

ABSTRACT

Derek Walcott Dramatist - Creole Drama for Creole Acting: A Careful Passion

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This dissertation examines the dramatic oeuvre of Derek Walcott in order to make the case that he is engaged, as a playwright, in creating a “Creole” drama - a drama that bears the special marks of its Caribbean origin and setting and that embodies the hybrid nature of Caribbean history, culture and personality. This Creole reality is the result of the historical coming together of European and African values within the physical location of the Caribbean islands. The idea of “Creole” is being used to describe the result of the fusion of these three realities and this result is seen to contain a multi-cultural plenitude that is ‘characteristic’ of the cultural and intellectual reality of the Caribbean.

The argument is conducted by means of an examination of representative examples of Folk, drama, historical plays, attempted Broadway musicals and the author’s later psychological plays, each of which sub-genre casts a slightly different light upon Walcott’s concern with the nature and expression of the “Creole” reality that this dissertation takes to be at the heart of Caribbean identity. Post-modern, Post-colonialist, Feminist and other branches of contemporary literary theory are used to comment on the works analysed, in order to demonstrate the variety and versatility of Walcott’s dramatic imagination, but more importantly to make clear that contemporary theory’s concern with complex, trans-cultural realities echoes the fundamental truth at the heart of Caribbean society and culture - so much so that what is meant by “Creole” comes close to embodying post-colonial theory’s key concepts of appropriation, hybridity, syncreticity, abrogation and the metaphor of *maronage*.

This study is also concerned with the language of Walcott’s plays - with “Creole” language and expression and the way in which the individual ‘voice’ of the playwright merges with the idiom of a people to effect a subtle ‘displacement’ of the values and perceptions associated with the English language in such a way as to ‘claim’ it as a Caribbean reality. This is what the discussion refers to as the “careful passion” of Derek Walcott.