Research article	Vol.6, No.1| 28 February 2021| Journal of humanities and cultures studies R&D

Mobilizing Shame in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*

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Abstract

This essay locates Edward Kamau Brathwaite's trilogy *The Arrivants* in the West Indian epistemology of travel, trauma, and collective change. In particular, this reading proposes that exploring the trauma of shame in Brathwaite's narrative suggests that traumatic recovery is never complete. However, the impossibility of transcending the "acting- out" of trauma does not necessarily negate the healing potential in the "working-through" strategy. Arguably, traumatized migrants may fail to entirely liberate themselves from the trauma of cultural disruption but they can still be agents of mobility. In this regard, *The Arrivants* exposes the limitation and the failure of traumatized migrants in realizing cultural wholeness. As such, this essay investigates how the trauma of shame becomes a defining element in the formation of the West Indian identity in the context of colonialism and cultural disintegration. Symptoms of traumatic shame, such as archetypal dissociation and loss of cultural memory, will be explored. Trauma theory, as presented in the writings of LaCapra and van der Kolk and others, shapes the theoretical framework of this discussion. Postcolonial readings by Brathwaite are also integrated in order to examine the role of colonialism in precipitating the West Indian case of cultural trauma.

Key Words: West Indian, trauma, healing, acting out, working through

Edward Kamau Brathwaite's trilogy *The Arrivants* explores the possibilities of recovering from trauma and revises the role of traumatized West Indian people in collective change. The trilogy presents a rereading of the West Indian trauma of shame to locate an effaced precolonial reality and grasp the primordial West Indian environment that preceded colonialism. Brathwaite presents a strategy of resistance based on a positive vision of the possibility of spiritual and social regeneration for the West Indian man and society through a rediscovery of the shame that had been suppressed in the African and West Indian past as an outcome of colonialism, and the ultimate recovery of their repressed heritage.

It is important to note that Brathwaite's *The Arrivants* has received an extensive body of criticism that highlights its call on transcultural encounters. However, the collection's scholarship that explores the drawbacks of migration does not perceive shame as a traumatic symptom of cultural fragmentation. For instance, Jane Wangari Wakaridi, in her thesis "A Study of the Journeying Motif and the Narrative Technique in Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *The Arrivants,*" examines the trope of transcultural travel but does not identify the traumatic outcomes of enforced transition and its intermediary significance in developing shame. On the other hand, certain readings of *The Arrivants* only provide brief references to shame and read its impact from a limited perspective. For instance, Gordon Rohlehr in *Pathfinder* contends that *The Arrivants* articulates the Africans' awakening by reminding them of their history. Rohlehr mainly argues that this awakening has not happened at a point in time. Rather, it becomes a shame-motivated process of accumulated insights. However, Rohlehr does not construe agency and cultural recovery as a liberatory manifestation of traumatic shame. On a larger level, Rohlehr reiterates the critical readings that overlook the possibility of moving beyond colonial victimization. Such scholarship has contributed to a misreading of the relationship between traumatic shame and agency in West Indian discourse. As such, this essay rethinks *The Arrivants* as a discursive realization of effaced liberation in traumatic shame.

In Cultural Anthropology, shame society or shame culture establishes a strategy of control that inculcates shame and ostracism as the primary tactics to maintain social order. In his *Middle Passage*, the Trinidadian-British writer V. S. Naipaul (2001) maintains that "History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies" (pp.28-29). The stigma of non-creation and non-achievement has generated an overwhelming collective emotion of mortification and submission for the West Indian man: "For we/ who have cre-/ ated nothing,/ must exist/ on nothing" (Brathwaite, 1973, p. 79). Colonizers use this strategy of instilling and indoctrinating shame to guarantee dominance: "for we who have achieved nothing/ work" (ibid., p. 13). In representative West Indian responses to the ordeals of colonialism, cultural loss, divided heritage, diasporic migration, and problematic self-identification; shame has long been recognized and processed. The destabilizing perception of cultural shame coupled with the drastic consequences of enforced travel have even generated disruptive fragmentation in the West Indian identity which could be recognized as specifically traumatic: "Never seen/ a man/ travel more/ seen more/ lands/ than this poor/ path-/less harbor-/ less spade" (ibid., p. 40). In this founding trauma of shame, West Indian people recognized the basis of a new homeopathic identity, where a founding trauma, as the American historian Dominick LaCapra (2000) defines it, is a "trauma that should, and (in the best of all circumstances does), raise the question of identity as a very difficult question but that, as a founding trauma, itself becomes the basis of an identity" (p. 161).

Arguably, a personal and collective identity could be found in something as disruptive and disorienting as a trauma. However, LaCapra (2000) warns against the dangers of such negative identification and the ostentatiously redemptive political functions trauma is ascribed to and justified with. He asserts the need to distance oneself from those functions and disable the unfavorable active play of the past in the present. Typically, victims of trauma suffer from the intrusion of past traumatic occurrences on their present in the form of nightmares, flashbacks, or compulsively repeated enunciations or actions. The defining therapeutic characteristic is the ability of the victim to draw borderlines between the past, present, and future, and distinguish between their overwhelming experiences and the present life. Such awareness brings about critical and gradual coming to terms with trauma "in a different way related to what you judge to be desirable possibilities that may now be created, including possibilities that lost out in the past but may still be recaptured and reactivated, with significant differences in the present and future" (p. 148).

This is easier said than done, though. According to psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk's contention in "The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-Enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism" (1989), people tend to choose "the most pleasant of two alternatives. High arousal causes people to engage in familiar behavior, regardless of the rewards. As novel stimuli are anxiety provoking under stress, previously traumatized people tend to return to familiar patterns, even if they cause pain" (p.27). This is why the traumatized may unknowingly resist the process of working through their trauma, opting for more convenient customary practice. This inclination to stick to the familiar can also be attributed to what Dominick LaCapra (2000), in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, calls "fidelity to trauma" which is "a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with" (p. 22). LaCapra explains that "part of this feeling may be the melancholic sentiment that, in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by the traumatic past" (ibid., p. 22). It would have been a feeling easy to conquer if it were not for the value invested in this trauma which makes it "a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound" (ibid., p. 22). As such, victims sublimate their trauma and make it sacred. So, "instead of calling for processes of working-over and working-through," their trauma becomes "valorized as a limit experience or as stigmata demanding endless melancholy or grieving, whose mitigation or rendering in narrative is perceived as objectionably consoling or even as sacrilegious" (ibid., pp. xiv-xv). Consequently, traumatized people develop what is called survivor guilt that bounds them with utmost devotion to those who were not lucky enough to survive. For example, in Brathwaite's poem "The Cabin" (1973), the speaker revisits the dwelling of Uncle Tom and ponders on the memories and suffering engraved on every stone and board. The poem is a lamentation of forsaken memory. It is an invitation to remember slavery in order not to overlook those who were inflicted by it: "No one/ knows Tom now, no one cares./ Slave's days are past, for-/gotten" (p. 71). The whole poem is a commemoration of a lost history, though shameful, and an immense feeling of guilt for letting their bond with the past break: "[b]ut how can we go on/ how can we go on/ growing as these houses are/ these supermarkets are/ picks pecking stones/ back breaking bone/if this first link is broken" (ibid., pp.71-72). What is undisputed about is that such moral obligation creates an "unconscious desire to remain within trauma," which "invalidates any form of conceptual or narrative closure" (LaCapra, 2000, p. 23). This difficulty calls for a way to undertake deliverance from trauma "in a manner that is not tantamount to betraying the trust or love that bids one to lost others" (p. 144). For such an effect, a revisionary epistemology of the

primordial Black story is offered. Such epistemology transcends the reality of colonization, revives the original cultural memory, and promotes the spiritual and cultural union of the Black. Thus, Brathwaite's project extends beyond recounting the archived history of his nation and its confinement within that scenario of "post-apocalyptic sensibility" which postulates that "one understands or can even explain the nature of problem but can do little or nothing to affect change" (Brathwaite, 2004, p. xxv), which amounts to the suspension of victimhood. Brathwaite's enterprise challengingly interrogates the idea of fixed historiography. It entails an endeavor to rewrite the history of his nation poetically, to gain a critical distance that enables his people to work over and eventually through their trauma of shame, and to sustain new African-American realities and new West Indian realities by extension. He does so by revisiting history in a cross-cultural way, incorporating a pastiche of traditions and creolizing these traditions, and presenting multifarious and multifaceted personas that seek not limited vindictive counter-identification but broader proto- or ur-identification instead.

Brathwaite (2004) is aware, thus, of the necessity of acting out the "pastness" as a condition of an emancipatory present since working through "means coming to terms with the trauma, including its details, and critically engaging the tendency to act out the past and even to recognize why it may be necessary and even in certain respects desirable or at least compelling" (p. 144). Ultimately, Brathwaite's collection of poems offers a healthy reenactment of shameful episodes and events with an overall sentiment of cathartic release: "These my children? God, you hear them? What deep sin/ what shattered glory?" (ibid., p. 21). Brathwaite's strategy entails envisioning the worst-case scenario that projects despair as the most severe possible outcome of his people's cataclysmic shame: "To hell/ with Af-/ rica/ to hell/ with Eu-/ rope too" (ibid., p. 29). He is heedful of the need to hit the bottom in order to find a way to bounce back up on the scale of self-esteem, which cannot be properly done without tearing down all the grand narratives they have imbibed and start anew with what they think might be their salvation. Only then, when his people have abandoned all their preconceived notions, he invites them to begin the journey of reconstructing the belief in their Blackness, the Blackness of no reservations or giving in to aspersion: "just call my blue/ black bloody spade/ a spade and kiss/ my ass. O-/ kay? So/ let's begin" (ibid., p. 29). Shame, which boils down to despair in this context, becomes a therapeutic ordeal that precipitates transition from severe pathology and self-disintegration to optimal health and self-actualization through refining self-appraisals by critically revisiting the shrouds of the past. Brathwaite's poems revise the discursive depiction of traumatized West Indian migrants. They trace the development of the colonized's active agency by recalling the historical journeys of the Black man and excavating the aboriginal relics of the precolonial past. The first book of the trilogy, *Rights of Passage*, opens with a verse from the book of Exodus: "And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt" (ibid., p. 2). Telling the story of how the Israelites left slavery in Egypt, the verse conveniently sets sail for the journey of transformation on the new West Indian exodus and route of emancipation. As the "jeu de mots" in the title of the section indicates, *Rights of Passage* scrutinizes the colonized's right to perform their rites of passage from slavery to agency by discerning and dealing with their cultural trauma.

To draw more concretely on Dominick LaCapra's two consubstantial strategies of agency, acting-out and working- through, Brathwaite's poetic figures strive to survive their trauma by transforming the "acting out" into a discreet potential of "working through." The two concepts do not usually invite antinomy or incommensurability. While "[a]cting out is compulsively repetitive," working through, on the other hand, "involves repetition with significant difference" (2000, p. 149). Working-through is the intervening process between victim and agent. It's via "working through" that one acquires the possibility of being an agent. LaCapra contends that "[t]here was a desire to leap from victim to agent" without "passing through survival and the process of working through the past," which is unattainable because the primary task of working through is to censoriously reassess the past as a victim in order to have greater leverage and be able to play a role as an agent (ibid., p. 158). However, it is important to note that the working-through mechanism does not entail a complete recovery or closure and normalization although it offers an alternative articulation and adaptation of trauma that stipulates transformation and agency.

The transformation that Brathwaite (2004) seeks in his work links his poetic figures concretely with ancestral Africa since there is much more to it than a blind imitation of the colonizer's project. The backward leap, in the second book *Masks*, to the Africa of "bright/ sun, this/ white plaque/ of heaven,/ this leaven-/ing heat/ of the seven/ kingdoms" (p. 90) leaves no doubt that the direction of the trilogy's compass points Africa-ward. More particularly, the first words of the whole book refer to an Akan proverb that goes like "Only the fool p oints at his origins with his left hand", as gesturing with the left hand is considered bad manners and an insult among the Akans (ibid., p. 88). In this regard, Brathwaite suggests the dynamic model of geography, "Tidalectics," as a theory of cultural production that foregrounds "alternative epistemologies to western colonialism and its linear and materialist biases" (Deloughrey, 1998, p. 2). In Brathwaite's definition, "tidalectics" draws on "the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic motion, rather than linear" (ibid., p. 18). It also invokes "the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean" (ibid., p. 2). At its core is the idea of an oceanic worldview where the tidal to and fro becomes a transmitter of culture rather than a violator of culture. Brathwaite seems to share Ashcroft and Tiffin's conviction that "cultures must be liberated from the destructive dialectic of history" (Gnanamony, 2005, p. 262). "Tidalectics" as a spatial metaphor is meant to move away from European dialectics and offer an alternative that is unbound by land-based modes of thinking and living. Its manifestation in literature should be reflective of the fluidity of water and the incessant swelling and receding of the tide that forms new configurations. In this sense, Tidalectics's "cyclical and circular process of connection and identification" (Hitchcock, 2003, p. 64) is parallel to the process of working through in its repetition-with-difference quality:

> Working over and possibly through a transferential relation is itself a type of repetition with change, in the best circumstances a change that, however limited and subject to remission, counteracts the immobilizing force of a repetition compulsion, vulnerability in the face of an authority figure, and the role of projective and incorporative identification. (LaCapra, 2000, p. xvi)

Homi Bhabha, in his *Location of Culture*, also advocates the healthy recurrence of the past and difference-in-repetition as "a way of reviving that past life" and "keeping it alive in the present"

(Huddart, 2007, p. 54). Bhabha (2004) also argues that "Repeatability, in my terms, is always the repetition in the very act of enunciation, something other, a difference that is a little bit uncanny" (ibid., p. 131). The uncanny, then, "opens a space for us to reconsider how we have become to be who we are" (Huddart, 2007, p. 56). It is "an involuntary recurrence of the old and familiar" (ibid., p. 55). So, it is similar to what Freud refers to as "the way the mind repeats traumatic experiences in order to deal with them. The feeling of uncanniness is, therefore, the feeling you get when you have guilt-laden past which you should really confront, even though you would prefer to avoid it" (Huddart, 2007, p. 55). Going to the past, thus, serves two purposes as it conjures up pleasant reminiscences of past days and culture before slavery and draws a road map to that point in history where things went wrong. Possibly, it could be taken from there and replayed differently if that nuance could be captured and harnessed. To put it differently, trauma is commonly defined as a type of history that interprets the past. What Brathwaite achieves by going back and forth between historical epochs is that he takes this definition to a further level that repudiates culpability and suggests traumatic healing by re-interpreting the past and rewriting history. A valid example in this case would be the recurrence of parts of the first poem "Prelude" in the "Epilogue" of *Rights of Passage* with an absolutely different attitude ascribed to the ostensibly same enunciation. In "Prelude," the tone is one of despair, barrenness, and submission: "across the scorched/ world water ceases/ to flow./ The hot/ Wheel'd caravan's/ carcases/ rot./ Camels wrecked/ in their own/ shit/ resurrect butter-/ flies that/ dance in the noon/ without hope / without hope/ of a morning" (Brathwaite, 2004, p. 4). In "Epilogue," however, the first stanza is copied from "Prelude" and carries forward to the second stanza which is reproduced with nursed despondency and channeled anger, preparing for a leap of faith: "but my people/ know/ that the hot/ day will be over/ soon/ that the star/ that dies/ the flamboyant car-/ cass that rots/ in the gutter/ will rise/ rise/ rise/ in the butter-/ flies of a new/ and another/ morning"(ibid., pp. 81-2). Moreover, setting the first and the third books of the collection in the New World operates as another example of echoing Suzan -Lori Parks's dramatic strategy of "Rep & Rev" to come up with a repetitive accumulation of evidence on the circular shape of history that can be worked through as opposed to irrevocable climaxes of linear plots correlated with the suspension of trauma. Although both *Rights of Passage* and *Islands* take place in the New World, one can detect the shift of demeanor in *Islands* after the revelation of ancestral legacy in *Masks* for a cultural autopsy. *Masks*, in this context, functions as an actualization of what Parks describes as one of the artist's tasks when using the ritual Rep & Rev, which entails "locat[ing] the ancestral burial ground, dig[ging] for bones, find[ing] bones, hear[ing] the bones sing, writ[ing] it down" (Reed, 2014, p. 153).

Another aspect of cultural dispossession that Brathwaite re-examines in his poetry, in addition to history, is the use of language and the selection of particular speakers and addressees. Brathwaite develops a linguistic model of agency. Language becomes a strategy of intervention in his poetry. For, as LaCapra (2000) puts it, "language, like history, is an institution that involves repetition/change, and an innovative use brings about significant change in repetitive patterns, which may be disruptive or at times revolutionary in nature" (p. ix). Brathwaite problematizes the use of borrowed tongues to express the African experience. He, thus, inspects the relationship of language to people's experience, their culture, and their perception of reality. Brathwaite seems to see eye to eye with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o about the production of culture. Thiong'o (1986) believes that our self-conception is irrevocably connected to the images produced from the reality we live in. The direct means of this production is communication, hence the use of language. Thiong'o

contends that "our capacity to confront the world creatively is dependent on how those images correspond or not to that reality, how they distort or clarify the reality of our struggles. Language as culture is thus mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature" (p.15). So, by imposing their language, the colonizers control the colonized people's tools of self-definition. Such domination of native language guarantees the domination of the psychic and mental universe of the colonized. For, according to Thiong'o, "Language was not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning" (ibid., p.11). Brathwaite (1973) is conscious of the distortion of reality the colonizer projects in his language of imposition. This is why he aims at discontinuing and transcending the colonial alienation that takes two forms:

> An active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment. It starts with deliberate dissociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. (p.28)

To do so, Brathwaite (1973) sees fit to inject the peasantry and working class with the agency for a revolutionary break with neo-colonialism by featuring the inoculation of Euro-languages with native tongues: "He still sicky-sicky. An' now/ I hear dat de cow/ gone down too. It int give no milk/ since las' Tuesdee" (ibid., p. 64). A case in point is the intentional inconsistency in the use of language in "Wings of Dove." The speaker, A Rasta, chants a prayer, wishing for the downfall of the White man: "Down down/ white/ man, con/ man, down/ down full/ man, frown-/ ing fat/ man, that/ white black/ man that/ lives in the town" (Brathwaite, 1973, p. 43), and the rise of the true Black man: "Rise rise/ locks-/ man, Solo-/ man wise/ man, rise/ rise rise/ leh we/ laugh/ dem, mock/ dem, stop/ dem, kill/ dem an' go/ back back/ to the black/ man lan'/ back back/ to Af-/ rica" (ibid., p. 43). The switch from standard English to a creolized version of English denotes the shift in attitude. This particular pattern brings out the intended indigenous musical rhythm. If you continue to read into the third section of the poem, you realize the pulse and subdivision of words, which marks the transformation of language into a drum beat and of the larynx into a percussion instrument:

> "So beat dem drums
>
> dem, spread
>
> dem wings dem,
>
> watch dem fly
>
> dem, soar dem
>
> high dem,
>
> clear in the glory of the Lord.
>
> Watch dem ship dem

come to town dem

full o' silk dem

full o' food dem

an' dem 'plane dem

come to groun' dem

full o' flash dem

full o'cash dem

silk dem food dem

shoe dem wine dem

praisin' the glory of the Lord. (Brathwaite, 1973, pp. 44-5)

The overall motive is an aspiration for a language despite being foreign and pregnant with West Indian cadences. Besides, Brathwaite is aware of the sentiment of betrayal the compradors prompted in their political ascendancy. This is why he makes sure to define the addressee and identify his poetry with them by entitling the first section of his first book as "Work Song and Blues." Such genres were initiated by the African-American working class in the south where a repetitive effect of rhythm prevails and a whole culture relies on the passing on of oral traditions. Brathwaite is convinced that the working class is his milieu and target if he is to achieve any break from neo-colonial arrangements. Being written out of the bourgeois narrative, the proletarian subaltern is imbued with voice in *The Arrivants*. In "Tizzic," a typical subaltern's dream of freedom is materialized as long as his culture is realized through the incantatory effect the repetition of the phrase "bambalula bambulai" induces, but "[a]fter the bambalula bambulai/ he was a slave again" (ibid., p. 262). Brathwaite presents Tizzic, the West Indian man who "prefers the booze/ an' women" (ibid., p. 260) to drown his shame and poverty. He is also the slave "to drums, to flutes, brave/ brass and rhythms" (ibid., p. 261), but this slavery earns him no shame now that he feels the glory of "green unhurried growing" (ibid., p.261).

As far as giving voice to the voiceless goes, Brathwaite's strategy denotes adherence to no white memory. This is manifested in more examples than one could count to the extent that it is safe to say Brathwaite finds it more apt to conjure up Shakespeare's voiceless Sycorax to recount and account for historical records. The role that Sycorax plays holds no immediate significance and does not demand her appearance as a poetic figure. It is parsed out and deduced through the assertion of the necessity to go back to no slave mentality. In this case, it is through Sycorax's phantom hovering over every action and word that Brathwaite evokes the shame-free past of no colonization. It sounds pertinent, even unavoidable, then to bring up Brathwaite's preview of Caliban in the poem that holds his name but does little or nothing to refer to the Caliban of Shakespeare. In "Caliban," the speaker sings another version of Shakespeare's song :"And/ Ban/ Ban/ Cal-/ iban/ like to play/ pan/ the Car-/ nival;/ pran-/ cing up to the lim-/ bo silence/ down/

down/ down/ so the god won't drown/ him/ down/ down/ down/ to the is-/ land town (Brathwaite, 1973, p. 192). Brathwaite's adaptation-with-variation of the song is charged with images of his community's suffering and redemption. Caliban, the colonized, plays limbo, a game indigenous to the West Indian islands. The game entails placing a stick horizontally for the dancers to pass under. Every round, the stick is lowered farther and the dancers are eliminated. Only the versatile and the resilient dancers make it to the end of the game triumphant. The image of the game can be interpreted as a reenactment of the experience of the middle passage. It is through both holding on to your legacy of cultural memory and your adaptability that you can work through your shame. So, Brathwaite is basically bending the language of the colonizer to serve his purpose of freeing his people from their shameful memory.

Music is another indigenous language that Brathwaite utilizes. Music in *The Arrivants* is the healthy reminiscence of ancestry and an instigator of desirable memory. This is mostly observed in "Atumpan," or the art of the drum, where the sound of the drum is heard in the syncopated lines of poetry: "Kon kon kon kon/ kun kun kun kun/ Funtumi Akore/ Tweneboa Akore/ Tweneboa Kodia/ Kodia Twenedur" (Brathwaite, 1973, p. 98). More importantly, "Prelude," the first poem of the first book opens with a twofold image of skin being whipped which could also be interpreted as a drum's surface being hit: "Drum skin whip/Lash, master sun's/Cutting edge of /Heat, taut /Surfaces of things" (ibid., p. 4). The rhythm and the enjambed lines deliver a trance state of mind which could be due to pain or loss in the tempo of the music. The two images combined in a single hallucinatory enunciation give the reader insight into the confused state of the speaker on a crossroad between slavery (the whip) and origins (drum). Either way, the speaker seems to be in a hypnotic state whereof the main concerns of the collective "I" could be interpreted either as going from origin to journeying and slavery or from slavery to mental journeying, and back to origin. Even when Brathwaite's words confuse the reader, his music never betrays his purpose of recovering the repressed heritage of his nation. For, although the speaker conveys his pain through groaning and shouting, he communicates his suffering through a language that resembles drum strokes: "I sing I shout/ I groan /I dream/ About" (ibid., p. 4). The mixed reactions of singing, shouting, and groaning reiterate the reader's uncertainty and perplexity as to the real sentiment of the lines. The last expression, dreaming, adumbrates the purpose of the book on the road of healing from trauma. The image of the drum as a conjuring force of dream and emancipation is increasingly realized in "The Making of the Drum" in the second book of the trilogy, where a detailed description of the process of making a drum is offered. The whole process of stretching the skin, shaping the barrel, snapping the sticks, and preparing gourds and rattles is rendered in a way that invokes a ritual of communicating with the West Indian gods. The ritual starts with an offering "First the goat/ must be killed" and libation "You will bleed,/cedar dark, when we cut you," (ibid., pp. 94-95) and ends with the sound of the drum that reverberates with the words of the gods: "listen/ let us succeed/ listen/ may we succeed" (ibid., p. 99). Success for the Ashanti people of Ghana demands the journey and the construction of the city of Kumasi which, for Brathwaite, is "the utopian image of a unified African civilization" (Naylor, 1999, p. 152). It is no surprise, then, that Brathwaite (1973) chooses to finish his book with the crawl of music to mow down any non-native cultural influence in "Jou'vert" or "daybreak." With the conjunction "so," he broaches the conundrum he has been contemplating throughout his book, and announces his people's second coming by banging the drums and kinking the gong gongs. The recurrent images of stretched "drum/skin" and whipped "back/drum" unravel here to elucidate the

interconnection between the trauma inscribed on the colonized's body and their legacy of music as the antidote. Brathwaite declares the awakening of his nation to make "with their/ rhythms some/ thing torn/and new" after the sorrows of enslavement (p. 270). Brathwaite goes far in his ancestral revival as to give voice to the drum in his poetry. As such, the drum becomes the most clamant speaker in the trilogy. The three sections of the book reference different styles of music correspondent to the major concerns of each section. In *Rights of Passage*, the prevalent styles are jazz and work songs being the descendants of slave cultures in the New World. Drums and the various forms of drumming soundscape *Masks* since drums are the basic cultural facets of original Africa. In *Islands*, however, a greater variety of West Indian and New World music is presented to parallel the book's verdict regarding the inevitable change West Indian people should undergo, a change that guarantees the retention of their pride in their culture and the renunciation of their shame.

Finally, it is worth noting that the three poems, "Tom," "All God's Chillun," and "Didn't he Ramble," from *Rights of Passage* summarize Brathwaite's translation of Uncle Tom archetype. Brathwaite (1973) enacts a trajectory from the future to the past through Uncle Tom, a paradigmatic black character. Tom projects his fear of seeing his people "back broken/ black broken" (p. 20). He also voices out their shame, lack of pride, and shattered glory. Yet, he does not do so without giving glimpses regarding the possible ways of recovering communal glory and working through collective shame. Such therapy could be realized by first pointing out and exploiting the anxiety of the White man who uses the whip to hide his fear and perturbation around the Black man: "Boss man lacks pride:/ So hides his/ fear of fear and darkness/ in the whip" (ibid., p. 19). Another way of working through shame is going back to roots and origins. At the end of "Didn't he Ramble," Tom brings up LaCapra's mechanism of working through trauma by asking two central questions in his book. These two questions summarize but do not limit the definition of the Black experience as either going back to cultural origins ("Will their blooms find my grave?"), or assimilating the colonizer's lifestyle and forsaking roots: "Or do I hear them mock/ my sons: my own sons mock-/ ing me?" (ibid., p. 25).

Consequently, this reading of *The Arrivants* locates shame as a trope within the context of cultural trauma, a trope that had been effaced before as a mere literal emotion that invites no further probing. However, when shame evolves as the prime cause and onset of trauma it demands further consideration and exploration. So, Brathwaite's work offers a study of possible ways of mobilizing change and working through the cultural trauma of shame. The trilogy proposes varieties of innovative mechanisms to work through traumatic experience. Re-examining the shameful history as recorded by the colonizer and rediscovering the suppressed shame are some of those mechanisms. Integrating ways of self-expression initiates survival from trauma through channels of linguistic and musical assertion.

Moreover, Brathwaite plunges his traumatized personas into a purgatory-like state, presenting a plethora of traumatic experiences and pathological events and attempting to deliver them from their shame. In his poems, he investigates the prospect of mobilizing traumatized migrants into agents of change. The change he seeks hardly aspires to achieve counter-racial purism. His mission entails constructing a rather shame-free reality where his people can co-exist with their perpetrators.

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Word Count: 5839