own company Trinidad Theatre Workshop, in Nov.1974, the budget cuts in the metropolis left the RSC unable to produce it. All these are indicative of Walcott's resolve to creolise the original and European myth of male sexuality rooted in specific Caribbean folk forms; what is produced is a cross-cultural piece testifying to Walcott's much-praised hybrid humanism. Walcott in his introductory note pointed out how the Trinidadian music and its public character had the qualities of wit, panache and elan of Tirso's period. Tirso's play came from the folk tradition and was not a part of the mainstream classic European tragedy and Walcott believed Juan as "a man who must have come from the folk imagination". To 'Caribbeanize' the play from the Spanish Golden Age, Walcott was insistent about his region's environment, language, music, dance and folk traditions. Shifting the focus away from the protagonist, Juan, Walcott's

play begins with the chorus, consisting of "a ship's crew, wedding crew, wedding guests, nuns, courtiers, ladies, slaves, fishergirls, musicians, whores, stickfighters, dancers"(Prologue). The setting is more demotic here compared to the stratification of the Spanish society. In place of Juan involved actively in his performance, here the Prologue reveals how Don Juan figure can be resurrected in any society for the re-enactment of his drama. As Rafael announces:

"This is the eve of All Souls,
Our carnival of candles,
When our village, San Juan, re-creates
A legend that cannot grow old...
... bring him across
The ocean, with salt, real flesh
as man, to live his loves over.
(kneels)
Earth, who holds him like a lover.
Release him to us for one light... (Prologue)"

The prologue resurrects Juan as a champion stickman, a kind of jamaican folk hero. In the Tirsonian version *Don Juan* is killed towards the end of act III when he goes to supper with Don Gonzalo's statue. But in Walcott's play he is killed during the supper that takes place at Don Juan's sanctuary in the cathedral. Other than such structural changes, Walcott syncretised the original Spanish text in terms of setting, stage directions also. Musical contributions of Galt MacDarmot draw extensively from calypso and the related tradition; the re-composed plot is animated by the rhythms of language, music and dance; the text embodies the principle of dynamic intersection of signifying practices. Permeating all the scenes, the Caribbean cultural reality is evoked through the lyrics, instruments and rhythm. All performance of Rafael and his troupe, role-playing takes place before the Trinidadian audience in the frame of folk experience and it ensures a full-blooded theatrical pleasure. On the occasion of All Soul's Eve, the villagers have come to perform the annual re-enactment of the Don Juan legend in a procession where they carry candles. It has its roots in the canboulay festival, a festival of the indentured labourers in the 1880s in which drums, singing, dancing and chanting were an integral part. The festival atmosphere is intensified by calypso with familiar refrain of *sans humanite*. Set in the makeshift arena of the field of a Trinidadian village, the area is like bullring, cockpit where stickfight was used to be practiced traditionally. In the Spanish Golden Age the setting was courtyard which also allowed contact with the audience and creating scopes for lively interaction. Walcott's Juan is re-created as skillful Trinidadian stickman, the very embodiment of male virility or macho Caribbean male, frequently celebrated in many classic calypso. Errol Hill has commented that the stickfighting was as much a musical performance, martial and kalinda, a form of song sung by the sticksmen with supporting chorus (351) At the same time Juan's sexual adventures are held to be equivalent with local performance, as Edward Baugh explains, "a 'stick man' is not only a man trained in stick fighting, but also, in Trinidadian slang, a man of great sexual prowess" (122). It deserves to be mentioned that the Trinidad Theatre workshop gave it a Sunday morning performance in natural light to conform to the condition laid down by the playwright himself: "the audience should sit on wooden bleachers close to the action, as in a rural bullfight, cockfight, or stickfight"(Joker 5). Like the setting of *Ti-Jean or Dauphin*, this setting is not only bare and open-air but involves the audience in the celebration of the occasion, indicating a greater rapport with the audience to overcome the divide of the proscenium arch from the auditorium. The physical style of acting and its vigour are signature elements of Walcott's

theatrical style since the days of Ti-Jean. The calypso at the beginning and end, dances suggest how West-Indian sensibility is rooted in folk rituals. The creole rhythms of song and physical expressiveness enable Walcott smoothly transit from Spanish creole setting to folk settings. The action is also interspersed with the shout and response pattern of songs of kalinda rhythms. Thieme has called it “Trinidadian version of play’s *carpe diem* theme”(69) . The way performance re-invents the script is exhibited in two of Errol’s two prominent texts- *Man Better Man*(1985) and *Dance Bongo* (1971). Hill advanced Caribbean drama with notable innovations like melding the original composition with calypso music and voodoo practice.

Walcott’s treatment of women has been castigated by Elaine Savory as it re-inforces negative stereotypes. She in her much-cited article “Art and Macho Attitudes: The Case of Derek Walcott” charges Walcott to have treated the issue of male infidelity “lightly and stylishly” and Juan’s attitude to women to be ‘tinged with disgust (249)’. But the three women- Isabella, Tirso and Anna whom Juan seduces and conquers one after another are not mere inert victims of aggressive male lust. Walcott’s re-composition of Juan’s ventures celebrate victory male cunning and intelligence or the superhuman energy of men. Isabella who has been deceived by the disguise of Juan of beggar women has been sentenced to a year’s penance in the convent. To the oppressive patriarchal authority, she retorts:

“a woman, yes! That was my wrong,
Born to this privilege of debasement,
Ordered to keep a civil tongue
Locked in its civil ivory casement,
When you re pious, she’s a wife,
And when appropriate a whore,
Now that you’ve simplified my life
To silence, I will speak no more.”

(1.1.10-17.115)

In attempting to voice the ‘mutedness’ of the Caribbean women, she also interrogates the codes and norms upheld in the society. Women are shut up within courts, castles or convents enveloped in dominant discourse. And again when she describes Juan with these words “He, the great joker of Seville, / whose mischief is simply a boy’s/ has made us women that is all”. (2.2), she strikes as independent voice rather than a pitiable victim. All the women that Juan seduces are endowed with strong individual viewpoints despite imprisoning roles in cramped societies. In Erna Brodber’s *Jane and Louisa Will come Home* women struggle for voice amidst small societies’ too many dictum/ strictures. As Anna’s father has been killed in the hands of Juan, she nurtures/ spells out a revenge wish and cries out for justice:

“... With my last breath
I’ll pray for justice, and for both
Of you, until he pays that debt”.

(2.2.14-16.119)

Her combative zeal is Walcott’s own re-interpretation of the theme of justice and revenge. Isabel credits Juan to have exonerated her from the false propriety and moral virtues of a wife. Tiseba, another well-read and intelligent woman seeks to improve her lot in marriage. Bound to tradition, they are un-silenced from the iron clutches of material and cultural oppression. By violating the prescribed code of chastity, Juan allows freedom to satisfy desire of love without moral validity. Patricia Ismond describes Juan as the rebel- courtier who “brings out into the open of the libido, the inordinate appetite which is the root element of all desire” (252). No less than the ladies, Juan displays devilish charm and defiantly challenges the strictures of his society. His charm is so irresistible that he can “change to elation each grave situation”. It is he who has exposed the travesty of pretension to propriety and respectability, formality and sophistication: “I/ fought for the freedom delivered/ after Eden” (2.6, 250). He sees himself as an agent that causes others to reveal their true selves. A passionate opponent of hypocritical society, he commits unflinchingly to the obligations of marriage, the orthodoxies of the establishment of state and church. As Robert Hamner describes him, “Juan embodies an irrational force- the spirit within man which urges him to obey subconscious impulses and to defy prohibitions such as those imposed in Eden and society. He is existential, post-Adamic man,

outside the pale of institutional values” (123). As a force, he not only points out the wrongs of the society but as an arch-rebel he claims to be a deliverer. Noticeably, the play concludes with the whole company joining together in a song about the possibility of freedom for a caged bird. The early heroes of Walcott also did not shrink from the imperatives of their moral choice and spurned moral guidelines. They stand apart from the pale of cultural establishment and defy its constraints. In the post-independence years, the Caribbean people had to assert their subject position and negotiate the ravage and collapse of the old world civilization. It is not for nothing that Edward Baugh has described Walcott’s Juan to be “a hero with a mission for change” (122). He has emancipated his victims by enunciating their powerlessness, to a new belief in themselves and re-claiming their identity:

Don Juan sings:

“Seville give me the honor
of calling me Don Juan, the Joker,
and its true what I do may undo a
woman, but I renew her
and honor her with dishonor”.

(2.1,4-9.117)

Revisiting Tirso’s original plot and characters, Walcott’s drama finds ample scope to pointedly critique the existing patriarchal code and hypocrisies directing the sexual politics. Breaking away from the authoritative canonical text and by the coalescing local and European traditions reflected in its indigenous syncretic practices, *Joker of Seville* demonstrates imaginative amplification rather simple transplantation. Decidedly more complex through the re-composition, the original undergoes literary mutations and re-interpretations. Long before in a preface to one of the programmes of the performance of *The Joker*, Walcott pointed out these “legends find their own vessels, when one oracle is exhausted, they may spring up in unexpected ground, just as vital, real, vulgar and apprehensible as they were when they first sprang to life”(16)

Pantomime:

Dramatists borrow the theatrical idioms across traditions, time and space, in order to reread the historical present and socio-political state. Cultural dialogue therefore, generates the possibility of performance in recontextualising and translating the source text. In Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*, Greek storyline has been adapted to the political, cultural circumstances of post-independence Nigeria and in the process of transposition the text is hybridized ; it interrogates the “ primacy of the Western tragic mode”(Tompkins,39) .Walcott was always convinced of the transformative and transpositional potential of the theatre. When he took over and adopted the defining tales of Europe, he found the need to syncretise the performances and give a Caribbean meaning to *Robinson Crusoe* on stage. Here, performance threatens the integrity of author, text and actor and rescues the dramatic text from deadly strategies and revivifies them in striking production. It is the startling potential of stage production to subvert the polarities of the dominant discourse -the salient quality of Pantomime. *Robinson Crusoe*, the ‘mega-text’ of English fiction, it has excited the Caribbean imagination by establishing and maintaining the tropologies of the New World. By a generic transposition, by a re- enactment of the original myth and by corrupting original script as Gilbert and Tompkins describe it, could such “tropologies be challenged and changed” (38).Revisiting Defoe's tale, Walcott's choice of the title of play reveals that the European travel and adventure story may be retold through facial, gestural acting. Often with the intention of ridiculing Pantomime was popularly practiced even in ancient Greece and Rome. The idea of role-playing, so common a strategy in Walcott set the pace of the narrative; at the background of stage, musical performance permeates the whole action. In his 1965 lecture on the figure of Crusoe, Walcott had quoted Yeats, “Give a man mask, and he will talk of the truth”. The post-colonial re-writes have always sought to confront the claim to absolute knowledge and truth and displace hierarchical arrangements of identity. Thus performance bears out a new system of signification because it “... stages an especially rich and reciprocal relationship amongst cultural hybridity, staged performance and political opposition” (Puri 107). As a fluid cultural mode it seeks to overturn the dominant aesthetic, linguistic, narrative and cultural codes. For over two decades, Walcott was involved in directorial business and production of performances and was aware that representation in drama and theatre does not always indicate a fixed referent or determinate position of the object represented. It can be

strategic, exploratory and re-creative/ inventive and it may generate an alternative fictional archive. The marginality of the cultural location enables the writer question the ideological basis of canonization and ideological bias such canon-formation reveals. Achebe has also insisted that such re-composition of classics or counter-hegemonic texts can go a long way to reclaim the self-belief and dispel the sense of denigration and self-abasement. They provide a useful way to analyse the relationship between the imperial past and its legacies in the present and stresses how the social relationship needs to be divested of the memories of slavery and colonization. So far as they re-write the characters, the narrative and context of the canonical perspective, they offer what may be called “renewed opportunities for performative intervention”. (Tompkins16). This intervention helps forge what Said describes as “... a geography of other identities, people and cultures/... and then to study how despite their differences they have always overlapped one another through unhierarchical influence, crossing, incorporation, recollection, deliberate, forgetfulness and of course conflict”(330-331).

After its first production, *Pantomime* was immediately recognised as remarkably relevant and timely work; it unleashed a candid commentary on post-independence social and racial politics in the West Indies. *Robinson Crusoe* has a particular significance for the Caribbeans since the white man on whom Crusoe is generally considered to have been based, Alexander Selkirk was cast ashore at his own request in a far less hospitable climate. Crusoe- Friday have been considered for long as the archetypes of the colonizer and colonized. It might have been fairly justified to have accorded Friday a centrality in counter-hegemonic response. Appropriating the story of encounter between a white castaway and local native, Walcott transfigures the adversarial relation into a comic two-hander; here, the narrative authority is wrested from Defoe’s narrator because Walcott was always attuned to the conflicting voices, the dialectic present in the source text. Rather than monologic discourse of Eurocentrism, Walcott is fascinated about how the text is riven with tensions and conflicts. Walcott has stated Crusoe to be “a figure from schoolboy reading. He is a part of mythology of every West-Indian child.” (Hamner,37). West Indian poets and prose writers have tended to identify with Crusoe, the castaway as a protean and contradictory figure. Walcott also lays main stress on the protean mutability of the Crusoe figure, one who is chameleon like and extremely adaptive to changing situations. To Walcott, the poet’s task is not to resolve these contradictions, to impose ‘explanation, justification and order’, but to embrace them, to reveal in the contrariety. As a

result, when he revisits the Crusoe story it is neither to exonerate nor to seek recrimination, but to explore the castaway's predicament and the dynamics of his proto-colonial relationship with Friday. It may also offer in the way of insights into, firstly, Caribbean experience and secondly to the poet's role in mediating this experience. Walcott, so often embraces this conflict, identifying with both the name-giving Crusoe in whose language he wishes to immortalize his Caribbean island and mimicking Friday, whose language and culture have been suppressed. In a paper presented orally at the University of West-Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 27 October, 1965, titled '*The Figure of Crusoe*', Walcott clearly states "If we read the commentary of exiles, we will think my position which is that of Crusoe or Friday, or more truly, a mixture of their imagined progeny, has been made defensive when it is in fact logical." (39). To empathize with the both would seem to defy the reality of colonialism. All such identifications, he seems to suggest, are no more than role-playing, adopting masks and mere poseurs. The problematic of the dynamic between Crusoe and Friday is never really explored in the three Crusoe poems. In those poems, Walcott mainly focuses upon the isolated position of the Caribbean poet and his creative process. In them, Crusoe is re-imagined as the hermetic poet whose craft is essentially solitary, something to be recognized for 'another's praise'. On the solitary beach, the poet feeds the 'detritus of the past' into a great bonfire by whose 'light he contemplates himself'. Crusoe is essentially a maker, re-deployed by Walcott to present art as craft, an honourable toil, requiring patience and humility:

“even the bare necessities
Of style are turned to use,
Like those plain tools he salvages
From shipwreck, hewing a prose
As odorous as raw wood adze”

(*Castaway*, 51)

The remoteness from the metropolitan world proves not to be inhibitive but favourable for the artists to initiate a Caribbean aesthetics.

The play maintains the features of classical pantomime. The pantomime genre with its cross-dressing and festival, role-playing/ masquerading, suspension of the ordinary social rules set in tune a pure carnival atmosphere. Played out by two men cast, Harry and Jackson, seeking a boost of the hotel trade in the imminently arriving season devises a pantomime on Crusoe-Friday theme. Harry discloses that he has scripted the panto version of Robinson Crusoe with two characters. But their roles are reversed to give the audience a share of satiric laughter. The adoption of their respective masks (Friday/ Crusoe) provides the necessary cover for Jackson and Harry to give emotional free rein to the sentimentality lurking behind their more accustomed roles of employer and employed. As soon as they began rehearsing their show, the comedic, playful nature of the performance runs off the track. Fun slips into satire and fake situation trips into the actual of the two. It is not for nothing that the play has been described by Paula Burnett as “carnavalesque teasing of Defoe’s and Western culture’s assumption” (119). It includes comic skits, clown routines and other slapstick effects. Both the players/ characters are from performance backgrounds; Harry is a retired British actor and Jackson, a hired Trinidadian, Calypsonian and carnival maestro. Drawing from disparate English and Caribbean popular performance tradition, this comic two-hander seeks to displace the authority of the voice of Defoe’s narrator and foreground the local performance tradition. Through shifts, turns and twists, involving all kinds of acting- “classical acting and creole acting”, their continuum creates a theatrical practice syncretized- a key feature also of the other two major Robinsonades, Coetzee’s *Foe* and Sam Selvon’s *Moses Ascending*. In this rich text, as Patricia Ismond has contended, “Walcott shows great skill and artistic resourcefulness in his use of the pantomime convention” (Theatre,13). The structure is no doubt complex fabric of classical and creole artistry- two incompatible traditions. The two performers complement each other perfectly, engaging in clown routines, ironic repartee and other slapstick effects. As Jackson himself describes, “So both of we doesn’t have to improvise so much as to exaggerate. We are faking, faking all the time” (1.85-86). Both British pantomime and the carnival acts are popular forms, both feature traditions of masking, humour that is often bawdy. Besides, cross-dressing, hybrid and variety of shows, frequent combinations of music, song and dance continue to improvise scripted panto. Improvisation admits unpredictability as well as creative manipulation of those unpredictabilities as part of the process. The playful, entertaining character of the performance does not diminish critical enthusiasm for political allegorizing in the plot. As the American

productions of the play tended to overemphasise the racial bitterness and hostility, Walcott pointed out how it may replicate imperialistic structure.

“The point is very simple. There are two types. The prototypical Englishman is not supposed to show his grief publicly. He keeps a stiff upper lip. Emotions and passions are supposed to be the things that a troubled Englishman avoids. What the West-Indian character does is to try to wear him down into confessing that he is capable of such emotion and there’s nothing wrong in showing it”(214-215). The continuum of classical and creole acting, slapstick comedy and psycho-confessional drama, jocular and serious acting, creates possibilities of mutation of the host texts. And in the process, it deconstructs the figural binarism of the master/slave, black/ white, colonizer and colonized embedded in the colonial “pre-texts”. Here, the narrative casts light on the open dialectic of the voice of the ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ and displaces enclosed discursive mode.

There is a consensus among the readers that of the two performers, Jackson’s is a completely outstanding achievement. Pouring out his ‘creole’ energy Jackson gets “freed from the shackles of the subservient “Friday’ role, now strides masterfully across the stage: his domination of Harry is effortless, and it is he who adopts the position of teacher” (Minford 130). The tension between the masterscript and self- mastery of the script fleshes out in Jackson’s role. His transgressive performance is at once entertaining, enjoyable and also thought- provoking; his deft role-playing overturns hierarchization of identity categories. He is assertive, bold, challenging, uncondescending. His flair for acting trips beyond the scripted part so much so that Harry has to disrupt the performance;

“we’re trying to do something light, just a little pantomime, a little satire, a little picong. But if you take this thing seriously, we might commit Art, which is a crime in this kind of society” (I, 41-43,140). From the beginning it is evident that Jackson’s humour has a sharp sting and he is equally adept at playing Columbus or Francis Drake. He is the very embodiment of critically resistive discourse of cultural hegemony of the West. He argues how the act of appropriation is a tool for correcting the hidden ideological assumption from the position of marginality: “Shakespeare, Robinson Crusoe, the classics, and so on and when we start getting as good as them, you can’t leave halfway” (I, 40-41,140). Playing the role of black Crusoe, Jackson

paddles his canoe, mimes a shipwreck and then proceeds to teach his white slaves in African language. He is not simple black Crusoe; his role is fraught with complexities. By his constant improvisations, he's manipulated his pre-defined social role in Harry's script. In the opening situations, he's not only brought the timely breakfast for his master but he confronts him with a reminder of historical reality of servitude as the act of placing master's foot upon the head:

“ three hundred years I served you breakfast in... in my white jacket on a white verandah, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib... in that sun that never set on your empire I was your shadow, I did you what you did, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib... that was my pantomime” (I:I,112)

Jackson is astutely critical of the constructedness of pre-scripted role and refuses to remain within the limits. After being reduced to mere shadows, the colonized can only act as mere performing animal swayed by the task master. Instead of adopting the master's values and abrogating the power of naming, he calls his role 'Thursday'. Through his constant improvisation, he proves that for all practical purposes, passivity must be sloughed off. Harry's script for Crusoe starts with lazy reflection: "O silent sea... from this complete desolation" and Jackson reminds him that Crusoe was above all a practical man who devises survival after shipwreck than a mere nature lover. He believes that a creole identity "grows from the unaided self- confronting hunger, shipwreck and solitude and creating what it needs" (Breslin123). Time and again he re-does Harry's script assertively. It is he who discovers that Harry's Crusoe- mania has resulted from bitterness of loneliness, separation from family and ex-wife's re-marriage. In a scene in Act II Jackson takes a photograph of Ellen and confronts Harry, and his role plying is so deft that it may easily be confused with reality:

“All right. I'll tell you what I'm going to do next, Ellen: you're such a big star, you're such a luminary, I'm going to leave you to shine by yourself. I'm giving up this bloody rat-race and I'm going to take up Mike's offer, I'm leaving "he theauth", which destroyed my confidence, screwed my marriage, and made you a star" (162, 4-7).

When Harry sounds maudlin from all the past setbacks and disasters, Jackson goads him to overcome the trauma of past and raise self-esteem: "Crusoe must get up. He have to face a next day again" (164). While Trewe is insecure, driven by specters of failure, Jackson is in full

command of self. He even can help Harry recover from the inferiority complex compared to his ex-wife who used to outperform him on the London stage. Full of self-dignity, he gradually brings his master to self-knowledge; he batters him out of his stiffness. He is the stark opposite of Friday of source text, self-expressive and eloquent or verbally proficient. With a voice, character and purpose of his own, he embodies “the spirit of independence that has been gradually taking root in the region”. (Theatre Ismond16)

From the beginning, Jackson is aware that they two are staging ‘history of imperialism’. By energetic role- playing, role reversal and parodying, he cuts thorough the myth of racial superiority. By revising Harry’s script, by zealous acting, Jackson mounts an attack against cultural system and codes of the metropolitan centre or occludes the violence of power relations. Towards the end, Harry even recognises an adroit performer and addresses him as Mr. Philip. He describes the colonizing mission of recasting the natives in his own image which now boomerangs and haunts the colonizer himself in the form of the shadow and makes him insecure:

“But the shadow don’t stop, no matter if the child stop playing the pantomime... while h praying, the shadow pray too, when he turn round frighten, the shadow turn round too... And that is why all of them Pakistani and the West-Indians in England... driving all you so crazy. In that sun that never set, they’s your shadow, you can’t shake them off” (1. 25-27.137). Earlier, Harry had stigmatized the third-world people as incapable of originality and creativity which echoes Naipaulian dismissal in the *The Mimic men*: “We pretend to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World” (113). The charge often pinned against the writers from the periphery was one of sterile imitation, imperfect mimicry of metropolitan paradigms. Walcott, always distrustful of originality, did never tire of pointing out mimicking as instrumental in displacing the structural non-equivalence, the discourses and logic of superiority. In *Pantomime*, creole art has been held up as capable of manipulating the performance and interrogative of the racist stereotypes, jokes and myths. Harry’s parrot imitates the name of its former German owner Herr Nigger with a creole accent. And the phrase sounds very much like “hey nigger”- a phrase of derision, a stock racial slur that startled and confronted Fanon during a train ride with his abject ‘otherness’. At this Jackson gets revolted and calls it ‘prejudiced’- the very same charge commonly leveled against the colonized. In his ground-breaking analysis of mimicry, Bhaba has described it as threatening to the strategies of

domination and other forms of disciplinary mechanism. Jackson's improvisational creativity renegotiates the relation of the two men and also uproots the established notions of history, race and social standing. Creative performativity can be oppositional to the essentialist politics and can problematize the dualism of copy/ original. At the outset the West-Indian islands is evoked by Harry as a tourist' paradise. He sings:

“Just picture a lonely island
And a beach with its golden sand
There walks a single man
In the beautiful islands.”

(1. 6-9.132)

To cater to the demand of entertainment of the guests during the season, Harry devises a comic skit on the English classic Robinson Crusoe hinged upon role reversals. But the association of 'golden sand', naked footprint and the idea of Carnivalisation are constructs of the tourism industry and Jackson frankly opposes the idea and thus asserts his freedom:

“I tell you, I ain't no actor, and I ain't working in front of a set of tourists naked playing cannibal. Carnival, but not Cannibal.”

(I: 9-12.132).

The myth of cannibalism is a testament to the West's claims of moral superiority. By refusing to walk naked before the tourists, he resists the interpellation of commercial tourism. He also objects to the proposed role-swapping which will ask Harry to play 'white cannibal' in front of his own people. This reversal is further developed when Harry unfolds a scenario in which Friday, now called Thursday is the Christian cannibal who has to unlearn his barbarous Christianity in order to be taught in African faith. Thus the opposite poles of the savage/ civilized are a myth constructed to justify the epistemic violence of the colonizer. Harry assures his servant about not contemplating suicide and the reason he offers is full of colonialist clichés and stereotypes:

“ Attempted suicide in a Third World country. You can’t leave a note because the pencils break, you can’t cut your wrist with the local blades”. (I , 31-34/133).

Jackson reminds that his ‘Third world’ is doing better ever since the English people are gone. Thus, time and again they confront each other with racial prejudices and colonial stigmas.

George Lamming has argued that to assert a different identity is never enough. Because, the history of Caliban is a history of development, growth and maturity. So it is true of Friday and Crusoe in the context of the play. Here Walcott’s staging of the encounter allows both Harry and Jackson grow and develop and overcome the *stasis* of their individual identity. They go through an elaborate pantomime and recognize in each other kindness and compassion. Paul Breslin in his perceptive analysis also mentions that the dynamic of the colonizer and colonized, master- servant is maneuvered effectively by the players to produce ‘a new text’- a text that through performance has translated the polarities of the relation and opposition into what Thieme has called “renegotiation of the roles in the post-independence period” (130). Neither Harry nor Jackson could foresee how their performance will release them from the straitjacket of racially inflicted identity and the re-positioning after the rehearsal of racial reversal. Harry with much of his suppressed rage now released has come to appreciate in his factotum an extremely talented actor. And with all play-acting over, Jackson at the very end reminds his employer, “starting from Friday, Robinson, we could talk about a raise” (170). This is, according to Partrick Taylor, not a mere demand for a salary hike but a claim for recognition and dignity. The oppressive material condition of daily lives never left Walcott’s artistic concern. Beside it may also be noted that Makak’s return home, as Walcott himself explained will see him resume his trade on another marketing day, in case of Jackson may well be a purely practical and material imperative. After all, Jackson has never ignored the duty of catering to the needs of the employer. Though there has been no material change in their position at the end of the play but they explore new understanding, rapport and mutuality after playing for so long ‘the history of imperialism’. They metamorphose themselves to assert beyond their singular identity and in the process, all hierarchies and privileges are suspended. And this is made possible by carnivalising the Crusoe-Friday myth. Thieme contends: “ultimately the play propounds a view of the character as a fluid, endlessly mutating process rather than an essentialist entity, a view which can be seen as a postcolonial conception of subjectivity irrespective of the period under consideration.”(127).

Both Harry and Jackson, by stripping away their prejudices can claim to a new identity; with colonial yoke left behind, they have successfully restaged their identity. Having negotiated with all perceptions and prejudices, both arrive at a common shore of understanding and respect. As Jackson's final calypso puts it:

“Well, a limey name Trewe came to Tobago
He was in a show business but he had no show
So in desperation he turn to me
And said: “Mr. Philip” is the two o’we,
One classical ctor and Creole,
Let we act together with we heart and soul,
It go be man to man, and we go do it fine,
And we go give it the title of pantomime.
La da deed a da da
Dee da da da da da da...”

(2 .36-45 151-152.)

After structural oppositions are dismantled, the cultural forum may generate possibilities for redemption. Walcott also underlined that this reconciliatory notion of living together may appear “facile solution’ to many but the possibility cannot be ruled out. In an interview he tells Edward Hirsch:

“I’ve had people say they think the ending is corny, but generally that criticism has come when I’m in America. The idea of some reconciliation or some adaptability of being able to live together that is sometimes rejected by people as being a facile solution.” , (119)

Harry and Jackson’s role playing testifies to the destabilizing and interruptive function of performance art. They do not merely represent reality but undergo self-transformation. Central to the plot of *Pantomime* is the confrontation of performance text and the literary text. Here several unpredictable and improvised performance destabilize the source text. As Shalini Puri observes,

“Neither Harry nor Jackson can foresee the full consequences of their rehearsal or performance” (133). As the role of Crusoe- Friday is translated into linguistic and other codes of carnivalization, the performance text is emancipated from the literary text. Jackson’s performance is highly transgressive and evolves in total disregard. the design of the plot in terms of textuality or performative is never consistent. Abandoning the faithfulness to the literary, it becomes a ‘new’ text with alternate dimensions, both temporally and spatially. Here, Harry also redeems himself redeemed jealousy and both the performance artists undergo self-transformation. Besides enactment of individual stories, the performance foregrounds a collective history- as they enact a more collective history.- the history of mastery and servitude, racial oppression Thus, primacy of the text, as in post-dramatic theatre, is undermined. The non-linear, fragmented narrative, play-within-a a play, transgresses the border of life and art and blur their boundaries.

Brief comparison may be invited of *Pantomime* with two major re-writes or Robinsonades of Z.M. Coetzee and Sam Selvon. The African writers in their constant re-doing of the Western canon have sought to emphasize their own differences and unique qualities and endeavoured to uproot the myth of Western Superiority. Like Walcott, Coetzee unwrites the colonial intertext and in using his raw material transforms Crusoe fable. Without being overtly oppositional, his *Foe* seeks to subvert the ethics of the pre-text in a rather oblique way. In Coetzee’s novel Friday appears to be silent with his tongue ripped out and becomes the very centre of Susan Barton’s contestatory narrative. Her Crusoe is further marginalized and gives away the narrative authority to Susan. The silence/ muteness of Friday is deemed the allegory for victimhood in the days of apartheid. Like the Walcottian text, Coetzee finds the means to question the authority in the precursor discourse and investigate the power dynamics, political oppression and ethical responsibility. If in *Pantomime* Jackson claims a cultural space for the hitherto marginalized/ excluded group, *Foe*, too, rests upon one ethico-discursive principle- the right of formerly misrepresented human groups speak for and represent themselves. Like Walcott’s play, it finds the means to question the authority the precursor discourse, investigate the power dynamics, political oppression and ethical responsibility. The Crusoe of the host text original is remade into weak minded Cruso with few tools, no gun and in a completely abandoned state. The only woman Ellen in *Pantomime* is only a background figure, existing only in Harry’s representation/ account of the past and Jackson only by cross- gender acting brings

her to the fore. But Coetzee foregrounds Susan, an English woman, marooned for a year on the island with Crusoe and Friday. As Jackson switches his role and impersonates to expose the gender identity as fictive construct, Foe also refrains from asserting narrative authority, no narration can be said to have monopoly over the 'truth'. The novel at the end envisions a future when people exist as full individuals and when an equal exchange will be possible among races. As the narrator, Susan Barton puts it:

“We are all alive, we are all substantial, we are all in the same world”(152).

Unlike pantomime, Sam Selvon's *Moses Ascending*, the second of his 'Moses Trilogy' offers a direct adversarial response to Robinson Crusoe. Here the inversion of the relationship is rather straightforward and the novel moves between storylines in a manner that displaces the framework offered by the Friday-Crusoe opposition from the centre. Moses who cannot sustain for long in the role of either Friday or Crusoe is a man poised between English identity and loyalty to Caribbean roots. Like Jackson in his 'Memoirs', he attempts a form of writing which mixes creole, Caribbean vernacular and stilted Standard English. Thieme rightly calls him 'a linguistic magpie' forging 'uniquely hybrid register'(61). Selvon's Moses, like Walcott the artist stoutly resists the essentialist rhetoric of 'black brotherhood'. Here Moses indoctrinates the white servant Bob and deploring the illiteracy teaches him alphabet. The strategy of writing like Crusoe's journal seems to underline his hold of the narrative authority. Moses's possession of money and Bob's lack of it overturned the unquestioned superiority conferred on the white men by race.

Odyssey- A Stage Version

Classics can console. But not enough .

Another Life. (Collected Poems, 297)

Classics act as imaginative stimulus; they are believed to be the source of light. Homer, even in the present century has been viewed as the fountainhead of Western literature, its defining author. Writers from all the corners of the world have re-worked the Homeric tale. No wonder then, connections have been woven between St. Lucia and the ancient Mediterranean. In reinventing Homer, Walcott has often picked from the Greek past and placed him in the postcolonial Caribbean context. And as a result, Homeric receptions have undergone cultural cross-pollinations and. Homer, as Grazios, Barbara and Greenwood Emily(eds) describes, “is a good starting point for thinking about epic and its generic transmutations, for integrating challenges to and redefinitions of canonical literature and for reflecting on the politics of reading Homer”(5). Writers working in post-colonies have re-imagined the classics and read them in strategically un-canonical ways. Thus classical referents have enabled ‘new cultural forms and processes to emerge’(Hardwick 242) Theatre-practitioners, poets, sculptors- all alike used, abused, rewrote and adopted the texts and images of the ancient world. They have been recognized as a source of resistance and liberation as well as or even rather than suppression. Postcolonial Caribbean writers have used their artworks to facilitate the transgression of boundaries and subversion of hegemonic rigidities previously mapped out in precursor canonical texts with the island stories at their heart. When Walcott undertook to re-write Homer at the behest of Royal Shakespeare Company, he knew that it will not be another Omeros but a stage product exploiting “the possibility of the theatre of the piece”(Burnett 282). Here Walcott was not driven/ goaded by the imperative of “transformation or translation”.(ibid). In his own words, “In a sense, my plays are large poems that are transformed before an audience”. He also argued that the modern dramatic poetry has raw, comic power and it does not merely seek an alliance/ to be an extension of the tragic tradition. Hence the transposition through mounting a stage version came too easily to Walcott’s Drama. Post-independence Caribbean writers have elicited from the myths and various traditions; Odyssean figure has been altered through various appropriations. As Laura Hardwick observes, “ the reception of the Odyssey in Anglophone literature in the modern Caribbean is an example of a text that was appropriated by colonial writers to underwrite empire, and has subsequently been revisited and rewritten to undermine the empire and to rewrite the region’s history”(193). Unflagging enthusiasm for Homer informs many of Walcott’s poems and plays. It has become a commonplace of West-Indian literary criticism to describe Walcott as ‘Caribbean Homer’. Finding many analogues and affinities between the Aegean and

the Caribbean archipelago, between Greek and Anglophone cultures, he categorically refused to be seen as 'second rate Aegean'. It is only through literary take-over that the temporal, historical and cultural distance between them could be wiped out. In his seminal essay *The Muse of History*, he emphasized the vision of the New World man as elemental being, one freed from the shackles of sequential time and capable of generating the possibilities of change. Always an upholder of 'history as myth', Walcott argued that time past and time present were not dichotomous but the Aegean world lived in simultaneous reality with the Caribbean. Therefore, a Caribbean artist should cultivate a sense of the present as 'at once a re-enactment of the past'(Brown.165). Without the baggage of the past, the classics can be appropriated for articulating polymorphous cultural reality. In his essays Wilson Harris also has repeatedly stressed that texts of the past might be initiated in theatre and performances. In his essay, "Creoleness: the Crosswords of a Civilization?" he has contended time past and future are continuous and this is the phenomenon of simultaneity exists in the imagination; times past and future share the same narrative space. Both these artists denied any tension between originality and tradition and thus the reception of *Odyssey* meant exploring a new cultural space through encounter with the other myths. The subjects hitherto separated by historical junctures meet on new cultural territory As in the very opening line of *Sea Grapes*(1976), a speculation is made:

"a schooner beating up the Caribbean/ for home, could be Odysseus,/ home-bound on the Aegean"

Translating the epic poem and its romance narrative into a theatrical text was indeed an exciting challenge for Walcott. He himself described the assignment as "a technical challenge to construct a dramatic poem as close as possible to the original poem" (Walcott on The Arts Programme, introduced by Florance, BBC Radio2, June 26, 1992). For the purpose of dramatization of the epic, Walcott compressed the poem into two acts of fifteen and six scenes, suitable for three hour performance narrative. And the verse form that he employed here is the alexandrine form of twelve syllables and the popular form of stichomythia or the continuous exchange of line and half lines. The young director of this production, Greg Doran also underscores the use of flexible hexameter line divided in a way that everybody speaks only a line at once. Separate episodes are threaded together with symbolic links and thus maintain a symmetrical structure. Instead of changing the original poem or finding the Caribbean namesake

of the epic/ Homeric characters of the original, he re-invents it in the Caribbean. In emulating the Western master narrative, Walcott was not merely articulating the progressive cultural development or merely conferring glory or honour on the backwaters of empire. Recasting the Homeric narrative, Walcott creolises the original and gleans out of it a smooth traffic between cultures, an enhanced variety of characterization. As Edward Baugh comments, “ In adapting *The Odyssey* to the stage , then Walcott naturalizes and demystifies Homer, and writes a play for Homer, and writes a play for his time, one which nevertheless stays substantially close to Homer”(197). The model of Homer is carefully negotiated, manipulated, edited and wrested away from an exclusive European tradition. Homeric poem is so strong in performative elements and so informed with the tension of contradictory voices that it proved to be conducive for the performance aesthetics of Walcott and a kind of continuum was found possible, as surfaces in a conversation between Odysseus and Demodocus:

ODYSSEUS: That’s a strange dialect. What islands are you from?

DEMODOCUS: A far archipelago. Blue seas. Just like yours.

ODYSSEUS: So you pick up various stories and you stitch them?

DEMODOCUS: the sea speaks the same language around the world’s shores.

(2: 4, 9-12,122)

One of Walcott’s inventive changes in the art of characterization is the acknowledgement of the significance of the peripheral characters- those who surround the white characters. Despite being social subordinates, they occupy multiple subject positions and interrogate the privilege of the leading white characters. They contribute considerably to Walcott’s process of creolisation of the European *ur-text*. While in the Homeric original she was an absent figure, Walcott draws Euriclia as a bearer of old culture and wisdom, comparable to Ma Kilman of Omeros- the practitioner of Obeah and herbal treatment, She is imbued with a superior consciousness, a dignified voice in the Ithacan palace- “this house’s foundation”(184). Her role as a nurturer has benefited two generations. Directed/ commanded by the queen, she reluctantly asks why she should wash the dirty legs of a beggar;

Lord, missis, me must wash this man foot?

(2:6,136)

While washing his feet, she notices the scar and cries out in total dismay: “oh god, is you, Master”? Before she discloses it publicly, she is checked by the returning king. She also acts as a catalyst in the reunion of father and son. When she looks at the massacre of the suitors she utters a cry as a sufferer and prays for the eternal rest of the departing soul. Like the old nurse, Eumaeus sees herself as a member in the royal household. She claims a familiarity with both son and father. Beside being a nurturer, she’s been a teller of old nurse’s tales as was popular in the West-Indian society. Another maid, Melantho appears much more spirited and less servile to exhibit class resistance. At the end when Odysseus threatens her with death, both Eurycleia and Penelope intervene to protect her. With these sketches of the two black maids, Walcott “revolutionaizes the elitist assumption of the Homeric treatment” (Burnett 303). Along with the figure of Billy Blue, Walcott also re-affirms of the role of Homer as an oral poet. It recalls a time when the bard was the chief entertainer. As Walcott himself stressed that in such culture the bard became “ the evening’s entertainment,... who probably was singing while people were having dinner, and had to be loud and clear, may be ignored while he was singing those stories...an itinerant person, poet, moving around the islands and to different cities”.(Walcott, interview with Burnatt, Stratford- on- Avon, July1,1992). As Nausicaa mentions, “ My father love stories, he rew. their singers”. In his figure, Walcott combines black American blues singer and ancient bard and stitches various episodes together. Like Eurycleia, he is marked out for Egyptian origin and part of a still-existing African culture. Thus his racial and cultural othernesses occlude the assumptions of monoculture. The blind singer, Billy Blue is a combination of part Greek chorus and part of Griot of the African tradition. It is he who opens the play, laying on its place in the oral tradition transmitted down the centuries:

“Gone sing ‘bout that man because his stories please us,
 Who saw trials and tempests for ten years after Troy,
 I’m blind Billy Blue, my man’s sea-smart Odysseus,
 Who the God of the Sea drove crazy and tried to destroy”.

(1.4.1)

Playing a part of the modern day anchor, he comments on the action and presides over almost the whole action. At the end of the action, he reminds us of the role of a wandering bard,

a figure whom John Theime describes as ‘a Caribbean Homer’. (188). At the end of the action, he reminds us of the role of wandering bard who circulates back to the centre of the story;

“I sang of that man against whom the sea still rages,
Who escaped its terrors, that despair could destroy,
Since that first blind singer, others will sing down the ages.”

(2.5.6-8.160)

All these characters are strategic users of creole speech, assimilators of disparate cultural traditions. As the Homeric texts are remade, the classic Western view of ancient Greece as the fountainhead of civilization is confronted. The spirit of the original, its vigour and zest has been repeated with difference in what may be called a ‘new’ text. Thus Walcott’s re-composition and complex manoeuvre distributes the narratorial responsibility among the black figures.

One of the several episodes which testify to recasting of Odysseus as a West-Indian legendary trickster figure of Anancy is the Cyclops episode/ encounter. His intellectual resource is aptly pointed out by the First Sailor “You must have some ideas; you’re famous for scheming” (2.1. 66.9-11). In this encounter, like his Homeric namesake, he wins with practical wisdom and quick presence of mind. Halfway through the play, he enters the grotto of Cyclops and there in the closed-off space sitting at a dinner table, he begins conversation with the monster . The episode of confrontation is overtly political; in the post-independence West-Indies the divisive and authoritarian governance had roused Walcott’s ire. The political realism of the scene has compelled the critics to see the episode s an allegory of the post-colonial writer’s “resistance to totalitarianism” (Giannopoulou, 4).

Estranged from all human experiences, the cyclopean island is “an iron island. Sunless. Cold(1.8.59-60). As thoughts are forbidden here, it is also intellectually sterile. Compared to it, the Homeric island is rich, well sustainable and paradisal. Stripped of all entertainment shows, it is oppressive:

EURYLOCHUS:

There is no art, no theatre, no circuses even

PHILOSOPHER:

There is the care of the grey colonels.

EURYLOCHUS

So one cold eye is all these Greeks know of heaven.

PHILOSOPHER

Their statues weep with grime over history's ruin.

(1.7.7-10)

Walcott's Cyclops is a "shepherd" wresting passive submission from his native people; his is the society of coercive control and mechanism. If he nourishes the sheep, it is only in order to eat them at a later stage. As Eurylochus describes the one-eyed monster, "The Eye's their shepherd, and the nation are his sheep?"[1.8.61.].The name he bears as Eye is strongly redolent of panoptican authority of all the islanders; all modes of independent thinking is censured in Cyclop's regime. It is often pointed out that Walcott's Cyclops is Orwellian Big Brother who is actively engaged in the act of seeing, keeping surveillance over all citizens to wield total power. Cyclop's Eye is so tyrannical that it is unknown to pity or compassion and does not know how to weep. Thus, the entire episode is a testament to the perversion of xenia(hospitality) and Walcott knew the alarming symptoms of divisive politics and autocratic separatism of the state leaders. This affinity is succinctly put by Lorna Hardwick in her essay *A Diadolos in the late-modern age? Transplanting Homer into Derek Walcott's The Odyssey: A Version*, " So, Walcott's redrawing of the otherness of the Cyclops in terms of political tyranny and lack of human feeling both dissolves the distance between Homer and the 20'th century and denies that it is 'natural' to exploit ethnic difference as a criterion for "otherness"(9). Odysseus counter argues mentioning visual organ as a pair rather than single and implying that human feature is indicative of the bond of solidarity and fellow feeling. Contrasted to his totalitarianism of Cyclops, Odysseus's pair of eyes suggests compatibility and moral sanity "For balance, Proportion. Contrast. Mortals need two.. Left, right. Good, bad. Heaven,hell"[68.7-8]. In *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake had written, "Without contraries there is no progression". Walcott's artistic vision entailed all the contraries and the opposites of culture to forge new dramatic tradition/ practices in the Caribbeans. Soon Odysseus introduces him as 'Nobody' renouncing of his nominal identity.

His adaptation of the pseudonym “Nobody” is brilliantly inventive- a negation of any identity or empty signifier which prevents Cyclops from getting help when hurt. Walcott’s Don Juan had taken the pseudonym of Nobody and before him Shabine, the red-nigger sailor-protagonist had described himself: “Either I’m nobody or I am a nation”. And Walcott’s Juan, when asked by Isabella, replies, “I’m nobody, that’s all you know;/ my name is Nobody, or you’re dead”(14). Having such indefinite/ indeterminate identity expresses the Caribbean cultural crisis in the land where they were settled. When Cyclops demands his identity, Odysseus supplies him all negative answers. He is nobody, comes from nowhere, does not know where he is going and believes nothing. Paul Breslin pointed out that Walcottian assumed identity/ persona is actually an elusive trick to be limited by the names thrust upon by others. Finding a correspondence with West Indian identity question, it is described as Robert. D. Hamner as “[The West-Indians] strategic adaptability allowed them to survive in the New World in the same way as Odysseus’ pretending to be nobody assisted his escape from the Cyclops”. (Ref.8). When Odysseus has blinded him, the monster cries out that ‘Nobody’ has hurt him, it ironically helps Odysseus flee. As retaliation and in futile rage, Cyclops hurls drum after drums. Though drums were became instrument in musical accompaniment in the hands of the slaves and banned by the white lords. Here again, Walcott resists easy markers of identity for both the colonizer and colonized. While fleeing, odysseus divulges his ruse to Cyclops: “MY NAME IS NOBODY! IT’S ODYSSEUS! AND LEARN, YOU BLOODY TYRANTS, THAT MEN CAN THINK”(1.9. 6-8. 72). Again, here Odysseus, the outsider has thrown off the mantle of tyranny. Easy identification of Odysseus/ Cyclops with victim/ victimizer is problematised in Walcott’s re-working.

The way Odysseus overpowers his opponent may be read as victory of civilization over brute strength. Thus the fixity of cultural quality, community identity is again called into question. Therefore, Zina Giannopoulou describes the episode as articulatory of “vision of post-colonial emancipation” or a “universal parable of humankind’s resistance to totalitarianism”. Odysseus is not a liberator in the sense of being an enlightened outsider who manages to impose order from outside. Rather than upholding the grandeur of the past, his theatrical imagination transforms the past events into the ever-present possibility as Odysseus says: “ The future is where I begin”(1 .7, 12.). Only the power of thinking can re-define the distant and mythicized past; by deploying the Homeric episode Walcott scathingly attacks the contemporary politics of

despotism, ideological repression. In Walcott's hand the politics of post-coloniality becomes a narrative of struggle against the totalitarianism.

Besides assuming an understanding of race and class, *The Odyssey- A Stage Version* radically alters the gender role and resists the reduction to stereotype of its female figures. One single episode- the denouement of the play- the scene of visceral slaughter and bloodbath will adequately explain this claim. The repercussion of the act of slaughter on the hero is so unsettling that it revives the memory of Troy:

“Troy's mulch! Troy's rain! Wounds. Festering diseases”.

(2.6, 13.151)

Though he wants to convince Penelope that the slaughters were committed for the sake of her defense, (To Kill your swine, Cierce”) , her response is one of revulsion and pacifistic rejection of all forms of cruelties. She questions the justification of the bloodbath: “You had to wade this deep in the blood”?(2.6.7,153) In Act II, Sc.V, she lays bare before disguised husband the excruciatingly long days of suffering:

“My own bed is besieged by a hundred suitors”.

(2.5 ,5,130).

For keeping the sanctity of marriage bed intact, she has outmanoeuvred and thwarted the suitors. As Hamner comments, “... she demonstrates that she is Odysseus' intellectual equal”. (107). By weaving Laertus's shroud, she has occluded the advance of her suitors She blames the men folk for gratuitous/ indulgent acts of violence.

“ these butchers that dyed the whole Aegean's basin”.

(2.6.11,154)

From Troy to Ithaca the futile violence committed by Odysseus and his army and the codes of heroic tradition is thus called into question. It is, as Peter Burian contends, “a criticism of the heroic tradition as a whole, as well as of Odysseus himself, for Penelope such glorification is inhumane” (Ref. 49). In Margaret Atwood's retelling in *Penelopiad* (2005) also Penelope

refuses to be made an example of considerate, trustworthy and all- suffering wife. Here Penelope has suffered threats from all the male relations- her father, her own son, her husband. At the point of slaughter, she desires another war to be started which will propel Odysseus and his crew to sail away from the Ithacan home again. After their departure, she wants to regain control / command of the kingdom. Thus the archetypal image of devoted, faithful and soulless wife is subverted in the retelling of Atwood. Besides, the twelve maids slaughtered in the main work is given voice through lyrical interludes. Thus the grand narratives of the war are relocated in the micronarratives of women at home. In this modern retelling the maids replay the role of the Greek chorus, a group of lowly characters commenting on the mighty figures and appear to take the centrestage of the action. As in their jump-rope rhyme they describe it:

“we had no voice no name

We had no name

We had no choice

We had one face

One face the same

We took the blame

It was not fair

But now we're here

We're all here too

The same as you

And now we follow

You, who find you

Now, we call

To you to you”.

(*Penelopiad*, 195-196)

Penelope’s assertive role, Euricylia’s dignified part have been underscored in T. Mauve’s analysis in *Derek Walcott’s Voyage of Homecoming*. He contends that they help flesh out the feminist perspective of the playwright. They by articulating independent views, propound the alternative to the heroic militarism and triumphalism. The downright rejection and deglorification of butchery and refusal to accept it as tribute to love reminds us of Yeats’ *No Second Troy* where the poet refuses to admit Irish nationalist struggle as spiritedly heroic or noble. Here, too women appear as the voices of reason, sensitivity and opposers of the patriarchal authority. When Odysseus commands the execution of the traitorous kitchen maid, Melanthos, the other two, Eurycleia and Penelope invert to desist/ thwart him. Walcott also drops the mass hanging of women. Compared to men, women have impressed with non-violence, intelligence and morally sensitive choice. This potential transformative justifies their claim to be recognized as agents in their world. Paula Burnett has also described the Ithacan house as “site of female domination” (309). Domestic sphere of home and hearth have not proved to be constraints for them. Thus Walcottian “con-texts” explore the alternative and resistant position for the women.

Walcott always conceived West-Indian identity to be processual, in flux and motion. While he showed fidelity to the host text, he recast the trope of voyage/ wander and homecoming in sync with the Caribbean reality. As Julia Sanders also contended that myth is never transported wholesale into its new contexts; it undergoes its own metamorphosis in the process” (64). Moreover the poetic persona of Walcott, as John Theime in his study touches upon in the Ch.5 Of his study, is foregrounded through the dialectics of motion and stasis which may be explored further. The axis of the plot is the never-ending tension of outbound voyage and homecoming. In Nobel-acceptance speech Walcott described himself as primarily a Caribbean poet/ artist but also at the same time as “homeless, circling satellite”. This has continued to be a major

concern of all of Walcott's work; this contrary artistic pull has been best symbolized by the Homeric hero. Eager for further exploits and new experiences, a "sacker of cities", Odysseus states/ claims, "[a]t the back of all men's minds is a rented room". Penelope's love for her husband is a 'harbouring heart', denoting security and protection. Upon return home, Odysseus finds their marriage bed is unshakable as olive tree. Towards the end their exchange is a testament to loyalty and mutual faith:

ODYSSEUS: keep me embraced in your arms, your harbouring heart.

PENELOPE: take root, my pine, my shade, my patience's pardon.

(2.6. 14-15. 157)

Time and again, Odysseus is identified with sea-animals like crab and sea-turtle as they carry their home on their back. Home is more symbolic than a physical reality. When Odysseus meets his son, Telemachus in disguise, both having experienced exile reveal their impulse for home in a very interesting exchange between them:

ODYSSEUS: And where you come from, young man?

(Silence)

TELEMACHUS: I'm from where everybody comes from. From my home".

(2.7.15-16.160)

In the middle of his career, Walcott went to America but regularly returned to the St.Lucian home. His thriving literary prestige could not undermine his literary in-placeness. By the end of *Omeros*, while Walcott extends his wanderings to North America and Europe, all events rhyme with a Caribbean counterpart. This wisdom of dynamic relationship of root/ route, voyage/ home-coming is best summed up in the words of Seven Seas;

"there are two journeys

in every odyssey, one on worried water,

the other crouched and motionless, without noise.

for both, the "I" is mast; a desk is a raft

for one , foaming with paper, and dipping the beak

of a pen in its foam, while n actual craft

carries he others to cities where people speak

a different language, or look at him differently".

(BookXI 295)

The New World identity is constructed around these contrary impulses.

First performed in 1992, Walcott's *Odyssey-A Stage version* reaffirms how imaginative reconfiguration can remake and translate an ancient text. Revisiting the Homeric subject, Walcott explores connections between the two archipelagos - Greece and the Caribbean-rejecting one's primacy over other. He's culturally trespassed in order to creolise the original. And thus it becomes a rich fabric of a variety of voices, speeches and dialogues. Walcott's plays have presented powerful alternatives to monolithic conceptions of society and culture and homogenizing discourses of identity. Individual and collective performances mutate the literary text as polysemic, plural and multi-dimensional. Like his poetry, his dramas also traverse the boundaries of time, place and affirms the spatial and temporal co-presences of subjects in the object newly fashioned. And in so doing he was not merely passing on the tradition but as Adreinne Rich demanded, also breaks its hold over the writer.

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 Shakesporean 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”.

Conclusion

Rather than mirroring life passively, drama acts as an artistic mode of thinking about life, a way of categorising it. Theatre and society share a common propensity for spectacular display. Through its categories like events, characters, situations and themes, drama endeavours to understand and deal with it. Since the days of Classical plays or Shakespearean theatre, the playwrights lay bare their own status as writers of fiction and perform a hermeneutics of itself; they examine or judge or raise questions about itself or the tradition in which it stands. In its 'metatheatre', a play recognises its own status as fiction and violates the conventional building blocks of the formal composition. It is based on the sustained opposition between the construction of a fictional illusion and the laying bare of that illusion. Here drama indulges in self-absorbed form in aesthetic contemplation. Since life is already in various ways theatre-like, here the characters are aware of the theatricality of life – as they can act and play, can refuse to view themselves as predictable actors in a monolithic system with prescribed behaviours. The dichotomous nature of metatheatre is felt between the actual event of the play and the play-like qualities of the actual world. In his long career of playwriting, Walcott has regularly turned to the strategies of metatheatre and the metatheatrical impulse of his plots makes assumption that cultural identity is unstable and opens up a space for contesting the hegemonic script for collective identity. As Camilla Stevens observes, “His stage characters re(assemble), re(store) and re(present) a fragmented identity that is richer and more complex for the seams and glue that is held together”(465), but more importantly, they also rely on knowledge of current theatrical practices. Such plays also construct and define an audience which is possessed of local knowledge. Belonging to the later years, the two plays *Pantomime* and *A Branch of Blue Nile* with metatheatrical strategies put into sharp relief the problematic relationship between art/ performance and life, theatre and reality, local and classical acting. In them characters are performers too, theatre actors who are aware of the theatricality of life and refuse to be limited to the acting according to the norms of monolithic system. As S. Puri observes, “For the artistic virtuosity of their individual performance... is consistently placed within the frame of a political macro-history which includes class, race, nation, gender and sexuality.” (127).

Like many meta plays, *A Branch of Blue Nile* has the theatre and theatrical profession as its subject along with tension between current theatrical practices. Here the West- Indian theatre company rehearses a Shakespeare classic, *Antony and Cleopatra* for staging in course

of which conflicting styles jostle with each other; it is between a white director who has returned from England, a black West- Indian actor who studied in New York and Cristopher, a married Trinidadian who writes the play in dialect These plays have for their subject matter the theatre and theatrical profession about the management of the theatre, its acting company and its production history:

“If there’s disorder here, in the little world, no thrust, no center, no authority, then lunacy is correct, we’re wasting time. What is wrong in here is what is wrong with this country. Our country. And if, outside, there’s mismanagement and madness, we must go mad”.

(223)

As the plot is structured, ‘creation’ and ‘criticism’ intersect. Here in the plot, the characters like Sheila or Harvey affirm themselves as self- conscious subjects that transcended their encoded social roles. The dramatic action revolves around their response to Sheila, their play with the text. When Harvey directs Sheila/ Cleopatra to “play what you feel about Chris, not Antony” at which Sheila responds “Just leave my private life out of this, please”. This realm of private and professional life often collide and collude. In course of action, dialect speech collides with the Bardic language or performer’s natural language with the language of the staged text.”(Breslow 390) . Here, Harvey’s Americanism is parodied by Gavin. It is in Sheila’s career decisions that is realized the interface of acting and life as even after leaving her acting career, she admits, “I don’t see the concretion. It’s like the theatre. The difference is that it’s day. No spotlight now.” (289). The troupe is engaged in rehearsing not only the classical play but also the “dialect’ play and they overlap to face the West-Indian artist with the complicated choice between the two.

The comic narrative of *Pantomime*, a classic illustration of the play within the play approaches its source text for critical or ironic convergence as Harry-Jackson set to swap their roles. Time and again, the play-acting allows both the actors embody new characters and from behind the character an occasional actor emerges. Here both the characters have their background from the entertainment industries. Both are adept performers engaged in self-referential debate how much of pantomime would be a serious rendition or light- hearted, amusing skit of Robinson Crusoe. Jackson, a reluctant performer takes hold of the script improvises temporarily o shed his identity affirming “all human roles are relative that identities are learned rather than innate”. (Hornby6). Through his spirited performance, he

re-works the master-servant relation and claim relatively greater independence, explore role beyond the historically determined part or institutional tyranny. The authority is subverted:

“ You see, two of both acting a role here we ain’t really believe in, you know. I ent think you strong enough to give people orders, and I know i ain’t the kind who like taking them. So both of we doesn’t have to improvise so much as exaggerate. We faking, faking all the time” (138)

He resents that in the island, black Crusoe will only act as agents and ‘neo-colonial shadows’. In a dramatically tense scene in Act II in a role play within a comic entertainment, Jackson poses as Harry’s ex-wife Ellen, holding the photograph in front of his face in a kind of pantomime mask which replays the scene from her marriage. But the role-play is confused with reality and Harry bursts out:

“All right, I’ll tell you what I am going to do next, Ellen: you’re such a big star, you’re such a luminary, and I’m going to leave you to shine by yourself. I’m giving up this bloody rat race and I’m going o take up Mike’s offer”. (2,4-7, 150)

He bares out the acute complexity as he lagged behind as a mediocre actor in comparison with his ex-wife. Thus, Harry’s marriage breakdown, failure in show business are fleshed through the role- playing technique of pantomime and carnival. It also destabilises gender and racial stereotype; through performance is exposed fictionality. In Walcott’s dramaturgy, ‘ play’ and ‘performances’ generate refreshing and imaginative variation of the social roles, cultural identity and suspend our belief in theatre’s claim to be a faithful reflector of human interaction. In *The Last Carnival*, metatheatrical devices like role-playing, inset performance like masque lay stress on the creolised heritage which “expose cultural and national identity as theatrical representation” (Steevens 164).

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Metatheatrical Performances and Re-negotiating Identity-in Walcott's Selected Plays

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Abstract:

In the dramas of 70s, Walcott showed remarkable dramaturgic advancement and sophistication. More fitted for American production, in these plays Walcott has deployed devices to expose the history and reality as contingent. Since the term 'metatheatrical' has been coined by Lionel Abel in 1960, it's become a catch-all for reflexive dramaturgy with regard to both genre and technique. In case of Walcott's syncretic and self-conscious plays like *Pantomime or Branch of Blue Nile*, the devices expose the intermingling of life and theatre and also add to our insight into the writing of plays. Moreover, the constant role-playing/ playacting, improvisation, masquerading and other maneuvers help these plots question unproblematic notion of culture and identity.

From the beginning of his career, Walcott was insistent about world- theatre metaphorical equivalence. And it is no wonder then that self- referential play abounds in his drama. In his seminal essay *What the Twilight says* she cogently states: "The theatre was about us, in the streets, at lampfall in the kitchen doorway, but nothing was solemnised into cultural significance". Rather than partitioning life from art/ drama, they were found to be juxtaposed. And he was firmly resolved to transform the surrounding 'theatricalities' into the discipline of theatre. Drama is the tool for explaining the nature of socio-cultural reality, by providing a world of make-believe, of play-acting. And by registering the theatricalities, they open a critical distance between the play-script and the play performed. Unlike the realistic plays, they repudiate the positivist and empiricist world view and foreground the interplay between fiction and reality. Their experimental strategies reveal the provisional nature of literary

convention by constructing fictional illusion through the imperceptibility of the frame and by shattering that illusion by the constant exposure of the frame.

Metatheatre flaunts its condition of artifice and by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality. In metatheatre, the characters are created who are aware of the theatricality of life, who can act, who can play, who refuse to view themselves as predictable actors in a monolithic system of behaviour. One of the defining features of metafiction is the simultaneity of creating a fiction and making a statement about making that fiction. It is often observed that it performs a hermeneutics of itself, that it examines or judges or raises questions about or is. about itself or the tradition in which it stands, or raises questions about theatre as itself. First produced in 1983 and described often as Walcott's contribution to theatre, *A Branch of Blue Nile* experiments with the tools that shed light on the career of Walcott as playwright, designer, director and critic and the experiences with the Trinidad Theatre Workshop. Interplay of role-playing and reality are central to the troupe which is rehearsing a production of *Antony and Cleopatra* on Trinidad stage. Here all the major characters are aware of their theatricalities whereby the dividing line between fiction and reality is erased. Beside this central plot, Chris, the playwright is also writing a story about the company. The rehearsal is interrupted by his off-stage/ backstage affair of Sheila and Chris and when he parts with the company a, he begins to write a play which tells the story of the company. The difficulties of playing Shakespeare, jarring confrontation of languages and cultures are fleshed out in the opening scenes. Such self-reflexive consciousness underlines Walcott's experiences of mounting reprisal on classics. Like Pantomime, here the master text undergoes creole transformation and problematize the cultural authority of the text like Antony and Cleopatra. The characters play multiple and overlapping roles. There is a tension between Euro-American methods and attitudes- Stanislavski an acting and Strasberg's 'Method' adaptation of it and local amateurism. Real life identity and the stage persona oftencollide with each other. As Sheila objects to Chris's mixing up of Sheila the actress, playing a role and Sheila the person living her life:

Sheila: I'm also dying.

Chris: Spoken like a queen. Let's go for drive.

Sheila: Fuck Cleopatra! My name is Sheila Harris and I came here like a shy little mamapule because you said I had it and I've found it. (236)

Creole interventions often subverts the Shakespearean 'pre-text' and often put down elevated diction of Shakespeare.

In Pantomime, metatheatrical strategies seek to understand identity as unstable, culturally constructed positions and expose the performativity that constitute subjects. For both the protagonists, Harry and Jackson, the experience of performing on the stage, their career background of show-business, taking part in 'play-within-the-play-within the play' enable them to surpass the limits of monolithic system of predictable behaviour. Here, the vortex of the comic design is the resort owner's idea of reversing roles, vacillation between the poles of farce and confessional psycho drama. The two-men through their respective performed part rewrites a script- one that evolves differently from the master script. As they go on improvising, they together create an ("other") play- transgresses beyond the original intention of keeping it 'light'. Just as Crusoe and Friday roles have been reversed, Harry's role as director, producer and writer of the play has been usurped by Jackson's assertive challenge. It's not only that the pantomime is wrested away from Harry but in the design of a psycho-drama, forces him out of the British reserve. In the mode of a psycho-drama, the scar is bared: "My son's been... gone queer, either". (103). Harry enters into more personal revelations, disclosing his loneliness, failed marriage, professional defeat at the hands of his ex-wife and his mediocre talent. Gradually it is revealed that Harry has arrived on this island to restore his shattered confidence- he just wanted to do a better panto and thereby redeem his sense of inferiority: "That's the real reason I wanted to do the panto. To do it better than [she] ever did"(164) Out of this hierarchy , they improvise to arrive at some reconciliation or condition of living together. In the closing minutes of the performance, Jackson's impersonation/ masquerading as Ellen helps Harry purgate his bitterness as Harry threatens to chase her with the ice- pick. And his natural inhibition is broken down by this re-enactment and intrusion of personal story. As Breslin observes: "... the interplay between Harry and Jackson-as- Ellen allows the resolution, at least on Harry's part, of long-standing bitterness".(126)

In Pantomime the framework of play about play further explores the relationship of art and life; they sometimes correspond and sometimes oppose one another. Harry intends it to remain a comic skit; Jackson stretches it beyond because theatricality and pantomime are not mere evasions of truth, but a means of exposing it. Harry's involvement through enactment of personal past rouses the dormant actor within it. As his familial traumas intrude into the script, his original scripts become compromised. Now himself a castaway, after a

traumatic death of his son, he seeks to redress the emotional wound. As Shalini Puri comments, “he seeks in the colonies a place for emotional convalescence after the disastrous dissolution of the family”. (121). Time and again, through acts of improvisation, there evolves an (‘other’) script- one that re-does the master script. The idea of role-reversal which prompted Harry to act as director, producer and writer of the play of the play has been usurped by Jackson’s assertive challenge. Through rehearsal, individual performances, ‘play-within- play-within-play, the plot does not only stage the performative qualities of creolization and holds up to question the boundaries of identity. The pantomime genre with its cross- dressing and festival, role-playing/ masquerading, suspension of the ordinary social rules set in tune a pure carnival atmosphere. And carnival appears to be not a leisure hour of entertainment from drudgery of daily lives but also prepares a way out of the violent history of displacement and genocide. Masquerading and play-acting here become empowering strategy to displace colonial authority.

Walcott’s self-reflexive consciousness unfolds in the inset performance of carnival where characters consciously and unconsciously adopt many roles. The metatheatrical performances often foreground encounter/ negotiation of different cultures. The dramatic action of *The Last Carnival* entails this encounter between white elite culture and the working ideology of black servants. Here, Victor is obsessive upholder of European art and he composes a short shadow play during the carnival in the first act. In Victor’s masque in Act-1, Victor takes up the role of Watteau and George, a family servant, plays the traditional part, though by this time neglected, Pierrot Grenade figure of carnival. The de la Fontaine host annually a sumptuous *fete*, and this year, Victor (costumed as Watteau), directs his brother Oswald as the painter Toulouse- Lautrec’s regular model. The use of Watteau’s *Embarkation for Cythera* is fascinating, not only because it invokes the masquerade performance of the early French plantocracy, but also because the artist was noted for his paintings of *fetes galantes*; *Cythera* in Watteau’s paintings is an idealized fantasy landscape for lovers. However this play-within-play soon turns into a carnivalesque performance and as Agatha and Oswald begin to improvise, the guests applaud and break into scream. At this Victor gets infuriated and gives them a rebuff for distorting the artistic motif: “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”. (44-45). He immediately withdraws but Oswald returns to the carnival party. The tension that surfaces between different styles of performance also confirm the inherent cultural pluralism in the complex cultural make-up of the Caribbean. As Camilla

Stevens observes: “the strategy of metatheatrical role playing casts doubt on the notion of an authentic or essential collective identity by showing the constructed and performative cultural identity”. (455). Again towards the end in a role-playing scene both Tony and Clodia parody the part of Victor and Agatha. In their assumed part, they critically interrogate the self-doubt of Victor and Agatha’s knack for manipulation. As the play within it arranges Brown, the journalist as the audience. Again this part underlines the performative nature of identity and something constructed and renders cultural identity fluid and constructed.

Walcott’s meta-theatre becomes a contribution and response to an even more thorough-going sense that identity is necessarily contingent and provisional and problematize the sense of essentialism of identity and culture. This intricate artifice of narration exposes what is beneath surface realism and by fragmenting the action allow it to comment on itself. These strategies underline the playwright’s attempt to understand and interpret reality and also attempt to dis-locate the hegemonic control of the colonial power. The role playing within role allows them to drop out their assumed identities to try out new ones. And as true of serious art, these strategies convey the dichotomous nature of actual world event of the play and play-like qualities of the actual world and the paradox of performance.

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