

That Terrible Vowel, That I:
Autobiography and Derek Walcott's Another Life

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Abstract

In this thesis, I approach autobiography in Another Life by exploring the linguistic means Derek Walcott uses to set up subjectivity in the text. In particular, I respond to Emile Benveniste's question: "what does I refer to" by examining the role of the first person pronoun in Another Life. In chapter one, I introduce the problem of "being in the text", attend to comments Walcott has made about the self, review criticism of the poem, raise issues which concern critics of autobiography, outline Benveniste's theory of subjectivity and Philippe Lejeune's observations on the use of the third person in autobiography. A thematic summary of the poem follows in the second chapter. The pronominal structure underlying Walcott's autobiography and the "biography" of a West Indian intelligence is traced in chapter three where I relate Walcott's dual perspective to Benveniste's definitions of discourse and historical narration. In the final chapter, close readings of selected textual extracts demonstrate the complexity of language phenomenizing the pronoun I in different sequences of the poem. The readings support Benveniste's claim that the I "refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced" and the post-structuralist notion that the "self" is a linguistic construct. I conclude that Walcott's I assimilates both romantic and post-structuralist properties.

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Chapter One

Being in the Text

1.1 Introduction

"Yet who am I"? asks Derek Walcott in Another Life (1973, 73). His answer is enigmatic: "I am all, I am one" (73). What does this line mean? What does the I signify? How does Walcott construct identity and subjectivity in this long and complex autobiographical poem? The role of the first person pronoun in Another Life and the linguistic mechanisms which underlie subjectivity are examined in this thesis.

In this chapter I introduce the notion of subjectivity, attend to comments Walcott has made about the self, review criticism of Another Life, uncover the lack of critical attention to subjectivity in the poem, raise issues which concern critics of autobiography, outline Emile Benveniste's linguistically orientated theory of subjectivity and extract salient features from Philippe Lejeune's essay, "Autobiography in the Third Person" (1977). The themes and structure of Another Life are surveyed in the next chapter. This is followed by a discussion of the shifting nature of the pronoun I, of "that terrible vowel, / that I" (this line appears in Walcott's poem, "Names", published in Sea Grapes (1976, 33)). After the role of pronouns in the construction of subjectivity has been covered, I move on, in chapter four, to close readings of selected textual extracts to

demonstrate how the I is phenomenalized in different sequences of the poem where the degree of subjectivity differs.

In this thesis the post-structural notion that the subject is a construct is accepted: the romantic notion of a "unified, unique, ineffable self" is rejected (Candace Lang's words 1982, 4). There is no search to discover Walcott, the "man-behind-the-text": the quest is directed towards the networks of signifiers which construct the self. The textual readings in chapter four demonstrate the validity of Jacques Lacan's assertion, in his essay "Of the Network of Signifiers" published in The Four Fundamentals of Psycho-Analysis, that there is "only one method of knowing" the subject, "namely, to map the network" of signifiers (1987, 45).

Another Life is a puzzling poem. The title suggests that the text is not directly autobiographical, that it is not about "my life". Instead it denotes several other possible meanings: the lives of one or more of the other protagonists, other inhabitants of St Lucia, the life of art, or perhaps the life of a child as opposed to that of the adult. The identity of the subject is obscured further by the fact that the I remains unnamed, anonymous throughout the text. Identity problems are further compounded by the complex permutations of pronouns. The first person pronoun I often gives way to the second person pronoun you and to the third person pronoun he.

Walcott's own comments about the autobiographical dimension of Another Life are revealing. In an interview in 1977 Robert D. Hamner asked Walcott:

If you were given the opportunity, how would you prefer that a critic approach the autobiographical element that figures prominently in your work? I think particularly of Another Life and other poems. Will biographical critics read too much of you, the man, into your poetry? (411)

Walcott's reply is cryptic:

I suppose, in a sense, it is a matter of conclusions, a matter of conclusions rather than a psychological progression toward some portrait of the author. (411)

From this statement Hamner concludes that Another Life is a "portrait of the author as a young man" and goes on to ask Walcott whether one might "depend too much on biography, so as to detract from the more universal qualities of a poem such as Another Life?" Walcott's reply is illuminating:

Well, it would be hard for one to leave out the details of a person's life in a book of that kind. It is a particular experience. But in a sense it is a biography of an "intelligence", a West Indian intelligence, using it in the Latin sense of spirit. So, the biographical chronicle is not a physical one so much. Other intelligences are in the poem. (411)

Walcott's reply accentuates the centrality of the presence of another "West Indian intelligence". The critic

interested in the theory of the subject, in the "being in the text", will question how Walcott constructs his own identity and simultaneously evokes the more impersonal West Indian intelligence.

The current pre-occupation with the problem of the subject in literary discourse and with the role of language in the construction of the self, has, as Paul L. Jay observes, "led to a new interest in autobiography" because in "no other kind of literary work is the relation between self-as-author, and self-as-subject, at once so obvious, and yet so problematical" (1982, 1045). Jay asserts that the writer's conception of the nature of the subject shapes the text, and launches his argument by endorsing Nietzsche's belief that the subject is not something given but is "something added and invented" (1045). Jay then comments on current conflicting responses to the problem of the subject. He writes:

We have become accustomed, when thinking about the concept of a thinking or writing "subject", at once to demystify and problematize that concept, to understand it as having reference less to a Natural, privileged, and potentially unified psychological condition, than to a historically constituted set of ideas and assumptions whose referents are complexly dispersed in the very language which seeks to constitute them.

(1045-1046)

Jay, following Nietzsche, envisages the I as a "conceptual language we have ourselves created" (1046). He solidifies

his argument that the I is a linguistic construct by citing Paul de Man's assertion that "the moments" in an autobiographical work" are not "located in a history" but are the manifestation "of a linguistic structure" (1979, 1046).

In the essay "Autobiography as De-facement" (1979) de Man stresses that representation in autobiography is problematic and questions the commonly held assumption that "autobiography depends on reference, as a photograph depends on its subject or a (realistic) picture on its model" (920). He adds that "we assume that life produces the autobiography" and suggests that we should recognize that the "autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact determined by the technical demands of self-portraiture" and by the "resources of his medium" (920).

Walcott's medium is poetry. This raises the question of the relationship between the nature of the I and poetic language. The peculiar nature of the I in poetry is recognized by Jerome H. Buckley:

In even the most personal poetry the self of a poet, insofar as he submits to the discipline and distance of meter, figurative language, and often stanzaic form, is perpetually more elusive and ambiguous than the self of the narrator of a subjective prose fiction. (1984, 132)

In Another Life the I is elusive, often a direct result of elliptical syntax and opaque metaphoric language. The close textual readings in chapter four focus on this issue.

Autobiography, to quote de Man, creates an "illusion of reference" which is not a correlation of the "structure of the figure" but "something more akin to a fiction" which "in its own turn, acquires a degree of referential productivity" (920-921). de Man concludes that autobiography is not a "genre or a mode" but a "figure of reading or of understanding" (921). For him, "the autobiographical moment happens as an alignment between the two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution" (921). He asserts that autobiography does not reveal reliable self-knowledge but that it "demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions" (922). de Man concludes this section of his discussion with the observation that:

Writers of autobiographies as well as writers on autobiography are obsessed by the need to move from cognition to resolution and action, from speculative to political and legal authority.

(922)

de Man's assertion that writers and critics of autobiography are obsessed by the need for resolution is confirmed by a reading of the final chapters of Another Life and its criticism.

How do autobiographers confront the problematic status of the subject? What literary precedents are there? Jay suggests that the narrative strategy of St Augustine and Wordsworth uses

the resources of a literary mode of self-analysis in order to recall, and in the process of recalling, to re-animate what is posited as a previously unified--or more authentic--self.

(1051)

Jay acknowledges that both writers face the problem central to the autobiographical enterprise, namely that "their own past identities could become appropriated by the very texts which were to mirror them" (1051). Jay notes that both Augustine and Wordsworth lack a radical critique of subjectivity and that their autobiographies testify to their acceptance of a unified, romantic self.

Jay contrasts the romantic type of narrative with the more discursive mode of contemporary writers such as Proust, Valéry and Barthes whose self-reflexive works assume a model of a "shattered, scattered, decentred" self (1056). Jay's concluding remarks on the link between the status of the subject and literary form deserve to be quoted in full.

Literary form, he writes

can be observed here to be intimately linked to changing forms of knowledge and self-consciousness, and to the fact that the more an autobiographical writer becomes preoccupied with the constitutive relationship between language and subjectivity, the more the constitution of his text will change. (1058)

Jay points out that the textual strategies pursued by Valéry and Barthes "shift the ground of an autobiographical practice--by way of an analytic, rather than retrospective

mediation" (1059). He concludes that the "problematical 20th-century subject is written into" their "fragmented, discursive" texts as a "disappropriated" subject, and "in a way which radically (and appropriately) problematizes the very form of autobiography itself" (1059). Jay concludes that the "crisis of subjectivity" defines both content and form of autobiography.

Jay and de Man both establish the currency of the theory of a linguistic subject. Jay, in particular, confronts the diverse strategies employed by Augustine, Wordsworth, Proust, Valéry and Barthes as they contend with the problem of "being in the text". Together, the observations of de Man and Jay provide useful footholds for the exploration of the status of the subject in Another Life.

At this prefatory stage, I am concerned with "being in the text" and Walcott's notion of the I. In two interviews Walcott foregrounds his concern for anonymity rather than identity--a surprising point of view for a writer engaged in autobiography. In the conversation with Hamner, Walcott says:

I think a writer has to keep looking perpetually for an anonymity. He has to keep forgetting his name and looking to be anonymous again.

(1977, 416-417)

This statement is particularly germane to Another Life with its shifting, unnamed I.

In a more recent interview with Edward Hirsch, Walcott again accords anonymity more significance than identity:

What you're taking on is really not a renewal of identity but actually a renewal of your anonymity so that what's in front of you becomes more important than what you are. (1986, 204)

In the same interview Walcott, in a discussion about the mystic moment described in Another Life in chapter seven, focuses on the unimportance of the I when he tells Hirsch that:

The body feels it is melting into what it has seen. This continues in the poet. It may be repressed in some way, but I think we continue all our lives to have that sense of melting, of the "I" not being important. (203)

Walcott's concern with the world external to the self is evident in the comment addressed to Hirsch:

I have felt from my boyhood that I had one function and that was somehow to articulate, not my own experience, but what I saw around me.

(211)

Walcott's remarks suggest that autobiography is only a peripheral interest, yet self-history pervades many of his poems, and particularly Another Life. "En passant" remarks made by several critics acknowledge this strand in his poetry.

1.2 Criticism of Another Life

Autobiography in Walcott's poetry, particularly in Another Life, is a rich but neglected topic. The close

relationship between his work and his personal life is striking and is widely acknowledged in criticism.

"Walcott's binding theme is Walcott" writes Edward Baugh (1977, 84). Mervyn Morris, acclaimed Caribbean poet and critic, recognizes Walcott's concern to define his identity in his exploration and dramatization of divisions within himself (1979, 146). D.S. Izevbaye also comments on the autobiographical dimension of Walcott's work when he writes that the "themes and style" of Walcott's poetry "relate closely to the personal circumstances of birthplace, place of work and the fact of being a West Indian" (1980, 70). These observations, however, are not expanded on and far more critical energy has been expended on Walcott's role in West Indian literature, on his "Eurocentric" ideology and on his presentation of West Indian intelligences. To my knowledge, no critic has explored the tension between Walcott's presentation of his "self" and the presentation of West Indian intelligence. This thesis responds to this gap.

Lloyd King, for example, views Walcott as a "literary humanist" (1970). Patricia Ismond opposes Walcott's "Eurocentric" poetry to the protest poetry of Edward Brathwaite (1971). Walcott's ideology and presentation of Caribbean consciousness concern other critics. Lloyd W. Brown, in an article on the "Caribbean Castaway Figure in the New World" examines Walcott's interpretation of Caribbean consciousness and discusses his self-conscious view of the artist's role in "new anti-colonial self-definitions" (1976, 156). Brown focuses on Walcott's re-definition of history and cultural values. This topic is

also discussed in Lawrence Breiner's article, "Tradition, Society and the Figure of the Poet" (1980). Funso Aiyejina is also interested in the presentation of Caribbean consciousness and in an essay "Derek Walcott: The Poet as a Federated Consciousness" writes that Another Life "is Walcott's tribute to the physical and psychological centre of his New World Consciousness" and that it is "in a more conceptual sense" an "autobiography of a West Indian intelligence in its confrontation with myth, history, reality and a future of possibilities" (1987, 70). Elsewhere, in the same essay, he describes Another Life as "the poetic maturation of Walcott's basic concerns about the plight of an island sensibility" (73). At the same time, Aiyejina recognizes the autobiographical nature of the poem but he does not comment on the interplay between the autobiographical dimension and the evocation of the "island sensibility".

Aiyejina's remark that Another Life is an "autobiography of West Indian intelligence" raises the question of whether it is possible to write such an "autobiography". Autobiographies are conventionally associated with self-writing of individual writers, not with the history of an island. Aiyejina's remarks draw attention to the centrality of West Indian intelligence in the poem and correlate with Walcott's comments on the insignificance of the self in Another Life.

Cameron King and Louis James in The Islands in Between also select Walcott's quest for identity and his concern for the "predicament of the West Indian" as his major themes

(1968, 86). They comment on Walcott's self-aware imagination and note that he "accepts and explores the existence that lies beyond subjective human consciousness" but they do not examine the ramifications of this statement nor the literary techniques employed to construct subjectivity (93-94). Walcott's exploration of consciousness is also raised by John Figueroa in an article "Some Subtleties of the Isle" but this is peripheral to his interest in language and the way in which "consciousness and experience" can be "fully embodied by the use of a variety of dialects and registers" (1976, 215). The observations made by these critics call for further exploration, particularly in the light of contemporary linguistic theories of subjectivity.

The autobiographical aspect of the long poem and its affinity with Wordsworth's The Prelude is discussed by M. Travis Lane in an essay entitled "A different 'Growth of a Poet's Mind': Derek Walcott's Another Life" (1978). Lane focuses on the artist's quest and spiritual development and is not concerned with the recurrent problems which pervade autobiographical discourse. Lane works within the expressive mode which takes for granted the romantic assumption that there is a "man-behind-the-work" with an accessible self. Lane is not concerned with the question of "being in the text" or with any of the problems surrounding the status of the subject.

These theoretical problems do not concern Baugh and Hamner. Baugh foregrounds autobiography in Another Life in his illuminating book, Derek Walcott, Memory as Vision:

Another Life (1978). He provides biographical detail and background data on local vegetation, history and geography. He clearly shows how memory and art suffuse the poem but, like Lane, he does not question the "man-behind-the-work" assumption underlying his explication of the text. In his essay, "Painters and Paintings in Another Life" (1980), art is his central interest. Similarly, problems inherent in the autobiographical enterprise do not concern Hamner in his short commentary on Another Life in his book Derek Walcott (1981).

This survey highlights the consensus among critics that autobiography and the evocation of consciousness are principal concerns of Walcott's. It also draws attention to the diverse interests of the various critics and to their neglect of theoretical issues--in general, they often ignore the discomfiting problems surrounding autobiographical discourse, are insensitive to the complexities of the genre, use the term "autobiography" loosely and accept the traditional romantic assumption that the individual writer has an accessible, recognizable "self". Having highlighted some of the omissions in the criticism of Walcott's work, let me now expand on issues which recur in autobiographical criticism.

1.3 Issues Concerning Critics of Autobiography

Traditionally, autobiography, as Lang puts it, is accepted as a sincere, true "self-revelation of a

transcendent subject" (5). Before the advent of the post-structuralists, autobiographical theorists did not question this assumption but concerned themselves with the problems of definition (Georges Gusdorf 1956, Jean Starobinski 1980, John Sturrock 1977, James Olney 1980); genre (Olney 1980, Elizabeth Bruss 1976 and 1980, Lejeune 1975); the problem of truth (Roy Pascal 1960, Barret J. Mandel 1980); the problem of memory and the re-structuring of experience (Gusdorf 1956); the interplay of history and fiction (Francis R. Hart 1970); time (Burton Pike 1976) and autobiography in the cultural milieu (Stephan Butterfield 1974, Arnold Rampersad 1983, James M. Cox 1971 and 1980, Robert F. Sayre 1980, Albert E. Stone 1973 and 1978, Roger Rosenblatt 1976). Collectively these critics pose specific problems faced by the autobiographer but they do not tackle the problem of the subject, subjectivity and identity. A few critics do acknowledge the problem--Avrom Fleishman, Buckley and Paul J. Eakin, for example, refer to the current debate about the nature of the subject but do not pursue it in their book-length studies of selected autobiographies.

In contrast to the critics operating in the traditional, romantic mode, the post-structural critics reject the romantic notion of the subject. In autobiographical criticism this assumption underlies the work of Jeffrey Mehlman (1974), Jay (1982), de Man (1979a), Eugene Vance (1973, 1978), Louis Marin (1978), Eugenio Donato (1978), J.M. Blanchard (1978), Randolphe Gasché (1978), Louis A. Renza (1977) and Michael Sprinker (1980). For these critics, and I quote Lang, the "manifestation of

the subject" is "better defined as the specificity of his interference in the linguistic codes he manipulates" (12). Post-structuralist critics, to quote Lang again, "favor the role of the writer exploring the signifying potentialities of a given network of signifiers" instead of searching for the "self" of the "man-behind-the-work" (12).

Let me conclude this brief synopsis of issues concerning critics of autobiography with this warning from de Man:

The theory of autobiography is plagued by a recurrent series of questions and approaches that are not simply false, in the sense that they are far-fetched or aberrant, but that are confining, in that they take for granted assumptions about autobiographical discourse that are in fact highly problematic. They keep therefore being stymied, with predictable monotony, by sets of problems that are inherent in their own use. (1979, 919)

So far, I have established that critics are aware of the autobiographical dimension of Walcott's poetry but that they overlook the problem of the subject in the text. I have also outlined two possible approaches to the subject, that of the traditionalists who accept the romantic notion of an accessible, unified subject, and that of the post-structuralists who assume that the subject is a linguistic construct. The post-structuralists' notion of the changing I is borne out by history: since medieval times the pronoun I has had different referents.

1.4 The Changing Status of I

A review of the development of various theories of the subject from Aquinas to Locke to Lacan is way beyond my brief. I shall confine this discussion to a review of the changing status of I since medieval times.

Vance's assertion that "the referent of the word 'I' modulates" with the "conditions (speaker, code, audience) of its enunciation" holds for the changing status of the pronoun throughout history (1973, 3). The permutations undergone by the first person pronoun since medieval times demonstrate the mobility of the pronoun and its dependence on theories of the subject. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan traces the changing status of the pronoun I as it is subject to changing, extrinsic historical circumstances. The synopsis that follows is based on her outline of the evolution of subjectivity (1986).

Briefly, in medieval times the self was largely anonymous. The beginnings of a personal and individual I only began to appear towards the close of the fifteenth century when the medieval ecclesiastical system collapsed. This awakened awareness of developing individualism flowered in the seventeenth century and in Ragland-Sullivan's words, "the actual birth of the human subject, seen as a distinctive presence with specific attributes, occurred" (8). The result was a concept of a universal man with being centred in reason and thought. Eighteenth century philosophers such as Locke, Hume, and Berkeley disturbed

this idea and placed greater emphasis on the role of perception in the formulation of the self. The advent of romanticism in the nineteenth century entrenched the idea that each individual possesses a unique, unified, accessible self. Romanticism, as Lang clearly shows, pre-supposes an authentic, pre-linguistic self and assumes that there is an "originary universal human nature" (4). Ragland-Sullivan provides further insight into the romantic view:

the "I" was the seat of emotion, creativity, intuition, imagination, mystical unity with the Absolute--the source of all that was Good and True--and so able to transcend reason and understanding. (9)

Romanticism was later challenged by Realism and then by Naturalism. The I of Realism was situated in surrounding social and economic forces. External objects controlled the subject, not private, inner ones. Naturalists added genetic and biological determinism: the I, to quote Ragland-Sullivan, "had become the product of biomechanistic determination" (10).

The advent of Freud in the late nineteenth century revolutionized this concept of the self by introducing the unconscious mind and by demonstrating that unseen forces affect behaviour. Lacan, in his re-reading of Freud, destroyed the romantic concept of the self even further by propounding a complicated theory of a split subject constructed by language. For Lacan, there is a subject of individuality and there is the subject of speech, but there is also the subject of the unconscious, and this subject

remains split off from the subject of speech--they can never converge. There can never be one subject. Lacan's enigmatic picture of the human subject contradicts the popular notion of the self as a fixed, whole, innate entity. Ragland-Sullivan explains that he negates the idea of a "static and substantive inner reality waiting to be found" (14) and asserts that the human subject is "multi-leveled, fluid and dynamic" (15). There is no whole self, no innate human nature. The Lacanian subject, as Robert Young observes, is not a "plenitude, a full imaginary unity" but is "a serial movement, an effect of language" (1987, 13).

The task of the literary critic trying to come to grips with Lacan's theory of the subject is hampered by the fact that Lacan's notion of the subject hinges on so many other concepts--signifiers, the Other, the Imaginary, the Real, the Symbolic order, the mirror phase, the ego--to name but a few. Of practical use to the literary critic is Lacan's web-like metaphor of subjectivity:

What concerns us is the tissue that envelops these messages, the network in which, on occasion, something is caught. (1987, 45)

This thesis is directly concerned with the linguistic "tissue" enveloping subjectivity. Instead of grappling with the vagaries of the Lacanian subject, I have chosen to explore the "network" in which subjectivity is "caught" by employing Benveniste's theory. However, I have included these prefatory remarks on Lacan as they draw attention to the complexity of the subject and the dangers in adhering simplistically to the "man-behind-the-work" approach.

1.5 Benveniste's Theory of Subjectivity

The survey of the evolution of subjectivity demonstrates the changing status of the I since medieval times and underlines the historical mobility of the pronoun. The I belongs to a grammatical category which does not have a fixed meaning. This concept is at the core of Benveniste's theory of subjectivity. For Benveniste, subjectivity is constructed by language. Personal identity is a linguistic phenomenon--speech confers identity. Benveniste defines subjectivity as the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as a "subject", which he explains

is defined not by the feeling which everyone experiences of being himself (this feeling, to the degree that it can be taken note of, is only a reflection) but as the psychic unity that transcends the totality of the actual experiences it assembles and that makes the permanence of the consciousness. (1971, 224)

Speakers are able to posit themselves as subjects because language provides the necessary grammatical categories--pronouns. The subject makes use of these "empty" signifiers to designate himself or herself. The fact that the first and second person pronouns, I and you are free floating, and do not designate specific individuals unless they are used in specific discourse, underlies subjectivity. These signs indicate subjectivity "as soon as

a speaker introduces them into each instance" of his or her discourse (219). These mobile signs (in contrast to fixed nouns) come into existence in discourse when they are used by a speaker.

The third person pronouns, he, she, they, them or it differ from the first and second person pronouns in that they do not set up subjectivity. Third person pronouns serve as abbreviated substitutes for other nouns. Their function is entirely different from that of the first and second person pronouns which, to quote Benveniste, possess "the sign of person" (200). For this reason, the third person pronoun is completely different in function from the I and you which do not constitute a "class of reference" but have their own reference which "corresponds each time to a unique being who is set up as such" (218). Benveniste reminds us that:

We must bear in mind that the "third person" is the form of the verbal (or pronominal) paradigm that does not refer to a person because it refers to an object located outside direct address. But it exists and is characterized only by its opposition to the person I of the speaker who, in uttering it, situates it as "non-person." Here is its status. The form he ... takes its value from the fact that it is necessarily part of a discourse uttered by "I." (229)

Benveniste brings out the distinction between verbs following the pronoun I and those following the third person pronoun by comparing the impact of "I swear" with "he

swears". For Benveniste, the first utterance is a "performance", it is the "very act which pledges" the speaker (229). It is not the description of the act being performed by the speaker whereas the second utterance is not a pledge but is simply a description of the act. Benveniste concludes that the same verb takes on a different meaning if it occurs in a first person utterance in which the denoted action is assumed by the "subject" or if it occurs in the third person (229). He explains that "this is a consequence of the fact that the instance of discourse that contains the verb establishes the act at the same time that it sets up the subject" (229-230). In other words, "the act is performed by the instance of the utterance of its 'name' (which is 'swear') at the same time that the subject is established by the instance of the utterance of its indicator (which is 'I')" (230).

The pronoun I always signifies the person who is speaking and can only be identified by the "instance of discourse that contains it" (218). It follows that the person who is addressed is you. Benveniste expands on this:

It is necessary and sufficient that one envisage a person other than "I" for the sign of "you" to be assigned to that person. Thus every person that one imagines is of the "you" form, especially, but not necessarily, the person being addressed "you" can thus be defined as the "non-I person." (201)

There are further grounds for observing a distinction between the "I-person" and the "non-I person". The I, as

Benveniste explains, is always "internal" to the statement and external to you and it is always transcendent with respect to you (201). As Walcott uses complex computations of I and you, it is necessary to quote Benveniste's exposition of the function of the two pronouns:

When I get out of "myself" in order to establish a living relationship with a being, of necessity I encounter or I posit a "you", who is the only imaginable "person" outside of me. These qualities of internality and transcendence properly belong to "I" and are reversed in "you".

(201)

Benveniste goes on to define you as the "non-subjective person in contrast to the subjective person that 'I' represents" (201). Together these two "persons" are opposed to the "non-person" form, the third person pronoun.

As the pronoun we is used extensively in Another Life, it is useful to summarize Benveniste's notion of the role of this first person plural pronoun. In his essay, "Relationships of Person in the Verb" (1971), Benveniste distinguishes three forms of this pronoun. In the first instance, we expresses "I+you" and in the second, "I+they". An undifferentiated we exists in the third case. In the first and second forms the I dominates the "non-I" element: there cannot be we except by starting with I (202). In other words, the presence of the I is constitutive of the we (202). The undifferentiated we is different. In this case, the predominance of the I is so strong that the plural can take the place of the singular. The reason for this,

Benveniste explains, is that we "is not a quantified or multiplied 'I'; it is an 'I' expanded beyond the strict limits of the person, enlarged and at the same time amorphous" (203). Benveniste adds that the use of we "blurs the too sharp assertion of 'I' into a broader and more diffuse expression", the we annexes an "indistinct mass of other persons" to I (203). This grammatical structure underlies the evocation of West Indian intelligences in Another Life.

So far I have outlined Benveniste's analysis of the functions of pronouns in the linguistic construction of subjectivity. The literary significance of these pronominal changes in autobiography is investigated by Lejeune in his essay, "Autobiography in the Third Person" (1977).

1.6 Pronominal Shifts in Autobiography

Lejeune presumes that autobiography is a pact between the reader and the writer and that this contract determines the interpretation of personal pronouns. Lejeune asserts that a switch to the third person in a first-person autobiographical narrative functions as a figure of enunciation which the reader continues to read as first person discourse. In his interpretation, the reader is impelled to compare the third-person narrative with an implied first-person discourse. Lejeune notes that the use of the third person "leads to the eclipsing of the real narrator who now becomes implicit" (32) as "the author

speaks about himself as if another were speaking about him, or as if he himself were speaking of another" (29). For Lejeune, the switch to the third person "brings both relief and tension to the text". He explains:

One feels it--I feel it myself as I write--to be an unnatural ellipse of the enunciation, and keeps expecting a relaxation of the ban on the use of the first person, just as, when reading a lipogram, one watches for the return of the forbidden letter. At the very moment of writing, I mold my sentences by means of a sort of scouring away and transposition of personal discourse. I write myself by silencing myself, or more precisely, by putting the soft pedal on myself. (29)

The "scouring away" and "soft pedal" metaphors evoke the de-personalizing effect of autobiography in the third person. The transformation from the first person to the third person provides distancing and effects what Lejeune describes as a "sliding over into a biographical or novelistic presentation of oneself" (33).

Lejeune also draws attention to other variables which affect the switch to the third person--tense changes and whether the use of the third person is systematic and extensive, or whether it is only used in a localized manner, for purposes of contrast, or whether there is considerable oscillation between the first and third persons. He concludes that the exceptional use of the third person gives full effectiveness to the figure. For Lejeune, the

alternating use of the first and third persons "corresponds to contemporary anxieties and, sometimes, to reflections on modern theories of personality" (39). For him the oscillation, indecision, the interruptions and mirrorings evoked by the pronoun switches are linked to the "impossibility of expressing identity" (39).

Lejeune does not treat the use of the second person in as much detail, but usefully comments that the use of this pronoun brings the identity of the receiver of the discourse into question (30). The use of the second person also enables the autobiographer to talk to himself about himself (if he uses the third person, he speaks to us about himself) (30). Lejeune writes that the use of the second person

makes evident, on one hand, the co-presence in the enunciation of an "I" (now implicit), a "you", and a "he" (hidden beneath the "you"), all referring to the same individual. (31)

Lejeune concludes that the use of the second person theatricalizes the enunciation and that it can "only unfold as it does because imaginary footlights guarantee its unity and relation to an eventual recipient" (31).

The theories of Lacan, Benveniste and Lejeune underline the linguistic features which must be taken into account when the opening question, "What does the pronoun I signify in Another Life?", is addressed. The words of the eighteenth century philosopher David Hume still hold:

all the nice and subtile questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than

as philosophical difficulties.

(qtd. in Buck, 477)

The subject, as Benveniste reminds us, "makes use of the act of speech and discourse in order to 'represent himself' to himself as he wishes to see himself and as he calls upon the 'other' to observe him" (67). The subject's language "provides the instrument of a discourse in which his personality is released and creates itself" (67). It follows that the personality "released" and "created" in Another Life hinges on the discourse comprising the text. The overall structure of the poem is outlined in the next chapter, pronominal transitions in the text are traced in chapter three. Finally, in chapter four, the "signifying potentialities" of selected networks of signifiers surrounding the pronoun I are presented and the usefulness of Benveniste's theory is evaluated.

Chapter Two

I Rendered the Visible World that I Saw

The following synopsis of Another Life demonstrates that autobiography forms but a single strand in a complex narrative, and that the retrospective mode of self-analysis has links with the romantic tradition associated with Wordsworth and St Augustine, rather than with the post-structuralist position forged by Barthes and Valéry.

The poem is a quartet consisting of part one, "The Divided Child", part two, "Homage to Gregorias", part three, "A Simple Flame" and part four, "The Estranging Sea". At the head of the poem, before the table of contents, is an epigraph from Edouard Glissant's Le Lézarde. In the first half of the epigraph, the pronoun I appears three times and signifies the autobiographical task of converting memories into words:

On the day when I finally fasten my hands upon
its wrinkled stem and pull with irresistible
power, when my memories are quiet and strong,
and I can finally translate them into words, then
I shall perceive the unique and essential quality
of this place.

It is noteworthy that the experience which is foregrounded is the perception of the "unique and essential quality of this place" and not personal experience.

The remainder of the epigraph is more metaphorical:

The innumerable petty miseries, the manifold
beauties eclipsed by the painful necessity of

combat and birth, these will be no more than the network of down-growing branches of a banyan tree, winding about the sea.

These lines encapsulate many of the themes of the poem. The "innumerable petty miseries" suggest the poverty and political corruption brought about by colonialism. Combat is another major theme: Walcott has to combat the effects of colonialism, corruption, exile, family loss. "Birth" proleptically hints at the celebration at the end of the poem. The final image of the banyan tree is one of unity and strength, transcendence and organic wholeness and suggests that he has come to terms with the diverse effects of colonialism which he describes with such force in the early poem, "A Far Cry from Africa" (published in In a Green Night 1962):

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live? (18)

The poem traces the growth of Walcott's spiritual independence as he confronts and then detaches himself from the colonial legacy. The devastating effects of colonialism on the island frequently eclipse personal history. The "double perspective" is generated by the juxtaposition of autobiographical experience, presented in sequences of the

poem where discourse (as defined by Benveniste) predominates, with passages evoking a West Indian intelligence, and which conform to Benveniste's notion of historical discourse (1971, 206). These terms are explained in chapter three.

The poem has a loose linear structure, starting from childhood and ending at middle-age. Each quartet of the poem is centred in a nodal experience, underlined by the epigraph and title. Experiences follow chronologically. The narrative, however, is constantly interrupted by descriptive passages and there are frequent thematic and temporal shifts. Walcott compresses many themes into a few lines and frequently jumps backward and forward in time.

In a pioneering essay on autobiographical theory, (published in French in 1956, and translated into English in 1980), Georges Gusdorf observes that the "original sin of autobiography is first one of logical coherence and rationalization" (1980, 41). Walcott's digressions, interpolations and temporal switches within single lines, sentences, stanzas or chapters, constantly disrupt the overt linear narrative and ensure that "logical coherence and rationalization" does not obtrude in Another Life.

Egocentricity, over-simplification, and the imposition of a rigid framework are other pitfalls in autobiography, and Walcott avoids these problems by sustaining a "double perspective", a term Brian Finney uses to describe autobiographies where the self is presented "as an entity" responding "to the world it lives in" (1985, 228). Finney points out that, in this type of text, the autobiographers

"set out to portray the interaction of the self with its society and times" and goes on to say that "such autobiographers tend to see their identity as their very particular mode of relating to the world around them" (228-229). This "double perspective" is sustained by a gaze which falls simultaneously on his own experience and on the "visible world" around him (58).

2.1 "The Divided Child"

The opening chapters, packed with pictorial detail, introduce Walcott in "the stage of self-questioning, self-exposure, self-healing" (to borrow Seamus Heaney's words) as he responds to colonialism, to the community and to his own artistic drive (1988, 27). The epigraph, taken from Malraux's Psychology of Art, launches the driving force of art and announces Walcott's motivation: as a young artist he is "more deeply moved by the sight of works of art than by that of the things which they portray". This theme is systematically developed and culminates in the very personal revelation of his frustration with painting and his subsequent commitment to poetry in chapter nine.

Rapid transitions from one theme to another within a few lines are a striking feature of Another Life. Diverse themes compressed into a few lines accelerate the pace of the narrative. The opening stanzas of the poem illustrate this strategy.

Colonialism, the central theme which often overrides the autobiographical strand in the poem, is introduced by the image of twilight in the second stanza. The "twilight" is conceived pejoratively as a declining "glare" yoked to military images. The other dominant theme in the poem, Art, follows. A variety of related themes is also initiated: the unnamed figure of the student obliquely brings in autobiography; the allusions to the Imperial British army ("red soldier crabs", "redcoats' meat" (6)) draws in the history of the island; feelings of inferiority engendered by colonialism are enacted by the child who prays "nightly for his flesh to change" (7). The world of art (represented by Campbell's First Poems) leads to the suggestion that "another life it seemed would start again" (7). This understated line (suggesting re-birth) states the goal of the autobiographical quest and connects with the title of the poem. The promise of a new life energised by art is counteracted by the juxtaposed image of death: "the white face / of a dead child stared from its window frame" (7). This image momentarily halts the narrative line: the interpolation prevents over-simplification and over-rationalization.

The variety of themes running through the other chapters comprising "The Divided Child" points to Walcott's multiple interests. Death dominates part ii of chapter one where personal history is interrupted by the description of a funeral. The only reference to Walcott is oblique: "the live child waited / for the other to escape" (8). The emphasis on external events ensures the suppression of

autobiography. The brief, fragmentary description of his childhood, hinted at in chapter one, is followed, in chapter two, by the vivid description of his widowed mother, her domestic routine, and her pain and suffering. The focus is firmly on his mother. Again autobiography is minimized. In chapter three there is a brief flashback to his childhood exposure to Western culture, represented by two books, Tanglewood Tales and Kingsley's Heroes (16), and then the "double perspective" continues as the focus switches to the local community of St Lucia (presented in the witty, alphabetical catalogue). The text becomes momentarily more personal in chapter four where his religious sensibility and its effects on him are highlighted. The personal then gives way to the impersonal as the account of his religious affiliations is followed by "The Pact", a self-contained story of Monsieur Manoir, a resident of St Lucia. The gaze remains firmly on St Lucia as Castries, the Foquarde family, and the captain's trip around the island's coastline are described in graphic detail. This section captures the "unique and essential quality" of the island, the stated goal of Glissant's epigraph.

Roman Catholicism, is foregrounded by the imagery in section i of chapter six. For some sections of the community, the religion of the colonist is so entrenched that even the sea is perceived as

Surpliced, processional,
the shallows mutter in Latin,
maris stella, maris stella, (34)

The interpolations of "alleluia!", "gloria!", and "ora!"

capture the intonation of communal worship. The Conradian allusions to leprosy, to a chafing sore and to the "slow stink of incense" link colonialism and Catholicism with contamination and disease. Colonialism creates tension: St Lucia is a "brittle" island. Colonialism has also created a deeply divided society: St Lucia is "a map of cracked precipices" (35). The ill-effects of colonialism taint everything: the huts are "wretched" and the river is "clogged" (33); twilight "chafes like a sore" (34); the volcano, Soufrière, is an "exhausted boil" (37); the coast "smells like hell" (37); the sea is "debased" with "soiled lace around her dirty ankles" (40). Disease is rife, particularly silicosis, leprosy, bilharzia and malaria. Figurative description is re-inforced by documentary realism, by the depiction of the island's poverty and malnourished, neglected "pot-stomached, dribbling" starved children (36). The bleak portrayal of St Lucia draws to a close with the catalogue of names associated with the island's history of violence, death and brutality. The legacy of colonialism is summed up: it has "stained" the air (39).

The impact of colonialism is personalized in lines revealing a child's feelings of inferiority using natural imagery consonant with a child's perception of his or her surroundings:

from childhood he'd considered palms
ignobler than imagined elms,
the breadfruit's splayed
leaf coarser than the oak's,

he had prayed
 nightly for his flesh to change,
 his dun flesh peeled white by her lightning
 strokes! (6-7)

The victim of colonialism devalues his own surroundings as he invests the emblems of Europe with prestige and he directly voices his wish for "white flesh".

Walcott addresses the reader as he vivifies the deprivation suffered by a West Indian child:

Remember years must pass before he saw an
 orchestra,
 a train, a theatre, the spark-coloured leaves
 of autumn whirling from a rail-line,
 that, as for the seasons,
 the works he read described their passage with
 processional arrogance; then pardon, life,
 if he saw autumn in a rusted leaf.

What else was he but a divided child? (41)

The use of the pronoun he depersonalizes the colonial deprivation and enables Walcott to extend the experience to other West Indian children. This pronominal strategy promotes the generalized West Indian perspective.

The line, "I saw, as through the glass of some provincial gallery" (41) interrupts the presentation of generalized West Indian experience and initiates the switch to autobiography. Walcott's cultural legacy inherited from his late father, his mystic experience, his commitment to art and his romance with Anna are covered. This sequence of the poem, crucial to the development of Walcott's

subjectivity, is discussed in chapter four. The present focus is restricted to the structure of Another Life--it is sufficient to note the marked swing to sustained autobiography, and that the autobiographical experience is chronologically arranged, but is interrupted by digressions and interpolations. The themes introduced in the exposition continue to be developed in the second part, "Homage to Gregorias".

2.2 "Homage to Gregorias"

The impact of colonialism on Walcott and on art dominates part two. The vibrancy, success and productivity of Gregorias, a local artist who follows the "errors of his own soul" and ignores European styles and models is juxtaposed with the conflict and despair experienced by the adolescent Walcott whose "hand was crabbed by that style, / this epoch, that school" (59). Two other central themes are Walcott's growing sensitivity to the history of St Lucia and his affinity for and friendship with Gregorias whom he envisages as a creative Black Greek artist (hence the Greek nickname).

Walcott's identity is validated by his close friendship with his fellow-artist. Together they celebrate what Finney terms the "personal paradise" of childhood as they indulge in the world of art (136). A clear division between them is drawn--Walcott is a victim of colonialism whereas Gregorias is the well-adapted beneficiary of both European and West

Indian culture. He successfully absorbs both cultures whereas Walcott is torn apart by his dual heritage. Gregorias, conflict-free, is independent, creative and dedicated to painting St Lucia in his own style. He is presented in bold masculine hunting images with his "easel rifled on his shoulder" (52). Gregorias, like Walcott, is surrounded by allusions to art, to Van Gogh, Cezanne, Gauguin. Gregorias is successful:

Now, every landscape we entered
was already signed with his name. (59)

Walcott, on the other hand, is not a success. Negative images contribute to his self-portrayal. Central to his identity as an artist, is his confrontation with the limitations of painting and his gravitation towards poetry: he has a "different gift, / its element metaphor" (59).

The youthful joy, elation and confidence of the two artist-friends in their "Garden of Eden" is conveyed in rhythmic, alliterative, musical verse. The imagery is bold, natural and energetic, the tone confident and gay:

Days!
The sun drumming, drumming,
. . . .
the ocean cannonading, come!
Wonder that opened like the fan
of the dividing fronds
. . . .
the breakers slow-dolphining over more breakers,
to swivel our easels down, as firm

as conquerors who had discovered home. (53)
 Innocence, success and energy abound as Gregorias and
 Walcott enjoy their "Golden Year".

Gregorias is presented as an innovative, indigenous,
 fulfilled artist. Art is his heaven (63). Walcott, in
 contrast, undergoes a crisis as art fails him. The mental
 disturbance preceding this insight is portrayed by malignant
 images signifying his disordered perceptions:

At your feet
 the dead cricket grows into a dragon,
 the razor grass bristles resentment,

 as the sea's huge eye stuns you
 with the lumbering, oblique blow
 of its weary, pelagic eyelid,

 The sun explodes into irises,

 The skull is sucked dry as a seed,

 Nature is a fire,
 through the door of this landscape
 I have entered a furnace. (56-57)

The turmoil affects him physically: "the stomach heaves"
 (58). He confronts his failure and realizes that poetry,
 not painting, is his medium.

Walcott's growth from a child enraptured by art but
 insensitive to suffering to an adult acutely aware of the
 grimness of life on the island and to the horrors of
 Caribbean history is traced in the chapters that follow.

History is the central theme of chapter eleven which opens with Walcott's childhood version of history depicted by a tapestry. The battle is likened to a polo game, and as an impressionable child, Walcott "thought if full of glory" (69). As a disillusioned adult, he sees Imperial history as "ennui, defence, disease" (70). He rejects European values and aligns himself with Caribbean history (70). There is a strong sense of Walcott's emergent Caribbean identity as he associates himself with the Carib Indians who, in 1651, when pursued by the French, flung themselves over the cliffs at Sauteurs to avoid capture. For Walcott, their suicide is a moment of glory, it is a "leap into the light" (72).

Walcott is emotionally pulverized by the significance of this heroic act. He associates himself with the whole community and says, "We are ground" (71). He then reflects on his own identity, "yet who am I" (72), and announces that he is "one with this engine" (72). His identification with these Caribbean heroes is complete: "I am all, I am one" (72). The I in this section of the poem acquires what Francis R. Hart terms "a suprapersonal significance, a principle of representativeness" (1970, 495). The collective self portrayed in this stanza connects with the black communal self described by Stephen Butterfield in Black Autobiography in America (1974).

Walcott does not sustain this total commitment to his West Indian origins and fluctuates between his Caribbean identity and European heritage. His quest for identity continues as he hovers between his Caribbean roots and his Eurocentric, art-related thoughts of Paris, Pound and

Hemingway. When local smells and speech, vegetation and climate displace the obsession with Western culture, he is liberated from the oppression of colonialism and is able to "shake off the cerecloths" and "stride from the magnetic sphere of legends, / from the gigantic myth" (75). He can recognize local men of stature and can now accord heroic status to the local foresters and fishermen. The pose of the "divided child" has finally been discarded. The Caribbean and not Europe gives him his sense of identity. He is no longer possessed by the "shame and awe" of colonial history, to use a phrase from "The Muse of History" essay (1978, 39).

2.3 "A Simple Flame"

Burton Pike in an essay "Time in Autobiography", writes that "much literary autobiographical writing" has a tendency "to become fixated on childhood and adolescence, and to lose luminosity with adulthood" (1976, 333). Another Life certainly conforms to the generic expectation that the immediacy of childhood and adolescence is captured--both "The Divided Child" and "Homage to Gregorias" accord with this convention. In part three, "A Simple Flame", Walcott moves on to early adulthood, and unlike the autobiographers, singled out by Pike, who fail to animate this period of their lives, Walcott irradiates the poetry evoking his love for Anna with "luminosity".

This markedly autobiographical sequence of the poem opens with a description of the fire that destroyed half of

Castries and with it the colonial past. The fire also forms the backdrop for Walcott's intense relationship with Anna. The flush of first love suffuses the poetry in chapters thirteen and fourteen. The joyous tone gradually becomes more pessimistic as allusions to treachery, fear, death and betrayal signal the end of their love (94).

In the chapter symbolically called "The Cement Phoenix", Walcott takes up the theme of West Indian consciousness and dissociates himself from colonial values--these belong to

Other men's voices,
other men's lives and lines. (106)

He satirically attacks British values in the amusing lines sending up the accolade awarded to him by the British Council. At this point Walcott has overcome all feelings of inferiority--he is no longer the "divided child" yearning for whiteness. He is at ease, so much so that he can now yearn for "intimations of immorality"! He has accepted his colonial heritage but now has to face restlessness resulting from the constraints of living on a small, impoverished island and by feelings of anguish brought about by the suffering of Gregorias and the suicide of Simmons.

Walcott's deep need to uproot himself is expressed in irregular syntax mirroring his disturbance:

Earth-heart, I prayed,
nerves of raw fibre,
uproot me, yet
let what I have sworn to love not feel betrayed

when I must go, and if I must go,
 (108)

This vow to leave the island contradicts the earlier compact made with Gregorias. Walcott's youthful dedication to paint the island has given way to restlessness and a confession of "envious anger" and the revival of colonial memories:

How often didn't you hesitate
 between rose-flesh and sepia,
 your blood like a serpent whispering
 of a race incapable of subtler shadow,
 of music, architecture and a complex thought.

(109)

Beaches flash the message "Go" to him. He likens his spiritual vacuum to a "crab's carapace from which the crabsoul had vanished" (110). Images of migratory swallows and ducks convey his restlessness. In his dejection he sees the islands as a futile "string of barges towed nowhere" (111). Constriction strangulates him. Exile is envisaged optimistically as the "possibility of angels" (112). Walcott does not probe his feelings any further and the narrative jumps to his arrival back in St Lucia and then returns to a description of his flight to Trinidad. His life in Trinidad is not mentioned and a stanza commenting on the fading nature of experience ends the chapter and the third part of the poem:

No metaphor, no metamorphosis,
 as the charcoal-burner turns
 into his door of smoke,

three lives dissolve in the imagination,
 three loves, art, love and death,
 fade from a mirror clouding with this breath,
 not one is real, they cannot live or die,
 they all exist, they never have existed:

Harry, Dunstan, Andreuille. (115)

2.4 "The Estranging Sea"

In the fourth and final part of the poem Walcott telescopes significant biographical events, and his innermost feeling and values surface as he reacts to the mental breakdown and suicide of Simmons, and to the attempted suicide and later rehabilitation of Gregorias. Walcott interprets the significance of Simmons's suffering in section ii of chapter eighteen. The striking image of the "enormous, lidless eyeball of the moon" symbolizes human fear (122). This menacing image is followed by the optimistic presentation of benevolent nature represented by a good day likened to a yacht with its "yards and spinnakers" hoisted in "acknowledgement to the supreme maker's / hand" (122). The mystery of life ("yet could not tell you why, or how it moved" (122)) is affirmed.

This reflective mood continues as Walcott synthesises his thoughts on art, history and human suffering. The bitter elegy addressed to Simmons is packed with words connoting depravity--"wasted", "contagion", "drunken in a gutter", "odour of your death" (122-123). Positive feelings

surface momentarily as he recalls his love for Anna and the golden year in his life:

Do not tell me the world is the same,
that life is hard as a stone,
for I have known it when it was a flower
potent, annihilating with promise. (123)

The bitter intonation introduced by the pejorative verb, "annihilating", intensifies as Walcott derides the destructive attitudes of a powerful section of the community towards Simmons. Images of desiccation, dirt and death convey Walcott's derision. His hostile opposition to this common attitude is summed up by the military image, "but in this battle, it is them, or me" (124). It is a cruel irony that Simmons who accepts and assimilates the local culture is destroyed by it.

Walcott finds solace in his writing--it is cathartic. He writes, "I have no friends / but the oldest, words" (125). His disillusionment extends far beyond Simmons's suffering and the chapter ends with him asking himself a question echoing T.S. Eliot and Yeats, "where was the world in which we felt the centre" (126). His world has fallen apart: he has rejected the colonial world he was born into and cannot accept the values of the new Third World. He castigates the ruling regime which imposes suffering on the working class. The stinging comment, "Ah, brave third world!" indicts the new black government.

In the chapter that follows Walcott lashes out at politicians, academics and anthropologists. He despises all "those whose promises drip from their mouths like pus"

(128). Yet despite evil and adversity, there is triumph as one man, unrecognized, "emerges / and staggers towards his lineaments" (128). This statement of resilience and victory recalls the earlier image of liberation, "to shake off the cerecloths, / to stride from the magnetic sphere of legends, / from the gigantic myth" (75) and anticipates the note of affirmation on which the poem will end. But before Walcott can attain spiritual equanimity, he has to confront his grief at the death of Simmons, his concern for Gregorias as he too contemplates suicide and his own spiritual development. In his maturity the green flash of light at twilight, originally associated with colonialism (6) becomes a symbol of his own enlightenment as the "flash of lime-green water, edged with white" elicits the statement, "'I have swallowed all my hates'" (140). He can now discard servitude, degradation, darkness and hate.

This intense moment is followed by a quiet, serene verse conveying the love and comfort his wife brings him. Biographical details are suppressed and he only hints at his own suffering. Painful, personal experiences happen off-stage. He concludes this chapter in which he has poured out his feelings, with the extended metaphor (echoing Glissant's epigraph) of his wife as a tree supporting him in the "grim times" (140).

In the next chapter he shatters the impression of new found peace with an angry analysis of "black angst" in West Indian history. The depiction of West Indian consciousness opens with a jaundiced perception of the island as damp, mouldy, decaying and beaten. Superb colour effects convey

the vibrancy of nature: the "corrugated silver of the marsh light", the "red heron", the "too green acid grasses" and the "acids and russets and water-coloured water" (141). Description leads to invective: "let the historian go mad there / from thirst" (141). Explorer, slave, accountant, geologist and grocer (all representative of aspects of history which deserve condemnation) are lampooned. History is scathingly reduced to a catalogue of meaningless artifacts such as mummies, spikenard (an Indian plant), potsherds and amphora.

The transmission of West Indian culture in all its complexity, from generation to generation, is the theme of the lyrical lines in which Walcott describes his own son playing in the Rampanalgas River with a boat made from a twig and dead almond leaf. The history of the island is telescoped into the lines recalling the middle passage and is extended in section ii of chapter twenty-two where the barbarism of the island's history is spelt out. The denunciation of history is followed by a personal mystic moment leading to transcendental visionary elation and a feeling of re-affirmation and renewal as Walcott is able to "walk calm, a renewed, exhausted man" (147). Walcott's new found values are asserted in hymn-like poetry in the stanza beginning "holy is Rampanalgas and its high-circling hawks" (147).

In the series of triplets concluding this chapter, Walcott sheathes his wife, Margaret, in holiness and uses the elemental symbols of the sun, rock and fire to communicate his inward composure.

The loud external world of tourist-ridden St Lucia with the hillside cut away for roads, the magical lagoon drained and the Vigie "bulldozed and bowdlerised" (151) is the setting for the final chapter. Walcott, after many years away, returns to the island and is pained by the developments. He calmly accepts his desire to live elsewhere, he has resolved his former conflicts and his memories are all at rest, yet, as he recalls Gregorias and the idyllic year they spent together, his joy bubbles through and the poem ends with celebratory lines dedicated to Gregorias and the golden year when they together "were the light of the world!" (152).

de Man, in his essay, "Autobiography as De-facement", notes that "writers of autobiographies" are "obsessed by the need to move from cognition to resolution and action" (1979, 922). The closing chapters of Another Life bear this out--the various themes are gathered together and neatly "resolved" as Walcott achieves equilibrium and experiences "an elation which sees everything as renewed", to use the words he uses in "The Muse of History" essay (39).

Walcott's statement that Another Life is more a "biography of an 'intelligence', a West Indian intelligence" rather than a personal autobiography" (1977, 411) affirms the secondary role of autobiography in the poem. The autobiographical sequences trace Walcott's artistic, emotional and spiritual development, but no radical critique of subjectivity is offered. The retrospective self-history links Walcott's poem with the autobiographical tradition associated with Wordsworth and Augustine rather than that

initiated by writers such as Barthes and Valéry who deliberately fragment and decentre the self. But Another Life is far more complex than this synopsis suggests. Walcott's handling of pronouns, for example, shift the ground of traditional autobiographical writing. In the two chapters which follow the linguistic mechanisms he employs to construct subjectivity are uncovered.

Critical analysis of the remarkable poetry is beyond my brief--other critics explore this rich field. My focus falls firmly on subjectivity in the poem. Before turning to the use the subject makes of "the act of speech and discourse in order to 'represent himself' to himself", to use Benveniste's words (67), it is appropriate to conclude with Fleishman's acknowledgement of Walcott's outstanding achievement in writing an autobiography in verse:

The only extended English verse autobiographies I know of after Wordsworth are the West Indian Derek Walcott's Another Life--a splendid achievement in its own right--and John Betjeman's less impressive Summoned by Bells. (1983, 475)

Chapter Three

That Terrible Vowel, That I

Walcott's complex use of pronouns in the setting up (and dislocation of) subjectivity is addressed in this chapter. Benveniste very usefully draws attention to the grammatical features of the language surrounding the pronoun I by distinguishing discourse from history. Throughout this chapter and the next I utilize this paradigm. In a brief preamble I outline the linguistic properties of these two modes.

Walcott's pronominal usage is then discussed under four headings: first, the I in relation to the author, narrator and protagonist; second, the functions of the mobile, shifting I; third, the effect of switches from the first person into the second and third person; and finally, the I as a "principle of representativeness" invested with "suprapersonal significance" to use Hart's terms (1970, 495).

3.1 History and Discourse

Benveniste's distinction between history and discourse is useful in discussing autobiography, as it underlines "the moment of time presented" and the intervention or absence of the narrator, two crucial considerations in autobiography. It also focuses attention on the linguistic properties of

autobiographical writing. Benveniste introduces these terms in his essay, "The Correlations of Tense in the French Verb" (1971). He defines historical narration as "the mode of utterance that excludes every 'autobiographical' linguistic form" (206). He expands on this concept:

The historical utterance, today reserved to the written language, characterizes the narration of past events. These three terms, "narration," "event," and "past," are of equal importance. Events that took place at a certain moment of time are presented without any intervention of the speaker in the narration. In order for them to be recorded as having occurred, these events must belong to the past. (206)

Benveniste adds that the "historical intention does indeed constitute one of the important functions of language; it impresses upon it its specific temporality, whose formal marks we must now point out" (206). He continues: "the historical utterance admits of three tenses": the aorist (simple past), the imperfect and the pluperfect. He adds that there can be a "periphrastic substitute for the future", the prospective (207). The present tense is not used in historical narrative: the use of this tense is a feature of discourse.

In the essay, Benveniste reproduces three "specimens" of narration and concludes that, in all three instances, the "mode of utterance, the number and the nature of the tenses remain the same" (208). He also observes that the "events are set forth chronologically, as they occurred" and he

describes the effect in these much quoted words: "No one speaks here; the events seem to narrate themselves" (208). In Another Life Walcott's use of this mode imparts the impression of objectivity in the sequences of the poem where he relates the history of the island.

Discourse, writes Benveniste, "must be understood in its widest sense: every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some way" (209). Benveniste stresses that discourse occurs in all genres when "someone addresses himself to someone, proclaims himself as the speaker, and organizes what he says in the category of person" (209). Of particular relevance to Another Life is Benveniste's observation that "in practice one passes from one to the other instantaneously" (209). He writes that "the nature of language is to permit these instantaneous transfers" (209). Walcott's frequent and very smooth shifts from one mode to the other bears this out.

Louis Marin usefully sums up the features of discourse: it is distinguished by markers of autobiographical writing such as personal pronouns, personal verb forms, and temporal and spatial adverbs (1978, 600). Narrative, by contrast, excludes these grammatical features. In Marin's words:

The narrative [histoire recit], with its intent on objectivity, is equivalent to discourse minus discourse's enunciating marks. The traits which enunciate it are effaced and dissimulated. In this way, narrative representation occurs in the

text as presentation of the event itself. (599)
 Marin lists linguistic features excluded from narrative: the I-you personal relation, its adverbial complements, and the present and perfect tenses (600). Having introduced Benveniste's definitions of discourse and narrative, let me now focus on Walcott's pronominal usage.

3.2 The I in Relation to Author, Narrator and Protagonist

In autobiography, to quote Bruss, the "logically distinct roles of author, narrator, and protagonist are conjoined" (1980, 300). Another Life flouts this convention: the referents for the anonymous I vary. In chapter two, for example, the I refers to Walcott's mother, in chapter fourteen it denotes Anna, in chapter nine, in the line, "Dear Theo, I shall go mad", Van Gogh could be the speaker (57). There are also occasions where the I has suprapersonal significance, as in chapter eleven where it is directly linked to West Indian intelligence in the line, "I am all, I am one" (72). These examples demonstrate that the I does not refer exclusively to a single narrator. This means that the author and narrator in Another Life are not always conjoined. The identity of the I, of the narrator, has to be inferred from the text and the fact that the I is unnamed problematizes the connection between the author and the narrator.

A further complication occurs because Another Life has several protagonists--Simmons, Gregorias, Anna and Walcott. As mentioned in the previous chapter, autobiography is often

suppressed in Another Life and there is no simple equation that narrator equals protagonist. Conventionally, the narrator is the protagonist in autobiography, and Walcott's deviations from this norm is one of the strategies he employs to "shift the ground of autobiographical practice", to use Jay's phrase (1982, 1059). This raises the question of the generic status of Another Life--how autobiographical is it? As my concern is limited to the linguistic features underlying autobiography in Another Life, I do not intend pursuing this issue, other than to note that de Man points out that autobiography "lends itself poorly to generic definition" and that each "specific instance seems to be an exception to the norm" (920). For de Man, attempts at generic definition of autobiography are fruitless. His warning justifies the evasion of this issue. It is sufficient to note Walcott's radical departure from the convention that the I in autobiography traditionally unites author, narrator and protagonist. The I in Another Life is a mobile, shifting pronoun, not always tied to the anonymous narrator.

3.3 The Mobile, Shifting I

Like all personal pronouns, I, to quote Vance is deictic: that is to say, rather than being a signifier (such as the word "book") designating a specific substance whose nature is more or less fixed, "I" is a special signifier whose referent necessarily varies with the circumstance of its

enunciation. (1973, 3-4)

Discourse confers identity on the pronoun. The act of saying I, as Marin puts it, "brings about the insertion of the speaker into a new moment of time and into a different discursive and circumstantial texture" (602).

In traditional autobiographies where the I denotes the narrator who is the protagonist, the identity of the I is not problematic, and is tied to the proper name of the narrator. In Another Life, however, Walcott does not provide this type of foothold for identity. The I is, to use Vance's words, "cleft" from a proper name and referentiality is "bestowed upon it by the extrinsic circumstances of its production" (3). This process, in selected textual extracts, is examined in the following chapter. For the moment, I wish to demonstrate the complexity of the pronominal system and the density of the language--the opening chapter of the poem exemplifies these features and illustrates the difference between discourse and historical narration:

Verandahs, where the pages of the sea
 are a book left open by an absent master
 in the middle of another life-
 I begin here again,
 begin until this ocean's
 a shut book, and, like a bulb
 the white moon's filaments wane. (3)

The I is surrounded by symbols--"verandahs", "pages of the sea", a "book", an unidentified "absent master", the "ocean", a "shut book", a "bulb" and "the white moon's

filaments". The range of images creates a "multitrack text", to borrow a phrase from Vincent B. Leitch (1983, 90). The first track is a spatial one, denoted by "verandahs". It suggests a vantage point, an open space where one can gaze onto the scene implied by the "pages of the sea" and the "book left open". Reading metaphors, as Lang points out, are common in autobiography and Walcott follows this convention by using them to represent the autobiographical project (1982, 11). These figures introduce the second track of meaning as they forge a link between the sea and books. The "book left open" conjures up a string of further associations, such as accessibility, exposure and availability. The symbol of the sea draws in yet another chain of signifiers, the power of nature, constancy, erasure, vastness. Plural meanings are released because there is no one-to-one relationship between the signifiers and the signified. To quote Leitch again, there is no "quick fix" between them (176). The polyvalent nature of the symbols accords with Lacan's notion that "any given signifier refers not to any corresponding signified but rather to another signifier in a sequence or 'chain' of signifiers" (Richardson 1983, 54). Enough has been said to demonstrate the opacity of the lines preceding the introduction of the I and the validity of Vance's words, that the I is "phenomenalized" in the "sole materiality of language, in the opaqueness of the text" (3).

The autobiographical enterprise is introduced in the line, "I begin here again". The close link between subjectivity and temporality described by Benveniste is

apparent in this line. The temporal moment is what Benveniste terms the "eternally 'present' moment" determined for each speaker "by each of the instances of discourse related to it" (227). More puzzling than the temporal aspect is the meaning of the verb "begin". Does it mean to write or does it mean "to be"? Both interpretations fit the context. The first interpretation introduces the autobiographical task whilst the second initiates the "grammar of selfhood", to borrow Vance's term (1).

The I in this line denotes the narrator--unnamed and devoid of physical description. No gender or age markers are given. The first person pronoun is absent from the final three lines of the stanza describing the completion of the task being undertaken. Closure is suggested by the figures of the "shut book" and the waning filaments of the white moon. The first person pronoun is also absent from the rest of the chapter. The autobiographical discourse of the first stanza gives way to the mode Benveniste terms historical narration. The switch effects a change in focus from autobiography to the island of St Lucia.

In Another Life, the opening stanza meets Benveniste's requirements for discourse: the intervention of the narrator is signalled by the personal pronoun I, the present tense verb "begin", the spatio-temporal adverb "here". These signs of person are dropped in the second stanza. The absence of these marks of enunciation together with the use of the past tense (for example, the verbs "lowered", "declined", "mesmerized" and "climbed") produce the more impersonal, seemingly objective mode which prevails in the

second stanza. The first person pronoun is absent in the remainder of the first chapter: the narrator does not intervene. This strategy minimizes the "presence" of the narrator and the "textual effect", as Marin observes, is that of "the memory of the enunciating subject" (601). In other words, the spotlight is on memories and events rather than on the narrator. We are aware of the narrator undertaking the task he set himself in the epigraph from Glissant, of translating memories into words and at the same time perceiving the "unique and essential quality of this place". The emphasis is firmly on the "place" not on the "person", and this is achieved by using language in which "signs of person" are absent.

This is a convenient moment to pause and compare discourse with historical narrative by highlighting the features of historical narration in the description of the funeral in part iii of chapter one:

They sang, against the rasp and cough of shovels,
 against the fists of mud pounding the coffin,
 the diggers' wrists rounding off every phrase,
 their iron hymn, "The Pilgrims of the Night."
 In the sea-dusk, the live child waited
 for the other to escape, a flute
 of frail, seraphic mist,
 but their black, Bible-paper voices fluttered
shut, silence
 re-entered every mould, it wrapped the edges
 of sea-eaten stone, mantled the blind

The "objective" nature of the passage correlates directly with the use of the past tense and the third person pronouns. Because historical narration excludes the "tense that will be chosen by whoever wishes to make the reported event ring vividly in our ears and link it to the present" (210), this "plane of utterance" (209) comes across as more "objective" than discourse. For this reason Walcott uses this mode in passages evoking other intelligences, (for example: "The Pact" (25-28); the description of the journey of the Jewel (32-33); the synopsis of the violent history of the island (38-39); slavery (53-54); the elegy to Simmons (132-135)). This mode adds "credibility". The impression of objectivity which is created is useful in the description of events in the text, which to use Catherine Belsey's words, "are marked in the text as non-fictional, as existing outside discourse, in the world" (91). Autobiography, as de Man reminds us, "seems to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, of representation" than fiction does, and to achieve an effect of authenticity, Walcott switches to historical narration (1979, 920).

Historical narration and discourse are very different: discourse is personal, animated, vivid and linked to the moment of writing; historical narration is more "objective", is seemingly independent of the speaker and is always in the past tense. Walcott tends to use these two modes to sustain the dual development of autobiography and the evocation of a West Indian intelligence.

To sum up my argument so far: the I in Another Life is mobile, is not named, is not always tied to the narrator

and, in the first stanza, is surrounded by complex and sometimes, opaque language. When the I appears in the poem together with second person pronouns, demonstratives, spatial and temporal adverbs, performative verbs, the present tense and modalizing terms, then the utterance in which it occurs is, in Benveniste's terms, discourse. These grammatical features produce the effect of the "speaking subject". Benveniste's distinction between discourse and narrative is useful in the reading of autobiography as it highlights the grammatical features underlying the "presence" of the subject. It is particularly germane to Another Life as Walcott moves freely between the two modes and achieves very different textual effects depending on the inclusion or omission of "signs of persons". A striking feature of Another Life is the way in which Walcott tends to use historical narration as the vehicle for West Indian intelligence comprised by history, sociology and the local landscape, and discourse, revolving around the speaker, to convey the autobiographical themes. There is a correlation between these two modes and the "double perspective" in the text. Having established that the I is mobile, and that Benveniste's distinction between discourse and narrative usefully specifies the grammatical features which occur when the first person pronoun is used, I propose now, to trace the changing referents of the shifting pronoun I.

When the first person pronoun occurs in chapter two it has several referents. The elastic pronoun first appears in a motto (first in German and then in English) in a simile which registers the domesticity of Walcott's mother:

she was a servant, her sign
 a dry park of disconsolate palms, like brooms,
 planted by the Seventh Edward, Prince of Wales,
 with drooping ostrich crests, ICH DIEN, I SERVE.

(10)

The validity of Vance's statement that the I is determined by the "extrinsic circumstances" of the "production" of the first person pronoun is evident in the capitalized motto-like statement (3). In this context the I is associated with Royalty, with the Prince of Wales, serving his subjects. The Royal I implicit in the prestigious royal emblem of the Imperial Prince of Wales contrasts with the humble signifiers evoking the mother's "condition of servitude"--brooms, the "disconsolate palms" (a pun on hands associated with housework) and the "drooping ostrich crests" which recall a feather duster. In this context, the I in the emblem becomes ironic and mocking.

The royal aura emanating from the motto is deflated by the two terse declarative statements that follow: "I sweep. I iron" (10). The royal I of the previous stanza is replaced by that of the mother. The I does not represent the narrator and only converges with that of the narrator at the end of the chapter in the lines

I can no more move you from your true alignment,
 mother, than we can move objects in paintings.

(15)

The I continues to represent the narrator until the line, "Dear Theo, I shall go mad" (57) in chapter nine. After this the I continues to converge with that of the narrator

until chapter fourteen (entitled -Anna awaking) where the identity of the I becomes more problematic.

In the first two stanzas in chapter fourteen the I seems to represent the narrator and the identity of the pronoun only becomes puzzling in the lines

I came out of the cave
like the wind emerging,
like a bride, to her first morning. (92)

The simile of the bride confers a female identity on the I. The next line, "I shall make coffee" presents the female in a "condition of servitude". Her identity is then constructed by sexual images, followed by declarative statements of love and sexual awakening. The female identity of the narrator and her dependence on men are confirmed by the presence of the gendered third person pronoun in these enraptured lines:

But even if I love not him but the world,
and the wonder of the world in him, of him in
the world,
and the wonder that he makes the world waken to
me,
I shall never grow old in him,
I shall always be morning to him,
and I must walk and be gentle as morning. (92-93)

The woman is presented as an adjunct to the male and the patriarchal view of woman accommodating male pleasure surfaces in the last two lines. Anna's identity is constructed by "the male-framed gaze", to use Juliet Flower MacCannell's phrase (1986, 135).

egocentricity is minimized by switches to the second and third person pronouns. I now propose to examine the effect of these pronominal shifts and to relate them to Walcott's achievement of writing, simultaneously, an autobiography and a biography of a West Indian intelligence.

3.4 Autobiography in the Third and Second Person

In chapter one, I outlined Benveniste's theory of subjectivity and the roles of the third and second person pronouns, and referred to Lejeune's essay on "Autobiography in the Third Person" (1977). For convenience, let me reiterate the salient points of their arguments and the literary implications.

According to Benveniste, the third person pronouns, he, she, them and they differ from the first and second person pronouns in that they do not set up subjectivity. Their function is entirely different from that of the first and second person pronouns: the third person pronoun, to quote Benveniste, refers to "an object located outside the direct address" (229). In an autobiographical text, this (as Lang points out) effaces the presence of the writer and gives the I the objective status of a he, "dissimulating all traces in the text of his work as author--of his active structuring, reworking or embellishment of the text" (14). This pronominal form, to quote Lejeune, eclipses the "real narrator who now becomes implicit" (32) and the author "speaks about himself as if another were speaking about him, or as if he himself were speaking of another" (29). In

Another Life, Walcott controls the presence of the narrator by manipulating this pronominal form. When he wants to foreground a West Indian intelligence, he employs the third person, when he wants to highlight autobiographical experience he reverts to first person discourse, and occasionally to the use of the second person.

The use of the second person pronoun in an autobiographical text has a specific function. Lejeune claims that the narrator's use of the second person dramatizes the enunciation and enables the autobiographer to talk to him-or-herself about him-or-herself (when he or she uses the third person instead of the first person, then he or she speaks to the reader about him or herself). The second person accentuates the receiver of the discourse.

In Another Life, there are several transitions in Walcott's self-reference from the first person to the third person. Switches from the first to the second person are less common. I now propose to map out the changes from one mode to the other, and to demonstrate the textual effects of the pronominal shifts. The outline which follows plots the interplay between autobiography (obviously presented in the discursive sequences) and the evocation of West Indian intelligences in those sequences in the poem where the narrator is eclipsed and West Indian intelligence is foregrounded. The outline reveals the oscillation between the two modes. As the discursive mode displaces the narrative mode, the text becomes more autobiographical. The synopsis of the pronominal structure is followed by a close reading of two textual extracts, one demonstrating the

function of the switch from first person to the third person and the second demonstrating the effect of the oscillation between first and second person pronouns.

In chapter one the I in the first stanza gives way to the gendered third person he in the stanza beginning with the line, "Darkness, soft as amnesia, furred the slope" (4). This narrative mode is sustained until chapter two where the I reappears and denotes Walcott's mother and then, finally at the end of the chapter, the narrator. The narrative mode continues in chapter four, but is interrupted by the I in the opening stanzas, and then continues in "The Pact" section and in chapter five, except for the occasions when the narrator intervenes and uses the first person pronoun to voice his adolescent sexual reactions to the "pomegranate skinned / Martiniquan Penelope" (39) and to the priest aboard the Jewel. The narrative mode is only interrupted once (in the line, "My fiery grandfather" (39)) in chapter six which evokes the local landscape and community of St Lucia, and its violent history, poverty, squalor and disease. Autobiographical discourse dominates the following chapter which vivifies Walcott's engagement with art and poetry, and which concludes part one, "The Divided Child".

From this bald outline it is obvious that the narrative mode (of which third person pronouns and the past tense are defining features) is dominant in part one. This structure ensures that the personal autobiographical dimension is secondary to the more impersonal evocation of a West Indian childhood and the growth of a West Indian intelligence in part one.

The balance between discourse and narrative alters in part two, "Homage to Gregorias"--here discourse prevails. The opening chapter is in the discursive mode; both the singular and plural first person pronouns appear frequently. The second person pronoun you slips into chapter nine and, a few stanzas later, is replaced by the I in very personal, meditative stanzas. Chapter ten, entitled -Frescoes of the New World, becomes increasingly autobiographical towards the end of part ii. Part iii and the final two chapters of this section continue in the discursive mode. Autobiography is no longer on the periphery.

Part three, "A Simple Flame", like part two, is predominantly in the discursive mode. Sections i, ii and iii of chapter thirteen are in the narrative mode. Part iv is of particular interest in that there is a switch from the I used in the first stanza to he in the seventh stanza. The I appears again at the end. The final two sections of the chapter revert to the narrative mode. The chapter entitled -Anna awaking is in the discursive mode and has already been discussed as the I is mobile in the first two stanzas, denoting either Anna or Walcott, the narrator, and then denotes Anna and later, Walcott. Part iii which concludes the chapter is in the narrative mode. Discourse, again accentuating the autobiographical dimension, predominates in chapters fifteen, sixteen and seventeen, which conclude part three.

The final section of the quartet opens in the narrative mode centred around Harry and the failure of art in the third world but shifts into discourse in part ii and this

form continues as the I becomes increasingly more frequent in part iv. The I introduces the invective dominating chapter nineteen and occurs sporadically in the elegy to Simmons in chapter twenty. The second person pronoun you (directed at the reader) occurs in the first eight verses of chapter twenty-one and is replaced by I in the stanza starting with the line, "Yet, when I continue to see" (138). The I comes to the fore in the meditative verses comprising part iii and iv. Narrative takes over in chapter twenty-two in the opening stanzas evoking the miasmatic landscape and the history of exploitation suffered by the island. There is a switch to first person discourse in the long stanza starting with the line, "That child who sets his half-shell afloat" (143). The switch to past tense verbs in the sequence of the stanza beginning with the line, "of all the races that crossed the water" signals the transition to the narrative mode which is sustained in the indictment of colonialism in part ii, and in the evocation of the horrors of slavery in part iii. The I re-appears in the final stanza of part iii, in the line, "I sit in the roar of that sun / like a lotus yogi folded on his bed of coals" (146), and launches the reflective sequence which continues until the end of the next chapter which concludes the poem.

This map of pronominal shifts shows the transitions, back and forth from discourse to narrative and how narrative dominates in part one of the poem, only to be displaced, in long sections, by autobiographical discourse as the poem progresses. It is important to note that, although discourse becomes the predominant mode, narrative sequences

evoking West Indian experience are interspersed amongst the discursive sections. This patterning ensures that the portrayal of a West Indian intelligence is sustained throughout the long poem and filters through the autobiographical quest for love, for liberation from the oppressive effects of colonialism, for artistic growth, spiritual development and the freedom to leave the island.

To demonstrate the function of the shift from the first person to the third person pronoun, I have selected the opening stanza of chapter seven:

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.
 Remember years must pass before he saw an
orchestra,
 a train, a theatre, the spark-coloured leaves
 of autumn whirling from a rail-line,
 that, as for the seasons,
 the works he read described their passage with
 processional arrogance; then pardon, life,
 if he saw autumn in a rusted leaf.
 What else was he but a divided child? (41)

The first sentence is in the first person and the heroes referred to are the dead, derelicts, the "stars" of

Walcott's childhood mythology catalogued alphabetically in chapter three. The past tense verb, "beheld", together with the temporal / spatial modifier, "at knee-height" places the "presented time" firmly in childhood. The injunction to the reader, "remember I beheld them at knee height" is significant: it draws in the reader and adds an implicit you to the passage, accentuating the receiver of the discourse. The opposition of their "cramped lives" and "their thunderous exchanges" which "rumbled like gods about another life" evokes the gap between the naive child's viewpoint and the adult's disillusioned view. The syntax, the past tense and the expressive words depict the narrator's different attitudes at different periods of his life. "Another life" in this context, refers to childhood. The alliterative reference to Gregorias, the successful, content, whole, local man and artist, acts as a harbinger for part two which pays homage to him and celebrates his freedom from the oppressing constraints of colonialism. The mention of Gregorias also complicates the referents of the pronoun he in the sentence which follows--does the pronoun refer to the narrator, to Gregorias, or perhaps to the unnamed West Indian child? By being open-ended, the pronoun permits all these possibilities and so draws in both the narrator and a more generalized West Indian intelligence.

This stanza also validates Lejeune's thesis that the use of the third person enables the writer to speak about himself as though he were another--the switch to the pronoun he immediately creates this effect. MacCannell's Lacanian interpretation is also worth mentioning. For her, the shift

from the first to the third person enables the I to relate "to itself in the mirror of the third person" (66). By invoking the third person pronoun Walcott relegates the subject to Lejeune's fictional role or, to use a different metaphor for the same depersonalizing effect, to Lacan's mirror status. At the same time, the ambiguity inherent in the free-floating pronoun allows it to refer to Gregorias, to Walcott observing himself, or extended to include other West Indian children. The third person pronoun permits Walcott to obliterate the distinction between himself and other West Indians. The use of the ambiguous pronoun sustains the parallel development of the personal autobiography and the impersonal biography of a West Indian intelligence.

This discussion highlights the extension of meaning generated by a switch from the first person to the third person. A switch from the first person to the second person pronoun has a very different effect. As the second person pronoun you figures prominently in chapter nine where Walcott confronts his failure as a painter and his preference for poetry, I have selected sequences from part i of this chapter to demonstrate the dislocating role of this pronoun in an autobiographical text.

Commentary on the failure of painting to capture a landscape on a flat surface opens chapter nine. The first pronoun to appear is the second person your in the line, "Over your shoulder the landscape / frowns at its image" (55). There is a sense here of the narrator speaking to himself, of him theatricalizing the statement, to slot it

into Lejeune's paradigm. When the pronoun appears again, it creates the effect of the narrator speaking to himself:

From the reeds of your lashes, the wild commas
of crows are beginning to rise.

At your feet

the dead cricket grows into a dragon,

the razor grass bristles resentment,

gnats are sawing the air,

the sun plates your back,

salt singes your eyes

and a crab, the brush in its pincer,

scrapes the white sand of canvas . . . (56)

Menacing images together with the use of the second person dramatize this expression of extreme discomfort. Again the pronominal structure imparts a sense of the disillusioned "would be painter" performing before Lejeune's imaginary footlights. The use of you avoids the egocentricity which the first person pronoun imparts, always a hazard in autobiography. It renders the personal as impersonal, a strategy which is necessary in autobiography, for as Yeats puts it, "all that is personal soon rots; it must be packed in ice or salt" (qtd. in Easthope 1983, 71). The second person pronoun provides the Yeatsian "ice or salt".

The second person pronoun you is used extensively in the next stanza. In Pamela Mordecai's reading, the pronoun denotes the poet, whom she identifies as Walcott. She interprets this section of the poem as a personal reaction to the frustrations imposed by the limitations of painting.

She writes:

As the poet becomes more obsessed with his task, and the landscape more heated, the burden of the effort, the wild improbability of its accomplishment, calls to his mind Van Gogh and Gauguin, both neurotic artists whose renderings of landscape emphasized its vital, burning quality.

(1987, 99)

Mordecai's equation of the pronoun with the poet is supported by the switch to the first person in the line "I have entered a furnace" (57). She however avoids the problem of the identity of the I in the earlier, free-standing line, "Dear Theo, I shall go mad" (57). The I in this line can denote Walcott or can echo Van Gogh addressing his brother. Similarly, the I in the lines, "I have entered a furnace" and "I rise, ringing with sunstroke!" (57) is not tied to any specific individual. The crucial issue is that it is mobile and free to expand meaning.

The I is absent from the next stanza in which the possessive your occurs four times: "the cold sea is coiled in your gut,"; "the hair on your nape"; "spiders running over your wrist" and "Your lashes settle like crows" (57-58). The repeated possessive form dramatizes the personal nature of the speaker's images of stress. Focalization changes in the following stanza where the first person pronoun reappears in the subject position and asserts the narrator's presence in the line, "I have toiled all of life for this failure" (58). This posture is dropped in the oblique line, "behind the square of blue you have cut from

that sky" (58). The use of the second person pronoun suggests that the speaker is turning inwards and speaking to himself and this reflective, private mode continues to the end of the stanza.

The mood is very different in the next section of the poem. The I predominates, the syntax is assertive and the declarative statements create the sense of resolution, of insight, of the completion of the clarification process, which contrasts with the earlier, far more tentative, probing stanza in which the second person pronoun signalled that the speaker was thinking things through.

To sum up: the effects of the switch from the first to the second pronoun vary. The use of this pronoun can suggest that the speaker is in a reflective mood, speaking to himself as he dramatizes his "soliloquy"; it can reduce narcissism by reducing the egocentricity created by too many successive I's; and finally it can involve the reader by addressing him or her directly.

Enough has been said to demonstrate that switches to the second and third person pronouns are significant, that they alter the focalization. Walcott fully utilizes the indeterminacy of pronouns to achieve these multiple effects.

3.5 The Suprapersonal I

"I am all, I am one" is a statement which deflects attention away from the personal, individuated I (72). In

chapter eleven, it proclaims the communal self, reconceived within Caribbean history (not colonial history).

Walcott, in his essay, "The Muse of History", observes that the "victims" of the Colonial tradition tend to "hold it in awe" before they are able to reject it (1978, 38). The process of awe followed by repudiation of colonial history takes place in chapter eleven. The "awe" is explicit: "I bled for all. I thought it full of glory" (69). The horrors of war and history surface in part ii. In part iii the individuated I of the previous stanzas disappears and the pronouns our and we (signalling the community) come to the fore in the lines,

Nostalgia! Hymns of battles not our own,
 on which our fathers looked with black, iron
mouths
 of cannon, sea-agape,
 to the bugle-coloured light crying from the West,
 those dates we piped of redoubt and repulse,
 while in our wrists the kettle drums pulsed on
 to Khartoum, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Balaclava. (70)

In his essay, "What the Twilight Says: An Overture", Walcott criticizes the New World black for trying to "prove that he was as good as his master" and states that "he should have proven not his equality but his difference" (1970, 9). The line, "Hymns of battles not our own" is an emphatic statement of difference; the West Indians do not accept the legacy of Imperialism. Adolescent awe and close identification with British history have given way to a West Indian sense of identity and the realization that history is

not glorious, but is "a history of ennui, defence, disease" (70). Images of calcification, fever and death pervade the lines enacting Imperial history.

A free standing quatrain draws attention to the tragic moment when the Carib Indians, pursued by the French in 1651, threw themselves over the cliffs at Sauteurs:

The leaping Caribs whiten,
in one flash, the instant
the race leapt at Sauteurs,

a cataract! One scream of bounding lace. (71)

Compressed into these short lines is a pictorial description of the horrendous moment when Caribbean heroes chose death rather than submission before the colonist. The vigour of the Caribs is conveyed by the verb "leaping". The verb "whiten" is ironic: they achieve the whiteness which their descendents yearned for at the moment of death. Their solidarity is underlined by the phrase "the race leapt" and by the metaphor of unity, "One scream of bounding lace". In the previous stanza the death of Imperial soldiers is euphemistically presented: "gold helmets of dragoons like flowers" tumbled down "blue crevasses"--the gold and blue hues deflect attention away from the horror of death and cushion the effect (71). The stark presentation of the mass death of the Caribs has the opposite effect of highlighting the tragedy. Caribbean history is presented with more feeling than Imperial history. The "divided child" of part one has, to use Walcott's words in his Twilight essay, "shucked" the effects of colonialism, particularly the "conditions of servitude" (5).

The impact of this tragic event on the narrator is conveyed by pulsating, run-on pounding lines in part iv. The syntax, to use John Barrell's words, enacts the "process of a man producing his own identity" (1988, 57). The length of the convoluted sentence, the tense changes, the lack of connectives and punctuation, and the piling up of obscure metonymic terms create the dream-like aura of the stanza:

I am pounding the faces of gods back into the red clay
they
 leapt from with the mattock of heel after heel as if
heel
 after heel were my thumbs that once gouged out as
sacred
 vessels for women the sockets of eyes, the deaf howl
 of their mouths and I have wept less for them dead than
I did
 when they leapt from my thumbs into birth, than my
 heels which have never hurt horses that now pound them
 back into what they should never have sprung from,
 staying un-named and un-praised where I found them--
 in the god-breeding, god-devouring earth! (71)

The stanza starts with inchoate, surrealistic actions. "Being", as Barrell puts it (100), "is perceiving" and the immediacy of the narrator's perceptions is conveyed by the declarative statement, "I am pounding". The Caribs are elevated to "gods" and the narrator casts himself in the role of a potter able to pound "the faces of gods back into the red clay / they leapt from" and to recreate them ("they leapt from my thumbs into birth") and then to "pound them /

back again into what they should never have sprung from". He is in control, he is assertive. He has escaped from the "malarial enervation" resulting from living in "a colonial backwater" (phrases from Twilight (4, 14)) and is articulating his identification with the "un-named", "un-praised" heroes. The self is no longer conceived in terms of colonial images, and history is no longer perceived through the colonial perspective. A metamorphosis has taken place.

The opening lines of the next stanza enact the decimation of the Caribbean population, directly caused by colonialism (depicted by the "wound" left by the destruction of the Caribs at Sauteurs). The first person plural pronoun we, placed prominently at the beginning of the line, signals Walcott's total alignment with West Indian intelligence. The patterning of the images is significant. The Caribs are represented by the "hooves of their horses" and the scene of their death, "those widening cliffs". Natural images-- "green branches", sea-horses, "red pepper of flowers"-- dominate the next few lines and suggest that the narrator is in direct contact with nature, with "the only credible life" (Twilight, 14). This cluster of images presents the narrator responding only to his immediate surroundings. He is free from the burden of colonialism and can now connect with history, with the Caribs, with the doomed heroes in Ancient Greece and with West Indian mythology (the wind-god Hourucan). He suggests that he is reconciled to his colonial origins and can comfortably embrace his European

and indigenous roots ("I am all" (72)). But he soon questions his identity:

. . . yet who am I, under
 such thunder, dear gods, under the heels of the
thousand
 racing towards the exclamation of their single name,
 Sauteurs! Their leap into the light? I am no more
 than that lithe dreaming runner beside me, my son, the
roar
 of his heart, and their hearts, I am one with this
engine
 which is greater than victory, and their pride
 with its bounty of pardon, I am one
 with the thousand runners who will break on loud sand
 at Thermopylae, one wave that now cresting must bear
 down the torch of this race, I am all, I am one
 who feels as he falls with the thousand now his tendons
harden
 and the wind-god, Hourucan, combing his hair . . .

(72)

He has attained a new state of equanimity and can accept his divided origins. The phrase "I am one" also implies a sense of wholeness, peace and resolution, but the meaning of this is negated by the rest of the statement: "I am all, I am one / who feels as he falls with the thousand". This suggests that he only feels one with the self-sacrificing group at the moment of obliteration. This is not expanded on, and the punctuation (. . .) imparts a sense of suspension of any further ideas--the definition of selfhood is dropped. The

equation of the individual self with the communal self having suprapersonal significance links Walcott's self with the black model of the self described by Butterfield who argues that the "black self" is a "conscious political identity", a self which "belongs to the people" (1974, 3).

To sum up: in part iv of chapter eleven, Walcott explicitly links his identity to history and follows the black tradition where the individuated self is suppressed by the communal self voiced in the statement, "I am all". Throughout the text, Walcott substantiates this philosophy of the communal self by his practice of using unnamed generic nouns, indeterminate pronouns and by conflating his experiences with those of other protagonists by using the plural pronoun we (for example, in chapter eight he blends his own experience with that of Gregorias).

The role of the figure of the unnamed child who surfaces in the first half of the poem is also significant: it enables Walcott to write his autobiography and the biography of a typical West Indian intelligence simultaneously. This dual development of autobiography and biography takes place, for example, in part v of chapter eleven. The poetic collage of the mind of the unnamed child serves two functions. The first half of the stanza recapitulates Walcott's own spiritual development, the second half, dominated by the "child, like a ribbed mongrel" (72), draws in the debilitating, divisive effects of colonialism on all West Indian children and so exemplifies a West Indian intelligence.

In the first half of the text, the figure of the unnamed (male) child performs this double function of representing both Walcott and other West Indian children. In chapter three, for example, the simile of the thin child, like a "kite / whose twigs showed through" foregrounds the poverty suffered by so many of the island children (16). Signifiers associated with European culture--Tanglewood Tales, Heroes, Demeter's torch and Ajax--emphasize Eurocentric education. The "divided child" in the first stanza of chapter seven is also male and unnamed, and again can be identified as Walcott or any other West Indian child. The switch, in part iv of chapter eleven, from first person statements such as "I tired of your whining, grandfather", "I tired of your groans, grandfather" to this description of an unnamed (male) child has the same effect:

for the sea to erase
those names a thin,
tortured child, kneeling, wrote
on his slate of wet sand. (67)

"Naming" as Maud Ellman puts it, "is maiming" (1987, 191). These examples demonstrate how Walcott uses "unnaming" to avoid "maiming" the referential scope of the generic nouns so that they can refer simultaneously to himself as an individual and as a representative of a West Indian intelligence.

To sum up: Benveniste's distinction between history and discourse is useful in identifying the linguistic means Walcott uses in the depiction of personal autobiography and the portrayal of a West Indian intelligence. This "double

perspective" mutes the autobiographical strand in the text. Walcott further shifts the ground of conventional autobiographical writing by his manipulation of the mobile pronoun I. In the next chapter specific instances of discourse which confer identity on the I are discussed and the question of the continuity between the writing I and the I of the past is raised.

Chapter Four

"Yet Who Am I"?

4.1 Self-Manifestation

In the previous chapter I examined Walcott's complex use of pronouns to set up (and dislocate) subjectivity. In this chapter I attempt to answer Walcott's question, "yet who am I" (72) by focusing specifically on the "extrinsic circumstances" of the "production" of the first person pronoun, I (Vance's words, 1973, 3). Benveniste conceptualizes the I as an "empty" form "which each speaker, in the exercise of discourse, appropriates to himself and which he relates to his 'person', at the same time defining himself as I and a partner as you" (227). Particularly significant is his statement that the "instance of discourse is thus constitutive of all the coordinates that define the subject" (227). In this chapter I address "the co-ordinates that define the subject" by exploring the network of signifiers (including the various tenses) Walcott selects to define his I in crucial passages in the poem. It is not feasible to examine the whole text: discussion is limited to a selection of diverse textual extracts illustrating both the governing themes in the poem and the complexity and variety of the language surrounding Walcott's I.

Walcott's engagement with art is one of the principal areas in which self-definition takes place. His development as an artist is central to the poem and I propose first to

examine his self-registration in terms of art. This is followed by an analysis of the discourse in two intensely subjective passages where ecstatic experience bestows referentiality on the I. The metaphorical language in these passages contrasts with the more literal, factual language phenomenizing the I in sequences of the poem where politics and history come to the fore as in the close reading of chapter nineteen. Finally, I examine the effect of the type of language on the nature of the I in the closing chapters of the poem. Buck, in an essay, "Reading Autobiography", stresses that the reader of autobiography should address what constitutes "culmination, completion" for the writer, hence the inclusion of the last chapters of the poem in this discussion (1980, 494). Collectively, these extracts contribute to the definition of Walcott's I. The diversity and discontinuity of the material defining the I validates Lacan's observation that "personal reality" is built up by "fragments of perceived fragmentations" (Ragland-Sullivan 187).

Before embarking on the close textual readings, I wish to introduce two separate issues: first the question of self-manifestation, and second, the continuity between the present, writing I and the I of the past. Let me begin with a few prefatory remarks on Lang's usage of the term "self-manifestation" (1982, 12). Lang, in her essay, "Autobiography in the Aftermath of Romanticism", makes it clear that "the romantics' lesson that the subject cannot manifest itself outside of language remains undisputed" and convincingly argues that "the significance of this assertion

has been fundamentally transformed" by contemporary Lacanian psychoanalytic theory which negates the romantic assumption of the notion of the pre-linguistic "ineffable" self (12). She rejects the romantic term, "self-expression" and advocates the use of "self-manifestation" which she defines as "the specificity" of the subject's "interference in the linguistic codes he manipulates" (12). Lang sums up the effects of this understanding of subjectivity: it

has led many critics to abandon the pseudo-objective stance of the reader seeking the image of that authority which grounds the text in favor of the role of the writer exploring the signifying potentialities of a given network of signifiers. (12)

She argues that it is futile to try and locate the "man-behind-the-work" and supports Vance's notion that the nature of the I depends on the "circumstances of its enunciation".

The second issue is the question of the relationship between the present, writing I in the text and the I of the past. The root of the problem lies in the fact that the pronoun I yokes together both the past and the present I's. Starobinski pinpoints the problem: the first person pronoun "embodies both the present reflection and the multiplicity of past states" (1980, 79). He explains:

the personal mark (the first person, the "I") remains constant. But it is an ambiguous constancy, since the narrator was different from what he is today. (79)

This pronominal constancy presents the autobiographer with

the problem of how he or she distinguishes the I belonging to the past from the I denoting the more mature writer.

In the close readings which follow, the continuity or discontinuity between the writing I and the I associated with earlier experience is not treated as a separate issue. Instead, it is discussed when significant examples of the I representing "present reflection" and the I representing the "multiplicity of past states" occur in the selected textual extracts.

4.2. "He fell in love with art / and life began"

Critics agree that art is central to the poem (Baugh 1978, 1980; Lane 1978; Modupe Olaogun 1987) but do not confront the way art determines self-registration. Walcott's engagement with art is crucial to his sense of identity, to his "mode of self-manifestation". Self-definition in terms of art takes place gradually and in conjunction with other wide-ranging signifiers. Poetry promotes polyvalent language and Walcott with his penchant for metaphor stretches language to the full, ensuring that multiple chains of associations are set up by the images he creates and the symbols he uses. This means that art is usually one link in complex imagery chains.

Art is introduced by the quotation from Malraux's Psychology of Art at the beginning of part one, "The Divided Child". The quotation underlines the power of the "sight of works of art" to move an artist--paintings move an artist more than "the things which they portray". The epigraph

from Malraux plays an important role in the structuring of identity. Walcott systematically develops a narrative line which traces his immersion in the world of art to his realization that he prefers poetry. The significant point is that Walcott forges a link between the epigraph and his own identity.

Metaphors in the opening chapter link life, art and identity. The complex relationship between art and life is hinted at in the metaphor of

. . . The clear
 glaze of another life,
 a landscape locked in amber, the rare
 gleam. . . (3)

"The clear / glaze of another life" relates life (autobiography / biography) to art. "Clear" suggests transparency and perspicuity, whilst "another life" is perceived as a "clear glaze", a smooth, transparent finish, something which can be visualized. There is also the suggestion that life is covered by the glaze, that it can be encapsulated in another medium. This image conjures up the romantic impression that "life" and the "self" are accessible, can be seen. The meaning of the open-ended "another" is not tied down. As mentioned earlier, it suggests the life of another person, or possibly another stage of the narrator's life or even another facet, such as art or poetry. "Life" is envisaged as a "landscape locked in amber". "Landscape" is a visual image suggesting that life can be perceived. The verb "locked" is a powerful image of constriction. There is a sense of life enclosed in amber, (a fossil resin used in

jewellery and as a preservative, often for insects in museums) so there is a sense of life being preserved in a medium with both positive and negative connotations. These lines place life firmly in the context of art, inscribed in a landscape.

The metaphorical equation of art and life is followed by the description of an unnamed art student drawing, and then climbing the hillside to visit his mentor. The emphasis is on the "sociological contours of the promontory" (6), on the colonial history of the island, on the black community grieving the death of a child, then on Walcott's mother. The islanders come to life in chapter three. In Lacanian terms, these sections of the text are concerned with the Other which Stuart Schneiderman defines broadly as "the space of the community" (qtd. in Ragland-Sullivan 16).

Self-definition becomes more focused in chapter four where the narrator (the writing I) engages far more personally with art and religion, and voices his alignment with his African origins. The chapter opens with a description of a painting of John the Baptist in Craven's book. The allusions to the painters, Verocchio and Leonardo, highlight the theme of art and testify to the writer's familiarity with European artists. The mode becomes more personal in the lines:

Kneeling in our plain chapel,
I envied them their frescoes. (23)

There are two co-ordinates defining the subject: his Methodist background is signified by the "plain chapel" and, his colonial legacy of envy is voiced in his reaction to

European frescoes. The use of the past continuous verb form (kneeling) both vivifies and animates the action. The same effect of immediacy is achieved in these highly metaphoric lines which evoke his responsiveness to European culture:

Italy flung round my shoulders like a robe,

I ran among dry rocks, howling, "Repent!" (23)

Compressed into these lines is the sense of Catholicism (signified by the Papal country, Italy) enveloping him like a cloak, like the vestments worn by Catholic priests. The Eliot-like figure of rocks with their connotations of suffering suggest the frenzy that thoughts of European culture arouse. The fact that this disturbing vision takes place as he is poised for prayer, kneeling in the Methodist chapel shows how pervasive and compelling the influence of Europe is on the divided colonial child. Thoughts of Europe shatter his equilibrium as they overtake him in his local chapel.

Another facet of his identity also emerges--his African origins. Despite his "passionate, pragmatic / Methodism" (24), he is deeply affected by his African roots. The mode of self-manifestation is highly metaphorical with the dominant clusters of signifiers drawn from art and religion. The self revealed by these metaphors is a religious one showing a strong artistic awareness and, at the same time one torn apart by colonialism. Division, not unity, prevails.

Later in the poem, art and religion, in tandem again, continue to define his identity:

I saw, as through the glass of some provincial
gallery
the hieratic objects which my father loved:
the stuffed dark nightingale of Keats,
bead-eyed, snow-headed eagles,
all that romantic taxidermy,
and each one was a fragment of the True Cross,
each one upheld, as if it were The Host. . . (41)

In these lines Walcott acknowledges his alignment, through his father, with European art and literature. The experience is firmly located in the past--the consistent use of simple past tense verbs ensure this temporal effect. The value he attaches to the "hieratic objects" is stated in the two lines in which he invests them with religious significance. There are no images of division, no negative images of colonialism.

Religious imagery initiates the next stanza which affirms his immersion in art and enacts his liberation from the oppression of colonialism:

The Church upheld the Word, but this new Word
was here, attainable
to my own hand,
in the deep country it found the natural man,
generous, rooted.
And I now yearned to suffer for that life,
I looked for some ancestral, tribal country,
I heard its clear tongue over the clean stones
of the river, I looked from the bus-window
and multiplied the bush with savages,

speckled the leaves with jaguar and deer,
 I changed those crusted boulders
 to grey, stone-lidded crocodiles,
 my head shrieked with metallic, raucous parrots,
 I held my breath as savages grinned,
 stalking, through the bush. (42)

His Christian belief in the Church upholding the "Word" of God is plainly stated. He accords art religious status as he uses the biblically orientated phrase, "this new Word" to describe art. His affinity with the world of art is clearly voiced: "attainable / to my own hand". The allusion to "hand" recalls the Glissant epigraph at the beginning of the poem, "when I finally fasten my hands upon its wrinkled stem". The consolidation implied by this reference to Glissant's words is extended by the next image of the "generous, rooted" natural man. There has been a marked transition from the anguished, split colonial self presented in chapter four to this evocation of a successful, secure artist engaged in exuberant fantasy. The "divided child" of the early chapters who yearned for "whiteness" has shed this racial anguish and can now yearn to suffer for art. This is a turning point in his maturation and the wide range of exotic images which follow--"savages", "jaguar", "deer", "crocodiles" and "parrots"--suggest a liberated, lively, playful imagination. It is noteworthy that "savages" feature in this fantasy. Colonists used this term pejoratively for the local population and the fact that Walcott can use it without rancour and in a comic context, implies that he has come to terms with the island's history.

"triptych", "the cantering horsemen", the "jewelled cities" and "Uccello"). The reference to Saul suggests the revelatory nature of the intense experience: it points to the conversion which takes place. The prayer-like structure of the stanza suggests the religious significance of the experience. The verb "believe" reinforces this sense. It is significant that references to art predominate and that the presence of the narrator is played down by the use of the third person pronoun: these strategies ensure that art is given more coverage than his own individuality.

In part two of the poem, Walcott's experiences as an artist are consolidated. The narrative outlines the golden year he and Gregorias enjoyed, their vow never to leave the island until they had depicted various facets of it "in paint, in words" (52), and then moves on to Walcott's frustration with the limitations of painting. In the sequence of the poem presenting his self-questioning, Walcott, to borrow a phrase from Finney, re-examines this phase in his life "from the private underside" (1985, 233). This is one of the rare moments in the text when Walcott exploits the self-regarding, self-interpretative element of autobiography to the full and does not obfuscate the message with elaborate or obtuse metaphors. He writes of the moment of contemplation:

Where did I fail? I could draw,
I was disciplined, humble, I rendered
the visible world that I saw
exactly, yet it hindered me, for
in every surface I sought

opinion. Reading and writing images are prominent and recall the opening stanza of the poem. The lines suggest that the only things which endure are books (written records as opposed to transient human experience), verandahs (places to stand, reflect and view) and the sea (a multi-dimensional image of nature, vastness, change, erasure and estrangement). The gaps in the text are significant. There are no allusions to colonialism, history or life, no conflicts emerge and there is a sense of peace. The "wind" and the "memory of the wind-whipped hair" (presumably Anna's and Hourucan "combing his hair" (72)) stand for experience external to the self and recall Walcott's comment to Hirsch (first mentioned in the introduction):

I have felt from my boyhood that I had one
function and that was somehow to articulate, not
my own experience, but what I saw around me.

(210)

At the end of the poem, the final images which he presents of himself are related to poetry. First, there is his desire to be "an old poet, / facing the wind" (148), and second, his celebratory lines to Gregorias cast him as a user of language in the role of Adam:

Gregorias listen, lit,
we were the light of the world!
We were blest with a virginal, unpainted world
with Adam's task of giving things their names,

(152)

His identity as a poet is clinched in part vi of chapter twenty-two. The use of the present tense again

creates the effect of a speaking I. In this sequence of the poem Walcott oscillates between the past and the present as he juxtaposes the I of the past with the I of the present, writing self. He complicates and obscures identity by using symbols and images which are often private and difficult to interpret.

Holy were you, Margaret,

and holy our calm.

What can I do now

but sit in the sun to burn

with an ageing mirror that blinds,

combing, uncombing my hair-

escape? No, I am inured

only to the real, which

burns. Like the flesh

of my children afire.

Inured. Inward. As rock,

I wish, as the real

rock I make real,

to have burnt out desire,

lust, except for the sun

with her corona of fire.

Anna, I wanted to grow white-haired

as the wave, with a wrinkled

brown rock's face, salted,
 seamed, an old poet,
 facing the wind

and nothing, which is,
 the loud world in his mind. (148)

The opening line, addressed to his wife, Margaret is in the past tense. There are no temporal markers to place the event in a specific time slot. The question he poses to himself is in the present tense and evokes the moment of present reflection. The inclusion of the adverb "now" places the statement firmly in Benveniste's "eternally 'present' moment" (227) and the present tense verbs which follow in his reply to this question sustain this temporal effect. The description he presents of himself sitting in the sun, burning, and "combing, uncombing" his hair parallels the earlier action of the "wind-god, Hourucan, combing his hair" (72). The allusion to this pagan God draws in his sensibility to West Indian mythology, whilst the repetitive "combing, uncombing" action suggests futility, aimlessness and destruction. The discourse confers these attributes on the I.

The syntax (the question) denotes the reflective nature of the I in these particular stanzas. The continuation of his inner debate is signalled by the emphatic statement, "No, I am inured / only to the real, which / burns. Like the flesh".

Less easy to comment on is the meaning of the lines, starting with the words, "No, I am inured / only to the real, which / burns". The first utterance suggests that he is hardened to painful experience ("to the real"), the power of which is conveyed by the verb "burns" and is expanded on by the horrendous simile, "like the flesh / of my children afire". The one-word sentence, "Inured.", reiterates his resistance, whilst the juxtaposed, single word sentence, "Inward." conveys the private, emotional nature of the experience. The following lines are more opaque: "As rock, / I wish, as the real / rock I make real, / to have burnt out desire, / lust, except for the sun / with her corona of fire." His wish to burn out desire and lust is stated explicitly. The lines imply that he accepts a purgatorial process which will consume him until he is like a rock (with a "brown rock's face"), free of lust but is still in touch with the energising life force, the sun. The image of the sun "with her corona" recalls the description of him sitting in the lotus-position in the "roar of the sun" with his head "circled with a ring of fire" (146). A halo is common to both images and symbolises his religious sensibility. The lines addressed to Anna are more direct. Again his role as a poet is uppermost: the I envisaged in the future is firmly tied to the role of the poet who enigmatically faces the wind "and nothing, which is / the loud world in his mind." "Nothing" recalls these lines from Wallace Stevens' "The Snow Man":

And, nothing himself, beholds

Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

(1975, 968)

This passage is significant: it clinches the role of the I committed to poetry. Art, specifically poetry, affirms the identity of the mature I. Absent from this passage are the images of division and conflict which dominated "The Divided Child", the disillusionment with painting (experienced in "Homage to Gregorias"), and the obsession to leave the island (described in "A Simple Flame"). All that remains of the intense love affair dominating "A Simple Flame" is the single reference to Anna. The I in this section of the poem is not a summation of the earlier I's: it is specifically linked to the mature I of the poet.

To sum up: art in Another Life affirms the identity of the I. A major theme in the poem is the quest for artistic fulfillment and Walcott's personal reactions to drawing, painting and poetry are central to his registration of selfhood. The material which Walcott selects to portray his engagement with art is diverse and his focus varies, moment to moment, from himself and his own inner feelings, to the outside world, to actual paintings and painters, to Gregorias and to other innovative images and symbols. At no stage in the text does he embark on a straightforward or oversimplified narrative treatment of art and identity, instead he intersperses sections about art with other experiences and resists any impulse to simplify or explain or make connections between the various I's which occur in the poem. There is no attempt to present a "whole self".

Identity is constructed, moment by moment, as the I occurs in discourse.

Benveniste's thesis that I is a "term that cannot be identified except in what we have called elsewhere an instance of discourse" is corroborated (226). The fragmented type of I which emerges from the discourse accords with the Lacanian notion that there is no whole "self" only "sets of signifying chains and unities, which compose 'self' out of relational ensembles of meaning" (Ragland-Sullivan 147). Art, as is evident from this discussion, is one of Walcott's major "ensembles of meaning" in the registration of his identity.

4.3 "I lost myself"

Having examined Walcott's presentation of his identity in terms of art, I now propose to focus on the "network of signifiers" underlying subjectivity in selected sequences of the poem centred on ecstatic experience, singled out for further attention as subjectivity is heightened in moments of illumination.

Walcott focuses on the self and subjectivity in part ii of chapter seven.

About the August of my fourteenth year
 I lost my self somewhere above a valley
 owned by a spinster-farmer, my dead father's
friend.

At the hill's edge there was a scarp
 with bushes and boulders stuck into its side.

temporal, spatial and biographical co-ordinates. The past tense together with the chronological detail indicates that the adult Walcott is recalling an adolescent moment. There is no attempt to focalize the almost Wordsworthian "spot of time" through the eyes of the fourteen year old boy. The moment of presentation is that of the writing adult. The ordinary descriptive language, the conventional syntax (with the exception of the inversion in the opening line) and the lack of a patterned rhyme scheme generate the effect of the speaking voice, very much in the tradition of Wordsworth. The prominence of the symbolic landscape and the movement back and forward from speaker to landscape are traditional features of romantic poetry. In these lines, Walcott's language and his model of the self, substantiated by the landscape, tie in with this tradition.

The mystic experience is summed up : "I lost my self", and, a few lines later, "I dissolved into a trance". These images of loss and dissolution accord with the statement Walcott made to Hirsch about this section of the poem: the "body feels it is melting into what it has seen" (203). This type of experience firmly connects Walcott with the traditional romantic concern with moments when everyday consciousness gives way to something more spiritual. Shelley's description of the traditional romantic experience fits Walcott's experience: people "feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe or as if it were absorbed into their being" (qtd.in Easthope, 125).

Walcott is explicit about his "inward state": he experiences a "serene extinction / of all sense". His

feeling of ecstasy is not a constant state but one which shifts from senselessness to one of elevation, of climbing, to a more socially aware state of mind where he becomes inextricably linked to his surroundings, to the "labouring smoke". The juxtaposition of the images suggests his simultaneous spiritual upliftment and identification with the labourers and with the signal-like smoke symbolizing life, movement, warmth.

Crucial to Walcott's structuring of his identity is his use of metaphor to express shifts in his consciousness. The description of the sloping hillside with "bushes and boulders stuck in its side" conjures up a graphic picture of a wounded countryside, symbolic of the injuries colonialism inflicted on the island. This is the negative way the child, hurt by colonialism, perceives the hillside. This disturbing figure is followed by another very visual description, this time of the "ripened valley" in the afternoon light. The adjective "ripened" suggests maturity and sets up a contrast between the valley (which has been there since time immemorial) and the immature young boy. The referential effect is achieved by the concreteness of the descriptive detail which enables the reader to "stand where the poet stands and borrow his eyes" (Robert Langbaum's words, qtd. in Easthope 129).

A long complex sentence without conjunctions and with clauses headed by the personal pronoun I conveys the nature of the hillside experience. The active, past tense verbs, "seized", "climbed", "drowned", "began to weep", "felt compelled" and "wept" firmly locate the experience in the

past and vividly signify the multi-faceted experience. The direct, everyday language presents no interpretative difficulties. The metaphors surrounding the verbs are more dense; for instance, the line, "I drowned in labouring breakers of bright cloud", has clashing signifiers-- "drowning" is an image of death, whereas the modifier "bright" suggests radiance and upliftment, not death. The contrasting images together evoke the subject, in a true romantic spirit, dissolving into Shelley's "surrounding universe". This moment of unconsciousness leads to senselessness and to weeping. The ecstatic moment fades as he continues to portray himself interacting with the hill, grass, earth, pebbles and with the "cooking smoke". His own individual experience recedes as the immediate surroundings are foregrounded. The world around him has more coverage than his subjective experience.

The language presenting the mystic moment is metaphorical and the line, "for unheard avalanches of white cloud", requires explication. "Unheard" suggests that he is out of touch with the "white cloud avalanches" which connect with the earlier image of dissolution when he "drowned in labouring breakers of bright cloud". The moment of unconsciousness is expressed by the verb "drowned" in this metaphor. The adjective "labouring" subliminally gathers in the workers, their poverty, their hovels and hard work. The alliterative "breakers of bright cloud" portrays radiant clouds in a sea-like formation and can be construed as an image of the actual mystic moment suffused with bright light. At the same time, it portrays the immersion of the

self in an invisible medium, in the mystical "cloud of unknowing". The "white cloud" connects with the earlier bright cloud and also signifies the mystic experience. Walcott's language becomes more metaphorical as he grapples with the elusiveness of subjective experience.

The conjunction "but" signals a shift to the present moment of the enunciation. In other words, the experiences linked to the I of the fourteen year old are displaced by the reference to the present moment of writing. This temporal shift is effected by the present tense verb "grows" in the line, "darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting", presumably quoted from a hymn. Apart from signalling a time shift, this line reminds us of the narrator's religious links with his culture. The images of darkness and amnesia negate the light which irradiated the clouds (the mystic moment) and marks the climax of the ecstatic experience. Again, the frequency of the pronoun I, the string of declarative statements with frequent pauses, the ordinary lexis and the varying line lengths devoid of end-rhymes create the cadence of a natural speaking voice, a distinguishing feature of Benveniste's discourse.

The final seven-lined sentence which concludes the stanza enacts the fading away of the isolated illuminated moment. Reflection on the meaning of the moment is signalled by the preposition "For", placed prominently at the beginning of the lines. The personal pronoun I is absent, the focus is no longer exclusively on the speaker but extends to the landscape, to the poor and also encompasses Caribbean history. The sustained use of the

present tense ties the reflective moment to the present of the enunciation. The figure of the dark "ship of night" alludes to the vessels used in the "middle passage" to transport slaves. The verb "locked" foregrounds confinement of the slaves (the past tense evokes the historical past). The simile of the "chains" reinforces this reference to past history. The switch from the past tense of the recalled description of the ecstatic moment to the present tense of the moment of the enunciation marks the shift away from the ecstatic moment to a consideration of the significance of it. From an autobiographical standpoint, the shift from the past tense to the present tense enables Walcott to intervene and comment upon the meaning of the events reported earlier in the past tense.

The role of Walcott's complex tense systems in the structuring of subjective experience is clearly seen in the remarkable passage, packed with "circuitous images", towards the end of the poem, in chapter twenty-one, where Walcott reflects on love and recalls the mystical moment in his youth:

And do I still love her, as I love you?
 I have loved all women who have evolved from her,
 fired by two marriages,
 to have her gold ring true.
 And on that hill, that evening,
 when the deep valley grew blue with forgetting,
 why did I weep,
 why did I kneel,
 whom did I thank?

I knelt because I was my mother,
 I was the well of the world,
 I wore the stars on my skin,
 I endured no reflections,
 my sign was water,
 tears and the sea,
 my sign was Janus,
 I saw with twin heads,
 and everything I say is contradicted. (139)

In this stanza the intervention of the mature I, at the moment of the enunciation, is evoked by the use of the present tense in the opening question, "And do I still love her, as I love you?". The interplay between the mature I (the I of the enunciation) and the recollections of a much younger I is effected by the switch to the past tense and the memories of the past, of that afternoon "on that hill that evening". The interrogative form leads to declarative answers, presented in lines with the personal pronoun placed prominently at the beginning of the line. In each clause, the use of the past tense verb firmly ties each distinct metaphoric experience to that of the much younger I. The consistent use of the past tense distances the early experience from that of the I involved in the textual act of interpretation. In the concluding couplet of this stanza, the switch to the present tense shifts the temporal moment to the time of writing. The memory of "another life" associated with a younger Walcott fades.

From what has been said, it is clear that the relationship between the I of the past and the I of the

terms of his mother. The next alliterative line has the same grammatical structure (the first person pronoun followed by a complement). It yields two related meanings. First, the "well of the world" suggests a life-giving function associated with the figure of the caring, nourishing mother. Second, the image of water contained in this metaphor can be foregrounded and connected with the string of water-related images in the stanzas comprising part iii (his astrological sign, the sea, tears, an eel, the drowning of the Carib Indians at Sauteurs and the flash of lime-green water). But before this chain of signifiers is developed, another dense, perplexing metaphor, "I wore the stars on my skin", appears. The "stars" recall the "stars" of his "mythology", those dead derelicts he mentions in the triplet concluding the satiric categorization of the inhabitants of St Lucia in chapter three (22). "Stars" has two other connotations, one negative and the other positive. In chapter nineteen, "stars" are purulent in the line, "their stars are pimples of pus" (128). At the end of the poem, Gregorias's "crude wooden star" with "its light compounded in that mortal glow" (152) is the ultimate affirmative symbol of Walcott's elemental man, "a being inhabited by presences, not a creature chained to his past" (1978, 38). In the stanza being discussed, the star symbol subliminally draws in the satirised characters in chapter three, the political corruption endemic in chapter nineteen, and finally, the symbol of victory, reconciliation and affirmation. The syntax, the verb he "wore" and the metonym "skin" (standing for his body) together suggest his close

contact with the "stars". The progression of the symbolism, from the satiric, to the negative, to the celebratory, represents nodal stages in the autobiographical quest, in the triumph over colonialism.

Walcott does not provide any clues to facilitate interpretation, but in line after line, introduces new symbols, as in the next line, "I endured no reflections". The first person pronoun is again placed prominently at the beginning of the line, the tone is emphatic, the past tense relegates the action to memory, but again the syntax is elliptical and the reader asks, "what reflections"? This section of the poem illustrates the way in which the elliptical, metaphoric nature of poetic language affects the I and it corroborates Buckley's observation that the I in poetry is "perpetually more elusive and ambiguous than the self of the narrator of a subjective prose fiction" (132).

The first person pronoun which appears seven times in seven successive lines is absent in the next three lines, which like the preceding lines, are short and highly patterned. Water, tears and the sea are listed as "metaphors of self" and are expanded on in the next stanza, but before he elaborates on the cluster of water images, he adds that his "sign was Janus" and claims that "everything I say is contradicted".

Mordecai's interpretation of the Janus figure and the final line of the stanza is illuminating. She writes:

If one teases out the Janus metaphor and considers the material consequences of seeing out of Janus'

two heads, a rather different kind of meaning emerges. Seeing out of two heads implies 360-degree vision, that is, the ability to see comprehensively, or in all directions at once. In a sense, the intellectual condition that corresponds to physical "total vision" is one that can be represented in the proposition "everything I say is contradicted"--all points of view need to be tolerated, all disagreements admitted. (96)

Mordecai sees Walcott "struggling to describe a whole in which intellectual and physical discrepancies are tolerated without animosity" (96). Traditionally, Janus looks to the past and the future, and in my reading, the mythical figure of double-vision represents the I of the past and present reviewing his life-history. Janus represents the process of getting to know the self which Ragland-Sullivan describes so well:

To know the moi (the exceedingly difficult task of seeing one's subjectivity as an object), one must be taught to read backward in a topological (spatial) sense, but in the immediacy of the present time. (44)

The twin-headed Janus also represents Walcott's dual cultural and racial background, his contact with both European and local culture, and his mixed origins symbolized by his white grandfather and black grandfather (67). The statement that "everything I say is contradicted" suggests Walcott's acknowledgment of change and uncertainty. The

metaphors of fluency ("I was fluent as water"), of mobility ("I would escape"), of transition, flux and change ("my sign was water, / tears and the sea") and finally the metaphor of the split subject, the twin-headed Janus evoke a Lacanian type of self which is in a state of flux, and to quote Belsey, is "perpetually in the process of construction" (1982, 65).

A complex interplay of tenses and innovative figurative language surround the I in the presentation of another illuminated moment:

and when I leapt from that shelf
of rock, an abounding bolt of lace,
I leapt for the pride of that race
at Sauteurs! An urge more than mine,
so, see them as heroes or as the Gadarene swine,
let it be written, I shared, I shared,
I was struck like rock, and I opened
to His gift!
I laughed at my death-gasp in the rattle
of the sea-shoal.
You want to see my medals? Ask the stars.
You want to hear my history? Ask the sea.
And you, master and friend,
forgive me!
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!

(139-140)

This stanza shows the way in which the use of the present tense ties utterances to the mature I at the moment the autobiographical text is being written. It also illustrates the conversational nature of discourse. For Benveniste, discourse reproduces the manner of expression of oral discourse (209). He writes that, in discourse, every utterance assumes "a speaker and a hearer" (209.) This pattern is particularly evident in the following utterances, addressed to an audience and couched in the imperative mode, which, to quote Belsey, gives "orders to its readers" (91): "so, see them as heroes"; "let it be written"; "You want to see my medals"; "You want to hear my history"; "And you, master and friend, / forgive me!" (140). The use of the present tense creates the impression that the various utterances are being spoken by the mature I at the moment of writing.

Declarative past tense statements confer identity on the I of the past, whilst present tense, imperative statements evoke the current opinions of the more mature I writing the autobiography. The I of the past is aligned with the heroes who died at Sauteurs. This consolidates the earlier stance: "I am one with this engine" (72). There is ideological continuity between the I in chapter eleven and the I in chapter twenty-one. The transition from the younger I recalling his strong identification with the Carib Indians to the mature I voicing a current opinion is achieved by the shift to an imperative sentence in the

present tense in the lines, "An urge more than mine, / so, see them as heroes or as the Gadarene swine" (139-140). This is followed by a flashback to the past moment of illumination. Exaltation is expressed by the repetition of "I shared, I shared". The repetition, to use Geoffrey Leech's words, has "its own kind of eloquence" and by "underlining rather than elaborating the message, it presents a simple emotion with force" (1983, 79). The repetition of the hard sounding plosive "ck" in the Biblical simile, "I was struck like rock" reinforces the hardness of the rock and contrasts with the subsequent miracle-like opening to "His gift!" Instead of an open-ended metaphor such as the "unheard avalanches of white cloud" signifying ecstatic experience, as in chapter seven, Walcott employs a simple, easily understood exclamatory religious phrase, "His gift!" In this evocation of an illuminated moment, religious language expresses the spiritual experience. Walcott does not employ metaphors of elevation and dissolution, or figures of clouds as he did previously.

The use of the past tense in the sentence that follows the climax of the moment of illumination, "I laughed at my death-gasp in the rattle / of the sea-shoal" ties this experience firmly to the younger I, to the I of the past, who is able to detach himself from his own figurative death by laughing at it. This rather macabre statement of dissolution or liberation is followed by present tense discourse addressed first to a generalized "you", and then to Simmons. The shift in tense signals the temporal shift to the thoughts of the writing I. The carefully balanced,

anaphoric questions and answers suggest that the poet has rejected human considerations (signified by "medals" and "history") and prefers to acknowledge "stars" and the "sea", universal rather than human images.

In the earlier evocation of the moment of illumination experienced when he was a boy of fourteen, Walcott described the ecstatic experience and then reflected on the significance of it. The same pattern recurs in this stanza. The past tense is used in the description of the illuminated moment, then the present tense is used to evoke the writing I's reflections on it.

Reflection leads to spiritual equanimity. The present tense of the first three lines indicates that the experience belongs to the mature I at the moment of writing. The past tense of the line in inverted commas links the process of ingesting hate to the younger I. The crucial feature is the role played by tense shifts in signalling the presence of either the younger I or the I of the writer at the moment of writing :

O simultaneous stroke of chord and light,
 O tightened nerves to which the soul vibrates,
 some flash of lime-green water, edged with white--
 "I have swallowed all my hates." (140)

In the opening of the poem, "colonels in the whiskey-coloured light" watched the "green flash, like a lizard's tongue / catch the last sail" (6). After Walcott's liberation from the oppression of colonialism, the "green flash" is detached from its earlier colonial context and equated with music and light and is "edged with white"--the

effect is one of radiant harmony and praise (this is created by the hymn-like anaphoric apostrophes). His earlier tensions (imaged in the past tense) by the words, "the tightened nerves" are set against his renewed spiritual awareness, imaged in the present tense phrase, the "soul vibrates". As in the first mystic moment, a quotation signals the fading of the ecstasy and the moment of insight: "I have swallowed all my hates."

This reading shows the crucial role of language-- particularly metaphor and tenses--in intensely subjective sections of the poem. "Language", to quote Leitch "speaks Being" (61). Language, as Anika Lemaire explains, provides the subject with a foothold for identity, with a "purchase, a possible point of reference for his own 'identity'" (1977, 53). Language enables the subject to become aware of herself or himself as a distinct entity. Without language there would be no subjectivity.

4.4 "This circle of hell"

Having looked at the discourse conferring identity on the pronoun I in sequences of the poem evoking heightened subjectivity, I now wish to comment on a passage where the objective world takes precedence. The I in chapter nineteen in Another Life castigates politicians, academics and others who cause suffering. The effect of documentary-type language, the present tense and third person pronouns on autobiographical discourse will be the centre of my focus.

In chapter nineteen, the highly personalized pronominal structure of the opening couplet together with the use of the present tense ensures the "intervention of the speaker", the distinguishing feature of discourse. In this particular passage, Walcott's complex network of tenses creates "a living connection between the past event and the present in which the evocation takes place" and he acts as "a witness, as a participant" to use Benveniste's words (210). The lively animated commentary is articulated by the mature I at the moment of writing the autobiography. This effect is produced by the sustained use of the present tense.

The invective in chapter nineteen is addressed to Anna, who is equated with Dante's Beatrice, (indicated by the personal possessive pronoun my). The pronominal structure of the first line affirms Benveniste's dictum that discourse has a speaker and a hearer (209). Anna is the addressee, Walcott the speaker. The presence of the speaking voice (another criterion of discourse) is set up in the second line by the first person utterance, "I enclose in this circle of hell" (127). The present tense ties the utterance to the I of the mature I, and continues throughout the chapter. There are no flashbacks to the earlier, younger I. The temporal moment is Benveniste's "eternally 'present' moment" (227).

From line three, those guilty of political and socio-economic crimes are inscribed in the "circle of hell":

in the stench of their own sulphur of self-
hatred,
in the steaming, scabrous rocks of Soufrière,

in the boiling, pustular volcanoes of the South,
 all o' dem big boys, so, dem ministers,
 ministers of culture, ministers of development,
 the green blacks, and their old toms,
 and all the syntactical apologists of the Third
World
 explaining why their artists die,
 by their own hands, magicians of the New Vision.
 Screaming the same shit. (127)

The focus is on the narrator's perceptions of politicians responsible for creating an evil, alien, hostile world which killed Simmons and other West Indian artists. Stinging invective defines the ideology of the I. The present tense is sustained, the images are drawn from the local landscape, local patois mockingly belittles "dem ministers" and the death of Simmons is put into the wider Third World context. The bitterly, ironic phrase, "magicians of the New Vision" clinches his condemnation and disillusionment. The narcissism in the previous passages recalling moments of illumination is absent here. The focus is on Walcott's response to events in St Lucia. The predominance of local referents foreground the Third World, not Walcott. The I's identity (particularly his own ideology) is affirmed by the succession of declarative statements.

As the chapter continues, the disgust initiated by words such as "stench", "scabrous", "pustular" and "shit" is intensified by pejorative words, associated with disease and infection, such as "leprous:", "chafe", "pus", "sores" and "pimples". The clustering of a wide variety of concrete

nouns ("flesh", "chains", "peasant", "African", "catamites", "eunuchs", "whores", "academics", "rats", "jackals", "rodents" and so forth) vivify and accentuate the external world rather than the private internal world of the individual. The "outward" gaze is further substantiated by allusions to historically verifiable occurrences such as slavery and negritude. The frequent reiteration of the "exclusive" plural, third person pronouns, "those", "their" and "they", accentuates the ideological distance between the poet and those he castigates. (Benveniste distinguishes "inclusive" and "exclusive" pronouns and this is a useful distinction in a passage such as this where the "exclusive" pronouns set the I apart from others (202).)

Those who do not share Walcott's point of view are censured as the passage continues. Academics are insulted by animal imagery:

and the academics crouched like rats
 listening to tambourines
 jackals and rodents feathering their holes
 hoarding the sea-glass of their ancestors' eyes,
 sea-lice, sea-parasites on the ancestral sea-
wrack,
 whose god is history. Pax. (127-128)

The intervention of the speaker is signalled by the Latin imperative "Pax". The interjection means "peace" and in the context, is bitterly ironic.

Walcott's contempt for politicians ("Those whose promises drip from their mouths like pus") is emphatic: "they are the saints of self-torture, / their stars are

pimples of pus" (128). Radical fury contrasts with the colonial anguish associated with the young "divided child" in part one of the poem. The accusations levelled at the politicians are catalogued:

These are the dividers,
 they encompass our history,
 in their hands is the body
 of my friend and the future,
 they measure the skulls with callipers
 and pronounce their measure
 of toms, of traitors, of traditionals and

AfroSaxons. (128)

Political division of the island, destruction of a fair future, the murder of Simmons, racism, and attitudes similar to those who exploited slaves in earlier times are the dominant themes of these lines. The present tense conveys the on-going nature of the activities of the corrupt politicians. Censure continues and is given force by the allusions to slavery ("once measured the teeth / of men and horses"), and to images of death, decay, disease and torture (128). For Walcott, "their future is clouded with cataract" (128). A "cataract" is a growth which covers the lens of the eye and leads to blindness, and the metaphor implies the short-sightedness of the new unseeing, unhealthy rulers. The word "cataract" also recalls the quatrain in chapter eleven where

The leaping Caribs whiten,
 in one flash, the instant
 the race leapt at Sauteurs,

a cataract! One scream of bounding lace. (71)

The use of "cataract" draws in this allusion and hints that the heroic actions of the Caribs can counteract the power of the present regime. This is confirmed: evil does not triumph:

but out of its mist, one man
whom they will not recognize, emerges
and staggers towards his lineaments. (128)

The man who emerges from the mist is a survivor--he has thrown off the shackles of history, colonialism, corruption. The man, to use Walcott's words in his essay, "The Muse of History", is "elemental, a being inhabited by presences, not a creature chained to his past" (38). This triumphant figure which concludes the chapter, proleptically anticipates the celebratory image of the radiant "crude wooden star", associated with Gregorias, at the end of the poem. Triumphant, joyful images such as these run through the poem. The concluding image of this chapter and the equally victorious "wooden star" which shines at the end of the poem testify that Walcott is not trapped in a colonial "circle of hell", but like the great poets of the New World, whom he praises in his "Muse of History" essay (39), he, too, can glorify the free, elemental man (38).

The discourse conferring identity on the I in this chapter differs markedly from that in passages discussed so far. In the earlier textual readings, the I appeared more frequently and was surrounded by dense metaphorical language representing the subject's inner world. In chapter nineteen, the referents are drawn from the external world of

politics and history, and the subject is decentred. The pronoun I occurs once only, yet the declarative syntax, together with the consistent use of the present tense, ensures the "speaking voice" effect throughout the short but powerful chapter. At no stage do the "events seem to narrate themselves" as they would in historical narrative.

So far I have discussed the identity of the I in three very different contexts, in terms of networks of signifiers drawn from art, from moments of spiritual illumination and from the passage in chapter nineteen where a documentary type of language predominates and where the use of the present tense ties the I to that of the autobiographer at the moment of writing as he engages with events, past and present. To conclude this chapter on some of the specific codes of discourse which confer identity on the I in Another Life, I wish to comment on the presentation of the I in the closing chapters of the poem.

4.5 "With one stroke you have completed it"

Buck argues that reading autobiography is a "matter of honoring the writer's representation of himself", a process which involves "articulating the writer's theory of identity, his resolutions with the world and himself" (494). He then poses several questions which the reader of autobiography should ask about the writer:

How does he situate himself temporally? Does he stand at the end of the period, looking back or

does he "thrusteth into the midst?" What is his characteristic view of his relationship between pattern and occasion? How does he formulate his relationship with the world at large? What, for him, constitutes culmination, completion? (494)

Most of these questions have been covered. To recap: I have observed Walcott's self-representation in terms of his complex, shifting pronominal system. Temporality was covered in chapter two where attention was drawn to the discontinuous temporal structure of the poem. Although the poem is ordered chronologically, starting with Walcott's youth and ending when he is middle-aged there are subtle shifts from past to present within most chapters, and in the close readings of selected sequences of the poem, the significance of the patterning of tenses has been consistently singled out--these shifts underlie the complex temporal patterning in the poem. I have not addressed Walcott's "characteristic view of his relationship between pattern and occasion". This statement seems to have Freudian implications way beyond the confines of this analysis. Walcott's formulation of his "relationship with the world at large" has been indirectly approached in the close textual readings where Walcott's perception of and interaction with the world external to him have been addressed. At this stage, Buck's final question, "what constitutes culmination, completion?" remains to be answered.

The closing of the poem is mentioned in two metaphors in the opening stanza of the poem:

I begin here again,
 begin until this ocean's
 a shut book, and, like a bulb
 the white moon's filaments wane. (3)

Completion is explicit both in the image of the "shut book" and in the image of finality, of the extinguished bulb conveying loss of light. These metaphors are followed by the announcement that he will "Begin with twilight" and closure is not mentioned again until chapter twenty-one where Walcott addresses the now dead Simmons and says that "with one stroke, you have completed" the poem (140). The poem does not end with the death of Simmons. Two more chapters follow. In both chapters the "double perspective" (Walcott's personal autobiography and the evocation of a West Indian intelligence) is sustained.

A West Indian intelligence initiates chapter twenty-two. In part iii, the focus shifts onto the personal experience of the reflective, mature poet when he asks:

. . . Which father?

Burned in the pyre of the sun.

On the ashpit of the sand.

Also you, Grandfather. Rest, heaven, rest, hell.

(146)

The mention of the ancestral figure of the "father" and the direct invocation of the "grandfather" personalize Walcott's links with the past--they bridge the gap between past historical events and the intense reactions of the poet. The injunction, "Rest, heaven, rest, hell", suggests

equilibrium resulting from the reconciliation of the opposing forces inherent in all forms of imposed ideology such as colonialism, religion and politics. This line recalls the opening line of part iii of this chapter which recapitulates the history of the island. The reiteration of the same words also acts as a bridge between Walcott and the West Indian intelligence emanating from the "process of history machined through fact" (145). In this stanza the "double perspective" running through the poem converges. Walcott's confrontation with the past leads to triumph and victory:

I sit in the roar of that sun
like a lotus yogi folded on his bed of coals,
my head is circled with a ring of fire. (146)

Acceptance and triumphant victory is followed by a very personal revelation, addressed to the "sun" (146). Both Eastern and Western terms are used ("Hare, / hare Krishna" and "God") and this reconciliation of East and West proves that he is no longer the "divided child" of colonialism, but a mature adult who has successfully assimilated both influences. In "The Muse of History", Walcott claims that "maturity is the assimilation of the features of every ancestor" (38) and it is clear from this stanza that he has attained this goal.

In the invocation to the sun, he is explicit about his own religious failings and confesses his religious laxity. This leads to the affirmation of his belief in the resurrection. But, at the same time, a negative note

obtrudes as he sees himself as a cipher that means nothing to the "sun":

and that you would rise again,
when I am not here, to catch
the air afire, that you need not
look for me, or need this prayer. (146-147)

The moment of closure of autobiography in the poem unfolds in the quatrain:

I was eighteen then, now I am forty-one,
I have had a serpent for companion,
I was a heart full of knives,
but, my son, my sun. . . (147)

The "serpent" and the "knives" convey a range of negative experience--evil, temptation, pain, violence. These have all been overcome. The use of the past tense together with the direct reference to age reinforces this impression.

Reaffirmation and renewal come to the fore in the anaphoric, hymnal lines in which holiness envelops the village of Rampanalgas, the landscape and history. Resilience and steadfastness are conveyed by the rock which "takes blows on its back / and is more rock" (147). His spiritual quest is complete: "I can walk, calm, a renewed, exhausted man, / balanced . . . by the weight of two dear daughters" (147). This revelation is crucial--it is the pinnacle of the autobiographical quest. Although his suffering still has "trace effects" (he is "exhausted"), he has found new strength, and this comes through in the assertive statement, "I can walk calm". The modifier "renewed" secures his spiritual resurrection, whilst the

verb "balanced" conveys his new-found equilibrium. The final image in the sentence, "the weight of two dear daughters", conjures up a paternal image. In this utterance the I signifies a man, a father, "who has come through".

Self-reflection continues in the series of triplets comprising part vi. This section of the poem has already been discussed. In the present context where closure is being considered, it is significant that the lines are reflexive and that privacy is sustained by the opaqueness of the symbols and "circuitous" syntax. Walcott makes no effort to clarify his thoughts. These only become accessible in the lines presenting the final moments of the autobiographical quest:

Anna, I wanted to grow white-haired
as the wave, with a wrinkled

brown rock's face, salted,
seamed, an old poet,
facing the wind

and nothing, which is,
the loud world in his mind. (148)

The final image is that of "an old poet". The external world is reduced to "nothing", yet it still influences him, it is "the loud world in his mind".

The inward gaze of this sequence of the poem does not continue in the final chapter, where the poet's attention is directed outwards to the "loud world". The private, reflective resolution of chapter twenty-one contrasts with

the more stylized resolution in the final chapter where the first person pronoun I is used frequently in past tense declarative sentences. The syntax (with the odd exception) is always the same, the I performs actions which collectively point to the resolution of former problems, conflicts and tensions.

The declarative form of the past tense utterances (indicating completion) reinforces the sense of resolution, of closure: "I would wake every morning surprised" (149); "I lolled in the shadows like an ageing hammerhead" (149); "I inhaled" (149); "I bent towards what I remembered" (149); "it was I who first extended my hand / to nameless arthritic twigs" (149); "But I was the one in awe" (149); "I would not call up Anna. / I would not visit his grave" (150); "I looked from old verandahs" (150); and finally, "But, ah Gregorias, / I christened you with that Greek name" (151). These utterances depict the middle-aged poet responding to St Lucia, to his European roots, particularly to the English language, to resolved memories of the past (Anna and Simmons), to St Lucia devastated by "progress", to acceptance of exile, and finally to memories of Gregorias. Self-registration is linked to these selected experiences. The final I celebrates Gregorias's energy and art, and the year when, together, they were "the light of the world" and were blest "with Adam's task of giving things their names" (152). The lines ending the poem are addressed to Gregorias:

and set above it your crude wooden star,
its light compounded in that mortal glow:

Gregorias, Apilo! (152)

Wonder, elation and renewal triumph.

What kind of I emerges in the two chapters closing the text? In chapter twenty-two, the I is tied to the roles, poet, husband, father. In part vi, the I is surrounded by a private network of symbols, difficult for the outsider to interpret. The I of chapter twenty-two is markedly more elusive and enigmatic than the I of the final chapter where the "signifying network" does not present interpretative difficulties. The I is that of the mature narrator successfully synthesizing the various strands in his autobiography: his reactions to the island ravaged by "progress", his equanimity, his acceptance of exile and finally his exuberance as he recalls Gregorias and the wonder of the New World. The themes encountered throughout the text are gathered together, summarized and resolved.

The I in this chapter does not reflect on the inherent contradictions of the autobiographical enterprise itself, there is no radical critique of subjectivity, of self-representation. The first person pronoun is used consistently, and apart from the shift from the first person to the third person in the couplet concluding chapter twenty-two, there are no dislocating shifts from the first person into the second or third person. When the second person pronoun you appears, referents are given, as in the stanza beginning with the line: "Forgive me, you folk" (151). The pronoun is specifically linked to the islanders, then to the sea, the islands, Gregorias and Anna. The referents are systematically supplied and the ambiguities

which surrounded this pronoun, in chapter nine for example, are absent.

Lejeune suggests that the alternating use of the first and the third person pronouns can correspond to "contemporary anxieties, and sometimes, to reflections on modern theories of personality" (39). Walcott's systematic use of the first person pronoun in the closing chapters of the poem suggests that he has overcome the anxieties which surfaced earlier in the poem in parts where pronominal shifts dislocated identity. The constant use of the I imparts a sense of stability which was disrupted in the earlier sequences where he oscillated between the various categories of person.

The temporal perspective is also more stable. The intricate time shifts encountered in some of the earlier textual readings are absent as the poet stands at the end of the period and reviews his life. The consistent use of the past tense underlies this textual effect. The final chapter completes the self-history: subjectivity is not problematized and the question, "who am I", raised in chapter eleven, does not surface. Walcott does not deconstruct or dislocate identity as he did in the sequences of the poem where subjectivity is directly questioned, or dislocated by pronominal shifts or complicated by dense metaphors and "circuitous syntax". Yet Walcott does not attempt to unify the various I's presented throughout the text. The impossibility of attempting such a synthesis bears out de Man's assertion that autobiography does not reveal "reliable self-knowledge" but that

it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions. (1979, 922)

4.6 "Yet who am I"?

Identity is a mystery. The words of Hume, the eighteenth century philosopher, still hold:

all the nice and subtile questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties. (qtd. in Buck 477)

Hume's concern with the linguistic nature of identity anticipates Benveniste's theory of subjectivity. This is a convenient moment to reconsider his definition of subjectivity. For him, subjectivity is the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as a "subject", which he explains

is defined not by the feeling which everyone experiences of being himself (this feeling, to the degree that it can be taken note of, is only a reflection) but as the psychic unity that transcends the totality of the actual experiences it assembles and that makes the permanence of the consciousness. (224)

Excluded from this definition is "the feeling which everyone experiences of being himself". Benveniste skirts around

this problem by concerning himself exclusively with the grammatical features of the discourse in which the subject releases and creates his personality. His emphasis is restricted to linguistic issues and this results in a tight and rather restricted interpretation of subjectivity.

In evaluating the usefulness of Benveniste's theory, it is necessary to acknowledge the narrowness of this approach. Not all literary critics, as Vance puts it, will choose to "pursue the poetics of self-knowledge primarily as a problem of literary theory" (2). He adds: "but no one of good sense will decline" to understand the "inner mechanisms with more precision" (3). With this goal in mind, I embarked on this exploration of subjectivity in Another Life using Benveniste's linguistically orientated theory of subjectivity. I am aware of the narrow focus.

On the more positive side, Benveniste's definitions of historical narrative and discourse yield useful insights into the textual effects created by the presence or absence of the grammatical markers of person. In Another Life, historical narrative tends to be used for the evocation of a West Indian intelligence, and discourse for self-revelation. Similarly, the analysis of the effects of the various pronouns and tense changes on an autobiographical text such as Another Life proved a useful tool in elucidating Walcott's contravention of the common autobiographical convention that autobiographies are written exclusively in the first person. Benveniste's explication of the specific properties of the mobile pronoun, "that terrible vowel, / that I" proved the most useful of all his propositions. The

close readings affirm his thesis that "the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language" (226). The diverse textual extracts conferring identity on the pronoun I demonstrate Walcott's verbal virtuosity. Collectively the readings reveal that the identity of the I depends upon the ever-changing referents surrounding the I in each specific utterance in which the pronoun occurs.

The question of identity and the problem of "being in the text" split autobiographical criticism into two opposed schools. The degree to which individual writers and critics situate themselves varies widely. For those who support the romantic notion of the self as a fixed, whole, innate entity, autobiography, to quote Lang, is accepted as "the self-revelation of a transcendent subject" (5). These critics assume that autobiography reveals reliable self-knowledge and for them autobiography is "rooted in a single subject whose identity is defined by the uncontested readability" of the writer's proper name (de Man 920). For critics operating in this tradition, the answer to the question, "yet who am I?", in Another Life, will elicit the response, "Derek Walcott" and no further questions will be raised.

The opposing school denies that there is a unified, accessible self. For them, "there is no unmediated experience, no access to the raw reality of self", to use Belsey's words (61). The self is a construct defined by the instance of discourse in which it occurs and subjectivity is linguistically constructed. For those operating within a Lacanian paradigm, the self is even more elusive because the

I which is the speaking subject of the instance of discourse, of the utterance, can never converge with the "subject of individuality" which is largely unconscious (Ragland-Sullivan 66). It follows that there can be no single answer to the question, "yet who am I"? : there can only be the awareness that the I is always contingent on the "circumstances of its production". Lacan usefully pinpoints the concerns of the post-structuralist critic trying to "map the network of signifiers" surrounding the I:

What concerns us is the tissue that envelops these messages, the network in which, on occasion, something is caught. (1987, 45)

One question remains: what theoretical standpoint does Walcott follow? Another Life is linked to the romantic tradition by the overt chronological structure of the narrative, the quest for "wholeness" and "transcendence", and the emphasis on childhood and early adolescence. But the romantic subject is dislocated by the pronominal structure, particularly the mobility of the unnamed I, and the serial presentation of the self. The self is further decentred by the "double perspective", by the gaze on the self interacting with the Lacanian "Other".

It would seem that Walcott is intensely aware of the tension between the romantic and post-structuralist models of the self; an awareness that allows his use of I a remarkable post-structuralist mobility throughout the poem, and yet, at the same time, invests it with some romantic properties. If criticism fails to reach a compromise, Walcott, however, manages a partial solution. The

resolution lies in his ability to interact with the Other-- other people, voices, landscape--that constitute him. The I that emerges at the end of Another Life (when the book is shut) is neither a romantic transcendent I or a fragmentary decentred I but rather an I suffused with "Another Life": not an I resolved by academic discourses but an I dissolving into

. . . you islands
whose names dissolve like sugar
in a child's mouth. . . . (151)

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