

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

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ملخص البحث

من بين اكثر الامور تداولاً لمجتمعات ذات الثقافات المتعددة هي مشاكل تمكن في سياسيات الدولة الحاكمة. فهناك بعض الأنظمة السياسية و خاصة القوى المستعمرة منها التي لا تسمح لأي مجموعة ذات اصول مختلفة عنها بتولية اية منصب في الدولة، من بين الدول التي تشهد مشاكل كهذه، هي الدول الكاريبية الواقعة ضمن القارة الامريكية. الشاعر الكاريبي ادوارد كاماو براثويت(١٩٣٠-) من بين الادياء الذين تناولوا امور سياسية كهذه في شعرهم، فعند قراءة شعره بعمق يمكن تحليل القصائد على انها مبنية على ايجاد حلول مناسبة لكي تعود الثقافة الافريقية الى الاراضي الكاريبية و تكون جزء منها و من الهوية الكاريبية، فهو يسعى الى ارجاع جوهر الكاريبيين ذات العرق الافريقي من خلال استرجاع الماضي الذي دُفن في داخلهم بسبب الاستعمار الذي اتهم حقيقتهم، فقد عانوا ما عانوه من العبودية لقرون طويلة و حان وقت كسر السلاسل و التحرر من سلطة المستعمر، فهوية الكاريبيين يجب ان تأخذ بنظر اعتبار ضم الثقافة الافريقية كعنصر اساسي لها، فهي الثقافة التي بني و ازدهر من خلالها هذه الجزر فلا يمكن رميها خارج مفهوم تلك الهوية، و هذا ما تطرق اليه براثويت في شعره، على الكاريبيين ان يتحدوا في محاربة العدو البريطاني و ان يضموا صوتهم لصوت براثويت ليعرف العالم حول انجازات اجدادهم و اباؤهم و على هذا الاساس يكون لهم الحق في المطالبة بمشاركة الحكم و المؤسسات دولة كحق شرعي لهم، فهذا البحث يتناول اولاً موجزاً في مفهوم "تعدد الثقافات" و من ثم تم تسليط الضوء على تحليل هذا المبدأ في الثالث الشعري /انسسترس (٢٠٠١).

الكلمات المفتاحية: مفهوم تعدد الثقافات، نظرية تيدالكتكس، اسلوب الفيديو سيكوراكس، اللغة الدولية، مفهوم السكلتون، مفهوم النيام، مفهوم السنسم •

Abstract:

All of mankind has a history that dwells within the space of their consciousness and within the blood of their veins. Such a history is cherished within the aspects of the culture he is raised up to behold and pass on to the upcoming generations by performing certain rituals and traditions. However, some external cultural interferences may take place, causing a gradual loss of some or all aspects of the interfered culture. The most destructive among such interferences, is perhaps that of a systemized colonization. It may cause for changes in cultural habits and traditions like style, religious performances and even language. Such issues are read within the context of multiculturalism.¹

The ancient African world and its many cultures have been home to such cultural interferences. Slave trades organized by colonial countries have taken away millions of African people. They were shipped to different cultural worlds and have suffered the loss of many of their own cultural aspects. The 'New World' has been subject to where Africans have witnessed such cultural problems.² Poets like the Caribbean Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1930-) have signed it their duty to retrieve lost cultural aspects, such as the loss of their ancestral history and their cultural identity and seeks therefore for an overall recognition of the ancient African culture within the means of the Caribbean identity. It is his attempt to deculturalize the aspects of the superior culture, in this case the British culture, in the

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

Caribbean nation in order for the African culture to rise. These shall be conducted in Brathwaite's trilogy *Ancestors* (2001).³

Key Words: Multiculturalism, Tidalectics, Sycorax Video Style, Nation Language, Skeletone, Nyam, Sunsum.

Introduction

Considering the term 'multiculturalism' in a most descriptive sense, it suggests that "many societies and nations involve peoples with different cultures, languages and faiths living together."⁴ However, as indecisive as it can be, multiculturalism is a "multidimensional concept,"⁵ that brings up different readings because of its usage in different types of contexts. This paper shall untangle the multicultural issues that Brathwaite's literary text tries to solve. Among the solutions that are read are 'identity politics', 'the politics of difference', and 'the politics of recognition'.⁶

Identity politics "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."⁷ It is then an actual movement that bases its activities on actual change, rather than organizing simple beliefs and joining groups without taking actual part in making a change of what concerns the national identity. 'The politics of difference' emphasizes on finding the differences between the multiple cultures of a single society, and studies the rights that will "treat everyone according to the same principles, rules, and standards."⁸ 'Politics of recognition' includes the acknowledgement of a culture's historical background and its valuable contributions. There is a strong link between being recognized and one's cultural identity. With an identity and an acknowledged history of every culture, a successful multicultural nation can be built.⁹ Brathwaite makes an evident use of these politics in his poetry and starts a poetic movement where he is seen to be after the **historical recognition** of ancient Africa in the Caribbean nation that has been lost over the centuries. His purpose behind travelling back into history is to pursue "the ideology of Africa as the source of all black culture."¹⁰ Additionally, he attempts to reform the Caribbean identity and to make the African culture its major component instead of being full-out British. These are the major multicultural issues in the Caribbean Brathwaite tries to solve in his poetry.

As Brathwaite tries to solve such issues, he is seen to have made use of different methods for his poetry to be more effective. The method of 'tidalectics' is one of these methods that refers to "the fusion of language and poetics with the rhythms of the sea –to describe the narrative"¹¹. Brathwaite opposes hereby what is known as 'Hegel's theory of dialectics'. The theory of 'Dialectics' was essentially used to refer to a debate where two people would be opposing each other with certain thoughts. The argument takes a linear movement where words would pass forwards and backwards repeatedly. One of the two ideas would gradually develop with the continuation of the argument. The 19th century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel added the idea that two different concepts could also oppose one another in a linear manner and that a concept could improve gradually depending on the other opposing concept.¹²

Brathwaite opposed this theory and came up with 'tidalectics', which he describes as "dialectics with my difference"¹³. He reveals that he sees the movements of the sea as a circular movement rather than a linear one. Presenting the circular motion, the poet wants to revolt against the seemingly endless Hegelian linearity of the Western culture that tries to

break down the African culture and its glorious history in the Caribbean.¹⁴ Tidalectics shall prove that the African culture is part of the Caribbean history as well.

'The Sycorax Video Style' is another method of writing the poet makes use of. It is "a computer-generated set of typefaces that Brathwaite has adopted for much of his publications since the 1990s."¹⁵ He presents his poetry with different fonts printed either on the left, middle or right side of the page. This way he resists the ordinary writing style British texts rule out. He attached this style of writing to the character of 'Sycorax'¹⁶, who is a female character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). She is an Algerian witch who originally was descendant from the ancient African world.¹⁷ She mirrors the Afro-Caribbean man with having a fragmented identity of African origins. She is therefore the poet's inspiration who provides him with the energy to write poetry and to achieve multicultural rights. Literary critic Elaine Savory implies that Brathwaite has elaborated on the masculine images that were the essence of previous works with feminine images in this trilogy for the sake of completing his movement towards multicultural achievement.¹⁸ So just like it is unable to reject this character from *The Tempest*, Brathwaite was positive that his work could not be rejected as well. And whenever recognition was made of his poetry, the African spirit in the Caribbean would be officially recognized as well.¹⁹

The type of medium he uses in his poetry is also known as 'nation language', which is the actual language spoken by the Caribbean citizens. This language, which Brathwaite resists to be considered as an English accent, is defined by him as "the language of slaves and labourers, the servants who were brought in by conquistadors."²⁰ It is for this reason that he is seen to be playing with words causing grammatical and lexical disorder. Brathwaite goes beyond the use of actual speech to also morphs words into new expressions to develop and expand his project of nation language.²¹ He successfully managed to catch the attention of the Oxford University Press, and so Brathwaite's game of recognition came to be a successful one. The language became one that is recognized by the world's most well-known presses that belongs to the colonial empire of Britain. This has given his poetry the intensity and power the reader needs to understand and act to solve the cultural pains of Brathwaite's life and the Afro-Caribbean life as a whole.²²

Historical Recognition

Starting his mission of African recognition in the New World, Brathwaite opens up that the Afro-Caribbean man is one who is born to be a citizen with a fragmented cultural origin. He emphasizes on such a critical issue by portraying that both man and land are the subject of fragmentation. In *Mother Poem*, he says:

the child
is born to splinters
broken islands
broken homes (140)²³

The term "broken" is repeated for reminding the Afro-Caribbean reader of his divided cultural reality. The poet continues expressing such a devastating experience with dividing words either by breaking them into syllables or with the use of any punctuation mark.²⁴

hear the pen/nies drop/in
lissen while they fall
ev/ry one for jee/sus
he shall have them all (23)

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

With such divisions and breaks, the poet attacks "the English rhythms and conventions of their education."²⁵ This is a demonstration of 'nation language'. Because of their fragmented reality, the Afro-Caribbeans were left without a culture through which they possibly could protect their honor or dignity. They were taken in as slaves and had to cope with labels of humiliation and degradation. In the poem "Miss Own," a female character is shown to be an insecure and unstable character. She is humiliated as she is sarcastically and repeatedly asked by her master to "*sign a bill here*" (49). This shows that she is treated with disgust and is made fun of, because he knows that she is not capable of reading or signing any bills. He will remain signing bills, while she will never have such a chance. Slaves are also not trusted to take the task of signing.²⁶ Despite such humiliation, the poet is persistent to prove that the African culture can still be traced here and there in the Caribbean community. In the poem, "Horse weebles," Brathwaite narrates:

Sellin sunrise 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 islanncocklin
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 nation. The seller is a lady whose goods are all originary from Africa like okra, pumpkin and sweet potatoes. With an emphasis on such factors, the poet emphasizes the presence of Africa in the New World.²⁷

Brathwaite makes a comparison between the ancestral African mother and the Caribbean mother. The African mother is a figure that is filled with powers of damnation. In the poem "Hex," she performs a set of different acts,²⁸ and is known to be a "historian, warrior, keeper of the dead and preserver of religious ceremony and rituals."²⁹ Brathwaite tries to save the African culture in the New World by trying to revive such an ancestral spirit within the Caribbean women. It is as if the ancestral mother oversees her children in the Caribbean and tries to heal her children from the torturous treatment and the pains they have undergone as plantation slaves.³⁰ The poet also introduces an Afro-Caribbean narrator like himself, who is shown to struggle for finding cultural wholeness in the New World:

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)

The ancestral mother will help this lost Afro-Caribbean to remember the watercourses of the past and the circle of the pool in the present. His theory of tidalectics is demonstrated here. He presents perspectives of both linear (barren metal) and circular (watercourses) and (the pool) in contrast to each other to provide a contrastive scene between the European and the African cultures. While the linear never approves of its previous concepts, the poet shows how the old watercourses are part of the present pools in the Caribbean, which means that the Afro-Caribbeans and the Caribbean landscape are both related to the ancient African World.³¹

The poet creates an auditory image termed by him as 'skeleton'. It demonstrates the sounds of bones through which the poet is determined 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.³² This image is also presented in contrast to the sound of the church bells and school bells. The resonance of the bells gives the sense of domination and authority of the West over all the Caribbean. Caribbean schools play a role in filling the children in with nothing but the English language and British culture and no reference is made to the contributions of the African people who are the essential source of the region's income and its overall prosperity. Schools have come to deculturize any culture that coexist in the nation and force the students into the culture of Great Britain and thereby claim their control over the West-Indian region.³³ He employs this idea in the poem "X/Self xth letter from the thirteen provinces". X/Self, the character of this poem, writes a letter to his mother in which he explains the pains of his studies. He is not quite familiar with the Western technological systems of education to learn the implied language, and eventually ends up to doubting the whole experience of his New World life³⁴:

uh fine
a cyaan get nutten
write
a cyaan get nutten *really*
rite (450)

He suffers from the loss of an actual culture he can identify with, and therefore feels as an alienated member from the community he lives in. He is aware of the means of technology, but has not quite an idea of the way one must use computers and other Western educational tools.³⁵ Brathwaite then changes the mood and is positive that the sounds of the bones shall take over the rings of these bells. The resonance of the bones is then not only an image of victimization, but also a movement towards freedom and revolution.³⁶

Brathwaite hereby makes use of a revolutionary spirit to force the Afro-Caribbean into the use of nation language, or the language they use in every-day speech, instead of the English language and its deculturalizing method of destroying all other cultures and their aspects. He also makes phrasal, lexical and grammatical changes.³⁷ An example of grammatical changes is found in the poem "Bell" where he clearly makes visible changes:

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

In addition to opposing the English language and its extreme rules, he also calls his people to take action against practices that are related to the Western culture and the Christian religion they brought with them. Their religion failed to make any reference to any African god. In the poem "Prayer," the white Christians are in the middle of reciting the Lord's Prayer to praise His name, when suddenly the African attendances interrupt. They dislocate the Christian God and relocate the god who is in Africa a soul rather than just a name. Furthermore, they use the most common word used in nation language; that is 'nyam'. Nyam is 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 ...³⁸

This interruption shows that revolt 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

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

culture as well. They speak out, for they are at pains at the crisis they live under. Their 'nyam' or their African self still exists and even if it 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 gradually more used than the Christian voice used in prayer. The voice of nation language turns down the solace Christianity offers and rather confronts its methods of colonialism and domination: "*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 colonist³⁹: "my mother blazes forth to these from faithless night" (119).

As a final solution Brathwaite makes use of is a 'healing rainbow' to equalize the essential cultures and combining them within the means of the Caribbean identity. The rainbow is a symbol of healing in the Akan culture, which is able to reconcile factors of sun and sea as well as fire and water together. The poet also associates 'Nyame', the supreme African god, to the phenomenon of the rainbow. As Nyame is known for in the African traditions, water is the prominent factor that this god controls and especially his control over rain. Brathwaite 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 raining is a proof how Nyame takes part in the renewal of the Afro-Caribbean self. The rainbow also refers to the European culture that is based on Christianity. It 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.⁴⁰ He therefore makes use of several colors to achieve that rainbow that will provide the healing power that Afro-Caribbeans are in need of to gain recognition of their ancestral history and a proper identity as a part of their multicultural rights.

Starting officially with his colorful task, "Red Rising," the first poem in *Sun Poem*, marks a voice of the healing rainbow. It suggests the starting point of creation as soon as the day begins at sunrise⁴¹:

**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 spirit or the 'sunsum' starts reawakening. This sunsum does not just mean one spirit specifically, but the beginning of what Brathwaite calls 'origen' or 'generation' if translated in its pure English form. It is the start of the Caribbean self that is based on African history.⁴² The poet then introduces a character he names Adam (spelled 'adam' with a small letter in the poems) in his poem "Orange Origen". The name of Adam is significant for he 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".⁴³

Adam is presented in the most colorful way, as if his image is presented "through the prism of the rainbow."⁴⁴ He is therefore characterized to be another voice of the healing rainbow. Adam is the boy who is seen to be travelling from boyhood into manhood.⁴⁵ This young boy is a reference to Brathwaite's own childhood who sees himself as the savior of the fragmented Afro-Caribbean community. 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.⁴⁶

Another character named "batto" is introduced in association to Adam. He is an orphan child who has never attended school but went to a prison-like institution, that kept young people captive for their criminal natured attitude.⁴⁷ 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 experience of the African forefathers who had to bare the oppressive slave trade during their historical voyage past 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 experiences in these poetic lines.⁴⁸

He shows through Adam's childhood memories how divided and rootless the child's conscious is.⁴⁹ 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. 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. These references show that every bubble will have its burst and that child innocence slowly disappears as he is to enter the stage of adolescence.⁵⁰ He will review the world differently and will start his journey of understand the crisis he and his people live under. The moment Adam enters adulthood is when he hears of the revolution that was led by a persona named 'Bussa'. It was a revolution that called for multicultural rights. He called for politics that would recognize his people with an identifiable identity that recognizes the contributions of the African culture and give the Afro-Caribbean slaves the rights they deserve after living under the mercy of one superior culture.⁵¹

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 into facing the reality of his ancestral past as part of his adulthood, he mixes multiple things together. He imagines a pair of mountains which are Mount Soufrière in the Caribbean and Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. Also Jah the god of the Afro-Caribbeans and Isis an ancient Egyptian goddess are mixed together and sing a song in collaboration to each other that carry words that preserve cultural traditions.⁵² Such linking makes the two world closer to each other and will help in deculturizing the British culture that dominate the Caribbean.

In the poem, "The Crossing," Adam and his classmates go on a school excursion to a place named 'Cattle Wash'. Adam's mood changes in that of 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 cause a fatal end.⁵³ 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 people of Afro-Caribbeans.⁵⁴ The bus nevertheless manages to reach the top of 'Hearse Hill' safely and continues its way towards their destination from where they could have a view from over a "wonderful place" (244). They could stand up on to the sea coast that was the closest to the Africa and travel to the African coasts by imagination.⁵⁵

This excursion is interpreted to be the complete opposite of the Middle Passage that brought the African forefathers to the New World. It follows the route from the west side of the Caribbean coast towards the east of the Caribbean coming to the Atlantic coast. When

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

Adam tries to stare beyond the limits of this coast, his ancestral spirit experiences a discovery. Past this coast lies the promised land of Africa. A feeling of terror conjoins this discovery and realizes that this place is where the sunlight is original. This place helps him regain ancestral memories of the African past.⁵⁶

In the poem "Noom," Adam continues learning about African traditions. He meets the story of a 'Loa' also spelled 'lwa' who is a "deity in the Vodou tradition"⁵⁷ one of cultural traditions in the Caribbean. This specific loa is named 'oggun', and Adam is told the story of "when the oggun / came out of the sea" (260), and set foot on the lands of Barbados. This arrival has taken effect on the geographical area of Barbados and that is the reason how this island is seen to be the closest to the African world in map. 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 by the process of time. This movement is then "neither an all-New World, nor all-Old World process."⁵⁸ Loa also reaches out to the highest point of the island. The purpose was to have an overlook of his displaced people.⁵⁹ He 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; it is a deity that is worshipped as they have a Sun King. The colonial culture transformed the sun into one that has only negative characteristics to offer.⁶⁰ The European culture presented the sun as one that,

... scores holes in leaf and paper

that destroys archives and the parchment

of industry

it is a baas eyed gaoler . keepin our people back (268)

Adam is also introduced to the very first African ancestors who were taken into the Caribbean as slaves. He meets their pains and understands the roots of the present crisis in the Caribbean. He also meets positive aspects that may help in the realization of liberation. He meets African gods like Legba, Shango and Ogoun on his way towards finding salvation and wholeness of the Afro-Caribbean self. The self is then a fragile factor and the negative sources have overpowered the gods of the ancient African world and culture. He is devastated to realize that 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.⁶¹

Green is known in the Akan culture to refer to new life. After Adam's child 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 its coasts. They came to attack with the most modern weapons of sword and stone and were able to justify their arrogant act of oppression.⁶² Brathwaite expresses his anger, through Adam's passing of the Caribbean history, that although the slaves were working hard in the plantation field and caused for the prosper of the Caribbean's economical 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 away and they succeeded in removing and replacing the African culture with the European culture.⁶³ However, the African traditions and spirit did not die away, but is buried underneath the layers of the Caribbean soil. It was this spirit that would be the spirit of rebellion. This spirit comes in the form of the African ancestor known by the name "Hannibal". He is characterized as the blue loa, and although having a sense of despair intermingled within as the Blues is Africa's music of despair, Hannibal is a spirit of rebellion.⁶⁴

The contributions of African ancestors must never be forgotten and the society should recognize ancestors like, Manny Martindale, Herman Griffiths, Wes Hall, Garfield Sobers, Joel Garner, etc. The pain that no actual monument is built to commemorate their contributions is still one of the deepest wounds Brathwaite continues to lament.⁶⁵

In "Clips," the reader is presented with clips as if watching a film. Two types of Caribbean men are shown and the reader is introduced to these. The first group of men is considered as the legal owners of the Caribbean plantation fields, or in other words the European colonists. While another clip presents the reader with the men who have spent their lives being trapped in the cycle of debt and limitless efforts, or the Afro-Caribbean men.⁶⁶ The latter group is depicted in a most disappointing manner. They are never able to satisfy neither their wives nor children and are men without self-control and never seem to bother that their lives are ones without recognition of their past, without a proper identity and thus without any multicultural rights.⁶⁷

In the poem "Indigone," Brathwaite presents the reader with the funeral of Adam's grandfather ("groundfather").⁶⁸ The poem is therefore portrayed in an atmosphere of darkness.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ He realizes at that point that fathers are characterized with a dead end. They fail to transfer any known cultural identity to their sons to be recognized 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.⁷¹ However, the poet gives another chance of hope. At the funeral, the African spirit 'Nam' is present. 'Nam' refers here to "the indestructible and atomic core of man's culture."⁷² The thunder of the god 'Shango' is also present. The three forces of darkness, thunder and culture are gathered together and with their combination a new Caribbean self is born. However this 'self' is very fragile because of the colonial standards that overwhelm the nation. This self that dwells in extreme poverty and complete destruction and it is the power of poetry Brathwaite wants to use to support this fragile self and make it the most power element in the Caribbean nation.⁷³

X/Self, the title of this volume, refers to this fragile and alienated self that is yet to be discovered.⁷⁴ *X/Self*, as he names this character, is given the letter X as it provides different meanings due to the unlimited ability to move from one culture, language and landscape into another. This Self is therefore one which has an unknown identity due to the loss of multicultural rights and taps into different places in hope of finding the identity that would ultimately identify his cultural self. In addition, it also provides the function of referring to a different set of colonial mechanizations beside slavery to justify the call for embracing such multicultural politics.⁷⁵

Explaining the start of dehumanization in history, he places the Roman Empire as the original source from where destruction started. The African slavery was one of the most devastating experiences that appeared immediately after the Empire's disintegration. Rome's destruction led to an outward movement that caused the destruction of many other cultural

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

worlds.⁷⁶ The downfall of this empire has caused the destructive aspect of man's spirit to travel from one country to another and dehumanized the world in a most negative way. More and more societies got involved with slave marketing as quickly spread all over the world. It is like a machine that produces slavery and not even its inventors were capable of stopping it. As much as Brathwaite considers such matters as the fault of the spirit of mankind, he also believes that it is the Spirit of man that will and is capable of rehumanizing all destruction man has set upon himself since the fall of the Roman Empire.⁷⁷

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)

The poem "Nuum" gives a bright account on the developing apocalyptic force that started around the world after the fall of the Roman Empire. It shows how the European colonial forces started invading and destroying nations such as the Asian and the African worlds causing the loss of many civilizations and their cultures. The infected countries' economy and industry were completely torn apart. This is portrayed by combining the world's most disastrous incidents that history has known like the "Bhopal disaster" with that of the gas chambers used in World War II.⁷⁸ Making such links shows the protest against the imperial systems and their murderous and unjust strategies in claiming power over other nations, races and cultures.

And in the poem "The edges of the desert," the poet describes some of the destructive aftermaths of the Western expansion that terrorized many places around the world.⁷⁹ The traditional Akan culture converted to simply be 'ashanty towns', that sign no importance or recognition at the making and development of the Empire.⁸⁰ The poet also opens up about the nature of the invaders. They appear have mellow miners who dig into the caves, but quickly show their true self and start destroying without mercy.⁸¹

Stepping further into details, the poet limits the Spirit to refer to the Caribbean Spirit. Literary critic Gordon Rohlehr explains that the origin of this Spirit comes from different sources taken from both the African and the Western worlds. They are sources such as Christianity, Hegelianism, the Akan culture and Dogon which is one of the tribes of the ancient African world. Brathwaite has chosen such sources to not only compare the two worlds, but to show that the West is not the only cultural source that exists in 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 "Mt Blanc is as symbol of materialism; while Kilimanjaro, its opposite, is a symbol of the spirit."⁸²

This idea clarifies the image of the colonized Caribbean territories and symbolizes the image of the Afro-Caribbean self at the same time. The Caribbean landscape and the lost self is aesthetically portrayed by layers from which the European demanding materialism tops the lands and buried underneath it lays the spirituality of the African world and the New World.

The image of the Spirit that is presented is then that of a dualistic image which aspects are in contrast to each other.⁸³

The poet is also seen to have made use of the theory of tidalectics to give the Spirit a more optimistic image. 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.⁸⁴

The Spirit is also seen to have taken some qualities from the Akan culture, specifically from the 'nam', related to the African god 'Nyame'. This god is characterized as being obscure and imprisoned, but is not affected neither by destruction nor creation. It is a quality the Spirit has inherited.⁸⁵ This Spirit is impossible to be destroyed or killed. It is however imprisoned due to European materialism. The African people who first arrived 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 has been shattered into pieces and marks a difficulty in regeneration 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.⁸⁶ 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".⁸⁷ It is a method of creation that comes out of destruction. 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.⁸⁸

The poet directs therefore an attack towards those Afro-Caribbean citizens who are seen to be adopting the European materialism system.⁸⁹ In his poem, "Phalos," for instance, the poet mentions how Afro-Caribbean women have adopted the European style of living to be accepted and recognized. 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 society⁹⁰:

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 accompong their mother
& now they cannot buttock down to hearth or cooking pot
to tuntum achar eddoed yam (405-406)

He calls upon returning to the ancient cultural traditions and rituals of the ancient African world that can be draw from their elders. To remember for instance 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.⁹¹

Finally, the Spirit is also constructed to include the 'Dogon', a specific folk in Africa who had secret scripts they believed to belong to African gods. These scripts were supposedly the reason behind universe's creation. Brathwaite has found his inspiration in such traditional stories and believed that he could achieve through them and with the creation of stories in his poetry, the multiculturalism rights of his Afro-Caribbeans folk.⁹² That is why Brathwaite has made the Spirit out of sources that identify with the common Caribbean Self that he tries to regenerate.

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

In his poem "Dies Irie", originally converted from 'Dies Irae', a hymn that reads words of fact about the Day of Judgment, the poet writes words of a resting dream that needs to be realized. It is like a "prophesay" that must be sung by all oppressed people suffering from colonial aftermaths.⁹³ It is this hymn that will reveal the true historical facts to people and force not only the British Empire, but also other colonial powers to recognize their horrible doings. The setting is like that of an official court. Justice is presented in a controversial way in which the Western world sees colonial invasion as justice. The hidden gaps of their humiliating and genocide records in history are never revealed by them. However those hidden gaps will be recovered and resurrected in which terms such as history and justice will be reconceptualized. Brathwaite is fully aware of the almost incapability of reorganizing the concept of history, but he places the hopes for a change in judgment.⁹⁴ He hopes that his poetry has highlighted the major problems of cultural fragmentation and hopes for the African culture to be unearthed and become a recognized part that identifies the Caribbean man.

Conclusion

It is clear that Brathwaite attempts to reorganize the Caribbean society with the aesthetic power of the word. As he was born at the most critical time of revolution, he tried to use his gift of using poetry to make the movement a more successful one. He realized his Afro-Caribbean fellow citizens had suffered from the loss of cultural recognition among the other cultures even though they far outnumbered all other cultures. Their history was denied and their identity was lost. Brathwaite marks that the reason lies not only because of the colonial systems alone, but is also reason because of them obeying and supporting such oppressive acts. He strongly opposed both English language and the Caribbean landscape that was built by the Western materialism and so attempted at deculturizing them with the use of effective writing styles and methods like the Sycorax Video Style, tidalectics and skeleton. Only with the power of unity, Afro-Caribbean people achieve their goal of recognition of both of their ancestral history and form an identity that is identifiable with all Caribbean people in the nation.

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

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

Assist. Prof. Raad Kareem Abd -Aun

Sabrina Abd ul kadhom Abdulridha

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