CARIBBEAN THEATRE: A POST-COLONIAL STORY

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I am going to speak about Caribbean theatre and drama in English, which are also called West Indian theatre and West Indian drama. The story is one of how theatre in the English-speaking Caribbean developed out of a colonial situation, to cater more and more relevantly to native Caribbean society, and how that change of focus inevitably brought with it the writing of plays that address Caribbean concerns, and do that so well that they can command admiring attention from audiences outside the Caribbean.

I shall begin by taking up Ms [Chihoko] Matsuda's suggestion that I say something about my own involvement in theatre, which happened a long time ago. It occurs to me now that my story may help to illustrate how Caribbean theatre has changed over the years and, in the process, involved the emergence of Caribbean drama. Theatre was my hobby from early, and I was actively involved in it from the mid-Nineteen Fifties until the early Nineteen Seventies. It was never likely to be more than a hobby. There has never been a professional theatre in the Caribbean, from which one could make a living, so the thought never entered my mind. And when I stopped being actively involved in theatre, forty years ago, it was because the demands of my job, coinciding with the demands of raising a family, severely curtailed the time I had for stage work, especially for rehearsals.

When I was actively involved in theatre, it was mainly as an actor, although I also did some

Baugh playing Polonius in *Hamlet* (1967)

Baugh playing Creon in *Antigone* (1962)

directing. The productions in which I was involved give some indication of the focus and aspirations of Caribbean theatre at that period. I acted in nine productions and directed two. Almost all of the eleven were English or European plays that could be called classics. Five of those in which I acted were by Shakespeare: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*. The other four included Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*, and Christopher Fry's *The Lady's Not For Burning*, a romantic comedy then in vogue in London and New York. The fourth was a popular English or American thriller, whose title and author I don't remember. The two plays which I directed were by major American writers: John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.

So I suppose I can claim that I was helping to bring high-quality drama to the Caribbean stage, but it was not Caribbean drama. However, at the time when I was active in theatre, Caribbean drama **was** beginning to fulfill more closely the primary function of theatre: to make a society see itself, critically.

As Wycliffe Bennett and Hazel Bennett write in their book *The Jamaican Theatre*: "One of the consequences of the British conquest [of the Caribbean] was that, by becoming English-speaking, Jamaica acquired British national memories, ideas, legends and customs that flow from one generation to the next through the English language."[1] Up to well into the twentieth century, "the theatrical scene [was] dominated by touring companies from overseas."[2] Local theatre groups consisted exclusively of British expatriates and white or near-white Jamaicans, and "Up to the late 1930s […] the number of black faces in the audience at theatrical productions could be counted on the fingers of one hand."[3]

> The situation was much the same throughout the West Indies. As Bruce King writes:
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> Before 1948 most high culture was imported and there was little in the way of indigenous theatre. The few local amateur theatre groups were white, with some light-skinned non-whites, and performed European or American plays.[4]

In Barbados,

> the Bridgetown Players [established in 1942] and the Green Room [Theatre, established 1951, were] dominated by white expatriates, assisted by white and not-quite-white Barbadians. The productions catered to the taste of a socially privileged minority, offering light material, such as English drawing-room comedy and "whodunnits" …. [5]

It was from the end of the 1940s that Caribbean theatre in English began to change its "colour," with the gradual emergence of gifted Caribbean playwrights exploring Caribbean themes, and with a corresponding rise of Caribbean actors and directors of a Caribbean orientation. One or two landmark events will illustrate. I begin with a personal experience.

In March 1954 I was still living in my hometown of Port Antonio, which is a good distance from Kingston, the capital of Jamaica and also the theatre capital of Jamaica. I used to read newspaper reviews of plays produced in Kingston, and I longed to be able to see them. I would be entering the University College of the West Indies as a student in October. I saw a complimentary review of a play, *Henri Christophe*, staged by the College's Dramatic Society, the student drama group of the College. The group was very active and their productions were of a high standard. But what was remarkable about this play was not only that it had been written by a student, but also that it was about the Haitian Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the black Haitian slaves revolted successfully against their white, French colonial masters, a landmark event in Caribbean history. My anticipation of becoming a student at the College was heightened by the thought of being in an environment where such a development in Caribbean theatre could occur.

That play was written and directed by Derek Walcott, who was to become the leading playwright of the English-speaking Caribbean, and a major pioneer in the development of Caribbean theatre. Even before he had entered the University College as a student, Walcott had made Caribbean theatre history by being co-founder of the St Lucia Arts Guild, whose aim was precisely the creation of truly Caribbean theatre. The leaders of the group included his twin brother, Roderick, who was also to become a notable dramatist. *Henri Christophe* was the first play performed by the St Lucia Arts Guild, in 1950, before Derek began his studies at the University College of the West Indies.

Derek Walcott was naturally a leading figure in the University Dramatic Society, which

> played a seminal role in the development of theatre in the West Indies, not only by leading the way with quality West Indian (and other) productions, but also through the work of UCWI graduates in the communities and schools of the region.[6]

After Walcott graduated from the College, he continued to live in Kingston for a while and remained a vital presence in the University Dramatic Society. In 1956 the group produced other ground-breaking, early Caribbean plays of his: *The Sea at Dauphin*, about the hard lives of the fisher-folk of St Lucia, and the internationally acclaimed *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*, based on a St

Lucian folktale and the Caribbean experience of plantation slavery and its legacy. It also drew tellingly, in respect of both form and theme, on a traditional St Lucian folk performance (theatre of the street), a mime performed at Christmas. In the mode of presentation of the play, Walcott also drew artfully on Japanese Noh theatre. The creative exploitation of Caribbean folkways – stories, proverbs, beliefs, customs, characters, performances -- was to become an important factor, also used by other path-finding playwrights. The inner-city life of the proletariat further extended their portrait of the people.

A major step in the progress toward a Caribbean theatre was made at the end of the 1950s, when Walcott relocated to Trinidad and soon founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop. He had gone to Trinidad for the production of the pageant *Drums and Colours: an Epic Drama*, which he had been commissioned to write to celebrate the opening of the Parliament of the newly-formed Federation of the West Indies. It is significant that the emergence of Caribbean drama coincided with the move toward political independence and nationhood for the British West Indian colonies. That a Caribbean writer was chosen for the pageant, and that Walcott, albeit still not at his maturity as a playwright, was the obvious choice, are facts of obvious significance. The pageant took a survey of Caribbean history, through selective episodes, exploring the struggle of Caribbean people for self-realisation.

The effort to spawn a truly Caribbean theatre had begun to make itself felt in the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, when a nationalistic impetus began to gather voice in Britain's Caribbean colonies. In Guyana there was the Georgetown Dramatic Club, and by 1966, when the Theatre Guild of Guyana, which took in the Dramatic Club and other groups, staged significant Caribbean plays such as Jan Carew's *University of Hunger*, it could be said that the "common people" were being drawn to the theatre.

In Trinidad, Errol Hill, beginning to make his presence felt as one of the region's shapers of theatre – as actor, director, drama tutor, playwright – founded the Whitehall Players in 1946. Their productions included his own *Ping Pong* and *Man Better Man*, in which notable forms of Trinidadian folk performance, especially carnival, calypso and stick-fighting, are centrally informing structural and thematic features.

In the 1950s, while he was Drama Tutor for the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University College of the West Indies in Jamaica, Hill established the Federal Theatre Company, a short-lived but significant contribution to the development of Caribbean theatre. Among the plays produced by the company were Charles Archibald's *Junction Village* and Derek Walcott's *Ione*. Another of Hill's signal achievements, during the 1960s, was in getting the University's Extra-Mural Department to publish, in modest, inexpensive format, a good few of the new plays, thereby making the scripts available to groups throughout the region for production. Then there were his own substantial, scholarly books on theatre in the Caribbean.

Another change-making development occurred in the later 1950s, when Lloyd Reckord, actor and director, and his brother Barry Reckord, playwright, took the spotlight of the Jamaican

stage. Their first outstanding collaboration was Lloyd's production of Barry's play *Della*, followed by *Miss Unusual*. However, they soon returned to England, where Barry had taken a degree at Cambridge University and Lloyd had studied at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre. They felt that the Jamaican scene did not allow enough scope for the most profitable exercise of their talents. They made their presence felt on the London stage, and Barry continued to live and work in London. Lloyd eventually returned to Jamaica, where he was again a leader of local theatre, including more of Barry's plays in his production list. He also made a name for himself as director and actor in films of Jamaican scripts, shot in Jamaica and in London. Through their work in England, the Reckord brothers helped to bring Caribbean drama to metropolitan attention.

Other Caribbean theatre personalities also found it desirable to try their fortunes in London theatre. A few have been quite successful, taking notable places in a Caribbean theatrical diaspora that parallels the diaspora of novelists and poets. One thinks, for example, of the Trinidadian playwright Errol John, author of the well-known *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*, and of the Jamaican Yvonne Brewster (née Jones), who made a name for herself in British theatre, as director, actor and lecturer, promulgator of Caribbean and Black British drama. Before that, she had made her mark in Jamaica as one of the founders of the Barn Theatre in the late 1960s. The Barn theatre was the converted garage of the Jones family home, and the group's resort to this arena was partly the result of the very limited availability of traditional theatre space. It was named after the Barn theatre in England, the acting arena of the Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama, at which Jones and Trevor Rhone had both studied. The Barn proved to be the forerunner to other small, intimate playing areas, fashioned from retrofitted houses and buildings. These set the trend for a kind of locally written play that called for small casts.

Brewster has said that in the early days of the Barn it was difficult to find "relevant, topical local work," and so "Trevor [Rhone] became playwright."[7] Like other Caribbean theatre practitioners who had studied in theatre schools in England, Rhone had benefited in respect of acting, directing and stagecraft. "His one important reservation about the experience was that he was being forced, in that ambience, to deny his own roots and to acknowledge the roots of England instead."[8] Disappointed in his attempt to make a theatre career for himself in London, he returned to Jamaica in 1965, became one of the founders of the Barn Theatre, and began to write plays to fill the need for locally-based drama.

His talent was almost immediately recognized and he has for long been acknowledged as one of the Caribbean's most considerable and compelling playwrights. His name became almost synonymous with the Barn theatre. From the beginning, his work was greeted with elation, for its combination of relevance and quality, and he helped noticeably to broaden the range of Kingston theatre-goers. Generally speaking, he addressed social issues through well-developed Jamaican characters and with impressive use of Jamaican speech and humour. For example, his *Smile Orange*, one of his most popular plays, which was also made into a successful film, is a satirical exposé of the unfortunate, laughable and retrogressive effects of the lengths to which

Jamaicans will go in pursuit of the tourist dollar, the tourist being, of course, typically white and First- World. The seeming compromise of self-respect in the effort to better their socio-economic condition is continuous with the inheritance of class and colour values from the time of plantation slavery. At the same time, one may take sympathetic delight in the cunning and ingenuity which are at work in their scramble for self-advancement, and in the extent to which they may seem to be knowingly "distanced" from their apparent self-abasement. This too is consistent with the people's historically driven capacity to survive.

Walcott, Reckord, Rhone remain the most considerable Caribbean playwrights, along with Dennis Scott, whose plays also came out of the 1960s and 1970s, but whom time does not allow me to speak about. Others have made appreciable contributions to the development of Caribbean drama, with the odd individual play worthy of being named among the "classics." Caribbean theatre has been quite active over the last thirty-five years, perhaps especially in Jamaica, but its vitality there may be regarded as a factor of its having stuck to a vogue in which the audience's laughter is the dominant motivator.

I shall now illustrate something of the nature and quality of Caribbean drama at its best, by saying a little about two plays: Trevor Rhone's *Old Story Time*, first produced in 1979, and Derek Walcott's *Remembrance*, first produced in 1977.

Old Story Time is a very Jamaican play. It deals with pervasive socio-cultural issues grounded in Caribbean history, issues which adversely affect personal relationships. As the title suggests, the play tells a story that is both a story from old times as well as "the same old story," often relived. It features a few characters who may be appreciated as typically Jamaican, although they manifest individuality which makes them more than just types.

The play is primarily the story of the relationship between Miss Aggy, a poor single mother, and her son Len, her only child, her "one-son" as Jamaicans would say, indicating a particularly intense love, protectiveness and ambition directed from parent to child. The relationship between them is all the more special because no other family relations are evident in their lives. Miss Aggy ekes out a hard living as a vendor of fruits, vegetables and "ground provisions," and she often denies herself minimal comforts in order to provide for Len and enable him to attend school. Her pride in him is enhanced by the fact that he is bright and wins a scholarship to an elite high school for boys.

Understandably, like other mothers of her class, Miss Aggy sees education, the education which she never had, as the only means by which her child will be a success, will achieve upward social mobility, and pull himself out of the state of deprivation into which he was born. However, success for Len, as she sees it, will mean turning his back on his origins, and catering to the inferiority complex and the class and colour prejudice by which Miss Aggy has been victimized. She and her son are black, meaning, for Jamaicans, ostensibly undiluted black. However, she is vehemently opposed to his fraternizing with the black girls of the district, and is set on his one day

marrying "Miss Margaret," daughter of the rector of her church, desirable, in Miss Aggy's eyes, by virtue of her social status, her light complexion and long, straight hair. In other words, Miss Aggy suffers from the inferiority complex that she has internalized.

Len is bright, and fortunate enough to manage to go to university in England, living up to his mother's ambition for him. However, she is worried when she virtually stops hearing from him, and horrified when she hears that he has married a black woman. When Len and his wife, Lois, return to Jamaica, there is a bristling tension between them and Miss Aggy, who is sarcastically hostile to Lois.

From this point, the play becomes a web of suspicion, secrets and surprising revelations among the various characters. For instance, in addition to her sense of threat from Lois, Miss Aggy is shattered to learn that George, light-complexioned and middle-class, who had been at high school with Len, and who had persuaded her to let him manage the money she was saving to buy a house for Len – that George has been defrauding her. George's true "colour" is shown up when we learn, not only that he has been systematically defrauding persons who have entrusted their money to his housing development company, but also that at school he had brutally directed his class and colour prejudice against Len. What is more, it turns out that Margaret, whom Miss Aggy had held up to Len as the girl to whom he should aspire, was herself prejudiced against Len and looked down on him.

Miss Aggy, her certainties knocked from under her feet, is convinced that someone, most likely Lois, has set obeah (witchcraft) on her. Determined to retaliate, she seeks out an "obeah woman" to help her get even with Lois. Lois, meanwhile, has had **her** secret exposed. When she was working at the bank, where George was her superior, it was she who was helping Len financially when he was studying in England. At a difficult time, she had defrauded a bit of the bank's money. George undertook to keep this a secret in exchange for his having sex with her. This was repulsive to her, but in the circumstances she had no choice. So here was another secret that she had to keep from Len.

Len, anxious about his mother and his wife, and fearing what his mother might do to his wife, decides, against his rational, enlightened nature, to seek the help of an obeah woman. In a farcical sequence, he disguises himself as a woman in order to visit the obeah woman. Then we see him, back at home, ludicrously following the obeah woman's instructions as he carries out the ritual of casting a spell to throw out the evil spirit that has taken possession of Miss Aggy.

By now Miss Aggy has become aware of the error of her ways and of her prejudiced misunderstanding of Lois. Not only is she deeply apologetic to Lois and Len, but she is also determined to seek out George and kill him, seemingly aware that this will mean, in one way or another, the end of her own life. Her soul is troubled, and on fire with revenge. However, before she can set out to find George, the others take hold of her and, repeating Psalm 23 from the Bible, begin to perform a ritual to exorcise her soul. The ritual includes the singing of an African chant. Eventually, Miss Aggy is released from the evil spirit, and from her desire for revenge, and all is

love and peace between her and her "children," between her and the world. As Pa Ben says,

> All night long we pray. We pray for strength in this the vigil of the long night. We bind ourselves together with strength and trust and confidence, […] for we knew that the one force that could counteract all evil was there, and that force was love.[9]

Pa Ben: I mention him last, but he is by no means least. Although he is not so indispensable to the plot as is Miss Aggy, or Len, or Lois, or even George, he is crucial to the feeling, manner, tone and meaning of the play, and is one of its two most memorable and endearing characters, the other being Miss Aggy. Pa Ben is the narrator, grounded in the Caribbean folk tradition of the storyteller, typically one of the older members of the community or village. In earlier times, in rural parts, before electricity, radio, television and video games, he/she would, at nightfall, gather the children, or other members of the village, around him/her and tell them stories, stories passed down from one generation to the next. These stories would often be fables, expressing the beliefs, grass-roots wisdom, and humour of the people. They were also, to some extent, the oral history of the people. The title of the play, then, also indicates that the performance is an extension and continuation of that story-telling tradition. Indeed, it begins with Pa Ben gathering the other actors around him and explaining to them the tradition of "old-time" storytelling. So we, the theatre audience, are extensions of them.

Pa Ben is ideally suited to be the narrator. He is an observer-narrator who also participates in the story he is telling. He is Miss Aggy's neighbour, friend and confidant. Our kindly feeling for Miss Aggy, never mind her prejudices and weaknesses, is informed by Pa Ben's amused, affectionate understanding of her. He becomes involved, in a confidential way, in the tension between her and Len, and by sharing his knowledge with us he makes us enjoy a privileged understanding of the entanglements and developments.

Walcott's *Remembrance* also deals, more explicitly and more analytically than *Old Story Time*, with the impact of the colonial legacy on succeeding Caribbean generations. It also complements *Old Story Time* by virtue of the fact that it looks primarily at the middle class. Interestingly, when the play was first produced in Jamaica, in January 1980, the venue was the Barn theatre, and the producer was Trevor Rhone.

In his programme note to the production of *Remembrance* in Port of Spain in 1979, Walcott says that the play "was written in honour of great teachers [he had] had the privilege of knowing in [his] boyhood, whose encouragement and love [had] made it possible for [him], a generation later, to write a play for them." This "sincere and painful tribute" was all the more timely because those teachers had now fallen out of favour with the new "radicals and revolutionaries" who paid them, at best, "grudging or ironic respect." Walcott's mother, one of the three persons to whom the play is dedicated, belongs to that group. Popularly called "Teacher Alix," she was the highly respected Head Teacher of the Methodist Infant School in Castries.

Remembrance tells the story of Albert Perez Jordan, a retired schoolmaster of Port of Spain, who saw it as his life's work to contribute to society by passing on to younger generations the

"sound colonial education," to use Walcott's half-ironic phrase from his poem "The Schooner *Flight*". He boasts, reminiscently, about how, "reading Macaulay, Carlyle, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton to each other … A.P. Jordan and young Ezra Pilgrim civilized themselves."[10] When we first meet him, he is deep in memory, acting out his life's commitment as he recites, to a class of boys, a famous English poem, much taught in colonial times in Caribbean schools, Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." He instructs the boys to learn the poem by rote. In the tropical heat of the schoolroom, he is dressed in jacket, tie and waistcoat, markers of colonial respectability. The boys make fun of him behind his back, calling him "One Jacket Jordan" and chanting, "Jordan is a honky-donkey white nigger man."[11] As he flogs one of the boys, he drums into him, "Colour don't matter!"[12] Ironically though, as we shall see, colour does matter, subtly and deeply, to Jordan, despite his better judgement.

Indeed, the strength and thought-provoking quality of the play derive partly from the fact that the portrayal, the life of the man of honour, Jordan, raises questions and qualifications about his values and certainties, even as it holds him up to acclamation. This factor may be one of the meanings suggested in Walcott's use of the word "painful" in his programme note. What the play enacts is the realization that the assessment of a Jordan, including his own assessment of himself, is nuanced and problematic, not a case of "black and white."

Language is a revealing aspect of Jordan's conflicted self, and the play of language contributes to the drama's pointed liveliness and humour. Jordan drills into the boys that they must always observe correct diction, meaning the diction of "proper" English, but he himself falls back, expertly and naturally, into Trinidadian speech. When a young reporter, interviewing Jordan, says, in reference to his tape recorder, 'Lemme erase [something],' Jordan immediately corrects him, but the language of the correction is ironically split: "Not 'lemme erase,' boy. Let me erase. You write for Ezra Pilgrim's paper and is so all you does talk?"[13] When, in the early stages of his trying to impress her, Jordan puts on his showily best English for the English woman Esther, she replies, condescendingly, "Your accent is almost flawless, Mr Jordan. When are you going to be yourself?"[14] The richly suggestive play of language, in the continuum of registers between Standard English and Caribbean creoles, has been a distinguishing feature of Caribbean drama.

The nuancing being indicated here is integral to the theatrical inventiveness of the structure of *Remembrance*. Jordan, as the narrator of his own life-story, is put into a position where he necessarily reflects, sometimes painfully, on the ambitions, achievements, failures of that life. His very good friend and jolly, down-to-earth drinking partner, Ezra Pilgrim, editor of a newspaper, has decided to publish an interview with Jordan about his career. One of the ways in which the audience's regard for Jordan is generated is by the regard which other characters in the play, such as Pilgrim, have for him. Pilgrim sends one of his young reporters to do the interview. This situation helps to set our focus on the role of the generation gap in the society's attitude to a Jordan, and on how Jordan has responded to the changes in the society's dealings with its

colonial legacy.

The factor of change is foregrounded by the choice of the time in which the present action is set. It is seven years after the failed attempt at a Black Power revolution, an obvious reference to actual events in Trinidad in 1970. But although the attempt failed, radical change in the society's attitude to the persisting colonial legacy in respect of class and colour was quickened, and Jordan cannot reconcile himself to those changes. More crucially, the change had caused him a deep personal wound that seemingly can't be healed. One of his two sons, "Junior," contrary to all that his father stood for, had taken up with the young revolutionary guerrillas and had been killed by the police. Jordan's inconsolable anger at this ostensible betrayal is complicated by the innuendo that the son's action had been a direct reaction to his father's view of things; in other words, the idea that he, Jordan, was indirectly responsible for Junior's death.

On every anniversary of Junior's death, Jordan's wife, Mabel, and their other son, Frederick, visit his grave in homage, but Jordan refuses to go. His bitterness would seem to be a cold putting of Junior out of his mind. This would be the opposite of the truth. As he tells Pilgrim: "They put a hole in that boy's body, but they've ripped out a hole in my own heart that nothing, nothing can fill."[15]

Jordan has enjoyed minor success as a short-story writer, and the interviewer opens the interview by asking him to speak about the two stories that have been most anthologized – to speak about them by way of their seeming autobiographical content. This strategy allows for an attention-holding segue, from Jordan talking about remembered episodes of his life to the immediacy of his re-enacting those episodes. The strategy also brings into focus the question of the relationship between fact and fiction in autobiography, and the probability that one's reconstruction and understanding of one's life, is to some degree a matter of self-invention. When the reporter asks Jordan whether one can "say that the work of Albert Perez Jordan was his life," Jordan replies: "You can say it, if you prepared for libel. It is fiction. I always added a little truth to my stories."[16] That said, we are amused to note that, when he begins to enact the story, he enters completely into the "fiction."

Jordan's two short stories interrogate his inherited colonial values and attachment. In the first, "Barrley on the Roof," "a satire on independence," Jordan's son Frederick, an artist, has painted the American flag, the "Stars and Stripes," on the roof of their house. Jordan is scandalized by this bizarre act, not least because it seems to celebrate the neo-colonial United States rather than the Great Britain to which he feels himself and his country attached. He orders Frederick to erase the painting. However, just then there appears a brash American, Barrley, who has seen the roof-painting from the Hilton hotel, where he is staying, and has rushed down to buy the painting. As Jordan remarks, "You Americans feel you can buy any blasted thing."[17] But this feeling is "in sync" with what Barrley knows to be a reality of the former Caribbean colonies of Britain, a reality stated in a piece of verse that he has brought with him: "if independence [from Britain] ain't what you expect, / just call the United States, collect."[18] Curiously, ironically, when

Frederick insists that he is not selling the painting (which would mean selling the roof), Jordan changes his tune, so to speak, and encourages Frederick to sell. Selling would mean that Frederick would get some much needed money to help finance his painting career, he would get "sponsorship." Frederick refuses to sell, on principle. The story ends with the omniscient narrator, in Jordan's voice, saying: "Barrley staggered down the sunny sidewalk … , stunned with admiration. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world but to lose his own roof?"[19]

The second story, "My War Effort," is set thirty years earlier, during the time of the Second World War, when Trinidad was still a colony of Great Britain, whose West Indian colonies extended themselves, as they were expected to do,
to help "the mother country." As **his** contribution to the "effort," the protagonist of the story (Jordan in thin disguise) works in the Information Office, where his immediate superior is a young Englishwoman, Esther Hope. Although he is apparently likely to marry Mabel, he is dazzled by Esther and makes romantic advances to her, asking her to marry him. For a time she treats his advances lightly, but when she eventually decides to accept his proposal, his courage fails him and he "runs off." Esther returns to England and he never sees her again. Reflecting ruefully on his action, he observes: "To stay within the boundaries of my race and not cross over, even for love."[20]

One may wonder whether he was indeed in love with Esther, or only with the idea of her as a lovely embodiment of the supposed superiority to which he aspired. His sense of guilt never left him; so now, in the play's present time, a young, white American woman with a baby in her arms, wanders into his house. The woman, Anna, is trying to get as far South as possible, away from her humiliating failure to find success as a ballet dancer. Meeting her, Jordan thinks immediately of Esther, and seeks to make amends vicariously by getting his son Frederick to marry her. Here again, Frederick refuses, sticking to his own principles; nor is Anna carried away by the apparent romantic possibility. Jordan is a loser once again.

A most memorable character in the play, and one who is crucial to our response to Jordan, is his wife, Mabel. Their marriage may be a case of opposites attracting one another. There is nothing of Jordan's romantic idealism about her. She is down-to-earth, no-nonsense, outspoken, sharp-tongued, ever ready, even hurtfully so, to puncture the bubble of Jordan's dreams. Still, she is a good wife, and has her own pathos. She had gone to another town for a week, "to catch some rest," only to return to find, as she puts it, "some hippie and my last son strolling arm in arm like man and wife."[21] In spite of seeing through Jordan, she understands and admires in her way his commitment to his career. Our affection for Jordan and our final assessment of him are perhaps best pointed by Mabel's last words. She tells him that she is "gone ahead to polish the crown He will have for you. 'Cause you was argumentative, stupid, and a stubborn man, but you was a king to me."[22]

At the end of the play he is engrossed in memory, trying to get all the "blasted young whippersnappers" to understand what Thomas Gray is saying: "It doesn't matter where you're

born, how obscure you are, that fame and fortune are contained within you."[23] But it is Jordan whom we think of most as he says that. The play ends with him reciting Gray's "Elegy," with the class reciting after him. It is an elegy for himself.

In finding themselves, Caribbean drama and theatre did not seek to cut themselves off exclusively from the drama and theatre of the ex-colonial power (even if that were possible). Rather, they drew on, and adapted to their purposes, the drama and theatre of Europe, as well as the drama and theatre of other cultures across the globe. In that respect they embody the characteristic multi-culturalism of the Caribbean and its aesthetics.

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[1] Wycliffe Bennett and Hazel Bennett, *The Jamaican Theatre* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2011), p.47.

[2] *Ibid*., p.25.

[3] *Ibid*., p.26.

[4] Bruce King, *Derek Walcott and West Indian Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.6.

[5] Edward Baugh, *Frank Collymore: a Biography* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2009), p.241.

[6] Mary Morgan, in Wycliffe Bennett and Hazel Bennett, *The Jamaican Theatre*, p.110.

[7] In Wycliffe Bennett and Hazel Bennett, *The Jamaican Theatre*, p.91.

[8] Mervyn Morris, Introduction to Trevor D. Rhone, *Old Story Time and Other Plays* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1981), p.ix.

[9] *Old Story Time and Other Plays*, p.87.

[10] *Ibid*., p.54.

[11] Derek Walcott, *Remembrance & Pantomime* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980), p.8.

[12] *Ibid*., p.9.

[13] *Ibid*., p.6.

[14] *Ibid*., p.36.

[15] *Ibid*., p.54.

[16] *Ibid*., p.9.

[17] *Ibid*., p.23.

[18] *Ibid*., p.28.

[19] *Ibid*., p.28.

[20] *Ibid*., p.46.

[21] *Ibid*., p.70.

[22] *Ibid*., p.84.

[23] *Ibid*., p.86.