

Burning Down London Bridge: England and Africa in the Shaping of Kamau Brathwaite

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Brathwaite's experiences in England

Kamau Brathwaite used the metaphor “rooflessness” to describe his experience as a student in Britain after he had won a scholarship to study history at the University of Cambridge in 1950. The English attitude toward the people from the colonies, in other words, made him feel unwelcome. There was the widely held view that people from the colonies were ignorant and they were stereotyped as heathens. This is brought out in his interview with Erika Smilowitz in which he stated that he was introduced to the Bible as if he was unaware of it, by students at the University of Cambridge, whom he considered to be less ignorant than the English population at large.¹ Some students, therefore, sought to have him Christianised thus reflecting the notion that non-Caucasian citizens from the colonies were inferior, as evidenced by their lack of Christianity. Kenneth Little supports Brathwaite's contention that British people were ignorant, and also enunciates that in some instances their interest in blacks was merely a reflection of an attempt or obligation to Christianise them. Therefore, he states that:

Many English people who are willing to offer hospitality to coloured persons, are very badly informed about Colonial and coloured countries and their peoples and cultures; they tend very much to regard the latter from a conventional and 'superior' European angle. Others, who view the matter from a pronounced 'Christian' point of view, accept the obligation more from a conception of duty rather than any real interest in their guests, and some even take advantage of the opportunity to expound their own religious attitudes in an attempt at proselytization.²

Based on his experience in the 1960s as a student in Birmingham, Elliott Bastien writes about the English ignorance as follows:

Trinidad, Barbados, Dominica. Where is that? What part of Africa – The West Indian is quite sensitive about his African origin and through a thorough brainwashing is yet unable to think of Africa as anything but a jungle and primitive peoples – No, the West Indies! Ah yes! You are a Jamaican. Well, sort of.³

Here he indicates that these English students were largely ignorant of the names of British West Indian territories, as reflected in their initial misconceptions that the places of origin mentioned, except that it must be part of Africa. And this was a conclusion, more than likely based upon the skin colour of the residents of these territories with whom they were having the conversation. He further adds, “Students from the West Indies find this lack of knowledge of the Caribbean on the part of the English very surprising.”⁴ A student in England during the 1950s, Mervyn Morris also registers his surprise at English people's lack of knowledge of the region and their tendencies to arrive at wrong conclusions about the residents thereof.⁵

In the imperial country, it was therefore brought out forcefully that non-Caucasians were considered to be inferior. Brathwaite's experience, however, did not develop within him the view or conviction that he was less than others. In fact it demonstrated that the so-called 'civilised' English were ignorant in many respects. Perhaps, such awareness along with what he developed in Ghana helped him to later defend and promote alternative religious forms created in the Caribbean. He therefore eventually reflected the position of a cacique who questioned the basis of there being a need for him to be baptised in order to go to heaven, when he was being put to death by some Spaniards. The cacique's position was that, since other Spaniards would be there, that was one place he would not want to be⁶. The notion of the inferiority accorded to others and his feeling of estrangement is reflected in the poem of his first experience of snow. Brathwaite experienced, and was therefore able to highlight, the disregard the British had for the colonised. He describes his experience thus:

The day the first snow fall I floated to my birth
Of feathers falling by my window. Touch earth
& melted. Touch again and & left a little touch of light
& everywhere we touch till the earth was white⁷

He had been given the chance to develop his writings, and his poetry on his first experience with snow was hailed by English critics as reflecting great sensitivity as well as the feeling of touching snow. However, such critics fail to recognise that underpinning this experience of the earth being white but everywhere else dark is the crippling and controlling grip on the earth – to the exclusion of others – by Caucasians. It culminates in the disapproval or discomfort with the state of things and hints at a need for things to get better. As he posits in *Barabajan Poems*: “What they didn't perhaps catch was the symbolism of pain & separation & Xile loneliness (my first Christmas away from home) of the two middle stanzas & the expression of the stark (black/white) racial prejudice I was experiencing.”⁸

Much of his early writing of poetry was not accepted by the British publishers since they were looking for something which had a “West Indian – to me – ‘exotic’ flavour.”⁹ Kenneth Ramchand concurs that the English stereotyped West Indians as performers and that even when they displayed academic competence the situation remained unchanged. He states:

On the academic level a successful West Indian becomes a phenomenon to those who notice: ‘How can you be so clever?’ The performance has a touch of the exotic in it, and somehow this has caused a lowering of the standards. Intelligence, by a mental flick of the wrist, becomes cleverness, a gimmick, and success has nothing to do with effort.¹⁰

The unwelcoming/ unaccepting stance made Brathwaite rationalise that his colour or ethnicity did not matter. That which was important was for him to absorb British culture especially through the medium of education. He therefore did not develop a resentful

attitude toward the imperial power although he felt somewhat alienated from the English. In fact, his affinity or limited sense of belonging was fostered almost solely from his meeting with other West Indians who seem to experience the same problem, and with whom he could identify, because of similar experiences.¹¹ As a consequence, this developed within Brathwaite the spark that would later ‘blaze’ him from his colonial path into becoming a Caribbean nationalist. This reaction is echoed in Patricia Madoo’s statement, in relation to the effect of racial prejudice on some West Indians, that:

The result of all this is a complete withdrawal – intellectual and emotional – from the English. He accepts their view that he is different from them but similar to all coloured people. He intensifies the degree of his contact with other West Indians. He clings eagerly to the idea that he share in a distinctive West Indian culture, separate from the English culture in which, the English has implied, he has no part.¹²

As such, tried as he might have, Brathwaite just could not or did not feel a sense of belonging in England. It was in George Lamming’s novel *In the Castle of My Skin* that he was able to identify the folk culture that he was brought up with. The skill with which Lamming had crafted their native Barbadian folk culture in his book was more acceptable to Brathwaite because the English had given it its stamp of approval. As Brathwaite states:

Then in 1953, George Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin* appeared and everything was transformed. Here breathing to me from every pore of line and page, was the Barbados I had lived. The words, the rhythms, the cadences, the scenes, their predicament. They all came back. They all were possible. And all the more beautiful for having been published by London, mother of metropolises.¹³

Brathwaite therefore accepted the possibility and plausibility – a stage of progress in the decolonisation of his mind – of writing about West Indians. However, such realization came about because of what the colonial power permitted. He enunciates that this was a point or stage which allowed the West Indians to be written about, although this was limited to being done by those with an outer gaze, including emigrants from the Caribbean region.¹⁴ In other words, previously the West Indies or colonies were not considered pertinent areas for study except where they were used as embellishments of the notion of British superiority.

However, the consequence of his time in Britain did not lead him to feel a need or commitment to return to the Caribbean to work. In fact, he considered himself “a citizen” of the world or a “rootless” person. As such, the fear that Vidia Naipaul had had of ever going back to his native island, Trinidad, was the condition of many emigrants from the region including Brathwaite himself. He expresses it thus:

For me, too, child and scion of this time, there was no going back. Accepting my rootlessness, I applied for work in London, Cambridge, Ceylon, New Delhi, Cairo, Kan, Khartoum, Sierra Leone, Carcassone, a monastery in Jerusalem. I was a West

Indian, rootless man of the world. I could go, belong, everywhere on the world-wide globe. I ended up in a village in Ghana. It was my beginning.¹⁵

However, unlike Naipaul, he did not consider England to be his home.

“The citizen of the world notion”, Brathwaite explains in *Barabajan Poems* was actually part of the ideological transmission of the British educational system to the emigrants from the colonies. They sought to dismiss the dangerous nationalistic tendencies in the colonies and to get West Indians not to consider their birthplace their home but rather their status there as only secondary to their obligation to the world at large. As such, the educated West Indians would not be a threat to the British interest and control within the territories and their identities would be confused or lost.¹⁶

Part of the imperial design was to represent West Indian culture which reflected African influences – such as steel band, the drum and so on – as primitive elements. It was to give the impression that the culture that emanated from blacks could not be a result of the varying culture that is represented in the Caribbean because nothing new or creative could come from the blacks.¹⁷ His experiences in relation to what type of writings were accepted by the English for publication is actually a manifestation of the ideology that nothing that is in the region was new, everything that existed there came from either Africa or Europe. The English promulgated the idea that the superior nature of their culture did not allow its total absorption by non-whites. Because of their supposed inferiority, African descendants in the Caribbean would have a way of life that allowed them to be largely brutish thus reflecting the influence of Africa. However, such influence would not be considered to be anything positive or the mixture of practices from different sources to comprise a ‘culture’. This is clearly brought out by contributors to *Disappointed Guests: Essays by African, Asian and West Indian students* who concur that the English had the notion that they could not be accomplished in its culture.¹⁸ Ruth Glass and Harold Pollins sum up the views of the general view of English, during the 1950s and 60s, that blacks were less than humans by outlining the reaction of a London woman who spoke out against the bad treatment meted out against coloured people and added: “I know they ain’t human, but we needn’t be cruel to them.”¹⁹ It is therefore not surprising that V.S. Naipaul has actually bought into the ideology that nothing has ever been created in the West Indies.²⁰

Brathwaite’s experiences in England before he went to Ghana broadened his horizons and dropped the scale off his eyes in the following ways:

1. He identified the disregard for and the inferior status that the English accorded to people from the colonies. The resultant unwelcome stance of the English thus brought home forcibly to Brathwaite that England could certainly not be his home.
2. England made him aware of the possibility for and the acceptability of non-whites, including West Indians, as relevant foci for study and publications. And that such writings could be done by the colonized even if only by those who immigrated to Britain.²¹

3. Even though he did not consider Barbados his home, being a citizen of the world and hence not belonging to any particular space, Lamming's novel made him realise that he belonged to the people of Barbados – if it was even only culturally – and that they were ones with whom he could identify. His sense of belonging with West Indians also reiterated such identity with Caribbean people. Such realization, the bud of which was produced by the novel, went into full bloom by the end of his stay in Ghana when he realised that the West Indies was home.

From the uncaring attitude of the British, Brathwaite was able to extrapolate – especially based on his knowledge of history which was expanded in Ghana – his metaphorical representation of Britain as a missile and Africa as a capsule.²² Consequently, Africa became a symbolic ideal that was pitted against the metaphorical destructive nature of Europe as the way toward our salvation. However, Brathwaite did not present this in a manner that called for a rejection of anything that is European. Rather he argues for a need to appreciate the valuable contribution of both cultures to the great potential that lies within the people of the Caribbean and that the contribution of Africa should not be rejected as elucidated in his Creolization theory.²³

His training in history influenced his poetic and other writings. His entire colonial education which encapsulates his schooling in Barbados and Britain made him aware of the lack of adequate information on the colonised. This was reinforced by his experience in Ghana that made him realise the need for history, poetry and writings in general to be from the perspective of the colonised. As a result, when he returned to Britain in 1966 to complete his doctoral thesis, he had a more activist approach; he was not the willing and unsuspecting recipient or presenter of a colonial perspective, but instead one who would – as much as was then possible within the thesis requirements of the university – present a theory that counters the postulations and objectives of the British Empire. This theory presents the day to day experiences within a typical colony in a positive light. His experiences in Ghana and the West Indies, on his return, had made him aware beyond a doubt that the African influence was very much in the region and that it was not one to be spurned.

Consequently, despite the demands of writing his doctoral thesis, Brathwaite operationalised his ideology on the positives to be found in the Caribbean experience by forming the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) in December 1966, along with Andrew Salkey and La Rose, which allowed the development and transmission of a Caribbean aesthetic. CAM, he insisted and made sure of, not only comprised the big names among Caribbean artists but also allowed new and unknown artists a chance to express and make themselves known. Anne Walmsley therefore explains:

Brathwaite's constant search for and encouragement of new directions of Caribbean creativity is evident during his secretaryship of CAM and as editor of *Savacou*. He gave the young, as yet unpublished Faustin Charles (on Kenneth Ramchand's recommendation) a chance to read, alongside John La Rose, at an early CAM private session; he made sure that at both conferences, young unknown writers had a chance to read and speak.²⁴

Through CAM, he sought and managed to not only get the products of the movement published, but was also successful in securing more English publishing houses to use Caribbean artists to illustrate such publications.

Establishing and developing a Caribbean aesthetic for Brathwaite involves a process that is largely influenced by the folk or little tradition in the region. CAM was therefore not an authoritative organisation but afforded equality to all its members in the sense that the perspective of all was valued. This value given was extended to his recognition of the importance of recording and storing all that was generated from CAM in order to ensure that they were published and/or all correspondence stored as a basis for establishing a Caribbean archive. Walmsley states that:

Brathwaite the historian's concern with recording, transcribing and publishing what was said at CAM sessions was paralleled by the care he took to preserve evidence of the history of the movement. Most of the contacts and the arrangements which he made as Organising Secretary were by letter; he kept not only people's letters to him, but dated carbon copies of his own self typed letters to them – in addition to every sort of document connected with CAM.²⁵

Herein lies Brathwaite's recognition that part and parcel of European dominance was the destruction, concealment and/or control of information that would counter their ideology or be from the perspective of the others. As such, distorted information was presented to the colonized in the African Diaspora and elsewhere to give the impression that s/he had achieved nothing before the Europeans. Moreover concealing such information gave more credence to Western ideology that the colonized has actually (and could only have) been improved through contact with Caucasians. Such improvement was only achieved through exposure to and adoption of European culture. For instance, he demonstrates European's complicity in presenting Socrates as a white philosopher in *X/Self*, by asserting that Socrates was a black man even though he has been presented as white. He therefore states that: "...one of the best portraits of this philosopher, showing him black, toga'd, rounding, balding (from a fifth century BC Greek statue in the British museum) is to be found in a most unexpected quarter: the *Oxford Junior Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 5 (1953/1960)"²⁶

Brathwaite used several ways to get Caribbean artists established in England by inviting them to conferences or public sessions, and insisting that the European criteria for determining suitability for publications was inappropriate for works from the Caribbean. As such in the presentations through CAM, the process was an engagement with the audience to get a feedback and to establish a literary tradition for the region. CAM was also attempting to counter the new wave of racism that appeared to come about after George Lamming's book, *Pleasures of Exile*. Because Lamming was critical of the Establishment, Brathwaite surmises, there was a reaction in Britain which saw a reduction in positive reviews of West Indian material.²⁷ Moreover, the establishment sought to have people who were inarticulate on television to represent such persons as typical West Indians. Through Andrew Salkey, a contact that was made through Frank

Collymore (who worked at the BBC), they sought and were able to get artists including Brathwaite himself to have their works aired on the BBC. Later on these tapes were given to the University of the West Indies, because the BBC considered its archives overcrowded.

His grounding in Africa

In 1955, Brathwaite went to serve as a teacher in a secondary school on the Gold Coast which was then a part of the British Empire. He had previously attempted to obtain work elsewhere, such as in Israel but was faced with prejudice. However, he was welcomed by the people in this region of Africa although one group exhibited its disapproval of the action of black people from the Caribbean (“cane suckers”) who had assisted the British to conquer them. H.H. Anniah Gowda contends that “Having lived in Ghana for nine years and felt his stay there something of a homecoming...”²⁸ Brathwaite refers to the welcome that he received in Ghana in his poem thus:

akwaaba they smile
meaning welcome

you who have come
back a stranger
after three hundred years

welcome
here is a stool for
you. sit do
you remember?

here is plaintain
here palm-oil:
red, staining the fingers
good for the heat
for the sweat²⁹

The welcome was not just based on how he was treated on his first landing but extended to the description of his stay on African soil. It included the spiritual awareness and certainty of discovery of the origins of many practices in the Caribbean which could be proven by historical evidence. Bridget Jones elucidates this point by stating that:

Brathwaite explores the African dimension with faith and confidence founded initially not on historical evidence but on personal revelation. When he travelled to Ghana to work in education after four years studying in Cambridge, it was a homecoming: “welcome” (The Arrivants, 124), a sense of origins rediscovered, a slowly growing certainty of ‘roots’. Rational proofs and historical evidence was largely irrelevant to his spiritual certainty: “the bridge of my mind now linking Atlantic and ancestor, homeland and heartland” (Third World Poems, 38).³⁰

He therefore indicates the stark contrast between how he was received and treated in Ghana with his reception and stay in England. As will be explained later this welcome was reiterated when he went to University of Nairobi, Kenya on a fellowship in 1972 while he was officially employed at the University of West Indies, Mona as a lecturer.

In Ghana, Brathwaite was exposed to historical accounts from the perspective of the colonised who was therefore able to reject the notion that the objectives of the colonial power coincided with his or her own. Ghana provided certain parallels with West Indian experience and an alternative world view and account of historical experiences. It is therefore not surprising that he represents Africa in his poetic work as an area that was/is lost and must be rediscovered. Such rediscovery and embrace of those elements that remains in the region, he postulates, is essential for the development the 'alter/native' or for the typical Caribbean person to be equipped with the ingredients necessary for enhanced welfare of the populace of the region. Consequently, he bemoans what has been lost in the process of colonialism while celebrating what remains, and underscoring the great potential of this remnant culture towards effecting improved standard of living for the region's citizens.³¹

In 1956, he went on secondment to the United Nations in relation to the Plebiscite which would be used to determine the future of Togoland. He then went back to Togoland to serve the Ministry of Education in helping to develop syllabi and textbooks which would suit the needs of an independent state. Being integrally involved in the decolonisation process in Ghana, the importance of syllabi and textbooks which fostered identity and appreciation of Ghanaian culture as important steps in the development of an independent nation which seeks the interest of its people over that of Europeans, helped to shape Brathwaite's ideology. He was therefore able to contribute to curricula that reflected the emerging Ghanaian culture and realise the relevance of recognising culture in the process of development.

Brathwaite was based in Salt Pond in Northern Ghana where he started a children's theatre along with his wife, Doris Brathwaite. He wrote plays for the theatre which included *Plays for African Schools: Odale's Choice* and *Four Plays for African Schools* – which have been published – as well as the unpublished plays, *A Pageant for Ghana* and *Endina*. These unpublished works which involved a lot of historical research, largely influenced his poem *Masks*³². This reflected the fact that the people of Ghana welcomed him and allowed him discretion within the parameters of government policy to operationalise the decolonisation objectives of the country. The country was therefore a test tube for the realization of decolonization as evidenced in the teaching strategies employed which included the use of local experiences as brought out in the plays that he wrote for African schools.

Brathwaite's exposure to the history from the perspective of the colonised, as well as his time spent in Ghana, allowed him to identify cultural similarities between Africa and the Caribbean. He therefore fails to consider the region as inherently doomed by the relationships or culture that exists therein. He reflects the position of Kwame Nkrumah in

his years in Ghana where he considers and recognises that within individuals or the ordinary people ideas and practices exist that should be incorporated in the process for enhanced welfare of the local populace. This is explicit in his recognition that the culture that developed in Jamaica and the region is also a response to the peculiar environment and experience of the Caribbean. Hence the culture of the region could not be simply understood by looking at the differential cultural origins of the people that make up the region but should also incorporate the influence of adaptation to the Caribbean environment.

His experience in Ghana was integral in influencing Brathwaite's ability to write so forcefully and convincingly of the non-European influence on Caribbean culture and hence formulate his theory of Creolization. The development of his writings and writing style was also shaped by this experience. His theory of Creolization therefore acknowledges the contribution of the different cultural experiences to the development of Caribbean society. In doing so, he contests the notion that culture was imposed on the black and that they in turn had no influence on the whites in the colony. It therefore encapsulates part of the debate that went on in the late 1960s and the 1970s in relation to what the Caribbean society, polity and economy were influenced or shaped by and hence the effect on the viability of the region.

Brathwaite's involvement in the decolonisation process in Ghana transformed him from a colonial to a person who actively rejected colonialism even in the new form it took after legal independence of many Caribbean territories. Additionally, the welcome he received and the exposure to a culture which resonated with his West Indian experience helped to make Brathwaite grounded or rooted and to recognise his identity as Caribbean, West Indian and part of the African Diaspora. That is, despite Brathwaite's awareness of some achievements of blacks and his bold exposition, acceptance and defence of Jazz as a student in Barbados, he was essentially previously in the colonial mould with the same aspirations and use of language.³³

Yet he was a colonial in a different sense from the British, since his experiences as the object of their activities and his exposure to another world view rendered him what he would call a colonial who did not accept the ideas about blacks' non-achievements or their inability to do so. However, he lacked the consciousness of there being a need to get rid of the chains of colonialism in order to achieve significant improvements in the conditions of his people. His answer was an individualistic response, to look elsewhere to seek his individual goal, which was circumvented by the new consciousness that was awakened by his years in Ghana. Timothy Reiss underscores the effect of Ghana on Brathwaite thus:

...the ten years Brathwaite spent in Africa (mainly Ghana) enabled him to make a passage akin to that expressed by George Lamming's Trumper, who comes back from the United States having discovered his group identity as a black. Memory, a sense of place, and above all a culture-consciousness are embodied for Trumper in this recognition, so that the old "big bad feeling in the pit of the stomach," the dizziness and emptiness are forgotten. "A man who knows his people won't ever feel like that." Brathwaite comes close to paraphrasing these sentences in the

characterization of we saw of the Anglophone Caribbean novel...In West Africa he found both the possibility of such group belonging and a place which grounded many of the fragments he found and was to find in the Caribbean.³⁴

Here Reiss illustrates that the colonial impact on Brathwaite underwent changes in Africa which actually led to a modification of his consciousness and a sense of belonging to the Caribbean and the peasantry thereof. Note that within the poetic piece denoting welcome to Africa, there is a sense of belonging and of his returning as a son of Africa, even if it is only for a visit. Such contrast with what he experienced in Britain would largely help to shape his identity especially with his exposure to a different perspective and one which was anti-colonial in stance.

These tenets of the Ghanaian experience were reflected in his works at the University of the West Indies where his teaching strategies actively employed or made use of, and endorsed the relevance of the local culture. This also shaped his great insights in his seminal work *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* as well as his involvement in the editing and writing of *The People Who Came* series which sought to present history from the perspective of the colonised. Communalism essentially requires unity; hence his experiences reiterated the relevance of unity or cohesion for development. As such, recognising the inappropriateness of colonial prescriptions and the validity and viability of the Caribbean, he proposed and sought to discover and establish the aesthetic of the region. He therefore became grounded by understanding the African roots of Barbadian and other West Indian societies. This also helped him to realise where his real home was and to develop a sense of commitment to Barbados, the Caribbean and the African Diaspora. This was reflected in his activities when he returned to the Caribbean from Ghana in 1962.

His time in Ghana had provided him with a chance to interact with West Indians from colonies other than Barbados, and helped to shape his thoughts to a Caribbean perspective, rather than an insular one. Hence his experience in Ghana, or outside of the Caribbean, actually allowed him greater interaction with others which reflected the growing black consciousness in Africa and its Diaspora.³⁵ Such consciousness was reflected in the plays that he wrote for performance at Salt Pond.

Brathwaite's experience as an educational officer in Ghana was influenced by President Nkrumah's view of what the typical Ghana should be like. Nkrumah espoused the concept – neo-colonialism – which is a recurring phrase in Brathwaite's works. Attempts to counteract neo-colonialism in Ghana actually took the form of Creolization de facto as evidenced in the role that Brathwaite played at least in the implementation process of the new nation's educational policy. In his plays for primary schools, for example *Four Plays for Primary Schools*, he modifies the nativity scene to reflect the customs and traditions of the people. At the same time, he prioritises the local customs as being authentic and relevant frames of references for any discourse. This ties in with the development model of Nkrumah which failed to accept Marxist theory wholesale by embracing elements that were compatible with the culture of his society and utilising elements of that culture to make it more workable.

While Brathwaite was officially employed at the University of the West Indies, Mona in the Department of History he returned to Africa to the University of Nairobi, Kenya in the Department of Literature in 1972. He got a fellowship to allow him to help in the process of decolonising literature at the university. As Thiongo explains:

We were trying to break away from the old colonial tradition that emphasized our colonial connections to Europe as primary but not our natural connections to Africa and the rest of the world...We wanted a dialogue among all the literatures of the entire pan-African universe and between them and those South America, Asia and Europe in that order. Central to that enterprise was orature, the long tradition of verbal arts passed from mouth to ear in both their classical and contemporary expressions.³⁶

Brathwaite was the first to be selected because he encompassed all the qualities they were looking for. So he was once again able to make a contribution to Africa and not only received the embrace of Kenyans but also appropriately received the renaming that epitomised the decolonisation that had taken place in Brathwaite, the former colonial. It was in a welcome ceremony that many attended that he received the name Kamau. Thiongo outlines the rationale for the renaming thus:

It was during the ceremony with the women singing Gĩtiro, a kind of dialogue and song and dance, that Edward Brathwaite was given the name of Kamau, the name of a generation that long ago had struggled with the elements to tame the land and to make us into what we now were. Edward, the name of the British king under whose brief reign in the 1920s some of the Tigoni lands had been appropriated by blue-blooded aristocrats who wanted to turn Kenya into a white man's country, and now been replaced by Kamau. Naming Brathwaite became the heart of the ceremony, which was also symbolically appropriate.³⁷

Brathwaite therefore took back what he had received from Africa and elsewhere to share with his other African audience in Kenya. He also received the welcome that has become typical of his African experience in addition to his name. So Kamau Brathwaite, who was in the decolonising process, or the decolonised, received a name that better reflected his African ancestry and his anti colonial stance.

Conclusion

Brathwaite's experience in English society made him aware of the extent to which the English were misinformed and ignorant about their territories. The prejudice that he encountered prevented him from developing an affinity with the English, despite its success in inculcating in him the notion that he was a citizen of the world, at least allowed him to start having an identity that marked him as West Indian. This is brought out in his reaction to *In the Castle of My Skin* as well as the camaraderie he felt with other West Indians.

The welcome he received in Ghana was in stark contrast to his reception in England. Exposure to an alternative historical perspective as well as attempts to improve the

society in Ghana helped to ‘decolonise’ Brathwaite and fully establish his identity as a West Indian. It also served to establish – within him – a commitment to the Caribbean and to devise strategies for achieving improvements in the wellbeing of its populace. Since Brathwaite’s experience in Ghana was largely responsible for his decolonisation and affirmation and acceptance of his identity as a West Indian, he affirms recognition of the relevance of the African experience as the necessary ingredient for the wellbeing of the region’s populace to be enhanced.

¹ E. Smilowitz, “Interview with Kamau Brathwaite”, 12 December 2002, accessed on 18/02/03 at the website <http://www.thecaribbeanwriter.com/volume5/v5p73.html>

² K. Little, *Negroes in Britain: A study of racial relations in English society*. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1972, p. 274

³ E. Bastien, “The Weary Road to Whiteness and the Hasty Retreat into Nationalism.” In H. Jajfel (ed) *Disappointed Guests: Essays by African, Asians and West Indian Students*. London and New York: Oxford University Press 1965, p. 48

⁴ E. Bastien. 1965, p.48

⁵ M. Morris. “Feeling, Affection, Respect.” In H. Jajfel (ed) *Disappointed Guests: Essays by African, Asians and West Indian Students*. London and New York: Oxford University Press 1965, p. 7

⁶ S. Gordon, *Caribbean Generations* p. 16.

⁷ K. Brathwaite. “From Newstead to Neustadt” In *World Literature Today*, Autumn 1994, 68.4, p. 655

⁸ K. Brathwaite. *Barabajan Poems*. Kingston: Savacou North, 1994, p. 59.

⁹ Edward Brathwaite. “Timehri” In *Savacou*, September 1970 no. 2, p. 37

¹⁰ Ramchand, Kenneth. “The Colour Problem at the University: a West Indian’s Changing Attitudes.” In H. Jajfel (ed) *Disappointed Guests: Essays by African, Asians and West Indian Students*. London and New York: Oxford University Press 1965, p.35

¹¹ K. Brathwaite. *Barabajan Poems*, Kingston: Savacou North 1994.

¹² P. Madoo, “The Transition from ‘Light Skinned’ to ‘Colored’.” In H. Jajfel (ed) *Disappointed Guests: Essays by African, Asians and West Indian Students*. London and New York: Oxford University Press 1965, p.59

¹³ K. Brathwaite. 1994, p.37

¹⁴ E. Brathwaite, 1970, p.37.

¹⁵ E. Brathwaite. 1970, 38.

¹⁶ K. Brathwaite. 1994, p.299

¹⁷ K. Brathwaite. 1994 399

¹⁸ P. Madoo, 1965. Also see M. Morris. 1965 and K. Ramchand 1965.

¹⁹ R. Glass and H. Pollins. *Newcomers: The West Indians in London*, London: Centre for Urban Studies and George Allen & Unwin Ltd 1960, p. 212

²⁰ D. Walcott. “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” In *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 1974. Issue 2, p.6

²¹ E. Brathwaite. 1970, p. 37.

²² G. Richards, “Kamau Brathwaite and the Creolisation of History in the Anglophone Caribbean”. Paper presented at the 2nd Conference on Caribbean Culture in Honour of Kamau Brathwaite, University of the West Indies, Mona 2002.

²³ E. Brathwaite. *The Development of Creole Society 1770 – 1820*, London: Oxford University Press 1971.

²⁴ A. Walmsley. “A Sense of Community: Kamau Brathwaite and the Caribbean Artists Movement.” In S. Brown (ed) *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*. Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press Ltd 1995, p. 108.

²⁵ A. Walmsley. 1995, p. 111.

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