

Dialogic Construction of Syncretic Identity in Derek Walcott's Select Plays

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ABSTRACT: *Derek Walcott (1930-2017), received the 1992 Nobel Prize in literature. This paper offers textual analysis of three of his plays from the point of identity politics. The works discussed are Remembrance (1977), Pantomime (1978), and The Last Carnival (1980). Derek Walcott had shared lineage as he had European and African grandparents. Early in his literary career, he grappled with the issue of identity in the Caribbean context and tried to salvage a sense of identity from the multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic diversity in his locale. In the heyday of political decolonization campaigns in the Caribbean, Derek Walcott, through his creative works, tried to sort out the identity conundrum and in the end, presented a syncretic construction of Caribbean identity. This paper, offers a reading of the afore-mentioned works through the major characters depicted in the plays: Albert Perez Jordan in Remembrance, Harry and Jackson in Pantomime, and Agatha Willett in The Last Carnival to present an analysis of the dialogic negotiations of identity that happen on stage.*

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When I see the word Ashanti as with the word Warwickshire, both separately intimating my grandfather's roots, both baptizing this neither proud not ashamed bastard, this hybrid, this West Indian."

What the Twilight Says (Walcott)

Textual space created by Derek Walcott is used as a dialogic negotiating ground for Caribbean and European characters. In their postcolonial theatrical locale both types of characters represent their distinct cultural backgrounds. Since Walcott, himself, harbored both these cultures within himself, as he had both African and European grandparents, therefore it seems as if he projects his schizophrenic consciousness onto stage and tries to find a solution for his identity problem. These twin forces can be explained in terms of the following binaries: colonized/colonizer, black/white, African/European, native/settler and the self/other. In this paper, I offer a reading of three plays of Derek Walcott, namely, *Remembrance* (1977), *Pantomime* (1978) and *The Last Carnival* (1980) for manifestations of these binaries through the characters and their perspectives; and how their interactions help them negotiate with the cultural Other for a deeper understanding of their self.

Walcott, in the plays mentioned above, presents characters that can be studied as types. They represent the Caribbean society in general. Characters of different nationalities, Caribbean and European, in particular interact on stage. The very existence of people from varying cultures poses a challenge to each individual, who then has to re-define himself in the face of the other. The existence of the cultural other tempts a society into identity politics. The society, then, has to restructure itself according to the new values brought in by the outsider(s).

This reconfiguration in mutual relationships would be the subject of this paper. I shall analyze the origin of characters within each play and then study their relationships with people who hail from a different background. Particularly, I shall look at whether this difference in nativity becomes a barrier in their interactions with the other or that it is used as a kind of tool to further their understanding of themselves.

Remembrance (1977), performed first amongst the three texts under study, presents Albert Perez Jordan, a Caribbean national, as the most important character in the play. He is a retired schoolmaster of sixty-five years and is inspired by the British culture. He prefers everything that is British over things which have their roots in the Caribbean. The conflict of the play lies in his refusal to visit the grave of his son who died in

February revolution: a movement to gain independence from the British. He refuses to accede to the repeated requests of his wife, Mabel, to visit his son's grave on the day of his seventh death anniversary. The reason for his refusal will be explored in the subsequent paragraphs.

Albert Perez Jordan is an opposite of the grandfather clock that lies on stage throughout the play wherein it represents the past while displaying the time of the present moment. Jordan on the other hand, fails to adjust his thoughts and beliefs with the changing times. He is ridiculed by his students and his family alike for fixation with the British culture. He remembers his students taunting:

Gray is ofay, black is beautiful,

Gray is shit,

(*Chanting*)

Jordan is a honky

Jordan is a honky

Jordan is a honky-donkey white nigger man! (I Prologue.

8)

Jordan's wife Mabel also makes fun of him:

I give hoping long ago that fool would change. When we was courting, he used to stroll with me by a place where an old coolie named Suraj used to keep ducks. The damn place was splattered with duck shit, but he would hold his nose high, and as he throw crumbs to the ducks in that stinking canal, he would say, "We are feeding the swans of Avon." (I. i. 19, 20)

Albert Jordan fails to understand the logic behind the Black Power riots to which he had lost his son. However, he does not blame his son, Junior, Solely, rather he hates the whole manifesto and rationale of such campaigns. Black Power movement emphasized racial consciousness among the black community. The Black Power movement emphasized on the exclusivity of the black self. It failed to acknowledge any positive influence of the other. Such a proposition was not acceptable for Albert Perez Jordan. He quotes from Blake, "A Man's worst enemies are those of his own House and Family" (I. *Prologue* 10). The quote is suggestive in the context of identity conflict within the play as he is blaming the sons of the soil whom he considered to be responsible of his son's premature death. In one of the arguments with his son Frederick, Jordan gives vent

to his sheer dissatisfaction with the Black Power ideology, “I don’t want to meet those bush-headed niggers who misled your brother” (I. i. 29). In the same strain he shows his disregard towards their cause, “What he dead for, anyway? What he gone and let them shoot him for, for “Fuck You, Whitey” and “Power to the People”? You see the people crying today? You see them going to that young fool’s grave and putting flowers?” (I. i. 30, 31).

In act II, Jordan blames his friend Ezra Pilgrim in his poem. The line, “although sons die and friends betray” (II. i. 50) alludes to his son, Junior’s death and the role Ezra Pilgrim played in shaping his son’s beliefs. Pilgrim discerns the allusion and reacts by stating, “You talking about ma so-called influence on Junior, right? Because I let him lose in my library? Because I made him read Cesaire and Marx and Fanon? That was wrong?” (II. i. 51). Jordan further blames Pilgrim for not censoring what his son wrote in his journal, ‘the Bugle’, accuses him for “recanting on the culture” they had known (II. i. 53).

Albert Jordan laments at the loss of values they held sacred. Interestingly, all the attributes of high culture Jordan alludes to are English:

What was the company we kept in our youth, Ezra? The company of great minds, great music. Right, Pilly? So we educated ourselves past ourselves, eh, Pilly boy? While our contemporaries were out chasing woman, drinking grog, and sniffing like dogs round the arse of a pension, we’d be hereafter work, right here on this veranda, right there by the seed ferns, way past supertime, reading Macaulay, Carlyle, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton to each other, Yes, friend A.P. Jordan and Ezra Pilgrim civilized themselves. (II. i. 54)

The last sentence sums up Jordan’s conception of his Self. He finds a meaning for himself only when he considers himself a prototype of his ex-master, something which his family and friends would not accept.

Jordan cherishes the English sensibility. In him the symbiotic relationship of the Self and the Other is not found; that is precisely why, he is presented as an ‘anachronistic’ character on stage. He represents a consciousness, no longer acceptable for the Caribbean society. Walcott does not portray him as a character who has found the ultimate clue to reality, rather his appearance on stage, the dream like situations within the play and the lack of linear progression of time all accentuate the confusion prevalent in Jordan’s mind and in the society as a whole.

Walcott is often alleged of asserting western cultural superiority over Caribbean thought. During precisely the same period when *Remembrance* (1977) was performed Walcott had to face similar allegations. Bruce King mentions, "Ever since the (1970) Black Power demonstrations, Walcott had been uncomfortable as critics accused him of not writing 'black 'enough...'" (King 339). For Walcott, however, such critique meant a lack of understanding of his beliefs. Through his portrayal of Jordan's character Walcott does not try to present a vision of identity which rejects everything indigenous.

There text, itself, in *Remembrance* (1977), challenges such a reading of it and offers clues which may help present a case for Jordan's redemption. Walcott intersperses in Jordan's dialogues his own thoughts about the relationship between the British culture and the black race. While remembering his past Jordan recalls a poetic lesson that he gave to his students in response to their, "Jordan is a honky-donkey white nigger man! (I. *prologue* 8), Jordan says:

Put out your hand, boy!
 I say put out your hand!
 Good! Good. Now turn it round!
 Boy, I said turn it round!
 What color is the palm, eh? Pink.
 What color is the back, eh? Black
 Well, you go learn, little nigger,
 That, just like your hand,
 What is called poetry, and art,
 Color don't matter! Color don't matter!
 (His own palm is extended. He begins to beat it)
 So learn! Learn! Learn! Learn! (I. *prologue* 8, 9)

It is this coexistence Walcott wants the Caribbean community to assimilate. Race and color, he seems to artistically imply, do not matter when it comes to culture. In one of his interviews Walcott states, "You can't separate your growth from our soil" (Conversations with DW 14).

The "soil" in this case is the European literary tradition which nourished native creative talents. Jordan's approach is thus more

inclusive of the other. He does not see any conflict in being a black and benefitting from the metropolis.

Walcott in the interview mentioned above states, “they make the silly mistake by confusing race with culture...I am saying that the exclusion of good speech, the exclusion of books, or art, or whatever, as a sort of historical revenge, as a revenge on history is very short-sighted, and is fatal.” (Conversations with DW.75) Jordan is idiosyncratic, Walcott, perhaps, wanted to say that even in as concentric a person as Jordan the colonized brethren can find something appealing and worth-following. He wants his pupils and his children to understand the worth of the English art forms that are accessible to them and that they are privileged enough to understand. He wants them to make creative use of the civilizational stream they inherit from their colonials. Jordan sums it up eloquently:

Thomas Gray is saying: it doesn't matter where you're born, how obscure you are, that fame and fortune are contained within you. Your body is the earth in which it springs and dies. And it's the humble people of this world, you Mango Head that he's concerned about. And he's concerned about them from the very first verse of his “Elegy “as he meditates aloud. Now, class, close books and recite from memory!” (II. ii 86,87)

Derek Walcott through his play *Remembrance* (1977) subtly and at times vividly reveals an aspect of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. By rejecting the “wild aides”, “wild company” (II. i. 54) of his son, Albert Perez Jordan, a mouthpiece of Walcott, presents forth the idea of making creative use of the colonial cultural heritage. Walcott himself calls it “steal [ing] back” from the empire. (Conversations w DW 75). In doing so, Jordan convinces that the natives do not stand a chance of forsaking their self or identity. Thus, a kind of syncretism between the English culture and black race is found in the character of Albert Perez Jordan, a prototype of Derek Walcott. Walcott writes about himself and says that he “could not claim to have been humiliated by the colonial experience: the exposure to colonial educational values, above all to the literary tradition of Virgil and Horace, of Shakespeare and Milton, contributed to a strength of the West Indian consciousness.” (Balme 50)

The play reminds a student of postcolonial literature the metaphor of ‘empire writes back’. Jordan, like Caliban of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* wants to empower himself by knowing the language of his

master. Through this play Walcott has addressed the issue of identity and has emphasized the need to make creative use of the influence of the 'Other' which can never be wished away. Hybridity, interdependence and symbiosis are the terms which help convey the moral of this quasi-didactic story.

Pantomime (1978), is a play that uses the symbolic storyline of Crusoe and Friday from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). The witty repartee between Harry Trewe, a hotel owner in Tobago and his servant Jackson carry forward the story of their mutual dependence. Harry is from England while his servant Jackson is a Caribbean native. Harry wants the Crusoe story performed for their Hotel clients and wants Jackson to play the role of Friday, the black servant of Robinson Crusoe in the original story. Jackson has his reservations about the role and later suggests role-reversal in which he wants Harry to play the role of his, Crusoe's, white servant. The story takes on a twist.

When Harry, rejects the proposition and orders abandonment of the idea of a performance for their clients. Jackson, then, ensues an attack on Harry's colonial mentality which does not accept the idea of a black master. The story can be studied as a comment on the identity equation between the colonizer and the colonized.

The play opens with the black and white colour images that symbolize the equation between the colonized and the colonizer. Harry enters, "*a small summerhouse or gazebo, painted white*" (Act I). He himself is wearing a white uniform. The conspicuous presence of black and white at the beginning anticipates a major concern of the play: the politics of binaries. Reference to Crusoe's story and the entry of a black servant with breakfast tray in hands pave the way for a dramatic conflict between the self and the other.

Harry, at the begging of the play represents "British imperialism, or neocolonialism, white economics power, and domination" (King 361) but later we realize that he is a lost soul and is trying to find the meaning of his existence. Though from the metropolis, he is dependent of the colony as there he is in a self-imposed exile. Jackson, representing the colony is stronger and mostly more eloquent than him. It is Harry's gradual realization and coming to terms with reality which forms the plot of the play. Harry ultimately realizes that his Self is locked in a symbiotic relationship with its Other as will be elaborated in the subsequent paragraphs.

The play presents Harry as a neocolonial character in his approach towards the colonized. At the beginning he shows his prejudice towards his cultural Other. A number of times he denigrates the colony and shows his propensity in continuing to play the role of his ancestor. Just because he is the owner of the restaurant and because Jackson is a black person, Harry takes it for granted that in Crusoe-Friday story Jackson can be his Friday: "Friday, you, bring Crusoe, me, breakfast now. Crusoe hungry (I 95). The very style in which he talks to Jackson reveals that he believes in the age old rhetoric of the colonizer: that the natives can only be talked to in words and not in sentences because they are not civilized enough to understand their coherent language. Later Harry cynically comments on the situation in the third world, "you can't leave a note because pencils break, you can't cut your wrist with the local blades..." (I 97). Harry, like Albert Perez Jordan in *Remembrance* (1977), is an anachronistic character. Both of them have a problem in adapting themselves to their immediate environment. Harry still believes in the colonial rhetoric. Jackson considers Harry's Parrot's squawks "Heinegger, Heinegger" (I 99) to have a racial connotation because according to Jackson the word if broken down phonologically becomes as 'hey nigger'.

Harry fails to give the deserved respect to his Other. In being Crusoe he represents the colonial mentality, but his Friday, Jackson, has a few things to teach him. Defending this survivor of the colonial age, the Parrot, Harry says, "The war's over Jackson! And how can a bloody parrot be prejudiced?" (I 100). Jackson in response indicts the whole colonial approach towards the Other and replies, "The same damn way they corrupt a child. By their upbringing. That parrot survive from a pre-colonial epoch, Mr. Trewe, and if it want to last in Trinidad and Tobago, then it have to adjust." The last sentence is prophetic in the context of the play, as Harry gradually does adjust himself according to his surroundings.

Jackson, representing the colonized has a firm disposition than Harry in this play. He, through his various arguments brings about a change in Harry's self-identity. Harry Trewe considered himself a representative of the metropolis, the empire, and thus thinks that his Self is independent of the Other. Little did he realize at the beginning that his salvation lies in acknowledging the fact that he is dependent on his ex-colonized, his Friday. When he ultimately admitted the fact, he is shown as a person who has come to terms with reality.

Jackson persuades Harry to respect the Other by revealing to him the treatment meted out to them by the white masters. He begins by suggesting role reversal in the Crusoe Friday story Harry wants to perform. Jackson suggests this so that Harry, an actor could get into Friday's role to know for himself what it feels like to be a slave. Jackson suggests:

Suppose I wasn't a waiter, and instead of breakfast I was serving you communion, this Sunday morning on this tropical island, and I turn to you, Friday, to teach you my faith, and I tell you, kneel down and eat this man. Well, kneel, nuh! What do you think you would say, eh? (*Pause*) You, this white savage? (I 111,112)

Jackson wants Harry to realize what they, the whites, did to the indigenous people. Jackson gets carried away and comments on how the locals were given an identity construct:

For three hundred years I served you. Three hundred years I served you breakfast in ... in my white jacket on a white veranda, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib... in that sun that never set on your empire I was your shadow, I did what you did, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib... that was my pantomime. Every moment you made your shadow copied... (I-112)

Jackson in the same strain moves on and brings home the truth by telling Harry that gradually the meaning created by the whites was replaced by a new meaning which they found for themselves "the servant start dominating the master..." he further says, "And that is why all the Pakistani and West Indians in England, all them immigrant Fridays driving you all so crazy till you go mad. In that sun that never set, they're the shadow, you can't shake them off" (I .113).

In Jackson's retelling of the Crusoe Friday story, color symbolism once again plays an important role. Harry finds it difficult to understand the new configuration, "okay, if you're a black explorer ... wait a minute... wait a minute. If you're really a white explorer but you're black, shouldn't I play a black sea bird because I'm white?" In response Jackson objects to the extension of "the limits of prejudice to include ... the flora and fauna of this island?" (I 122)

It seems that the role reversal does not suit Harry, as he says, "This is too humiliating. Now let's just forget it and please don't continue

or you're fired" (I 23). Harry, as accused later by Jackson, is unwilling to perform the role of a slave. This is something which Jackson objects to. He wants Harry to understand what it feels like to be a slave and wants the pantomime to continue. He tells him that the colonized have learnt things from their colonizers and they admit it. Jackson says, "You see, it's your people who introduced us to this culture: Shakespeare, Robinson Crusoe, the classics and so on, and when we start getting as good as them, you can't leave half way. So, I will continue? Please?" (I 124)

When Harry disallows Jackson, to act, Jackson retaliates and rightly accuses Harry of prejudice. He tries to make Harry realize that if he wants to end his exile from his true Self he needs to accept his dependence on his colonized. The following speech of Jackson conveys an important message that now the colonized are as good as the colonizers and the latter can no longer dictate their terms to them:

May I say what I think, Mr. Trewe? I think it's a matter of prejudice. I think that you cannot believe: One: that I can act, and two: that any black man should play Robinson Crusoe. A little while aback, I came out here quite calmly and normally with the breakfast things and find you almost stark naked, kneeling down, and you told me you were getting into your part. Here I am getting into my part and you object this is the story... this is history. This moment that we are now acting here is the history of imperialism; it's nothing less than that. And I don't think that I can__ should__ concede my getting into a part halfway and abandoning things, just because you, as my superior, give me orders. People become independent. Now I could go down to the beach myself with this hat, and I can play Robinson Crusoe, I could play Columbus, I could play Sir Francis Drake, I could play anybody discovering anywhere, but I don't want you to tell me when and where to draw the line! (I 125)

Walcott subsequently makes it absolutely clear that Harry is looking at this development as a representative of the white community. He does not want it to be performed because it will be offensive for the audience. HARRY: Look I'm sorry to interrupt you again, Jackson, but as I__ you know__ was watching you, I realized it's much more profound than that; it could get offensive. (I 125)

Harry's 'I' in "but as I" which is separated from the later part of the sentence stands for his Self. So it is his notion of self which is not willing to accept the Other's his master. He tries to convince Jackson that in case they reverse everything they will have to change everything. They will

convey that “two thousand years” of civilization...was wrong” (I 126). It is this imaginative re-thinking of history which is unacceptable for Harry.

Jackson's attempts are not all futile. Readers can discern a change in Harry's behavior. Once Jackson objects strongly to Harry's order abandoning the idea of a pantomime, the latter, for the first time in the play, shows some consideration towards Jackson: “Are you hurt? Have I offended you?” (I 28). At the beginning of Act II, Harry offers Jackson to have a drink with him and suggests they sit together and “work out what happened that morning” (II 134). Just after a moment for the first time in the play, Harry offers Jackson to sit and calls him “Mr. Philip”. Later Harry shares his plight with Jackson. For the first time he confides in him that he is not adjusted properly in the surroundings. Jackson has a remedy for him. He offers Harry that they go ahead with the pantomime and finish what they left unfinished because of Harry. For Harry it would be coming to terms with his surroundings as by playing the role of Jackson's Crusoe's on blacks – on his Other.

There is a kind of reconciliation between the two. Harry accepts Jackson's killing of the prejudiced parrot. Casio, the name Jackson gives to black Crusoe, becomes a symbol of Harry's syncretic Self. Harry is a changed man at the end and can accommodate the other in his consciousness of himself. He accepts his dependence on Jackson, his Friday, who helped him know, who helped him know himself. Jackson helps Harry come to terms with reality.

The Last Carnival (1980), like *Remembrance* (1977), is also a play which is linked with the Black Power movement and the riots of 1970. Walcott criticizes the vision of Black Power revolutionaries through native black character, George, whose nephew Sydney is an accomplice of the rebels who look back to Africa for the replenishment of their souls. They reject anything that comes from the west. Creole family of Fontaignes took their initial lessons in politics from Agatha, the English governess. He lived with Fontaignes' children as a brother, yet the ideology he sticks to believes that Europeans should not be living there because they do not belong in the Caribbean.

In this play Walcott presents a French Creole family which hires an English governess to look after their children. The governess, Agatha Willett is a strong and politically informed character. She is steeped in British socialist tradition. The moment she arrives in Trinidad and Tobago she gives Marxist critique of the local systems. She trains Jean Beauxchamps, a black servant of the Fontaignes in Socialism. Jean later

becomes a minister in the post-independence government. Sydney, later a black Power adherent, also owes his political awareness to Agatha. In *The Last Carnival* (1980), Walcott emphasizes upon the fact that political awareness, particularly socialism that came to the Caribbean is also indebted to the British socialist tradition.

The play begins with an oblique statement on the political situation in Trinidad and Tobago. "A green wooden shed marked H.M. CUSTOMS, NO TRESPASSING" (I i.), reveals that the area is under British control. The indigenous element is also presented through, "A steel band in the distance" (I i.). The gray colour that is mentioned also underscores the lack of exclusivity between these two cultures: one symbolized by H.M Customs, the other by the steel band playing in the distance. The beginning is quite prophetic as Walcott gradually highlights the syncretic nature of Caribbean society in general and its politics in particular.

Agatha Willet is the most formidable character in the play. She comes from the centre to the periphery. The plot of the play mainly revolves around her: the way she caribbeanizes herself and how significantly she changes the Caribbean people around her. She is also like a Crusoe figure. Her remark on her arrival, "The light's astonishing. So clear! All this. It's as if the world were making a fresh start" (I. i. 6), is reminiscent of Crusoe. She in her own right brings new meaning for things around her. Unlike the original Crusoe, here she has to take into account the influence of the natives—in this case that of Victor who swore her in "I'm here for good" oath. (I. i. 8). Her statement towards the end of the play sums up the nature of her relationship with the Caribbean society: "I tried to change the island and it changed me." (II. ii. 92)

The way Agatha influences the native black politics of the Island offers the most tangible support to the thesis of this paper: the influence of the Other in shaping native identity systems. Agatha begins giving political lessons to everyone around her the moment she arrives on the Island. In response to Victor's brother, Oswald orders his black servant, George, "Move your fat, black Trinidadian ares!" Agatha replies, "I'll carry it, did you bring this poor man out on Sunday to lift one bag?" (I. i. 11). In the next scene she once again comments on the wretched state of the women working: "Those estate women, the ones in rags there working in the cocoa. They look tired enough to drop" Her concern for the natives makes her question, "Do they get bonuses for overtime?" (I. ii. 15).

Agatha begins a school in the back verandah and teaches the natives that they are equal. She teaches Jean, the maid of the house, to call her owners by their first name. The play is replete with episodes where Agatha spreads the socialist ideology she learnt while living in England. It is her training which makes a politician out of Jean Beauxchaps. Earlier she was maid-servant at the fontaigns'.

AGATHA: but today Jean Beauxchamps has a voice in our government.

BROWN: She certainly does. Avery British voice. (II. i. 60)

Through this Walcott wants to emphasize that even in such a decolonized concept as Socialism, the Caribbean owes its initiation to the metropolis, to its Other.

Walcott, repeatedly in his plays rejects the notion of identity in which the Self is presented as an entity exclusive of the Other influence. In his play, *Remembrance* (1977), he has already made it evident that such a vision is myopic. In *The Last Carnival* (1980), as well he presents an invisible character: the Black Power movement. But never does he present the movement as a viable political alternative to the one existing, "Oswald: Black people don't know what the arse they want! Country is a black county, the government black!" (II. i. 59). Walcott makes a political point when the Black servant says, "They give us independence and we start fighting. (II.i 54). Through many references Walcott comments on the myopic vision of the revolutionaries of the Black Power campaign. He makes the readers see how Agatha strived to empower the indigenous people, yet the adherents see her and the Fontaignes as their enemies and burn down their state at a Santa Rosa as a result it becomes difficult for the family to even stay in the Caribbean. The plot of the play carries forward the tale of a mutually beneficial relationship between an English character, Agatha Willet, and the Caribbean people. Walcott uses various techniques which help convey the message that only a hybridized vision of Caribbean identity can pave the way towards harmonious society. The motif of cocoa is used in the play. At the very outset Agatha Willet smelling the fragrance of cocoa says that it has something to do with England going to war. Cocoa is used as a metaphor to highlight the link between Europe and its Central American colonies. It also becomes a metaphor of symbiosis between the metropolis and the colony. The play ends with a reference to the cocoa beans: "And the smell of the cocoa beans was good omen." (II. iv. 101). It is as if Walcott wanted to present his solution to the myriad problems prevalent in the Caribbean society

that by highlighting things that the metropolis and the colony share, can bring them closer, help them understand and respect each other.

The carnival performed by the Fontaigness is also an image which highlight syncretism between different genres. Carnival, as Walcott mentioned in an interview, is neither drama not poem. It is a bit of both. In this carnival, the nationalities also intermingle: Agatha plays a French pierrot. Walcott notion of the “great almostness” of carnival van help us understand how it accentuates the three of the play. Walcott believed that carnival is not an exclusive genre. He stated, “...elements combine to make the curious force of Carnival its great almostness, its near-poetry from the calypso, its near orchestra from the steel-band, its near theater form its bands, it’s near sculpture from its craftsmen.” (Balme 51). The carnival scene thus subtly comments on the Caribbean society, that it’s neither based on Christopher Balme writes about Walcott:

A radical counter-position to Naipaul and the Eurocentric ideology he represents emerged in the 1960s in the wake of the black-consciousness movement in the United States, which quickly found followers in the Caribbean. A new Afro-centric cultural ideology grew up which concentrated on and revalorized the retentions of African culture in the Caribbean. In these competing and highly polarized positions Walcott assumes the role of a mediator. (Balme 49)

Derek Walcott proceeded with his thesis: the West-Indian society cannot truly decolonize itself, unless its vision of itself is essentially syncretic. Walcott can thus be seen not only as a playwright par excellence but also as a visionary. Due to his shared lineage he was in the identity imbroglio that goaded him as a writer to find the solution creatively. He imbibed the two cultural streams to replenish his creative Self. He paved the way and enabled the Caribbean subjectivities to come to terms with their colonial past and benefit from the syncretic resourcefulness in their journey into the future.

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