

BEGINNING AGAIN:  
DEREK WALCOTT'S ANOTHER LIFE AND  
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S PRELUDE

by

FRANCES MARY SPROUT (SCHMIDT)

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Department of English

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

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## Abstract

In "Beginning Again: Derek Walcott's Another Life and William Wordsworth's Prelude," I read Another Life through/against The Prelude, focusing on how Walcott claims and continues the inheritance represented by The Prelude as well as on ways he re-writes this work, modifying and subverting it to suit his post-colonial needs. Like M.H. Abrams, I use The Prelude as a representative text, reading it as a culmination and embodiment of Romantic theory and practice.

In my introduction, I note other comparisons of the two works, offer an overview of the thesis, and discuss the critical response which labels Walcott's work too Eurocentric to be relevant. I respond to this by offering post-colonial theory which asserts the legitimacy of "appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre" (Ashcroft et al. 38), and I discuss Graham Huggan's and Rei Terada's work on the use of mimicry in the Caribbean.

Walcott's simultaneous love for and frustration with the Western canon which is part of his heritage is particularly noticeable in three areas, each of which is the focus of one of my chapters: 1) nature and landscape imagery; 2), the notion of the divided self; and 3) the form, structuring principles, and narrative patterns. In the first chapter, I consider how Walcott writes back to a canon which presents Nature either as paradisal, as divided

into either the beautiful or the sublime, or as a partner in a nurturing, reciprocal relationship with the poet. In the second chapter, I discuss the two poets' shared perception of their divided selves, arguing that while Wordsworth's conclusion presents a confidence in the possibility of regaining integrity, Walcott insists that there never has been such integrity in the colonies, and thus, it can never be recovered. The third chapter considers Walcott's choice of the epic form, as well as his modification of Wordsworth's narrative patterns and structuring principles.

I conclude by asserting that, like the Romantic project as Abrams summarizes it, Another Life is simultaneously subversive and conservative, reformulating the epic in order to ensure its continued post-colonial relevance.

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## Introduction

Similarities between William Wordsworth's The Prelude and Derek Walcott's Another Life abound, and have been noted since the latter's publication. In this thesis, I read Another Life through and against The Prelude. I do so acknowledging the strongly conservative trend in Walcott's re-working, but defending it against those critics who would reject the work as "too European." I assert the subversive nature of this re-writing, by demonstrating ways in which Walcott's appropriation of form and style achieves the post-colonial aim suggested in The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures, that of "seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (Ashcroft et al. 38).

My primary focus will be on how Walcott claims and continues the inheritance represented by The Prelude, as well as on how he re-writes this work, modifying and subverting it to suit his post-colonial needs. Unwilling to discard the language or the canon of his English ancestors (he states unequivocally that "the language of exegesis is English" and that he once "saw [him]self legitimately prolonging the mighty line of Marlowe, of Milton" ["Twilight" 31]), Walcott admits that his "sense of inheritance was stronger because it came from estrangement" ("Twilight" 31). He does, however, insist on making the

language relevant to his condition, by "making creative use of his schizophrenia, an electric fusion of the old and the new ("Twilight" 17). His hope is in the "forging of a language that [goes] beyond mimicry" ("Twilight" 17). When Walcott then writes an autobiographical verse epic recognizably patterned after The Prelude, he is not imitating to flatter or to insinuate his way into the canon. Rather, he is attempting to conserve that which is valuable while modifying and subverting the canon to assure its continued relevance in the West Indies and expand the possibilities of its discourse.

Ashton Nichols sums up previous comparisons of Another Life and The Prelude in "Colonizing Consciousness: Culture and Identity in Walcott's Another Life and Wordsworth's Prelude," noting that while Kenneth Ramchand first made the connection between the two, and Edward Baugh later extended it, neither developed the Wordsworthian side of the parallel. Travis Lane, in "A Different 'Growth of a Poet's Mind': Derek Walcott's Another Life," does look more closely at The Prelude, but does so mainly to demonstrate the poems' "very great differences" (65). Nichols' essay not only examines Walcott's debt to the "Wordsworthian tradition of verse autobiography" (173), but also suggests that a comparison of the two works can deepen understanding of Wordsworth's poem.

Nichols sees the intertextual relation between the two poems as offering an understanding of the cultural context



of autobiographical writings in the lyrical mode. He sees the autobiographical voice in both as emerging "out of an interaction between sociocultural forces and an aesthetic posture that seeks to critique all cultural identifications" (174), with the resulting difficulty that this voice then seeks an "artistic" position free from social limitations at the same time as it demonstrates the impossibility of such a culturally neutral position.

My own interest is primarily in Another Life. In this poem, the influence of The Prelude is clear in the way its subliminal presence underlines an important theme of Walcott's: his simultaneous love for and frustration with the Western canon which is part of his heritage. This is particularly noticeable in three areas, each of which will be the focus of one of the following chapters: 1) nature and landscape imagery; 2) the notion of the divided self; and 3) the form, structuring principles, and narrative patterns.

The first chapter will consider Walcott's re-writing of Wordsworth's presentation of Nature.<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth insists on an original integrity with Nature, and points to the Eden of childhood as proof of this. For the post-colonial Walcott, it is important to expose the Nature into which he has been born as already fallen. Thus it is his task to "begin here again" (145), to somehow reclaim the garden through "Adam's task of giving things their names" (294).

Although both poems are alike in weighting landscape and other imagery of nature with symbolic and philosophical meaning, these images always point Wordsworth towards a greater transcendent Nature, a Supreme Being, whereas such solace seems unavailable to Walcott who sees Nature as continually inspiring or challenging, but also as continually erasing his art. Walcott's references to Nature also allude to a colonial history and to the issues of language surrounding that history, so that the un-named pre-European landscape and the indigenous flora and fauna are juxtaposed with the nature for which he has been given language.

The second chapter is concerned with the treatment in both poems of the divided self. Although the narrative structure of The Prelude works towards integration, while Another Life acknowledges division at almost every point, the concept of a divided self is a central concern of both works. Wordsworth speaks of two consciousnesses, distinguishing between thoughts and feelings, the life of the soul and that of the mind. Another division is apparent in the insertion of censorious comments by his mature self of his activities during his early student years. Walcott's own divisions are many: there is, for example the division between his European and his African heritage; the division occasioned by his love of Western literature and his awareness of its part in denying the local oral culture; and

the division caused by his love for Anna and his simultaneous detachment from her in order to observe and describe her in the name of art.

Finally, the third chapter will look at the form, structuring principles, and narrative patterns of the two poems. Both, of course, share (and modify) the epic form associated with the great works of Homer, Vergil, Dante, Spenser, and Milton. By using this form to describe the growth of a poet's mind, Wordsworth makes a quintessentially Romantic statement, claiming for the subjective and the individual a stature previously reserved for heroes and gods.

Walcott's seemingly conservative choice of a canonical form is equally subversive. Although frustrated by the colonizers who will not/cannot see the local landscape in terms of poetry, neither will he reject his European heritage. Clearly capable of using the Creole "nation language" Edward Brathwaite promotes as the national language of the English-speaking West Indies,<sup>2</sup> Walcott insists on also drawing from his European background. To those who "jump[] on" him from "both sides for pretentiousness or playing white," calling him "traitor" or "assimilator," the self-styled "mulatto of style" responds: "Pastoralists of the African revival should know that what is needed is not new names for old things, or old names for old things, but the faith of using the old names anew"

("Twilight" 9-10).

Walcott thus risks critical comments such as those of Alice Walker, who claims of Another Life that "very little that is recognizably Black West Indian survives," and who finds that "there is too much foreign talk and far too much British style" (576). Patricia Ismond, in summing up the "Walcott versus Brathwaite" debate in her article of the same name, says that "in bringing these two poets together . . . it would be dishonest not to recognise at once that it is Walcott above all that needs to be vindicated" (55). As she says, the "stock attitudes" are that Walcott "seems to be a type of poet's poet, the kind of luxury we can ill afford, and which remains Eurocentric" (54). But while some see Walcott's work as either slavishly imitative or politically quietist in its focus on style, Ismond sees Walcott's "'acceptance' of the Western Word," as making a rather revolutionary claim. This is the claim to an inheritance evident in the way Walcott "feels free to mould it [the Western Word], bend it to his own purposes, now to expose its shortcomings, now draw upon its strengths--as competently as the original possessors" (69).

Ismond's assessment of Walcott's strategy shows its similarity to those "intellectuals from the colonial or peripheral regions" of whom Edward Said speaks, those who wrote in an 'imperial' language, who felt themselves organically related to the mass

resistance to empire, and who set themselves the revisionist, critical task of dealing frontally with the metropolitan culture, using the techniques, discourses, and weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European. (243)

When Ismond states that the "confidence and tenacity of [Walcott's] approach challenges and defies any such notions of inferiority," she parallels Said's comments that the work of those intellectuals writing in an 'imperial' language is "only apparently dependent (and by no means parasitic) on mainstream Western discourses; the result of its originality and creativity has been the transformation of the very terrain of the disciplines" (243).

Both Ismond and Said suggest that a writer from the periphery can use the language of the metropolitan power without being either dependent, parasitic, or quietist. In fact, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin say in The Empire Writes Back, the "crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (38). One of the two processes these authors describe for achieving this is "the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new

usages [which] marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege" (38). They cite as an example of this Walcott's appropriation as well as his "Adamic celebration of language" (51).

Besides appropriating the 'imperial' language, Rei Terada points out that Walcott is also "address[ing] the opposition between mimicry and originality" (3). Terada makes the extremely pertinent comment that in

at least three ways . . . Walcott's work throws into relief the simultaneous inadequacy and resilience of the idea of 'originality': by provoking critical discussions of it; by the strength with which it presses against it; and by its tendency nevertheless to fall back upon it.

(44)

This parallels Walcott's insistence on countering Wordsworth's Edenic imagery with his own vision of a fallen nature while simultaneously embracing the Edenic myth in order to claim the empowering language of Adam.

Graham Huggan also considers mimicry in Walcott's work in his essay "A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry." He sums up Fanon, Naipaul, and Bhabha on mimicry, and suggests that

Caribbean writers have been eager to turn colonial mimicry to their own advantage, capitalizing on the mischief-making alliance between parody and

'parrotry' in order to provide a deliberately embarrassing reminder of their own cultural difference. (646)

The wilful "mischief-making" and "embarrassing" here also call to mind Harold Bloom's Oedipal struggle between the "ephebe" and his "precursor".<sup>3</sup> Laurence Breiner provides a very useful summary of Bloom's theory and its relevance to Caribbean writing, comparing it to both Edward Brathwaite's and Derek Walcott's own theories of influence, in his essay "Tradition, Society, The Figure of the Poet."

Throughout these three chapters, I refer often to M.H. Abrams, from whom I adopt the practice of using The Prelude as a representative text, as a culmination and embodiment of Romantic theory and practice. This is perhaps at the cost of ignoring much of the more contemporary theory regarding the Romantic period, but I believe this is justified by my project: Abrams' reading of The Prelude is roughly contemporaneous with the publication of Another Life. I have chosen to work with the 1805 version of The Prelude, not only for the rather arbitrary reason that it is the version I know best, but also because of Jonathan Wordsworth's claim that it is the version preferred by British readers (Walcott's St. Lucian education being modeled obviously on the British).<sup>4</sup>

The edition of Another Life to which I refer throughout is that found in Collected Poems: 1948-1984. This edition

does use a different pagination from that of the first (1973) edition; as well, it includes neither the opening inscription, "for Margaret," nor the quotation from Edouard Glissant's Le Lézarde (The Ripening), which appear on pages before the poem in both the 1973 and the 1982 editions. These are the only differences, however, and the poem is laid out as it is in the first edition with the four books occupying, respectively, 44, 32, 34, and 35 pages. All quotations from the poems throughout this thesis will offer page numbers only, while my references to The Prelude follow the convention of including both book and line numbers.



## Chapter One -- "All That Romantic Taxidermy"

Before looking at how Walcott acknowledges, interrogates, and finally re-shapes the poetics of nature he inherits from/through Wordsworth's The Prelude, it will be useful to delineate those poetics in terms of how they represent the Western canon generally, the Romantic movement especially and, most specifically, Wordsworth himself. Three important aspects of the tradition into which Walcott is writing are: the Biblical narrative of the garden, fall, and redemption; the organizing categories of the beautiful and the sublime; and the paradigm of the artist in a reciprocal and nurturing relationship with nature. Walcott's task is to include post-colonial realities in this Western literary discourse of nature, and to do so, he must work within, yet somehow subvert, a long-established iconography of nature which has excluded or marginalized the non-European.

These three aspects central to and continuous throughout Western tradition all share an important element: a commitment to a nature which, at least before man's fall, was beautiful, nurturing, and paradisal. This is the paradise, the Garden of Eden, of the Biblical narrative. (Such a paradise is also found in Classical writing in such versions as the Greek Elysian fields, and the Latin *locus amoenus*.) In English literature, the most important version

of this narrative is, of course, Milton's Paradise Lost, and Wordsworth at several points in The Prelude makes specific allusion to this work, reinforcing the place of his own work within the longer tradition.<sup>5</sup>

Besides representing the longer Western tradition of writing about nature in terms of the Biblical Garden and fall, The Prelude also represents a Romantic impulse. M.H. Abrams, in Natural Supernaturalism, claims as typically Romantic in it the move from an early integrity within nature to a fall into the divisiveness of analytical thought, with a redemptive return to oneness with nature. Also typically Romantic is that this final integrity is on a higher level which clearly acknowledges a reciprocity between mind/imagination and nature. Thus, what The Prelude offers is a retelling in secular terms of the Biblical Paradise/Fall/Redemption narrative, or as Abrams says, a naturalizing of the supernatural.

Wordsworth's own use of the trope of a pre-fall Paradise makes such a period in history analogous with childhood in general, and in terms of autobiography, with his own childhood and childhood memories in particular. This is exemplified, in the following passage, by the image of Wordsworth as a child bathing in the river Derwent and running joyously and freely through the corresponding landscape. Particularly suggestive of Eden is the naked innocence and the emphasis on integrity with Nature

represented by the repetition of the word "one":

Oh! many a time have I, a five years' Child,  
 A naked Boy, in one delightful Rill,  
 A little Mill-race severed from his stream,  
 Made one long bathing of a summer's day,  
 Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again  
 Alternate all a summer's day, or coursed  
 Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves  
 Of yellow grunsel. . . (I, 291-398)

Yet even as Wordsworth is recreating, in his childhood, a Biblical Eden, he is modifying that Eden to focus on himself alone in oneness with nature, thus excluding Eve. As well, the lines immediately following these turn rather quickly to harsher, darker aspects of Nature--the crag, hill, and woods--and then to the sublime: "distant Skiddaw's lofty height . . . bronzed with a deep radiance" (I, 299-300). The mountain reveals him as "alone beneath the sky" and his nakedness is now judged to be that of "a naked Savage" who "sport[s]" "in wantonness . . . in the thunder shower" (I, 303-4).

Similarly, the opening which situates the poet alone in the landscape places him in a paradisaal setting. The gentle breeze offers blessing, the fields are green, and if there are clouds, they are gently wandering ones. The language is of groves and sweet streams, and in contrast with the city from which the poet has just returned, this is clearly

Edenic. At the same time, however, although the poet has in front of him "[l]ong months of peace . . . of ease and undisturbed delight" (I, 26-29) he must make choices about the journey he is about to undertake: whither shall I turn / By road or pathway or through open field, / Or shall a twig or any floating thing / Upon the river, point me out my course? (I, 29-32). As his allusion to Paradise Lost makes clear, his stance here is similar to Adam's outside of the garden: "The earth is all before me."<sup>6</sup> His liminal position (between paradise and the rest of the world) also suggests the hero of the classical epic, leaving home to venture into/against the Other which is the unknown world.

What this figure also subtly conflates are the beautiful and the sublime, two responses to the Other/nature around which metaphysical thinking has been organized throughout Western intellectual history. Herbert Lindenberger, referring to the poet's statement that he "grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (I, 305-6), notes that "Wordsworth quite naturally assumed a dichotomy between conceptions of 'beauty' and 'fear'. . . behind his use of these words there stands a whole century of discussion on the nature of the beautiful and the sublime" (23). Lindenberger makes the useful connection between the beautiful/sublime dichotomy and Wordsworth's "training in that ancient rhetorical tradition which distinguishes between *pathos* and *ethos* as the opposing types of emotion

which poetry seeks to depict" (25). He argues that "[t]he progress from *pathos* to *ethos* is Wordsworth's image of the history of his own life, and as such it provides a pattern of organization for The Prelude" (36).

As M.H. Abrams points out, along with these terms Wordsworth "inherited a long tradition of finding moral and theological meanings in the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, as well as of conducting an inquiry into cosmic goodness and justice by reference to the contrary attributes of the natural world" (102). This tradition inevitably excluded those aspects of nature which fit neither category, and many deconstructionist and New Historicist critiques of The Prelude and other Romantic writing have focused on such exclusions. Walcott, of course, takes another approach, rewriting The Prelude to include those aspects of nature which challenge the limitations of the discourse.

Besides drawing attention to the two potential categories of the beautiful and the sublime, the opening figure of the poet against the landscape most obviously foregrounds the relationship between poet and nature. Wordsworth uses the wind as a symbol of the poet's inspiration in Nature, as do so many of the Romantics, Coleridge in his "Aeolian Harp" for example, or Shelley in his "Ode to the West Wind." As M.H. Abrams notes in his essay "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," The Prelude is marked from the beginning by its use of the

recurrent wind as a kind of unobtrusive leitmotif,  
 "representing the chief theme of continuity and interchange  
 between outer motions and the interior life and powers"  
 (28).

Herbert Lindenberger also comments on Wordsworth's use  
 of wind imagery, as well as of water imagery, pointing out  
 that

the dominating images of The Prelude are wind and  
 water, images which by their very nature--their  
 flowing, transforming quality, their ability to  
 interact with other natural elements . . . allow  
 the poet free range between the observable world  
 and the higher transcendental reality which he  
 wishes to make visible to us. Their chief  
 function, one might say, is to act as  
 intermediaries between the two worlds. (71)

Wordsworth's choice of representing nature through some of  
 its most potentially transforming images reflects a  
 tradition of confidence in the possibility of regaining a  
 unity between mind and nature. As well, although the images  
 begin in the everyday where the mind attempts to experience,  
 understand, and even re-create them in poetry, ultimately  
 they will lead, as in the Mt. Snowdon vision with which the  
 poem ends, to the transcendental ideal.

Lindenberger argues, against "conventional literary  
 history," that "Wordsworth's attempt to locate visionary

power in natural scenery seems less the beginning of a tradition . . . than the culmination of a way of thinking for which the groundwork has been laid long before." For him, the difference is in the language Wordsworth was able to devise "for the interaction of the mind with external nature" (94). Lindenberger goes on to say that Wordsworth structured his work around observed images not only because of his love of nature, but also because of the epistemology he had inherited. He cites Tuveson's demonstration of how unity of outer and inner follows from Locke's epistemology, but finds Wordsworth's poetry unique not for its combination of "sense-impressions of nature with more complex ideas," but for "the peculiar method which he developed to draw the intellectual from the visual" (96). What is specifically Wordsworthian, according to Lindenberger, is that he represents the external world only in order to get beyond it; if he lets his intellectualizing self intrude, the intrusion seems to follow so naturally from the concretely perceived premise with which he started that the reader is scarcely aware he has crossed the border which commonly separates the simple idea from the complex, the empirical realm from the transcendental." (96)

The Western literary discourse of Nature of which The Prelude is part, then, accepts as given a Nature which represents the Paradise which is both pre- and ahistoric, and which is where history began. Although Wordsworth

inserts into this discourse some modifications or reservations, his opening is clearly situated in a Nature which, with its gentle breezes, green fields, and sweet stream, is suggestive of Eden. Walcott's opening, by contrast, is set in a distinctly un-Eden-like twilight ocean scene. The sun is harsh even as it sets, glaring and "mesmeriz[ing] like fire without wind" (a combination which is reminiscent of hell rather than Eden); its decline is associated both with the end of the British empire and with drunkenness. The sea is a book whose pages can be read, but the master who could give them meaning is absent. That this is a post-lapsarian landscape is clearly indicated in the comment that: "The dream / of reason had produced its monster: / a prodigy of the wrong age and colour" (145).

Similarly, Wordsworth's assertion that each individual life begins in the Paradise of childhood is questioned by Walcott who turns, as Wordsworth does, from contemplation of the landscape about him, to a meditation on his early memories. Like Wordsworth, Walcott remembers his childhood self in association with Nature, but while Wordsworth assigns a unity between self and Nature in this period, for Walcott, this supposedly Paradisal time was already marred by a division which is signified, at this earliest point, by Nature. Walcott associates his childhood self with the Moon, a symbol of inconstancy, and he recalls his earliest sin, that of betraying the Caribbean reality by considering



its "palms / ignobler than imagined elms" and "the breadfruit's splayed leaf coarser than the oak's" (148), and praying "nightly for his flesh to change" (149).

A comparison of Another Life and The Prelude in terms of their depiction of childhood forces a questioning of Wordsworth's representation. Walcott, by copying Wordsworth in including a memory of a child's death in his childhood memoirs, subtly reminds us that Wordsworth's childhood Paradise is constructed through his narrative choices. Walcott's funeral scene for the child Pinky (AL, Chapter I, Section III) cannot help but recall Wordsworth's "Boy of Winander" who "was taken from his Mates, and died / In childhood, ere he was full ten years old" (V, 414-15). Similarly, in Book XI, Wordsworth admits that when he "was then not six years old," so young, in fact, that his hand could "scarcely . . . hold a bridle" (XI, 280-1), he came across a Gibbet on which a Murderer had been hanged years earlier. (This memory is one of his "spots in time;" his adult self draws solace from the memory's sure evidence that he has faced and survived adversity in his early life, and thus, will be able to do so again.) The striking difference between the two poets' childhood memories of death is, of course, in the narrative sequencing: Wordsworth chooses to establish childhood as Edenic and only much later to allow the reader to glimpse its other realities; Walcott, on the other hand, offers a child's

memory of a playmate's death as his first presentation of childhood, and does this within the poem's opening pages. Another Life, then, insists on childhood as already enmeshed with and aware of death, and speaks back to a Wordsworthian discourse which attempts to enshrine childhood as Paradise.

Discourses of Paradise have, of course, particular implications in colonial settings. Many of these settings continue to be exploited for commercial purposes, so that the contemporary travel industry discourse is very much continuous with that of Western literature.<sup>7</sup> Walcott resists this depiction of his island as a tropical Paradise, countering with such realities as "a stinging haze / of thorn trees bent like green flames by the Trades . . . while the asphalt sweats its mirages and the beaks / of fledgling ginger lilies gasped for rain" (194), more suggestive of Hell than Paradise. It is an island of decidedly non-pastoral storms: "Lightning frequently / crackled across the watersheds, thunder / rattled the sky's tightened parchment" (253). Instead of being only a place of perfect beginnings, this island is one of many which constricts with its own hopelessness: "He haunted beaches, / the horizon tightened round his throat . . . The islands were a string of barges towed nowhere, / every view / assembling itself to say farewell" (253).

Paradoxically, at exactly the moment in which Walcott denies that the Caribbean is Edenic, he embraces the myth by

stepping into the role of Adam, and naming its realities. For Walcott, the only redemption possible for this already corrupt landscape into which Caribbean man is born comes through the Adamic act of naming. This is most clearly indicated in his claim that he and Gregorias, when lit were "the light of the world," Christ-figures who "were blest with a virginal, unpainted world / with Adam's task of giving things their names" (294). (This is, though, admittedly a retrospective claim made in the past tense; it is not at all clear that he retains any such confidence during his mid-life writing of this poem.) Yet this sense of consecration to a redemptive task must encompass the revelation of this yet-unpainted world as distinctly non-Edenic: "we swore . . . that we would . . . put down, in paint, in words . . . all of its sunken, leaf-choked ravines, / every neglected, self-pitying inlet / muttering in brackish dialect, / the ropes of mangroves / from which old soldier crabs slipped / surrendering to slush, / each ochre track seeking some hilltop and / losing itself in an unfinished phrase" (194).

Not only is the landscape Walcott names not as pristine as Adam's, but the language which he must use is also compromised by previous use. When Walcott says that "no one had yet written of this landscape / that it was possible" (195), he suggests an already-existing discourse which is inadequate or exclusive. When he speaks of the varieties

of wood which respond to their sounds but are not yet named, he likens them to "bastard children, hiding in their names"; of these children, "whole generations died, unchristened" (195). He can never be truly Adamic, then; an established tradition of naming has already created the illegitimacy. His task is really more like Christ's: He must name, baptize, Christ-en the post-colonial reality into a system of legitimacy. As Christ, he must always act in relation to The Father, who is, from the beginning of this narrative, "an absent master / in the middle of another life" (145).<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, Walcott does insist on celebrating his "task of giving things their names," thereby perhaps attempting to redeem his earlier inconstancy in preferring elms to breadfruit. Again, however, the Adamic quality of his cataloguing is curiously compromised by the intensely connotative language he uses. Much of the flora of the region, for example, is described with military associations. Thus there are the "coconut lances" (145), the "disconsolate plumes / of the cabbage palms' casques" (176), and "the golden cocoa's tattered epaulettes" (179). The allamandas' flowers suggest "bugles" but "nobody charges" (156). As the allamandas fall, they are nevertheless "medalling the shoulders of the last visitor" (256), while other flowers "medalled the gravestones of the Inniskillings" (172).

The language this Adam must use to inscribe the flora

of the Caribbean is weighted with other associations and experiences besides the military ones. The bougainvillea which grows outside the poet's childhood home, for example, is described as having thorns which "moult like old fingernails" (156), signalling its association with the home and thus with the poet's mother, now dead from cancer. And in the following passage which inscribes such tropical realities as banyans, mangroves, gibbons (if only obliquely), whelk pickers, lagoons, and red soldier crabs, the language suggests some inescapable hierarchies:

patricarchal banyans,  
bearded with vines from which black schoolboys  
gibboned,  
 brooded on a lagoon seasoned with dead leaves,  
 mangroves knee-deep in water  
crouched like whelk pickers on brown, spindly legs  
 scattering red soldier crabs  
scrabbling for redcoats'  
 meat (148, my emphasis)

What is also fascinating about this extremely connotative passage is the Ovidean ambiguity created through both metaphors and syntax. The humans turn into animals while the trees become brooding bearded patriarchs and whelk pickers. It is unclear whether the mangroves scatter the red soldier crabs or whether that is done by the whelk pickers (who exist only as metaphor).

As well as the tropical flora and fauna, this Adam must try to name into the Western literary discourse a climate which is not yet represented. In place of Wordsworth's gentle breezes, clouds, and mists, there is the mesmerizing sun (145). Its setting and dawn are "like manacles [which] chafed his wrist" (217), thus recalling the Caribbean history of slavery. Twilight is also associated with drunkenness: "as its amber climbed / the beer-stein ovals of the British fort / above the promontory, the sky / grew drunk with light" (145). This drunkenness is a minor theme throughout, associated not only with the British military-- "colonels in the whisky-coloured light" (148)--but also with Gregorias and his father. Gregorias is also compared to the sun: the poet says that he so christened him because Gregorias "sounds explosive, / a black Greek's! A sun that stands back / from the fire of itself, not shamed, prizing / its shadow, watching it blaze!" (294).

The poet's first love, Anna, is also described in terms of the sun, which is dated from her birth: "The sixteen-year-old sun / plates her with light" (229). Not only does the sun date from her birth, but Anna becomes the sun for the young poet as "he wished himself moving / yet forever there. / The disc of the world turned / slowly, she was its centre" (229). This identification of his love interests with the sun continues when, much later in life, he begins a prayer by calling the sun "holy," and then addresses his

wife, Margaret, as holy, saying there is nothing for him now but to "sit in the sun to burn" (290). He goes on to remember Anna, saying that he wishes "to have burnt out desire, / lust, except for the sun / with her corona of fire" (290). Thus the two women are connected through this imagery, which establishes them as central in his life, but also as potentially destructive.

The sun's dominance in that landscape is clearly indicated in the poet's prayer when he is "[b]urned in the pyre of the sun" and sits in its roar "like a lotus yogi folded on his bed of coals [his] head . . . circled with a ring of fire" (288). His prayerful references to it as "my son, my sun" (289) offer the potential of an alternative to the imposed Christian "Son" deity. Despite (or because of) its clearly destructive potential, he prays towards its "holy, repetitive resurrection" and he "repeat[s] [him]self / prayer, same prayer, towards fire, same fire / as the sun repeats itself" (289).

Finally, however, as much as he can try to make the language new by describing his own landscape, the Adamic Walcott must work within an established iconography of nature; after he has added to it, he must also challenge or subvert that discourse. (Thus, according to Harold Bloom, he is as much Satanic as he is Adamic.<sup>9</sup>) In The Prelude, Wordsworth uses imagery and symbols which have a long-established meaning within Western literary tradition. The

river, for instance, is often used to refer to just that tradition. The breeze, as Abrams has pointed out, has a specifically Romantic association with creativity. Walcott does use some of the same symbols and images of nature as Wordsworth, but modifies them to better represent the landscape or nature he inhabits as well as to suit his themes.

While he does this, Walcott is also challenging the traditional categories of beautiful/sublime. These categories, of course, leave no room for any political agency. They allow only the quietism which must be the inevitable response to aesthetic perfection, or the fear and awe which paralyse, thus precluding any possibility of change. Perhaps some of Wordsworth's silences<sup>10</sup> reflect his discomfort with this excluding dichotomy, but The Prelude does finally perpetuate the tradition. The Adamic Walcott who inherits this discourse must name the tawdry, the pathetic, and even the comic as challenges to the exclusive categories of beautiful and sublime.

Wordsworth makes several references to the sea throughout The Prelude, generally asserting it as either beautiful (or the Romantic variant thereof--the picturesque) or sublime. In Book IV, for example, it forms part of a "glorious" landscape: "Magnificent / The morning was, a memorable pomp, / More glorious than I ever had beheld. / The Sea was laughing at a distance" (330-35). It moves from



this category to the sublime and back in Book V, when his friend falls asleep by its shores and has his strange dream about the Arab with the Books of Stone and Shell, which the "waters of the deep" (V.130), the "fleet waters of the drowning world" (V.136) threaten to obliterate. Some ambiguity in the Sea's depiction is suggested in Book XIII when "the Sea, the real Sea . . . seemed to dwindle and give up its majesty" (XIII.49-50), but only to be replaced by another "still Ocean" formed by the reversal of perception which sees the mountains as a huge sea, and which allows the redemptive vision which culminates the work.

Walcott's metaphors for the ocean all establish it as very material and tangible. Yet some do suggest the sublime: when he describes it as animal, the animal is either somewhat dangerously furred and clawed (263), or stunningly huge-eyed, a creature whose waves are lumbering blows from "weary, pelagic eyelids" (198). And although a human sea is obviously less than sublime, Walcott's personification gives it the mouth of an "old gravekeeper / white-headed, lantern-jawed" (293). But if these metaphors do evoke something of the sublime, his sublime is very different from that of Wordsworth for whom the transcendental sublime is finally a welcome invitation back to an integrated relationship with Nature. Walcott, instead, finds it impersonal, indifferent, and obliterating. The sea he describes is, if sometimes sublime, an aspect of

nature which offers no nurture or guidance but which merely denies: "O oceanic past / we were like children / emptying the Atlantic with an enamel cup. / I crouched under each crest / the sneering wave . . ." (208). Here the sea is associated with history, which finally, like Naipaul's comments, renders the Caribbean artists irrelevant.

Walcott's references to the sea suggest both the obliterating power of the book/history and the Caribbean's absolute lack of history. The sea is really the Caribbean's history book. Not only did it bring the British masters, but it also, of course, carried the slaves from Africa to St. Lucia, and it continues to separate the Caribbean subject from both ancestral lands. The poet searches it for a record of his "white grandfather's face" or his "black grandfather's voice" (208). It carries all history, both the recorded of Albion, Sidon, Tyre, and Byzantium (208), and the unrecorded of the "Madrasi, the Mandingo, the Ashanti" (285). And the sea which carries all this history is indifferent to it:

The sand had seen battalions come and go  
 the vines had written their memorials,  
 all of that cannon fire taken up by cloud.  
 Nothing had altered the teal or mallard's route,  
 all that salt blood thinned out in the salt surf  
 . . . . .  
 There was no history. No memory.

Rocks haunted by seabirds, that was all. (256)

Like the flooding waters which threaten to overtake and drown Wordsworth's Arab and his precious books, Walcott's sea offers to obliterate history, allowing us to begin again, but at the cost of rendering the poet's work irrelevant.

The Adamic Walcott attempts to counter this obliterating effect by his act of naming the aspects of the ocean which cannot be confined under the headings of beautiful or sublime. He describes it in very quotidian and material terms, thus creating some space for questioning its mastery. The most recurrent image, and that which introduces the sea likens it to a book: "pages of the sea . . . this ocean's a shut book" (145). Although there is something of the transcendent in this image, it is also very tangible, material, and contained. After all, the reader of these lines holds a book and the speaker is creating one. Similarly, the engine to which the sea is compared, which might suggest the powerful and even the sublime (150, 292), turns out to be the very quotidian engine of air-conditioners. The ocean's shallows are described as servers in a Catholic procession, another metaphor drawn from the Island's daily life. Walcott also turns the book into a trite "catalogue / of shells and algae" (24), and draws attention to the tawdry by personifying the ocean as a slut: "Lost, lost, rain-hidden, precipitous, debased, / ocean's

soiled lace around her dirty ankle" (182).

Both Walcott and Wordsworth use the moon as a central image. For Wordsworth, again, the moon can be part of either a beautiful (or picturesque) landscape as in his claim that, just as he loved the sun, so to him was the moon "dear" allowing him to "dream away my purposes, / Standing to look upon her while she hung / Midway between the hills, as if she knew / No other region but belonged to thee . . . and thy grey huts, my darling Vale!" (II.196-202). Or it is part of the sublime as in the Mt. Snowdon revelation of Book XIII where the "Moon stood naked in the Heavens" (XIII.41), and "looked down upon this shew [of mountains transformed into Ocean] / in single glory" (XIII.52-3).

Walcott draws on traditional Western iconography which reads the moon as a symbol of inconstancy and reversal. I have already pointed out that the poet's childhood self, as her subject, is guilty of such inconstancy as betraying the palms and breadfruit of his island for the elms and oak of the colonizer's (148). The same inconstancy affects the poet's island audience; they "have drunk the moon-milk" and are now only "poor negatives," to whom he is unsure how to tell his story, a story which will return him to an earlier moon which has long since faded "with the elate extinction of a bulb" (151). This last image of the moon often links it, in Another Life, with the sea; the sea is the book and the moon is the lightbulb which illuminates it. Again, the

Mt. Snowdon scene is recalled but with the difference that Walcott is, instead of recounting himself in such a scene, looking back at the figure of another poet poised between sea and moon--that of his now-dead teacher and mentor, Harry Simmons.

All of these images of the moon seem to resist a confinement to either the beautiful or the sublime. Although the moon has the power to whiten the islanders and to magnify "the life beneath her like a reading glass" (149), this is undercut both by the personification which establishes her as a slut<sup>11</sup> who lends the town her lace (152) and whose fingers stroke the sea, and the simile which likens her to a bulb which, after all, can be turned on and off, and must, eventually, wear out, fading to extinction. As well, she is presented as rather comic in the line, "a moon ballooned up from the Wireless Station" (146). Yet the sublime is acknowledged. The writer's "dun flesh," for example, is "peeled white by her lightning strokes," surely a terrifying, or sublime, image. And in an image which again links moon and sea, "the enormous, lidless eyeball of the moon" swims "towards us . . . gibbering with silence, struck / by something it cannot answer / or the worst, the worst, an oceanic nothing" (263-4).

If Walcott has been able to introduce into the discourse slight modifications to the rigid categorization of certain accepted symbols of Nature as either beautiful or

sublime, his almost complete rejection of the symbol of the wind or breeze marks the difference between his and Wordsworth's depiction of the relationship between artist and Nature. Walcott chooses instead to invoke the artist's use of amber. This naturally derived substance (a fossilized pine sap) is used as a fixative, particularly in the most canonized representations of Western art. References to it, then, allow Walcott to allude economically to the canon and to the artistic process. As well, the particular greenish cast which it imparts to the painted surface is analogous to the inevitable colouring of the viewer's (or reader's) perception which is inherent in any form of art, and as Edward Baugh points out, to the transfiguring role played by the "amber glaze of the poet's memory/imagination . . . [which] [p]aradoxically . . . actualises and idealises at the same time" (89).<sup>12</sup>

Wordsworth's continual moves from synaesthetic descriptions of material Nature to those of an ineffable transcendent one reflect his attempts to move back to a reassuring oneness, to a relationship between Nature and Mind in which Nature is accepted as primary guide and nurturer, yet wherein there is reciprocity between the two. Walcott's more painterly approach reflects his own more ambivalent relationship with Nature. His is a Nature which inspires and challenges the artist, offering him "a virginal, unpainted world" (294), but which continually

frustrates him, obliterating any achievement and overwhelming him with indifference.

Walcott's artists try to achieve mastery over the landscape/nature. Gregorias, for example, marches towards the Atlantic with "the easel rifled on his shoulder," like a soldier going into battle. He sings "O Paradiso" until "the western breakers laboured to that music" while his canvas is "crucified against a tree" (194). This twisted passage which economically incorporates references to both paradise and redemption (through art?) turns Wordsworth's reciprocity into something more sinister: Gregorias is able to make the waves submit to the domination of his song, yet his canvas is finally crucified against a tree.

Walcott draws on his own early frustrations as a developing painter to describe a Nature which reflects his inadequacy back to him. If the poem overall is an attempt to find some meaning to the poet's position vis a vis the landscape, the conceit of Nature as an impatient sitter posing for an inadequate artist, is a wonderfully effective, if poignant way of underlining that theme. Thus the landscape "frowns at its image" over the painter's shoulder, while "the mountain's crouching back begins to ache," and "like a tired sitter / the world shifts its weight" (197-8). When Walcott's references to Van Gogh ("Dear Theo") remind us that other artists have gone mad in response to this challenge, his language echoes Lear in his question,

"Is that where it lies, / in the light of that leaf, the  
glint / of some gully . . . Nature is a fire / through the  
door of this landscape / I have entered a furnace" (199).<sup>13</sup>

This question, together with the following comment that  
"I have toiled all of life for this failure" (200) also  
recalls Wordsworth's "Was it for this?"<sup>14</sup> But Wordsworth,  
of course, is looking backward, wondering if it was to allow  
him to reach this level of poetic awareness and skill that  
the fair Derwent River nurtured him through childhood. The  
difficult question seems deliberately balanced by the  
nurturing security of a very tame nature. Walcott, instead,  
is looking to the frightening future possibilities which are  
part of submitting to the poet's relationship with a nature  
much more dangerous than Wordsworth is willing to admit.

For Walcott, then, rather than the option of a  
reciprocally nurturing and creative relationship between  
mind and nature, the choice is rather of struggle,  
submission, or obliteration. His mentor and painting  
teacher retreats into nature, Gauguin-like. As he  
contemplates his canvas, a "spider began to thread / easel  
to bedstead" (262). This image, which again recalls Van  
Gogh's tortured struggle with art, also foregrounds the  
difficulty of the artist's task which is ultimately an  
attempt to come to terms with nature, knowing that nature  
which always outlast and supersede the artist's efforts.  
Yet the true artist cannot resist the challenge, and



Simmons' death is foreshadowed by his claim, again in a painterly metaphor, that it "would be worth it to fall / with the meteor's orange brushstroke / from a falling hand, to hope / there is painting in heaven" (267-8). This gorgeous image paradoxically asserts the ascendancy of nature--how could an artist hope for an acceptable mimesis of a fiery meteor--yet depicts the meteor itself as only a dying painter's accidental brushstroke.

The self-immolation implied in the association of the meteor with Simmons' eventual suicide is subtly recalled in Walcott's final address to his friend and fellow artist. "Gregorias," he says, "listen, lit, we were the light of the world!" (294). Not only does this image acknowledge the destructive aspect of attempting to redeem the world, but it also, in its use of the past tense, contrasts with The Prelude's closing exhortation to Coleridge. In the latter, Wordsworth, with a confidence restored by a vision of a nurturing Nature, pledges himself and Coleridge as "Prophets of Nature" to instruct others "how the mind of man becomes / A thousand times more beautiful than the earth / On which he dwells" (589). Examining his past relationship with Nature gives him the ability to face the future with faith and hope. Walcott's similar examination, however, reminds him of a time when he had similar hope and optimism, an optimism which is not entirely abandoned, but is now modified to a resigned commitment to "beginning again."

## Chapter Two - "What Else Was He But a Divided Child?"

In his treatment of the divided self, Walcott once again both claims and modifies an inheritance transmitted through and represented by The Prelude. Through Wordsworth, Walcott inherits a tradition long imbedded in English literature. In this tradition, the divided self is presented as a fall away from an original paradisaal integrity with nature, a fall brought about through man's own fault (in Wordsworth, the fault of over-analytical thought). This imperialist tradition ignores the colonial condition of being born into a post-lapsarian world; it is Walcott's task to modify the model by describing his own divided self as being, if a "fallen" condition, then one which is not his fault but his inheritance. He similarly accepts and modifies the inheritance of a model whereby the poet celebrates, by the very act of writing, that same division he claims as a fallen and lamentable condition. Finally, Walcott inherits through Wordsworth the inclination to write towards integrity. Here, his modification is that while he too finally presents a formally integrated autobiographical self, he achieves this by articulating doubts and divisions rather than silencing or denying them.

The crisis which shapes The Prelude is that of the division within Wordsworth, ostensibly occasioned by his response to the French Revolution (or his response to the English reaction to that revolution). This crisis

interrupts an earlier integrity, an integrity which is ultimately restored through a return to an acceptance of the natural order. The pattern here is not only that of the Biblical model of Paradise - Fall - Redemption. It is also, as M.H. Abrams points out, the pattern of the Romantic philosophy which secularizes this model, retaining its assertion of an initial unity followed by a falling out of or away from this into "a position of remoteness and . . . alienation" with an eventual return to unity and perfection thanks to a "cohesive and sustaining supernatural energy" (152).

As Abrams sums up Romantic philosophy, the primal fracture resulting from man's reflection and philosophizing is "conceived of as having two divisions, one cognitive and the other moral." While the first of these is seen in a division between mind and outer nature,

the second manifests itself in a split within the nature of man himself . . . . In its moral dimension . . . the loss of the mind's original unity with itself . . . through man's emergent awareness of an opposition and conflict between that 'nature' which is the substratum of his human nature (man's natural instincts, desires, and compulsions . . . ) and his subjective 'reason' (the capacity to distinguish alternative choices which are right or wrong) together with his

subjective realm of 'freedom' (the capacity to choose what is right and reject what is wrong).

(182)

Wordsworth's description of himself continually reflects a sense of splitting: in the beginning lines, for example, he narrates being able, "by miraculous gift" to shake off "[t]hat burthen of my own unnatural self" (I.21-23); later, he tells the reader that when he thinks back to his early life, he sometimes seems "[T]wo consciousnesses" (II.32).

Later still, Wordsworth speaks of moments in which "such a holy calm / Did overspread my soul, that I forgot / That I had bodily eyes" (II.367-369). In such moments of overcoming his bodily or sensory self, the poet achieves a unity:

. . . in all things

I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.

One song they sang, and it was audible,

Most audible then when the fleshly ear,

O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,

Forgot its functions, and slept undisturbed.

As Abrams points out, this is Wordsworth's own version of the Romantic philosophy:

unity with himself and his world is the primal and normative state of man, of which the sign is a fullness of shared life and the condition of joy; analytic thought divides the mind from nature and

object from object, and this division, if absolute, kills the object it severs and threatens with spiritual death the mind from which it has been severed." (278)

This reading of the poem, though perhaps not comprehensive, is a satisfying one which provides a very useful summary of the concept of the divided self inherited by Walcott.

Walcott takes this inheritance--a self-division which provides the central structuring crisis not only of an artist's life but also of his work (or vice versa?)--and both endorses and modifies it. His endorsement of the tradition is found in his inscription of the division he experiences: between his black/Caribbean/African and his white/European ancestry and culture. Walcott also writes about the turmoil occasioned by the division between his desire to paint and his greater skill as a poet. Finally, as a poet writing in middle age, he is divided by the memory of his youthful optimism and the more pragmatic resignation of maturity.<sup>15</sup>

Where Walcott modifies the tradition is in insisting that rather than falling into division, such division is, in fact, a normal part of the colonial condition. He is born not into unity and integrity but into a language marked by such colonialism. The title for the first chapter of Another Life--"The Divided Child"--is Walcott's strenuous protest against Wordsworth's claims for the integrity of

childhood. Walcott insists that "from childhood he'd considered palms / ignobler than imagined elms" (148) and "had prayed / nightly for his flesh to change, / his dun flesh peeled white by her lightning strokes!" (148-9). His own imagination's idealization of Europe divided the child Walcott from his daily experiences; the nightly prayer for skin to match his imagination is a poignant demonstration of internal division and self-hatred.

Similarly, the diverging directions in which the child is pulled are demonstrated by the bedtime juxtaposition of the "magic lantern shows" of the "black lamplighter with Demeter's torch" with his Classical/Western "children's literature" represented by Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tanglewood Tales and Charles Kingsley's Heroes (158). The two stanzas which describe the lamplighter frame the two which describe the boy in bed, forming a contrast between his comfortable home and the surrounding wild. Outside is magical transformation as iron trees are ignited, and the ceiling "reels" with the reflection of this action. This magic is associated with the lamplighter's blackness, and both with the darkness of night as well as with the nearby shacks. Ascribing Demeter's torch to the black lamplighter is a reflection of the boy's awareness that, although not recorded in the white/literary/Anglicized education he is receiving, there is nonetheless potential for story in the everyday folk experience surrounding him.

In the daytime, the boy learns the history of his European grandfathers and imagines himself in battle against the Other which represents part of himself: "I butchered fellaheen, thuggees, Mamelukes, wogs." (211) The child's imagined relation of himself to this classroom history is of one "like a ribbed mongrel / trailing the fading legions" (214). Wordsworth experienced little unhappiness at school although Cambridge proved a trial in his later adolescence. The first two books of The Prelude detail a childhood in a determinedly joyous manner. Even when Wordsworth and his schoolmates "lived / Through three divisions of the quartered year / in pennyless poverty" (II.83-85), he presents such poverty in positive terms, saying that "we knew the blessing then / of vigorous hunger" (II.80-81, my emphasis). Walcott instead focuses on the curriculum which glorified his European heritage while teaching him to feel ashamed of, or ignore as irrelevant, his African ancestry.

Further evidence of dividing forces in Walcott's childhood is found in Chapter Four, the chapter which juxtaposes Christianity with "negromancy." That this was a very early division, and that it was perceived at the level of the body, the threshold of the self (i.e. on a personal level), is clear in the following lines:

The cloven hoof, the hairy paw  
despite the passionate, pragmatic  
Methodism of my infancy,

crawled through the thicket of my hair,

till sometimes the skin prickled

even in sunshine at "negromancy." (166, my emphasis)

Walcott plays with the alternate spelling of "necromancy" strengthening the emphasis on the association between the "black arts" and his black skin; as well, the word is placed to rhyme with and play against "infancy." In his insistence on "the body's memory" (167) which holds this atavism and which is also the place "where Africa began" (167), Walcott points to a history and a geography which render his childhood a divided one far different from the paradisaal state which Wordsworth describes.

The pain of this division is obvious, and it is a palpable presence in Walcott's life from his earliest days. Instead of Wordsworth's delayed plunge into despair after the French Revolution, Walcott experiences this fragmentation and separation continuously, even throughout the most joyful episodes of his youth; it is exemplified by his relationships with Gregorias and Anna.

With his best friend and fellow painting student, Gregorias, the young poet shares a commitment to "never leave the island / until we had put down, in paint, in words . . . all of its sunken, leaf-choked ravines . . . " (194). Yet this friendship which bolsters Walcott's commitment also makes him more aware of his own internal division. For Walcott desperately wished to paint but had to admit that "I



lived in a different gift, / its element metaphor, / while Gregorias would draw with the linear elation of an eel" (201). Gregorias is associated with the Black-ness and the folk/oral, with Walcott's own African heritage. Thus there is a focus on his "black nudes gleaming sweat, / in the tiger shade of the fronds" as well as on the cherubim which he renders "brown-bottomed" (203). Although his work is "grotesque," it is "whole" (201), and he "possess[es] / aboriginal force" (201).

Walcott clearly admires both his friend's art, and his ability to "abandon[] apprenticeship / to the errors of his own soul" (201). He finds himself incapable of such spontaneity, separated from this possibility by his European-colonial education: "my hand was crabbed by that style, / this epoch, / that school / or the next" (201). While Gregorias is "bent to his handful of earth" (203) for inspiration, Walcott pores over books of reproductions in his father's library.<sup>16</sup> The chapters which celebrate "mad, divine Gregorias / imprisoned in his choice" (208) (lines which suggest that the division cannot be resolved simplistically, that Gregorias' choice also comes at a cost) close painfully with the image of a "thin, / tortured child" (209) listening to the sea voice of his black grandfather and looking in the sea-wrack for the face of his white grandfather.

Similarly, the poet's first love is marked by internal

conflicts; these conflicts line up an idealizing and courtly love associated with whiteness against sexual feelings which are associated with blackness. Anna is always described as light, golden, and sun-like. She is a European Anna, drawn from literature and art, an "Anna of the wheatfield and the weir . . . of the solid winter rain . . . of the smoky platform and the cold train." She is "all Annas, enduring all goodbyes . . . Christie, Karenina, big-boned and passive" (238). Although the mature poet can now imagine Anna replying, "I am simple, I was simpler then" (242), the younger poet's imagination transformed Anna so that she "became, in fact, another country" (238) in response to his need. As such, she provided the idealized, created woman of the sunlight who countered the young man's baser fascinations. The contrast she provides is clearest in the following lines which are set apart from, but immediately follow, lines in which the words "lechery" or "lecherous" occurs four times in nine lines, associating that lechery with women of colour, both "the Indian woman you finger-poked in the doorway" and the

. . . Negro whore on the drawing-room floor  
 under the silent portraits of your parents,  
 while Anna slept,  
 her golden body like a lamp blown out. (228)

The young poet's sexual guilt here is clearly associated with racial guilt.<sup>17</sup> His sexual attraction to women who,

like him, are (of colour) is sinful "lechery"; to this, the white/golden Anna can only be the virginal antidote.

Clearly then, although Walcott does describe joyous episodes in his youth, his early memories do not afford him the same nourishment that Wordsworth's do. Wordsworth's recollections, particularly his "spots in time," not only provide continuity between his childhood and his mature self but also lead him back towards integrity. Since Walcott's childhood already encompassed division, there is no such integrity to which he can return. By modifying this inheritance of an insistence on childhood as an unblemished, happy time, Walcott has broadened the discourse, not only articulating his own post-colonial reality but also perhaps paving the way for such recent works as Jamaica Kincaid's The Autobiography of My Mother,<sup>18</sup> which even more vehemently denies the possibility of seeing Eden in a Caribbean childhood.

The Prelude represents an inherited paradox which Walcott accepts but questions; the paradox is that the divided self which the poet laments also provides him with both the material for his poem and an opportunity to create an integrated self in writing. This is similar to the relationship between division and integration in the Romantic philosophy which so heavily influenced The Prelude. According to this philosophy, as M.H. Abrams points out, the initial, two-dimensional fission between mind and outer

nature, and between the mind and its own natural impulses, although it is in itself an evil, is the very act which releases the energy that sets in motion the speculative philosophy whose basic aim . . . is to cancel all cognitive and moral separation and opposition in a restored and enduring unity. (182)

Abrams goes on to point out that Romantic philosophy is "primarily a metaphysics of integration, of which the key principle is that of the 'reconciliation,' or synthesis, of whatever is divided, opposed, and conflicting" (182). Without the division, in other words, there would be no need or, perhaps more significantly, no opportunity for integration.

Not only does the division provide the subject matter and momentum for the poem, but in each case, it allows the writer to create an integrated self, if only on paper. Thus both poets negotiate a continual exchange between memories of a past self and commentary by the adult writer, inscribing for themselves and for their audience an autobiography whose apparent mimesis has healing and integrating potential. While Wordsworth is at best self-conscious about this writing towards integration,<sup>19</sup> Walcott is openly scornful both of his own complicity in the further alienation it causes and of the possibility of final resolution.

For writing an integrated life means another division,

this time not only between art's formal requirements and a demand for accurate mimesis, but also between the ability to record objectively and the desire to live subjectively. Gayatri Spivak has written about Wordsworth's representation of gender/sexual issues and the historical Wordsworth's possible experience with these issues, pointing out his effacement of his real-life romance with Annette Vallon and its replacement by the Vaudracoeur story.<sup>20</sup> Throughout The Prelude, the distance between experienced or "real" life and art's created version of that life is perhaps most noticeable in the poem's gaps and silences. Walcott more directly addresses the distinction; he says he "fell in love with art, / and life began" (186). Although this quotation implies that life does not exist for him without art, Walcott suggests throughout that his dedication to art is often at the expense of life.

The distance Walcott's artistic ego imposes between himself and his life is evident in his relationship with Anna. His early love for her is introduced immediately after the creed-like stanza of consecration to art in Chapter 7, which ends with the above quotation counterposing art and life. In his responses to Anna, the young artist is invariably torn between these two. He describes Anna in terms of art, "her golden plaits a simple coronet / out of Angelico" (187), and describes his hand as "trembling to recite her name" (187). As he now recognizes, "[t]he hand

she held already had betrayed / them by its longing for describing her" (236).

While Walcott castigates himself for his negation of the real Anna in favour of the one he creates/inscribes, his most painful self-indictment is found in his description of the suicide of his mentor, Harry Simmons. After musing on his gift in relation to those of Gregorias and Simmons, he asks his master and friend for forgiveness:

Forgive me, if this sketch should ever thrive,  
or profit from your gentle, generous spirit.

When I began this work, you were alive,

and with one stroke, you have completed it! (282)

The language here is very concerned with art as willful creation; the nouns are also potentially active strong verbs--"sketch," "work," "stroke". And the horrible pun which equates the painter's stroke with the razor's forces the equally horrible, painfully honest realization that the poet benefits from Simmons' suicide because it so perfectly completes his poem.

Yet although Walcott realizes his own complicity in art which perpetuates as much as or more than it heals division, he has few alternatives and must accept this inheritance which Wordsworth offers. Like Wordsworth, he will attempt to write towards integration and, like Wordsworth, he will do this by rather self-consciously signalling an inscribing and an inscribed self, and by linking these respectively, to

the adult writer and his younger counterpart.

Wordsworth's first book, with its address to Coleridge about the nature of his present task and its invocations to the muse which is Nature, is clearly written to focus attention on the writing self. He speaks of the "months to come [in which he] / May dedicate [him]self to chosen tasks" (1:33-4). Wordsworth's self-reflexiveness concerning his task is closely related to his fascination with the layers of chronological selves. He interrupts himself after his first 54 lines to point out that "Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make / A present joy the matter of my Song, / Pour out, that day, my soul in measured strains, / Even in the very words which I have here / Recorded" (1:55-59, my emphasis). A distinction is drawn between a fairly recent recording and an earlier outpouring of song (the spontaneity of which is curiously modified by its "measured strains"). As readers, we seem to be considering three chronologically distinct actions and/or selves: the speaker in the narrative present, the recorder in a recent past, and the "singer" who poured out his joy in an even earlier past.

Walcott finds this a useful model. His opening also draws attention to the efforts of the present self--"I begin here again" (145) and places that self in relation to passing time-- the moon's filaments waning--but against a backdrop of a past action, that of the absent master who has opened and then abandoned the pages of the book which is the

sea. Although he begins in twilight in the present tense, the twilight he describes is marked by its use of verbs in the past tense: "when a glare / which held a cry of bugles lowered / the coconut lances of the inlet, / as a sun, tired of empire, declined. / It mesmerized like fire without wind, / and as its amber climbed...the sky / grew drunk with light" (145, my emphasis). This overlapping of the past and his present is as much a central feature of Another Life as it is of The Prelude, as each poet tries to understand and articulate his present by probing earlier experiences and expectations.

While Wordsworth, through childhood memories, particularly the powerfully shaping "spots in time", is finally able to assert a renewed integrity, Walcott is only able to understand and articulate his division, and to re-commit himself resignedly to the task of changing those conditions which predicated it. If any redemption from the fallen state is possible, it will be achieved through the act of naming. Where Wordsworth turns to his childhood to find solace for his adult self, it is Walcott's adult, inscribing, self who re-writes his past for the hurt child he carries within. This adult, for example, bridges the child's division between the oral daily street/folk life and the literary stories of the classroom by composing a Homeric abecedary which asserts an "alphabet of the emaciated" as the "stars of my mythology" (164).



Walcott asserts his own division, acknowledging the pain it has brought him, but without the need or the ability to overcome it. Perhaps this is because he has more openly accepted his own complicity in this pain by acknowledging the part it plays in his writing. And perhaps because the primary response he makes to it is even more writing which will inevitably cause more alienation --both because it holds him back, observing, from others, and because it causes him to judge his own work, which is also a part of himself.

Wordsworth, through his "spots in time," is finally led back to the unity described in the Mt. Snowdon passage. Walcott parallels this in a moment of similarly apocalyptic revelation which he experiences as a youth, and re-interprets as an adult. At fourteen he "lost [his] self somewhere above a valley". With a reversal of clouds and sea very similar to Wordsworth's experience on Mt. Snowdon, the young boy "drowned in labouring breakers of bright cloud, / then uncontrollably . . . began to weep . . . with a serene extinction of all sense . . . for nothing and for everything" (185). Thus the self seems to dissolve into a unity which, again, parallels Wordsworth's Mt. Snowdon epiphany. But when the poet tries as an adult to understand this weeping submission, he associates himself with doubleness rather than with unity: my sign was Janus, / I saw with twin heads, / and everything I say is contradicted"

(281).

He also associates himself with the feminine which might be his opposite but which is also an integral part of his self: "I knelt because I was my mother" (281). This turning to the feminine for consolation and for balance is also asserted in his description of his relationship with his wife:

I have married one whose darkness is a tree,  
bayed in whose arms I bring my stifled howl,  
love and forgive me!

Who holds my fears at dusk like birds which take  
the lost or moonlit colour of her leaves,  
in whom our children  
and the children of friends settle  
simply, like rhymes,  
in whose side, in the grim times

when I cannot see light for the deep leaves,

sharing her depth, the whole lee ocean grieves. (282)

He later claims that he can walk beside "the tireless hoarse anger of the waters . . . a renewed, exhausted man, / balanced at its edge by the weight of two dear daughters" (289). The sexist essentialism of such lines is troubling; nevertheless, there is a positive movement here from Wordsworth's effacement of the sexual to Walcott's model of sexual union and/or hybridity offering the potential to heal division.

Finally, though, despite the healing and forgiveness provided by his wife and the renewal and balance offered by his daughters, Walcott remains divided. Unlike Wordsworth who closes with a commitment to future action, a commitment which joins him to Coleridge, integrating a potentially second self, Walcott looks back to a time when he also felt such a commitment. He also addresses a potential alter ego, and divides that fellow artist further under his two names: "Gregorias, Apilo!" (294); the first the "arty" Greek name with which he has idealised him; and the second his common name, the nickname of his childhood friend.

Rather than exhort his friend to join him in a commitment to a future task, he is divided from a time when they shared such a commitment, a time when they "were the light of the world!" and "were blest . . . with Adam's task of giving things their names" (294). Although he has earlier likened Gregorias to the sun, he now associates him with his "crude wooden star" (294), a transition which links him with the twilight mood of the poem's opening. Similarly, earlier in the third section of this final chapter, he returns again to "old verandahs" and to a "book left open by an absent master" (292). The gulf or division which separates him from "another life" in which he and Gregorias shared so much hope will not be overcome. He will not achieve the final integrity which Wordsworth claims. Rather, his only hope is to move forward resignedly to take

the only action possible, that of creating yet another life  
through the writing action which is the poem: that of  
"beginning again."

## Chapter Three -- "Heroic Argument"

Walcott's use of the epic form for his "growth of the poet's mind" obviously recalls Wordsworth's Prelude; as well, it points to an entire tradition of the epic within Western literature, and also, because of the epic's original association with transmitting history, to the Western discourse of history itself. In the allusions made to The Prelude by the form of Another Life, Walcott acknowledges the inspiration he has drawn from Western literature, claiming his inheritance by demonstrating his skill in one of its most exalted genres. At the same time, he modifies Wordsworth's somewhat subversive use of the epic for autobiography by interrogating and subverting that tradition himself. Through such modification, as well as in his echoing of and deviation from Wordsworth's narrative patterns and structuring principles, he inscribes the postcolonial realities previously excluded from the epic form. He narrates a life similar to Wordsworth's in its youthful optimism and eventual disillusionment, but eschews Wordsworth's final redemptive resolution in deference to the Caribbean's lack of "history" which must condemn him to a perpetual "beginning again." Another Life's most obvious allusion to The Prelude is made in its form: verse autobiography with epic qualities. This intertextuality demands that The Prelude be considered not only as The

Prelude, but also as a signifier for a whole tradition of Western writing. Although Wordsworth may originally have intended his poem only as a prelude, a sort of trying ground of his skills for the task of writing a true epic, it is now recognized as being "a poem in a recognizably epic style" even by those critics who feel that it fails as an epic (Lord 7). As "recognizably epic," the poem carries the weight of Western literary tradition, with a line clearly traceable from Classical, Biblical, and Old English epics through Dante, Spenser, and, especially, Milton.

Paul Merchant calls The Prelude an "early autobiographical epic."<sup>21</sup> He gives reasons for finding the poem "quite overtly, an epic," citing several aspects of the poem which most clearly situate it within this tradition. He finds significant, for example, that "[t]he Muse, or inspiration for the work, is introduced in the fifth line, as a 'welcome Friend': he is Coleridge, to whom the poem is addressed" (84). Merchant points out that the poem "thus has the character of a number of oral tales told to this friend, tales which describe to him in detail the speaker's poetic and spiritual development" (84), and also notes "the poet's habit of introducing solitary figures" which, "together with the many fine similies . . . lends the poem the distinctive character of an epic" (85).

Merchant further states that "Wordsworth built up his own mythology of experience" through "a long series of

deeply felt visual incidents." He describes the "creation of the complete poem from this pattern of interrelated incidents" as a "labour of great imaginative skill," and asserts that "it is during the organization of the work that the epic, rather than the autobiographical novel, is formed" (86). Merchant's comments demonstrate both that Wordsworth's poem is different enough from the traditional epic that labeling it as such requires some defence, and also that the genre is flexible enough to accommodate modifications. Besides the qualities which Merchant suggests mark The Prelude as epic, an epic must necessarily be, if not long, at least "large in scale" (Merchant 4). Merchant sketches out two poles within which epic experiences may be placed by using two borrowed phrases: "surpassing the dimensions of realism" and "including history" (1). He demonstrates the fluidity of the genre between these two poles by tracing its development from the Homeric epics, noting such modifications as those made by Dante in his Commedia, Chaucer in Canterbury Tales<sup>22</sup> and Milton in Paradise Lost.

Wordsworth demonstrates his awareness both of the fluidity of the genre and of the need to argue for his place within it through his references to Milton. Both M.H. Abrams and Herbert Lindenberger call attention to Wordsworth's claim that "[T]his is in truth, heroic argument," a line in which, as Abrams states, "Wordsworth

echoes, in order to supersede" Milton's claim that his Biblical subject matter is as heroic as the more traditional Classical material of epics (29). And as Lindenberger says, through this echoing, Wordsworth

not only points up the epic impulse behind the poem, but calls on Milton's precedent in justifying new areas worthy of epic: for if Milton must defend himself for writing an epic about man's moral rather than his military history, Wordsworth in turn claims to find heroic argument in man's (and, indeed, in one man's) personal history. (12)

Thus Wordsworth carries on not only the epic tradition itself but also carries on the tradition of its modification.

At the most obvious level of form, Another Life is epic: it is over 150 pages long, and divided into four sections or books which are further subdivided into chapters, a division which not only emphasizes size, but also that the epic is a book, a material manifestation of a literary culture. With twelve chapters in the first two sections and eleven in the last two, there is also a subtle reference to the epic's traditional division into twelve books<sup>23</sup> (Wordsworth modified this tradition as well: the 1805 Prelude has thirteen books). Although originally an oral form, the epics we know are strongly associated with



books, part of a European tradition which privileges the written over the oral. Walcott's task throughout is to question this privileging even as he indulges his writerly self by inscribing the oral. Using the epic form is a powerful way of foregrounding this contest between "the book" and the oral, and of reminding the European that this privileged literary form is closely linked to orality.

In this context, Walcott's double mention of a "book" in the poem's opening stanza suggests a subversion of the epic poet's invocation of a muse. Where Wordsworth invokes both the blessing of the gentle breeze and a fellow poet, Coleridge, Walcott turns to "the book." But it is a book which has been abandoned, as have the poet and the Caribbean, by "an absent master / in the middle of another life" (145), with the suggestion, through the following lines, of the other life being British life, life in the literary canon which does not care to record the Caribbean. It is also the only book which has included the Caribbean: "the pages of the sea" which hold the record of the history of slavery and colonialism. Other books, those which more clearly represent the traditional muse of literature, will be of little use to Walcott as a poet trying to write a Caribbean reality.

It is to the books of the canon, those which have inspired yet excluded him, that Walcott now writes back, and it is into the dominant literary discourse that he attempts

to inscribe his own post-colonial, Caribbean reality. The epics whose form he imitates/recalls have always represented that which the colonial master insisted the Caribbean could not be--heroic and historic. But just as Wordsworth moved into a space prepared by Dante<sup>24</sup> and Milton to assert his own poetic development as worthy of the epic form, Walcott similarly extends the use of the form to include the Caribbean, inscribing it as historic while he simultaneously questions the meaning and value of the traditionally heroic.

Wordsworth's use of the epic form is marked by several direct references to Milton, the adoption of Milton's blank verse, and a similarity of narrative structure. Walcott similarly refers to his literary forebears by making numerous allusions to Wordsworth and Milton. However, Walcott's most direct references to earlier epics are those to Homer, for whom history and the sea were also closely intertwined. For example, in Chapter 3 he writes an abecedary of the local characters of his childhood in Homeric terms, describing the "surly chauffeur from Clauzel's garage [who] bangs Troy's gate shut!" (159). Emanuel Auguste is the "lone Odysseus, / tattooed ex-merchant sailor" (160), while "Janie, the town's one clear-complexioned whore" with "her black / hair electrical / as all that trouble over Troy" is a potential Helen (161). What these examples make clear, however, is that although Walcott may be re-writing Homer to include his local

reality, he does not always, in so doing, claim the local as heroic. Rather, by insisting that "[t]hese dead, these derelicts, / that alphabet of the emaciated" were "the stars of my mythology" (164), Walcott is ironically inscribing the anti-epic.

Similarly, the sea voyages made by "Capitaine Foquarde" recall those of Ulysses, with whom he is compared directly (173, 181). But here Penelope, his Martiniquan wife, is far from faithful during his absences. She blooms each time he "ulyssees," laughing while she stitches ripped knickers (the ripping and stitching a burlesque version of the original Penelope's weaving and unweaving). The voyages on the "Jewel, a single-stack, diesel, forty-foot coastal vessel [which] coughed like a relic out of Conrad" are similarly far from romantic. They involve the twice-a-week loading of a "cargo of pigs, charcoal, food, lumber, / squabbling or frightened peasants, the odd priest," and the subsequent delivery of this cargo by "threading the island's jettied villages, / Anse La Raye, Canaries, Soufriere, Choiseul, // and back" (174). Again, rather than assert the life of the islands as heroic, Walcott draws attention to its daily tawdriness; this inscription of tawdriness foregrounds the traditional epic's exclusion of such realities, prompting a questioning of its claims to accurate representation.

The history of the traditional epic is similar to that

represented by the large tapestry Walcott remembers from his schooldays, a

classically chaotic canvas

of snorting, dappled chargers

. . . . .

Their riders were a legion of dragoons

sabre-moustached, canted on stiffened rein,

their arms crooked in a scything sweep,

vaulting a heap of dying,

one in the stance of a reclining Venus,

as casual as Giorgione

. . . . .

the whole charge like a pukkha, without blood

. . . . .

no mouth of pain,

every chivalric wound

rose-lipped, dandiacal, sweet,

every self-sacrifice perfumed (210, my emphasis)

Walcott's description of the tapestry draws attention, in its reference to the Classical period, the reclining Venus, and Giorgione, to the rendering of history into art usually with a consequent effacement of blood and pain. In this chapter, Chapter 11, Walcott questions other representations of history, particularly his "red-jacketed Williamson's / History of the British Empire" (211), and juxtaposes their "fiction / of rusted soldiers fallen on a schoolboy's page"

with the forest which "keeps no wounds" (212). He suggests that what has been considered a history of epic heroism can also be seen as a history of "ennui, defence, disease" (212). At the same time, he imaginatively reconstructs the leap of the Carib Indians to demonstrate that the Caribbean history which has been excluded from the texts is as heroic as any European epic (213-4).

Walcott further questions the traditional parameters of history by noting that St. Lucia is finally brought into the scope of history by the fire which almost destroys it: "the thick tongue of a fallen, drunken lamp / licked at its alcohol ringing the floor, / and with the fierce rush of a furnace door / suddenly opened, history was here" (221). If this drama renders the Caribbean finally somehow epic as "[y]our ruined Ilion" (226), Walcott is again quick to describe the tawdry reality of this destruction, the

perverted bedsprings, heat-stained mattresses,  
all of the melancholy, monotonous rubbish  
of those who thought their lives strange to their  
neighbours,

their sins repeated tiredly by the same

picture-frames, papers, blue magnesia bottles (225)

Once again, he moves to inscribe the Caribbean reality as epic, but also suggests the potentially tawdry background effaced in the traditional epic.

The epic's power to represent and to define the human

condition as well as the power of the epic and the book to shape, measure, and validate the post-colonial life is a power Walcott wants not only to question but also to claim. Yet when he does so, rendering the oral and the imaginatively reconstructed into his own epic, he cautions the reader:

Provincialism loves the pseudo-epic,  
so if these heroes have been given a stature  
disproportionate to their cramped lives,  
remember I beheld them at knee-height,  
and that their thunderous exchanges  
rumbled like gods about another life,  
as now, I hope, some child  
ascribes their grandeur to Gregorias. (183)

This ambivalence towards his own inscription is perhaps Walcott's most subversive modification of the epic. While Milton asserts the heroic, epic qualities of the saga of Man's soul, and Wordsworth extends this to a depiction of an individual life as heroic, Walcott questions through his mimicry of the form whether it contains any possibility at all for the mimesis that readers are so eager to grant it.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, Walcott's extensive use of iambic pentameter throughout Another Life is not simply a demonstration of his mastery of a European form. Rather, the poem's moves both towards and away from the blank verse are so closely linked,

through Milton and then Wordsworth, with the English epic, that they demonstrate a tension between the language and form of the metropolitan power and that of the Caribbean poet. While clearly built on the framework of blank verse epic, Another Life equally clearly signals the inadequacy of that form to support it and, instead, often modifies the form to suit its own needs.

The framework is particularly noticeable at beginnings and endings. The first line of Another Life, for example, is written in a rhythm suggestive of iambic pentameter. With the exception of the first line of section IV, so are the first and last lines of each section of the first chapter; almost half of poem's 23 chapters begin this way. As well, some of the most important lines are written in pentameter which, if not always perfectly iambic, is extremely close to, or suggestive of that rhythm. For example, there is the Wordsworthian "spot in time" which results in the young poet's consecration of his life to art:

About the August of my fourteenth year

I lost my self somewhere above a valley (184)

The poem's central theme is declared in this rhythm:

What else was he but a divided child? (183)

and the major loss it narrates is announced this way:

A sodden letter thunders in my hand

. . . . .

an eaten letter crumbles in my hand (274)

Walcott also uses iambic pentameter when he discusses his task as a poet, as in the line in which he says that he and Gregorias were charged

with Adam's task of giving things their names (294). His description of art's attempt to contain, frame, and master life, as well of his own art's betrayal of love, is very cunningly offered in a sonnet:

And which of them in time would be betrayed  
 was never questioned by that poetry  
 which breathed within the evening naturally,  
 but by the noble treachery of art  
 that looks for fear when it is least afraid,  
 that coldly takes the pulse-beat of the heart  
 in happiness; that praised its need to die  
 to the bright candour of the evening sky,  
 that preferred love to immortality;  
 so every step increased that subtlety  
 which hoped that their two bodies could be made  
 one body of immortal metaphor.

The hand she held already had betrayed  
 them by its longing for describing her. (236)

Here Walcott adds the additional constraint of rhyme to those of rhythm and meter. He uses the convention of five rhymes--a,b,c,d and e--but deploys these in an unconventional manner, underlining his ability to work within the limitations of the form while subverting it to



his own ends. As well, the sonnet draws attention to Walcott's skill with the lyric form, and foregrounds the tension within this work (similar to that in Wordsworth's) between its often lyric content and its epic intentions and form.

While Walcott often uses iambic pentameter to point to important lines or central themes, he also uses the disruption of blank verse to achieve the same end. In Section III of Chapter 11, for example, when Walcott remembers the history he was taught in school and simultaneously imagines alternative histories, more than a third of the 27 lines have ten syllables, if not five stresses; five of these are near-iambic. This has a challenging and arresting effect on the reader who must struggle both into and against the rhythm. In the first stanza which begins conversationally, "I saw history through the sea-washed eyes," it puts the emphasis very clearly on "a lonely Englishman who loved parades" (212), thus reducing the "choleric, ginger-haired headmaster" to a nostalgia-evoking, slightly ineffectual, figure and immediately diminishing his capacity to represent history. The last two lines of this stanza suggest the limitations of such systems of representation as the English discourse of history and iambic pentametric verse.

The next stanza begins in an iambic pentameter which continues to question the schoolroom's nostalgic dubious

representation of history: "Nostalgia! Hymns of battles not our own." The iambic pentameter is used here to contrast the written history which the boys must memorize with the trope of a racial history denied by the classroom: "those dates we piped of redoubt and repulse, / while in our wrists the kettle drums pulsed on." The lines of fairly regular metre and rhythm are interspersed with longer and shorter lines, lines which begin as iambic but end otherwise, or lines like the five beginning "How strange," said Bill (Carr)," which completely disrupt any suggested pattern. These last five lines are then immediately followed by a return, for one line, to near-iambic pentameter which describes the schoolroom history as "A history of ennui, defence, disease." The stanza then continues with a catalogue of images of the death and disease which are the inevitable counterpart of war. Again, there are fragments in iambic rhythm, but the line which is closest to iambic pentameter points to the ridiculous heraldry of war and heroism, and leaves exposed the stanza's final line with its rather pathetic anti-climax: "fade, 'like the white plumes of the Fighting Fifth / who wore the feather without stain.'"

The final stanza of this section is only four lines long, and it forms a contrasting image of heroism, that of the Carib Indians jumping off the cliffs to the rocks below in the 1651 battle.<sup>26</sup>

The leaping Caribs whiten,  
in one flash, the instant  
the race leapt at Sauteurs,  
a cataract! One scream of bounding lace.

Again Walcott plays with the possibilities and the limits of iambic pentameter. A natural reading of the first line combines it with the first three words of the second line to form a line of iambic pentameter. But the break the poet has chosen puts the emphasis on the ending word, "whiten" as well as on the illuminated moment which is an important concept of both history and poetry. It also demonstrates the possibility of re-arranging, of reading in different ways, thus allowing the reader interpretive engagement. The final line, however, is the line which is most clearly set out to approximate iambic pentameter. The disruption of the pattern here focuses the imagination on the "One scream," which, between the surrounding "cataract" and the "bounding lace" (a nice contrast to the "white plumes of the Fighting Fifth"), resounds as fixed, eternal, wordless, and finally, uncontainable in the discourse of the blank verse epic.

Just as Walcott's use of the epic form allows him to refer to, question, and modify the discourse of Western literature and history, so too does his echoing of Wordsworth's narrative patterns and structuring principles. In terms of narrative patterns, this is particularly noticeable in Walcott's simultaneous adoption of and

deviation from Wordsworth's use of the epistolary convention, the confessional first-person tone/voice, as well as Wordsworth's negotiation between past and present events. These narrative patterns in both poems focus on a structure whose ending ultimately circles back to its beginning, but while this ending-beginning situates Wordsworth looking forward, Walcott looks backward to a lost optimism. This deviation reflects the distance between Wordsworth's Romantic re-fashioning of the Biblical and Miltonic meta-narrative to provide the structure for his life story,<sup>27</sup> and the unavailability of this model to a post-colonial poet who was never able to believe in an Eden.

Wordsworth's story is one told to a close friend and fellow artist who is now absent and being addressed from a distance. It is a selective retelling of a life, one in which Wordsworth's poet persona remains clearly in charge of the first-person narration. Although there is a continuous negotiation between past memories and present reflection on those memories, the poet is clearly situated from the beginning in an ultimately forward-looking moment of present victory over past difficulties. Walcott similarly begins in the first person by addressing an implied single listener, and the reader does gain a sense throughout the poem that this listener must be Walcott's fellow artist, Gregorias. Thus the "There / was your heaven!" of the poem's first page must be addressed to the same listener as

the "You sometimes dance with that destructive frenzy" of its last page. But it is much less clear where Gregorias is now situated, not only in the present physical world but also in his relationship to the poet persona. Further confusing the question is the instability throughout of the first-person narration, which switches sporadically to a third-person narrative. As well, the second-person addresses are made not only to Gregorias, but also to the poet's mother (Chapter 2), his grandfather (p. 209), to his first love, Anna (Chapter 15), and his mentor, Harry Simmons (Chapters 18, 21). And there is all of Book Two, the "Homage to Gregorias" which seems to speak about Gregorias to a primary audience which can only be the reader--all of this inevitably has a retroactive effect on the opening apostrophe, not only rendering the addressee's identity unclear, but destabilizing the relationship between speaker and listener/reader.

Similarly, while Wordsworth's recollections of the past keep the poem's narrator firmly situated in the present, Walcott's often merge past and present, or abandon the present for the past. In the description of the poet's childhood self at bedtime, for example, past and present tenses are combined so that while the "child tented his cotton nightdress" and "[t]wilight enshrined the lantern of his head," "[h]ands swing him heavenward," and a candle "re-letters" the books by his bed (158, my emphasis).

These deviations from Wordsworth's narrative patterns parallel the relationship between the two poems in respect to their structuring principles. Just as Wordsworth asserts his control of the narrative, maintaining a stable "I-you" relationship with the reader and a clearly differentiated "now-then" relationship with the past, so too does he insist on an overall structure which allows and reinforces that control and stability. This structure is, of course, the grand narrative of Western discourse, the Biblical structure of the Garden, the Fall, and the Redemption, adopted by Wordsworth's literary hero, Milton, for his epic work, Paradise Lost. Wordsworth combines this with the journey trope which reinforces both the linearity of his overall structure, as well as its paradoxically simultaneous circularity--the way in which its beginning and ending somehow merge to form a moment which nonetheless insists on a linearity, pointing to the shared future task to which Wordsworth and Coleridge must dedicate themselves.

Walcott adopts the circular relationship between beginning and ending in his poem, and he certainly refers often to the Biblical narrative. As well, the continual presence of the sea suggests the possibility of journeys, and the poet does describe several which were significant in his life. However, the overwhelming sense in the poem is not of a forward progress away from the Garden, through the Fall, and towards/into Redemption, but rather of the

perennial need to "begin again" with both Adamic exultation and Sisyphean resignation.

The avowed task at the beginning of the poem is: "I begin here again," and this is a theme repeated throughout the work. In the first chapter's second section, for example, Walcott quotes from a poem "Holy" by the Jamaican poet, George Campbell. This poem, first published in 1945, is noted as "the beginning of the distinctive West Indian literary tradition in which Walcott has been such a prominent figure" (Chamberlin 143). Walcott reads the book "bound in sea-green linen," its colour clearly linking its suggestion that "another life . . . would start again" (149), with Walcott's own beginning at the sea's edge. Another beginning is cited when the young boy "fell in love with art, and life began" (186). Later, the poet hopes to "shake off the cerecloths" of the privileged European art of Hemingway and Pissarro. A cleansing rain offers a new beginning in which can be privileged the "smell of our own speech, / the smell of baking bread, / of drizzled asphalt, this / odorous cedar" (217).

Another important "beginning again" is that of Castries after the 1948 fire: "the phoenix metaphor flew / from tongue to tongue" (246). Gregorias must also come close to destruction before beginning again. When he tells Walcott about his flirtation with and rejection of suicide, it becomes obvious to the poet that "Gregorias . . . had

entered life" (272). But despite the triumphant associations of these new beginnings, Walcott finally is able to propose beginning again only as that of an art perpetually compromised by its history, and which must ultimately be obliterated by nature:

they will absolve us, perhaps, if we begin again,  
 from what we have always known, nothing,  
 from that carnal slime of the garden,  
 from the incarnate subtlety of the snake,  
 from the Egyptian moment of the heron's foot  
 on the mud's entablature,  
 by this augury of ibises  
 flying at evening from the melting trees,  
 while the silver-hammered charger of the marsh light,  
 brings towards us, again and again, in beaten scrolls,  
 nothing, then nothing,  
 and then nothing. (286-287)<sup>28</sup>

Like the sun, with its "holy, repetitive resurrection" (288), the poet can only "repeat myself, / prayer, same prayer, towards fire, same fire" (289).

This insistence on "beginning again" is reinforced by the poem's structure and by its narrative patterns in such a way that the reader is constantly being forced to re-orient herself and "begin again." The first chapter, for example, is spoken by an "I", who is almost effaced by the end of the first section. Although subsequent reading establishes "the



student" who is described here as the poet "I"'s younger self, this is not clear on a first reading, but requires a "beginning again." By the end of the chapter, we are again being addressed by the poet who uses the first person, but the next chapter appropriates this "I" for an imaginative re-voicing of the poet's mother's life. As soon as we adjust to this, the voice is again the poet's and "Maman" is addressed in the second person, as in "Maman, / you sat folded in silence" (153). Such shifts tend to emphasize the separation of the work into sections,<sup>29</sup> and force the reader to be aware of "beginning again" with each such section.

This is also the effect of Walcott's variation in style from section to section and from chapter to chapter. Whereas Wordsworth's pages all look very similar with their lines of blank verse, Walcott combines various styles. The abecedary of local characters, for example, with the first word of each section set apart, draws attention to itself as a unit different from the rest of the work. So does the section entitled "THE PACT" in Chapter 4, and the first section of Chapter 6, whose short lines recall a liturgical litany. Wordsworth, of course, also encloses noticeably distinct sections, as, for example, the dream section, and the section describing the thwarted love between Julia and Vaudracoeur. But the combined effect of the continuous blank verse and the insistence on a linear progression

towards the Mt. Snowdon revelation is to force the reader to accept Wordsworth's mature self as a guide past/through these particular difficulties. Walcott, by contrast, insists that we are arrested regularly throughout, and that it is only with some difficulty that we are able to "begin again" with the next section or chapter.<sup>30</sup>

Walcott's ending continues this focus on beginning again by returning us to the beginning: the last chapter recalls the opening's verandahs, the twilight, and the moon swinging its lantern over the sea's pages. This circularity parallels that of The Prelude which, as Abrams says is "an involuted poem . . . about its own genesis" (79). Abrams goes on to justify this claim by pointing out that the The Prelude's "structural end is its own beginning; and its temporal beginning. . . is Wordsworth's entrance upon the stage of his life at which it ends. The conclusion goes on to specify the circular shape of the whole" (79). The beginnings and endings of The Prelude and Another Life are also linked by their addresses to a fellow artist, respectively, Coleridge and Gregorias/Apilo/Dunstan St. Omer.

Again, however, Walcott modifies the discourse suggested by these similarities. Whereas Wordsworth ends with the positive vision offered by his revelatory experience on Mt. Snowdon, looking forward to the task he urges Coleridge to join him in, Walcott ends by remembering

such an earlier keenness. He looks back to a time when he and Gregorias were "lit" as Wordsworth and Coleridge seem to be. Although he has now found a certain solace in marriage and family, his confidence in himself as "the light of the world" (294) has abandoned him to be replaced by a mature resignation. The last line of the poem, however, with its nostalgic exhalation of two versions of his friend's name-- "Gregorias, Apilo!"--suggests that although he can no longer sustain the optimistic tone with which The Prelude concludes, he is still committed to perpetually beginning again at "Adam's task of giving things their names" (294).

### Conclusion

By focusing a comparison of Another Life and The Prelude on nature and landscape imagery, the divided self, and on form, structuring principles, and narrative patterns, I hope to have established both the similarities which show Walcott claiming and continuing a tradition, and the modifications which demonstrate his subversion of that tradition. Of course, as Paul Merchant points out in his work on the epic, such continual modification is part of that tradition. And M.H. Abrams asserts the renewing effects of the Romantic writers who,

in reinterpreting their cultural inheritance,  
developed new modes of organizing experience, new  
ways of seeing the outer world, and a new set of  
relations of the individual to himself, to nature,  
to history, and to his fellow men. (14)

Nonetheless, he finds the movement a conservative one which ultimately reformulated in order "to save traditional concepts, schemes, and values" (13).

Walcott's project seems to me very close in many ways to the Romantic project, and I find a comparison of The Prelude and Another Life interesting for exactly that reason. For paradoxically, if Walcott attempts to modify or subvert this tradition he is simultaneously claiming and

continuing a heritage of just such modification and subversion. This is perhaps one of the reasons Walcott has been accused by critics of being too slavishly European in form and style. Certainly, although Another Life in many ways suggests the subversive possibilities of mimicry, Walcott never attempts to reject the canon. Rather, his commitment to and love of this canon are clear in his rather erudite allusive style which includes a vocabulary ("lacertilian," for example) very reflective of a comprehensive European-modeled education.

However, such accusations seem to miss the point that one of the central dilemmas faced in Another Life is Walcott's sense of division between his African and his European ancestors. As well, they ignore or refuse to accept his pragmatic insistence that "the language of exegesis is English" ("Twilight" 31), and his consequent decision to use that language and style, but to use it in a new way, "making creative use of his schizophrenia" ("Twilight" 17). What these critics dismiss as merely imitative, I read as a powerful re-writing which allows Walcott to claim, rather than silence his European heritage, modifying his inheritance to ensure its continued relevance by inscribing within it the previously silenced realities of the Caribbean.

## Notes

1. Capitalizing "Nature" is common both throughout The Prelude and throughout much of the criticism dealing with it. This capitalization is useful to distinguish the Nature which is transcendent from the daily manifestations of "nature" through which the greater "Nature" is known. John Williams, in Wordsworth: Romantic Poetry and Revolution Politics (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989), uses the capitalized form to point out that, for the Romantics, "Nature had become the source of divine revelation, and in consequence 'Nature' and 'God' were often treated synonymously" (3). He delineates Wordsworth's "distinction between a love of natural objects for their own sake"--what we might call small-n nature--"and a more profound love engendered by a recognition of the permanent moral and spiritual truths with which natural objects were imbued" (5). The latter more profound love is for that Nature I will discuss using a capital "N."

2. See Edward Kamau Brathwaite's History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry, London: New Beacon, 1984.

3. Harold Bloom's theory about the relationship between poets and their precursors is outlined in his work, The Anxiety of Influence (New York: Oxford UP, 1973).

4. I have not confirmed that this is the version included in Walcott's curriculum, but it does seem a reasonable conjecture.

5. Endnotes to Stephen Gill's edition of the thirteen-book Prelude in William Wordsworth (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) are very useful for pointing out allusions made in The Prelude to Paradise Lost.

6. M.H. Abrams calls this allusion "the first prominent instance of Wordsworth's carefully chosen and allocated allusions to Paradise Lost." He says it is a "very striking instance, because in his opening he echoes the closing lines of Milton's epic, when Adam and Eve, between sadness and expectancy, leave paradise to take up their journey in this world of all of us" (115). Abrams disagrees with critics who see this as establishing The Prelude as a sequel to Paradise Lost, pointing out that though the preamble comes first in the structural order of the Prelude, it inaugurates the stage of the narrator's life which comes last in its temporal order. It is not, then, The Prelude which Wordsworth meant to dovetail into the place in Milton's poem at which man, having lost paradise, sets out on his pilgrimage to recover it again, but the narrative which follows The Prelude; namely, the opening book of The Recluse proper, Home at Grasmere." (116-7)

Nevertheless, the journey which the reader will undertake with Wordsworth's poet persona, the journey in which Wordsworth will re-shape his life for narration must begin at the outside edge of a garden which recalls that of Paradise Lost.

Susan Wolfson, in her article "'Answering Questions and Questioning Answers': The Interrogative Project of The Prelude" [The Prelude ed. Nigel Wood (Buckingham: Open UP, 1993) 125-165] considers how this Miltonic echo is "more complexly scripted with important counter-intimations," looking at ways in which the echo "not only forecasts providence [but] also brings into play a script of failure and alienation." She points out that although Wordsworth's "hero's voice does not pause over this double legacy," Wordsworth's sense of it inflects the voicing of his next question which, though still cast in a rhetoric of affirmation, bears a more hesitant tone, and as a consequence, an ambiguous sense" (150).

7. Paul Breslin makes this connection in his review, "'I Met History Once, But He Ain't Recognize Me': The Poetry of Derek Walcott" Tri-Quarterly 68 (1987): 168-183.

Russell Banks' street-wise character, Bone, paraphrases his Rastafarian mentor in Rule of the Bone (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1996) asserting continuity between, slavery, colonialism, and tourism. As he says,



when the English found out how colonization was a cheaper and less vexatious way than slavery for getting rich without having to leave London except on vacation, they went and freed all their slaves and colonized them instead. And after that when the English queen finally died and they had to let Jamaica go free the Americans and Canadians invented tourism which was the same as colonization, he said only without the citizens of the colony needing to make or grow anything. (157)

8. Harold Bloom discusses the contemporary poet's relationship with his literary forebears in terms of Father and son. Walcott's use throughout of the word "master" draws on its many Caribbean connotations as well as suggesting the inevitable "anxiety of influence."

9. In The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry, Harold Bloom develops a reading of Paradise Lost "as an allegory of the dilemma of the modern poet" (20). In this, he applauds subversive or Satanic resistance to a predecessor's poetry as strength in contrast to Adamic attempts and impulses which are seen as weak (20-24). He goes on to cite Blake who, as Bloom says,

names one state of being Adam, and calls it the Limit of Contraction, and another state Satan, and calls it the Limit of Opacity. Adam is given or natural man, beyond which our imaginations will

not contract. Satan is the thwarted or restrained desire of natural man, or rather the shadow of Spectre of that desire. Beyond this spectral state, we will not harden against vision, but the Spectre squats in our repressiveness, and we are hardened enough, as we are contracted enough. (24)

Bloom makes it clear that poets "this late in tradition are both Adams and Satans" (24), and that "no poet since Adam and Satan speaks a language free of the one wrought by his precursors" (25).

10. Several critics have concerned themselves with what Wordsworth does not (or cannot say). Douglas Kneale, in his article "The Rhetoric of Imagination" (Ariel 15:4 [1984] 111-127) discusses Wordsworth's concerns with the incompetence of language. He quotes Roman Jakobson as pointing out that "the supremacy of poetic function over referential function does not obliterate the reference but makes it ambiguous," and goes on to say of The Prelude that such ambiguity is

most apparent in a poem which finds itself instead narrating the semiological problems of that narration. Shifting between an imaginative history troped as fiction, usurpation, and drama, and a fiction which purports to be history, autobiography, and epitaph, the text feels obliged to descant on its own deformity. (125)

Gayatri Spivak's article "Sex and History in The Prelude (1805): Books Nine to Thirteen" provides an interesting reading of The Prelude in terms of what is silenced or occluded:

The itinerary of Wordsworth's securing of the Imagination is worth recapitulating. Suppression of Julia, unemphatic retention of Vaudracour as sustained and negative condition of possibility of disavowal, his sublation into Coleridge, remembering through the mediation of the figure of Dorothy his own Oedipal accession to the Law, Imagination as the androgyny of Nature and Man -- Woman shut out. I cannot but see in it the sexual-political program of the Great Tradition. If, in disclosing such a programmatic itinerary, I have left aside the irreducible heterogeneity of Wordsworth's text, it is also in the interest of a certain politics. It is in the interest of suggesting that, when a man (here Wordsworth) addresses another man (Coleridge) in a sustained conversation of a seemingly universal topic, we must learn to read the microstructural burden of the woman's part. (136)

Although Walcott does at least attempt in places to speak the woman's part, his attempts are such that it seems fairly

clear that Spivak would place him squarely in the Great Tradition.

Susan Wolfson's article "'Answering Questions and Questioning Answers': The Interrogative Project of The Prelude" (The Prelude, ed. Nigel Wood, Buckingham: Open UP, 1993) also examines the unsaid in The Prelude, by exposing evasions and indeterminacies in what she calls Wordsworth's "interrogative dialectics." Although she does not do so in her essay, she suggests that "a wider application of [these dialectics] to the sociohistorical forces shaping both notions of subjectivity and attitudes about history as they are represented in, or excluded from, his autobiography" (162, my emphasis) might be useful.

11. Elaine Fido in "Walcott and Sexual Politics: Macho Conventions Shape the Moon," in The Literary Half-Yearly 26.1 (1985) 43-61, finds Walcott's treatment of women throughout his work disappointing. She relates his depiction of Woman to his use of the moon as symbol, pointing out that it is used to convey images of whiteness, fecundity, and witchery.

12. In his article, "Painters and Painting in Another Life, Edward Baugh offers a thorough discussion of Walcott's use of amber imagery.

13. The King Lear allusion, of course is to Lear's

exclamation in Act III: "O, that way madness lies; let me shun that" (III,iv,21).

14. Again, Susan Wolfson is interesting to read on the issue of Wordsworth's use of the interrogative.

15. The theme of division in Another Life is discussed in numerous other articles. Pamela Mordecai, for example in "'A Crystal of Ambiguities': Metaphors for Creativity and the Art of Writing in Derek Walcott's Another Life" (WLWE 27:1 [1987] 93-105), lists the divisions as being

between desires to paint and to write, between Anglicized/colonial/white and indigenous/black view of the world, between creole and standard languages, between puerile and mature attitudes, between the real and the idealized, between art and actuality. (94)

In "Commonwealth Albums: Family Resemblance in Derek Walcott's Another Life and Margaret Laurence's The Diviners" (WLWE 22:2 [1982] 262-268), Clara Thomas sums up Walcott's division

in race between England and St. Lucia, and beyond that he is linked by blood to a remote African past. In religion he is pulled between his family heritage of Methodism, the dominant Catholicism of the Castries he knew as a boy, and 'an atavism stronger than their Mass / stronger than chapel / whose tubers gripped the rooted middleclass /

beginning where African began / in the body's  
memory.' (265)

16. Edward Baugh provides a careful reading of the poem's painting imagery and includes useful information about references to books, paintings, and artists alluded to in Another Life in his article "Painters and Painting in Another Life."

17. The young poet is brought to this scene of sexual guilt by rowboat. The regular pentametrical lines of this section (the third section of Chapter 13) to describe what Walcott deliberately calls the "pentametrical" rowing help to connect it with another important rowing scene in pentametre, that of Book I in The Prelude. The latter is also heavily imbued with guilt, which although ostensibly a guilt at the "act of stealth" (I.388) is told in language which connotes sexuality: "lustily / I dipped my oars into the silent Lake, / And, as I rose upon the stroke, my Boat / Went heaving through the water" (I.401-404).

18. Jamaica Kincaid's The Autobiography of My Mother (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1996) is inscribed "For Derek Walcott."

19. See Ashton Nichols' article "The Revolutionary 'I': Wordsworth and the Politics of Self-Presentation" in Wordsworth in Context Ed. Pauline Fletcher and John Murphy (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1992) pp. 66-84. for a more

thorough consideration of the relationship between Wordsworth's self and his self as text.

20. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Sex and History in The Prelude (1805): Books Nine to Thirteen."

21. Merchant includes Dante's Commedia as an even earlier autobiographical epic, citing Emerson's praise of Dante "that he dared to write his autobiography in colossal cypher, or into universality" (41).

22. Although Merchant states that "Chaucer's Canterbury Tales have no more claim than Langland's poem to be classed as a conventional epic," he includes them in his consideration of the epic because

they are another contribution to the tradition . .

. the simple device of having them all on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, during which each pilgrim was to tell two pairs of stories to beguile the time. The result is a long poem with a distinct oral character . . . and again the poet has found a loose structure which will accommodate every contemporary class and custom. (43)

23. In his Graduating Honours B.A. essay "Black Greeks: The Odyssey and the Poetry of Derek Walcott" (University of British Columbia, 1990), Lachlan Murray discusses Walcott's Epitaph for the Young, pointing out its

direct connection with Another Life and noting that it is a long poem in twelve cantos.

In an interview with Robert Hamner, Walcott says of Epitaph for the Young that it is "sort of like an Urtext of Another Life" ("Conversation with Derek Walcott," World Literature Written in English, 16 [1977]: 409-420).

24. See Note 21 for more on Paul Merchant's consideration of Dante's Commedia as the "earliest epic written in the first person" (38).

25. Rei Terada makes the useful generalizations that mimesis can be taken "to mean the representation of reality, and 'mimicry' the representation of a representation, a repetition of something itself repetitious" (1), and he points out that "for Walcott mimicry, with all its ambivalent freight, replaces mimesis as the ground of representation and culture" (2).

26. Edward Baugh offers a brief version of this battle on page 45 of Derek Walcott: Memory as Vision: Another Life.

27. This claim of the Romantic project as a re-fashioning of these meta-narratives

to save traditional concepts, schemes, and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creature and creation, but to reformulate them within the prevailing two-term



system of subject and object, ego and non-ego, the human mind or consciousness and its transactions with nature (13)

is the central focus of M.H. Abrams' Natural Supernaturalism.

28. This is surprisingly similar to the image in The Prelude of the flood overtaking and destroying the book carried (in the form of shell and stone) by the Arab in Wordsworth's friend's dream. The "nothing" also has special resonance for the Caribbean, of course, recalling as it must Naipaul's well-known comment in The Middle Passage (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) that "nothing was created in the West Indies" (29).

29. Susan Lohafer refers to the space around each story in a collection of short stories as an ontological gap, for which she uses the metaphor of a moat (Lohafer 52). After leaving the ontological space of one story and before entering the next, the reader must cross the moat of the "real" world.

30. Edward Baugh draws attention to Another Life's "rich variety of moods, and the subtlety, sometimes the subtle suddenness, with which the poet shifts the emotional gears of the poem" (28). This sudden mood-shifting forces

the reader to make adjustments or, in effect, to "begin again."

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