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The Poetics of Multiculturalism in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Poetry: A Study of Selected Poems

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Council of the
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Requirements for the Degree of
Master in English Literature**

By

Sabrina Abdulkadhom Abdulridha

Supervised by

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd-Aun, PhD


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Signature: 

Name: Prof. Qasim Salman (Ph.D)

Chairman

Signature: 

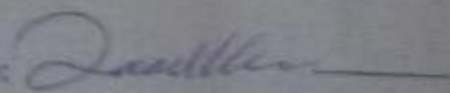
Name: Saad Naji (Ph.D)

Member

Signature: 

Name: Prof. John Abdel Azim

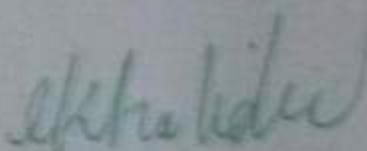
Member

Signature: 

Name: Prof. Raed Kareem

Member and Supervisor

Approved by the Deanery of the College of Education

Signature: 

Name: Prof. Dr. Khalid Jawad Kadhim Al-Adilee

Rank: Professor

Position: Dean of College of Education

Date: 26/3/2017

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

((يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى
وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ))

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

(سورة الحجرات: 13)

((O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted))

(Surah Al- Hujurat: 13)

Sahih International

I certify that this thesis, "The Poetics of Multiculturalism in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Poetry: A Study of Selected Poems," was prepared under my

supervision at the College of Education, University of Al-Qadisiya, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature.

Signature:

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd-Aun, Ph.D.

Date: 26/10/2016

In view of the available recommendation, I forward this thesis for debate by the Examining Committee.

Signature:

Name: Assist. Prof. Raja'a Mardaan Flayih

Head of Department of English

College of Education

University of Al-Qadisiya

Date: / /2017

We certify that we have read this thesis, "The Poetics of Multiculturalism in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Poetry: A Study of Selected Poems," and, as Examining Committee, examined the student in its contents, and that in our

opinion it is adequate as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature.

Signature:

Name:

Date:

Chairman

Signature:

Name:

Date:

Member

Signature:

Name:

Date:

Member

Signature:

Name:

Date:

Member and Supervisor

Approved by the Deanery of the College of Education

Signature:

Name: Prof. Dr. Khalid Jawad Kadhim Al-Adilee

Rank: Professor

Position: Dean of the College of Education

Date: / / 20

DEDICATION

To the beloved who helped the wish I made,

while that shooting star passed the glamorous sky,
become Reality.

Without her encouragement, without her caring hand
my dream would still be dwelling somewhere in the
dark Galaxy.

-To my mother

To the Brave who have offered me
the safe path towards success.
To those whose memorials cover
both sides of the road

Your sacrifice and every drop of blood
you've shed, shall never be forgotten.
Your souls will remain like immortal stars
Of Iraq's magical day and night.

-To all who have sacrificed themselves for Iraq.

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appreciate all the support and prayers that helped me complete this academic project.

ABSTRACT

The concept of multiculturalism is one of the main interests the field of postcolonialism seeks to study. This scientific field does not simply consider multiculturalism in a descriptive sense (a nation that includes more than one culture), but crosses these limited borders to include many additional readings. The Caribbean nation is one of many nations in which multiculturalism is read differently depending on the context it is used in.

Caribbean literature approaches multiculturalism to unfold cultural problems and some texts consult certain policies to solve issues of recognition and human rights. The Barbadian poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1930 -) is one of the most prominent Caribbean poets who tries to find the appropriate solution towards achieving the African rights of an identity that recognizes the ancient African background as the major influences in the development of the Caribbean nation. Hence, this thesis aims at reidentifying the African presence in the Caribbean and to heal its broken ties with the African world to mark that African traditions have successfully travelled their way across the Atlantic Ocean. Brathwaite wants to unify its people to deculturalize the British culture for the African culture to rise by not only pointing out their horrible doings but also by creating certain cultural markers the Afro-Caribbeans must be identified with.

This study is divided into three chapters and a conclusion. *Chapter One* is divided into three sections of which section one will sum up the different usages multiculturalism and concludes it with the idea of how the term is used in literary context. Section two will study how the Caribbean nation became multicultural and what reasons are behind the existence of the African on the Caribbean. It will also shed light on the essential factors that led the common African culture to fade away slowly. Section three will introduce the postcolonial poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite. Details about his life will be given

and the most prominent stages of his literary career shall be depicted to ultimately show his use of multiculturalism as the main subject in his poetry.

Chapter Two will analyze the concept of multiculturalism in Brathwaite's trilogy *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1973). The chapter falls into three sections mirroring the three books of poetry that this trilogy includes. They are *Rights of Passages* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969). This trilogy reveals the roots of all African sufferings and how they have reached the New World. A wide coverage of African traditions will be revealed in the hope of awakening the black consciousness for purposes of achieving the rights multiculturalism offers.

Chapter Three, also subdivided into three sections, is devoted to the three books of Brathwaite's second trilogy *Ancestors: A Reinvention of Mother Poem, Sun Poem, and X/Self* (2001). This trilogy includes *Mother Poem* (1977), *Sun Poem* (1982), and *X/Self* (1987). This thesis will display Brathwaite's pains and reveal his intention of healing the broken ties of the Afro-Caribbeans with the ancestral world of Africa. This chapter will continue to show how the poet deculturizes the British culture for aims of achieving multicultural rights.

Finally, the conclusion sums up the findings of the study.

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Section One: Multiculturalism

Who but shall learn that freedom is the prize
Man still is bound to rescue or maintain;
That nature's God commands the slave to rise,
And on the oppressor's head to break the chain.
Roll, years of promise, rapidly roll round,
Till not a slave shall on this earth be found.

— John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*

Multiculturalism is one the most complex and indecisive terms that cannot be encompassed within the terms of a single definition. Countless thinkers and intellectuals have been placing a set of innumerable definitions of the term that led not only in the constant evolution of its general meaning, but also produced a set of different interpretations in the process of time. The main reason behind the different definitions and interpretations today lies in the fact that multiculturalism has been used in different contexts for different investigation purposes. In order to understand what multiculturalism as a term may imply, the general meaning of culture needs to be clarified.

‘Culture’, in its most common terms of understanding, is known to represent “a set of practices, beliefs, and value systems that is distinctive from other coexisting sets of mores.”¹ These practices, beliefs, and systems are shared by a certain group of people and show how

people understand themselves and the world and organize their individual and collective lives. It includes views about the nature of the self, its relations to others, man's place in the world, the meaning and significance of human activities, relations and the human life in general, moral values and ideals, etc., and provides a framework, an intellectual and moral compass, in terms of which human beings navigate their way through life.²

Having a culture is a common aspect. It gives mankind the capacity to learn and reach high levels of adapting many different life conditions that go far beyond the animal standards of living. To begin with, it should be mentioned that a

medium of expression lies at the heart of any culture. The mastering of a medium of expression is therefore a quite important and significant mode that one shares with the individuals of the community he/she belongs to. Without such a mode, no cultural aspects, like traditions, values, beliefs and experiences can possibly be transmitted over the generations. A medium of expression is therefore considered to be the essential and necessary aspect that helps in the continuation of a culture in all of its aspects. A culture defines the identity of a single person or an entire cultural group. A culture also includes the sharing of a common historical and social background leading towards the continuation of the common culture across the generations.³

Being a defining concept, culture is considered one of the prominent subjects that is studied by many different thinkers. In general terms, culture is described as being a dynamic concept, as it changes with the changes of the environment. Some cultural aspects, like certain traditional behaviours and beliefs for instance, remain over the generations, while others change and may eventually disappear by being replaced by alternatives to help surviving, developing, or adjusting the social environment in a more sustainable and intellectual way. Cultural aspects may also be replaced by force when aspects of a different culture intervene. Cultural change comes therefore in two different forms, internal and external. Internal cultural changes take place when individuals within a cultural group start changing or adopting beliefs and behaviours that differ from the original norms of their culture. Change in this case is achieved without the interference or contact of any outside source. External cultural change, on the other hand, can occur when a certain culture is influenced by aspects of another culture that eventually may cause a change in some or all of its beliefs and principles. This external interference is read in the context of ‘multiculturalism’.⁴

It can hereby be estimated that not every country necessarily lives under the principle of one culture only. There is a considerable number of nations and countries around the world that include more than one cultural community in its population, most likely leading to some or many external cultural changes. Such countries or nations are called ‘multicultural’. Each one of these cultures follows different cultural traditions and has different views, historical memories, styles of literature, ethnicities and most likely even considers the usage of a language that differs from the other coexisting cultures. There might be some agreement between the various cultures of a society, but they also disagree on many other cultural behaviors and attitudes. A society that subscribes to such different organizing principles and moral vocabularies and understands and disagrees about significant areas of life represents therefore a multicultural society.⁵ So multiculturalism in its most common and purely descriptive sense suggests that “many societies and nations involve peoples with different cultures, languages and faiths living together.”⁶

Going beyond its pure descriptive sense, multiculturalism is used in contexts that enriches it with many other different but relatable interpretations. Multiculturalism is then a “multidimensional concept,”⁷ which depends on certain aspects that are commonly political, social, or cultural in sense. Tracing the beginnings of this concept, multiculturalism was first introduced in 1965 when the Canadian Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism published a report in which they used the term in a political context. Multiculturalism came to be used as an attempt to synthesize the various cultures of the Canadian community. It was a plan to build a society that depends on justice. This report came as a response to the objections Canadian minor and aboriginal cultural groups made. They have been downgraded because of the hypocritical ‘monocultural’ system the government depended on for centuries. Multiculturalism in such political contexts came to refer to “the

efforts of protecting minority and aboriginal cultures.”⁸ The aim of multiculturalism in this context is an attempt to gain political power and is therefore taken as a solution for such secondary and excluded groups to represent themselves in the Canadian society, where rights can be shared righteously and equally.

This report helped bringing multiculturalism to the forefront in various fields of studies. It started to appear in contexts related to fields of humanities and social sciences. So in addition to politics, multiculturalism began to appear in sociology, education, economics, history, literature, urban planning, law and psychology.⁹ This consequently led to the adoption of various other interpretations, leading multiculturalism to be a term that cannot be understood, unless it is read and analyzed in the context it is used in.¹⁰ It is therefore obvious that debates between one interpretation and another are raised, as no limits to the term exist.

With the rise of democratic nations over time, multiculturalism came to be used in contexts where it served as a ‘theory of liberalism’.¹¹ Liberalism implies the idea that everyone has the right to practice his/her religion, beliefs, traditions and other aspects of his cultural life in a safe manner without being forced to live under the mercy of any disrespectful or controlling power. Furthermore, one can practice or behave in whatever way he/she desires, as long as such practices do not cause the violation of anyone’s freedom in the society they share.¹² It calls people to deal with cultural differences in terms of respect and equality and to commit themselves to respect the rights of a concept known as ‘universal citizenship’.¹³ Universal citizenship includes the understanding of three major points. First, all citizens share a common life, second, everyone deserves equal treatment, and finally everyone must be included in polity.¹⁴

This theoretical implication of multiculturalism came not only to present minorities and immigrants with equal rights, but also ironically helped the major

groups protest against the special treatment such groups of minorities and immigrants were given.¹⁵ This interpretation of multiculturalism has however received a wide range of criticism, as it came to restrict the freedom of people of what they were and were not allowed to do. It seemed to be more of a critique of multiculturalism rather than multiculturalism that calls for liberty.¹⁶

Multiculturalism evolved more and more by time and came to be associated with political expressions such as ‘identity politics’, ‘the politics of difference’, and ‘the politics of recognition’. Since multiculturalism deals with the diverse cultures of any multicultural society, every culture ought to be respected and acknowledged by all the other cultures of that society. The marginalization and exclusion of certain cultural groups led to the creation of these expressions and are associated with multiculturalism within political contexts. The term is interpreted as a political movement to reidentify the national identity.¹⁷

The political expression ‘Identity Politics’ signifies “a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups.”¹⁸ Such activities seek to secure the cultural identity among the other identities that coexist in a single society. It is a movement that bases its activities on actual change, rather than organizing simple beliefs and joining groups and parties without taking actual part in making a change of what concerns the national identity. These politics seek to dig out certain characteristics that make one cultural group distinctive from other cultural groups and in turn to challenge the oppressive properties they have been forced to live under. It “signifies a loose collection of political projects, each undertaken by representatives of a collective with a distinctively different social location that has hitherto been neglected, erased, or suppressed.”¹⁹ So, this set of politics emphasizes using multiculturalism as a tool to reidentify the national identity that would protect the rights of the minorities and other oppressed groups of a multicultural nation.

‘The Politics of Difference’ is a political expression coined by political theorist Iris Marion Young in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990). It emphasizes finding the differences between the multiple cultures of a single society. Every culture has a nature that significantly differs from the natures of other cultures. Such politics also attempt to find policies that equalize the rights of all cultures. This means that all different groups need to “treat everyone according to the same principles, rules, and standards.”²⁰ However, some groups that have suffered disadvantages and oppression need to be given more rights than other groups in order to promote social justice. It differs from the previously discussed set of politics in the fact that it emphasizes comparing the differences between one culture and another to achieve the rights of minorities and aboriginal groups.

Finally, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor in his book *Multiculturalism* (1994) presents the reader with another important strand of politics that is read in a multicultural context. He proves that cultural diversity can create problems of recognition and respect. The solution to such problems is to deal with what he calls ‘The Politics of Recognition’. Such politics focus on factors that go beyond the general aspects of one’s cultural identity. This includes the acknowledgement of a culture’s historical background and its valuable contributions. Taylor marks that there is a strong link between being recognized and one’s cultural identity. With an identifiable identity and an acknowledged history that differs from other histories, multicultural rights can be realized. These politics serve therefore as a call for cultural recognition of their historical background in the nation they inhabit, because absence of the recognition of any culture will gradually lead to cultural destruction and may eventually lead that culture to be considered subsidiary to other cultures in that nation. They will suffer from not getting their full rights, because they are looked down upon by other cultural groups who otherwise enjoy their rights fully. This leaves a

feeling of oppression within the mind of such culturally suppressed groups.²¹ It is a socio-political program that is after the recognition of minor groups and to have such a recognition added to the national identity. Such recognition is essential to strengthen one's culture among other cultures and helps in the construction of a multicultural society whose national identity is balanced by equality and respect.

Summing up these politics, it can be said that they seek not only to include matters of identity and culture in all its aspects, but also claim rights in economic and political fields. It also involves "a wide range of claims involving religion, language, ethnicity, nationality, and race."²² All of these categories have been subsumed with the concept of culture when considering the meaning of multiculturalism. Language and religion may be considered essential aspects of culture minor groups try to retrieve when calling for multicultural rights. This call for multicultural rights and its call for cultural recognition is widely apparent in education, art and literature. Such works and writings do not only stand for claiming recognition of the specified culture in all its actual aspects, but also demand the acknowledgement of its historical background that should be included within the national identity.²³ These multicultural politics have widely shaped the means and demands of the general means of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism in modern societies can be seen in areas like the Caribbean region and especially those islands that have won their independence from colonial political systems. They include cultural groups that have suffered from the loss of the aspects of their culture and have been denied from their historical contributions and background alike. Among the most prominent of such cultural groups are the Caribbean citizens with an African ancestry. They are classified as being among those cultural groups who have been denied from all decision-making organizations and possess the least amount of recognition in these areas. The 'Afro-Caribbeans', who will be the subject of this thesis, live

in such New World societies where the white race and their imperial systems reign supreme. It gave the Afro-Caribbeans and their culture an image of being the inferior component of the Caribbean community. This was especially because of their historical involvement in slavery. The African culture was gradually going towards an eternal loss and its people started to lose their cultural identity and ancestral heritage, especially with what is related to language and religion.²⁴

However, some of this section of Caribbean people came to a point where they believed that such a hypocritical system was no longer acceptable and started protesting to put an end to such societal hierarchies. It may also be added that one of the main reasons of remaining unrecognized is because the Afro-Caribbeans had fallen into the trap of self-depreciation. This means that whenever any African traditional practice is performed or any specific African language was used to communicate with, it was automatically considered inferior. That is why Afro-Caribbeans started to accept cultures that were considered superior to their own. They hoped it would help them in regaining their rights and human dignity. However, this led to nothing but the loss of the common African culture and their silence over the centuries has caused the destruction of their cultural identity.²⁵

Having been influenced by external cultural change, the common African culture in the New World has been subject to such destructive fragmentation. This is read, as mentioned earlier, in multicultural context, and the first step to reach the rights of multiculturalism is to return back to the roots of their past. It is essential for the sake of demanding historical recognition, as their contributions and cultural differences will be revealed. Recognition of the African history is therefore the initial process in the reformation of the Caribbean national identity that would provide the Afro-Caribbeans with the recognition of being descendants from a very different culture the West forced

upon them. It is to protest against the unjust classification that ranks the Afro-Caribbeans as representing the inferior and the uncivilized part of the Caribbean community. Only through such an approach of multiculturalism, Afro-Caribbeans were able to call out for their lost rights and shatter the stereotypical class differences of the Caribbean social system, like having 'first class' and 'second class', 'primary class' and 'subordinate class', or 'civilized' people and 'uncivilized people'.²⁶

Literature written by Caribbeans of African ancestry in the New World is also signified to include such a political stand when approaching multiculturalism. Such subjects are employed aesthetically especially by Caribbean writers who belong to nations that have been under the control of the British Empire. These Caribbean nations are also known as the British West-Indies. Such writers approached multiculturalism as "a response to a crisis of identity in a settler society which, for a variety of reasons, could no longer sustain a national identity dependent on the myth of a British origin."²⁷

Multiculturalism is then not only a new policy for dealing with immigrants, minor groups or aboriginals, like the Canadian Royal Commission proposed, but also refers to "a policy to redefine national culture."²⁸ Literature that involves such subjects may be called 'multicultural literature' which is defined by the poet Julia Candace Corliss as "the literature about persons or groups that differ in some way (ethnically, racially, culturally, linguistically, by sexual orientation, or disabilities) from the sociopolitical Euro-American mainstream of the United States".²⁹ This is true for the Afro-Caribbean writers who used literature as a movement to address the significance of their culture and its history to reach their aim of redefining the Caribbean cultural identity.

Section Two: Multiculturalism in the British West Indies

Caribbean societies are inescapably heterogeneous...the Caribbean has long been an area where some people live next to others who are remarkably distinct. The region—and indeed particular territories within it—has long been multi-racial, multi-lingual, stratified, and some would say, multi-cultural.

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “The Caribbean Region: An Open Frontier in Anthropological Theory”, 1992.

The Caribbean region is one of the most well-known multicultural areas that includes a set of diverse cultures. Being a multicultural society, this region is still a developing state that constantly welcomes new cultures from different areas around the world. The Caribbean is therefore home to various different cultures, that are mostly from European countries like the Netherlands, England, Portugal, and Spain. The region also includes cultures from various other places, like China, Africa, and India. The primary reason behind the presence of most of these cultures in the Caribbean can be rooted back to both the pre-colonial and the European colonial era.³⁰

Tracing the historical background of the Caribbean region, archeological researches have proven that there were tribes living in the American continent before the European colonial invasion took place. The people of these tribes are known in contemporary contexts as ‘Amerindians’. An Amerindian is “any member of the various aboriginal peoples of the Western Hemisphere, with the exception of the Eskimos (Inuit) and the Aleuts.”³¹ The number of Amerindian citizens that inhabited these areas in pre-colonial period was an estimated 57.3 million citizens. In the Caribbean there were approximately 5.85 million native citizens inhabiting the islands.³² The most well-known Amerindian tribes that inhabited the Caribbean were named the ‘Arawaks’, the ‘Caribs’ and the ‘Ciboney’.³³

The Arawaks, also known as the Arawak-Taino, is “the name and language of Amerindian tribe who inhabited the Caribbean islands before European

arrival,”³⁴ while the Caribs are “the other major Amerindian group to inhabit the Caribbean and source for the name *Caribbean*.”³⁵ They were often negatively compared with the peace loving Arawak-Tainos as being warlike and “cannibalistic”.³⁶ The Ciboney were another major Amerindian tribe that lived in those Caribbean islands that is presently known as the ‘Greater Antilles’. However, they were later forced to occupy isolated places because of the more powerful Arawak-Tainos who had started to attack them to occupy their lands when Spanish vessels arrived at the Caribbean coasts in the 16th century.³⁷

The colonial era began when the European colonizers arrived the shores of the Americas and the Caribbean Islands, which was not too long after the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus (1451-1505) claimed to be the first to have ‘discovered’ the new continent. It marks the era where the Eurocentric colonization in the New World had officially started. Colonialism may be defined as “a lucrative commercial operation, bringing wealth and riches to Western nations through the economic exploitation of others. It was pursued for economic profit, rewards and riches.”³⁸ Furthermore, it is “the consolidation of imperial power, and is manifested in the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands, often by force”.³⁹

Colonialism in the Caribbean led to what is known as ‘cultural imperialism’. In general terms, imperialism is defined as “any attempt by one people to dominate politically another people, especially if the latter perceive the rule to be hostile to their national identity.”⁴⁰ Cultural imperialism refers therefore to the domination of a culture at the expense of other cultures using the power of politics and economy.⁴¹ Such is the case with what the aboriginal Caribbean tribes witnessed. The native Caribbean cultures were shut down forcefully when the imperial European cultures came to be the leading and supreme culture of the area. Even worse, British officials and other European

forces denied the existence of any Amerindian tribe in the Caribbean or the new discovered continent as a whole. Taking the British colonizers as an example, they deny the fact that any Amerindian group inhabited the place at the moment of their arrival. Instead, they mention that when their vessels arrived at the coasts of the West Indies, the islands were completely deserted. The truth, however, is that Amerindian tribes barely fought back against these colonial intruders and so most of the Amerindians were killed leaving their land empty for the new-settlers to occupy.⁴²

As Columbus served the Spanish royal family at that time, Spain was the first colonial force to start organizing voyages to colonize the New World. The discovery of gold mines was the main resource Spain planned to go after, when Columbus noticed that the indigenous tribes wore gold rings in their noses. They sketched a migration plan that is known as the 'white migration'. This plan included the migration of white employees only, for it was Spain's dream to become a nation of great wealth and fortune. However, plans did not go the way it was expected to be, for only little gold was found in the areas they invaded. Instead, the colonizers found the subtropical weather of the Caribbean an appropriate factor for sugar production. Spain started transporting slaves, especially from the African continent to benefit from sugar plantation to its absolute maximum. Not too long after, other Western countries entered the battle of colonizing lands as well, for they learnt about the rich opportunities this discovered continent hid. Without hesitation, they entered the slave markets in competition with Spain.⁴³

Little by little, these Western countries namely France, The Netherlands and Britain started competing with Spain to gain their own portion of colonies in the New World. This caused countless bloody clashes between the different Western countries for the Caribbean region was one of the areas on which eyes were set hoping for the discovery of more valuable sources to trade with. The

colonizing battles reached their peak from the early sixteenth century through the seventeenth century. As Spain was the first to claim possession of most of the region, it was soon attacked severely by these Western forces taking over several Spanish colonies and so caused the diminishing of Spanish properties over time.⁴⁴

Barbados, one of the Caribbean islands, was taken over by the British, when the British mariner John Powell arrived there on the 14th of May, 1625. He landed on the island by accident when trying to sail to Brazil. He was blown off the intended course towards another direction by fierce wind leading to the discovery of Barbados. Only two years later, the first settlers came in to settle on the island and started activities like “hide hunting, privateering, and the cultivation of subsistence crops and minor staples.”⁴⁵ After 1640, focus changed on sugar plantation when the Portuguese colony of Brazil introduced it for the first time. Barbados entered the sugar production trade and the colonizers took all the lands over, either by buying them or taking them by force. Jamaica, another Caribbean island conquered by the British Empire, faced the same fate as it became the largest sugar colony the empire possessed. The white population slowly increased after 1660, and so did the black population as African slaves were forced to migrate for economic trading purposes. Black slaves eventually outnumbered the white citizens “as much as ten to one.”⁴⁶

African people were the most common to be transported as slaves and are known to have experienced in total four major slave trades, where they had to leave their homelands in order to serve either in Western countries or in their colonies. These four slave trades include the following:

The largest and most well-known is the trans-Atlantic slave trade where, beginning in the fifteenth century, slaves were shipped from West Africa, West-Central Africa, and Eastern Africa to the European colonies in the New World. The three other slave trades—the trans-Saharan, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean slave trades—were much older and pre-dated the trans-Atlantic slave trade. During the trans-Saharan slave trade, slaves were taken from south of the Saharan

desert to Northern Africa. In the Red Sea slave trade, slaves were taken from inland of the Red Sea and shipped to the Middle East and India. In the Indian Ocean slave trade, slaves were taken from Eastern Africa and shipped either to the Middle East and India or to plantation islands in the Indian Ocean.⁴⁷

In general, slave trade was not a new phenomenon for the Western countries. In ancient times, such trades mostly included black slaves from Africa, but was however not built upon racial discrimination. There were also many white-skinned slaves who had to experience slavery. The global African slave trade, that was however based on racial principles, officially started in 1444 when a group of 235 black slaves from Africa were transported to Portugal. The transportation of Africans grew increasingly fast when by the year of 1448, one thousand slaves were transported to Portugal for plantation purposes. Although the Africans were slaves since very ancient times of the Pharaonic Egypt in the sixth century B.C, slave markets, grew out even larger by time displaying slaves who were mostly from the African continent. Countries all around world recognized the Africans as being the best slaves for hard work.⁴⁸

The slave trade that includes the transportation of African slaves towards the Caribbean and the two Americas, is the 'Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade'. This trade involved the transportation of approximately 12 million slaves from different places around Africa. It is a number that does not include the slaves who faced unfortunate death during the process of transportation and clashes that arose between the different Western countries.⁴⁹ This whole act of forced immigration or "dispersal of African people all over the world", is also known as the 'African diaspora'. 'Diaspora', is a term of Greek origin; 'dia' means 'through', and 'spora' refers to "the process of sowing".⁵⁰

Although the term was originally used for the dispersal or spreading of seeds, it had over time also come to include the dispersal of mankind. Considering the dispersal of man, diaspora initially was used as a "descriptive category of migration".⁵¹ It was to describe the mass movement of people from

their original homeland to settle in other places and regions. This form was used by the Greek as a positive expression; positive in the means of expanding the empire by colonizing weaker nations and migrating into these lands. This kind of diaspora may boldly be applied to the later European movements that expanded their nations to conquer the weaker nations, especially those of the newly discovered American continent. However, a twist in its meaning started to appear with the passage of time. In addition to the previous reading, diaspora came also to be engaged with the negative idea of the forced migration of certain groups of people. Jewish groups, as well as African and Palestinian groups came to be associated to this meaning of diaspora in their different historical contexts. It further grew into a concept rather than just a simple category of forced migration, as diaspora came to discuss other reasons that led to the migration of people. Diaspora also studies the aftermath of such migration movements and relates to problems that include cultural matters of recognition and identity.⁵²

The African diaspora is based on certain economic purposes and thereby appears in different forms:

The dispersal that created the African diaspora occurred through (a) voluntary means (economic and pre-Columbian exploratory journeys); (b) trade, servitude, and military expeditions (early Indian Ocean trade journeys from the sixth century); (c) forced migrations (transatlantic slavery over at least four centuries in the modern period, from the 15th to the 19th centuries); and (d) induced migration, the more recent 20th- and 21st-century migrations of African peoples based on world economic imbalances.⁵³

The form of the African Diaspora that led to the arrival of the majority of African people to the Caribbean is when they were forced to migrate from their African homelands as servants to the Western colonies. It all started from the 15th century, when Africans were transported to the New World.⁵⁴ The trade became more intense when King Ferdinand and Charles V gave official permission to start the African slave trade in the early sixteenth century.⁵⁵ African people were sold in slave markets and even the Spanish black slaves,

who have settled in Spain from earlier slave trades, were not excluded from enslavement. African people at these markets were characterized as being “Admirable workers, strong enough to survive the heat and hard work on sugar, coffee, or cotton plantations or in mines, in building fortresses or merely acting as servants; and at the same time, they were good-natured and usually docile. Many black had experience of agriculture and cattle.”⁵⁶ They were chosen because the Amerindian people did not have such characteristics, neither did the people of any of the Western countries.

The part of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade that included the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean from the African continent towards the New World is known as the “Middle Passage”.⁵⁷ Many have considered this part of the slave trade as the most horrific and inhumane experience that African people had to bear. It were times when African people suffered from disease, suicide, embarkation, and melancholy at its highest level. They were, aside from being taken in as slaves, also victims of pirates, had to bare the violence of angry natives and endured the crossing of the Middle Passage that might at times last for a whole year.⁵⁸ The Middle Passage has therefore been considered to be an experience of catastrophe and pain. It is believed that no African slave who has been transported to the New World between 1540 and 1840 escaped trauma. The Middle Passage is therefore traditionally perceived as a negative historical mark that signifies the end of the African culture and history in the Caribbean and the New World. The British writer V.S. Naipaul therefore argues that it is impossible for the Caribbean to have an African representation after the consequences of the Middle Passage. It was according to him impossible to state the brutality of this slave trade and the destruction of a whole civilization to build a new one. Any history is normally written out of the achievements and contributions of the individuals of that community. Naipaul finds that the Caribbean community does not have any achievements of its own.⁵⁹

Other researches however consider the African culture to have crossed the Middle Passage successfully and even developed in the new environment it arrived at. That is why these researches proved that the African culture existed but were pure no more. Barbadian poet and critic Edward Kamau Brathwaite highlights a common misinterpretation of how the African culture in the New World is analyzed. Because African cultures highly focus on religion, arguments about these cultures claimed that the only thing the slaves transported over the Middle Passage was religion. No specific philosophical view did they bring with them, nor any art, social standards or familial structures. Therefore the African culture was considered as a weak culture in the Caribbean for no social or personal contribution was recognized. It was therefore necessary for African thinkers to stand up to study the reality of the Caribbean and the New World of what African elements in such communities exist, beside religion.⁶⁰

Brathwaite declares the falsity of such statements, revealing the truth of African cultures. They are cultures that have religion as its core and everything in their lives is associated to this core, like philosophy, society and art. He also points out that the anti-African scholars were not the only reason of why the African culture was subject to destruction. Cultural factors, like the African drum, their medical prescriptions, dance, songs and tales could have been existent till this day. However, it was mainly because the Western imperial forces had banned these factors that they vanished gradually. The ban of the African drum caused much controversy for it was the tool that produced the voice of their god as well as being a tool for worshipping. Their products were also replaced by European foods and even names and ideas changed after being affected by the Christian way of thinking. Instead of worshiping their African deities, they turned to the churches and even became familiar with writing and reading instead of depending on their African oral tradition, which will be focused on later. At the same time they were never given the right to vote or

practice their rights, another element that destroyed and devalued the common African culture.⁶¹

Despite all the negative researches that were set on table, it cannot be denied that one of the consequences of the slave trade caused the introduction of many African traditions to the Caribbean, and that these traditions can still be traced in the life style of the contemporary Caribbean man. Their traditions had a certain influence on the cultures of other settlers of Amerindians and even on the Europeans colonizers themselves. The African settlers had learnt different habits from other cultures as well. Some of the African slaves eventually gained freedom and were able to return to their homeland in Africa. They would bring with them some of the new habits they had learnt and so influenced the habits of the original African cultures in their African homeland.⁶² That is why African thinkers have an opposite idea of the African reality in the Caribbean. They believe that fragments of pure African cultures still exist and linger within the minds of the African-Caribbeans population.

Aside from these positive and negative interpretations, a third view places itself in between the two previously explained views and is known as 'cultural syncretism'.⁶³ This view considers the Middle Passage as leading to a community with a multicultural system rather than one that has led to an end. Such a system believes that African elements that survived the Middle Passage gradually developed as one African culture developed its elements from other African cultures around. New African communities started to form and construct in the New World for the beliefs and traditions were being generalized and the limits between the different African cultures were slowly lifted. Writers like Wilson Harris viewed the Caribbean community as one that is multicultural and considered such a community as a source of strength. Considering it this way, Brathwaite was one of the many writers who also tackled the Middle Passage and the whole African journey in a most creative way. Works of such writers are

said to have reconceptualized “the meaning of the journey from Africa to the Americas, creating many middle passages by retracing links, reconstructing the past, and reexploring the voyages of the mind.”⁶⁴ These writings mostly include the reconsideration of three phases of the African experience. The first is:

the period before the slave trade and evidence of African encounters with Europeans and Amerindians; the historical moment of the slave trade and the middle passage experience; and the significance of this experience for African Americans seen in contemporary cultural practices, archaeological findings, imaginative reworkings, and historical reconstructions.⁶⁵

This means that after crossing the Middle Passage, African survivors suffered from further cultural loss in the Caribbeans due to the racism they faced whilst being under the control of the white colonizers. Racism is derived from ‘race’ which is defined as the common distinctive physical features that exist between the individuals of a certain group of people. Furthermore, “discrimination against groups and individuals based on skin color and other assumed associated characteristics (phenotypic and genotypic) is the hallmark of racism.”⁶⁶ Racism includes negative attitudes towards a certain groups of people, the African-descendants in this case, in a way that makes them inferior to other people with features and characteristics that are different from that of their own. The white skinned looked down at the black skinned as the black citizens were popularly known to be slaves. They were for example called out with the insulting word ‘negro’. Not only were they cast out from the different institutions, whether educational, governmental, medical or any other social institution, but were insulted in the cruelest ways possible. This has a negative effect on the personality of the persecuted Afro-Caribbean who experiences racist acts. They feared resisting such attitudes as the attackers belonged to groups that enjoy the state’s support. The British state also violated the rights of such discriminated groups and played the major role in such racial acts.⁶⁷ Race as a term was essentially introduced because of the African slavery that the New World witnessed.

Reaching the twentieth century, the British Empire had remarkably expanded, for it had conquered wide areas in different places around the world. These include wide parts of Africa and Asia. Australia, Canada, the Caribbean and even Ireland became part of the British Empire. This empire became one of the most powerful empires history witnessed.⁶⁸

Cultural imperialism has caused the division of the African culture and so there was a need for reforming the Caribbean cultural identity through which the African culture would gain recognition. The black citizens were to return to their historical roots to emphasize their significant differences from other cultures. They were descendant from African tribes and so attempted to resurrect their African ethnicity. Ethnicity refers commonly to the “social practices—language, religion, rituals, and other patterns of behavior—that define the content of a group’s culture.”⁶⁹ Traditions, practices, rituals and different customs are transmitted over the generations. Ethnicity therefore preserves such factors over the years with no or little interference from other ethnical groups. These different traditions are preserved through the use of language, music, food and all the traditional celebrations that such ethnic groups perform.⁷⁰ During the mid-twentieth to the late twentieth century, ethnicity was widely used to refer “a process by which individuals or groups came to be understood, or to understand themselves, as separate or different from others. This meaning of ethnicity commonly referred to the consciousness of exclusion or subordination.”⁷¹ Multiculturalism defends the rights of a lost ethnicity and so the African descendants in the Caribbean, for instance, were able to recall their African ethnicity within the Caribbean national identity that they demanded to be reformed. Ethnicity here provides the identification of their belonging to a certain group that shares the same heritage, historical background and habits of living.⁷² Among the most common features Afro-Caribbeans share are: (1) Their involvement in an historical slavery trade; (2) Being oppressed by the social

state; and, (3) They shared specific music and rhythms as well as religions and specific forms of cultural expression.⁷³

After such cultural issues came forward, protests against the domination of the British state and culture in the British West Indies started to break out. The Afro-Caribbeans form the majority of settlers in this region, but are not even given the most basic of human rights. In 1924, Barbados witnessed protests and riots, which were mainly organized by the political figure Charles Duncan O'Neal (1879-1936). He was a social reformer and a local doctor who formed a party called 'The Democratic League' which called for the lost rights of his people. The 'first trading association' was also formed as an alternative for and as a reaction against slavery. These two protesting movements eventually grew to be the Barbados Labor Party (1938) and the Barbados Worker's Union (1941). Barbadians also followed the stories of famous rebelling characters, like the Jamaican Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) and Trinidadian Clement Payne (1904-1941). Riots spread even further when Payne was sent out of Jamaica in 1937. This led to the formation of 'The Barbados Progressive League' which succeeded in winning the first seats in 1940 to speak out for the rights of the Barbadians. However, it was the Democratic Labour Party that succeeded in securing the country's independence from Britain in 1966.⁷⁴ This was the beginning of the 'decolonization' of the Caribbean. Decolonization "is the process in which a colony or a subjected territory moves from dependent to independent status from a conquering nation or empire."⁷⁵ It marked the beginning of a new era, known as the 'postcolonial era' in the Caribbean.⁷⁶

Postcoloniality can be defined as "that condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical agents in an increasingly globalized world."⁷⁷ Postcolonialism as a field of study may be defined as "the study of the ideological and cultural impact of Western colonialism and in particular of its aftermath – whether as a continuing influence

(neocolonialism) or in the emergence of newly articulated independent national and individual identities.”⁷⁸ The analysis of multiculturalism in the postcolonial texts deals with “the management (often compromised) of contemporary geopolitical diversity in former imperial centres and their ex-colonies alike. It is also increasingly a global discourse since it takes into account the flow of migrants, refugees, diasporas and their relations with nation-states.”⁷⁹

Literature in the Caribbean also had its turn after the era of colonialism ended. Literature that was presented by writers belonging to colonies or former colonies of the British Empire was called ‘Commonwealth Literature’. These colonies and post-colonies were from Asia, Africa, Ireland, South-America and Australia. This term appeared during the 1950s, to include writers from not only white communities like Australia, but also nations Britain had colonized previously like Nigeria and India. Texts that are written under the terms of commonwealth literature were political in context. Although these nations had fought for their freedom from Britain and ended as independent nations, they continued considering the British monarchy as the supreme power despite the fact that Britain had no official control over their nations anymore.⁸⁰

This classification of literature became a trend, especially when the journals entitled *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (1965), *World Literature Today* (1971) and *Kunapipi* (1975) were printed to publish poetry and other literary writings that came from colonial areas or even from writers who lived inside the United Kingdom, but originally belonged to any of the British colonies. Conferences, like the Leeds Conference in 1964, were also held for literary characters to present their literary works. So, this type of literature was just a part of the central English literature.⁸¹

As mentioned before, Commonwealth Literature had its concerns about specific themes that were mostly political in sense. They were mostly concerned with retelling the colonial history of their nation, as well as notifying local

problems that gradually turned to call for nation building and rejecting the colonial takeover. From the 1980s, the term of Commonwealth Literature started to be rejected by many writers. As soon as many nations started to win their independence, they refused their writings to be classified under English literature. They wanted complete freedom from whatever had to do with the British Empire and its colonial culture and therefore rejected to be classified under the division of English literature.⁸²

Many British critics began to respond negatively to that matter. They publically declared they did not approve of the rejection of Commonwealth Literature, as they claimed that no individual was able to achieve literature if he/she was not ready to embrace the Western traditions and culture. However, while such selfish statements were released, the West-Indians, among many other post-colonial literary writers, became even more insistent to write literary texts that would include the actual experience and heritage of its citizens as well as the environment of the Caribbean instead of including all that is related to the West only. Many Caribbean writers rose to fame with their attempts to raise the consciousness of their fellow people. The time to implant their culture into the Caribbean society that would identify their habits and attitudes and not those of the British culture has come.⁸³

Commonwealth Literature was therefore gradually replaced by the notion of 'postcolonial literature' as a protest to what the British imposed, especially those nations that had finally won their independence.⁸⁴ Postcolonial literatures are the literatures that are a result of "interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices".⁸⁵ Postcolonial literature is then defined as that literature, which "critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives. As well as a change in power, decolonization

demanded—and still demands— symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings.”⁸⁶

Postcolonial writers openly reject everything that supports colonization. Such writers belong to groups that have suffered from complete exclusion or subordination in such societies for centuries. They made it their task to attack the British culture and show its shortcomings, so they could turn the focus on their own fragmented cultural identity in the hope of being able to recollect it. Whatever gave the colonial empire the power to continue their fierce oppression, was brought into the literature of these writers as targets. It was a way they hoped to be effective in not only weakening this empire to a most probable destruction, but also to raise their own cultural issues in the hope of recollecting lost cultural self.⁸⁷

The main feature that allowed writers to represent themselves more openly in postcolonial literature, is the use of language. While Commonwealth Literature restricted its writers to write only literature in European languages, postcolonial literature was a more flexible type of literature as it allowed writers to write in languages other than European ones.⁸⁸

On the other hand, postcolonial Caribbean literature differs from the ordinary literature of the West in the sense of unity. Caribbean poetry and any other literary texts have a unifying code as the writers do not set national boundaries or discriminate in language or race between the different Caribbean islands. They seem to support and complete one another rather than work on themes that create boundaries between one writer and another. This may be called ‘Caribbean Poetics’.⁸⁹ Such postcolonial writers seek to write about the commonalities between them rather than their differences. So it is safe to say that the Caribbean texts have the distinct attitude of unifying the region. Caribbean poetry has also been given a link to the poetry from Africa and Madagascar. Thus in the late 1940s, the famous anthologist, Leopold Sedar

Senghor (1906-2001) made this link, when he described them of having “affirmation, avec leur talent, avec leur negritude”; meaning that all of them, Caribbean and African poetry, possess the characteristics of having affirmation, talent, and being black.⁹⁰

The first literary texts that were Caribbean-based and written under postcolonial terms, flourished during the 1960s. Some writers started to use themes revealing that a twist in the societal institutions was needed. For instance, Caribbean students are not familiar with the significant atmosphere and the random practices of England. Presenting such facts in their syllabus would mean nothing but hypocrisy and oppression. Education that refers to their own Caribbean attitudes, atmosphere and history would naturally be more appropriate and righteous for students to grow up with. Such a theme of rebuilding the Caribbean societal institutions was also tackled by Caribbean postcolonial writers.⁹¹

The Indian professor of English and American Literature Homi K. Bhabha, was interested in studying the new cultural forms that emerged from multiculturalism. He says that multiculturalism in postcolonial criticism is mainly interested in analyzing the unequal colonial forces who demand their power in the modern world. They are in a continuous battle for authority purposes. Postcolonial discourses depict such subjects and are mostly from the Third World countries or the minority groups that live in colonial or postcolonial nations. They circulate their focus on cultural differences as well as political discrimination and authority, which normally has led to the loss of meaning and the historical division of the suppressed culture. Such contexts mainly revise the social and historical contexts of the society in order to rewrite the realities of the past. Writers who have suffered from the pains of history, especially with problems such as diaspora, cultural domination and displacement are the writers who mainly approach postcolonialism. These cultural groups have suffered, due

to such historical occasions, from social marginalization. These texts help giving the writers an aura of a promised source of self-identification. Bhabha marks that culture is one of the strategies of survival and that these incidents make the survival of any culture a complex process. With the journey of self-identification, there must be a project of recognition that includes the historical and literary perspectives.⁹²

Bhabha was majorly influenced by the Palestinian postcolonialist Edward Said. He succeeded the idea that there must be a cultural translation to reevaluate the lost culture. Said translates this idea by saying that such postcolonial texts are a “tremendously energetic attempt to engage with the metropolitan world in a common effort at re-inscribing, re-interpreting and expanding the sites of intensity and the terrain contested with Europe.”⁹³

Describing the West Indian writer, Lloyd W. Brown states in his book *West Indian Poetry* (1984) that the West Indian writer “has been the most insistent, and certainly the most persuasive, articulator of a West Indian consciousness which defines a special cultural identity in the region and its literature, and which in the process endows that literature with a unifying principle and with a corporate national image.”⁹⁴

Brathwaite is among the most distinguished literary writers who deals with the Caribbean case in closer detail to show the amount of oppression the Afro-Caribbean people have suffered. He thus shows how he and his Afro-Caribbean group have suffered from a cultural loss and tries therefore to retrieve certain cultural components and lost cultural rights as the right of multiculturalism.

Section Three: Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Life and Literary Career

The Caribbean postcolonial poet, historian, critic, fiction writer, and essayist Edward Brathwaite was born in 1930, in the city of Bridgetown in Barbados. He was the son of a warehouse clerk, Hilton Brathwaite and his wife Beryl Gill Brathwaite.⁹⁵ After Edward Brathwaite finished his primary school, he was given the opportunity to follow up his studies and enter a secondary school. He was smitten with the experience, especially because it was a time where education opportunities were not as wide as they are in the present. It was mostly because of his parents' social status that helped in the offering of such opportunities for they were socially higher in class than the average Caribbean man. He also spent some of his childhood at his uncle's place where he got to learn about some old African traditions as well as religions like 'Shango' and 'Pentecostalism'.⁹⁶

With successfully completing his secondary school, he continued his education and attended Harrison College in Barbados, and participated in the production of its school newspaper by presenting a column on jazz.⁹⁷ Because of his high intellectual capabilities, he won a scholarship to attend Cambridge University and so set his sails towards Britain in 1950. His ingenious intellectually in studying history developed remarkably as he continued, and in 1953 he won an honors degree in history. He looked forward to leave Cambridge after obtaining his university degree, for his enthusiasm for seeing the world grew drastically. He managed to get a job in Ghana, West-Africa and left Britain without hesitation. He remained there for several years working at the Ministry of Education.⁹⁸ There he made major historical discoveries and even got to add the African name 'Kamau' to his original name in an official ceremony in 1971, as he found within it qualities of having a cultural position and belonging as well as a source of rejection and revolution.⁹⁹ He declares that

“Name therefore becomes important and what we name and call ourselves becomes even more important, especially in a colonial or post-colonial situation where we have been named by other people and where it is therefore our responsibility to rename & redefine ourselves.”¹⁰⁰

The journey and the historical discoveries he made in Ghana brought the best out of Brathwaite in writing the most significant pieces of Caribbean poetry. His poetry started to limit itself to certain major themes, when realizing that his true belongings and ancestral roots belonged to West Africa and that the Afro-Caribbeans in the New World are somewhat related to the African culture when setting their traditions against those that are practiced in the African world. Summing up his experiences in the eight years he lived in Ghana, Brathwaite says:

Slowly but surely, during the eight years that I lived there, I was coming to an awareness and understanding of community, of cultural wholeness, of the place of the individual within the tribe, in society. Slowly... I came to a sense of identification of myself with these people, my living diviners. I came to connect my history with theirs, the bridge of my mind now linking Atlantic and ancestor, homeland and heartland. When I turned to leave, I was no longer a lonely individual talent; there was something wider, more subtle, more tentative: the self without ego, without I, without arrogance. And I came home to find that I had not really left. That it was still Africa; Africa in the Caribbean. The middle passage had now guessed its end. The connection between my lived, but unheeded non-middle-class boyhood, and its Great Tradition on the eastern mainland had been made.¹⁰¹

His journey to Ghana was one of importance for he started to realize that the Caribbean identity had degraded and suppressed the history and the overall reality of the African culture. It was a necessary factor for Brathwaite to highlight such cultural issues in his literary works for the British Empire established the Caribbean community where the African heritage was denied even in the educational curriculum.¹⁰²

When he returned to the Caribbean in 1962, he became a tutor at the University of the West Indies in St. Lucia. He also started his writing career through writing essays, which were characterized by being critical and cultural.

He published them in several periodicals and soon became among the most authoritative and important commentaries that were written about the West Indian society. Following up his lecturing in St. Lucia, he became a lecturer of history in 1963 in Jamaica, another Caribbean island that was colonized by the British Empire. It was here where he started writing his first trilogy *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1973), the poetic album that shaped his reputation as being one of the most famous international West-Indian poets.¹⁰³ This trilogy is “an epic of sorts on Black West Indian history and culture”.¹⁰⁴ It consists of three books of poetry, entitled *Rights of Passage* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969). This collection of books mainly focuses on the ancient world of Africa. Basically, the poet takes the task of finding the roots of the majority of Caribbean citizens. He thus believes that the people of the Modern Caribbean are originally from different places from around the world and concerns himself with those from the ancient African world. They are peoples with no clear identity and have not even a historical background that is recognized at any of the state’s institutions. It is his attempt to bring back African cultural aspects as well as their history and that includes slavery and the transportation of their ancestors to the Caribbean.¹⁰⁵ He recollects all information he and his Afro-Caribbean fellow citizens have in common whether that includes the past or present. It is a step towards going after the recognition of the African culture in the Caribbean. With such recognition he is able to point towards the need of an identity that is immensely based on the common culture of the ancient African world.

He continued his poetic career with writing his second trilogy *Ancestors: A Reinvention of Mother Poem, Sun Poem, and X/Self* (2001), which also includes three books of poetry: *Mother Poem* (1977), *Sun Poem* (1982), and *X/Self* (1987). This trilogy is in fact a revision of his previous literary work. He thus published each of the three books separately at first, but later decided to collect

them within another trilogy he described in the title page to be a “reinvention” of the three poems. Through such a description, Brathwaite wants to reveal that he has rewritten the volumes in a different style than that of the original in a way that is concerned with the typography of how the poems are organized. Some changes in the lines are also made.¹⁰⁶ He calls his writing-style in this trilogy as the ‘Sycorax Video Style’ and it may be defined as “a computer-generated set of typefaces that Brathwaite has adopted for much of his publications since the 1990s.”¹⁰⁷

This collection of poetry mostly limits itself to the poet’s homeland Barbados, and in *X/Self* specifically Brathwaite speaks of an individual who has lost his “ancestral name”.¹⁰⁸ He uses this character as an image to portray Barbados as one of the many colonies in the West-Indies that has suffered the loss of all black culture and its historical legacy. In both the trilogies and many other works, Brathwaite also demonstrates an interest in music that is African-based. It went from “ritual drum chants to the blues and jazz”¹⁰⁹, especially in his poetic collection entitled *Black and Blues* published in 1995. He also wrote a collection of poetry entitled *The Barabajan Poems* (1994) which is autobiographical in sense. He wrote this collection, just like *Ancestors*, in ‘video style’ and takes the computer, which is an icon of the Western technology, as an image to show the rejection of the controlling Western policies in his homeland. Other collections of poetry include *Dreamstories* (1994), *Zea Mexican Diary* (1994) and *Trench Town Rock* (1994).¹¹⁰

Alongside his poetic publications, Brathwaite also published scholarly articles from which *The Folk Culture of Jamaican Slaves* (1969) and *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (1971) are the most famous.¹¹¹ To sum up his works to date, Brathwaite “has produced at least nineteen volumes of poetry, four collections of prose poems (what he terms “proems”), two volumes of plays for children, eight books of literary and

cultural criticism, numerous critical essays, and five studies of Caribbean history.”¹¹²

It should not be forgotten that Brathwaite was born in the midst of a period, where the evolution of the Caribbean society had begun. It marked the height of radicalism against the controlling British Empire, especially in his homeland Barbados. The Barbadian citizens started to protest against the vicious economic and social policies that prohibited, beside the British culture, the different cultures of the Caribbeans, and on a major scale the Afro-Caribbean, from any rights that allowed them to practice equal social and political rights that were otherwise denied for centuries. These policies have been dominant since slavery found its place on the Barbadian soil. The protests eventually resulted in the election of Barbadian representatives who could finally present the Caribbean society with policies that reflect their own cultural reality.¹¹³

For centuries, Afro-Caribbeans seemed to accept the domination of the British culture and showed no interest towards a formation of a culture which has factors that could represent the contemporary Caribbean man. That is why Brathwaite attempts to capture the attention of as many Afro-Caribbean readers by approaching multiculturalism not only for their African historical background to be retrieved, but also for seeking its recognition and making it one of the prominent factors of the Caribbean identity. He highlights such cultural aspects for he strictly refused the continuation of living under the myth of the British culture as the base of the Caribbean national identity.¹¹⁴

He tries to make it clear that the Caribbean identity suffers from ‘rootlessness’, which is a “psychological state of dislocation and unbelonging, further deepened by historical memories of slavery and exile.”¹¹⁵ He attempts to highlight this weak point by showing the importance of having a Caribbean cultural identity to obtain strength and dignity from. That is why he worked in

his poetry on elevating the cultural consciousness by dealing with themes of the African heritage in the Caribbean society.¹¹⁶

Brathwaite has suggested four types of African literature in the Caribbean world.

1. Rhetorical: This is where authors mention Africa on a most surface level, not necessarily knowing much about this ancestral world. A desire of reconnection is however perceived, but not for the aim of celebrating the African elements in the Caribbean world. The poetry of Jamaican George Campbell is one whose poetry can be classified under this category. This type is seen to be static in sense with hope and willingness included. It also carries a level of betrayal and ignorance within that can clearly be noted in the works of Derek Walcott. He presents two cultures and creates a ground where one culture must be chosen as the representative culture of the common Caribbean man. Such works do however recognize the presence of African elements in the Caribbean community.¹¹⁷

2. The Literature of African Survival: This type deals with the surviving African elements that have been inherited over the generations. It shows off proverbs, songs, and tales in a most developed way. However it does not specifically aim at reconnecting these elements with the pure traditions of the African world.

3. The Literature of African Expression: This type aims at transforming African folk elements into literary elements. Limbo, a traditional dance that was found during the transportation voyage along the Middle Passage, is for example experimented in the poetry of George Lamming.

4. The Literature of Reconnection: The last type includes Caribbean writers who have actually lived in Africa and therefore try to reconnect the broken ties between the two worlds. They reach out to Africa to fill the gap that is left in the

spirits of many African-Caribbean people. For example , the Jamaican historian, H. P. Jacobs writes a piece of literature that says:

Bear up, mi good tree, bear up!
Mi father always cut a tree,
The green tree falls and the dry tree stands!
Shemo-limmo! mi toto! beng! beng!¹¹⁸

The folk / metaphysical mind is connected with African symbolism. ‘Shemo-limmo’, which is the secret name of a bull in certain Afro-Jamaican folk stories, is also connected to lemolemo, the Yoruban word for “locomotive”. The locomotive has in turn also become one of the appearances of Shango, god of thunder and creativity, in the New World.¹¹⁹ Brathwaite’s poetry may also be recognized as being that literature which tries to make reconnections between the New World and the Old World of Africa.

Brathwaite’s writings were initially influenced by Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and T.S Eliot (1888-1965). This can partly be noticed from his revolt against the iambic pentameter just like Pound and Eliot. Pound started this poetic revolution that suggested there should be a change in the pentameter that English literature depended upon. However, the iambic pentameter remained a pattern that was running strong through all the poetry that was produced in the first half of the twentieth century. Resistance started because the iambic pentameter limits the consciousness of the reader to only a “single cultural development,”¹²⁰ providing thereby no opportunity for other cultures to maintain their traditions and political issues literarily. Making use of this type of pentameter reflects hypocritically only the British culture, and that is what Brathwaite tried to dismantle with the start of the second half of the twentieth century. Brathwaite did this by using ‘Nation Language’, or what was formally considered by the British to be a creole, in favor of using the English voice that is based on the iambic pentameter. He thereby attacked “the English rhythms and conventions of their education.”¹²¹ The hurricane, for example, is a natural phenomenon in the Caribbean that, according to Brathwaite, cannot “roar in pentameters”¹²²,

while the phenomenon of snow can because it reflects the British weather. He began using the ‘calypso’, instead of the famous English iambic pentameter.¹²³ Calypso “is the metrical, musical and rhythmical form which is specific to the particular history, population and geography of the Caribbean. It is the folk expression of the African-descended people on the islands.”¹²⁴

With the breaking of such English literary rules, nation language is the medium of communication Brathwaite suggests as the formal language of the Afro-Caribbean people. He reveals that this language is the result of English being influenced by the languages of the imported African people that were brought to the region during the colonial era. It is the language spoken by the every-day Afro- Caribbean man. This language, which is otherwise known for being an English accent, is defined by Brathwaite as “the language of slaves and labourers, the servants who were brought in by conquistadors.”¹²⁵ On the other hand, the languages of the Western countries like English, Dutch, Spanish and French Brathwaite refers to as imperial languages and do not represent the actual languages that are used in the Caribbean region.¹²⁶

With the use of nation language in his poetry, Brathwaite reflects the idea of how the African culture was one that was based on the oral tradition. The melodies, which were sung and hummed by the African slaves while ploughing the earth, kept flowing orally from generation to another and eventually survived to be existent within the spirit of the contemporary Afro-Caribbean man. This oral tradition is used by Brathwaite not only to refer to the past, but he also wants to put it straight that this type of poetry “forces us into recognition of the fact that modern culture (in the widest sense of the world) is in good part oral and visual however much we may be loth to admit it.”¹²⁷

Making use of the oral tradition in poetry can be considered “an essential instrument in diffusing ideas and sending out messages of all kinds, the poetic function being not the least in this process.”¹²⁸ When Brathwaite performed parts

of his poetry, listeners would feel the power of the African voice. The Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes his experience of listening to sections of poetry performed by Brathwaite himself by saying:

We were mesmerized by the voice of orature. We were captives of a heritage we knew so well but from which our education had been alienating us. His voice was returning us to our formative roots in orature. ... This orality runs through brathwaite's entire work and is what gives it its very distinctive quality. This comes out powerfully through performance and makes us realize that, in his literary output, Brathwaite gropes for the word in its oral purity. In doing so, he is groping for the voice of the peasant, the submerged voice of the many who toil and endure.¹²⁹

Brathwaite hereby became a poet who gradually became unique and different from the poets he got influenced by. Pound and Eliot did not exclusively deal with political themes. Brathwaite on the other hand can be characterized as dealing with political issues, including thereby a revolutionary spirit that runs through his different literary works. He was interested in writing poetry that attracted the Caribbean audience only and had no interest in pleasing 'western' readers as he refused to make "political concessions" to anything that could possibly be considered as flattering. Brathwaite says "all the ancient hexameters or Elizabethan pentameters together are not worth the blood spilt or the dehumanization produced by the colonial enterprise."¹³⁰

H.H. Anniah Gowda says that Brathwaite is a poet "who feels the need to liberate himself from inherited colonial cultural models"¹³¹ He did so by basing his writing career on the idea of making use of his personal life experiences and by excessive reading. He never stops travelling and exploring different places in Europe, Africa, North-America and even the Far East. He lectured about his experiences at different universities in front of different audience to emphasize the lost cultural rights and history of the Afro-Caribbeans for instance.¹³²

In his essay "Nation Language" (1984), Brathwaite reveals in a more detailed way the aims of his writing career. He criticizes the cold intrusion of the Western cultures that started with Columbus's 'discovery' of the Caribbean.

He points that before Columbus's arrival at the coast, there were already tribes living peacefully on those 'new lands'. However, their cultures and their aspects such as their languages were destroyed with the genocide of these tribes thirty years after the historical European invasion. The tribes were wiped out and members who miraculously survived had to adopt and think in languages that were different from their own. That is how English, Spanish, Dutch and French spread in the region. Later, slaves from different places in West-Africa were transported to the Caribbean and the colonizers did not allow them to make use of their own languages nor live their style of living. It was here that the submersion of different cultures and languages started.¹³³

It went as far as the African descendants were left with no official identity that could completely represent them. The only way to solve this problem was to travel to the past to resurrect the African ancestral roots, through which Brathwaite was able to make a link between cultural aspects of the Afro-Caribbean and the West-African cultures in surprising ways. Hence, Brathwaite plans to depict the fragmented history of Africa and to combine this history with the fragments of the present. It is as if he has "the Herculean task of recreating a mythic Caribbean territory."¹³⁴ It is a task that will expose the pains of the past and the present in order to pave the way towards an identity that will identify all the Afro-Caribbean citizens. With the African ancestral history as a background and an official language to spread the traditions, rituals, the Caribbean landscape and even music like jazz, a new culture would be born. It can be concluded then that Brathwaite tackles within his poetry "homelessness and weariness on the one hand and, on the other, the constant need for a new beginning."¹³⁵

Brathwaite also made use of the experience of the Middle Passage in order to find the cultural roots of the African Caribbean population. He is, in addition, seen to have made the efforts to go back into the history of the African slaves towards the New World and to renew the relationship between the Africans in

the African continent and the African-Caribbeans of the New World. He also pointed out the historical significance of the slaves and attempted to show the brutality the African slaves and their upcoming generations had to live under within his literary works.¹³⁶

He seeks a solution that opens the door for group recognition by approaching multiculturalism. It is a multicultural right of any cultural group to call for recognition in a society with a diverse set of cultures. He demands the recognition of the Afro-Caribbeans as one of the main cultural contributors and rejects the consideration of this group of people as secondary or even a deleted component of the Caribbean society. Such a movement involves the ‘politics of multiculturalism’.¹³⁷

The whole process of unearthing the African heritage by mentioning the historical journey of African slavery, reviewing the cultural problems of the Afro-Caribbeans, seeking solutions to achieve recognition of this lost culture and its historical background in the Caribbean all in an attempt to reform the Caribbean identity that is identifiable to every Caribbean citizen shall all in all be studied under the term of the “Poetics of Multiculturalism”.

NOTES

¹Alma Dawson and Connie van Fleet, "The Future of Readers' Advisory in Multicultural Society," in *The Readers' Advisor's Companion*, eds. Kenneth D. Shearer and Robert Burgin (Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 2001), 250.

²Bhikhu Parekh, "Composite Culture and Multicultural Society," in *Composite Culture in a Multicultural Society*, eds. Bipan Chandra and Sucheta Mahajan (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2007), 3.

³Bernice Lott, *Multiculturalism and Diversity: A Social Psychological Perspective* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 12-14.

⁴Larry L. Naylor, *Culture and Change: An Introduction* (London: Bergin and Garvey, 1996), 138-139.

⁵Parekh, 3-4.

⁶Robert Leach, *The Politics Companion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 144.

⁷James S. Frideres, "Managing Immigration Social Transformations," in *Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Elspeth Cameron, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2004), 208.

⁸Cem Zeytinoglu, "Multiculturalism," in *Encyclopedia of Identity*, eds. Ronald L. Jackson II and Michael A. Hogg (California: SAGE Publications, 2010), 1:480. Monoculture is described as one culture that dominates other cultures in a certain society. Such a system is against diversity and is after the spread of a cultural story that must be accepted by all members of that society. Moreover, "[y]ou unconsciously believe and act on certain things, and disbelieve and fail to act on other things. That's the power of the monoculture; it's able to direct us without us knowing too much about it." F.S Michaels, *Monoculture: How one Story is Changing Everything* (Red Clover,

⁹Tahir Kamran, "Islam, Urdu and Hindu as the Other: Instruments of Cultural Homogeneity in Pakistan," in *Composite Culture in a Multicultural Society*, eds. Bipan Chandra and Sucheta Mahajan (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2007), 93.

¹⁰Zeytinoglu, 480.

¹¹Lisa Harrison, Adrian Little and Edward Lock, *Politics: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 110.

¹²John Charvet and Elisa Kaczynska-Nay, *The Liberal Project and Human Rights: The Theory and Practice of a New World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.

¹³Harrison, 110.

¹⁴Varun Uberoi and Tariq Modood, "Multicultural Citizenship," in *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*, ed. James A. Banks (California: SAGE Publications, 2012), 1519, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1506320333>.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1519.

¹⁶Harrison, 110.

¹⁷[Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/), s.v. "Multiculturalism," accessed October 6, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/>.

¹⁸*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Identity Politics," accessed October 6, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-politics/>.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 158.

²¹Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: (Expanded Paperback Edition)*, eds. Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.

²²Sarah Song, "The Subject of Multiculturalism: Culture, Religion, Language, Ethnicity, Nationality, and Race?" in *New Waves in Political Philosophy*, eds. Boudewijn de Bruin and Christopher F. Zurn (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 177.

²³*Ibid.*, 190.

²⁴United Nations Staff, *Globalization and Development* (United Nations Publications, 2004), 151, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=9211214505>.

²⁵Nilgun Anadolu-Okur, *Contemporary African American Theater: Afrocentricity in the Works of Larry Neal, Amiri Baraka, and Charles Fuller* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 45, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1136614230>.

²⁶Taylor, 26.

²⁷Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, "Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in the USA and Australia," in *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity*, ed. David Bennett (London: Routledge, 1998), 155.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Julia Candace Corliss, *Crossing Borders with Literature of Diversity*, (1998): 4, quoted in Alma Dawson and Connie van Fleet, "The Future of Readers' Advisory in Multicultural Society," in *The Readers' Advisor's Companion*, eds. Kenneth D. Shearer and Robert Burgin (Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 2001), 250.

³⁰Indara Rampersad, "Multiculturalism and the Challenge of Managing Diversity in Trinidad and Tobago," *Journal of Social Science for Policy Implications* 2, no. 1 (March 2014): 130. The Caribbean region consists of a group of islands that occupies an area of about 1,700 miles starting from "offshore Florida to the coast of South America". Lloyd E. Hudman and Richard H. Jackson, *Geography of Travel and Tourism*, 4th ed. (Massachusetts: Cengage Learning, 2003), 103, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0766832562>. The region is also known under the name of 'The West Indian Archipelago'. 'Indian' came to be used as a description to this archipelago, because the explorer Christopher Columbus had mistaken the place for the eastern shores of Asia, where he was supposedly travelling to. Robert H. Schomburgk, *The History of Barbados: Comprising a Geographical and Statistical Description of the Island: A Sketch of the Historical Events Since the Settlement And an Account of its Geology and Natural Productions* (London: Longman Brown Green and Longman's Paternoster Row, 1848), 2.

³¹*Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* (Taipei: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006), 58.

³²William M. Denevan, "Native American Populations in 1492: Recent Research and a Revised Hemispheric Estimate," in *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, ed. William M. Denevan, 2nd ed. (Wisconsin: Wisconsin Press, 1992), xxviii.

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³⁴Alan West, *African Caribbeans: A Reference Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), 215, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0313312400>.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 215.

³⁷*Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, 405.

³⁸John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 7.

³⁹Elleke Boehmer, introduction to *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

⁴⁰M. Moore, "On National Self-Determination," *Political Studies*, XLV/5, 1997, p.902, quoted in Taras Kuzio, *The Politics of Multiculturalism* (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham, 1998), 2.

⁴¹John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Continuum, 1991), 3.

⁴²Penn Hardwerker, "Barbados," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol Ember (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2001), 182.

⁴³Eric Doumerc, *Caribbean Civilisation: The English-Speaking Caribbean Since Independence* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2003), 20, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=2858166994>.

⁴⁴Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440 – 1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1997), 792, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=147460336X>.

⁴⁵Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Jamaica: Caribbean Universities Press, 1994), 13.

⁴⁶Sheridan, 13.

⁴⁷Nathan Nunn, "The Long-term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123, no. 1 (February 2008), 141-142.

⁴⁸Christine Chivallon, *The Black Diaspora of the Americas: Experiences and Theories Out of the Caribbean*, trans. Antoinette Titus-Tidjani Alou (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011), 5-6.

⁴⁹Nunn, 142.

⁵⁰Carole Boyce Davies, introduction to *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora*, by Carole Boyce Davies (California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), xxxiii.

⁵¹Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton, *The Scottish Diaspora* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 17.

⁵²Inbom Choi, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, eds. C. Fred Bergsten and Inbom Choi (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 10.

⁵³Davies, xxxiii-xxxiv.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, xxxiv.

⁵⁵Thomas, 792.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 132.

⁵⁸Rasheed Olaniyi, *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*, eds. Toyin Falola and Amanda Warnock (Westport: Greenwood, 2007), 261.

⁵⁹Carl Pedersen, "Representations of the Slave Trade in Caribbean and African-American Literature," *The Massachusetts Review* 34, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 226.

⁶⁰Edward Kamau Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature," *Daedalus* 103, no. 2 (Spring, 1974): 73-74.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 74-76.

⁶²Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2009), 9.

⁶³Pedersen, 226.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 227.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶Lott, 17-18.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁸McLeod, 6.

⁶⁹Henry Yu, "Ethnicity," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, eds. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 103.

⁷⁰Lott, 25.

⁷¹Yu, 103.

⁷²Lott, 25.

⁷³Monika Fludernik, *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 297.

⁷⁴Melissa Shales, *Barbados* (Sydney: New Holland Publishers, 2007), 19, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1845375610>.

⁷⁵Marc Prou, "Decolonization," in *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 1:378.

⁷⁶Boehmer, 3. The term under discussion can be written in two different ways. Some write it separating the term with a hyphen, 'post-colonialism'. Here the term simply refers to the historical period that denotes the era after colonialism. Others write the term without a hyphen, 'postcolonialism'. The latter term will be depended upon, as this thesis will not only depend on the historical perspective of the islands, but from its literary perspective as well.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Stewart King, "Catalonia and the Postcolonial Condition," in *The Space of Culture: Critical Readings in Hispanic Studies*, eds. Stewart King and Jeff Browitt (Cranbury: Monash Romance Studies, 2004), 39, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0874139171>.

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⁸⁰Pramod K. Nayar, *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 34.

⁸¹Nayar, 34.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Caribbean Poetics: Aesthetics of Marginality in West Indian Literature" (PhD diss., University Microfilms International, 1990), 53.

⁸⁴Nayar, 34.

⁸⁵Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., general introduction to *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

⁸⁶Boehmer, 3.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Nayar, 34-35.

⁸⁹Torres-Saillant, 33.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., 48.

⁹²Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 171-173.

⁹³Edward Said, "Third World Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture," *Rafiran*, vol.9, no.3 (1990), p.49, quoted in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 174.

⁹⁴Lloyd W. Brown, *West Indian Poetry* (1984): 8, quoted in Torres-Saillant, 53-54.

⁹⁵Christine Krueger, *Encyclopedia of British Writers, 19th Century* (New York: Book Builders, 2003), 51.

⁹⁶Curwen Best, *Kamau Brathwaite and Christopher Okigbo: Art, Politics, and the Music of Ritual* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2009), 34.

⁹⁷Krueger, 51.

⁹⁸Mark A. McWatt, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite," in *Fifty Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Daryl Cumber Dance (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 58.

⁹⁹Paul Naylor, *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 142-143.

¹⁰⁰Kamau Brathwaite, *Barabajan Poems, 1492-1992* (New York: Savacou North, 1994), 240-241, quoted in Naylor, 143.

¹⁰¹Kamau Brathwaite, "TIMEHRI," in *Black British Culture and Society: A Text Reader*, ed. Kwesi Owusu (London: Routledge, 2000), 48.

¹⁰²Pedersen, 233.

¹⁰³McWatt, 59.

¹⁰⁴Lloyd W. Brown, "BRATHWAITE, Edward," in *Commonwealth Literature* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), 41, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1349861014>.

¹⁰⁵Krueger, 51.

¹⁰⁶Anna Reckin, "Tidalectic Lectures: Kamau Brathwaite's Prose/ Poetry as Sound-Space," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (December 2003): 13.

¹⁰⁷Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: The Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2004), 87.

¹⁰⁸Elaine Savory, "Brathwaite, Kamau," in *Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Literature 1900-2003*, eds. Daniel Balderston and Mike Gonzales (New York: Routledge, 2004), 81.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹McWatt, 59.

¹¹²Simon Beecroft, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite," in *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. John C. Hawley (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 69.

¹¹³Best, 34.

¹¹⁴Brown, "BRATHWAITE, Edward," 41.

¹¹⁵Jennifer Lyle Morgan, "Women in Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade," in *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity*, ed. Anthony Tibbles (Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool, 2005), 57.

¹¹⁶Brown, "BRATHWAITE, Edward," 41.

¹¹⁷Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature," 80-82.

¹¹⁸Jacobs, H.P. "The Little Boy Who Avenged His Mother," in *An Early Dialect Verse, Jamaican Historical Review*, 1, No.3 (December 1984), 269-281, quoted in Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature," 85.

¹¹⁹Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature," 85.

¹²⁰Kevin McGuirk, notes to "'All Wi Doin': Tony Harrisson, Linton Kwesi Johnson, and the Cultural Work of Lyric in Postwar Britain," in *New Definitions of Lyric: Theory*,

Technology, and Culture, ed. Mark Jeffreys (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 70, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0815318782>. The iambic pentameter is “the traditional workhorse of English poetry. (Its basic pattern is da-DA—or one unstressed and one stressed syllable—five times.)” Eleanor Cook, *A Reader’s Guide to Wallace Stevens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 326.

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¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid., 69-70.

¹²⁴Fludernik, 311.

¹²⁵Edward K. Brathwaite, “Nation Language,” in *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*, eds. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin (New York: Routledge, 2000), 310, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0415186811>.

¹²⁶Ibid., 310.

¹²⁷Arturo Cattaneo, “Caribbean Verse: History of Literature As History in Literature,” in *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse in English*, ed. Paula Burnett (London: Penguin Books:1986), 88, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0141937394>.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, “Kamau Brathwaite: The Voice of African Presence,” *World Literature Today* 68, no.4 (Autumn 1994): 678, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40150609>.

¹³⁰Torres-Saillant, 155.

¹³¹Quoted in Kalliney, 76.

¹³²McWatt, 59.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴June D. Bobb, *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott* (Trenton: African World Press, 1998), 14.

¹³⁵McWatt, 59.

¹³⁶Pedersen, 231.

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CHAPTER TWO

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EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE'S *THE ARRIVANTS: A NEW WORLD TRILOGY* (1973)

As the concept of multiculturalism offers solutions to many cultural issues that minorities suffers from, Brathwaite comes forwards to discuss the issues Afro-Caribbeans suffer from. He starts his quest with an attempt of gaining recognition by retrieving the lost African history and culture to prove the involvement of this cultural group in the history of the Caribbean. He makes use of the fragmented memories that are buried within Afro-Caribbean self and ties such memories up with the African historical background for the purpose of achieving cultural wholeness, or “To make the fragments whole”¹, as he says. His poetry is primarily based on the experiences of his travel to Ghana, describing it as an “*interior journey into the history & culture of our selves . . . the discovery of our ancient & ancestral buried birthchord & the further deeper nearer more distant confrontations with // time- / place-self*”² (italics in original).

Brathwaite is therefore seeking to depict something that goes beyond ‘cultural diversity’, or “the variety of cultures”³ of his Caribbean homeland. His poetry is like one of those “political movements fighting for recognition of their cultural identities [which] are justified in the optics of multiculturalism.”⁴ He approaches multiculturalism to stress “the examination of issues of power relations between white and non-white ethnicities in a ‘multicultural society’,”⁵ and finds in such an examination some hope to solve such problems at hand.

Brathwaite’s significant writings have marked him as one of the most reputed Caribbean poets. He is among the many noteworthy personalities, who made the proverb *necessity is the mother of invention* the basis of their works and creations. In one of his recent interviews, he reveals the inspiration behind the start of his literary career as a poet and the purpose that forms the essence of

the themes he approaches. He states: “I think always words, words were the poem. Trying to create images, and not just images but I was aware that I needed to create a native image. I stress this word *native* because of the destruction of the sense of nativity and birth, the whole thing about a slave woman not being able to give birth to a free child.”⁶

The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy (1973), Brathwaite’s first poetic trilogy, is one of the major contributions he added to the West-Indian literary canon. This trilogy consists of a collection of three books of poetry entitled: *Rights of Passage* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969).⁷ Professor of Literary Studies Elaine Savory describes the volume as being “an outstanding original and poetically mature portrayal of the history and culture of African peoples in the New World.”⁸ In a more detailed description, this volume may be described as

a sustained narrative of an African experience that originates on the mother continent and extends to the diaspora, an experience in which the marking elements of the Black destiny have been brought together into a single existential perspective, each episode bearing upon the other and determining the direction and lived texture of the whole.⁹

Like many of his other celebrated literary works, Brathwaite’s *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* is based on the remarkable researches he has done in both West-Indian and African-American history. He portrays his experiences in a most artistic way to make the Afro-Caribbean population in the New World understand the deep reality of their forefathers both culturally and politically, for it is because of their contributions that Brathwaite stresses the importance of African recognition in the Caribbean. He compares the reality of the Afro-Caribbean population to that of the Western population in the region and through this the poet tries to direct the reader towards condemning the white folk and their overpowering culture. The British Empire has caused the black people to dwell without a cultural identity that defines their fragmented self. Because of such fragmentation, Brathwaite declares in his essay “Folk Culture

of the Slaves in Jamaica” (1981) that seems that the African culture is not visible when compared to other cultures in the Caribbean. Yet he underlines that this culture has been transferred from Africa to the New World in an immanent way:

The significant feature of African religious culture was that it was (is) *immanent*: carried within the individual/community, not (as in Europe) existentially externalized in buildings, books. So that in a sense, African societies *did* appear to European observers to have “no culture,” because there were no externally visible signs of a “civilization.” That dance was African architecture, that history was not printed but recited, the contemporary Prospero, could not understand. And yet it was the immanent nature of this culture that made its amazing and successful transfer from Africa and the New World/Caribbean, even under the extraordinary conditions of slavery [,] possible. The slave ship became a kind of psycho-physical space capsule, carrying intact the carriers of a kind of invisible/atomic culture (italics in original).¹⁰

Brathwaite comes forward to dig out this seemingly invisible culture by emphasizing the most prominent cultural aspects of language and religion, placing these at the heart of his poetry. His poetic talent considers the existence of a cultural loss and he expands his talent with highlighting a new language at the same time. Compiling new words, he seeks to make a native language for purposes of cultural recognition. His aim is then to focus on a culture that is not based on what has been inherited by the Western cultural imperialists, but rather one that is based on African ancestry.

Starting off with the title of the trilogy, it is significant to shed light on the title’s main word ‘Arrivants’. The French literary critic Jacques Deridda puts it as follows: “Since the *arrivant* does not have any identity yet, its place of arrival is also de-identified: one does not yet know or one no longer knows which is the country, the place, the nation, the family, the language and the home in general that welcomes the absolute *arrivant* (italics in original).”¹¹ This means that the person described or the ‘arrivant’ realizes the loss of his cultural rights at his arrival of this de-identified place. Brathwaite addresses the cultural issue the persona faces and implicitly moves beyond the boundaries of these issues trying to set up his idea of a possible solution. He seeks the participation of his fellow

people to ensure success. He is convinced that he can, with the help of his people, reach self-identification by demanding the multicultural rights that every man is rightful of possessing. That can be done with the plan of holding “a broken mirror up to broken nature”.¹² It means that the poet starts his poetic journey with presenting the broken nature of the Afro-Caribbeans in a newly produced form in a way that makes it almost seem like it is a ‘discovery’.

Section One: *Rights of Passage* (1967)

From the very beginning of his trilogy, Brathwaite is carefully making powerful historical references. The title of the first volume *Rights of Passages*, is plainly suggestive referring to “rites de passage”, meaning “a transition between one condition to another”.¹³ It refers to the changing condition of the African settlers in the Caribbean and the New World. Their state changed through time from servants and slaves, to spades and labourers, and then to legal citizens who are calling for their cultural rights. The main reason Brathwaite starts off his revolutionary movement with mentioning historical incidents for Afro-Caribbeans to read is because he perceives some kind of “racial amnesia” that might have inflicted his people. They seem to be unfamiliar with the detailed history of pains and sufferings their forefathers went through. He even perceives some denial in which some African-descendant groups do not want to be linked to the African world thinking of it as a disgrace and a cause for their humiliation. That is why Brathwaite in this volume finds it essential to restate the history of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and what sufferings their forefathers were living under before, during and after this slave trade. It is an attempt to collect the fragmented cultural elements of the past and present together and present them as a unified whole to be representative of all Afro-Caribbean citizens. It is an essential step in rebuilding the Caribbean identity which aims at recognizing the African culture as its major contributor.¹⁴

With presenting the general aim of this volume, it is important to know beforehand that this volume includes four sections. Each one of these sections is further subdivided into several poems. Together they “draw on a stunning variety of vernacular black cultural traditions and historical references.”¹⁵ The first section of this poetic album is entitled “Work Song and Blues,” starting off with the poem “Prelude”. It portrays historical Africa and the trade journey that native Africans were involved in.¹⁶ Brathwaite’s aim from the very beginning is presenting and reminding the Afro-Caribbean reader about the realities of their history. There is a clear difference between the peoples with an African ethnicity and those with a Western ethnicity. He starts with the lines:

Drum skin whip
lash, master sun’s
cutting edge of
heat, taut
surfaces of things
I sing
I shout
I groan
I dream ¹⁷

These lines show the dark past of the Middle Passage when the African forefathers crossed the ocean that links Africa to the New World. Their vehement sufferings began immediately when they were transported by sea to serve as slaves in other countries. Using the images of the drum and the whip at the beginning of this trilogy is quite significant because they are allegorical in sense. The drum signifies “the origin of song and dance, of community and communication, of subversion and rebellion.”¹⁸ It also symbolizes the slaves. It is as if every African slave had turned into a “drum” enduring the violent ‘beats’ of the fierce Western whip.¹⁹ The drum therefore signifies either the African instrument or the human slave, both of which are tools of rebellion and identity.²⁰ The drum has given historical and revolutionary implications. The whip has become a symbol for slavery marking the violent and merciless attitude of their masters. It also is selected to be a historical reference to the

sound one produces when whipping the African drum. It is the revolutionary voice of their true identity.²¹ The “skin” on the other hand, may either refer to the “surface of the drum or to the surface of a human, a slave, being whipped.”²²

The word “master,” can be interpreted differently. I can refer to the Western slave traders who whipped the slaves on their backs causing their cultural deterioration. It can also refer to the anger of the African gods who have cast a curse at their own African people.²³ Regardless of which interpretation is considered, there is no doubt that Brathwaite wants to resurrect the African ethnic roots through mentioning such African myths and the African history in general, hoping for his people to realize that they live in an age where oppression is still present. In addition to this, literary critic John K. Hoppe emphasizes the importance of the pronoun ‘I’ in these lines. The pronoun is not merely used to retell the pains of a specific slave on a personal level, rather it speaks as a “synthesis of many others.”²⁴

It is no secret that the African forefathers arrived on the shores of the New World carrying with them different cultures, different languages and had lived under different life traditions and conditions. They were however arrogantly treated by their Western trade masters under open racial terms. As long as slaves were dark skinned, their culture and language would not change the way they were treated. Moreover, each master carried out a secret plan in which he would mix slaves from different African cultures and languages together within his laboring group, in order to divide them politically and to force them to communicate using the Western communication code only. Despite such a hypocritical plan, the African slaves got close together and created a strong bond between one another depending on the commonalities that existed between them in both cultural traditions and appearance. Little by little, these different African cultures merged together forming a sense of unity and oneness among the black skinned, as they have been sharing the same struggles and historical

background.²⁵ This is where Brathwaite sought an opportunity to strengthen the bond between the Afro-Caribbeans.

Brathwaite then travels with the reader to the age prior to the Western invasion. Africans were moving from one place to another in Africa, in order to build up their own civilization and live under the traditions of their own cultures.²⁶

Build now
the new
villages, you
must mix spittle
with dirt, dung
to saliva and
sweat: round
mud walls will rise
in the dawn
walled cities
arise
from savanna and
rock river bed ... (5)

The process of building their civilization called for the combination of natural factors like water, earth, fire and air, as well as human factors, like saliva and sweat. The poet emphasizes deeply the efforts that were made to build their civilization so that it will successfully reflect their African culture. Even African gods were believed to have cooperated in this most tiresome accomplishment and served to protect their constructions from all possible dangers.²⁷

So grant, God
that this house will stand
the four winds
the seasons' alterations
the explorations of the worm. (7)

However, these trusted gods had failed to protect the African people when the colonial forces stormed in and started to destroy their civilization and enslave people. A new civilization had to be built on different ground with the use of the same natural and human elements. This reminds the reader of the famous poem *The Wasteland* (1922) composed by T.S Eliot. These elements reflect the

fragmentation of the Self. This Self does not know whether to continue being broken and sustain life as it is or to recollect itself and make a radical change. Nearing the end of the poem, Brathwaite reveals that this god was made of fire. This god represents Ogun, the Yoruba god of fire, who had the capability of providing his people with the necessities of agricultural tools and weapons of war.²⁸ In the next poem “New World A-Comin’,” Brathwaite expresses his frustration and anger at Ogun.²⁹ He says:

And the fire, our
fire, fashioning locks
rocks darker than iron;
fire betrayed us once
in our village; ... (10)

This god witnessed the conquest of Africa by the Western cultural imperialists, yet did nothing to protect his people, like providing them with weapons of war. He then shows the frustration of the African people while they are being taken away to the New World for plantation.³⁰

O who now will help
us, help-
less, horse-
less, leader-
less, ... (10)

Brathwaite however highlights later in the poem that a new world lies behind the agonizing whips and chains.³¹

for our blood, mixed
soon with their passion in sport,
in indifference, in anger,
will create new soils, new souls, new
ancestors; ... (11)

It is noticeable that Brathwaite avoids being chronological when writing poetry, as he is not after following the concept of time. He jumps between past, present and future to show that these time phases are connected even if they are different. The journey African people have been forced to make is not simply a

historical incident, but is an important factor that marks the beginning of the fragmentation of the African self. It is the beginning of where suffering had begun and from which Afro-Caribbeans are still suffering. The Middle Passage has always been a reminder of such pains, however it paradoxically has also some creativity lying within it as new creative cultural phenomena were found.³²

The poet introduces the reader to a fictional persona named Uncle Tom, to demonstrate the spiritual sufferings of the average African ancestor. This character is derived from Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). It shows how the character, a slave, later becomes a national symbol of "black collaboration".³³ In Brathwaite's poetry, Uncle Tom is portrayed as a character who worries about the next generations or "seeds" (12). He is a "complex character, one who embodies memories of African glory as well as the devastating loss and self-pity that followed the Middle Passage."³⁴ He witnesses the violence and oppression that surrounds them and fears they might die out if no action is taken. In other words, he deeply worries that if they are not provided with the knowledge of their traumatic past and react to it in a way to rebuild a new and different future, they will be forever lost. That is to say, their culture, language and all the heritage of their forefathers would be no more.

Uncle Tom's descendants are portrayed as being "scattered around the world, [and] must find themselves by confronting their history."³⁵ With a wide sense of negativity, Tom does his best to explain how the African slaves have been working with sweat and blood, yet have achieved nothing but pain and loss.³⁶ He laments:

for we who have achieved nothing
work
who have not built
dream
who have forgotten all
dance (13)

Brathwaite unfolds through Uncle Tom the culture of the African world little by little. The aesthetic beauty that lies within the myths and stories of the folk in Ghana and other African states are presented with a touch of Brathwaite's own imagination. The loss and damage of these factors are worthy of calling out for his people to take political action against the Western authorities. Through Tom, he laments the loss of these significant African cultural models and conveys to the reader that little of these models are present in the Afro-Caribbeans today. All are destroyed by the Western cultural imperialism:³⁷

the paths we shall never remember
again: Atumpan talking and the harvest branches, all the tribes of Ashanti
dreaming the dream
of Tutu, Anokye and the Golden Stool, built
in Heaven for our nation by the work
of lightning and the brilliant adze: and now nothing (13)

So just like Uncle Tom, Brathwaite fears that his people will lose everything if they do not find themselves in the pages of their ancestral history. Uncle Tom seems to be lost in a time, where he has taken part in things that are "worthless" (15) and is only successful in uttering words of servility.³⁸

So I who have created
nothing but these worthless
weeds, these need-
less seeds, work; who have built
but on silt, but on sand
dream;
who have forgotten all
mouth 'Massa, yes
Massa, yes
Boss, ye
Baas' (15)

His children who are representatives of the upcoming generations are taught nothing in the Caribbean of what is related to their African culture and traditions. The British culture has been dictating over the reality of the African culture, for the African population are taught a culture that does not belong to them or identifies with their reality. This is an act of external cultural change; a

change that twists the beliefs and principles because of the interference of another culture. Brathwaite emphasizes the fragmentation of the Afro-Caribbean man by breaking the words with hyphens.³⁹

But help-
less my children are
caught leader-
less are
taught fool
ishness and use-
lessness and
sorrow (14)

He is furious that his people are not a unifying cultural group that can raise its voice against the Western colonizers. He implies this thought in Uncle Tom's character.⁴⁰

And I
timid Tom
father
founder
flounderer

speak
their shame
their lack
of power

but weak
O weak
no crack
in the chain
starts
no bitter
flame
marks
my wrath. (15)

In addition to the frustration and desperation, the poem "All God's Chillun" which is a clear reference to the expressionist play "All God's Chillun Got Wings" (1924), displays Uncle Tom's sadness of how his seeds are mocking him. He is a poor man who has shared his stories of Africa with them, but they could not care less for these stories. His sons tell him to get familiar with

everything and accept the racial stereotypes the whites acknowledge. At hearing such comments, Uncle Tom is left behind devastated and desperate. He begins feeling powerless and hopeless, as only one old man cannot change matters by his own. He needs their support to preserve what is left and to resurrect what has been lost of the African culture. Their contributions must be highlighted in every effective possible way, so as to become a major aspect in the Caribbean identity.⁴¹ However, to Uncle Tom's deepest sadness, he is disliked and degraded by not only the white masters and their social harshness, but also by his black seeds. The white see him as the inferior component of the Caribbean society, whereas the black consider him the source of weakness.⁴²

Brathwaite proves he is "the pulse taker of society,"⁴³ and his concern with history is ground enough to proclaim the socio-economic ills the black man suffered from slavery to modern times. It is not surprising that he echoes the protest against history as he fears the continuation of Western domination.⁴⁴

for I fear
to see them

back broken
black broken (20)

"The Spades", the second section of "Work Songs and Blues", refers to the descendants of Uncle Tom. The section starts, just like the first section, with a poem entitled "Prelude". This repetition marks a significant factor in the journey of the African diaspora. Uncle Tom's journey has ended here and this prelude marks the start of the journey of the next generation. The voice changes automatically from Uncle Tom to his children. They emphasize rejecting the history and cultural traditions Uncle Tom tried to transmit to them.⁴⁵ They say:

To hell
with Af-
rica
to hell
with Eu-
rope too, (29)

This denial of their ancestral roots, history and culture is a crucial factor of the loss of cultural identity and dispossession in the contemporary Caribbean community. Brathwaite reveals that because of this gap, the African people of the New World are given a stereotypical image that depends on racism. That is their dark skin, their red tiresome eyes, and other significant features that differentiate them from the white people. In his poem “Folksways,” he reveals how every black slave was continuously labeled as “negro”, (30) a stereotype meant to make Africans inferior to the whites.⁴⁶ Out of deep frustration, Brathwaite angrily writes out the image of a slave:

I am a fuckin’ negro,
man, hole
in my head,
brains in
my belly;
black skin
red eyes
broad back (30)

This act of racism played a major role in their fragmentation and led to the further loss of their ancestral roots and culture. This may also be called ‘deculturalization’. Deculturalization refers to the “destruction of the culture of a dominated group and its replacement by the culture of the dominating group.”⁴⁷ Racism became therefore a tool to set the African slaves without a culture. Afro-Caribbeans were looked down upon under such terms, and so it was only obvious that the ‘black skinned’ Caribbeans were extremely irritated to be linked to the African world.

The future at hands always seemed to be a disastrous one for Uncle Tom's children. They are, like the section's title suggests, characterized as being like spades. They are labor hands with no hope for, or a good deserved future.⁴⁸

Just hard hands
man, spade hard
and licensed
with their blisters. (30)

Concluding Uncle Tom's spiritual status, it is clear that Brathwaite is at pains that the Afro-Caribbeans as members of the Caribbean society, have had the toughest of times in past and present, have strived the most for survival and evolution of the Caribbean nationhood, and are yet not recognized by the political ruling state for their contributions. With such prominent and essential contributions, they have every right to be recognized as the essence of the contemporary Caribbean society. That is why Brathwaite calls for action through showing more weaknesses that the Afro-Caribbean folk suffers from. It is a call that implicitly shows the strict need for protesting against oppression and achieving the multicultural rights they deserve.

Ever seen
a man
travel more
seen more
lands
than this poor
land-
less, harbour-
less spade? (34)

The fragmentation of the words "landless" and "harbourless" reflect again the fragmentation of the African-descendants in the Caribbean. The self has experienced a total loss and is identified now with nothing more than poverty, homelessness, and a lack of self-possession.⁴⁹ Hoppe states that

the absence of a final land, a final harbour, the journey itself movement along someone else's path becomes the sign under which this (group) identity lives and finds its order. In particular, the boogie-woogie song of section 2 uncouples the movement from any purpose; it is the symbolic identity of the people. The forced journey has been refigured by Brathwaite as a cultural element; exile has become internalized, constitutive of group identity and subjectivity.⁵⁰

The forced journey of the African slaves and the further loss of their offspring came in total to be used by Brathwaite as a cultural element after mingling the facts with parts of his imagination. The lines mentioned previously mark the loss of harbour and land. This can be linked to the epigraph of *Rights of Passages*:

And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus: 16.1)

He links the African fate in the New World to that of the Jewish people. The Jewish people are known for being involved historically in a diaspora. It involved the journey of the children of Israel made from Egypt to "the wilderness of Sin", a place near Sinai. The results of this diaspora were dispossession and exile and have become a cultural landmark that is inherited over generations. As it became a cultural element that is shared by all Jews, Brathwaite attempts to make the African diaspora a cultural marker of the African-Caribbeans as well. It would be a tradition that could unify all Afro-Caribbeans together.⁵¹

The third section of "Work Songs and Blues," is entitled "Islands and Exiles". Brathwaite, with such a title, "establishes the framework in which the Caribbean identity has been sought".⁵² In his poem, "Calypso," he unfolds the cruelty of the plantation system in the Caribbean. He says: "The islands roared into green plantation" (48). The roar reflects the large financial income the

Western colonizers made from plantation, while the African slaves harvest nothing but pain and oppression:

It becomes an island dance
Some people doing well
While others are catchin' hell (49)

Brathwaite goes on to lament that the African slaves have set foot everywhere around the globe. They wander around the different capitals of the world and are “nigratin’ overseas” (50) from one place to another. Nigrate is a term Brathwaite coined by combining the words ‘nigger’ and ‘migrate’. It is as if the African slaves were punished to leave their lands of glory and migrate to an alien land where they would become ‘niggers’. It is a marker of racial exploitation and a hint at where the African diaspora find its beginning. Nigration starts with their enforced transportation across the Middle Passage. Coining this term helped Brathwaite to point his finger towards the extreme racism the black people endure. It all started with the Western colonial slavery.⁵³ Because of this slavery, the African descendants are perceived as a shattered and downgraded group of people whose reputation seems to be associated with nothing other than slavery. They have travelled to:

Castries’ Conway and Brixton in London,
Port of Spain’s jungle

and Kingston’s dry Dungle
Chicago Smethwick and Tiger Bay. (40)

All this started when Christopher Columbus ‘discovered’ the lands of the New World. It is the incident that marked the birth of destruction and tragedy for the African people, as well as Amerindians. It is ever since that day that their cultural self was put to question.⁵⁴

Once we went to Europe, a rich old lady asked:
Have you no language of your own
No way of doing things
Did you spend all those holidays
At England’s apron strings? (55)

Language is not the only element that is culturally affected due to the oppression those people live under, but even the traditional African drum seems to have lost its power and importance. “Our colour beats a restless drum / but only the bitter come” (56) and so the Afro-Caribbeans feel more lost than ever. In “Wings of a Dove,” the theme becomes a bit more positive when hope starts to reappear between the lines of despair. Materialism that is conquering the region is finally attacked with words of revolution and strength.⁵⁵

Uncle Tom is later in the lines also pictured as a source of hope and survival. He tried to find hope by approaching an African god, whom he celebrates using the African drum. He succeeds in giving the African drum a voice in the New World and so has finally found comfort and peace in the new place he inhabits. He regains the hopes of a better future without oppression and inequality.⁵⁶

So beat dem burn
dem, learn
dem that dem
got dem nothin’
but dem
bright bright baubles
that will burst dem
when the flame dem
from on high dem
raze an’ roar dem
an’ de poor dem
rise an’ rage dem
in de glory of the Lord. (45)

However, Brathwaite seems always to remind the Afro-Caribbean reader of the pains of the past. This proves the mixed nature Brathwaite possesses. At times his poetry is written using words of hope and regeneration, while at other times he shows words of destruction and misery.⁵⁷ In his poem “The Emigrants,” Brathwaite does not see the African citizens of now and then as the only victims of the Western violence and their oppressive whip, but the islands of the

Caribbean are clearly also part of destruction and loss.⁵⁸ The islands are given a voice of historical knowledge of the arrival of Christopher Columbus, the conquistador:

What did this journey mean, this

new world mean: discovery?
Or a return to terrors
he had sailed from, known before?

I watched him pause.

Then he was splashing silence.
Crabs snapped their claws
and scattered as he walked towards our shore. (53)

The lines show the Caribbean lands ask a rhetorical question about the name, 'New World', given to the lands by Columbus. As everyone knows that Columbus was not the first to arrive the shores of this nation. The voice of the Caribbean lands reminds the reader that Columbus's arrival meant nothing more than terror and loss.⁵⁹

The fourth section *The Return*, starts with the poem "The Dust". In this poem, the poet reveals that the preserving of the African past is a female task. It is through the Afro-Caribbean women that culture and race can survive. They are imagined to be a community for protecting African memories. They witness the pains of the environment around them and give these memories a voice hoping that such voices will bring up a solution.⁶⁰ They, for instance, discuss the ill herd they see around them:

.... How
Darrington mule?
He still sicky-sicky. An' now
I hear dat de cow
gone down too. It int give no milk
since las' Tuesdee. (63-64)

And even the vegetables are sickly and withered:⁶¹

....Bolinjay,
spinach, wither-face cabbage,
muh Caroline Lee an' the Six Weeks, too;
greens swibble up an' the little blue
leafs o' de Red Rock slips gettin' dry
dry dry. (64)

This reflects the sickness and dullness of the entire Caribbean society. Brathwaite demonstrates the importance of preserving with presenting a folk story he made out using his imagination. An Afro-Caribbean woman named Olive tells the reader a story from the past. She in fact retells a story she has heard from her grandmother years ago. It talks about the eruption of a volcano that caused great damage to a neighboring island. The act of retelling this story brings past and present together. The damage this volcano has caused, draws the damage of the present Caribbean region. Both generations are searching for meaning after such a damaging experience.⁶²

An' then suddenly so
widdout rhyme
widdout reason

you crops start to die
you can't even see the sun in the sky; (68)

Olive, the representative of all Caribbean women, is the powerful voice of resistance that preserves old African traditions and culture, just like the feminine power of Pocahontas who is known for her powerful voice of resistance. This voice may be buried underneath the ground, but is promised to make a powerful return.⁶³

praise God that yuh body
int turnin' to stone,
an' that you bubbles still big;
that you got a good
voice that can shout
for heaven to hear (68)

This poem is important because it “becomes for Brathwaite a powerful symbol of continuity and the unity of community. The word “dust” in the poem is not

only the volcanic ash of Olive's grandmother's story, but also the dust of Africa as it successfully moves from the African continent to the lands of the Caribbean."⁶⁴ Brathwaite moves to more remarkable African touches that can be found in the Caribbean for the sake of formulating their existence into a recognizable entity. The poem "Cabin" describes a cabin. It refers to a museum that once was the house of a former black slave named Josiah Henson (1796-1884). The poet describes the house before it was turned into a museum.⁶⁵ He says:

Under the burnt out green
of this small yard's
tufts of grass
where water was once used
to wash pots, pans, pots,
ochre appears. A rusted
bucket, hole kicked into its
bottom, lies on its side. (70)

The colors function to remind the reader of the pains of their African history. In the first line, "Under the burnt out green", the reader is given the idea that the house is a little bit torn in appearance, but the ironic combination of colors that were used in the construction of the house reflects the style and fashion of the Africans in general. In addition, these colors remind the Afro-Caribbeans of the Pan-African flag which is coloured with green, yellow and red. The red and yellow 'ochre' with the greenish color of the garden are a combination that Brathwaite uses to awaken the black consciousness. The bucket that shows the rusty color and the fence that has been broken both mark the loss and destruction of the African culture and their dispossession of their cultural and human rights.⁶⁶

A continuous burden runs over the four parts of *Rights of Passages*. Brathwaite ends the section of *Rights of Passages*, with revealing the traumatic loss in a most direct way.⁶⁷ He laments:

Where then is the nigger's
home?

In Paris Brixton Kingston
Rome?

Here? Or in Heaven?

...
Will exile never
end? (77)

This volume can be considered “an elegy to a lost origin, even while he acknowledges that Africa is not his homeland.”⁶⁸ American professor Laurence Breiner reveals that “*Rights* asks [the trilogy’s] central question, *Where is the nigger’s home?*”⁶⁹ It is a desperate question the poet seeks an answer for. Brathwaite concludes the volume by returning to the exact point he has started from in the last poem “Epilogue.” He reiterates, with slightly some alterations, the lines of his first poem “Prelude,” in “Work Songs and Blues.”⁷⁰ He says:

So drum skin whip
lash master sun's
sharp cutting edge
of heat, taut
surfaces of things
I sing
I shout
I groan
I dream (81)

But while he used fire and flame images in “Prelude,” in this poem he makes use of images related to water. He uses images like “old negro Noah” and refers to the rivers like Pra, Volta and Tano as well as referring to rain. The use of water constructs a threat that is even more serious than flames and fire. It is the Middle Passage, the ocean that has caused the destruction of millions of African slaves

and their succeeding generations.⁷¹ He however never fails to give a glimpse of hope, writing that his people believe that their sufferings will end one day and that they will rise to achieve a better future with the help of one another:⁷²

but my people
know
that the hot
day will be over
soon
that the star
that dies
the flamboyant car-
cass that rots
in the road
in the gutter
will rise
rise
rise
in the butter-
flies of a new
and another
morning; (81-82)

Rights of Passages approaches the theme of multiculturalism in means of exposing displacement and suffering. He has also attempted to create cultural markers Afro-Caribbeans can be identified with, like nation language and the diasporic movement from Africa to the New World. The different time lapses and the quick movement from one continent to another confirm Brathwaite's "commitment to thematic development at the expense of chronology."⁷³

Section Two: *Masks* (1968)

After taking the reader through the gloomy African diaspora portrayed in both the African and the West-Indian worlds, Brathwaite chooses to narrow the setting to West Africa in his second volume *Masks*. The purpose behind narrowing the scope is to pursue "the ideology of Africa as the source of all black culture."⁷⁴ To end the sufferings of the Afro-Caribbeans, Brathwaite seeks to find the originality of black culture in the Caribbean. He elaborates on the

theme of African ancestry using one of the earliest historical African cultures in Ghana and the countries of West Africa in general to prove the two worlds are linked culturally. His personal journey to Ghana allowed him to meet the well-known 'Ashanti' or 'Asante' people and got introduced to their culture known as the 'Akan culture'. It was for Brathwaite the starting point where actual links between Africa and the black people of the Caribbean would be realized.⁷⁵

The name Akan "denotes a West African ethnolinguistic group comprising of, among others, the Akuapem, Akyem, Baule, Asante, Brong and Fante peoples."⁷⁶ Most Akan people belong to the Asante group that originated in Ghana.⁷⁷ The Ashanti people believe in a triple god. The first aspect of this triple god is called 'Nyame', who "represents the natural universe"⁷⁸. The other two aspects are 'Nyankopan', who has the power of giving life, while 'Odomankoma' is the god that has the power to creatively shape the physical world. However, not all Ashanti people believed this division to be true as some considered Odomankoma to be the "god of the Earth and its physical features."⁷⁹ Others believed him to be a god who was able to create the earth without the help of Nyankopan, or the need of his life-giving power. In other traditions, it is believed that Odomankoma created the earth in steps. First the ocean, followed by the creation of the Earth and then the sky. He was then believed to have pressed the Earth down and the sky up and followed it by placing the humans, animals and all the other visible creations on the planet completing his task of creation. Additionally, Odomankoma was believed in some other traditions to have created 'Death'. Death eventually killed him and after his death, he came back to life but in a different form.⁸⁰ Brathwaite believed that the resurrection of such Akan religious beliefs can be made use of to form a unifying aspect where the different traditions of the culture could be unified, as he presents this god in general terms. Consequently, the Afro-Caribbeans will unite together by having

such ancient beliefs in common. It is one of the poet's intelligent ways of uniting the divided Afro-Caribbean people.

Masks is divided into six sections entitled *Libation*, *Path-finders*, *Limits*, *The Return*, *Crossing the River*, and *Arrival* respectively. The sections and the poems included are each a part of a unified sequence based on the African vision that lies within the poet's limits of experience and awareness. It is an awareness that "takes root from an interrogation of the historical contingency of black presence in the Caribbean and in the rest of the Americas."⁸¹ In other words, Brathwaite questions the presence of black people in the Caribbean and what the origin behind their presence is. Such questions, especially the latter, inspire and form the essence of this book of poetry. He tries to answer these questions, by continuing to go through the long historical journeys his African forefathers have gone through. It is a volume that represents "the poet's reconnection with the physical and spiritual reality of the ancestral continent and with a universe of being that confirms the sacred compact between the poet as singular consciousness and the collective body of the race in its full historical personality."⁸²

There are two poles of awareness at hand here: one is the poet's self-awareness and the other is the awareness he wishes to awaken within the Afro-Caribbean conscious. The two poles introduced lead the reader into the African history from the period before the African diaspora on one hand, and into the history based on Brathwaite's personal experience in Africa on the other. The black consciousness that this volume tries to awake is another essential step for the calling of multicultural rights. He includes the summoning of such African historical traditions which are seen to have left as cultural markers within the Afro-Caribbean life style in the Caribbean.⁸³

The first section of *Masks*, entitled *Libation*, sets off with a poem that is entitled "Prelude". Brathwaite starts counting the seven kingdoms of the ancient

African world and represent through them the glory of the ancient African world:⁸⁴

...the seven
kingdoms:
Songhai, Mali,
Chad, Ghana,
Tim-
buctu, Volta,
and the bitter
waste
that was
Ben-
in, ... (90)

This set of names are sites worthy of mentioning as they refer to ancient African places and have therefore been written carefully, to be spoken carefully. This group of syllables notifies that there is an emphasis on orality; the voice of the pure African heritage.⁸⁵ The oral tradition is “the only path that can lead us right into the history and spirit of the African peoples.”⁸⁶ That is why Brathwaite opens this volume depending on the oral tradition. He followed up what the Guyanese novelist and essayist Wilson Harris claims during his writing career. Harris mentions that “*breath* is all the black man may have possessed at a certain stage in the Americas.”⁸⁷

The Guyana- born critic Gordon Rohlehr marks that the seven kingdoms mentioned are not given in chronological order. This reconfirms that Brathwaite’s sensibility has shaped the philosophical view of the Caribbean he approaches in his literary work. In other words, the poet is again after the thematic development rather than after the chronological order of the Caribbean history.⁸⁸

Depending consequently on the oral tradition as the starting point, Brathwaite seeks to link certain African cultural traditions with the African-Caribbean ones through this literary journey across Africa. Among the major elements that characterize many of the earliest African cultures are musical

instruments, especially the drum. Being a clear sample of the oral tradition that managed to survive over the centuries, the poem “The Making of the Drum,” is divided into several sections that introduce the reader to the steps of making a drum. Personifying himself as a craftsman, the poet shows the importance of this musical tool by announcing that the first step of the construction of a traditional drum is the sacrifice of a goat and the use of its skin for making *The Skin* of the drum.⁸⁹

First the goat
must be killed
and the skin
stretched. (94)

After this has been done, *The Barrel of the Drum*, or the container of the drum, is made from the wood of a specific type of tree named ‘twenedure’ tree.⁹⁰

For this we choose wood
of the *twenedure* tree:
hard *dure* wood
with the hollow blood
that makes a womb. (95)

The craftsman addresses the wood taken from the twenedure tree. The wood significantly bleeds and mouths words just like human beings. These lines therefore serve as a personification to resurrect the painful memories of both the pre-colonial and colonial eras of the African history.⁹¹

Here in this silence
we hear the wounds
of the forest;
we hear the sounds
of the rivers;

vowels of reed-
lips, pebbles
of consonants,
underground the dark
of the continent. (95)

It is worthy to mention that these lines of poetry include the combination of natural elements, like the skin of a goat and wood taken from the forest,

intermingled with the reference of linguistic elements like consonants and vowels. That is to not only to emphasize the African history and its landscape but to give the history a voice. These lines also display the double function the drum possesses. The drum functions as a musical instrument in an orchestra and is also a source that produces certain sounds. This reflects the mixed traditions and cultural habits the Afro-Caribbean live under today. The orchestra is a reference to the West, while the produced sounds of the drum refer to Africa. The contemporary Afro-Caribbean man may be African in roots by inheriting different cultural aspects from their forefathers, but have also been under the influence of certain Western cultural habits and have, whether by force or by will, adopted these habits from their masters.⁹² With the continuing of making the drum, a specific type of wood is needed for the making of *The Curved Sticks of the Drummer*. This wood is taken from a tree which blooms twice a year only:⁹³

From this stripped tree
snap quick sticks for
the festival. Its wood,
heat-hard as stone,
is toneless as a bone. (96)

The fourth step is the making of the *Gourds and Rattles* of this drum. Finally, the process of construction ends with *The Gong-Gong*, which Brathwaite reveals as being the essential part of the drum. He says:

The drum
is dumb
until the gong-gong leads (97)

With the presentation of the drum, Brathwaite delivers an implicit warning which directs the reader to grasp the idea that music is universally understood, while speech must be necessarily translated from one language to another to be understood. He has been listening carefully to the African folk music for purposes of using new rhythms that the English-speaking communities were not familiar with when approaching the field of poetry, but were otherwise

recognizable to the Afro-Caribbean population. It is clear that the poet took this suggestion of musical importance from the famous Shakespearean play *The Tempest* (1611), in which lines are presented with sounds and musical cues.⁹⁴

be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices
That if I then wak'd after long sleep,
The clouds methought would open, and then in dreaming,
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again. (Caliban, Act III scene ii) ⁹⁵

This play can widely be found in Caribbean discourses, as it depicts how certain European characters in the play came to be associated with native characters of the island where the play is set.⁹⁶ In *The Tempest*, the major character, Caliban, had over the play stated the importance of music on an island he inhabited, presenting it as a marker of identification. That is the reason Brathwaite decided to do his researches on the oral tradition of the cultures in the African continent to turn it into a marker of identification as well.⁹⁷ He has learned to make use of African images and icons in a revolutionary way by essentially depending on the oral tradition. Going beyond the boundaries of the drum, means going beyond the physicality of the African world. He made the African drum the tool through which a link between Africa and the New World could possibly be made, or a link between “sound and sight”⁹⁸. The drum’s visual image may signify the New World whereas the sound of the drum signifies the oral tradition of the African world. This invented icon, that has become the breath of the poem, is the icon or the breath of all black people of the West-Indian population. Through the oral tradition things can be retrieved to link between the past and the present. Materialistic items owned by the Africans are lost and therefore they owned nothing but “calamitous air of broken ties in the New World.”⁹⁹

This poem also introduces the reader to the divine presence of an ancient African god. The power of the divine is compared to the power of man. It is

shown that the African drum is man-made. As shown in the lines beneath, it is “we” (95) who make the drum speak and not the divine referred to under the pronoun “they”. Therefore Brathwaite emphasizes that man’s interaction is the essential element in the production of sounds and not the power of this god:¹⁰⁰

You will bleed,
cedar dark,
when we cut you;
speak, when we touch you. (95)

So it is like a hierarchical process. It is *The Gong-Gong*, which is obviously man-made, that is considered as the essence of the drum. Only through this item the African drum is able to function. Then, after man’s interaction and the drum’s construction, this god is able to have his voice heard.¹⁰¹ The poet has here clarified that it is a revolutionary stand the Afro-Caribbeans need to take in order to make their voice heard as change must start from themselves.

In the poem entitled “Atumpan,” the drum is shown as the tool through which the African god Odomankoma both addresses and is addressed by his people.¹⁰² “Atumpan,” refers to the name of an “Asante talking-drum found all over the West Indies”¹⁰³ This god is able to speak into the two worlds of Brathwaite’s experience using the Atumpan, which are the ancient African world and the modern Caribbean world. Through these historical touches, he is once again able to relate the ancient African culture to the cultural factors of the contemporary African-Caribbean man in terms of resurrecting such cultural aspects.¹⁰⁴ He drummed in the past and the sounds of the drums are produced again in both worlds as a reminder to his people of their past and to resurrect the sense of Africa within their minds.¹⁰⁵

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

.....
The Great Drummer of Odomankoma says
The Great Drummer of Odomankoma says

that he has come from sleep
that he has come from sleep
and is arising
and is arising (98)

The lines include first of all more repetition than the first part of the poem. This repetition gives the poem a sense of slowness that in turn suggests “the hard work, patience, and dignity of work.”¹⁰⁶ Second, Brathwaite makes use of languages that are clearly different from each other; Akan and English. He would repeat the same words in both the Akan and English languages. By such a use of languages, Brathwaite has created a ‘stereophonic space’, or a reproduction of the same meaning, for the purpose of showing that the languages of English and Akan are totally different, which naturally shows the difference between the English culture and the Akan culture. Through this, Brathwaite also shows that the traditions differ from one another and that the oral tradition that is used here is the only surviving element the Afro-Caribbeans possess and is resurrected in oral cultural forms.¹⁰⁷

Even after the consideration of the wide differences between the two languages, it is almost as if Brathwaite ironically wants to present the languages as being an echo of one another. He creates a new field in which it is possible to reconfigure the boundaries of the oral tradition. Towards the end of the poem, the poetic lines show how Brathwaite fuses the two languages together.

like *akoko* the clock
like *akoko* the clock who clucks

who crows in the morning
who crows in the morning

we are addressing you
ye re kyere wo

we are addreesing you
ye re kyere yo

listen
let us succeed

listen
may we succeed . . . (98-99)

It is as if the original sound has its echo and they both enter the same acoustic field to intermingle with one another. This poetic creation makes a space where both the languages of Akan and English interact in free and repeated turns. This space is considered as a stereomodern strategy that crosses the boundaries of the oral tradition. It thus allows this oral culture to be printed in ink instead of being orally transmitted via speech only.¹⁰⁸ It is again a cultural marker that identifies the Afro-Caribbean self and that links the two different world together.

“Mmenson,” the title of another poem, refers also to the name of a specific musical instrument. It is “an African orchestra of tusks (horns).”¹⁰⁹ This musical instrument is of cultural significance, because it is believed to provide the soul energy of the African ancestry.¹¹⁰ The presentation of the Mmenson marks the continuation of the oral tradition and delivers an implicit message to the Afro-Caribbean reader. The songs that are performed on such musical instruments do not only signify the ancestral source of energy that is being made use of in writing his poetry, but also show the subject matter of the poems of this section. The driving rhythm of the lines, releases the sense of the troubled African history. The poem adopts therefore a melancholic tone of loss and despair through the songs that are performed on such instrumental tools.¹¹¹

Having started with this historical journey as a spiritual one, Brathwaite continues the journey in the following section entitled *Path-finders*. The poet presents a group of Ashanti travelers who have set off for physical journey passing different places in the African continent.¹¹² He portrays the African civilizations through this group of travelers. They are trying to find a new place

to settle and build their own formal civilization: one that is meant to be built to reflect the culture of the ancient world. They start their journey using the route that begins from ‘Ougadougou’, towards ‘Chad’ then ‘Timbuctu’ and finally ‘Volta’ that is located on the coasts of West Africa.¹¹³ He has chosen these historical places as titles of his poems in this section. Each of the cities mentioned is associated with the means of ruin and destruction. “Ougadougou,” for instance, shows that this city is one where “an atmosphere of chaotic incursion prevails”.¹¹⁴ It is not too long when they witness the Western forces invade the places they cross. The horrors of how the high flames of fire destroy the houses, the change of the temperature of the sky, and the panic and cries of terror heard from children and women alike are all intelligently translated in this poem.¹¹⁵ He describes the situation as follows:

The heat
was before us; mirages danced
in its silver; our brittle walls
crumbled, flat walking roofs

tumbled; red tongues
licked grass from the streets
children screamed, women ran,
crackled sparks’ eyes crashing to ashes;
goats butted and turned, blinded; horses
stamped. (104)

He then interrupts the journey with creating an imaginative place in which the lost Afro-Caribbeans can imagine a life that includes a clear recognition of the African past:¹¹⁶

This sacred lake
is the soul
of the world;
winds whirl
born in the soul
of this dark water’s world. (105)

This gives the reader an even more extreme sense of loss than before because of its negative spirit, however he insists that it is necessary for the African past to

enter the Caribbean history as part of the country's cultural identity.¹¹⁷ In the poem "Timbuctu," Brathwaite laments through the travelers the changing setting of Africa. The soil of Africa is full of valuable resources, like gold, and sets a melancholic atmosphere because it was slowly ripped of its riches. This has turned Africa from a country of power and wealth into a tragic wasteland.¹¹⁸

And what wealth here, what
Riches, when the gold returns
To dust, the walls

We raised return again
To dust; and what sharp winds,
Teeth'd with the desert's sand
Rise in the sun's dry

brilliance where our mosques
mock ignorance, mock pride,
burn in the crackled blaze of time,
return again to whispers, dust. (106)

The travelers speak to one another lamenting the pains of their journey. In the poem "Volta," one of the travelers says:¹¹⁹

I am very tired, Munia. My head
aches, my feet
are weary; sometimes
the light seems to sing before my face.
My blood cries out for rest.

But still you won't rest
You won't give up. Can't we
Stop here? Have we
Not travelled enough ? (107)

The journey is associated with images of fire and water. The poet tries to show the high level of destruction their Akan civilization, and the African world as a whole, witnessed. He gives the reader a nostalgic sense of the destroyed city.¹²⁰

Ever since our city was destroyed
by dust, by fire; ever since our empire
fell through weakened thoughts, through
quarrelling, I have longed for

markets again for parks
where my people may walk,

for homes where they may sleep,
for lively arenas (107)

Nothing of these places or kingdoms, which were described earlier in “Prelude,” remained. All were destroyed and turned into dust by the colonial invaders.¹²¹ He jumps to the modern Caribbean territory and questions whether this place is appropriate for African descendants to build themselves a unified nation.¹²²

Can you expect us to establish houses here ?
To build a nation here ? Where
will the old men feed their flocks ?
Where will you make your markets ? (108)

This question reveals the poet’s sense of loss and he again feels a desperate need to highlight such cultural issues to his fellow African-Caribbean people.¹²³ He intends to arouse the sense of loss within every Afro-Caribbean individual. Sharing the same feeling may lead them to take action together to solve their cultural issues.

The third section of *Masks*, entitled *Limits*, develops slowly into the theme of mortification. As the journey of the Akan travelers continues, Brathwaite shows how they have stopped in “The Forest,” the title of the first poem in this section. They used this new found location for building a unified nation. However, Brathwaite declares the Akan people’s destiny by revealing the natural environment of the forest they have settled in. The environment changed their “pistil journey into moistened gloom”.¹²⁴ The end of this poem foreshadows the travelers; destiny and eternal loss. However the loss of this group of travelers, as they were taken away into new lands, is a necessary factor for the birth of a new generation of people. This also led to the birth of a god named ‘Ananse’ or ‘Anancy’:¹²⁵

From this womb’d heaven comes the new curled god
Within goblin old man’s grinning, flat face smiling
Crouched like a frog with monkey hands

And insect fingers. (116)

All Akan groups share the belief of this deity named Ananse and consider him to be a folk hero. Ananse is generally known to be a character that is weak. The only potential Ananse possesses to face a powerful opponent with is his wit and trickery.¹²⁶ The birth of this African god implies the emergence of a ceremony that is to be remembered over the centuries. The death of the travelers followed by the birth of Ananse and the arrival of the Africans at the shores of the New World marks the turning point where the tragic history of African slaves starts. Brathwaite tends to give this ceremony a deeper spiritual and cultural meaning to emphasize the African tragedy and to make it another cultural marker that signifies his black people in the New World. Brathwaite has combined such historical facts with his personal experience and imagination to write the most effective lines of poetry. It is a combination of art and pure history.¹²⁷

The last two poems of this section, entitled “Techiman” and “The White River,” show how the relationship between the twentieth century Afro-Caribbean people and the soil of the Caribbean islands is fragile, just like the fragile relationship that existed between the Ashanti people and the African soil and kingdoms. The poet mixes the past with the present while exploring the slave route that starts from the town of Techiman in Africa towards the very edge of the African coast. He not only aims at drawing this route, but also wants to recapture the sufferings and the different forms of pain those Akan travelers faced while travelling through these paths. Restating their sufferings is a necessary component to be dealt with as it has become an essential part of not only his personal historical memory, but also of all the black citizens who have become part of the Caribbean nation.¹²⁸

This spiritual journey somehow changes into a more political and social journey as darkness and gloom seem to chase both the Afro-Caribbeans and the Ashanti people. The Akan travelers of this journey are therefore not different

from the heirs of Uncle Tom in *Rights of Passage*. Uncle Tom realizes that his descendants have travelled a lot as well and have by time spread all over the continents of the world. This historical journey over the west part of Africa has led Tom's heirs to travel over "all quarters of the globe."¹²⁹

Returning back to the journey made in Africa to highlight once again the purity of their soil, Brathwaite makes sure that the Ashanti people own a momentous tradition that differentiates them from other cultures of Africa. They believe that success comes with the construction of and the journey toward the city of 'Kumasi', the capital of their land.¹³⁰ It is a place that is known to be a

city of gold
paved with silver,
ivory altars
tables of horn, (138)

Kumasi represents the place of "the ancestral seat of power of the Ashanti nation and it is for Brathwaite the utopian image of a unified African civilization".¹³¹ Some Akan people who were taken in as prisoners are later shown to have reached the coasts of their lands and are taken away across the Middle Passage towards the New World. It was this journey that marked the beginning of servility. The poet implies within the lines a dilemma that continues to invoke the issues of the Caribbean identity. He speaks of the confusion that is found within his spiritual self. It is the incapability of determining which ancestry he and his fellow Afro-Caribbean people belong to because of influence of more than one culture on the Caribbean Self. He says: "whose ancestor am I?" (125) after returning to the coasts of the African continent in the fourth section *The Return*. A 'seed' or an Afro-Caribbean representative is later personalized to have returned from a long-term exile to Africa and is warmly welcomed by his ancestors.¹³²

Welcome
you who have come
back a stranger
after three hundred years (124)

The Ashanti people are very welcoming of this New World relative and ask him to take a seat on a “stool” (124). They start questioning him about the nature of the rituals his people use to perform back at the Caribbean. The aim here is that their connection to each other can officially be verified if the relative is able to mention rituals that originally belong to the African world. After sitting on the stool, which is a ritual of chieftainship in the Akan culture, he is asked to wash his hands in preparation for eating and later after the performance of some Akan rituals, the relative is asked whether he recalls any of these traditional factors, for they hope to welcome him back as a righteous citizen of the African soil. However, the relative seems to remember only a few things and does not feel he can be fully related to African lands, its culture and its people. There is also a hint where it is revealed that he feels that his identity has no connection to that of the African culture.¹³³

I traveled to a distant town
I could not find my mother
I could not find my father
I could not hear the drum
whose ancestor am I? (125)

The relative faces some perplexities whilst being on this journey to Africa. And the poem, “The New Ships,” reveals more of how pained he was with facing the loss of many aspects of the Akan culture.¹³⁴ In “Masks,” the relative travels his paths across the African world, the world where his ancestral roots belong. He cites an African god that accompanies him whilst making his journey, asking him for wisdom and guidance.¹³⁵

God of the path-
way,
God of the
tree,

God of all part-
ing, we greet you. (130)

This African god communicates with his worshippers through a tree that has suddenly split “by a white axe / of lightning” (130). It is destroyed by the storm, interrupting any divine message this god needs to give his people and this New World relative.¹³⁶ Harris highlights the importance of these lines. He sets out that, when diving further within the lines of poetry, one reaches “the dramatic breath of the poem.”¹³⁷

So the god,
mask of dreamers,
hears lightening stammer,
hears rustle
their secrets
blood shiver like leaves
on his branches. (131)

The combination of thunder and lightning as a repetitive phenomenon in the skies of Africa, is related to the image of the drum. These two elements, thunder and lightning “stammer” (130) across the sky in a significant way. At first lightening appears, which constitutes only the sight of the phenomena, but when thunder appears, the phenomena can be perceived with the ears and signifies completion. The same goes with the drum. The drum has no function as long as the African gods do not give it life by drumming. There is a need for the resurrection of the African gods in the life of the New World relative to resurrect the element of the drum as a representation for Africa.¹³⁸ Then two rhetorical questions are asked. Will this African god rescue this New World traveler who is taking the journey across West Africa? Will his voice direct him and his people towards the right path? It seems that the stammering of a lightening interrupts the voice of the African god, leaving the questions unanswered. As if nature has chosen for them to choose their path without their god and to wait to learn the reality of their fate with time.¹³⁹

.... Will
the tree, god

of path-
ways, still
guide us? Will
your wood lips speak
so we see?

Brathwaite also makes religious implications. Although admitting the existence of Western cultures in the Caribbean, Brathwaite declares with an attitude of racism that Christianity has caused the loss of their god Nyame. The sounds of the gong-gong, the essential component of the African drum, were replaced by the church-bells.¹⁴⁰ That is why the tree that Nyame used to address his people “has been split by a white axe of lightening” (130):

Here Nyame’s
tree bent,
falling before the

Nazarene’s cross.
Bells silenced the
gong-gong (134)

It seems that the Caribbean has become a land that is tied to the reality of loss as if it were a wasteland. The lands seem to be silent on the matter and the scenery is linked with images of death. However, underneath the layers of the Caribbean earth, a voice is buried.

hearts
rustle their secrets,
blood shiver like leaves. (130)

The path towards enlightenment is a very complicated one as Brathwaite declares that destruction is partly because of the Afro-Caribbeans themselves. This has caused the wrath of the African god ‘Onyame’. The only way to solve these cultural issues at hand is the continuation of destruction. This African god continues the process of destruction as a necessary step to renew the Caribbean landscape and offer one that is a place appropriate enough for the Afro-Caribbeans to live on.¹⁴¹

And when the cycle is ripe
I, giver of life to my people,
crack open the skull, skill
of shell, care
fully carved craft
of bones, and I kill. (146)

Eventually in section five, Brathwaite shows the history of Africa past its ordinary boundaries. He assimilates his imagination with the actual history of Africa in order to make his intention more effective.¹⁴² The New World relative starts slowly to recognize some of the African myths which he captures in conversation and in sight. In “Tutu,” he is able to

see the bright symbols he’s clothed himself in:
gold, that the sun may continue to shine
bringing wealth and warmth to the nation;
mirrors of brass to confound the blind
darkness; calico cloth to keep us from sin (141)

He was able to reintegrate with his ancestors in Africa through recognizing some ceremonial traditions of the Ashanti tribe. Through this, the relative was partly able to reidentify himself with the common history they share. It is this reidentification that enabled him to justify his New World existence.¹⁴³

“The Awakening” opens with the introduction of an ancestor drummer named ‘Asase Yaa’. The New World relative asks this ancestral drummer for help. He asks him to help him search for the reality of his complete self before returning to the Caribbean lands.¹⁴⁴

Asase Yaa, Earth,
If I am going away now,
You must help me. (156)

With these lines an awakening archetype is associated. With the passage of time, the black consciousness shall be awakened and the New World relative and all African-Caribbeans will finally achieve their multicultural rights of being a rightful Caribbean citizens who are not to be humiliated by the different cultures they coexist with:¹⁴⁵

I will rise

And stand on my feet

Slowly slowly
Ever so slowly

I will rise
And stand on my feet.

Like akoko the cock
Like akoko the cock.

Who cries
In the early dawn (156-157)

The last lines of the volume are full of the enthusiasm of success in achieving reidentification. In order to grasp the multicultural rights of identity and recognition of every Afro-Caribbean citizen, Brathwaite declares:¹⁴⁶ “I am learning / let me succeed...” (157). These lines do not represent the end of the journey, but reveal that the journey is still incomplete. It leads to another journey, the life of the African people when they return back to the shores of the Caribbean nation. He wants to “reach a shore”¹⁴⁷ or a place where the African religious practices are valued and respected. *Islands*, the final volume of this trilogy, will complete this unfinished journey of resurrecting the African history.¹⁴⁸ Brathwaite’s style of writing has revealed “a preoccupation with the psyche, a feature which takes him to much analytical depth and which like the Korabra, the funeral drum, goes to the roots of experience and returns again.”¹⁴⁹

Section Three: *Islands* (1969)

After approaching the African diaspora in *Rights of Passages* to explain the loss of the African descendants in the New World, and with showing how a New World relative went across traditional Africa with the intention of resurrecting the essence of black culture in the New World in *Masks*, this volume underlines a return to the Caribbean to question the placement of this long denied 'spade'.¹⁵⁰ *Islands* marks "both an arrival and an embarkation"¹⁵¹ to resolve the problems of the Afro-Caribbean man. So after referring to the glories and pains of the African history, Brathwaite has clarified the righteous reason behind calling for multicultural rights.

Considering the poems generally, *Islands* broadly questions the Caribbean land from two different perspectives: literal and figural. From the literal perspective, the natural characteristics of the Caribbean landscape are taken into consideration. They include the Caribbean terrain, like the shores and its sand or the sea and its coral. The figural perspective, on the other hand, tries to reveal what cultural place the Caribbean land has provided its Afro-Caribbean citizens with. Culture gives a person meaning to the land he/she inhabits. The poet, in this volume, interrogates, meditates upon and presents the contributions of the Afro-Caribbean people and their earliest forefathers for the Caribbean world. Hereby Brathwaite challenges the hypocritical British culture that has reigned supreme over the other cultures in the region. Since language is the cornerstone of all culture, Brathwaite attempts to begin "a linguistic embrace and embarkation that asks the West Indies, '[W]here is your kingdom of the Word?' (222), as a starting point of cultural creation. This kingdom is the figurative ground that will be spoken about in the volume."¹⁵²

The success of linking the Afro-Caribbeans to their African ethnic roots is practically credited to the physical journey Brathwaite made to West Africa. However, he realizes and explicitly explains, especially in this part of the

trilogy, that the journey to Africa, whether the one made in person or the symbolic journey in his poetry, is not the ultimate answer to resurrect the multicultural rights of identity and recognition. The return to the Caribbean and finding a solution within the borders of this new environment is his utopian project. There is a need of reclaiming the cultural rights of the black community in the New World. What should be kept in mind is that the reclamation of rights cannot completely depend on the African culture only, as the Afro-Caribbean have by time become a result of a mixture of cultures. Brathwaite in this volume openly challenges the colonial view the Caribbean is known for. He firmly rejects and criticizes the consideration of the Afro-Caribbeans as being the uncreative and subsidiary part of the community. He has high hopes in this volume, to resurrect and restore their rights by making use of the previously explained history and present cultural experiences as essential factors of the recreation of the Caribbean identity.¹⁵³

Brathwaite uses different methods to show the power of the African culture in the Caribbean. It is a power that goes head to head with the British culture. He makes several references of African memories and folk traditions that are performed on the Caribbean lands, to demand once again the recognition of Africa and the impact it made on both the Caribbean in the past and present:

The island landscape is suffused with the presence of African deities and folk memories as the very names of some of the individual poems suggest: “Legba,” “Ogun,” “Negus,” “Veve,” “Ancestors.” The atmosphere of the poem is a kind of imaginative double-exposure, where the rich and haunting historical suggestiveness is superimposed upon the barren landscape and people; it is a creative juxtaposition of themes and perspectives that infinitely enriches the reader’s sensitivity to, and awareness of, the total “myth” of West Indian man.¹⁵⁴

This volume, like the previous volumes of the trilogy, is written in sections which are further sub-divided into a number of poems. This volume includes five sections with the titles: *New World*, *Limbo*, *Rebellion*, *Possession*, and *Beginning*. Brathwaite tackles the issues that are found on the Caribbean soil,

not only what concerns the language Afro-Caribbeans use in everyday speech, but the actual landscape of the Caribbean as well. Both the language and landscape are characterized as being ‘broken’ and ‘cracked’. To take several examples when reading out the poems of this volume, he mentions phrases like, “cracked note”, “cracked mother”, “cracked ground”, and “broken tongue” and refers to the history of the African descendants as being “stripped and torn”. (162, 180, 187, 210, 216).¹⁵⁵

Presenting the Caribbean in such terms, whether landscape or wordscape, Brathwaite clearly wants to emphasize the amount of fragmentation and the lack of coherence these two fields suffer from. It is almost as if the fragmented landscape ensured the fragmentation of language. It should be made clear then that the use of terms like ‘broken’ and ‘torn’ do not only refer to the cruel history of the African world and its people, but also to the most recent social problems the African descendants face in the Caribbean. It signifies “the social divisions and social conflicts that have plagued the Caribbean since the advent of European expansion in the late fifteenth century.”¹⁵⁶ Brathwaite in this volume is after helping to “resurrect the islanders’ folk-memory of Africa”¹⁵⁷, for cultural recognition and identity reclamation. So, *Islands* “focuses on Caribbean transformations, showing how new gods and rituals inform identity and offer strategies for rebirth and revitalization.”¹⁵⁸ This means that the poet will be resurrecting African-based traditions performed in the New World to prove their cultural differences and that the British culture and their cultural aspect have also had an impact on their traditional way of living.

Section one, *New World*, signifies the journey towards the Caribbean islands. In his poem, “Jah,” Brathwaite makes matters clear. Jah is the name of a God of to the Rastafarian religion which is a religion found in the eastern part of Africa. Rastafari was first introduced in Kingston, Jamaica in the 1920s and the 1930s. They follow the belief that says that Ethiopia is their spiritual homeland.

It is the land of where their ancestors belonged to. They believe in one god who is known as 'Jah'. Once leader of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I (1892-1975) was believed to have been sent to earth by Jah. He had the duty of a 'messiah'. A messiah is "someone who saves people from the evils of the world."¹⁵⁹ Rastafarian is taken from the royal title Haile Selassie I was given, 'Ras Tafari', which means 'crown prince' in Ethiopian language.¹⁶⁰

Brathwaite is recreating the Caribbean atmosphere. He declares Jah as the god of the Caribbean region. The presence of an African god is to bring back memories of the African world into the Caribbean. This action was taken, as the poet noticed that no sacred place existed and no gods are remembered or worshipped in the Caribbean, and therefore he considers these lands to be nothing more than wasted and empty. He says: "A prayer poured on the ground with water, / with rum, will not bid them come back" (164).

He also summons Ananse, the god that was previously born from the destruction of the Akan travellers. This god has the form of a spider and adopts this persona in the lines of this poem. Ananse is an imagined god-like spirit that functions as a trickster.¹⁶¹ He weaves its webs in trees and is known to preserve its hidden powers and is ready to use them whenever they are needed. This spider is taken from the Asante folklore. It metamorphosed into a cultural symbol reflecting the sufferings of the slaves and through which they were able to find the power of resistance and strength.¹⁶² This Caribbean figure has "the protective talent of subterfuge."¹⁶³ This means that he is able to prevent himself from getting involved in unsafe situations. All he is interested in is creating webs in trees. To clarify the purpose of Brathwaite's use of this African spirit, Joyce Jonas says:

The image of the spider on its web is, it seems to me, a fine symbol of the artist at work –creating a whole world from its own substance. Like Anancy, the artist escapes the disastrous prospect of nonbeing by weaving a (fictive/narrative) thread and climbing it to freedom. He takes strand of linearity (oppressive history or plot) and complicates it by making a patterned web of connections and

interrelationships –a woven “text” that turns history/ his story into oracular myth, an infinite ploy of signifiers.¹⁶⁴

The spider is a kind of artist that weaves its web in trees to express the myths and the history as if it were a text. He thus weaves all the threads of myths and historical elements together as one united web. This invites the reader to review those myths and the history that links the Caribbean to the African world from a different perspective. So in addition to already known history of slavery, it also seeks out the cultural elements of myths, traditions and all that defines the beauty and glory of the Afro-Caribbean traditions that are still evident in the New World. The reader should not forget to understand that the setting of all incidents is in Brathwaite’s imagination. He tends to present, with the power of his imagination, elements of history and myth, and also pain and suffering in their most effective ways showing the fact that he is after a unified Caribbean identity and selfawareness.¹⁶⁵

His poem “Legba,” refers to the name of another African god. Brathwaite defines, in the glossary of his poetic book, that Legba is “the Dahomean/Haitian god of the gateway. He is the crucial link between man and the other gods and as such, is often the first to be invoked at a ceremony.”¹⁶⁶ He shows this character as a god who “draws together African and Caribbean cosmology in order to reconnect that which the “Middle Passage” tore asunder or amputated.”¹⁶⁷ It means that this god confirms the historical connection between both the African and the Caribbean worlds and attempts to heal the fragmented identity of the Afro-Caribbean. Legba is the Yoruban god named ‘Eleshin Elegba’, transmitted from Yoruba towards the Caribbean world. He is a well-known god in Haiti where he plays an essential role in different traditional ceremonies and voodoo mastery. He is also known as the god that connects man with the spiritual world. The poet announces that this god has even participated against imperial wars, however his children or his worshippers are still trapped

in the seemingly everlasting economic and hunger issues of their societal community:¹⁶⁸

He had fought in the last war
and has ribbons to show for
It; knows Burma, Malaya and has been
to Singapore; gets a small pension

But apart from that
not very much attention.

His children eat dirt,
are pot-
belied, knobble
knead sticks down. (174)

They clearly suffer from the disappearance of their major human rights. They eat otherwise inedible things, like dirt because of the wide-spread malnutrition. Even their school system is one of unmistakable hypocrisy as well as being bankrupt. The Caribbean educational system does not offer its students any information about the African ancestral history or even about the Caribbean environment, rituals and all that is possibly related to it, whether history, geography and other subjects of education:

they go to school to the head-
master's cries,
read a blackboard of words, angles,

lies; (174)

Brathwaite therefore considers schools the destroyer of the word. They force the new generations of Afro-Caribbeans into the culture and language of the colonizer rather than cherishing the memories and roots of the African culture. It is because of such institutions that the African culture and language is forgotten and Western cultures prevail. That is all part of the British Empire strategic plans to keep them as the dominant power.¹⁶⁹ He ends the poem with the lines:

... ; doubt
ripples the fruit
lakes, snap-

ping the bamboo,
cracking the blue. (176)

The mood of these lines may be characterized as being deeply melancholic in tone. There is an overall reference to sadness. The “blues” may refer to which is a common African genre of music that is known as the ‘Blues’. The music of the blues is melancholic as well, as the instruments through which the musical tones are produced, are personified as weeping out of sadness. This wailing and crying suggests the feeling of utter helplessness and despair. Both the feeling of being blue and the melancholic music come as a response to the “European economic and cultural holocaust [that] sapped a people of much of their inner music.”¹⁷⁰ He thus mentions earlier in the poem how sugar canes of the Afro-Caribbeans were deprived of their rights because of the ‘steel cutlass’ or the Western imperial forces:

... the
sugar cane screams
swinging under the steel
cutlass; (175)

The second section, entitled *Limbo*, is significant as the title may refer to three different things. First of all, it refers to an ancient native African dance that reminds people of their earliest traditional culture.¹⁷¹ Limbo is then “a rhythmical dance performed with athleticism and extreme suppleness”¹⁷². It is a dance where

dancers pass under a pole – the ‘limbo stick’ – by bending backwards. Each time they successfully go under the pole, it is lowered until it is just inches from the ground. If the dancer knocks down the pole, he or she is disqualified. The limbo is a part of the cultural tradition of the West Indies and is something tourists might expect to see. Its origins are thought to relate to slave ships where slaves were

chained to long iron bars. It is believed they invented the limbo using these bars to keep themselves fit and supple.¹⁷³

Harris believes that the limbo represents “a certain kind of gateway or threshold to a new world.”¹⁷⁴ The gateway is that space that exists between the pole or the limbo stick and the ground. The dancers have to be flexible to be able to pass underneath the pole. It is here where the space created is seen as the gateway that connects the two worlds of Africa and the Caribbean.¹⁷⁵ Secondly it may refer to “the place between heaven and hell.”¹⁷⁶ Lastly, it may refer to a situation that lies in between the two already mentioned situations. So it seems here that Brathwaite shows the loss of the African slave between two situations: the African roots and the modern environment of the New World.¹⁷⁷ Brathwaite comprehends the loss of the Black Caribbean folk and shows how they are lost between the continents of Africa and the Caribbean.

Limbo is “both a reenactment of the painful Middle Passage from West Africa to the Caribbean islands and an interpretive act of spiritual self-discovery.”¹⁷⁸ Which means that the Afro-Caribbean man is pictured as performing the limbo dance as an attempt to cross the limbo-stick and to reach its other side. In other words, the Afro-Caribbean is trying to cross the Middle Passage that was historically crossed by their forefathers to change their destiny which depicts them as downgraded black slaves having no multicultural rights to defend their dignity and ancestral pride.

In the poem, “Cracked Mother,” Brathwaite presents another persona named ‘Caonaba’. She is, beside the slaves who were transported by ship, another victim of colonization. She is presented with a state of fear being in the Caribbean world, as the experiences of colonialism she went through cannot be forgotten. It shows the persona suffering from a fragmented psyche due to the experiences she went through. She is the representation of all Afro-Caribbean citizens. The fragmented psyche cannot become a whole until an identity and

other human rights are given to this group of people. So the nostalgia of returning to the African world has to be replaced by an identity that recognizes the African culture as its major contributor. Then a conflict seems to arise between Caonaba and her mother. The mother believes that salvation of the Afro-Caribbean man can only be provided when they follow the religion and the traditions of the Western culture. Brathwaite labels this perception with “cracked” as he does not agree with what she finds to be a solution for salvation. Caonaba on the other hand, has a different interpretation of the problem:

Christ on the cross
your cruel laws teach
only to divide us
and we are lost. (182)

At the end of this poem, Brathwaite shows a hurricane that mirrors Caonaba’s way of thinking. This hurricane will destroy colonialism and its evil system of control, and new maps will be drawn in a day full of light instead of dark. He ends the poem with two rhetorical questions showing the hope of creating a new Caribbean identity:¹⁷⁹

...How will new maps be drafted?
Who will suggest a new tentative frontier?
How will the sky dawn now? (184).

In the poem “Shepherd,” Brathwaite enriches his readers with hope and tries to recover them from the pains of the past. He thus makes it clear that the “psyche of the New World person cannot be made whole until it is possessed by the reality of the New World existence.”¹⁸⁰ Brathwaite presents a narrator who is silent at the beginning of the poem.

Dumb
Dumb
Dumb
There is no face
No
Lip
No moon (185)

Then there is a woman with a “white calico” (185), who prepares the set for the entrance of African gods into the New World. As soon as they enter, the drums beat, marking the voice of the African gods. The gods are now freed from the depths of the sea and enter the New World. It is now their demand and their voice they use to call for the recognition of the Afro-Caribbean self.¹⁸¹ The poem, “Caliban,” starts with some reminders of the past:

It was December second, nineteen fifty-six.
It was the first of August eighteen thirty-eight.
It was the twelfth of October fourteen ninety-two.
How many bangs how many revolutions? (192)

These lines mention the dates of the African slavery and sufferings that are associated to their present identity crisis. The first date is the day when the revolutionist Fidel Castro made his first move against the Western monocultural system. Then he mentions the day of Emancipation and follows it with the day Columbus made his so-called discovery and entrance in the New World in 1492.¹⁸²

Brathwaite then makes use of William Shakespeare’s fictional character Caliban. This character is a rebellious figure and Brathwaite in his poem makes use of “the spirit of rebellion and the authenticity of ancestral African rituals”¹⁸³ he possesses. The poem starts in the town of Havana, the capital of Cuba, where everything seems to be gloomy and dead:

In Havana that morning as every morning,
the police toured the gambling houses
wearing their dark glasses (191)

It is a place where “...death / of sons, of songs, of sunshine” (191) predominates. The newspapers that are sold in Havana, are written out in the Wall street, i.e., referring to New York Stock Exchange. The newspaper suggests that Havana is “a mundane and philistine world prone to historical amnesia”.¹⁸⁴ This description has its historical remembrance when Castro set

foot on Cuba on the second of December, 1956. He was a rebellious man, who took action against the supreme Western power in Cuba. He organized a protest and revolution that led to the fall of the city of Batista. An act that reminds Brathwaite of the same revolutionary spirit of Caliban in *The Tempest*. Caliban starts singing a euphoric song that slowly becomes an incantation that calls for the return to the African world.¹⁸⁵

Ban
Ban
Caliban
like to play
pan
at the Carnival; (192)

He plays the drum, specifically the steel drum, which reminds him of the times the African slaves danced the limbo while they sailed across the Middle Passage. He mentions the slaves who were in the dark inside of the ship. It was always silent, dark and the slaves seemed in complete solitude. Hereby, the poet wants the very first memory of the African Slave Trade to be remembered and resurrected to become a ritual that is cherished. It is another attempt of self-realization that should be one of the identification markers of the Caribbean identity. The silence on the ship is broken by the drummer's beats and the harmony of the flute that accompanies the drum. The limbo dancer is also rescued from the overwhelming silence that controls the ship by the beats of this drum. The drum is of Trinidadian origin and is considered by Brathwaite an African drum as it is mostly related to the African drum he described earlier in *Masks*. The limbo dancer gets back on his feet after he falls and a drum-consciousness arises within the depths of his mind with the help of their dumb gods. This rise resurrects the hope of a self-created culture that would resurrect their rights.¹⁸⁶

Brathwaite also makes use of Caliban in his poetry to focus on much more important terms; that is the humiliating terms of 'Negro,' or 'slave'. Caliban's

cultural identity and origin is not signified in Shakespeare's play. He was simply considered a slave after the play became well-known. He was basically presented in the cast as being a 'savage and deformed slave'. Throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, an emphasis was placed on the adjective 'deformed', while the next two centuries emphasized 'savage'. In the last forty years, the focus started to change towards the character 'Caliban'. He was seen as an American or African in origin, but Brathwaite in a monograph with the title "Caliban, Ariel and Unprospero in the Conflict of Creolisation: A Study of the Slave Revolt in Jamaica in 1831-32," announces that he sees Caliban as a Jamaican rebel slave.¹⁸⁷

So Brathwaite sets his faith and eventual redemption with that of Caliban. Whenever Caliban is able to rise on his feet from under the limbo-bar of slavery towards the beams of the bright sun, Brathwaite finds an opportunity to stand up as well.¹⁸⁸ He says: "Sun coming up/ And the drummers are praising me." (195) This poem presents a special type of "ritualistic musical creation"¹⁸⁹. The ritual starts when Caliban is performing the limbo dance and is drawn back to the history of the African forefathers whilst they crossed the Middle Passage. That is because he links the limbo stick to the whip. Later, in the third section of the poem, the dance evolves into having more creative possibilities. The dance does not only bring back memories of the slaves on the ship, but also to the history of his people before they were taken away by the sea. Being able to shift from one period of time to another is a symbol of release and revolution. Caliban, therefore, is not that obedient character who performs at the limited sounds of the drum in front of different audience of night-clubs or Caribbean tourists, but is self-directed by listening to the sound or the call of a different type of drum. So after presenting the drum as being the major symbol of Africanism in *Masks*, Brathwaite shows the response to the beats of the drum. This response "allows the Caribbean subject to transcend a history of poverty, suffering and external

definition, through a response that appears to afford more potential for genuine self-fulfillment than the contemporary escape offered by Carnival.”¹⁹⁰ Brathwaite here confirms his project to separate himself and his people from the impact the Western culture has on them and on the Caribbean lands. He, through Caliban, tries to enter a new phase of reforming the Caribbean culture far away from such Western impacts.

In his poem “Rites”, Brathwaite makes use of cricket, a sport that is widely played all over the Caribbean. He implicitly makes use of the sport as a ritual. It thus refers to

the legacy of slavery directly and exposes the region’s mid-century limbo position between colonialism and independence. It set the tone for the way poetry could explore cricket’s status as a cultural vehicle for the violent expression of anti-colonial action and self-definition, while shedding light on collective ambitions and failures.¹⁹¹

“Islands” reviews the Caribbean nationhood from the literal perspective. Brathwaite however shows that reviewing the map of the Caribbean nation is not only a geographical matter. Hence he shows that the scattered islands or the ruins of lands are allegorical in sense. The haphazard order of the Caribbean soil reminds the examiner of the map of the horrible Caribbean history that reveals the horrendous lives of the past generations. The reader can trace the revolutionary spirit that is placed within the sensibility of the lines. He makes fun of the notion of time and refuses to be a follower or a slave to chronology.¹⁹²

Looking through a map
Of the Antilles, you see how time
Has trapped
its humble servants here. De
scendants of the slave do not
lie in the lap
of the more fortunate
gods. The rat
in the warehouse is as much king
as the sugar he plunders. (204)

The word ‘descendants’, then does not only refer to the broken history of the Afro- Caribbean citizens, but it also functions as the break of the concept of time and thus chronology that he finds pointless to depend upon in this literary work.¹⁹³

In the poem “Wake,” from the third section entitled *Rebellion*, Brathwaite continues with the idea of the shattering islands, through which he tends to announce the break of the cultural factor of the African descendants and that no political reformations are being set to protect this issue the majority of the Caribbean inhabitants have at hand. There are no official policies in political legislation that protect what has been left of their forefather’s culture and they themselves have no approval of reinforcing an official cultural identity.¹⁹⁴ He mourns:

Islands
islands
stone stripped from stone
pebbles
empty shells
chapels of broken windows
no one calls here on the Sunday sand. (212)

And this geographical break continues in further poems like in “Unrighteousness of Mammon”:¹⁹⁵

from memory, from book,
and look:
blue chains of islands
break; (216).

The poem “Ogun,” in the fourth section, is significantly important. Ogun, a Yoruban and Afro-Caribbean creator, is refigured in the form of a divine craftsman. In fact, Brathwaite does not want, for himself or for the other Afro-Caribbean people to return to the earliest state of the African identity, because he has made clear that following such a path of identification is a dead end as

there are differences between the two folks now. Ogun crafts different supplies in the Caribbean, like chairs, tables and coffins of wood. This resembles the Afro-Caribbeans who spent most of their days as slaves. Little by little, Ogun started to suffer hunger because of the modernization that spread over the country. Wood was quickly replaced with materials such as rubber and tubes, materials that this craftsman was not capable of creating. He became a subsidiary component of the society, just like the Afro-Caribbean man. However, Brathwaite throws a ray of hope as he sees this craftsman being a “site for another cultural ‘reality,’ that of his African past which is forever with him.”¹⁹⁶ He presents hope in these lines:

And yet he had a block of wood that would have baffled them.
With knife and gimlet care he worked away at this on Sundays,
explored its knotted hurts, cutting his way
along its yellow whorls ... (243)

The craftsman owned a piece of wood which he worked on in times of rest. He crafted the piece on Sundays, that day of the week Christianity provided as a resting day. However this craftsman chose to craft the piece in his spare time, instead of giving himself the rest his religion provides. The reason behind this is not only personal, but also for reasons he was not quite aware of:¹⁹⁷

And as he cut, he heard the creak of forests:
green lizard faces gulped, grey memories with moth
eyes watch him from their shadows, soft
liquid tendrils leaked among the flowers
and a black rigid thunder he had never heard within his hammer
came stomping up the trunks. (243)

This ominous piece of wood is significant, because it carried within it ancestral memories of the past that are freed in the present. The traditions and the cultural habits of the African forefathers are still present within the souls of the Afro-Caribbean people even though they are unconscious of them. The craftsman knows the sound of the creak even though he never heard it before. He recognizes the memories although he was never a part of them and perceives

things he has never seen before. The ominous shape of the wood is symbolic signifying the wounds of the African slaves. They have suffered and given everything up yet achieved nothing.¹⁹⁸

... : dry shuttered

eyes, slack anciently everted lips, flat
ruined face, eaten by pox, ravaged by rat

and woodworm, dry cistern mouth, cracked
gullet crying for the desert, the heavy black

enduring jaw; lost pain, lost iron; (243)

This piece of wood is also an image for reshaping the culture that is based on the African ancestral roots. He attacks the idea of rejecting the African culture that was expressed by the seeds in “To hell with Africa, to hell with Europe” (29) in *Rights of Passage*. He starts the search for the multicultural rights of his group of people far away from history and thus the concept of time. There is no escape from their history, however “there appears the recognition of cultural overlap and historical imagination breaking through the walls of economic slavery and historical limitations.”¹⁹⁹ And here, a clear and justified reason is given of why the African history was carefully drawn in the trilogy. Literary critic John K. Hoppe reveals that “the poet’s journeys into his people’s past have not yielded any way out of history, but are now included in the people’s modern identity. It is this inter-mixture of historical subjectivities, this cross-cultural or “syncretic” imagination that will provide a base for radical change.”²⁰⁰

The last poem of this volume and thus the trilogy is entitled “Jou’vert”. It means ‘opening day’ suggesting the call for freedom and rights. It gives a sense of hope and of a new beginning as it refers to the first day of a traditional Trinidadian carnival. It is a significant ritual in which people gather together before sunrise and march towards Independence Square in bands. They appear with remarks of being covered with dirt and mud or wear old clothes. It is the

day in which “slaves lit the night with their torches.”²⁰¹ This carnival is held to commemorate the slaves when they used to gather with each other after the sugar cane season came to an end. It celebrates their freedom from work after a season of hard work and pain. This carnival allowed them to forget their pains and enjoy freedom. The carnival is then a cultural ritual that Afro-Caribbeans are cautious to perform every year. In this poem he also brings together the Old World with the New World showing that the African culture is also part of the Caribbean reality. For instance, the most prominent religions of both worlds are tied together to imply the connection and the sharing of one community and reality. He says:

Christ will pray
To Odomankoma

Nyame God
and Nyankopon (267)

So it is a poem that explores happiness and hope beyond the black ashes of the past.²⁰²

With the end of the trilogy, Brathwaite’s intention has been revealed over the lines of his poetry. He clearly talks about the black population of the Caribbean,

so that they may recognize their position in society, become cognizant of their identity, and discover their connectedness to a creolized Caribbean culture. However, his intention is not isolationist. With recognition of their own place in the society, and an acknowledgement of this place by the rest of the population, the entire society moves towards integration and the identification of a common Caribbean identity that moves beyond race.²⁰³

Brathwaite’s revolution does not end just here. He continues his writing career with revealing more and more of the cruel incidents of the past and the losses of the present. Among the most significant literary works besides *The Arrivants*, Brathwaite has yet another volume of poetry, a second trilogy entitled *Ancestors: A Reinvention of Mother Poem, Sun Poem, and X/Self* (2001). He

carries on including the revolutionary spirit in the name of all Afro-Caribbean citizens. It is a spirit that attempts at continuing to imply the differences of this broken cultural group among the other cultural groups in the Caribbean nation and to transform certain incidents and performances as cultural markers that only Afro-Caribbeans can identify with. In *Ancestors*, Brathwaite makes use of nation language in a more developed and significant way to intensify the revolutionary spirit. It is to take the reader to a higher and more developed stage of revolution as the revolution of the word is for Brathwaite the essence of remaking the Caribbean cultural identity.

NOTES

¹Quoted in June Bobb, *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998), 13.

²Kamau Brathwaite, *Barabajan Poems* (Kingston: Savacou North, 1994), 77, quoted in Christopher Winks, *Symbolic Cities in Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 149.

³Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 53, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1135039755>.

⁴Radka Neumannova, "Multiculturalism and Cultural Diversity in Modern Nation State" (Phd diss., University of Economics, Prague Czech Republic, 2007), 4.

⁵Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 164.

⁶Kamau Brathwaite, interview by Natasha Sajé and some of her students, November 10, 2006.

⁷Nathaniel Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality and Experimental Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 139, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0521444535>.

⁸Elaine Savory, "Rights of Passage," in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, eds. Daniel Balderston, Mike Gonzalez, and Ana M. Lopez (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1:1281, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1134788525>.

⁹Ibid., 156.

¹⁰Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica* (London: New Beacon, 1971), 13, quoted in Ashley Dawson, *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 62. Prospero is the rightful Duke of Milan in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.

¹¹Jacques Derrida, *Aporias: Dying--awaiting (one Another At) the "limits of Truth" (mourir--s'attendre Aux "limites de la Vérité")*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 34.

¹²Kamau Brathwaite, *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (Staten Island: WE Press and XCP, 1999), 104, quoted in Anthony Reed, *Freedom Time: The Poetics and Politics of Black Experimental Writing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 70.

¹³Ethel Ngozi Okeke, "Slaves, Spades and Negroes: Asserting the Africans Rights to the Caribbean Nationhood in Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage*," in *Justice and Human Dignity in Africa*, eds. GMT Emezue, Inge Kosch and Maurice Kangel (n.p: HPC Books, 2014), 61.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ashley Dawson, *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 64.

¹⁶Savory, 1281.

¹⁷Edward Brathwaite, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 4. All quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically henceforward.

¹⁸Paul Naylor, *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 147-148.

¹⁹Cyrus R.K. Pattel, "Kamau Brathwaite 1930-," in *Encyclopedia of American Poetry: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Eric L. Haralson (New York: Routledge, 2001), 101, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1579580084>.

²⁰Naylor, 147-148.

²¹Simon Gikandi, "E. K. Brathwaite and the Poetics of the Voice: The Allegory of History in "Rights of Passage," *Callaloo* 14, no. 3 (Summer, 1991), 729, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2931495>.

²²Naylor, 148.

²³*Ibid.*, 147-148.

²⁴John K. Hoppe, "From Jameson to Syncretism: The Communal Imagination of American Identity in Edward Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*," *Weber Studies: An Interdisciplinary Humanities Journal* 9.3 (1992), <https://weberstudies.weber.edu/archive/archive%20A%20%20Vol.%201-10.3/Vol.%209.3/9.3Hoppe.htm>. (accessed October 8, 2016).

²⁵Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 163.

²⁶Naylor, 148.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 149.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 150.

²⁹Lorna Burns, "Prophetic Visions of the Past: The Arrivants and Another Life," in *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, eds. Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell (New York: Routledge, 2011), 187.

³⁰Bobb, 113.

³¹Burns, 187.

³²Curwen Best, "Brathwaite, Kamau (1930-)," in *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*, eds. Toyin Falola and Amanda Warnock (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 68.

³³Savory, 31.

³⁴Dawson, 64.

³⁵Savory, 1281.

³⁶Ulfiired Reichardt, "Diaspora Studies and the Culture of the African Diaspora: The Poetry of Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite and Linton Kwesi Johnson," in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. Monika Fludernik (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 312.

³⁷Hoppe, "From Jameson to Syncretism."

³⁸Dawson, 65.

³⁹Nathaniel Mackey, "Wringing the Word," in *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*, ed. Stewart Brown (Melksham: The Cromwell Press, 1995), 137.

⁴⁰Mark A. McWatt, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1930-)," in *Fifty Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Daryl Cumber Dance (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 61-62.

⁴¹Emily Allen Williams, "Tropical Paradise Lost and Regained: The Poetic Protest and Prophecy of Edward Brathwaite, Claire Harris, Olive Senior, and David Dabydeen" (PhD diss., Clark Atlanta University, 1997), 22. *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924) is a play by American playwright [Eugene O'Neill](#). It was used by Brathwaite for the racial conflicts it contains.

⁴²Bobb, 115.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 177.

⁴⁴Randolph Chase, "Folk Protest in the Poetry of Derek Walcott, E.K. Braithwaite and Claude McKay," *The Free Library*, last modified March 22, 2014, accessed October 8, 2016, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Folk+Protest+in+the+Poetry+of+Derek+Walcott%2c+E.K.+Braithwaite+and...-a0365072225>

⁴⁵Derrilyn E. Morrison, *Making History Happen: Caribbean Poetry in America* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 4, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1443884146>.

⁴⁶J. Edward Chamberlin, *Come Back to Me My Language: Poetry and the West Indies* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), 182, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0252062973>.

⁴⁷Andre J. Branch, "Deculturalization," in *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*, ed. James A. Banks (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2012), 1:609-610, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1506320333>.

⁴⁸Okeke, 65.

⁴⁹Morrison, 4.

⁵⁰Hoppe, "From Jameson to Syncretism."

⁵¹Chamberlin, 183.

⁵²Gikandi, 732.

⁵³Amor Kohli, "Questioning as Utopian Practice in Edward (Kamau) Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage*," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 47, no. 3 (September 2012): 413-414.

⁵⁴Bobb, 178-179.

⁵⁵Ibid., 179-180.

⁵⁶Ibid., 180-181.

⁵⁷Gikandi, 730.

⁵⁸Hoppe, "From Jameson to Syncretism."

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Bobb, 121.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 122.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 123.

⁶⁵Monica Manolachi, "The Memory of Different Rhythms and Colors in E.K Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*," *University of Bucharest Review* 3, no.1 (2013): 138.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Reichardt, 316.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Laurence Breiner, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Twentieth-Century Caribbean and Black African Writers*, eds. Bernth Lindfors and Reinhard Sanders, vol.125 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1993), 17, quoted in Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), 121, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0199741611>.

⁷⁰Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 184, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0852555539>.

⁷¹Tsitsi Ella Jaji, *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 178.

⁷²Bobb, 63.

⁷³Curwen Best, *Kamau Brathwaite and Christopher Okigbo: Art, Politics, and the Music of Ritual* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2009), 146.

⁷⁴Wayde Compton, "Culture at the Crossroads: Voodoo Aesthetics and the Axis of Blackness in Literature of the Black Diaspora," in *A Pepper-pot of Cultures: Aspects of Creolization in the Caribbean*, eds. Gordon Collier and Ulrich Fleischmann (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 494, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=9042009187>.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Emily Zobel Marshall, "Anansi, Eshu, and Legba. Slave Resistance and the West African Trickster," in *Human Bondage in the Cultural Contact Zone: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Slavery and its Discourses*, eds. Raphael Hörmann and Gesa Mackenthun (Munster: Waxmann, 2010), 171.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Patricia Ann Lynch, *African Mythology A to Z*, 2nd ed. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2010), 97.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Abiola Irele, "The Return of the Native: Edward Kamau Brathwaite's Masks," *The Free Library*, September 22, 1994, accessed October 8, 2016, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+return+of+the+native%3a+Edward+Kamau+Brathwaite%27s+Masks.-a016465669>.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Charles A. Bodunde, "The Black Writer in the Multicultural Caribbean: The Vision of Africa in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*," in *Caribbean Writers: Between Orality & Writing*, eds. Marlies Glaser and Marion Pausch (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 25.

⁸⁵Jim Cocola, *Places in the Making: A Cultural Geography of American Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), 106, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1609384113>.

⁸⁶J. Ki-Zerbo, ed., *General History of Africa: Methodology and African Prehistory*, (California: University of California Press, 1990), 1:62.

⁸⁷Wilson Harris, "The Root of Epic," in *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris*, ed. Andrew Bundy (London: Routledge, 1999), 172.

⁸⁸Best, 146.

⁸⁹Michael Sharp, "Echoes of African Praise Songs in the Poetry of Kamau Brathwaite," in *Facts, Fiction, and African Creative Imaginations*, eds. Toyin Falola and Fallou Ngom (New York: Routledge, 2010), 96, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1135212880>.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Manolachi, 139.

⁹²Ibid., 139-140.

⁹³Sharp, 96.

⁹⁴Manolachi, 140.

⁹⁵William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Roma Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 58.

⁹⁶April Ann Shemak, *Asylum Speakers: Caribbean Refugees and Testimonial Discourse* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 79.

⁹⁷Manolachi, 140.

⁹⁸Harris, "The Root of Epic," 171.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰Naylor, 150.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁰³Sharp, 97.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶Jaji, 180.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹Paul A. Griffith, *Afro-Caribbean Poetry and Ritual* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 97.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹Yaw Adu-Gyamfi, "Orality in Writing: Its Cultural and Political Function in Anglophone African, African-Caribbean, and African-Canadian Poetry" (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 1999), 123-124.

¹¹²Best, 34.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴Bodunde, 24.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶Bobb, 114.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Bodunde, 25.

¹¹⁹Williams, 28.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 27.

¹²¹Bodunde, 25.

¹²²Williams, 28.

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴Irele, "The Return of the Native."

¹²⁵Best, 144.

¹²⁶Marshall, 171.

¹²⁷Best, 144-145.

¹²⁸Irele, "The Return of the Native."

¹²⁹Best, 34.

¹³⁰Naylor, 152.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 163.

¹³³Williams, 31-32.

¹³⁴Irele, *The African Imagination*, 163.

¹³⁵Peter J. Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 104, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0199977984>.

¹³⁶Ibid., 104.

¹³⁷Harris, "The Root of Epic," 171.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Kalliney, 105.

¹⁴⁰Irele, *The African Imagination*, 163.

¹⁴¹Bobb, 186.

¹⁴²Ibid, 34.

¹⁴³Irele, "The Return of the Native."

¹⁴⁴Bodunde, 29.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Quoted in Irele, *The African Imagination*, 165.

¹⁴⁸Irele, *The African Imagination*, 165.

¹⁴⁹Best, 146.

¹⁵⁰Mackey, 131.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ezekiel Solomon Akuso, "Africa in the Caribbean Imagination: A Study of the Poetry of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Nicolas Batiste Guillen and Derek Alton Walcott" (PhD diss., Ahmadu Bello University, 2005), cxxvii-cxxviii.

¹⁵⁴McWatt, 61.

¹⁵⁵Mackey, 130.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 131.

¹⁵⁷Chantal Zabus, *Tempest After Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 55, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=113707602X>.

¹⁵⁸Bobb, 186.

¹⁵⁹Amber Wilson, *Jamaica: The Culture* (New York: Crabtree Publishing Company, 2004), 10, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=077879332X>.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Bobb, 187. "Often showing up in different shapes such as coyote, spider, or beaver, the trickster is always creating havoc, even if his intentions may be good. Depending on his form, the trickster often seeks to deceive the other animals, people, and elements of the sky in order to satisfy his greed. His ever-constant presence in tribal mythology serves to always remind people that there should be a little coyote, spider, or beaver in everyone." Janet Parker and Julie Stanton, eds., *Mythology: Myths, Legends and Fantasies* (Cape Town: Struik Publishers, 2003), 434.

¹⁶²Marshall, 171.

¹⁶³Bobb, 187.

¹⁶⁴Joyce Jonas, *Anancy in the Great House: Ways of Reading West Indian Fiction* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990), 2, quoted in Wilson Harris, "The Creative Mind and The Rewriting of History in Wilson Harris's The 'Tree of The Sun,'" *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* 2, no. 1/2/3 (Spring, 2000): 142.

¹⁶⁵Bobb, 187.

¹⁶⁶Brathwaite, 273.

¹⁶⁷Naylor, 59.

¹⁶⁸Akuso, cxxvii-cxxviii.

¹⁶⁹Mackey, 142-143.

¹⁷⁰Best, 101.

¹⁷¹Paul Burns, *The Essentials of GCSE AQA English: For Specification A* (London: Letts & Lonsdale, 2006), 53, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1905129483>.

¹⁷²Georgie Horrell, "Poetry of oppression, résistance and liberation," in *Teaching Caribbean Poetry*, eds. Beverley Bryan and Morag Styles (New York: Routledge, 2014), 46, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1136180826>.

¹⁷³Imelda Pilgrim, Lindsay McNab and Peter Thomas, *Working with the English Anthology for AQA A, 2004-2006* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers), 15, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=043510604X>.

¹⁷⁴Harris, 152.

¹⁷⁵Bobb, 188-189.

¹⁷⁶Burns, 53.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Zabus, 55.

¹⁷⁹Bobb, 189-190.

¹⁸⁰Ibid, 189.

¹⁸¹Ibid., 190.

¹⁸²Ibid., 191.

¹⁸³Zabus, 55.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 56.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Ibid, 57.

¹⁸⁸Gerald Moore, "When Caliban Crossed the Atlantic," in *Still More Adventures With Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain*, ed. William Roger Louis (New York: The University of Texas, 2003), 317, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1860649157>.

¹⁸⁹Best, 101.

¹⁹⁰John Thieme, *Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 141-142. Carnival is a kind of festival that has taken place ever since the colonization of the New World. Carnivals are known to mostly take place in the Caribbean, Cuba and Colombia. Carnivals mostly reflect different cultural traditions of African, Amerindian or European tribes. In the Caribbean, especially in Cuba, the African culture is clearly evident as traditions were preserved ever since the African diaspora took place. Roberto Ferreira da Rocha, "Carnival, Latin America," in *Africa and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History*, eds. Richard M. Juang and Noelle Morrisette (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 241.

¹⁹¹Claire Westall, "Reading Brian Lara and Caribbean Cricket Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Cricket*, eds. Anthony Bateman and Jeffrey Hill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 146, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0521761298>.

¹⁹²Dania Dwyer, “The Aesthetics of Ruins in West Indian Postcolonial Poetry,” in *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, eds. Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), n.p.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶Hoppe, “*From Jameson to Syncretism.*”

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*

²⁰¹Quoted in Bobb, 192.

²⁰²Bobb, 193.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, 226.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER THREE
EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE'S
ANCESTORS: A REINVENTION OF MOTHER POEM, SUN
POEM, AND X/SELF (2001)

After the completion and publication of Brathwaite's first trilogy *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*, it became renowned around the world. He did not stop there, as he powerfully continued his successful poetic career with the production of more political poetry. With his significant style and method of writing, he produced many more books of poetry. Among them are three distinguished books which he made into another trilogy in 2001. He entitled this trilogy *Ancestors: A Reinvention of Mother Poem, Sun Poem, and X/Self* which includes the volumes *Mother Poem* (1977), *Sun Poem* (1982), and *X/Self* (1987).

Brathwaite started *Mother Poem* upon his return to Barbados after being estranged from his New World home for almost twenty years. It came after he had thoroughly revised his first trilogy *The Arrivants* that he felt he had left something essential behind. He acknowledged that a gap was created in the revolutionary message he tried to spread. That is why he was not completely satisfied with the trilogy and considered writing more poetry to accomplish a complete form of highlighting the multicultural issues of the people he represents.¹

In an interview, Brathwaite reveals that in "the first trilogy –there is an absence of my family – my family – in the work."² It was this absence that inspired the composure of his second trilogy. Consequently, many critics have considered this trilogy as a complementary to the first. In general terms, this trilogy depicts similar issues of the Afro-Caribbean life of past and present. He tries to shed light on the multicultural problems at hand and attempts to intensify

his message by facing the reasons that left his people with a lack of proper recognition among the other cultures in the nation. However, the poet has made some notifying and distinguishable changes in this trilogy. He changed the setting geographically, and invented fresh writing styles in order to make it more effective. The trilogy starts in Barbados then passes the borders of the Caribbean region and gives a global account on the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized. Finally, the poet takes the reader back to Barbados in conclusion.³

The volumes, especially *Mother Poem* and *Sun Poem*, give a more extended poetic history than the volumes in *The Arrivants* for the purpose of awakening the African consciousness. *X/Self* on the other hand focuses on the interaction between the different cultures in the modern world. *Ancestors* is also more personal than the earlier trilogy as the pronoun 'I' is less representative of the Afro-Caribbean and is instead referring more to the poet's personal experiences.⁴ Each of the three volumes constitutes a significant role in the trilogy. *Mother*, part of the title of the first volume, refers to the poet's own mother, the oppressed women in Barbados and to Barbados itself. He finds them valuable and essential factors for rescuing the African traditions in the present Caribbean. In *Sun Poem*, the masculine figure is presented with the retrieval of boyhood memories that are put in contrast to the incompetent fathers of the contemporary Caribbean. The volume ends with a glimpse of hope when children of African origins are being empowered by the Caribbean sun. *X/Self* takes a direct turn into politics, in which he addresses the fallen colonial empires. It is the final step towards the realization of the black revolutionary voice.⁵

Considering the style of writing, this trilogy is also different from the first trilogy. The poems are presented in a significant way. Brathwaite uses a set of typefaces or fonts known as the 'Sycorax Video Style'. He reveals that employing such a style of writing inspires him to go "across Mexico to

Siqueiros and the Aztec murals and all the way back to ancient Nilotic Egypt to hieroglyphics – allowing me to write in light and make sound visible as if I am in a video”.⁶ With using different styles of writing poetry, poets obviously tend to direct readers to focus on the message that is included. Such messages are mostly hidden and it is the reader who must treat words like symbols to identify what they really stand for.

It is essential to understand how the phrase was coined by Brathwaite in order to understand the nature of his poetry in this trilogy. ‘Sycorax’ is a female character that does not make an actual appearance in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611). She is “a witch born in Algeria”⁷ who has ceased to exist even before the action of the play starts. A background story is given of her before the play, narrating that she had arrived pregnant at the shores of a newly discovered island after her banishment from her homeland in North Africa. She is the first to inhabit this island with her son Caliban, who was born later on, before other settlers reached its coasts.⁸

After the arrival of other forces who took control over the island, Sycorax is portrayed to have a fragmented identity with African origins. Brathwaite uses this persona in his poetry as a rich source for reclaiming the fallen African identity. He also named his personal computer ‘Sycorax’ after this character as a source of inspiration. With the video style of writing he is able to use Sycorax to outreach his mother tongue as well as attempting to resurrect the forgotten African origins. Sycorax is the “muse in the machine that wires the poet to originary energies”⁹, or as Savory describes the Brathwaite’s use of this character as a “spirit in the form of Sycorax, the anti-colonial matrix of creativity, who inspires the machine, the Western computer, to produce Brathwaite’s video style, which markedly brings orality into the written word.”¹⁰

Savory also notes the use of the feminine figure in this trilogy. She implies that Brathwaite has elaborated on the masculine images that were used in the

first trilogy with feminine images in this trilogy for the sake of completing his movement towards multicultural achievement.¹¹ Brathwaite describes Sycorax and his invented video style saying:

Sycorax being the submerge African and woman and *lwa* of the pla(y), Caliban mother and person who deals with the herbs and the magical sous-reality of the world over which Prospero rules. And therefore I celebrate her in this way –thru the computer –by saying that she’s the spirit/person who creates an(d)/or acts out of the video-style that I workin with.¹²

Caliban’s mother is “the *lwa* who in fact, allows me the space and longitude – groundation and inspiration –the little inspiration –that I’m at the moment permitted (*italics in original*).”¹³ The term *lwa* refers to a “deity in the Vodou tradition.”¹⁴ Beside using the Sycorax Video Style, Brathwaite also employs, “tidalectics” in this trilogy, a theory he developed. It can be defined as “the fusion of language and poetics with the rhythms of the sea – to describe the narrative”.¹⁵ In other words, Brathwaite frames his poetry with the use of pauses placed between the words of his poetic lines. These pauses reflect the movements of the sea. He also writes his lines either at the left side, in the middle or at the right side of the page. Just like the African slaves who were incapable of controlling their fates, readers struggle with the way of reading Brathwaite’s poetry. Readers are not only incapable of deciding the direction of the poem, but are also clueless of where the destination of the poem will direct him/her. This is true for the slaves as well when they were taken away from their African homeland not knowing the destiny that awaits them. He places such periods intentionally for the reader to recognize that he/she is facing a similar destiny as that of the slaves.¹⁶

With the presentation of this theory, Brathwaite intends to oppose the Western way of thinking. He opposes a theory known as ‘Hegel’s theory of dialectics’. The theory of dialectics was developed by the 19th century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. This theory was first used to refer to a debate where two people would be opposing each other with their thoughts.

The argument would be of a linear movement where words would pass forwards and backwards repeatedly. The ideas would gradually develop with the continuation of the argument between the two sides. Hegel added the idea that two different concepts also could possibly oppose one another in a linear manner and that a concept could improve gradually depending on the other opposing concept.¹⁷ Brathwaite opposed this idea and came up with tidalectics, which he describes as “a dialectics with my difference”¹⁸. In an interview, Brathwaite says that he sees the movements of the sea as a circular movement rather than a linear one, i.e., a movement that goes forwards and backwards. Presenting the circular motion in presenting his poetry, Brathwaite primarily wants to revolt against the seemingly endless linearity of the Western culture that tries to break down the African culture and its glorious history.¹⁹ The Canadian literary critic Wayne Compton says that tidalectics basically “describes a way of seeing history as a palimpsest, where generations overlap generations, and eras wash over eras like a tide on a stretch of beach In tidalectics we do not *improve upon* the past, but are ourselves *versions* of the past” (italics in original).²⁰ This means that Brathwaite sees the African history as a part of the Caribbean present and not as an improvement or an opposing concept. He clearly tries to interweave Africa and Barbados together with the use of the ancestral past. This he does with the neocolonial experiences he has lived to see while being outside the Caribbean borders for almost two decades. He shows how the reclamation of the African world and history helps in cherishing the African traditions that are practiced in the New World.²¹

Some critics relate the theory of tidalectics to the traditional dance of the limbo. This dance nourishes both body and spirit with creativity and power. It is the same creativity and strength that naturally defines the movements of the sea.²² Tidalectics is also seen as a metaphor for diaspora and migration. The diaspora has created spaces in the identities and cultural traditions of the African

descendant people and with creating periods in his poetry, Brathwaite wants not only to shed light on the shortcomings the Caribbean identity holds, but also shows the urgent need to seal these spaces by regenerating the motion of the sea in a circular way. Brathwaite resists the straight movement of the sea to control the destiny of those spaces, meaning thereby the Western colonial forces.²³

In an interview, Brathwaite reveals how he came to use a method known as ‘magical realism’. Within this method lies his source of hope, the source of identifying the Afro-Caribbean self culturally.²⁴ This method is generally used “as a tool for revolutionary social representation, with a recognition that in many postcolonial societies a peasant, pre-industrial population had its imaginative life rooted in a living tradition of the mythic, the legendary and the magical”.²⁵ This means that Brathwaite portrays the Afro-Caribbeans as a population that possesses a clear African background and he takes in the realities of this population in an imaginative way, creating thereby a ray of hope that he wishes would lead to forming a utopian self. As the interpretations of magical realism are numerous, Brathwaite reveals the following about his personal use of this method in the same interview:

I’m very much aware that in this second trilogy that is what is happening to me, that gardens become corals and corals wither away or transmute themselves into light. And, you know, that is the kind of thing which I call magical realism. How the metaphors and images interlock and interweave and interpenetrate each other, so that increasingly you have a seamless – in fact, it’s seamless kind of poetry, increasing without punctuation, where images inform, flow and influence each other. It is a kind of surrealism as well, but magical realism, I think is nearer to it, because it is the transformation of reality into this prism of imagination and light.²⁶

This means that the poet makes use of historical facts and the landscape of the ancient African world and tries to view these factors in a more sensational and magical way with the use of his imagination, for he reveals that within such a transformation, a ray of hope conjoins.

In addition to these techniques, he also morphs words into new expressions which meanings are obviously associated to the Afro-Caribbean experiences. The purpose of such newly coined words is his projective plan to develop and expand the usage of nation language.²⁷ About Brathwaite's style of writing, the critic Nathaniel Mackey concludes that "nation language itself assumes a much more prominent, pervasive role in the second trilogy than in the first."²⁸

Looking at the trilogy from a general perspective, it is analyzed to give answers to a set of questions: "Where were you born? The nature of your landscape? *Mother Poem*: the mother, the coral, limestone. Then, is that your only source of influence, power, aura? The answer was no, there was a male element as well, your father. *Sun Poem*: light, air, in addition to water and ocean and then the third movement, the resolution into myself, into *X/Self*."²⁹

Mother Poem and *Sun Poem* have then the function of being the source of renewal and revitalization that people look forward to for a brighter future of identity and cultural rights. This spirit is further developed in the third part *X/Self* where the force develops into glorifying the ancestral past as an inspiring potential to give importance to the self.³⁰

Section One: *Mother Poem* (1977)

The first book of this trilogy is entitled *Mother Poem*. Brathwaite originally published this poem in 1977. There was a need to interweave a feminine power as a part of his movement towards the realization of Afro-Caribbean multicultural rights. "Mother" is the feminine power of this poetic movement which refers to the African motherland, to the poet's homeland Barbados, as well as to the women in the Caribbean who protect and cherish the ancestral traditions over the generations. They struggle for the survival of their cultural traditions and fight for saving the reminders that chain them and their Caribbean

existence to the African world. It is clear that his literature can be categorized under the type 'The Literature of Reconnection' as such a reconnection is essential for identification purposes. In this volume, mother is shown to have more than one voice. At times the voice is "public and oratorical" and at others it becomes "private and personal".³¹

"Alpha," the opening poem of the volume is a song that praises the mother, whether that means Africa, the Caribbean, or the Afro-Caribbean woman in general. It is a poem that submits power to these three factors and so the poet tries to make this triangle the essence of strength and survival of the African past, present and future. The theory of tidalectics is very visible in this poem. Brathwaite makes a clear circular movement from the New World towards the Old World. He retrieves the ancient memories of the past and links them to the new experiences of the New World, making sure that the past is part of the present and not an improvement of it. He makes use of the sea journey slaves made to cross the Middle Passage towards the New World.³²

i remember ancient watercourses
dead streams. carved footsteps

and my mother rains upon the island

w/ her loud voices
w/ her gray hairs
w/ her green love³³

Here Brathwaite shows the presence of the ancestral mother in the Caribbean. With her voice there will be hope for the maintenance of connections between the Old world and the New. Only with the voice of this song, the mother is empowered to preserve and the father, meaning the African traditions, will be able to survive throughout the generations:

& my father swims through the noise
through the blankets of jute on his lungs
& he is caesar again at the hellespont (16)

At this point, the poet tries to point out the importance of the union of the spirits of the mother and the father in the poem. If these two spirits are able to unite, a new identity will be formed and one of the multicultural rights can be achieved. However, to make such a plan successful the Afro-Caribbean man should endure many obstacles and fight many battles to reach the goal of achieving multicultural rights.³⁴

The poet reassures in this volume that the Afro-Caribbean man is born with fragmented nature to show the necessity of having to fight for the realization of their multicultural rights. He announces near the end of the volume that:

the child
is born to splinters

broken islands
broken homes (140)

He adds the term “broken” again to the fragmented image of the child, just like he did in *Islands* when saying:

bless me with shadows
white calico of mutters;

mother me with words,
gems, spoken talismans of your broken tongue (210)

Not only does he give the sense of fragmentation in the semantic meaning of the word, but also in the way he presents his poetic lines of this trilogy. He introduces in *Mother Poem*, beside the division of the word, several stops to emphasize the fragmentation of the Afro-Caribbean self.³⁵

hear the pen/nies drop/in
lissen while they fall

ev/ry one for jee/sus
he shall have them all

dropp/in dropp/in dropp/in dropp/in
hear those pen/nies fall

*ev/ry one for jee/sus
he shall have them all (23)*

Brathwaite introduces the slash (/) in these lines. He also makes use of the colon in words like “i:ron” and “us:ed” (45, 97). All these techniques are his way of emphasizing the amount of destruction that this particular group of people suffered.³⁶ Brathwaite also makes great use of puns in *Mother Poem*. An example can be found in his poem “Bell”, where he refers to a warehouse as “wear-house” (25). The poem is about a the narrator’s husband who worked in this place and Brathwaite uses this pun to increase the reader’s identification with the suffering of the Afro-Caribbean man.³⁷

i nevva did know when e start comin home
wid a wheeze. wid a cough. wid a stone
in e chess. So e cuh hardly *breed*. c’dear
when de duss dat e ketck in dat sun/dayless wear

-house. brek e up like a stick
& pelt e down sick
pun de grounn (25)

Another pun he uses by changing thirty-five cents into “dirty-five sense” (44) in the poem “Pig morning”.³⁸ In “Miss Own,” mother, who is here representative of all Afro-Caribbean women, is shown to be an insecure and instable character. She is humiliated as she is sarcastically asked by her master to “sign a bill here” (49). This shows that she is treated with disgust and is made fun of, as mother is not capable of reading or signing any bills. He repeats the sentence over and over again so as to humiliate her more and more in order to remind her that he is superior to her. He will remain signing bills while she will never have such a chance. Slaves are also not trusted by their master to take the task of signing bills. The only relationship that exists between mother and her master is the “shoe”:³⁹

for the shoe is a safe cottage to the illiterate peasant
needing light. running water. the indestructible plastic of the soft
ill lit/erate present

sign a bill here (51).

In “Horse weebles,” Brathwaite speaks of the Caribbean social community. He narrates how markers of ancient Africa can still be traced in the Caribbean social life despite oppression. He says:

Sellin biscuit & sawfish in de plantation shop at pie
corner. was another good way of keepin she body & soul-seam
to
-gather
she got she plot of cane. she cow. she fifteen pigeons in a coop
razzle-neck fool-hens. a rhode islann
cocklin
yam. pumpkin. okra. sweet
potato. green pea bush (51-52)

The scene of these lines, which Brathwaite does not fail to write in nation language, shows the ordinary lives of people in some grocery shop in the Caribbean. The seller is a lady whose goods are all originally from Africa like okra, pumpkin and sweet potatoes. With an emphasis on such factors, the poet re-emphasizes the presence of Africa in the New World. The intense use of the pronoun ‘she’ in these lines has given the lines the rhythm defying the English rules of metres.⁴⁰ Further in the poem, a conversation is set up:

evenin miss evvy miss
maisie miss
maud. olive how yu? how
yu eveie chile?(53)

This conversation proves its significance by being written out completely in nation language. This is another defiance not only against the English language and the rules of English poetry, but also against the high colonial standards that all people in the Caribbean are forced to live under.⁴¹

The ancestral African mother is personalized to having a quite different nature than the contemporary Caribbean woman. She is a figure that is filled

with powers of damnation. In the poem “Hex,” she performs a set of different acts:⁴²

So she sings of streams
that are a-glutter w/boulders
of rocks that have not forgotten
their ancestry of iron
she quarrels like the dry seeds of the lotus rattle
she rattles like dry tamarind pods
like shak shaks
she shakes
& her tongue climb a hill of dry consonants (73)

The qualifications of singing, quarreling, rattling and shaking provide the persona (the mother) with the role of being a “historian, warrior, keeper of the dead and preserver of religious ceremony and rituals.”⁴³ Brathwaite tries to show the level of struggle the mother goes through trying to save the African culture in the New World. That is the reason the mother adopts different roles and fights many battles:

she will remember the floorboards of a cabin
how there was a grave there
where she bury her children
their skin drilled to screams like the soft guavas. by the flicker
of birds (75)

She also tries to restore her children’s broken self from the torturous treatment and the pains they have undergone as plantation slaves.⁴⁴ She heals them

from the sicknesses of the plantation
she gather sticks
gutters them to fashion pipes flutes siphons
rambies of herbs she powders & sniffs (75).

This ancestral mother, who has multiple roles of preservation and healing the African culture and her people, is introduced to Barbados, the New World mother. Barbados is shown to be the victim of Western colonialism and her only

possible savior is the ancestral mother. She has been harassed and is home of devastation as a result of the terror that was inflicted on her.⁴⁵

they learn to smile w/keats & milton
but forget lizzie & joe
they sing men of harlech
but know nothing of the men who march

from congo rock
from belleplaine
from boscobelle
from hothersal turning (78-79)

With the confrontation of Barbados, the ancient ancestral mother stands firm and remains persistent to continue all her actions for the survival and perseverance of the New World mother, Barbados, who fails at the task of reidentifying herself. Brathwaite says:

for the mind is dry. where there are no rivers

the sky of hope shines high w/barren metal
where there are no watercourses
i struggle through the silver thorn but cannot find the pool (80)

However the ancestral mother will help with reconnecting the watercourses of the past and the circle of the pool in the present. Brathwaite introduces here the tidalectic movement again. It is the movement “from the metallic to the circular”⁴⁶. He presents these movements in contrast to each other to provide a contrastive scene between the European and the African cultures. He employs this idea further in his poetry in the symbols of the missile and the capsule, where the metallic is the missile and the circular is the capsule. The missile carries within it cultural elements of the West like technology, profit and aggressiveness. While the capsule preserves the cultural elements of the African culture.⁴⁷ Brathwaite explains: “We came across the Atlantic in this space capsule within the missile of the Europeans, and ... we enshrined our memories, our rituals, our histories within this life-supporting schema.”⁴⁸ So as this space capsule travelled from the past into the present, the mother is the icon and the

symbol who becomes fully responsible of keeping the African culture that have travelled over time intact and safe.⁴⁹

In “Nam(e)tracks,” Brathwaite sets up a conflict between the colonizer and the colonized to highlight the issue of identity. The narrator is the representative of the colonized while O’Grady another character in the poem, represents the colonizers. O’Grady is trying to force the narrator to “say name”, which means that the narrator is ordered to leave and forget his original African name. The narrator refuses to obey as a man’s name is a sacred matter that one must preserve according to the common African culture. Once name has been bestowed, it becomes a sacred concept that is not to be taken away easily. Brathwaite tries to show that name protection is protecting one’s identity and his/her culture as a whole.⁵⁰ He says:

she lisper to me dat me name what me name dat me ame
is me main an it am is me own an lion eye mane
dat whinner men tek you an ame . dem is nomminit different an
nan so mandingo she yessper you nam (91)

The ancestral mother speaks to the narrator in nation language and calls him to acknowledge the importance of the ancient African culture in his New World life. He is to guard the aspects of his identity and must understand as well as relate his Caribbean experiences to his ancestral past. It is the only way for survival and to reconstruct the Caribbean culture in multicultural terms.⁵¹

The narrator is shown to have beaten O’Grady and Sycorax’s defiance is also portrayed during the game. This is shown when the narrator declares his triumph towards the end of the poem. He says:

but e nevva maim what me mudda me name
an e nevva nyam what me mane (94).

Here he reveals the failure of the colonizer to devour his “mane” or his name after being encouraged by his mother that the African people in the New World being referred to as slaves was nothing but a fictional label that one must not

allow himself to be labeled by. They refuse to be renamed by the colonizer who had declared at the beginning of the game that he had come to either “nyam” them or rename them or to eliminate their freedom forever.⁵² That is why Brathwaite has chosen to name himself Kamau rather than Edward for he refused the implication of Western names on Africans. It was one of the main reasons of the deculturization of the African culture in the Caribbean.

“Nyam” can also refer to the process of eating. It may refer to the fierce habit of eating animals. This is to show the monstrous intention of Prospero or O’Grady when organizing the game. Brathwaite has intentionally transported the letters in name and formed the word ‘mane’, to refer to Caliban’s cultural identity. Nyam becomes a word to refer not only to capitalism and oppression but also to fear and death. It is said that white traders used to eat black slaves in times of hunger and starvation. The term ‘mane’ on the other hand can also refer to the lion’s mane as a symbol of endurance, or as a symbol of preserving cultural traditions similar to dreadlocks. So whether Brathwaite intended the usage of mane or name, Sycorax has given her son the faith that he is human and not subhuman and that he is to speak in his own terms of expression, nation language. She perfects the role of being a supporter, a preserver and a rebel against any force of Western domination.⁵³

Brathwaite’s idea can be interpreted in a more complex way. The Shakespearean play *The Tempest* is clearly evident in the poems “Hex,” and “Nametracks”. Sycorax is used as a spirit to protect the African culture and avoid its erasure. She tries to open her son’s eyes to enable him to survive both physically and spiritually and she tries to limit his focus on the African culture. Both Caliban and his mother are shown to be *arrivants*. Sycorax, who arrived at the island as a pregnant woman, is pictured as “a sort of mythical Afro-diasporan First Mother”.⁵⁴ In “Hex,” she is shown as being continuously haunted by memories of the past. She remembers sounds of gunfire, her imprisonment in

Africa, the horrors of crossing the Middle Passage and finally the scene of how Western colonizers would throw the dead bodies of African slaves into the sea during the journey towards the New World. The function of her role as a witch is also visible in the poem. She makes use of the prescriptions of herbs to heal her people. She also casts spells to protect the well-being of her son Caliban. Caliban is displayed as a subhuman who is incapable of talking and even after he learns to speak later on in the play. He is still depicted as being a downgrading slave as he is described with nouns and adjectives that mark him as being inferior to the European characters in the play.⁵⁵

In this volume, Brathwaite coins a new term which is “skeleton,” by which he wants to revive the dead ancestors in his poetry and they are to retell all the injustices they have met in their lives as slaves. In “Cherries,” he says:

she will bend forward w/the hoe. *huh*
and the gravel will answer her. *so*

she will swing upward w/the hoe. *huh*
and the bones of the plantation will come ringing to meet her. *so*
Her sweat will water the onions & the shaddock & the wild thyme (111)

The poet creates an auditory image using the sounds the bones make. With such an image, the poet is reaching a new level to show the pains of the slaves in plantation. It shows that these pains did not stop and are not just buried within the grounds of the Caribbean, but the sufferings are a continuous matter that chases the Afro-Caribbeans everywhere.⁵⁶ The bones are also presented in contrast to the church bells. The resonance of the bells gives the sense of domination and authority of the West over all the Caribbean. He is clearly against any form of Western domination. Later on in the volume, Brathwaite also refers to school bells. He says:

she love the sound of schoolbells. squares
triangles. hookey hockey matches
desks. gas chambers. forward march (37)

With the reference to bone and bell, Brathwaite suggests that the bones shall take over the sound of these bells. The resonance of the bones is then not only an image of victimization, but also a movement towards freedom and revolution. With the method of skeletonality, Brathwaite does not only rebel against the English language, but also on the role of the schools in the Caribbean. Schools play a role in filling the children with nothing but the English language and British culture. No reference is made to the contributions of the African people who have come and inhabited the Caribbean centuries ago. Schools deculturize any culture that coexist in the nation and force the students into the British culture as a secret method to claim their control over the West-Indian region.⁵⁷

Brathwaite laments the pain that even after the colonial era has ended in the Caribbean, the Caribbean schools seem to continue to follow the same English-based syllabuses in their classrooms. He says:

how can there be a carved trail
when schools teach their children blasphemies
the blasphemy that the word is law when spoken by an English
engineer . that our teaching must reflect these verities (45)

Students are portrayed to be unhappy and are therefore victims of the fierce governmental regiments. He reveals:

her children locked up into their cell

blocks of school & a knock
upon the crack & redwood door (38)

The mother is shown to revolt against the words that are taught by force by the British government. She uses these pure English words and crumbles them into curses. This is a reference to Caliban's mother Sycorax who was a witch capable of using magic.⁵⁸ Brathwaite uses a continuous revolutionary spirit to force the Afro-Caribbeans into the use of nation language. He uses the English language and rearranges the sentences, as well as making phrasal, lexical and grammatical changes.⁵⁹ An example is found in "Bell":

an to know that he hads was to walk down de noon
down dat long windin day to we home (27)

In the poem “Prayer,” the white Christians are in the middle of reciting a prayer to praise their Lord, when suddenly the African attendances interrupt.

our father which art in
kilimanjaro

hollow by thy
nyam (115)

Their use of nation language directly attacks the Christian divine power. They dislocate the Christian God and relocate Him to be in Africa rather than in heaven. The name of their god is not to be said. They use the most common word in nation language; that is ‘nyam’ again. Nyam is, in a more detailed description,

not only *soul/atom* but *indestructible self/sense of culture under crisis*. Its meaning involves root words from many cultures (meaning ‘soul’; but also (for me) *man* in disguise (*man* spelled backwards)); and the *main* or *mane* or *name* after the weak *e* or tail has been eaten by the conquistador; leaving life (*a/alpha*) protected by the boulder consonants *n* and *m*. In its future, *nam* is capable of atomic explosion: *nam...dynamo...dynamite* and apotheosis: *nam ...nyam ...onyame ...*⁶⁰

This interruption shows the revolution against the monologic prayer that is taking place. It is not only the Christian religion and their culture that matters, but the African religion and their culture as well. They speak out because they are at pains at the crisis they live under. Their ‘nyam’ or their African self still exists and even if it is submerged with other letters or words, the term will remain and will prove itself in an explosive manner as a representative of the Afro-Caribbean self among the other cultures of the Caribbean. The use of nation language is more than the Christian voice used in prayer and it turns down the solace Christianity offers by confronting its methods of colonialism and dominance: “*endure thy ministers with righteousness*” and then says “o lord save thy kingdom” (118). The poet starts with the process of giving the mother a perfect form that is in quality to resist the powers of the colonialist⁶¹: “my

mother blazes forth to these from faithless night” (119). Brathwaite is clearly defying the Western culture and the Christian religion they brought with them.

In the poem “Angle/Engine,” another step is made towards the stage of perfection. This time the church is a carpenter’s shop. About this poem Brathwaite recounts that he once was in a carpenter’s shop and saw the people clapping and performing different dance moves while humming different tunes. That came as a result of the banning of the African drum and such moves became the alternative. So in the poem when the poet explains a service performed in this shop, he tries to ensure that its performers are possessed by the ancient African goddess named Damballa and not by the Holy Spirit. This poem shows then the replacement of one religion with another as well as a change in gender.⁶² Even though the woman is possessed by Damballa, the poem “Driftword” shows her wishes at perfecting the Christian religion as well:

let it be hand
& clap

& tambour
& she will praise the lord

so that losing her now

you will slowly restore
her silent gutters of word

fall

slipping over her footsteps
like grass

slippering out of her wrinkles
like rain

re-
echo

of the stream & sipple bubble

re-

echo of the cliff & scarface
mountain

past the ruinate mill & the plantation stable
past the bell & the church

wall

the chapel
half-trampled w/cordial

leaves
the graveyard of slaves (151-152)

Brathwaite seems to admit that Christianity has had an impact on shaping the Caribbean identity as well. These lines include the different meanings of mother. It shows that restoring one depends on the restoration of the others. When Barbados and the Caribbean women of African ancestry return to the roots of their homeland and retrieve their traditions, freshness and renewal will occur in Barbados and a change will be made in the identities and rights of the Caribbean women and its people as a whole.⁶³ Barbados will be

trickling slowly in-
to the coral

travelling in-
-wards under the lime-
stone

widening outwards into the sun-
light

.....

towards the breaking of her flesh w/ foam (153)

With making use of feminine principles and the hopes of making a strict link between Barbados and Africa, Brathwaite ends the first volume of *Ancestors*. He has shown that the Afro-Caribbean women are the holders of the African past and are its protector in the New World. They are to heal the wounds of the past for a better future. It is in the next volume, entitled *Sun Poem*, that Brathwaite

presents Barbados as a “paternal source”⁶⁴ and how hope can be retrieved with the aid of the Caribbean sun.

Section Two: *Sun Poem* (1982)

After examining his homeland Barbados, as far as the feminine principles are concerned, Brathwaite starts examining Barbados from the masculine principles in his next volume. *Sun Poem*, the second volume of this trilogy, was originally published in 1982. This volume is named to refer not only to that igniting star that shines in the daily sky, but also to serve as a pun to be used under the meaning of ‘son’. Son is interpreted in this volume as the Afro-Caribbean man, as well as the child of the black mother in the first volume. The son is born in Barbados at its most critical state. He is trying to understand the reasons behind the crisis that every Afro-Caribbean is seen to be suffering from. Because of the intuitive qualities he has inherited from his mother, the son is able to travel into the past. He needs to discover the roots of the crisis and hopes to find a proper solution to put an end to the sufferings at hands.⁶⁵ This son is the characterization of the poet’s own lost self.

The sun, on the other hand, is used to be described as the “megalleons of light” (362). This description explains the importance of using the sun as the main image in this volume as it can be used to make both African and European references. This description makes a clear link to the Egyptian god named ‘Ra’, who owned a sun-ship. The sun can also be associated to the galleons of the European forces during their conquest of the new world. They possess enormous energetic power in the lands they control. The name of this volume holds then a strong metaphor in which both sun and son are used widely to refer to different entities completing the female figure that is presented in *Mother Poem*.⁶⁶ These two terms can show the superiority of one culture against the other and contains at the same time hope for a new beginning where the African culture will be

recognized by the official European-based state as the essential contributor in the rise of Barbados.

Sun Poem is described by Stewart Brown as “Brathwaite’s most personal, autobiographical poem and yet also a poem that re-examines and amplifies those issues of regional/racial history/mythology that his earlier work had begun”.⁶⁷ It is “about the birth of poetic and spiritual sensibility”⁶⁸ that is brought in as a solution to the Afro-Caribbean crisis Brathwaite has presented in his earliest trilogy *The Arrivants* and in *Mother Poem* of this trilogy.

With the start of this volume, Brathwaite is seen to be continuing with the division of his poetic lines and the breaking of the syllables as a method of mirroring the fractured Caribbean state in general and the Barbadian homeland specifically.⁶⁹

but can you ever guess how i
who have wrack you wrong

long too to be black
be-

come part of that hool that shrinks us all
to stars

how i
w/all the loco-

motives in me
wd like to straighten

strangle eye/self out

grow a beard wear dark glasses
drivin the pack straight far-

ward into indigo & vio-
lent & on into ice like a miss-

ile (167-168)

With showing such divisions, Brathwaite reveals that it is the task of the first generation poets and writers in general to specify and give a detailed account on the nature of these divisions of both wordscape and landscape. It is the task of the second generation poets to heal this divided state of mind and so Brathwaite has in this volume placed himself among the second generation poets whose task is to heal the division of the Afro-Caribbean case as a political solution to the rights of multiculturalism.⁷⁰

In giving himself the responsibility of healing this fractured Caribbean community and the Afro-Caribbean consciousness, Brathwaite makes use of the image of a “healing rainbow”⁷¹. His choice of the rainbow came as a result of his acknowledgement of the rainbow as a symbol of healing in the Akan culture. It is a natural phenomenon that is able to reconcile sun and sea as well as fire and water together. The rainbow however does not only make a reference to the African world and its Akan culture, but to the European culture that is based on Christianity as well. The rainbow appears in Noah’s experience on earth and also appears in the African mythology in a somewhat similar way as that of the Christian Genesis. Taking a closer look into the African mythological traditions, Brathwaite associates Nyame, the supreme god of Africa, with the phenomenon of the rainbow. Nyame is known in the African traditions to be able to control water, especially rain. He shows how, after a storm of thunder and rain, a rainbow shall appear to heal and clear up the Caribbean landscape. The rainbow, being the natural aftermath of rain, is a proof how Nyame takes part in the renewal of the Afro-Caribbean self.⁷²

Brathwaite also connects the rainbow to what is known as the ‘sunsum’. The sunsum is a term in the Akan culture that can be defined as “a man’s essential spirit, passed on from father to son, a vital linkage between the ancestors, the living and the yet unborn,”⁷³ or what Brathwaite simply uses to refer to the soul or what has to do with spiritual blood. The sunsum is the spirit

that awakened within Brathwaite when he travelled to Ghana and got in touch with the Akan culture for the first time. He got to recognize that his awakened sunsum was the essential link that he could use to make a connection between the Caribbean self and the Akan culture of the African world. He planned on making this connection a more open one as a beginning to link the culture of Barbados and the Caribbean in general as the former culture is a descendant from the African Akan culture.⁷⁴

Working on the task of awakening the inner spirit or the sunsum of the Afro-Caribbeans in Barbados, Brathwaite tries to tighten the play of language in his poetry to succeed in achieving recognition and identity. With the unusual usage of the European technology and the broad use of nation language, Brathwaite aimed at the recognition of the African contributions within European based institutions. His idea was that whenever recognition of his poetry is made, the actual sunsum that relates the Caribbean to African world would be officially recognized as well. This playing with language has caught the attention of the Oxford University Press, and so Brathwaite's game of recognition came to be a successful one after this press agreed to print his art of literature.⁷⁵

Nation language, one of the essential cultural devices the slaves communicate with, is then the language of revolution and resistance. This has given Brathwaite's poetry, and especially the autobiographical *Sun Poem*, the intensity and power the reader needs to understand the cultural pains of Brathwaite's life and the Afro-Caribbean life as a whole.⁷⁶ He explores

the cycle of masculine existence from the games and dreams of boyhood through the rites of adolescence, sexual initiation, manhood, marriage, fatherhood, and death. ... by identifying the man's cycle of existence with the heavenly cycle of the sun, Brathwaite universalizes the autobiographical details and avails himself of a cosmic imagery of light and color which transfigures character, event, and autobiographical to the archetypal.⁷⁷

“Red Rising,” the first poem in *Sun Poem*, marks the initial voice of the healing rainbow. It suggests the starting point of creation as soon as the day begins at sunrise.⁷⁸

When the earth was made
when the wheels of the sky were being fashion
when my songs are first heard in the voice
of the coot of the owl
hillaby soufriere and kilimanjaro
are standing towards me w/water w/fire (165).

This rising is where the narrator’s spirit or his sunsum starts reawakening. This sunsum is however not only the representation of one spirit only, but it is the beginning of what Brathwaite calls ‘origen’ or ‘generation’ in its pure English form. It is the rise of the Caribbean self that is based on African history.⁷⁹

The words of these lines mark universality as they are written as an attempt to link the African landscape to that of the Caribbean. He mentions here the mountains ‘Hillaby’ of St. Vincent in the Caribbean and ‘Kilimanjaro’ of Tanzania in Africa for the sake of linking the two worlds together. It is to make the reader realize the male contributions of the Barbadian history. The formation and prosperity of the Caribbean region must essentially be devoted to the efforts of the Caribbean men who are originally descended from the African world. So whenever a Caribbean aspect is pictured one must retrieve memories of the past to understand what sacrifice was made and what value it gave to the current image of today’s Caribbean.⁸⁰

The use of the red color is also to show its various interpretations that differ from one culture to another. The British culture recognizes the red color as a symbolic reference to the color of blood or may as well stand for life. In the

Akan culture red stands symbolically for the sun or “the male element in society.”⁸¹

Brathwaite then introduces a character he names ‘Adam’ in his second poem “Orange Origen”. The name of Adam is significant for it stands for the first man in human history. This name is chosen for its universal function and at the same time suggests “the individual autobiographical subject”.⁸² Adam is presented in the most colorful way, as if his image is presented “through the prism of the rainbow.”⁸³ He is therefore characterized as the second voice of the healing rainbow. Adam, whose name in the volume is spelled with a small letter, is the boy who is seen to be travelling from boyhood into manhood.⁸⁴ Beside being a representation of the poet, Adam reminds the reader of that innocent child in William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* who also enters later on in the cruel world of experience.

This young boy sees himself as the savior of the fragmented Afro-Caribbean community. He uses the pronoun ‘his’ in a rather unusual manner, ‘his’. This he does to refer to the term “Iesu Hominum Salvator”, which is the Greek term for Jesus Christ the savior of all man.⁸⁵

Colors are shown to be essential in Adam’s New World life. They are demonstrated as the source of power and renewal. These colors may also be seen as representing the ancestral memory of his African ancestors in the New World after suffering a dull and lifeless experience of slavery and displacement. This bundle of colors, represented as a rainbow, links Adam’s New World experiences to Brathwaite’s historical memories of Africa when he visited Ghana for the first time in his life.⁸⁶

The poet gives the reader an account of the alienated consciousness that Afro-Caribbeans can be characterized with. He shows through Adam’s

childhood memories of how divided and rootless the child's consciousness is.⁸⁷

He says:

**not knowing the names of our flowers & trees
scratchywist womans tongue hogplum stinkin toe**

**we cd only call our brothers robinhood
or barnabas collins (202)**

Such innocence can be associated with the symbol of a bubble. The child's natural innocence is as fragile as the reality of a bubble. Brathwaite makes several references to bubbles in this volume so as to portray the fragility of both the bubble and the boy. In one scene, Adam sees bubbles that are made out of soap. They appear to him like a world filled with color and light until the bubble suddenly pops and fades away. In another scene, Adam dives deep into the sea and Brathwaite explains how innocent the level of a child's logic can be. As there is no oxygen under the sea, Adam cannot stay there and needs to take a breather to nurture his lungs with oxygen. However he believes that he can make bubbles of air that will help him dive for longer times:⁸⁸

**if i cd make a bubble . if i cd make a bubb
le in my mouth . i wd suck in air when i <
needin it . an breed back out in de bubble
adam thought**

**cause thats wha the fishes do adam thou
ght when they swim w/open mouths (215)**

However the bubbles would burst at every attempt he made to benefit from their air:

**... . he
suck**

**at them &
blow on them. hope-**

in

**but tick
went the bubbles**

&

**tick tick
bubbles**

&

burss back to plain water (216)

Every bubble will have its burst and the child's innocence slowly disappears as he is to enter the stage of adolescence.⁸⁹ This imaginative scene is set up to make the Afro-Caribbean people get out of their ignorance and face the reality of their Caribbean existence.

In "Sun," Adam is told to have grown up in a place that is known as "Brown's Beach" identifying the setting with the Barbadian landscape. Another character named "batto" is introduced. He is an orphan who never attended school but went to a prison-like institution, "dodds", which kept young people captive for their criminal attitude:⁹⁰

**batto nevva have a mother
like the land-boys have an e nevva even had
to go to school**

**But he been to dodds
& hope one day to go to a proppa prison (192)**

Adam, being the victim of this misbehaving child, suffered the pains and injuries and seemed to be lifeless because of Batto's cruelty. It is as if Adam relives the sunsum of the African forefathers who had to bare the oppressive slave trade during their historical voyage through the Middle Passage. As this is an autobiographical poem that reflects Brathwaite's life in the Caribbean, the lives of many of the Afro-Caribbean children can be understood through reading his personal experiences in these lines of poetry.⁹¹ The setting of where the conflict

takes place is the sea which is pictured as a place that gives back old memories and sufferings. Their conflict ends with a life-death wrestle under water. The winner of the wrestle would be recognized with all characteristics of courage and bravery that marks the signs of adulthood.⁹² All these struggles mirror the struggles of the poet and his Afro-Caribbean people with the West. They have to fight to gain recognition of their cultural contributions and history. Their history and identity must be part of the national Caribbean identity.

As the battle between the two characters continues, Adam's sister is seen to be imagining that fish are changing into birds wanting to escape the darkness of the sea, but failed:⁹³

& yet she love to think them tryin to be birds tryin to leave the dark
heavy water dragging the links
of the chains of the water . poor slaves . a little bit higher
& higher till their fins skinn the surface & the chains dropp back dripp
back & their flish feel the air see the prisoner sea for the first time (230-231)

One of the consequences behind this incident is that the wresting battle has ironically also lead to the start of many friendships. However, Brathwaite declares that they fail because he was to prepare his way into the obstacles of adulthood and with such an effort he had to leave his childhood behind.⁹⁴ The moment Adam enters adulthood is when he hears of the revolution that was led by a someone named 'Bussa'. It was a revolution that called for rights that were suppressed by the Western government and their overpowering culture. He called for politics that would recognize his people with a clarified identity and give the Afro-Caribbean slaves the rights they deserve after living under the mercy of one superior culture.⁹⁵

Adam is later seen to be making an imaginary journey to the past where he makes a connection between the two worlds, the Old and the New. On his way to face the reality of his ancestral past as part of his adulthood, he mixes

multiple things together. Brathwaite may be a racist when defying the Western cultures, but at the same time he does not deny their existence and influence on the common Caribbean society and its people. He for instance links the pair of mountains Mount Soufrière and Mount Kilimanjaro together. Also Jah the god of Afro-Caribbeans, and Isis an ancient Egyptian goddess are mixed together and sing a song to each other taking the role of a griot.⁹⁶ A griot may be defined as an “African tribal storyteller. The role of the griot was to preserve the genealogies and oral traditions of the tribe. Griots were usually among the oldest men. In places where written language is the prerogative of the few, the place of the griot as cultural guardian is still maintained.”⁹⁷ This emphasizes the oral tradition that helped in preserving some of the African cultural traditions in the Caribbean. They sing:

**and the trees on the mountain be-
come mine. living eye of my branches
of bone. flute**

**where is my hope. hope where is my psalter
my children wear masks
dancing forwards me the mews of their origen**

earth (165)

In the poem, “The Crossing,” Adam and his classmates go on a school excursion to a place called ‘Cattle Wash’. Adam’s mood changes into fear when the bus drives its way up to a hill. He fears that the bus might slip out of its course by going backwards and crash:⁹⁸

**... the wheels wd slip back slip back slip back
down**

**faster & fast
-er faster & faster & faster & faster
until they crash (248)**

These movements that are in contrast to each other suggest Adam’s travelling back into his ancestral history of Africa, while going forward with

achieving knowledge and discovering the reality of himself and his fellow Afro-Caribbeans people.⁹⁹ The bus nevertheless manages to reach the top of ‘Hearse Hill’ safely and continue their way towards their destination from where they could have a view of a “wonderful place”.¹⁰⁰ They sing out of excitement a song that is quite significant:

*we’re going to a won der ful place
we’re going to a wonder full place
over the hills and far away
we’re going to a wonderful place (244)*

Brathwaite is once more breaking up these words by spacing.¹⁰¹ The spacing disappears in the last word “wonderful”, seemingly to reflect Brathwaite’s hope to succeed in his task for calling for multicultural rights.

This song mentions the coasts they call “wonderful” as it is the place from where the historical roots of the Afro-Caribbeans could be resurrected. They could stand up on the sea coast that was the closest to Africa and travel to the African coasts in their imagination.¹⁰²

This excursion is interpreted to be the complete opposite of the Middle Passage. It follows the route from the west side towards the east of the Caribbean. When Adam tries to stare beyond the limits of this coast, his sunsum which is buried within him experiences a discovery. Past this coast lies the promised land of Africa. He is shocked at this discovery as he starts realizing that this place is where the sunlight is original. It was a discovery he never was aware of. This place helps him regain ancestral memories of the African past. This vision has officially pinned the fading away of his childhood innocence and it was the start where his life would take a twist.¹⁰³ Later Adam learns that there is more to understand about his ancestral past. There were boys at that coast who had a seemingly brighter spiritual knowledge of the African past and its Akan cultural traditions. They told Adam stories about African gods like Legba and Loa.¹⁰⁴

In “Noom,” Adam learns the story of ‘Loa’ from these beach boys. ‘Loa’ is also spelled ‘lwa’. They narrate a story “when the loa came out of the sea” and set nature on the lands of Barbados. This arrival has an effect on the geographical area of Barbados and that is the reason why this island is seen to be the closest to the African world. This marks the beginning of creation and the presence of this god is quite significant as a creator. The changes of the island’s geographical position has given Loa a role that makes the Caribbean dependent on such gods who are derivative from West African gods. This god will help in fashioning further traditional concepts of Barbados and the Caribbean islands as a whole depending on the traditional African mythology. Hereby the link between the Old world and the New world grows stronger through the passage of time. This movement is then “neither an all-New World, nor all-Old World process.”¹⁰⁵

Not only was it the geographical perspective Loa wants to change, but arrived at the coast of the Caribbean island of Barbados to reach out to the highest point of the island. Loa’s purpose was to look over his displaced people.¹⁰⁶ Loa was

... gazin full tilt at the dub dubbin sun
dat is beatin tormenting drums in his head
say the cattelwash boys

he had raise his name in a shout sp loud
it had enter the gullies & rocks & is heard in the hills
& howls a this place like the sound of wind in a cavern

it was noon
like midnight robbin the moon
& his cry grow greater as the pain of the world grow black for him (263)

Loa kept shouting till he lost all of his energy and fell from the cliff into the sea. All that came as he saw how the African world and its traditions were denied

and erased from the Caribbean landscape and its Afro-Caribbean people. The denial of Africa can also be seen in the image of the sun. In the Akan culture, the sun is a sacred concept, as it is known among them to worship a deity named the 'Sun King'. The colonial culture transformed the sun into one that has only negative characteristics to offer.¹⁰⁷ The European culture presented the sun as one that,

**scores holes in leaf and paper
that destroys arches and the parchment of industry
it is a baas eyed gaoler keeping our people back (268)**

Adam's bubble, which is symbol of his childhood innocence, has clearly burst and he is no longer that innocent little boy who wants to remain ignorant of his African motherland.¹⁰⁸ With enough physical spirit and the strength to face the reality of the African world, Adam continues traveling back into the history of his island in search of salvation and cultural wholeness by using his inherited intuition. He is introduced to the very first African ancestors who were taken into the Caribbean to work in plantation as slaves. He feels their pains and understands the roots of the present crisis in the Caribbean. Negativity is not the only source Adam meets in his travel back into the past. He also meets positive sources that may help in the realization of liberation. He meets African gods like Legba, Shango and Ogun. It can be concluded then that the self or the son is a fragile factor and the negative sources have overpowered the gods of the ancient African world and culture. The black male figure in the Caribbean does not possess any power but over his family. Adam is pained at learning these facts about the Afro-Caribbean self and that only a few fathers could be named as true heroes. Heroes were only common in books: "But our heroes were in books / and few of our fathers were heroes." (280). This is emphasized with the portrayal of a dull Caribbean landscape that appears to be out of hope.¹⁰⁹ He says:

**cause no bright
man cyaaan be**

**faddah to faddah to faddah
to sun**

**if e nevvah get chance
to be son
light (308)**

This poem is associated with the green color of the rainbow. Green is known in the Akan culture to refer to a new life. After Adam's childhood innocence came to an end, the tone of Brathwaite poetry becomes more public and the voice mingles with the dark wit that marks Brathwaite's intellectual attitude. Another historical account of the Caribbean is given from the time the European colonial forces arrived at its coasts. They came to attack with modern weapons by that time's standards and were able to justify their arrogant act of oppression.¹¹⁰

**they brought knives & cutlasses & bill hooks
& baskets . hoping to reap rich harvest**

**but the sun was too hot & their waxen flesh
melted like candles of fetish or faith
w/in their wooden churches (255)**

Brathwaite deeply criticizes their acts and uses flashback scenes where Adam discovers such realities of the Caribbean history. Although the slaves were working hard in the plantation fields and caused the prosperity of the Caribbean economic system, the European colonizer succeeded in removing these facts from the official history of the Caribbean. This consequently led to the erasure of the Caribbean's most essential historical incidents whether that dealt with their traditional African gods or the memories of the slaves during their journey across the Middle Passage. An entire culture was planned to be wiped out and they succeeded in the division of the African culture and replacing it with the European cultures.¹¹¹

This erosion and denial of the African past and its Akan culture is the major reason behind the displacement and rootlessness of the Afro-Caribbean people. They are left unrecognizable among the superior cultures and have no official identity that defines them culturally. The poem does however show that the African traditions and spirit did not die away, but are buried underneath the layers of the Caribbean soil. It was this spirit that would be the spirit of rebellion. There is an African spirit that Brathwaite comes up with. He reminds the Afro-Caribbean reader of this traditional spirit and attempts to spread his story all over the Caribbean region. This spirit comes in the form of the African ancestor known by the name “Hannibal”. He is characterized as the blue loa, and is a spirit of rebellion although this spirit has a sense of despair.¹¹²

Brathwaite has made use of this African character for he was a famous rebellious character who did not accept the overpowering of any state over his own state. He courageously faced the Roman Empire without fear and tried to prove himself to be the most powerful in the region. That is why Brathwaite considered such African characters to be a pure source of energy, power and rebellion and wanted such legendary spirits to join the rebellion against the West.

**Hannibal heavily crossing the alps
clangour of armour, clamour of ice
raving of rock, steeples of metal green
plunder**

**Hannibal heavily crossing the alps
enamored with honor
risking his vigour on the slippery slopes of an elephant
thunder (287)**

Brathwaite makes use of two contrasting images: a stone and a pebble. Although the pebble or the minor culture is a concrete and visible to the eye, the

emergence of the stone or powerful cultures like the British culture make it seem as if it does not exist or is of no consequence. The existence of stones, or such supreme cultures, suppresses the function and reputation of the pebbles, or minor cultures by trying to give itself a divine quality and making itself the supreme power among the other powers in the environment. Brathwaite coins a new neologism for this state of oppression. He calls it “stammaments”, which is the result of blending the terms “stammer” and “monument”. It can be defined as “a neologism which names a predicament while exemplifying the innovation which seeks to overcome it, the taking of linguistic liberties aimed at decolonizing the word.”¹¹³ Such terms do not only form a direct attack on superior cultures, but also deculturizes the essential factor of their culture, language. With the formation of such words, a new language is presented and can boldly be categorized as being postcolonial. With such methods, cultural liberty can be achieved.¹¹⁴

**& yet there are these stammaments in stone
 that smile
 are fat of romanesque. athletic like good
 traffic cops. piercing or blind to the world
 but nvva look. in like us (282-283)**

It so shows then that stuttering or ‘stammering’ is a way to pull down those stones or ‘monuments’. It is with the stammering of colonial language that postcolonial speech starts to form. Another word may be considered as being an original part of the word, that is “stamen”. This word suggests that stuttering may seem to be like a defect in speech, however it eventually leads into the production of a new form of speech that Afro-Caribbeans seek to make an essential factor in Caribbean culture for the purpose of African recognition. This process of stammaments is simply described by Mackey as being “germinal, generative”,¹¹⁵ meaning that it may be seen as a defect, but is eventually a most productive process.

The son laments that the monuments or “stammaments” that were built in the Caribbean never had African characteristics. However, the poem would praise each and every Afro-Caribbean worker that really has devoted his life in building Barbados and helped it flourish and prosper. The poet mentions some of the African ancestors whose contributions must never be forgotten and the society should recognize especially prominent cricketers like Manny Martindale, Herman Griffiths, Wes Hall, Garfield Sobers and Joel Garner.¹¹⁶ However the pain that no actual monument is built to commemorate their contributions is still one of the deepest wounds Brathwaite continues to lament:

**there is still no memorial epigraph
to those thick-set quick-step groundsmen
who watered the crust of west indian cricket (282)**

In “Clips,” the reader is presented with clips as if watching a film in which the two types of Caribbean men are shown. In one of the clips, the reader is introduced to the men who are considered as the legal owners of the Caribbean plantation fields, or in other words the European colonizers. While another clip presents the reader with the men who have spent their lives being trapped in the cycle of debt and limitless efforts.¹¹⁷ He says:

**the houses we live in are rented . pay pracket
empty by freddies . food cigarette bettin shop races

de wife in a turn & me monthly hope down pun a
cycle.... (305)**

These men who are in fact the Afro-Caribbeans are depicted in a most disappointing manner. They are negatively pictured as never being able to satisfy neither their wives nor their children. They are men without self-control and never even seem to bother that their lives are without recognition, without a proper identity and thus without any multicultural rights.¹¹⁸

The role of fatherhood is taken into a deeper consideration when Adam is seen to be playing a flirtation game with a girl named Esse. The girl is sitting on

a tree branch where the sun is gently encircling her with its light.¹¹⁹ They also eat fruit from that tree resembling the scene of Adam and Eve in paradise. This scene reminds the reader of similar scenes Adam spent with his sister in his early childhood. However, the difference is that there was a green light in his childhood, whereas in this current scene that green light makes no appearance.¹²⁰ At first Adam is totally positive about his love relationship with Esse, but as he slowly grows into his adult self, he realizes that he has to consider the political and social roles that come with the growing of such a relationship. All such conditions that seem to reach a closed end are actually transcended by Brathwaite. He sees a new beginning within the pain of loss, dispossession and lack of identity. That is why Brathwaite seeks the hope of renewal and reclamation of the African principles in the Caribbean self with the birth of the son.¹²¹ This seemingly happy scene is narrated to be turning suddenly into a treacherous one as soon as Esse gets hurt by the tree's thorn. Her innocent world and her youthful being are threatened by the unsatisfying realities of the world. She later even becomes the victim of pleasure. She is cheated on by men and they abandon her mercilessly. Even her husband has no interest in her and she is left alone in the world singing "the hymn w/out tune w/out words" (380). It is not only Esse who sings but an unlimited number of women are also heard to have suffered from men who have broken their promises to them. It marks the stage of adolescence that has lost its childhood innocence forever. But this is not the end as Brathwaite shows. There is still a source of renewal and hope.¹²²

The mothers at some point are being portrayed as loa or gods, giving the Afro-Caribbean women an opportunity for renewal and unity. With such a spirit they are given the ability to rephrase their lives and rewrite history over again in a much brighter way than the disastrous history their ancestors have experienced.¹²³

f or moyers stann in the light

of the door
-way mothers stann by the gooseberry
tree at the end of the distantest yard

for mothers are *Lwa*
are stone crabs under the dream of yr pillow
for mothers are fish traps of

no

black pebbles of sound down the
floor of the
well. ... (322)

In the poem “Indigone,” Brathwaite presents the reader with the funeral of adam’s grandfather (“groundfather”).¹²⁴ This is the last event in the section. Adam understands the cyclic nature of mankind. He looks at his father’s eyes which are in turn looking downwards at his grandfather’s corpse. He feels as if he has located the place he belongs to in this cycle of mankind. So his cultural issues of dispossession and the loss of identity surpass the feeling of being able to reach a world with a new beginning. It is like a cycle that will never stop to deviate towards another new and different direction.¹²⁵ That is why this poem is shown to present an atmosphere of darkness, a setting that marks the period before creation:¹²⁶

... ground

father dead my fathers further genitor
of futures past my borning ancestor
still burning in a room he’d left ... (360)

He dies in the city where Adam was born. Adam starts thinking how this place has become both a setting of death and birth. It is the place his grandfather died

and where Adam himself was born.¹²⁷ He realizes at that point that fathers are characterized by a *dead* end. They fail to transfer any known cultural identity to their sons to be recognized by in their community. The case becomes more critical when the father's role diminishes as the son is seen to be taking his place at home.¹²⁸

Suddenly there “came nam / nameless dark horse of devouring morning” (368). Nam refers here to “the indestructible and atomic core of man's culture”.¹²⁹ The thunder of the god Shango is also present. The three forces of darkness, thunder and culture are gathered together. They are lyrically described:

w/a slow rising light of leviathan
w/a thunder call firmament

and the salt became stars
they say

and the light grow
and open the eye of its flower (368-369)

With the combination of these three forces a new Caribbean self is born. However, this self is very fragile in the current Caribbean nationhood because of the colonial standards that overwhelm the nation. It is the self that dwells in extreme poverty and complete destruction and Brathwaite wants to use poetry to support this fragile self and make it the most powerful element in the Caribbean nation.¹³⁰

It can be concluded then that it is out of the darkness of this occasion that the final voice of the rainbow comes into action. “Son,” the last poem of the volume, is that fragile creation that came after the death of the old man. It is again a rising of the sun, just like the first poem of the volume which showed the rising of the sun.¹³¹ Brathwaite writes this last poem in the form of a praise-song praising the birth of his newly born son. With the praise intention, Brathwaite is

well aware that his new born baby, that came to color his life, shall quickly find its fate with the forgotten African forefathers and end up “in the indigo ‘ice’ of oblivion.”¹³² With presenting the contributions and existence of the new gods, a new Caribbean self emerges:

and my thrilldren

coming up
coming up
coming up
coming up

and the sun
new (370-371)

As much as Brathwaite knows that this new Caribbean self is fragile, he tries to avoid its destruction and in *X/Self*, the last volume of this trilogy, tries to replace despair with hope to complete his task of reclaiming multicultural rights.¹³³

Section Three: *X/Self* (1987)

Both *Mother Poem* and *Sun poem* have prepared the spiritual ground for Brathwaite’s next and final volume *X/Self*. This concluding volume “explores the possibilities for a protean Caribbean persona, born of the his-&-her / stories explored in *Mother Poem* and *Sun Poem*.”¹³⁴ That is the stories of the spiritual mother and father. It is based on the idea that it is not only Brathwaite who should feel that the Caribbean is his homeland, but his fellow Afro-Caribbean folk should as well.¹³⁵

X/Self, the title of this volume, refers to that alienated self that is yet to be discovered. *X/Self* is the poetic character of this volume, just like the mother in *Mother Poem*, and Adam and the father in *Sun Poem* were.¹³⁶ The reason behind his use of the letter X is because it provides different meanings due to the unlimited ability to move from one culture, language and landscape into another.

This Self is therefore one whose identity is unknown due to the loss of multicultural rights. He taps into different places in hope of finding the identity that would ultimately identify his broken cultural self. It is like a mathematical hypothesis the poet sets to be solved within the lines of this volume. In addition, it also provides the function of referring to a different set of colonial mechanizations, beside slavery, to illustrate the reason of why calling for such multicultural rights is necessary.¹³⁷

As X/Self is dwelling in different places and gets in touch with different cultures and languages, he slowly gains experience in both literature and history. X/Self is therefore characterized to have a sharp mind possessing knowledge of different worlds and their cultures that he perceives from an aesthetic perspective. X/Self is also characterized as having an ironic mind with characteristics of deep lamentation and sarcasm. All such experiences of pain, grief, sarcasm and intelligence have created a challenging platform for the formation of a new and identifiable self. This volume is therefore considered to be “Brathwaite’s most eloquent testimony, which relentless vision of ruin can reside in close proximity to a spirit of hope and affirmation.”¹³⁸

X/Self may be considered as the representation of the poet’s own self, who travels between the past and present to revive the original source behind the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and other colonial machinations. He believes that reviving such historical facts are essential to the survival of African cultural traditions that identify with the most common features of the fragmented Afro-Caribbean Self, or the X/Self.¹³⁹

Although not as much as the previous volumes, Brathwaite continues the division of his poetic lines, but in a more empathetic way. His way of using hyphens is barely seen and makes a wider use of a combination of spacing and

punctuation marks instead. He is for example using a wide range of slashes and spacing at times:¹⁴⁰

how man/how mane/ how many/few/ how few/how furious
how sane/in. sane/how dunsinane/how black/ how brown/ how
byzantine how/ever flat or fat/ how it into the apple/sweet or scour (410)

and a combination of full-stops and spacing at others. It is to show his frustration of how the Caribbean state depended on char, a symbol referring to African slaves and their productivity, to acquire power:

the state machine cannot function on myst on mystery on magic. al
realism. on char. on char. on char. ity & char. nival
& char. pentiers & fisherman & dialect & walking on the water (407)

Nation language continues therefore to be an essential component in his poetic composition. It is then both landscape and wordscape the poet uses to pass the idea that the Caribbean is the native homeland of all Afro-Caribbeans and that they have a language that distinguishes them from both the African and the European worlds.¹⁴¹

Comparing this volume with the previous volumes and the first trilogy *The Arrivants*, *X/Self* makes a wider overview of histories of different worlds and empires. It goes beyond the history of the African world and its involvement with slave trade and enters other worlds and ruling systems to make it understandable that African slavery is a global issue and that such an issue is the primary cause for the loss of cultural rights of African ethnicities.¹⁴²

In the introductory poem of the volume, “Letter from Roma,” the poet presents a character who is an emperor’s son. He is seen to experience a surreal vision after suffering from a trance because of inhaling a powerful scent in his room. In his vision, he notes many ladies that are in close distance with his father, the Emperor of the Roman Empire. The jewelry and perfume these ladies

wear as well as their supposed tidy behaviour can never cover up the ugliness of their reality:¹⁴³

their fat bejewell fingers clammy hands
that search me out
tying a tassel. tapping a link

make my sins
stretch. the mad blood fricates rise & rough
me as they rub
against the itches of my vest

& when they raise their looms
the cologne
waters of their lost dub
-lutions

mingle w/the sticky wet & foetid
vapours
rising from their deep & hollow
pits (387)

This is an indirect satirical attack the poet directs on the concept of leadership in the world in general and the Caribbean in specific. The Emperor and his people are seemingly full of politeness and peace, but they carry within them the ugliest and darkest of souls, just like the British Empire and its leaders.¹⁴⁴

The poet continues his attack and reveals that the continuous spread of such leaderships around the world is not only because such leaders use excessive force to control invaded areas, but it is also because of the people who live under the oppression of such leaderships. He reveals how all people are participants in dehumanizing the world's history and are the same ones who are capable of rehumanizing it. This is because man's 'Spirit' has both destructive and creative aspects. Being part of the human Self, the poet claims that the reason behind the fragmentation of the Self is because of its own Spirit. The Spirit is at the same time capable of reconciling the fragmented Self and rehumanizing the pages of history, by going beyond the historical, political, and societal issues that have been controlling the Caribbean region for centuries. The history which

Brathwaite has given a wide account of in the previous volumes, and especially in the volumes of *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*, is the result of mankind himself. Mankind crafts history by the efforts made on earth, and he is also the main contributor in dehumanizing history by not resisting destructive policies like slavery. That is why he considers mankind as the essential factor in shaping history and the determiner of the Self.¹⁴⁵

Explaining the start of dehumanization in history, he places the Roman Empire as the original source from where destruction started. Brathwaite says:

What I'm saying there is that Rome created some kind of law, order, structure, for the ancient world and with Rome's fall mercantilism, commercialism and materialism, unbridled materialism, rushed in to fill that gap. And that included eventually the alterRenaissance, the business of selling us, selling people, selling Africans, the slave trade. That is how the thing works out. The Roman Empire . . . gives way to the mercantilism of western Europe. The death of Rome signals the beginning of western expansion, which includes slavery and the slave trade and result disequilibriums throughout the world and within, therefore, the word. As Mt. Blanc, Lake Chad and Kilimanjaro sink and the desertification of Africa begins.¹⁴⁶

The African slavery was one of the most devastating experiences that took place immediately after the Empire's disintegration. Rome's destruction led to an outward movement that caused the destruction of many other cultural worlds. In "Salt," Brathwaite elaborates this idea:¹⁴⁷

rome burns
& our slavery begins

vultures wheel over kiev over kybir over
ayub khan

vultures wheel over the ganges
over the crossed swords of shiva
over the murdered death of mahatma ghandi
vultures wheel

vultures wheel
over lourdes over maggoire

vultures wheel
over the ice brick blocks of the alphas

over the frozen body of el cid

of lidless legba louverture over corbusier

.....

they wheel

high over the desert over tripoli

& tunis

over the head waters of the Nile

over chad over timbuctu over lagos

over ile ife

over Ibadan

& the far markets of abomey (397)

The poet explains the condition of every slave after Rome's destruction. He says:

the slaves groan

cerements of bone & hammered alabaster

rises in hellalluia (396)

The laws of slavery spread across the nations and consequently led to the spread of capitalism. Capitalism is that system in which people would be classified as upper, middle and lower classes. More and more societies got involved with slave marketing as it quickly spread all over the world. It is like a machine that produces slavery and not even its inventors were capable of stopping their machine from producing slave markets.¹⁴⁸

In "Mont Blanc," the development of this 'machine' slowly led to the founding of technology in the Western world. Through the image of the machine, Brathwaite is capable of showing the devastating impact this machine and the Western technology has caused in different countries around the world.¹⁴⁹ He reveals the setting of where and when the machine was created:

Rome burns

& our slavery begins

in the alps

oven in europe

glacier of god
chads opposite

industry was envision here in the indomitable glitter

.....
volt crackle & electricity it has in
vented. ... (421-422)

In addition to this interpretation of Rome, the poet also uses this Empire as a metaphor for America, hoping that the forces of the suppressed people will combine together against that one supreme power. It is the power that acknowledges the white people and their Western cultures as the only rightful commanders and builders of the New World. Opposing this idea, Brathwaite calls for a world that depends on equilibrium and growth after centuries of European supremacy in all social and political matters.¹⁵⁰

The poet reaches the moment of limiting the Spirit focusing on the Caribbean Spirit only. Rohlehr explains that the origin of this Spirit comes from different sources taken from both the African and the Western worlds. These are sources such as Christianity, Hegelianism, the Akan culture and Dogon, one of the tribes of the ancient African world. Brathwaite has chosen such sources not only to compare the two worlds, but to make it clear that the West is not the only cultural source that has shaped the Caribbean world. He personifies the two mountains of Mont Blanc in France and Kilimanjaro in Africa to handle the situation in a poetic and thus in a more efficient way. He explains that Mont Blanc “is a symbol of materialism; while Kilimanjaro, its opposite, is a symbol of the spirit.”¹⁵¹ This idea clarifies the image of the colonized Caribbean territories and symbolizes the image of the Caribbean Self at the same time. The Caribbean landscape is aesthetically portrayed by layers of which the European demanding materialism tops the lands. Buried underneath this layer, lies the spirituality of the African and the New World. The image of the Spirit that is

presented is then that of a dualistic image whose aspects are in contrast to each other.¹⁵² It has aspects taken from African origins as well as European ones.

The poet is also seen to have made use of the theory of Hegelianism in his own way to give the Spirit a more optimistic image. That is, his theory of tidalectics once more. The Spirit emerges as the continuously progressive concept being the result of the dialectic movement of opposite concepts in history. The movement the Spirit has made immediately after the fall of the Roman Empire is a tidalectic movement. So the Caribbean Spirit is a version of the other historical Spirits like that of Rome and Africa.¹⁵³

The Akan culture has been another essential cultural source the Spirit has taken some qualities from, especially from the 'nam'. This term is related to the African god 'Nyame'. This god is characterized by being obscure and imprisoned because it owns a fragile self that is still in its earliest stages and is therefore too weak to free itself. However, this Self is not affected by destruction or creation. It is a quality the Afro-Caribbean Self has inherited.¹⁵⁴ This Spirit and thus the Self is impossible to be destroyed or killed. It is however imprisoned due to European materialism. The African people who first arrived at the shores of the New World, have either forgotten about their pure African Spirit or have been following the new system of materialism and left their ancient traditions behind. That is why it is shattered into pieces and is difficult to regenerate due to its imprisonment. Recollection and regeneration is only possible whenever man's consciousness returns into full awareness and is ready to face Western materialism. It is almost as if the consciousness of the African slaves is subjugated and has no 'face' until they start their revolution.¹⁵⁵

Revealing such weaknesses, Brathwaite calls for a revolution to end the era of suppression. The Spirit that has been shattered and imprisoned by materialism must be reawakened and prove itself to be part of the Caribbean society. This process is termed by Rohlehr as 'Apocalypse' and may be defined as "the

process by which the reawakened Spirit attempts to transform the withholding structures of a dehumanizing history”.¹⁵⁶ It is a method of creation that comes out of destruction and is presented as a solution to heal the broken Spirit. Apocalypse includes two processes: the destruction of an ancient world from which the process of the creation of a new world starts. These processes include the characteristics of judgment, equality and a well-organized authority. However, these characteristics seem to be never realized as they are mocked by the supreme culture.¹⁵⁷

The final source that has played an essential role in the construction of the Caribbean Spirit includes the ‘Dogon’. Dogon refers to a specific folk in Africa who significantly had secret scripts they believed to belong to African gods. These scripts were supposedly the reason behind the creation of the universe. Brathwaite finds his inspiration in such traditional stories and believes that he may be able to achieve through them and a share of his imagination, the multiculturalism rights Afro-Caribbeans are persistently in need of.¹⁵⁸ That is why Brathwaite has made the Spirit out of sources that identify with the common Caribbean Self that he tries to regenerate. Apocalypse, which is the destruction and renewal of the Afro-Caribbean Self, and magical realism in which all fragments will be recollected to form a newer concept are both methods that seek to create a satisfying Caribbean Self.

Depending on the apocalyptic feature, the poet shows how many imperial systems have been involved in controlling the New World where some of these would withdraw before the power of others. This confusing and destructive condition created a New World that was the eventual result of the destruction of other worlds and their cultures, like that of the Ashanti people and their Akan culture. The apocalyptic criterion, which Brathwaite employs from the very beginning of the volume, represents the essence of the foundation and continuous renewal of a new civilization in the New World.¹⁵⁹

The main issue of this volume then is dealing with the predicament of how to free the Afro-Caribbean consciousness from slavery and lead it towards a liberating revolution. Brathwaite wants them to carry a Spirit with characteristics of iron, fire and energy taken from gods like Shango and Ogun that possess two distinguished African spirits.¹⁶⁰

The poem “Nuum” embodies the developing apocalyptic force that started around the world immediately after the fall of the Roman Empire. It shows how the European colonial forces started invading and destroying nations from Asia and Africa causing the loss of many civilizations and their cultures. The infected countries’ economy and industry were completely torn apart. This is cleverly portrayed through the combination of the world’s most disastrous incidents that history has known. This poem merges the industrial disaster known as the “Bhopal disaster” with the loss of thousands of lives in World War II.¹⁶¹

... . *x* –

plosions of mad-

rigal gas tar

bines. the car

bides of bhopal. blitzkriegs of mein kampf. fake satellites

like discoteques departing up. wards

thru their own whirling light (427)

The poet also links Nagasaki with Vietnam and Auschwitz. Making such links shows the protest against the (neo) colonialist systems and their murderous and unjust strategies in claiming power over other nations, races and cultures. He describes their invasion in this poem:

they burn
they eat the land

they vomit it up
they leave lakes of desolation

ochre choler un-
water

that returns no
benediction

echo-
less plantation of dead plankton (426)

And in the poem “The edges of the desert,” the poet describes some of the destructive aftermaths of the Western expansion that have terrorized many places around the world. He says:¹⁶²

chad sinks
and forest trees crash

down

there is a crack
w/in the uttar stone of Ethiopia

watch where the mediterranean sea
comes seeking thru (399-400)

Imperialism has expanded over the centuries and is today a more destructive experience as technology added more advanced systems of conquering nations. These technology-based systems cause massive destruction for purposes of occupation, expansion and over-empowerment. For example, the traditional Akan culture and civilization changed from being successful nations in Africa to be simply ‘ashanty towns’ that sign no importance or recognition at the making and development of the British Empire. Even Benin, a city in Africa known for its bronze production loses its recognition and is pictured as a tomb. The colonial miners left the place with nothing more than ashes, hungry civilians and a fearful scene:¹⁶³

ashanty towns arise & rust
within their oxides
confound against their ikons

ash twits sparrows

...

bronze catafalques of benin city

there is hiss-
teria from apertures of foundries
drying fiords gold-plated cardiacs (427)

The poet also opens up about the nature of the invaders. They appear to have mellow miners who dig into the caves, but quickly show their true self and start destroying without mercy:¹⁶⁴

they destroy
they destroy
they destroy

they do not care (426)

After stating such incidents of degeneration and destruction, Brathwaite taps into the context of the future in his poem “Dies Irie”. It is where the second phase of the Apocalyptic experiment begins, the phase of renewal and recreation after destruction and fragmentation. The poet has called the poem “Dies Irie,” which he essentially converted from ‘Dies Irae’, to refer to the title of a hymn that describes the Day of Judgment. The conversion of the title of this hymn has within it words of a resting dream; a dream that needs to be realized. It is like a “prophecy” that needs to be sung by all oppressed people who have and are still suffering from colonial aftermaths. The hymn includes the idea of Apocalypse that both Christianity and paganism share:¹⁶⁵

Day of sulphur dreadful day
when the world shall pass away
so the priests & shamans say

what gaunt shadows shall affront me (429)

It is this hymn that will reveal the true historical facts to people and force not only the British Empire, but also America and Europe, all metonymically

referred to as “Mont Blanc”, to recognize their horrible doings. It is as if Apocalypse became a judgmental device that questions both Time and History for glorifying war and colonialism. Brathwaite identifies the prosecutors in his poetry as well as some of the crimes the West is accused of. The setting is like that of a court. Justice is presented in a controversial way in which the Western world sees colonial invasion as justice. The hidden gaps of their humiliation and genocide records in History are never revealed by them. However those hidden gaps will be recovered and resurrected in terms such as History and Justice and will be reconceptualized to reflect the detailed reality of what has taken place. Brathwaite is aware of the incapability of reorganizing the concept of History, but he places the hopes for a change in judgment in the future.¹⁶⁶ It is clear that the poet attempts to reorganize the Caribbean society with the aesthetic power of words. He says:

day of thunder day of hunger
.....

bring me solace bring me fire
grant me penance grant me power
give me vengeance w/thy word (431)

“Word” here has specific spiritual qualities, taken from ‘Nommo’.¹⁶⁷ Nommo is a concept that refers to “the ancestral spirits who are a major part of the worship and traditions of the Dogon people in Mali. The original Nommo is held to be the first living creature on earth, created by Amma, the male sky god.”¹⁶⁸ Brathwaite makes a clear use of magical realism here. German writer Janheinz Jahn describes the concept of the Nommo as follows: “All magic is word magic, incantation and exorcism, blessing and curse. Through Nommo, the word, man establishes his mastery over things.”¹⁶⁹ Nommo constitutes Brathwaite’s inspiration to continue on his movement and to use his words in poetry to awaken the black consciousness. It is like the power that allows him to perform an act of exorcism to chase away the evil spirits that surround him and his

people in the New World. It is not necessary whether the poet believes in such spirits or not, but the idea is to provide him with a moment of resistance. The result behind such a clash between the African and European Worlds will result in the making of a Self with a new meaning. One that has revived its Spirit and is ready to represent the man of the contemporary Caribbean society.¹⁷⁰

In “Phalos,” the poet is seen to lament the present position the Afro-Caribbeans have in the Caribbean. The loss of the Self continues on strongly as they are seen to be adopting the European materialism system and appear to have forgotten about their African ancestry and its traditions.¹⁷¹ He for instance mentions how women with an African ancestry look like in the Caribbean society. They have adopted the European style of living just to be accepted and recognized as an equal individual in the Caribbean society. They believed that adopting the popular and superior culture would help them in hiding their African features that continued to degrade their societal status. It was their theory of being more acceptable in society.¹⁷² He says:

our women have forshook their herbs
forshorn their naked saviours
the ragged dirt yards where they live their words
.....
they have stiletto tipped & toed on gucci heels
from accompon their mother
& now they cannot buttock down to hearth or cooking pot
to tuntum achar eddoed yam (405-406)

Being subject to external cultural change, he calls his people to fight the spread of Western culture that is destroying other cultures and placing them and especially the African cultures as secondary cultures. He calls upon returning to the ancient cultural traditions and rituals of the ancient African world that can be drawn from their elders. To remember the “herbs” and the African gods for the sake of regenerating the Spirit of the fragmented Self, is a good way to reform the Caribbean identity.¹⁷³

In the poem “X/Self xth letter from the thirteen provinces,” X/Self writes a letter to his mother in which he explains the pains of his studies:

Dear mumma
uh writin yu dis letter
wha?

guess what! pun a computer **O**
kay? (444)

He is not quite familiar with the Western technological systems of education to learn the implied language, and eventually ends up doubting the whole experience of his New World life:¹⁷⁴

uh fine
a cyaan get nutten

write
a cyaan get nutten *really*
rite (450)

He is clearly suffering from a cultural loss which leads to an alienated self from the community he lives in. He is aware of the means of technology, but he does not have an idea of the way one must use computers and other Western educational tools.¹⁷⁵ This implies the idea that the educational institutions do not teach anything but what is related to the Western culture. There is a need for the reconsideration of cultural enrichment where all cultures should enjoy recognition in education.

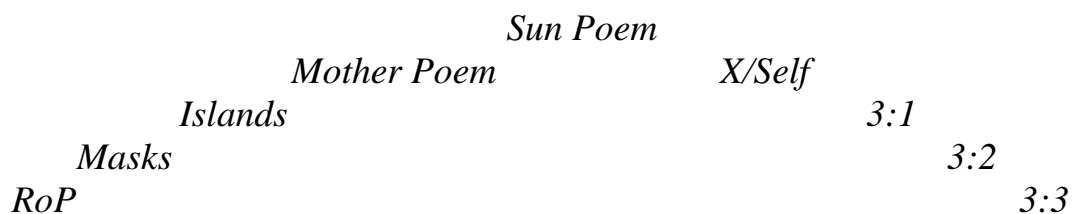
That is why Brathwaite emphasizes the power of the word. Just like Caliban used the power of the word against Prospero to curse him, the poet also calls his people to use the power of the word as weapons to enforce their African existence as part of the Caribbean community. He says:

From this cramp hand
cripple by candlelight
a crab scuttles

its mail'd dragonish swords
its clench armour
rattle the lame mango leaves (465)

As long as the Afro-Caribbeans remember their African ancestry and the power of their culture, Brathwaite ensures that will achieve their multicultural rights and they will be like stars rising in the bright Caribbean sky.¹⁷⁶ He has given the Afro-Caribbean Self the importance of existence. It is a lost broken Self and he has attempted to awaken the African sunsum in order to recollect its broken fragments. With resisting the dominating cultures of the West, a new identity will be created and their historical and social account will be highlighted to intermingle with the national identity of the Caribbean Self.

With the end of this volume, there is an important statement Brathwaite has made in various speeches suggesting that he will be working on a third trilogy. This poetic work results in “three interrelated trilogies which will together form a kind of grand Caribbean epic as his major creative enterprise.”¹⁷⁷ Literary critic Stewart Brown makes an interesting chart in which he organizes the three trilogies in the form of a rainbow:



By the writing of three trilogies, Brown suggests the healing rainbow will be complete and Brathwaite's movement will thereby be completed.¹⁷⁸

Brathwaite has developed his poetry in this trilogy in the most remarkable ways, by using different styles of writing to support his aim in writing. The reidentification of the national identity requires a culture to be sought and a history to be retrieved. This trilogy has presented the three major factors of the

Afro-Caribbean folk which needs to be present if rights of multiculturalism are to be gained. He has given the African man a voice of sacrifice. He has given up his strength and dignity to survive and to make his family survive. The African mother is a source of perseverance and warmth. She is given credit to have transmitted the traditions and cultural aspects of the African world over the generations. Whereas the son is the seed and the hope of the Afro-Caribbean community in the Caribbean. It is he who is able to strengthen the bonds between his people and highlight Africa as the main contributor in all Caribbean history and he can also be its source of destruction. Brathwaite shows the importance of the son and gives him all the warnings possible to prove himself in the Caribbean community, as it is the son who will retrieve dignity and all African aspects within the Caribbean identity to be reidentified.

NOTES

¹Ibid.

²Kwame Dawes, "Kamau Brathwaite," in *Talk Yuh Talk: Interviews with Anglophone Caribbean Poets*, ed. Kwame Dawes (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 35, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0813919460>.

³Paul Naylor, *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 157.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Simon Beecroft, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite," in *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. John Charles Hawley (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 70.

⁶Dawes, 37. David Alfero Siqueiros (1911-1974) was a Mexican artist who was part of the Mexican Mural Movement. He, along with other members of the movement, beautified buildings with paintings that embodied the Mexican history. They also called for an equal payment for all workers no matter what job they have. Carol Sabbeth, *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera: Their Lives and Ideas, 24 Activities* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2005), 43. The term 'Aztec' refers to an ancient civilization in Mexico that does no longer exist. However, Mexican artists like Siqueiros, are known to have painted Aztec murals making thereby reference to this extinct civilization. Mary Stout and Helen Dwyer, *Aztec History and Culture* (New York: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2013), 38. Hieroglyphics are a set of figures that were used by the ancient Egyptians as a style of writing. Hieroglyphic figures include mostly the portrayal of animals, parts of the human body, or mechanical instruments. These figures were also engraved on doors, public buildings and temples and are known to represent signs of divine, sacred and supernatural things. John Lauris Blake, *The Family Encyclopedia of Useful Knowledge and General Literature* (New York: Peter Hill, 1834), 446.

⁷Douwe Wessel Fokkema, *Perfect Worlds: Utopian Fiction in China and the West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 86, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=9089643508>.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: The Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2004), 87.

¹⁰Elaine Savory, "Wordsongs and Wordwounds / Homecoming: Kamau Brathwaite's *Barabajan Poems*," *World Literature Today* 88, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 750, quoted in Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: The Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2004), 87.

¹¹Goldberg, 87.

¹²Anna Reckin, "Tidalectic Lectures: Kamau Brathwaite's Prose/Poetry as Sound-Space," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (December 2003): 4.

¹³Kamau Brathwaite, *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (New York: We Press, 1999), 189, quoted in Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: The Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2004), 87-88.

¹⁴Anthony B. Pinn, *The African American Religious Experience in America* (London: Greenwood Press, 2006), 243, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0313325855>. Vodou or Voodoo is a well-known religion in Haiti. It is the result of the combination of African and Catholic elements together. Such a religion has a supreme God, but its followers focus more on the loa, which includes a large number of African spirits. Traditions show the loa attaching itself with families and individuals asking for ritual service to show their devotedness. The loa in turn protects, helps and guides his people in life. *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* (Taipei: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006), 2013.

¹⁵April Ann Shemak, *Asylum Speakers: Caribbean Refugees and Testimonial Discourse* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 72.

¹⁶Shemak, 80.

¹⁷*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Hegel's Dialectics," accessed October 10, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-dialectics/>.

¹⁸Nathaniel Mackey, "An Interview with Kamau Brathwaite," in *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*, ed. Stewart Brown (Melksham: The Cromwell Press, 1995), 14.

¹⁹Ignacio Infante, *After Translation: The Transfer and Circulation of Modern Poetics Across the Atlantic* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 151, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0823252140>.

²⁰Wayde Compton, "Introduction," in *Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2001), 17, quoted in Carmen Birkle, "Between the Island and the City: Cultural Brokerage in Caribbean-Canadian Short Fiction," in *Diasporic Subjectivity and Cultural Brokering in Contemporary Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. Igor Maver (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 78.

²¹June D. Bobb, *Beating a Restless Drum: The Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott* (Trenton: African World Press, 1998), 64.

²²Paul A. Griffith, *Afro-Caribbean Poetry and Ritual* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 30.

²³Brinda Mehta, *Notions of Identity, Diaspora, and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 86.

²⁴Mackey, "Interview with Kamau Brathwaite," 21.

²⁵Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 108, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1135039755>.

²⁶Mackey, "Interview with Kamau Brathwaite," 21-22.

²⁷Shemak, 80.

²⁸Nathaniel Mackey, "Wringing the Word," in *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*, ed. Stewart Brown (Melksham: The Cromwell Press, 1995), 144.

²⁹Mackey, "Interview with Kamau Brathwaite," 13.

³⁰Bobb, 42-43.

³¹*Ibid.*, 64.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Kamau Brathwaite, *Ancestors: A Reinvention of Mother Poem, Sun Poem, and X/Self* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2001), 15. All quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically henceforward. The researcher attempted to reproduce the fonts used by the poet exactly as they appear in the volume as far as possible. When the same font was not found, a closely similar font was used.

³⁴Bobb, 64-65.

³⁵Mackey, "Wringing the Word," 138-139.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 139.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, 141.

³⁹Curwen Best, *Kamau Brathwaite and Christopher Okigbo: Art, Politics, and the Music of Ritual* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2009), 156.

⁴⁰Ulfried Reichardt, "Diaspora Studies and the Culture of the African Diaspora: The Poetry of Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite and Linton Kwesi Johnson," in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments* ed. Monika Fludernik (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 314-315.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Bobb, 65.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., 66.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Quoted in Bobb, 66.

⁴⁹Ibid., 67.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., 67-68.

⁵²Ibid., 62-63.

⁵³Branche, 63.

⁵⁴Jerome C. Branche, *The Poetics and Politics of Diaspora: Transatlantic Musings* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 62.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Mackey, "Wringing the Word," 141.

⁵⁷Ibid., 141-142.

⁵⁸Ibid., 143.

⁵⁹Ibid., 144.

⁶⁰Kamau Brathwaite, notes to *X/Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 127, quoted in Naylor, 160.

⁶¹Naylor, 160-161

⁶²Ibid, 161-162.

⁶³Ibid., 163.

⁶⁴Elaine Savory, "Brathwaite, Kamau," in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, eds. Daniel Balderston, Mike Gonzales and Ana M. Lopez (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1:219, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1134788525>.

⁶⁵Bobb, 68.

⁶⁶Robert Benson, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite," in *American Ethnic Writers*, ed. David Peck (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2009), 120.

⁶⁷Stewart Brown, "Sun Poem: The Rainbow Sign?" in *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*, ed. Stewart Brown (Melksham: The Cromwell Press, 1995), 152.

⁶⁸Best, 76.

⁶⁹Mackey, "Wringing the Word," 133.

⁷⁰Brown, 152.

⁷¹Ibid., 153.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., 154.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Mark A. McWatt, "Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1930-)," in *Fifty Caribbean Writers: A Bio-bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Daryl Cumber Dance (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 64.

⁷⁸Brown, 155.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰H.H Anniah Gowda, "Creation in the Poetic Development of Kamau Brathwaite." *The Free Library*, September 22, 1994, accessed October 8, 2016, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Creation+in+the+poetic+development+of+Kamau+Brathwaite.-a016465661>.

⁸¹Quoted in Brown, 155.

⁸²McWatt, 64.

⁸³Brown, 155.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Benson, 120.

⁸⁶Brown, 156.

⁸⁷Benson, 121.

⁸⁸McWatt, 65.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Brown, 156.

⁹¹Ibid., 157.

⁹²Benson, 121.

⁹³Bobb, 69.

⁹⁴Benson, 121.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Bobb, 68.

⁹⁷*Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, 806.

⁹⁸Bobb, 69.

⁹⁹McWatt, 64.

¹⁰⁰Bobb, 69.

¹⁰¹Mackey, "Wringing the Word," 139.

¹⁰²Bobb, 69.

¹⁰³Brown, 157.

¹⁰⁴McWatt, 66.

¹⁰⁵Best, 72.

¹⁰⁶Brown, 158.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 158-159.

¹⁰⁸McWatt, 66.

¹⁰⁹Bobb, 69-70.

¹¹⁰Brown, 158.

¹¹¹Ibid., 159.

¹¹²Ibid. Hannibal was a famous military hero from Carthage (today's Tunisia) in North Africa. This rebellious warrior and leader was sworn into hating the Roman Empire and its people by his father and had promised to take over this Empire. The Roman Empire, on the other hand, was an empire of brutal power and did not enjoy the growing power of Hannibal with his taking over many economic areas in the region. That is why Hannibal felt a challenging spirit travelling across the Mediterranean Sea. It was not too long before he began his attack on the Empire in 218 BC and famously started climbing the Alps in Italy with his military. He eventually succeeded into defeating the Roman Empire. However, the Romans restored their land after defeating Hannibal in 202 BC. The Carthaginians and Hannibal were feared for centuries and the expression 'Hannibal at portas', meaning 'Hannibal at the gates', was an expression that terrified many children. Ethel Davies, *North Africa: The Roman Coast* (Guilford: The Globe Pequot Press, 2009), 8.

¹¹³Mackey, "Wringing the Word," 135-136.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 136.

¹¹⁶Brown, 160. Manny Martindale was a successful West Indian cricketer who is known to have joined the highest standards of cricket known as ten Tests from 1933 to 1939. Reg Nelson, "Keighley," *The All Rounder Cricket Bradford Premier League 2016*, December 15, 2016, accessed February 2, 2017, http://www.bradfordcl.com/keighley_history.html. Herman Griffiths was also a famous West Indian cricketer. He was known to be the best bowler (the person who throws the ball towards a certain target with great speed) in the Caribbean in 1923. Wes Hall (born 1937) was one of the most celebrated West Indian cricketers of his time. Gordon Brooks, *Caught in Action: 20 Years of West Indies Cricket Photography* (Barbados: Wordsmith International, 2003), 99. Garfield Sobers (born 1936) was a cricketer from the West-Indies who soon became a legend. He helped his region becoming the fiercest cricketing nation the world has known. Clive Borely, Yvonne Forde and Esther O'Neale, *Key to Reading*, eds. Bertilia Jean-Baptiste and Leonie St. Juste (Cheltenham: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1995), 110. Joel Garner (born 1952) was a West Indian cricketer known in the period between the 1970s and the 1980s. [Encyclopedia Britannica](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joel-Garner), s.v. "Joel Garner," accessed February 4, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joel-Garner>.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸McWatt, 66.

¹¹⁹Bobb, 70.

¹²⁰McWatt, 66.

¹²¹Benson, 121.

¹²²Bobb, 70-71.

¹²³Ibid., 71.

¹²⁴Brown, 160.

¹²⁵Benson, 121.

¹²⁶Bobb, 71.

¹²⁷McWatt, 66-67.

¹²⁸Benson, 121.

¹²⁹Quoted in Bobb, 71.

¹³⁰Bobb, 72.

¹³¹Brown, 161.

¹³²Ibid., 156.

¹³³Bobb, 72.

¹³⁴Brown, 161.

¹³⁵Best, 153.

¹³⁶Ibid., 167.

¹³⁷Özlem Türe, "From the Root of the Old One: Reconfiguring Individual and Collective Identities in Anglophone Afro-Caribbean Poetry" (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2007), 55.

¹³⁸Gordon Rohlehr, "The Rehumanization of History: Regeneration of Spirit: Apocalypse and Revolution in Brathwaite's *The Arrivants* and *X/Self*," in *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*, ed. Stewart Brown (Melksham: The Cromwell Press, 1995), 182.

¹³⁹Türe, 93.

¹⁴⁰Mackey, "Wringing the Word," 138-139.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 139.

¹⁴²Rohlehr, 164.

¹⁴³Best, 172.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Rohlehr, 163-164.

¹⁴⁶Mackey, 15.

¹⁴⁷Rohlehr, 165.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 164-166.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 165.

¹⁵⁰Rohlehr, 181.

¹⁵¹Kamau Brathwaite, "Metaphors of Underdevelopment: A Proem for Hernan Cortez," *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly* 7, no.4 (Summer 1985): 469, quoted in Rohlehr, 166.

¹⁵²Rohlehr, 166.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 166-167.

¹⁵⁵Ibid, 170-171.

¹⁵⁶Ibid, 171.

¹⁵⁷Ibid, 171-172.

¹⁵⁸Carrie Noland, "Kamau Brathwaite's Video-Style," in *Diasporic Avant-Gardes: Experimental Poetics and Cultural Displacement*, eds. Carrie Noland and Barrett Watten (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 91.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 167-168.

¹⁶⁰Rohlehr, 175.

¹⁶¹Ibid, 182. The Bhopal disaster took place in India, in the city of Bhopal, where a gas leak claimed the lives of nearly 22,000 people. Kailash Gupta, "Bhopal Chemical Disaster," in *Encyclopedia of Disaster Relief*, eds. K. Bradley Penual and Matt Statler (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2001), 2:35, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=1412971012>. Nagasaki is a city in Japan where an atomic bomb was dropped by the United States in 1945. Eamon P. Doherty, "The Atomic Bombing at Nagasaki and Robert Walsh's Arrival," in *A New Look at Nagasaki, 1946*, eds. Eamon Doherty, Joel Liebesfeld, Todd Liebesfeld, William "Pat" Schuber, and Joseph Devine (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2008), 43. The Vietnam war in which the United States took part, started in 1955 and claimed over 2 million lives. *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, 2004.

¹⁶²Bobb, 73.

¹⁶³Rohlehr, 183.

¹⁶⁴Best, 160.

¹⁶⁵Rohlehr, 183.

¹⁶⁶Ibid, 183-184.

¹⁶⁷Bobb, 73-74.

¹⁶⁸F. Abiola Irele and Biodun Jeyifo, eds., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Thought: Abol-impe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1:166.

¹⁶⁹Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu: African Culture and the Western World* (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 132, <https://books.google.iq/books?isbn=0802132081>.

¹⁷⁰Bobb, 74.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁷²Türe, 97.

¹⁷³Bobb, 73.

¹⁷⁴Best, 159.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁷⁶Keith Michell, review of *Ancestors* by Kamau Brathwaite, Winter, 2011, accessed January 9, 2017, <http://www.oysterboyreview.org/issue/14/MitchellK-Brathwaite.html>.

¹⁷⁷Brown, 161.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

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The African descendants, one of the major sections that live in the New World, have been experiencing a vacuum of most or all of their human rights. Their hands have not been out of labor, their backs never healed from the Western whip and their cultural Self was left to be broken into its smallest parts. They were cuffed and taken away to find themselves working in plantation fields they do not even own or belong to. The culture these Africans beheld was torn apart and it seemed as if it was struck against the ground to be buried away and forgotten.

With the passage of time, they were forced to adopt traditions and other cultural aspects of a total alien culture that does not represent them. The extreme differences between African cultures and cultures that came from the West clashed against one another. This consequently led some African traditions to witness change or replacement because of Western cultural interference. Such cultural issues have been justified in the field of multiculturalism and are labeled 'external cultural changes'. Multiculturalism is a developing concept that guarantees each and every citizen the right of an identifiable identity that reflects the cultural Self, for it offers recognition of all cultures and the historical background of every multicultural community.

Edward Kamau Brathwaite has, in his works *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* and *Ancestors: A Reinvention of Mother Poem, Sun Poem, and X/Self*, approached the problems of multiculturalism that the West-Indies generally and Barbados specifically suffer from. Brathwaite has taken a literary stand against such cultural problems where he has questioned and offered solutions to the cultural crisis at hand.

He condemned the idea that the modern Caribbean identity did neither consider the recognition of any of the African contributions in the New World nor any of the present African traditions that have survived the Middle Passage.

The poet has therefore taken the responsibility to reveal the detailed reality of the Caribbean history and of how undeniable links it has with the ancient African world. With such revelations, Brathwaite is determined to revive his people's cultural reality and to prove the African ancestry that remains to instill their souls.

This thesis has first of all considered Brathwaite's focus on retrieving the African history. It is a primary step towards self-identification. With the revelation of the African background and exposing all the weaknesses and sufferings both the African slaves and the Afro-Caribbeans went through, Brathwaite seeks an opportunity to unite his people. He believes that whenever the Afro-Caribbeans recognize the pains of the past and present, they can together highlight the importance of their existence in the Caribbean.

Second, this thesis has revealed how the poet portrays the experiences African ancestors at their arrival to the New World. They are set out in plantation fields and other terrifying jobs to carry out their masters' dreams. The prosperity of the British Empire was all because of the increasing economic income African slaves were responsible for. Little by little, no rights for them remained and no dignity was left. Their culture started to break apart; some of its aspects are forgotten or replaced, while others are changed drastically. That is why Brathwaite tackles such problems of fragmentation and has his poetry devoted to such cases. His response to such oppression is that he offers his poetry as a setting where decolonizing the British culture is possible. Showing their strict methods and imperial actions, Afro-Caribbeans can liberate themselves from such superior powers and will seek to recollect their fragmented Self and gain an identity that identifies this Self. Moreover, with an identity one's cultural rights are restored and preserved and that is what multiculturalism has to offer to every citizen of such a nation.

This thesis has also revealed how the poet makes strong links between the Ancient African World and the New World as a source for retrieving power and existence. Cultural habits, myths, tales and traditions that live up till this day in the Caribbean are clearly and undeniably related to the African world and cultures. With making such links, the poet has stated a demand for recognition of African existence in the West-Indies that has changed over the course of time and is therefore different from the pure African culture. Moreover, the African cultures are still present and even if they are buried underneath the materialistic culture of the British, they will find a way to break such cultural barriers to demand recognition and reformation. He is therefore not only hinting at the unity of all black people, but also calls them to revolt against the Western hypocritical system which overtook their culture. Within his approach to multiculturalism to retrieve their cultural rights, the poet develops certain notions and theories to show the significance of the black community and to deculturalize the British culture at the same time.

Among the most significant methods of deculturization is his use of nation language. This language reflects the reality of the black community and their daily life instead of using English which could never express any aspect of their cultural Self. Brathwaite makes clear that nation language is not an English accent, but is an independent language that defines the black-Caribbean community. With using this newly invented language, Brathwaite is encouraging every black-Caribbean citizen to make use of it.

Brathwaite also opposes one of the most well-known Western theories, i.e., Hegel's theory of dialectics. He restates his own views of how two different but relatable concepts are analyzed. He has reshaped this theory, naming it 'tidalectics', by relating it to the movement of the sea. It does not only deculturalize all that belongs to the Western thoughts, but also to show that one concept leads to the other rather than opposing one another. With this theory, the

poet wants to assure that the African historical background is part of the Caribbean Self and cannot be taken lightly. It is just like the sea whose waves are moving in circles where one circle is part of the circles that follows it. The theory of tidalectics, as well as nation language, are demonstrated in both his trilogies.

Finally, the poet has deculturized the British culture by revealing their merciless deeds and taking the English pentameter and language in general to a new and different level. His invented Sycorax Video Style demonstrated in the second trilogy *Ancestors*, involves the printing of his poetic words with different font styles, different sizes that have taken different positions on the book's pages. He is, through using such methods, successful in proving that the black population has different cultural markers like language, traditions, beliefs and habits and develops and expands them as these cannot be justified by the British culture. His quest for reformation and recognition of Africa in the New World is successful on a personal level over the years, but he has called in both trilogies that there is still a need for a stronger bond of unity among his people to make the goals of realizing multicultural rights possible. As soon as self-realization rises in the Afro-Caribbean consciousness, a ray of hope shines towards achieving equal rights in the multicultural Caribbean nation.

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المستخلص

إن من ابرز اهتمامات علم ما بعد الاستعمارية هو دراسة مفهوم تعدد الثقافات. هذا المجال العلمي لا يعتمد فقط المعنى الوصفي لمفهوم تعدد الثقافات (ان دولة واحدة تتضمن اكثر من ثقافة واحدة) وانما يجتاز حدود هذا التعريف ليتضمن قراءات اخرى ممتدة لها. الدول الكاريبية هي من ابرز المناطق التي يتم قراءتها تحت هذا المفهوم ليكون المعنى حسب السياق المستخدم.

الأدب الكاريبي يقوم بأستخدام مفهوم تعدد الثقافات للكشف عن المشكلات الثقافية التي يعاني منها المجتمع الكاريبي و بعض النصوص الادبية تقوم باقتراح طرق معينة لحل هذه المشكلات التي تتضمن مشكلة الاعتراف بالهوية و انعدام حقوق الانسان. الشاعر الكاريبي ادوارد كاماو براثويت (١٩٣٠ -) هو من ابرز الشعراء الكاريبيين الذين حاولوا من خلال نصوصهم الادبية ايجاد حلولاً للحصول على الحقوق التي تتعلق باعتراف الهوية الكاريبية و الخلفية التاريخية التي كان لها الدور الرئيسي في تطور المجتمع الكاريبي. فهذه الرسالة تهدف في اعادة تشخيص الوجود الافريقي في الدولة الكاريبية و تعيد بناء الروابط المنكسرة مع العالم الافريقي للكشف عن التقاليد الافريقية التي نجحت في العبور عبر المحيط الاطلسي. اراد براثويت لشعبه ان يتحد ليصبحوا يداً واحدة للقيام بتحطيم الثقافة البريطانية و النهوض بثقافتهم الافريقية. فيؤمن براثويت بانه اذا اشار الى افعال الاستعمار المروعة و اعلاء العلامات الثقافية للافرو-كاريبيون فبإمكانه ان يحقق هذا الهدف.

تقع هذه الدراسة في ثلاثة فصول و خاتمة. الفصل الاول تم تجزئته الى ثلاثة اقسام. القسم الاول يقسم بدوره الى ثلاثة اقسام ليغطي اول فصل منه الاستخدامات المختلفة لمفهوم تعدد الثقافات و ما يمكن ان يعنيه في السياقات الادبية. القسم الثاني سيأخذ بالنظر الى المجتمع الكاريبي و كيف اصبح مجتمع ذات ثقافات متعددة. بالاضافة الى ذلك، سيتم التركيز على النقاط الاساسية التي سببت وجود الثقافة الافريقية فيها. القسم الثالث سيتناول نبذة عن الشاعر الكاريبي ادوارد كاماو براثويت. فسيتم شرح سيرته الذاتية و مشواره الادبي و ابرز انجازاته للكشف عن كيفية استخدامه لمفهوم تعدد الثقافات في نصوصه الشعرية.

يحلل الفصل الثاني مفهوم تعدد الثقافات الذي يستخدمه براثويت في الثلاثية الشعرية الاولى للشاعر تحت عنوان الوافدون: ثلاثية شعرية لعالم جديد (١٩٧٣). لهذا الفصل ثلاثة اقسام متبعا بذلك تقسيم هذه المجموعة الشعرية المتضمنة لثلاثة كتب شعرية هي حقوق الطرقات (١٩٦٧)، /قنعة (١٩٦٨)، و الجُزر (١٩٦٩). هذه الثلاثية الشعرية تبين اصل الكارثة الثقافية الذي مر بها الافرو-كاريبيون و كيف وصلوا الى العالم الجديد. سيختص هذا الفصل في التحدث عن تقاليدهم لاعادة الوعي للشعب الافرو-كاريبي. فهي الخطوة الرئيسية التي يجب اتخاذها للوصول الى الحقوق التي يوفرها مفهوم تعدد الثقافات.

الفصل الثالث يقتصر على تحليل الثلاثية الشعرية الثانية لبراثويت تحت عنوان **اسلاف: اعادة**

اختراع لقصيدة الام، قصيدة الشمس، و النفس/X (٢٠٠١). يتكون هذا الفصل من ثلاثة اقسام ايضا.

يستعين براثويت بحقائق من حياته ليتمكن من استعادة الروابط المنحلة التي تربط الافرو-كاريبيون بالعالم الافريقي القديم. فالشاعر يستمر في سحق الثقافة البريطانية المستعمرة ليحقق هدفة للحصول على الحقوق الذي يوفره مفهوم تعدد الثقافات.

و تلخص الخاتمة الاستنتاجات التي توصلت إليها الدراسة.

رقم الايداع لدى دار الكتب و الوثائق ببغداد لسنة.....



وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي

جامعة القادسية

كلية التربية

شعرية تعدد الثقافات في شعر ادوارد كامو براثويت: دراسة في قصائد مختارة

رسالة

مقدمة إلى مجلس كلية التربية، جامعة القادسية
جزءاً من متطلبات نيل درجة الماجستير في الأدب الانكليزي

تقدمت بها

صابرينا عبد الكاظم عبد الرضا

بإشراف

أ.م.د. رعد كريم عبد عون

شباط ٢٠١٧

جمادي الاولى ١٤٣٨