

ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE PASTORAL MODE IN THE POETRY AND PLAYS

OF DEREK WALCOTT

by

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis is to investigate engagements with the pastoral mode in the poetry and plays of Derek Walcott. This will be achieved through a focus upon four key areas: Edenic symbolism, classical reception, allusions to the visual arts, and pastoral drama. The pastoral is a complex mode, with a long literary history. I argue that Walcott engages with the mode in a process of transformative interactions with the legacy of Eurocentric representations of Caribbean settings, the notion of the Caribbean as an Edenic space, the classical tradition including the pastorals of Theocritus and Virgil, the tradition of landscape art and both the piscatory pastoral and pastoral drama. These engagements allow for the subversion of generic expectations, and a revisionary, transformative approach to the pastoral mode and its many associations. This results in a distinctly Walcottian type of pastoral, one which evades reductive idealisation and restrictive uses of aesthetic models, in favour of a creative and profound engagement with pastoral's core themes.

For Sir Derek Walcott

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INTRODUCTION

Representations of the natural world, and of the relationship between the human subject and the setting in which they are positioned, are an essential feature of much of the poetry, plays, prose essays and artworks of Derek Walcott (1930-2017). For the most part, these depictions portray settings in the Caribbean archipelago, and are predominantly situated on the island of the poet's birth, St Lucia, and his later home of Trinidad. The question of which methods to use in representing the Caribbean setting is a consistent theme across Walcott's works; *Another Life* (1973) begins with an amorphous, changing 'sketch' of the surroundings, one which is 'transfigured sheerly by the student's will', the 'drawing' unable to 'trace | the sociological contours of the promontory'.¹ The instability of this process of creating a material image of the setting emblematically signifies the poet's struggle to commit to a single method of aesthetic representation. In *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), Walcott shifts through visual depictions of natural spaces as rendered by a variety of artists, with a particular emphasis upon the painter Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), richly conjuring the 'dusty olive | of Cézanne's trees', and 'a Turner sunset burning', only to reinforce his own artistic autonomy over these imagined scenes: 'My pen replaced a brush'.² This sentiment is key to an understanding of Walcott's engagements with various aesthetic modes. His characteristically nuanced use of language is central to the rendering of this epiphanic moment; through the use of the possessive personal pronoun for the noun 'pen', symbolic of the role of poet, compared to the indefinite article for 'a brush', a reference

¹ Derek Walcott, *Another Life*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973; repr. with a critical essay and notes by Edward Baugh and Colbert Nepaulsingh, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2009), ll. 79, 37, 80-81. Further references to line numbers in this edition are given after quotations in the text.

² Derek Walcott, *Tiepolo's Hound* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), pp. 19, 13, 19. Further references to page numbers in this edition are given after quotations in the text.

not only to his own role as painter but also to the various methods of seeing the landscape which have been interrogated in *Tiepolo's Hound*, Walcott indicates that he has taken individual control over the representation of the settings depicted through his act of crafting poetic language, limiting the importance of the abstract, plural examples of pictorial depictions alluded to throughout this poem. For Walcott, the process of representing a Caribbean setting is both complex and vital to his poetic vision.

This study seeks to illuminate a single, significant method employed by Walcott in his navigation of aesthetic modes: an engagement with the pastoral mode.³ I argue that negotiations with pastoral constitute a key component of Walcott's poetic and dramatic craftsmanship, and shed light on a variety of topics, including the poet's pioneering methods of representing spaces in this archipelago, his treatment of classical and European modes and genres, his projection of the relationship between the human subject and the natural world, his interest in the connections between pictorial depiction and verbal imagery and the role that poetry may play in negotiating colonial and postcolonial history. I argue that engagements with the pastoral mode are employed as an important tool in creating a unique, multifaceted vision of the human subject's relationship to a Caribbean setting, one which is at once artistically liberating, in its interrogative treatment of a European aesthetic, and emblematic of Walcott's vision of

³ I will further explain my definition of the term 'pastoral mode' in this introduction, and indeed throughout the thesis in its entirety, however I will at this point expand my reasoning for the qualification of pastoral as a 'mode' in this discussion. It is usual in studies of pastoral from the latter decades of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century to refer to the 'mode' of pastoral, in order to reinforce the notion that pastoral is, fundamentally, a mood, or a way of seeing and representing the world. As Paul Alpers explains: 'It has become commonplace to say that pastoral is a mode, not a genre [...] When we speak of "the pastoral mode" or "the Augustan mode" or "the metaphysical mode" or "the allegorical mode," we mean more than styles and conventions: we mean these as reflecting, expressing and encoding certain outlooks on life'; Paul Alpers, *The Singer of the Eclogues: A Study of Virgilian Pastoral* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 6-7.

writing: ‘Verse crisp as sand, clear as sunlight’.⁴ This is a poetry which seeks inspiration from the same Caribbean setting that it represents, and it achieves its aim of simultaneous clarity and complexity in this objective in part through a deeply considered and multi-layered engagement with the norms and tropes of the pastoral mode.

Of course, pastoral is only one example in a mosaic of interactions with a broad selection of modes, genres, forms and allusions to the works of other poets, playwrights and artists in Walcott’s densely intertextual writings. As Timothy P. Hofmeister has observed in a study of the relationship between *Omeros* and epic: ‘There are no doubt numerous genres, as well as sub-genres, embedded in the text of *Omeros*’.⁵ ‘It would be fair to ask’, Hofmeister continues, ‘why one should valorize any particular category of generic criteria that might be present in the poem’, rather than to ‘insist that its generic codes are set at odds, free to operate without any reductive order, in defiance of conventional expectations and in favour of the formation of new expectations’.⁶ Hofmeister rightly complicates and resists this simplistic dichotomy between directing attention towards the analysis of a single mode or genre and establishing an understanding that generic features are pluralistic, complex and able to form ‘new expectations’. In this study, I argue that the role that pastoral plays in his writings is a surprisingly overlooked area of Walcott studies, and that a focus on this specific feature can greatly illuminate and enrich readings of his works. Ultimately, these engagements culminate in a transformation of the pastoral mode, its conventions and tropes extended

⁴ Derek Walcott, ‘Islands’, in *In A Green Night* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), p. 77.

⁵ Timothy P. Hofmeister, ‘The Wolf and the Hare: Epic Expansion and Contextualization in Derek Walcott’s “Omeros”’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 2 (1996), 536-554, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30222233 (p. 539).

⁶ Hofmeister, ‘The Wolf and the Hare’, p. 539.

and interrogated through a deep, complex and radical exploration of the mode's major themes.

It is interesting that so little critical attention has been turned to the presence of engagements with pastoral, considering that Walcott directly alludes to pastoral themes and techniques with such regularity.⁷ For example, one of his earliest collections, *In a Green Night* (1962), contains several examples of an engagement with features intrinsic to the mode, including a distinction between rural and urban realms, idealised descriptions of natural settings, and a consideration of the relationship between human subjectivity and landscape. 'As John to Patmos', for instance, creates a dichotomy between an idealised rural space and the urban environment: 'This island is heaven – away from the dustblown blood of cities'.⁸ The setting offers a retreat, and is typified by stasis and a sense of belonging: 'So am I welcomed richer by these blue scapes, Greek there, | So I shall voyage no more from home; may I speak here'.⁹ This same distancing between the rural and the urban realms is alluded to in the mock-epistle 'To A Painter in England', which contains the sentiment:

Where you rot under the strict, grey industry
Of cities of fog and winter fevers, I
Send this to remind you of personal islands
For which Gauguins sicken, [...] ¹⁰

In a Green Night also contains examples of a genre Walcott returns to frequently: that of the elegy, including a self-defined 'Elegy' for the poet's father. The close

⁷ In addition, a cursory glance at his work indicates a direct engagement with poets widely regarded as frequent and influential practitioners of the mode; his poem 'Homage to Edward Thomas' for instance, and his collaborative collection of essays with Joseph Brodsky and Seamus Heaney: *Homage to Robert Frost* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996).

⁸ Derek Walcott, *In A Green Night*, p. 12.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Walcott, *In A Green Night*, p. 16.

relationship between pastoral and elegy will be examined in this thesis, as elegiac themes form a core component of Walcott's poetic *oeuvre*. Finally, 'Choc Bay' includes direct references to traditional tropes of the pastoral mode, such as 'Herds' of livestock, 'toilers' working the sea, the presence of 'Grief' in an idyllic space, aestheticized 'blue fields' and Edenic symbolism, as it culminates in the speaker's 'barefooted flight from paradise'.¹¹ However, the poem consistently inverts and complicates each allusion to the pastoral tradition. These 'herds' are not cattle or sheep, but 'driven, bright | Fish', the ominous note of 'history' intrudes on the Arcadian vision, as 'time's bitter legends' encroach upon the scene, and the 'fishermen' reject symbols of the classical age, having 'no blue myth to aid them but prayer, | Venus lives with aristocrats'.¹² It is evident, then, that from the earliest days of his poetic endeavours, Walcott demonstrated an interest in engaging with the pastoral mode, and a need to complicate, question, adapt and appropriate its features.

Walcott's technique of engaging with a wide range of modes and genres has been productively explored by several critics, including Edward Baugh in his landmark study *Derek Walcott* (2006). The pastoral is not a mode which sees sustained analysis in this work, but it is certainly worth highlighting Baugh's succinct summary of a major feature of Walcott's poetic style:

It remains to mention another feature of Walcott's way with language and his general approach to style in the expressive arts. He works out of a dualism and tension between a will towards plainness, sparseness, quiet and simplicity on the one hand, and an instinct for eloquence, literary allusiveness, rich texture, verbal play and resounding effect on the other. This dualism and tension are another manifestation of his creative "schizophrenia".¹³

¹¹ Walcott, *In A Green Night*, pp. 23-25.

¹² Walcott, *In A Green Night*, pp. 23-25.

¹³ Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) <<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/10.1017/CBO9780511485961>> p. 24.

Similarly, the pastoral mode rests upon a framework of dichotomies, including those between simplicity and complexity, court and countryside, leisure and labour and corruption and naivety. This allows Walcott, in employing his dualistic style, an opportunity to explore the nature of such fundamental modal themes, ones which the poet frequently returns to. Chronicling a clear, monolithic and consistent sense of purpose for Walcott's engagements with pastoral is not possible, as Walcott's uses of modes and genres are rarely singular in style and effect. Rather, his well-known tendency towards paradoxes and contradictions prevents a straightforward trajectory in his engagements with the mode, and ensures that his processes and purposes are pluralistic and wide-ranging.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the very presence of these engagements results in a major achievement: the appropriation and transformation of a classical and European aesthetic mode, one which had been employed for reductive colonial-era depictions of the region, in the context of an emerging postcolonial Caribbean literature.

Walcott's work offers a seminal rethinking of the limits, opportunities and effects of interactions with the pastoral mode, not only in the postcolonial context, but also in twentieth and twenty-first century literature more generally. After the death of pastoral in poetry was in essence declared by such critics as John Barrell and John Bull in *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse* (1974), alongside a stream of attacks and dismissals of the mode by critics such as Raymond Williams and Roger Sales in

¹⁴ As Edward Baugh has observed, 'contradiction and paradox are characteristic features of Walcott's thought', citing the title of the doctoral dissertation of Victor D. Questel as evidence of the prevalence of these features: 'Derek Walcott: contradiction and resolution: paradox, inconsistency, ambivalence and their resolution in Derek Walcott's writings 1946-1976' (doctoral thesis, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, 1979). Baugh, p. 4.

the second half of the twentieth century, it may well have appeared that pastoral could no longer be used for valuable artistic experimentation or socio-political commentary.¹⁵ Walcott's radical engagements with the mode illustrate that pastoral can still be employed productively by contemporary poets. He demonstrates a clear condemnation of uses of the pastoral mode which result in reductive portrayals of people and landscape, and creates a complex engagement with its ideological connotations as part of an investigation into its creative potential for highlighting and exploring the relationship between a human subject and the natural world, the variances between urban and rural spaces, human relationships both platonic and romantic and further major themes. In *Another Life* alone, Walcott seamlessly moves between conjuring the idealised 'light-furred luminous world of Claude' Lorrain's pastoral paintings with their 'ruined temples', (1041-42), to a condemnation of aesthetic modes which depict '[a] nature reduced to the service | of praising or humbling men' (3234-35), to a seemingly stabilised vision of a nature free from the complexities of competing methods of representation: 'The world | stopped swaying and settled in its place.' (147-148). Throughout his copious range of writings, Derek Walcott offers a consistently complex and profound exploration of the pastoral mode, culminating in a major artistic achievement well worth highlighting and exploring.

Defining the Pastoral Mode

It is worth first clarifying what is meant by the term 'pastoral mode' in the context of this thesis. There is certainly a lack of scholarly consensus on its definition. As Paul

¹⁵ John Barrell and John Bull, 'Introduction', in *The Penguin Book of Pastoral Verse*, ed. by John Barrell and John Bull (London: Allen Lane, 1974); pp. 1-20. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Roger Sales, *English Literature in History: 1780-1830, Pastoral and Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1983).

Alpers has rightly observed:

Pastoral is a familiar topic in the academic study of literature. It seems an accessible concept, and most critics and readers have a fairly clear idea of what they mean by it. Yet there is no principled account of it on which most people agree, and it sometimes seems as if there are as many versions of pastoral as there are critics and scholars who write about it.¹⁶

This concept of ‘versions of pastoral’ can be read as a direct reference to William Empson’s seminal study of the mode: *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935). For Empson, pastoral rests upon a fundamental process: ‘putting the complex into the simple’.¹⁷ Through its reliance on this broad definition of pastoral, Empson’s study involved a radical rethinking of definitions of the mode, including readings of works as wide-ranging as *The Beggar’s Opera* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Emphasis is placed upon the social relations illuminated by engagements with pastoral, as Empson argues that pastoral involves the inauthentic depiction of a ‘beautiful relation between rich and poor’.¹⁸ *Some Versions* has divided later critics, some of whom have questioned the premise of a singular, broad definition of the mode as straightforwardly putting the complex into the simple, are uncertain as to the text’s choice of primary materials, or feel that Empson’s analysis is too narrowly political.¹⁹ As Alpers observes: ‘Though *Some Versions of Pastoral* is widely recognized as the one really profound treatment

¹⁶ Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 8.

¹⁷ William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935), p. 22.

¹⁸ Empson, pp. 6, 11.

¹⁹ This observation is similarly made by Paul Alpers, who comments: ‘Empson’s view of pastoral has been regarded as either unmanageably inclusive or narrowly social and political. It in fact lies between these extremes, wide-ranging indeed but consistent’. Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, p. 37. For Halperin, Empson highlights the complexity of the pastoral and the difficulties involved in its definition, as: ‘For Empson pastoral is essentially a “trick of thought,” not a genre or literary form’. Indeed, ‘Empson established that pastoral is a literary mode for expressing a view of life equal in scope to that conveyed by tragedy, comedy, and other primary modes’. This is, perhaps, Empson’s most impactful and influential achievement in *Some Versions*; the suggestion that the pastoral mode transcends generic categories as they were understood by his contemporaries, and that its effect was the representation of ‘a view of life’, a feature which this thesis’ definition of pastoral as a mode, rather than genre, supports. David M. Halperin, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 54, 55.

of the subject, its coruscating brilliance and idiosyncrasies of manner have made it as difficult to use as it is easy to admire'.²⁰ Indeed, it is a challenge to work solely with the definition of pastoral posited by Empson, as such a wide range of texts fall into the bracket of evidencing this process of 'putting the complex into the simple'. Moreover, I would suggest that it allows for too much flexibility in its recognition of key features of the mode for a sufficiently nuanced analysis of pastoral and anti-pastoral literature. In contrast, Paul Alpers's *What is Pastoral?* (1996) offers a tightly defined, succinct consideration of the mode, one which chronicles the literary history of pastoral in greater depth than Empson's *Some Versions* and is less eclectic in its choice of textual studies and recognition of key features.

The fundamental argument offered in Alpers's monograph is that the definition of pastoral rests on the notion of a 'representative anecdote', a quotation from Kenneth Burke's *A Grammar of Motives* (1945).²¹ Alpers draws attention to two accounts of pastoral as representative anecdote; one which privileges the landscape, and one which elevates its representation of herdsmen, the core question being 'what do these representations represent?'²² For example, if the landscape is the central element, is it representative of a 'state of mind'?²³ This question of whether the landscape is better understood as a mindscape, in a link to Romanticism's symbolic use of nature as representing interior psychology, will be considered in this study, as traditional pastoral landscapes may be employed to connote a wish-fulfilment of the desires of a human subject. However, for Alpers, Romantic poetics involved too great an emphasis on idealised landscapes, and it is the role of the herdsmen which is pastoral's central

²⁰ Alpers, p. 37.

²¹ Kenneth Burke, quoted in Alpers, p. 13.

²² Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, p. 22

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

feature, rather than the natural setting depicted: ‘we will have a far truer idea of pastoral if we take its representative anecdote to be herdsmen and their lives, rather than landscape or idealized nature’.²⁴

In a reading of Theocritus’s first idyll, Alpers offers a concise summary of pastoral’s main tropes and process, with an emphasis upon its portrayal of human subjects:

This passage presents several features that are regarded as pastoral’s defining characteristics: idyllic landscape, landscape as a setting for song, an atmosphere of *otium*, a conscious attention to art and nature, herdsmen as singers, and, in the account of the gifts, herdsmen as herdsmen. This multiplicity of features itself suggests that we should treat these lines as an anecdote – that is, as a brief and compendious rendering of a certain type of life.²⁵

For Alpers, then, it is the lives of agricultural workers (such as, but not restricted to, herdsmen and shepherds) as representative figures for human beings, rendered through a specific literary practice, which is the central tenet of pastoral and key to its definition. This involves a limiting of the perceived significance of idealised settings: ‘the principle remains: poetic representations of nature or of landscape are not all of a piece; they answer to and express various human needs and concerns; *pastoral* landscapes are those of which the human centers are herdsmen or their equivalents’.²⁶ Whilst this thesis acknowledges that the presence of a human subject is an essential feature of the pastoral mode, and in many cases proves representative of the poet themselves, I attribute more importance to idealised landscapes than Alpers. It is the relationship between mankind and nature which is as much a vital feature of the mode as the representative lives of

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 27, 22.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

herdsmen, and an idealisation of the setting – or a stressed lack of idealisation – is an important component of this. Pastoral depicts its characters within a carefully crafted scene and offers a viewpoint on human activity (although predominantly leisurely) in a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding landscape. It offers readers new ways of thinking about not only their own lives, but also their existence in relation to the material surroundings in which they are placed. For Walcott, engagements with the pastoral mode offer a means of closely analysing the relationship between human subject and setting, for instance through employing pastoral tropes in order to highlight each character in *Omeros*'s (1990) strongly differing perception of their connection to the natural world which surrounds them; from Achilles's meditative, melancholic observation of the marine creatures of the Caribbean Sea to Plunkett's attempts to farm livestock for economic gain and Philoctete's careful tending of a small plot of land for food crops. The mediation between human psychology and the physical landscape in which the subject is placed plays a pivotal role in Walcott's literary renderings of setting, and engagements with the pastoral mode are employed for this process.

What is Pastoral? has been highly influential in the critical field of studies of the literary pastoral, but it does not seek to offer radical new readings of pastoral and its significance, and does not expand its view to consider the role that pastoral plays in other mediums, such as the visual arts. It is also less polemic in tone than other seminal studies, such as those of Raymond Williams and Roger Sales.²⁷ Alpers self-identifies a restriction in his study, in that it omits offering 'a separate treatment of pastoral drama as a form', a subject which this thesis seeks to address in a chapter investigating

²⁷ Sales, for instance, states that pastoral is 'deceptive and prescriptive. It offers a political interpretation of both past and present. It is a propagandist reconstruction of history'. Sales, p. 17.

Walcott's engagements with pastoral drama and the piscatory pastoral tradition through readings of *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954) and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (1993).²⁸ Nonetheless, its greatest strengths, I would suggest, are its clear, articulate and insightful treatment of the classical pastoral and its legacy in European literature, its refusal to dismiss pastoral as simply artificial and idealising, and its emphasis upon the significance of communal human interactions to the mode. In reading this text today, however, the recent rise of ecocriticism has become a notable absence. This theoretical field is not referred to by Alpers, who writes this self-defined 'formalist' study over two decades ago, and thus during the early stages of the dramatic escalation of ecocritical studies in the late 1990s and twenty-first century.²⁹ I would question whether it is possible to offer a wide-ranging discussion of the pastoral mode today without considering ecocritical implications. Pastoral, after all, directly addresses the main subject of most ecocritical scholarship: the relationship between humanity and nature.³⁰ Of course, for Alpers, the material natural world represented in these works is not paramount, but recent research into ecocritical understandings of pastoral have offered many insightful observations and should not be neglected.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. x. However, as William J. Kennedy has noted in his review of *What is Pastoral?*, after making this claim Alpers continues to analyse speeches from *Love's Labor's Lost* and *Hamlet*. There is also substantial analysis of *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*, so Shakespeare's dramatic works are in fact well represented in this study, even if the form of pastoral drama is not illuminated in a manner which strongly differentiates it from poetry and prose. William J. Kennedy, review of Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (1996), *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 50, (1999), 238-239, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2902200 (238).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. x.

³⁰ This point has been well expressed by Sidney Burris in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: 'Pastoral's interest in the relation of humans to the natural world and to each other accounts for its tendency to surface in contexts like anticonquest discourse (Bartolomé de Las Casas's vision of wolves, sheep, and good shepherds in the Americas), Enlightenment philosophy (Jean-Jacques Rousseau's natural man), and romantic poetry (the "precious boon" of nature that William Wordsworth accused humans of giving away)'. Sidney Burris, 'Pastoral', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Roland Greene et al., 4th edn (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 1005-1008 (p. 1008).

Terry Gifford likens the ‘story of the reception and transformation of pastoral in the relatively brief history of ecocriticism’ to a ‘roller-coaster ride’, an apt metaphor for this rapidly evolving area of criticism.³¹ In an essay which explores ecocritical interventions in pastoral studies, Gifford offers a differing perspective on pastoral’s central feature to that of Alpers. Rather than representative herdsmen, it is instead the process of return which is stressed as the ‘essential’ characteristic of pastoral; although it should be noted that Gifford is far less interested in deciding upon a single vital trope of the mode than Alpers.³² Gifford’s focus rests upon an outlining of his definition of the term ‘post-pastoral’, a neologism with an ‘ecocritical usage’, the use of ‘post-’ here not meaning ‘after’, but ‘reaching beyond’ the ‘limitations of pastoral while being recognizably in the pastoral tradition’.³³ For Gifford, this term is best employed to ‘describe works that successfully suggest a collapse of the human/ nature divide while being aware of the problematics involved’.³⁴ The question of whether Walcott’s writings fulfil the ‘post-pastoral’ category posited by Gifford is a cause for debate, and will be considered in this thesis, as the readings I will offer of Walcott’s works will suggest that the ‘limitations’ of pastoral, as Gifford understands them, are indeed transcended. However, I do not intend to suggest that Walcott works squarely in a ‘pastoral tradition’ or can be singularly defined as a ‘post-pastoral’ poet. This is too decided and absolute a description for a writer whose engagements with modes and genres are so consistently fragmented and amorphous. A confident labelling of Walcott as a ‘post-pastoral’ poet is potentially reductive, risking an eliding of the complexities

³¹ Terry Gifford, ‘Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post-Pastoral’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. by Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 17-30, <doi:10.1017/CCO9781139342728> (pp. 17-18).

³² Gifford, ‘Post-Pastoral’, p. 18.

³³ Gifford, ‘Post-Pastoral’, p. 26.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26

present in his various engagements with the mode. As Gifford has himself pointed out, ‘it is important to realize that a single writer, or indeed a single text, might shift between all three modes of pastoral, anti-pastoral and post-pastoral’.³⁵

In 1992, Glen A. Love urged for greater critical interest in pastoral in the field of ecocritical studies, stating: ‘Pastoral’s ancient and universal appeal – to come away – requires new examination in an age in which there is no away’.³⁶ Pastoral, suggests Love, ‘has always been a serious criticism of life. Ecocriticism, I think, can give us a serious criticism of pastoral. It is time for pastoral theory and ecocriticism to meet’.³⁷ This plea was certainly heard, and such critics as Greg Garrard have since sought to extensively revisit pastoral’s role in light of modern ecological consciousness, exploring the notion of the ‘radical pastoral’, a term which he regards as ‘really, possibly irredeemably, problematic’.³⁸ Indeed, Garrard considers the mode sufficiently significant to literary ecocritical studies to merit the sole focus of a chapter in the influential monograph *Ecocriticism* (2012). Pastoral is treated in an openly politicised and highly cautious manner by Garrard, who states: ‘[n]o other trope is so deeply entrenched in Western culture, or so deeply problematic for environmentalism [...] the pastoral trope must and will remain a key concern for ecocritics’.³⁹ Garrard claims that the ‘classical’ pastoral (in this case referring to all pastoral literature dating before the eighteenth century, a definition I consider far too homogenising) was disposed to ‘distort or mystify social and environmental history’.⁴⁰ The second category employed

³⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁶ Glen A. Love, ‘Et in Arcadia Ego: Pastoral Theory Meets Ecocriticism’, *Western American Literature*, 27 (1992), 195-207, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43024440 (p. 198).

³⁷ Love, p. 198.

³⁸ Greg Garrard, ‘Radical Pastoral?’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 35 (1996), 449-465, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25601184 (p. 459).

³⁹ Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 37.

⁴⁰ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, pp. 38, 44. Garrard states that his use of the terms ‘Classical pastoral’, ‘Romantic

by Garrard, the ‘Romantic pastoral’, is linked to the argument that William Wordsworth (1770-1850), an important figure in the pastoral tradition, ‘is, on the whole, far more interested in the relationship of non-human nature to the human mind than he is in nature in and for itself’, a verdict which appears to favour a defiance of anthropocentric thinking in poetics over the use of landscapes for self-reflection and psychological enquiry into human thought processes and behaviour.⁴¹

Whilst Garrard’s linking of pastoral to wider ecological and political frameworks is helpful to this study, in particular in the consideration of the ecoeology offered in my second chapter, his condemnation of pastoral as ‘ecologically delusive’ in most instances obscures the complexity of this mode and its history.⁴² Too great an emphasis upon reading these spaces solely in connection to ecology and material surroundings risks eclipsing a recognition of pastoral’s tendency towards employing imagined topographies; much of pastoral literature does not seek to offer a realistic rendering of an existing physical space, but a representative, imagined realm, and this should not be overlooked. Indeed, neither ‘Radical Pastoral?’ nor *Ecocriticism* contain a single mention of Arcadia. The pastoral mode is one which centres the human subject, frequently explores spaces which are imaginative constructs and relies upon pathetic fallacy, and this would create an uneasy dynamic with an ecocritical line of enquiry typified by the terms here expressed by Garrard. As Laurence Lerner observes: ‘It is true that Arcadia is an actual region of Greece, but as the setting for pastoral poetry it is a land entirely of the fancy’.⁴³ Moreover, this thesis does not share Garrard’s reluctance

pastoral’ and ‘American pastoral’ for differing pastoral kinds is based upon the categories posited by Terry Gifford in *Pastoral*, which will be considered later in this introduction (p. 38).

⁴¹ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p. 47.

⁴² Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p. 53.

⁴³ Laurence Lerner, *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), p. 65. Similarly, Cashman Kerr Prince remarks: ‘It is, therefore, not only as natural landscapes that Walcott

to admit to the possibility of a ‘radical pastoral’. Indeed, Walcott offers, I will argue, just such a radical engagement with this complex, flexible, multifaceted and, admittedly, deeply ‘problematic’ mode.

Ultimately, this thesis does not seek to offer a dedicated ecocritical reading of pastoral tropes in the works of Walcott. My interest is more firmly placed upon Walcott’s engagements with the pastoral mode and its tradition as part of a process of investigating, analysing and appropriating methods of representing the Caribbean setting, and, importantly, its inhabitants. I argue that Walcott extends and transforms the imagined topography of the pastoral mode, incorporating recognisable Caribbean features into this space, and exploring its potential for commentary upon contemporary concerns. Nonetheless, although this theoretical field will not be centred, ecocritical readings of pastoral play a part in my understanding of the mode and inform my readings of Walcott’s work. The pastoral mode can no longer be treated in isolation from ecocritical theory, and this is the result of the significant efforts of ecocritics in recent years to fulfil Love’s plea for greater integration between studies of pastoral and ecocriticism.

It is clear thus far that there is no basic, universal definition available for the pastoral mode. Indeed, for Annabel Patterson, definitions of pastoral add little of value to critical debate in this area. In her introduction to *Pastoral and Ideology* (1987), Patterson announces that this book will resist the impulse to ‘launch another attempt to

represents the islands, but as symbolic landscapes, offering a reminder of the untouched, Edenic world’. Cashman Kerr Prince, ‘A Divided Child, or Derek Walcott’s Post-Colonial Philology’, in *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds*, ed. by Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillepsie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 170-191 (pp. 48-49).

define the nature of pastoral – a cause lost as early as the sixteenth century’.⁴⁴ This cause has been ‘reduced to total confusion by modern criticism’s search for “versions of pastoral” in the most unlikely places’, an implied rebuttal to Empson’s wide-ranging study.⁴⁵ Instead, for Patterson, it ‘is not what pastoral *is* that should matter to us’, but what ‘pastoral since Virgil can do and has always done [...] how writers, artists, and intellectuals of all persuasions have *used* pastoral for a range of functions and intentions that the *Eclogues* first articulated’.⁴⁶ However, I would suggest that these two aims are not mutually exclusive. A consideration, if not a definitive conclusion, of what pastoral ‘*is*’ is surely important to any study of the mode, in that it clarifies the groundwork of critical readings of pastoral material.

Nonetheless, I would highlight Patterson’s drawing of attention to ‘the argument woven through the *Eclogues* as to whether poetry has a social function, and if so, where it rates on the scale of social usefulness’.⁴⁷ This, I suggest, is a concern shared by Walcott, who offers self-reflective meditations upon the social value of his writings, clearly evident in such works as *Omeros*, *Another Life* and *The Sea at Dauphin*, a theme which will be explored in depth in this thesis. Moreover, Patterson’s overview of the complex and various ideologies at work in the *Eclogues* is worth highlighting in full, due to its succinct and convincing interpretation of this highly influential material:

Among the competing ideologies proleptically displayed in the *Eclogues* are Roman republicanism; the classic statement of the claims of the many to equal consideration; the counter-claim of the privileged few to special treatment on the grounds of special talent; the hegemonic needs of the holders of power for cultural authentication; the

⁴⁴ Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) p. 7.

⁴⁵ Patterson, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Patterson, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Patterson, p. 5.

responsibility of the intellectual for providing that authentication, in the interests of stability; the value of political or social stability in nurturing the arts; the responsibility of the intellectual for telling the whole truth, in the interests of social justice; the intellectual's claim to personal autonomy.⁴⁸

Although this study is relatively less reliant on Virgil's bucolic writings, Patterson's argument in favour of recognising these strong connections between ideology and pastoral discourse in critical studies of the mode is central to this thesis. As this statement suggests, pastoral writings may convey and interrogate major ideological viewpoints, and this is often achieved through dialectical oppositions between conceptual theories. Indeed, the mode rests upon dichotomies, these 'competing ideologies', thus allowing for a deep and often tense exploration of pluralistic viewpoints, a vital theme in Walcott's writings.

In part, the issues related to offering a clear definition of pastoral arise from the fact that the mode has a long history. Theocritus, whose *Idylls* are widely recognised as foundational to the pastoral tradition, is thought to have been born in Syracuse in the last two years of the fourth century BC, and the production of Virgil's *Eclogues* is dated to the period *circa* 42-39 BC. In addition, these texts contain a wide array of themes and both stylistic and formal variations.⁴⁹ David M. Halperin has influentially argued for a

⁴⁸ Patterson, p. 8.

⁴⁹ It is important to highlight the complexity involved in any suggestion that Theocritus's pastorals were genre-forming. As will be further explored in this thesis, especially in its second chapter, Theocritus's pastorals neither relied upon nor created a clearly defined, singular concept of the pastoral mode. As Richard Hunter observes in an introduction to Theocritus's *Idylls*: 'Theocritus' extraordinarily influential invention assures him an honourable mention in most histories of Western literature, but the variety and breadth of his poetry is less often appreciated. Moreover, although he is rightly viewed as standing at the head of the pastoral tradition [...] his "bucolic" poetry differed in many ways from what followed, and "pastoral" really evolved from particular imitations and "readings" of, first, Theocritus, and, subsequently, of Theocritus' greatest imitator, Virgil'. Richard Hunter, 'Introduction', in *Theocritus: Idylls*, trans. by Anthony Verity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. vii-xxii (p. vii). For Thomas Hubbard: 'Theocritus probably did not see himself as inventing a new genre but rather, in typical Alexandrian fashion, importing into the familiar genre of mime a landscape and set of thematic associations drawn from various other generic traditions'. Thomas Hubbard, 'Pastoral' in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most and Salvatore Settis (Cambridge (MA) and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 694-697 (p. 694).

more nuanced understanding of the role that these ancient texts play in the later pastoral tradition, with a particular emphasis upon revising critical understandings of the works of Theocritus. Halperin warns against simplistically referring to these texts as pastoral, or as genre-forming:

[I]t is necessary to be aware of the implications of any chosen critical method and to acknowledge that the use of the pastoral category to classify works of ancient literature imports alien values and literary associations into the cultural context of these works. To impose pastoral theory on the ancient texts without a proper regard for its relatively late genesis is to be guilty of an unconscious anachronism in critical thinking.⁵⁰

For Halperin, an overly neat and linear line of development has been posited for the relationship between the bucolic writings of Theocritus and Virgil and the later pastoral tradition, and contemporary literary scholarship is too reliant upon a modern conceptual understanding of the pastoral mode. Nonetheless, this is not to dismiss the role that pastoral tropes play in these writings, as ‘although the ancients neither possessed a single term signifying *pastoral* as we understand it nor regarded the presence of pastoral elements in a poem as determining that poem’s generic identity’, it can be observed that ‘their writings do testify to the existence of a concept of pastoral (or a close approximation to it)’.⁵¹ Halperin’s central aim is to reclaim Theocritus’s *Idylls* from misperceptions resulting from Virgil’s highly influential imitations and interpretations of this material, alongside those later works similarly influenced by Virgil’s *Eclogues*: ‘It is time once and for all to demonstrate the limitations imposed on our understanding of Theocritus by the prevailing practice of viewing his poetic idiom through the prism of the post-Virgilian pastoral tradition’.⁵² This is a consideration which impacts this

⁵⁰ Halperin, p. 71.

⁵¹ Halperin, p. 16.

⁵² Halperin, p. 8.

study, as will be most evident in its second chapter, which involves an investigation of Walcott's relationship to the classical tradition. This thesis seeks to evidence that Walcott's engagement with classical bucolic writings demonstrates an awareness of – and works to place an emphasis upon – the generic complexities of this canon, offering a radical and transformative interpretation of this source material.

For Terry Gifford, the term 'pastoral' referred to a specific formal type until roughly the start of the seventeenth century.⁵³ This type was typified by the convention of shepherds conversing, usually in verse, within a 'mostly' idealised natural landscape.⁵⁴ However, once again the stability of this definition is fractured; this is just one example of three definitions of pastoral offered by Gifford. The second places emphasis upon the dichotomy between urban and rural spaces: 'beyond the artifice of the specific literary form, there is a broader use of "pastoral" to refer to an area of content. In this sense pastoral refers to any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban', and Gifford identifies this use of the term as being more usually employed for conjuring a 'celebratory attitude' in relation to the rural space described.⁵⁵ The third meaning of pastoral, in contrast, is a pejorative one, and relates to cases when the literary representation of the natural world does not correspond to socioeconomic or ecological 'reality', with the consequent implication that 'the pastoral vision is too simplified and thus an idealisation of the reality of life in the country'.⁵⁶ Although helpful in grounding a more detailed examination of pastoral, these definitions have the potential to homogenise a complex, pluralistic and ancient

⁵³ Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 1.

⁵⁴ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 2.

mode, and are somewhat superficial in their focus upon broad areas of content. What ‘reality’, for instance, is being referred to here? Reality is based upon individual perception, and to conclude that anti-pastoral writings innately offer a more realistic depiction of rural experiences elides the hugely complicated nature of representing ‘reality’ through literature.

Moreover, I would add to Gifford’s descriptions of these three definitions of pastoral the more specific requirement for a human presence in the setting represented, which is not stressed in the latter two examples. The mode presents a type of nature that acts as a sanctuary for humankind; whether it be the Garden of Eden, Arcadia or elsewhere, the purpose seems always to be to allude to a sense of belonging, an idealised space for humanity. This is the case even if it does not fully commit to this projection, or even outright rejects it. However, it is essential to note that this sanctuary is always complicated by an awareness of the outside world and corrupting or morbid forces. Indeed, the earliest examples of pastoral are intrinsically tied to displacement; Virgil’s *Eclogues* are influenced by, and refer to, the policy of evicting landowners under the Emperor Octavian, in order to settle large numbers of soldiers after the battle of Philippi in 42 BC. This is made clear in the first lines of *Eclogue I*:

Tityrus, here you loll, your slim reed-pipe serenading
The woodland spirit beneath a spread of sheltering beech,
While I must leave my home place, the fields so dear to me.
I’m driven from my home place: but you can take it easy
In shade and teach the woods to repeat “Fair Amaryllis”.⁵⁷

These words, spoken by Meliboeus, demonstrate the emotional resonances of this contemporary political practice of forced displacement and resettlement. Of course,

⁵⁷ *Virgil: The Eclogues and The Georgics*, trans. by C. Day Lewis, ed. by R. O. A. M. Lyne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966; repr. 2009), p. 3.

these themes are highly relevant to a poet writing from and about the Caribbean, a region where displacement has been a fundamental element of colonial history due to such major factors as slavery, indenture and a plantation economy. The presence of these themes as early as the *Eclogues* indicates the strength of the connection between the act of writing pastoral verse and expressing contemporary political concerns over dislocation and the concept of belonging. Moreover, Virgil writes at a time of colonial expansion, this displacement a result of militaristic attempts to protect and expand Rome's territories. As a result, pastoral has demonstrated a potential, from its earliest iterations, to be employed to deal with such experiences as exile, dislocation, colonialism and loss, major themes of Walcott's works in the context of the twentieth and twenty-first-century Caribbean.

The pastoral mode has traditionally been tied to a notion of return, often envisioning a temporal as well as a physical space. Most notably, this return is to a lost Golden Age of peace and plenty, or a pre-lapsarian, idealised realm of bliss. As Arcadia and its equivalents are likely to be not only spatial but temporal realms, they may nostalgically gaze upon an imagined past (frequently the poet's own childhood) or offer a utopian vision of a potential future, a feature which has rightly been treated with suspicion by critics such as Raymond Williams due to its potential for political messaging. These *loci amoeni* are not uniform; as Gifford has observed, the 'cultural context' of any given pastoral offers a method of 'reading and evaluating the results of pastoral return'.⁵⁸ Consequently, as each pastoral is produced in a specific time, in a

⁵⁸ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 82. A definition of the term *locus amoenus* and a further overview of its role in ancient pastorals is offered by Sidney Burris in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: 'Ancient pastorals are poems in hexameters, either dramatic in form or with minimal narrative framing, in which fictional herdsmen sing songs to one another or to an absent beloved, in a stylized natural setting. The poems are short, typically less than 150 lines long, and plot and character devel. are minimal: pastoral's

specific place, it will base its own Arcadia around this context. Gifford highlights the contemporary success and popularity of the works of the poet Seamus Heaney as evidencing this ‘continuing need for a pastoral poetry that returns to speak to contemporary concerns’.⁵⁹ That pastoral poetry may navigate temporal spheres in order to address ‘contemporary concerns’ may appear paradoxical, however I argue that Walcott’s writings fulfil this very aim. For example, *Another Life* offers a prolonged examination of the poet’s childhood and journey towards emotional and artistic maturity, a traditional trope of pastoral evident in such literary models as Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*.⁶⁰ However, this extended poem is far from a nostalgic imagining of an idealised youth, but rather conveys a searing indictment of the circumstances which led to the suicide of his mentor, and almost ended in the self-inflicted death of his closest childhood friend, as well as further sombre instances of a radical inversion of nostalgic idealisation.

Empson set a precedent for politically-focussed readings of pastoral in *Some Versions*, and this was revisited and developed by Raymond Williams’s landmark work *The Country and the City* (1973), widely recognised as the foundational text of a Marxist critical strain of addressing pastoral, and a wide array of further politically-minded investigations of the mode. Pastoral, however, is not the work’s sole theme, and Williams’s analysis is not singularly focussed on poetry. Unlike the majority of studies of pastoral produced in this era, it evidences some effort to include mention of works

major innovation is to make the performance of an internal poetic event – the pastoral song – and the fictional world in which this performance takes place – a *locus amoenus*, or peaceful rural location with flowing water and shady trees – the chief attraction of a literary genre’. Sidney Burris, ‘Pastoral’, in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, p. 1005.

⁵⁹ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 98.

⁶⁰ There are three dates of publication for Wordsworth’s poem, referring to three versions of *The Prelude*: 1799, 1805, 1850.

outside of the threshold of the Anglo-American literary canon, and to incorporate a consideration of colonial history in its analyses of generic themes.⁶¹ This is too frequently absent from influential studies of the literary pastoral mode; indeed, I would suggest that the main reason why the impact of engagements with pastoral in the works of Walcott is under-recognised is simply because too often the focus of studies of this mode is firmly placed on European and American writers, without a recognition of the specific complexities, concepts and references that a writer based in the Caribbean archipelago would bring to pastoral tropes. Whilst Gifford does offer a consideration of cultural variances, for the purposes of this study the major flaw in all critical perspectives of pastoral discussed to this point is their overwhelming focus on only these cultural contexts.

Nonetheless, Williams's study offers a valuable, if broad, interrogation of the relationship between pastoral and politics, stressing that Virgil himself understood the experience of the threat of land confiscation.⁶² Again, the spatial and temporal realm depicted is fundamental to Williams's reading, in particular the dualistic contrast between urban and rural settings, indicated as he outlines modifications which developed in the mode's early history:

The pastoral landscape of Theocritus had been immediate and close at hand: just outside the walls of the city. The Golden Age of Hesiod had been a mythical memory, contrasting with the iron time of modern men, in which labour is necessary and is admired. A transmutation occurs, in some parts of Virgil, in which the landscape becomes more distant, becomes in fact Arcadia, and the Golden Age is seen as present

⁶¹ Williams's study includes a consideration of colonialism in relation to the dichotomous relationship between 'city and country' which forms the fundamental basis of this monograph: 'Thus one of the last models of "city and country" is the system we now know as imperialism'. This includes considerations of the slave trade and the trade of goods from the tropics. Williams also highlights texts by such writers as Yashar Kemal, James Ngugi, Wilson Harris and Chinua Achebe, although there is no prolonged analysis of their works. Williams, pp. 279, 284-285, 288.

⁶² Williams, p. 17.

there, at once summoned and celebrated by the power of poetry⁶³

Williams highlights the distancing effect at work in Virgil's projection of Arcadia, as realistic and mythic perceptions of the *locus amoenus* are developed into a simultaneously spatial and temporal sphere, an integration of the representations of existing spaces and the lost Golden Age outlined by Hesiod, which is created in the imagination of the reader or listener through the process of poetic composition. Political, economic and social factors shaped pastoral's course, claims Williams, particularly the transition 'from a feudal to a bourgeois world', leading to a range of pastorals varying from the artificial 'pastoral of the courts and of the aristocratic houses' to the pastoral of 'the country-house and its estate' and eventually leading to the development in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries of 'what can be offered as a description and thence an idealization of actual English country life and its social and economic relations'.⁶⁴

Much of late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century criticism of pastoral, and of studies considering the relationship between literature and landscape more widely, owes a debt to the arguments formulated in *The Country and the City*. Williams's ideas have been explored and revisited in great depth, and elements of his hypotheses may be recognised in most later studies of the mode, interrogated and appropriated by such critics as Gifford, who has described Williams's book as 'pre-ecocritical', and Jonathan Bate, who expands upon Williams's interest in such alternative pastoral voices as John Clare.⁶⁵ Evidently, Williams's voice is an important one in any critical approach to the

⁶³ Williams, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Williams, pp. 21-22, 26.

⁶⁵ Gifford, 'Post-Pastoral', p. 21. Jonathan Bate analyses the work of John Clare in several of his major studies, including *The Song of the Earth* (2000), and has written a biography of the poet. Walcott's poetry includes references to Clare, again furthering the framework of allusions to pastoral poets in his work, as can be evidenced in 'The Bounty': 'the breadfruit opens its palms in praise of the bounty, | *bois-pain*, tree

pastoral mode, and his arguments will be further explored within this thesis, although the breadth of the theorizing offered in his study does make the material difficult to navigate precisely, and the focus upon political history limits comment upon other areas of pastoral studies, such as the roles that *imitatio* and *mimesis* play in this tradition. However, it is important to acknowledge that none of the major studies of pastoral examined thus far offer an extended analysis of the pastoral mode in the context of Caribbean literature, or, for the most part, in literature outside of the Anglo-American canon more generally, a critical gap which has seen limited but productive redress in recent years.

The Caribbean and the Pastoral Mode

The pastoral mode has a long history in the Caribbean. Pastoral artworks and poetry were hugely popular in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the era of colonial expansion in the region. Consequently, pastoral and georgic depictions of the Caribbean circulated across the British empire, including such works as James Grainger's poem *The Sugar-Cane* (1764), a self-defined georgic portrayal of the island setting, which conjured such pastoral scenes as:

The muse hath seen on Annan's pastoral hills,
Of theft and slaughter erst the fell retreat,
But now the shepherd's best-beloved walk:

of bread, slave food, the bliss of John Clare, || torn, wandering Tom, stoat-stroker in his county | of reeds and stalk-crickets'. 'The Bounty', in *The Bounty* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), pp. 3-16 (p. 3). References to Clare continue throughout this poem. These references to John Clare in 'The Bounty' have been insightfully analysed by Elaine Savory, in an essay which explores references to plants in Walcott's poetry, with a focus upon the concept of eco-poetics and aesthetic modes, including some exploration of the role that the pastoral mode plays in Walcott's work. Elaine Savory, 'Towards a Caribbean Eco-poetics: Derek Walcott's Language of Plants', in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 80-96.

Hath seen the shepherd, with his sylvan pipe ⁶⁶

As Paula Burnett notes in an anthology of Caribbean verse in English: ‘The prevalent mode in the eighteenth century’ was ‘an exotic version of pastoral, modelled on the classics and [James] Thomson’s [*The*] *Seasons*’.⁶⁷ The form employed for these works was ‘usually blank verse’, and they tended to be substantial in scale.⁶⁸ For Burnett, despite their ‘mediocrity’, these poems signalled that a ‘new landscape, a new climate and a new society were being claimed for art; and even at this early stage, a new manner of treatment was beginning to emerge’.⁶⁹

Nathaniel Weekes’s *Barbados* (1754) is a notable example of the category of eighteenth-century pastorals depicting Caribbean settings and subject matters, its themes and style well exemplified by the following stanza:

When frequent Rains, and gentle Show’rs descend,
To chear the Earth, and Nature’s self revive,
A second Paradise appears! the *Isle*
Thro’-out, one beauteous Garden seems; now Plants
Spring forth in all their Bloom; now Orange Groves
Diffuse their Sweets, and load each passing Gale
With heav’nly Fragrance; the Citron too, now
Breathes its Hoard of rich Perfumes; while All,
Their various Odours join, and to the Mind
Inspire a Likeness of what *Eden* was.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ James Grainger, ‘The Sugar-Cane’, in *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger’s The Sugar Cane*, ed. by John Gilmore (London and New Jersey: The Athlone Press, 2000), p. 132. The mixing of georgic and pastoral elements is not unusual, as Gifford observes: ‘The explosion of interest in pastoral in the eighteenth century [...] resulted in a mixing of pastoral with georgic poetry, influenced by Virgil’s *Georgics*’. Gifford, ‘Post-Pastoral’, p. 20. Lloyd W. Brown describes the poem thus: ‘*Sugar Cane* is significant as an early example of what has become a long-lived tradition in West Indian poetry. It is the tradition of the Caribbean pastoral [...] It is based on the unimaginative imitation of popular literary forms in Western Europe, ranging from the epic and picturesque modes of the eighteenth century, to the nature poetry of the nineteenth-century British Romantics. Like countless expatriate and locally born poets since his time Grainger perceives the West Indies as mere landscape’. Lloyd W. Brown, *West Indian Poetry* (London, Kingston, Port of Spain: Heinemann, 1984), p. 20.

⁶⁷ Paula Burnett, ‘Introduction’, in *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse in English*, ed. by Paula Burnett (London: Penguin, 1986), p. xlv.

⁶⁸ Burnett, ‘Introduction’, p. xlv.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Nathaniel Weekes, ‘Barbados’ in *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse in English*, ed. by Paula

Weekes uses the mode to project a vision of the Caribbean that is highly idealised, one which offers a richly sensual and aestheticized description of the setting to its reader. There is an element of synecdoche at work, as the fruits and their scents become emblematic of the space in its entirety, its resources highlighted as its central value. Although exoticized, the island is compared to familiar eighteenth-century European rural spaces both real and imaginary; the ‘Garden’, the orangery, the Edenic realm. However, it is emphasised that this is a ‘second Paradise’, a mirroring of the original, the final simile emphasising that this is ‘a Likeness of what *Eden* was’. It is this suggestion that the setting is merely a reflection of nonurban spaces which frequently recur in European literature which Walcott seeks to highlight, question and ultimately reject, through his own interpretation of the Caribbean as an amalgamation of postlapsarian, second Edens.

For Burnett, ‘Barbados’ evidences that the image of the region circulated by eighteenth-century colonial pastorals ‘was of a golden age, but the confidence of the period complacently placed it in the present, an idyll which was available in real life on a tropical island, tamed by ordered cultivation’.⁷¹ It was not only literature which spread this vision of the Caribbean as a contemporary idyll, in need only of ‘cultivation’ – intensive plantation agriculture based upon the transatlantic slave trade – for rich rewards. The visual arts were similarly influenced by pastoral tropes in this process of representing the Caribbean setting, with elements of the mode at work in the paintings

Burnett (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 102.

⁷¹ Burnett, ‘Introduction’, p. xliv.

of such eighteenth-century artists as Agostino Brunias (c. 1730-1796) and George Robertson (1748-1788). In an essay exploring the role that pastoral played in colonial pictorial depictions of the region (with a particular focus on the paintings of Robertson) Geoff Quilley highlights the neglect of this topic in art criticism:

Since around 1980, study of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British art has investigated the role of landscape in visual and literary culture as a cipher for highly complex sets of social and economic relations and identities, which through their displacement on to an established aesthetic convention of landscape representation, and its related poetic forms of pastoral, georgic and eclogue, are subject to a process of mystification. Yet, by concerning itself exclusively with Britain, much of this scholarship has neglected the crucial role of landscape in the transnational discourse on empire and colonialism; and, as a corollary, to consider how landscape, as an imperial category through which both linkages and differences between metropolis and colony could be established, throws into flux the whole issue of what comprised British and colonial identity at this period.⁷²

Pastoral relies upon the presence of people in its landscapes, but the question of human inhabitants becomes problematic in the colonial Caribbean pastoral. As Quilley observes, the ‘presence of slaves in such a landscape [...] would seem to violate the basic precept of the pastoral as a genre that disallows labour’.⁷³ This results in a paradox: the artist must include human figures in order to fulfil the modal criteria of pastoral, however, those present in the scene are necessarily symbolic of enforced toil, suffering and hardship.

In an interview in 1987, Walcott offered an insightful self-interpretation of his poetry’s relationship to the language of agriculture, relating this to Caribbean history and to both the pastoral and the picturesque:

the word “wheat” for me will always be a literary word. It’s a word out of poetry; it’s

⁷² Geoff Quilley, ‘Pastoral plantations: the slave trade and the representation of British colonial landscape in the late eighteenth century’, in *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the North Atlantic World, 1660-1830*, ed by Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 106-128 (p. 106).

⁷³ Quilley, p. 116.

not a word out of agriculture for me. It's not a word that I know – it's not a *world* or word that I know. When you plant wheat, that's *work*, but wheat in tapestries, wheat in literature becomes a pastoral word that has no work in it, in a sense. I think that may be the difference, because sugar is not a pastoral, though it may appear to be a pastoral thing. The fields of sugar in the Caribbean are divinely beautiful, are supremely calm and so on, but there's a lot of blood and sweat in the earth for it. [...] For one person it's picturesque and archaic and literary. For another person it's something that smells and grows.⁷⁴

Thus, a dichotomy is created between agricultural language and its semantics in the context of art, and the use of such language for the physical act of agricultural labour. The interior landscapes of poetry, closely associated to the pastoral mode and the picturesque, are here separated from the actual realm of farming, and any rendering of Caribbean sugar plantations as pastoral spaces is firmly rejected, through the stressing of the exploitative violence of the enforced labour involved. Walcott's poem 'The Star-Apple Kingdom' can similarly be read as demonstrating an interrogative, direct engagement with the eighteenth-century pastoral artistic tradition. This is indicated by its opening lines: 'There were still shards of an ancient pastoral | in those shires of the island where the cattle drank'.⁷⁵ That these are 'shards', violently broken fragments of an image, suggests that the archetypal pastoral scene presented is irrevocably damaged, an inauthentic and archaic gaze for this setting. Any sense of idyllicism is interrupted by the presence of 'windmills and sugar mills', reminders of the brutalities of the colonial exploitation of people and land.

The mention of 'shards', moreover, draws to mind the use of the metaphor of a fractured vase in 'The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory', which is employed by

⁷⁴ Derek Walcott in interview with David Montenegro in 1987, 'An Interview with Derek Walcott', in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp.135- 150 (from *Points of Departure*, ed. by David Montenegro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991) 80-104; first publ. in *Partisan Review*, 57 (1990), 202-14 (p. 146).

⁷⁵ Derek Walcott, 'The Star-Apple Kingdom', in *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), pp. 46-58 (p. 46).

Walcott to describe the contemporary Caribbean condition as the assembling of broken fragments which create a beautiful, full and new whole:

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars. This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are disparate, ill-fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places. Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent.⁷⁶

Walcott continues to directly compare this reassembling of 'fragments' to the production of poetry, which he terms a 'remaking'.⁷⁷ This notion of productive fragmentation and restoration can be linked to Antonio Benítez-Rojo's influential monograph *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, which attempts to 'reread the Caribbean' through a recognition of the process of 'syncretism'.⁷⁸ For Benítez-Rojo, a 'syncretic artifact is not a synthesis, but rather a signifier made of differences'.⁷⁹ In the Caribbean, 'traditional culture refers to an interplay of supersyncretic signifiers whose principal "centers" are localized in preindustrial Europe, in the sub-Saharan regions of Africa, and in certain island and coastal zones of southern Asia'.⁸⁰ This 'interplay' between signifiers becomes a productive force for such practices as the creation of art, as interactions between these codes allow for a re-envisioning of the Caribbean space:

⁷⁶ Derek Walcott, 'The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory', in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 65-84 (p. 69).

⁷⁷ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 69.

⁷⁸ Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, 2nd edn (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) <<https://doi-org.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/10.1215/9780822382058>> pp. 12, 1.

⁷⁹ Benítez-Rojo, p. 21.

⁸⁰ Benítez-Rojo, p. 21.

In reality, it could be said that, in the Caribbean, the "foreign" interacts with the "traditional" like a ray of light with a prism; that is, they produce phenomena of reflection, refraction, and decomposition. But the light keeps on being light; furthermore, the eye's camera comes out the winner, since spectacular optical performances unfold which almost always induce pleasure, or at least curiosity.⁸¹

The language here employed by Benítez-Rojo, as well as the overall argument in favour of 're-reading' the Caribbean through this perspective of recognising the process of syncretism, is markedly similar to that offered in 'The Antilles', as Walcott discusses his own gaze surveying this space 'as a camera would', as well as in the envisioning of 'shards' of a broken colonial pastoral offered in 'Star-Apple Kingdom'.⁸²

Although this theme of a dialogue with colonial-era pictorial pastorals will be explored further in the third chapter of this thesis, it is worth highlighting that 'Star-Apple Kingdom', as a single example from Walcott's extensive body of writing, deals with pastoral in an extremely complex, innovative and unusual way. As well as interrogating the colonial pastoral, Walcott simultaneously engages with contemporary, postcolonial politics in Jamaica, with critics such as Edward Baugh and Patricia Ismond identifying the flawed protagonist of the poem as modelled upon the politician Michael Manley (1924-1997).⁸³ For Baugh, this poem: 'represents a beguiling, nostalgic construction of the West Indian past as a time of peace, order and beauty. But this is a false colonial dream, built on the inhumanity of plantation slavery'; its central character

⁸¹ Benítez-Rojo, p. 21.

⁸² Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 68.

⁸³ See Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 114, and Patricia Ismond, *Abandoning Dead Metaphors: The Caribbean Phase of Derek Walcott's Poetry* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), pp. 228, 249-280. When asked about this identification, Walcott responded: 'It is obviously Jamaica. I am – I was – very close to Michael Manley, but it isn't him entirely, and of course the poem is modelled very closely on Marquez's *Autumn of a Patriarch*'. Derek Walcott in interview with Ned Thomas in 1980, 'Interview', in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 64-69 (first publ. in *Kunapipi*, 3 (1981), 42-47), p. 66.

is ‘aware of the power of the pastoral dream of the country’s past as depicted in the description of the landscape with which the poem opens’.⁸⁴ Baugh continues to argue: ‘Under the calm of the idyllic colonial landscape, the protagonist can hear the silent scream of the supposed non-persons excluded from the Great House family photograph: the blacks, field slave and house slave. This scream echoes down the centuries’.⁸⁵ The mode of reading Caribbean pastoral here is similar to that of Lloyd W. Brown:

This limited perception, or nonperception, of black humanity is typical of the genre that Grainger pioneers in *Sugar Cane*. The Caribbean pastoral has always extolled the beauties of the West Indian landscape to the exclusion of any perceived West Indian experience, or at the most, in conjunction with a patronizing and selfindulgent view of the folk as exotic swains and “servants of choice.” The severely limited moral vision complements the shallow derivativeness with which the poet handles his borrowed forms.⁸⁶

This is the legacy of pastoral which Walcott works to transform. His work demonstrates the transformation of pastoral from a reductive, limiting aesthetic mode to a complex, profound force for interrogating methods of depicting Caribbean settings, without allowing for the marginalisation of human experiences. Brown does not allow for this possibility of reclaiming or transforming pastoral, and his understanding of the mode as limited to depictions of ‘mere landscape’ implies a superficiality which pastoral does not necessitate, and is too dismissive of productive, radical efforts made by Caribbean writers and artists to challenge and appropriate tropes of the pastoral mode. ‘Star-Apple Kingdom’ highlights major features of Walcott’s engagements with eighteenth-century pastoral poetics and pictorial art; such instances recur and are present in works including ‘The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory’ (1993), *Another Life* and *Tiepolo’s Hound*. This thesis will examine these instances, analysing Walcott’s

⁸⁴ Baugh, pp. 114-115.

⁸⁵ Baugh, p. 115.

⁸⁶ Brown, p. 20.

reclamation of the Caribbean setting from the reductive gaze of the colonial pastoral.

In comparison to the wealth of material available on the pastoral mode in the context of European literature, there have been considerably fewer critical studies considering uses of the pastoral mode outside of this cultural framework. However, in recent years pioneering contributions have been made to this area, including some studies focussing specifically on uses of pastoral in contemporary Caribbean literature. Many of these occur as shorter sections of studies seeking to explore the relationship between postcolonial literature and environmental discourse, such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2015). Their reading begins with an outlining of the issues which arise from uses of pastoral in postcolonial contexts, including the argument that: 'pastoral is predominantly European in sensibility and form. The stylistic conventions of pastoral are not easily mapped onto non-European landscapes that often appear to be in direct opposition with them, and their value-systems likewise'.⁸⁷ As Huggan and Tiffin point out, '[n]one of this bodes well for the practice of either postcolonial literature or postcolonial criticism; and yet [...] practitioners of both are heavily invested in the pastoral mode'.⁸⁸ Their analysis of pastoral in Caribbean literature rests upon a critical reading of V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987). Indeed, due to its open dialogue with conventions of projecting a pastoral space in Wiltshire, this is the chosen text for a number of studies of Caribbean literature's connection to the mode, including Sarah Phillips Casteel's earlier work *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* (2007) and Rob Nixon's *London*

⁸⁷ Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 100.

⁸⁸ Huggan and Tiffin, p. 100.

Calling: V. S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin (1992). In Nixon's extended study of Naipaul, he makes the claim that: 'in composing *The Enigma of Arrival*, Naipaul invents postcolonial pastoral'.⁸⁹ Huggan and Tiffin dismiss this statement as 'inaccurate', rightly observing that 'pastoral is a mode that appeals to a number of different postcolonial writers, who have turned it to their own uses in a number of different regions of the world'.⁹⁰ Indeed, one of the most obvious differences between Naipaul's use of pastoral and that of Walcott is that Naipaul appears to feel the need to locate the action in an English landscape, whereas the vast majority of Walcott's poems and dramas are set in the Caribbean. This implies differing, and I would suggest conflicting, understandings of pastoral's potential, associations and effects, and so calls into question Nixon's confident voicing of Naipaul as the sole founder of the 'postcolonial pastoral'.

Casteel makes no such claim, limiting the significance of Naipaul to this debate through combining her analysis of *Enigma* with a reading of Walcott's *Tiepolo's Hound*. This forms a chapter of a monograph which offers a seminal study of the role that pastoral plays in literature of the Americas more widely, rather than specifically the Caribbean. Casteel's findings will be considered in greater depth in the third chapter of this thesis, which will explore references to pictorial depictions of pastoral scenes in both *Another Life* and *Tiepolo's Hound*, but it is important to outline here that in this comparative study an emphasis is placed upon approaching this material through a lens of postcolonial theorizing. Casteel argues:

Both works [...] show how received landscape ideas became subject to interrogation as the Caribbean writer's encounter with the European landscape produced a critique

⁸⁹ Rob Nixon, *London Calling: V. S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 161.

⁹⁰ Huggan and Tiffin, p. 134.

of colonial landscape representation as well as a new sense of place. In Naipaul and Walcott, this interrogation hinges on a tension between an idealizing vision of nature on the one hand, and a historicizing vision on the other. This tension is fundamental to the pastoral, a mode that Naipaul celebrates but that Walcott is more apt to disclaim. Yet both authors' treatments of the landscape of empire may be considered as operating within the pastoral mode when it is understood in the critical and complex sense that I will be elaborating⁹¹

This tension between an idealisation of the surrounding environment and an awareness of history is the core concern of most postcolonial and ecocritical readings of the pastoral mode's role in Caribbean literature, with the widespread suggestion that pastoral's effects are more reductive than productive, typified by Eurocentricity, and oblivious of political and ecological issues.

Indeed, these concerns can be recognised in Casteel's earlier essay 'New World Pastoral', which centres literary representations of the Caribbean garden as 'a site in which to think through contemporary debates surrounding place and identity'.⁹² For Casteel, the 'paradisal garden' has associations with the plantation and the 'European pastoral vision of the Americas'.⁹³ This essay draws attention to the significance of the 'Garden of Eden', and both 'Edenic and pastoral associations' to discourses surrounding the Caribbean during both colonial and postcolonial periods.⁹⁴ The extent to which Edenic symbolism and metaphor permeates discussions of the Caribbean has been influentially highlighted by J. Michael Dash in *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World* (1998), and it is a theme which will be centred in the first chapter of this thesis, as Edenic symbolism forms a major component of Walcott's writings. In *West Indian Poetry* (1984), Lloyd W. Brown expressed concern over the

⁹¹ Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007), p. 21.

⁹² Sarah Phillips Casteel, 'New World Pastoral', *Interventions*, 5 (2003), 12-28
<DOI: 10.1080/13698032000049770> (p. 12).

⁹³ Casteel, 'New World', p. 15.

⁹⁴ Casteel, 'New World', pp. 14, 15.

role that the pastoral mode played in early writing from the region, warning that this revealed an inclination to ‘perceive the West Indies as mere landscape’, a reasonable concern, but one which does not necessitate an absolute dismissal of pastoral, a mode which Brown does not investigate in sufficient depth but rather dismisses as artificial and limiting.⁹⁵ I would instead argue that the connections between pastoral and these problematic uses offer writers a clear opportunity to complicate, question and reject reductive aestheticization.

There is a close connection between the study of postcolonial pastorals and ecocriticism. Lorna Burns, for example, has offered insightful readings of paradisaical and specifically Edenic imagery in the works of writers engaging with the Caribbean setting, such as Shani Mootoo (b. 1957), linking this theme to the pastoral mode, and combining postcolonial and ecocritical theoretical perspectives.⁹⁶ Studies which seek to incorporate both postcolonial and ecocritical methodologies, however, do not necessarily dwell on the role of the pastoral mode. This critical gap should perhaps not be surprising, as pastoral has long been an overlooked area of literary criticism in comparison to other major modes and genres. This is problematic, as it is evident from this brief overview of the field that innovative, insightful and productive readings of pastoral are both possible and desirable. Its close associations with the central themes

⁹⁵ Brown, p. 20. When turning his attention to ‘late’ pastoral verse (1940-1960), he remarks: ‘Of course the increasingly minor role of the old Caribbean pastoral does not mean that the Caribbean landscape loses its perpetually strong grip on the poetic imagination. If anything, that grip has become stronger over the years. But there is an important difference between an earlier preoccupation with a blandly escapist and derivative word-painting – the Caribbean pastoral – and the more recent perception of the landscape, not as a background for neoclassical or neoromantic imitations, but as a living symbol of the West Indian’s historical experience and sense of identity’, p. 66. These comments misrepresent pastoral, obscuring the complexity and depth of connections between the mode and contemporary landscape poetry.

⁹⁶ Lorna Burns, ‘Landscape and Genre in the Caribbean Canon: Creolizing the Poetics of Place and Paradise’, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 17 (2008), 20-41. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23019970; Lorna Burns, ‘Politicising Paradise: Sites of Resistance in *Cereus Blooms at Night*’, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 19 (2011), 52-67. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23019958.

of major theoretical areas, such as postcolonialism and ecocriticism, have not been recognised to as great an extent as they should have been. In Walcott studies, important groundwork on this topic exists, but it remains a marginal area of critical interest.

Walcott and the Pastoral Mode

Whilst his representations of the natural world have been discussed by many critics, there have been very few studies of the pastoral mode in the works of Derek Walcott. The subject is absent from readings which seek to offer broad overviews of major themes in Walcott studies, such as Paul Breslin's *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott* (2001) and Edward Baugh's *Derek Walcott* (2006). No study exists considering the role that pastoral plays in his dramatic works, a critical gap that the final chapter of this thesis seeks to redress. Often connections to the pastoral mode in Walcott's writings are highlighted briefly and remain insufficiently developed. In a seminal study of Walcott, Paula Burnett states:

Importantly, however, Walcott does not just "write back." His representation of the island space cannot be contained as a species of pastoral, in which a "locus amoenus" is held up in opposition to a metropolitan society as a means of interrogating the latter. Its primary motor is, rather, an assertion of its own particularity, for its own sake, and for its own community.⁹⁷

Burnett is right to stress that Walcott's representations of Caribbean spaces do not adhere to straightforward conventions of pastoral, however this statement overlooks the complexity of his engagements with the mode. To narrow pastoral to merely a

⁹⁷ Paula Burnett, *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), p. 30.

dialectic between metropole and rural environments is to oversimplify its links to such themes as the impulse of nostalgia, the concept of belonging, the representation of agricultural workers and human relationships, and so on. To employ the pastoral mode does not equate to a rejection of any assertion of ‘particularity’, in the sense of positing a localised notion of place, and pastoral does not simply involve a commentary upon the urban realm facilitated through the conjuring of its supposed rural opposite. Burnett’s monograph seeks to relate politics to poetics in Walcott’s writings, and so, despite its many achievements in this area, it is surprising, though far from atypical, that it does not include further investigation of a mode which so closely interconnects these realms.

Whilst major studies are often lacking in their treatment of the topic, an insightful study of the role that the pastoral mode plays in Walcott’s poetry is offered by John Van Sickle in an article investigating the phrase ‘Virgilian reeds’, a quotation taken from *Omeros*.⁹⁸ It has been widely noted that Walcott engages with the Homeric and Virgilian epics in *Omeros*, however the focus of Van Sickle’s essay is predominantly on the role that Virgil as a pastoralist plays in Walcott’s narrative poem, with the argument that ‘Derek Walcott remakes epic tradition in a way that places Virgil in the middle – between his great predecessor and great successor’, drawing attention to Virgil’s role as a pivotal figure in the literary history of the pastoral mode.⁹⁹

Attention is drawn to two stanzas of the fourth book of *Omeros*, which offer an envisioning of the North American landscape:

The elegies of summer sighed in the marram,
to bending Virgilian reeds. Languid meadows

⁹⁸ John Van Sickle, ““Virgilian Reeds” - A Program Cue in Derek Walcott’s “Omeros””, *Vergilius*, 51 (2005), 32-61. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41587306.

⁹⁹ Van Sickle, p. 32.

raised their natural fly-screens around the Parkin farm.

Larks arrowed from the goldenrod into soft doors
of enclosing thunderheads, and the rattled maize
threshed like breaking surf to Catherine Weldon's ears.¹⁰⁰

For Van Sickle, these lines act as 'metapoetic signage' which bring Virgil 'from subtext to surface'.¹⁰¹ It is the word choice 'marram' which is most profoundly analysed, chronicling an initial belief that this is a *hapax legomenon* only to illuminate its multiple allusions through a close analysis of its etymological, botanical and literary roots, including a link to Virgil's own tripartite Roman name: *Publius Vergilius Maro*, which contextually would have led to the poet being referred to as *Maro*.¹⁰² Moreover, reeds are widely seen as 'an emblem for pastoral poetry', furthering this allusion to the pastoral tradition.¹⁰³ For Van Sickle, this 'helps to mark Walcott's program as tripartite and neo- Virgilian even while contributing a bucolic trace to his incipient middle-georgic-range'.¹⁰⁴

Van Sickle's focus is firmly placed upon the Virgilian pastoral and georgic traditions, rather than any wider network of references, a feature which differentiates his study from this thesis, which seeks to offer a wider perspective of intertextual connections.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Van Sickle does not explore Walcott's representations

¹⁰⁰ Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 176. Further references to page numbers in this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁰¹ Van Sickle, p. 37.

¹⁰² Van Sickle, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁵ It should be noted, however, that Sickle does examine the influence of W. H. Auden's *BUCOLICS – Winds, Woods, Mountains, Lakes, Islands, Plains and Streams* on Walcott's choice of the word 'marram', as the word occurs in this sequence (pp. 41-42). Walcott's 'Eulogy to W. H. Auden' will be analysed in the second chapter of this thesis. Conventions of the pastoral mode appear frequently in Auden's poetry, as can be clearly witnessed in such poems as 'Vespers', which creates a dialectic between the Arcadian who resides in Eden and the Utopian, who is associated with the New Jerusalem, a poem highlighted by Laurence Lerner for its complex negotiation of pastoral tropes. *Collected Poems of W. H. Auden*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber, 1976; repr. 1991), pp. 637- 639; Lerner, *Uses of Nostalgia*, pp. 66-

of Caribbean landscapes, and this thesis does not share an understanding of Walcott's aim here as being 'neo-Virgilian', which appears to overstress the role that Virgil plays in this complex text.¹⁰⁶ However, this essay offers a vital summation of the ways in which the relationship between Walcott's work and the pastoral mode may be read, arriving at two possible conclusions for a reading of these 'bending Virgilian reeds'. The first is that they bend in sympathy to the 'elegies of summer', the second that they bend 'as a powerful model of expressive movement for the elegies to follow'.¹⁰⁷ If the first, then the 'notion of modern elegies inspiring ancient reeds implies a dynamic concept of tradition'.¹⁰⁸ It 'conceives of the later poet exercising reinterpretative power that reconstitutes, regroups, and supplements the prior, generating new significance and energizing the tradition from some new point of vantage or view'.¹⁰⁹ If the second, 'the notion that a modern poet takes inspiration from Virgil and responds to his lead corresponds to the common view that literary tradition dictates new practice by setting genre norms'.¹¹⁰ My own reading of the relationship between Walcott and the pastoral works of Virgil, and indeed of all poets practicing this mode, aligns far more closely to the first of these possibilities. It is a 'dynamic' and 'reinterpretative' process, one which allows Walcott to illuminate and investigate the flaws intrinsic to the mode, and to generate 'new significance' in his transformative approach to its modal features.

Van Sickle's study, though pioneering in its recognition of the role that Virgilian pastoral and georgic verse plays in Walcott's poetry, is limited by its focus

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¹⁰⁶ Both an extension of this argument and a further consideration of Van Sickle's study will be offered in the second chapter of this thesis.

¹⁰⁷ Van Sickle, p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

being set squarely on *Omeros*, and this limitation is shared by Gregson Davis in his essay “Pastoral Sites”: Aspects of Bucolic Transformation in Derek Walcott’s “Omeros” (1999). Indeed, this is a widespread issue in Walcott studies. The success and enormous significance of *Omeros* has overshadowed the broad canon produced by this poet, playwright and essayist. Criticism tends to rely heavily on this single work, often at the expense of a wider, more considered overview of texts which span a vast range of styles and contexts. Some poems have seen little to no critical interest, including those in the collection *White Egrets* (2010). In the second chapter of this thesis, examples from this collection will be closely analysed in a consideration of their engagements with pastoral elegy, and throughout the first three chapters attempts have been made to incorporate a wide-ranging selection of Walcott’s poetry. Nonetheless, Davis’s essay offers a significant contribution to this field, and successfully draws attention to the fact that the engagements with pastoral at work in *Omeros* have been overlooked, leaving a critical gap in readings of this seminal text: ‘To trace the major pastoral strands stitched into the vast and intricate fabric of Walcott’s *Omeros* would require a protracted exercise in close reading’, however, ‘[t]he far more modest goal of this paper is to present cogent evidence [...] for the centrality of pastoral motifs and obsessions in the economy of the poem, and to point to a few key *loci* in which such motifs are elaborated and complicated’.¹¹¹ Once again, the focus of Davis’s definition of pastoral refers to Virgil’s ‘magisterial remodeling of the genre in the *Eclogues*’.¹¹² For Davis, this creates a ‘bucolic scaffolding’ which becomes the ‘backdrop for subtle explorations of important issues – ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic’.¹¹³ Like Van Sickle’s

¹¹¹ Gregson Davis, “Pastoral Sites”: Aspects of Bucolic Transformation in Derek Walcott’s “Omeros”, *The Classical World*, 93 (1999), 43-49, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4352370 (p. 43).

¹¹² Davis, p. 43.

¹¹³ Davis, p. 43.

study, it is solely Virgilian pastoral which is centred here, rather than a transhistorical and cross-cultural understanding of the mode. In contrast, Philippe Hackens has offered an insightful study of Walcott's relationship to pastoral and postcolonialism, combining this with an examination of the mode in the works of Seamus Heaney, a recurring figure in studies of twentieth-century pastoral, as well as a colleague and friend of Walcott's.¹¹⁴

Like Van Sickle and Davis, Hackens focuses specifically on poetry, although with a broader interest in alternative poems to *Omeros*. Postcolonial theoretical models are employed for this purpose, with Hackens arguing that 'both Heaney and Walcott acknowledge the pastoral ideal as a central element in their post-colonial identity'.¹¹⁵ Their poetry, he claims, employs an 'overall pastoral design' in order to 'articulate various paradoxes inherent in the post-colonial poet's situation'.¹¹⁶ Hackens offers an insightful analysis of the relationship between the pastoral mode and postcolonialism, arguing that the 'spirit of pastoralism' is 'akin to that of colonialism; in a sense, they are versions of each other'.¹¹⁷ Indeed, he claims, 'both colonial discourse and pastoral discourse pertain to an overall strategy of positing a beautified, imaginary version of otherness'.¹¹⁸ Altogether, 'the form is bound, sooner or later, to turn into its dialectic antithesis, the anti-pastoral, whose rural setting realistically represents the harshness of the actual rural condition in order to denounce its pastoral, nostalgic idealisation'.¹¹⁹

Although Hackens stresses the close interrelations between pastoral and anti-

¹¹⁴ Philippe Hackens, 'The pastoral design as (post)colonial paradigm in Seamus Heaney's and Derek Walcott's poetry' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 1999).

¹¹⁵ Hackens, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ Hackens, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ Hackens, p. 19.

¹¹⁸ Hackens, p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Hackens, p. 15.

pastoral, this statement implies a clear-cut contrast between pastoral and anti-pastoral which this thesis does not recognise, and the suggestion that anti-pastoral offers a realistic representation of rural spaces requires further explanation and caution – to what extent can realism be evidenced and quantified in poetic representations of the natural world? There are copious examples of works which integrate elements of both pastoral and anti-pastoral, and the concept of a diametric opposite of pastoral, one which directly contradicts the mode's processes and associations, is difficult to evidence. As Gifford has pointed out, 'the anti-pastoral was embedded within the most complex pastorals from the *Idylls* onwards'.¹²⁰ Although it will be referred to throughout this thesis, my final chapter will most extensively explore the notion of anti-pastoral, unpacking engagements with this strain of the pastoral mode in *The Sea at Dauphin*. It is worth noting that of all scholars cited thus far, only Hackens and Casteel engage with Caribbean landscapes and history in their examinations of the pastoral mode in the works of Derek Walcott, with other critics instead considering only Virgilian influence. Thus, it is evident that this remains a neglected area of Walcott studies, in need of far greater critical attention. Moreover, all these studies are limited by a shared reliance on readings of Walcott's poetry, with no examples of analysis of his dramatic works, and Casteel is the only critic to this date who has offered an investigation of Walcott's relationship to pastoral artworks.

It is clear, then, that there remains a great deal of untrodden ground in criticism of engagements with the pastoral mode in the writings of Derek Walcott. This study will include four chapters, each analysing a distinct strand of the mode and readings of different selections of Walcott's works, in order to allow for a recognition of the

¹²⁰ Gifford, 'Post-Pastoral', p. 22.

variances present across this wide-ranging canon, written over the course of seven decades. The structure is thematic, rather than chronological, examining a selection of key themes related to the modal category of pastoral and its poetic, artistic and dramatic traditions, highlighting the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of Walcott's engagements with these tropes. The first chapter explores the role that Edenic symbolism plays in a select few of Walcott's shorter poems and *Omeros*, in light of the significance of Eden as an alternative to Arcadia in later branches of the pastoral mode. Walcott employs both Eden and the characters of Adam and Eve as symbols throughout his work, as evidenced by such poems as 'Adam's Song', and Eden is employed as a recurring metaphor in prose essays including 'The Muse of History' (1974). I will analyse examples of those instances when Edenic symbolism may be read as referring to archetypal pastoral visions of Eden, in order to complicate and interrogate the meanings at work. This will be linked to paradise discourse, as Walcott navigates the familiar trope of the Caribbean as an Edenic, paradisaical space, at once idealised and reduced into a recurring literary convention. I will argue that Walcott puts forward the notion of pluralistic Edens, these varying versions of Eden each offering distinct – and at times contradictory – visions of the surrounding landscape and its inhabitants.

The second chapter of this thesis explores Walcott's engagements with the classical tradition, positing that whilst there has been notable critical interest in conventions of the epic in *Omeros*, this has overshadowed the work's engagements with a broader range of classical genres and modes, including pastoral. I will explore the generic flexibility already present in such source texts as Homer's *The Odyssey*, as well as including an extended section focussing specifically on the pastoral elegy. This will involve close readings of *Omeros*, as well as shorter elegiac poems such as 'The

Acacia Trees’ and ‘Eulogy to W. H. Auden’. Within recent years, the study of classical literary genres (predominantly epic and tragedy) in Caribbean writing has become a topic of heightened academic interest, productively addressed by such critics as Emily Greenwood, Justine McConnell, Lorna Hardwick and Maeve Tynan.¹²¹ However, these works tend to overlook the significance of the pastoral mode, a critical gap which I seek to redress.

The third chapter will consider visual representations of landscape in *Another Life* and *Tiepolo’s Hound*. Walcott’s role as an artist and art critic is paramount here, the chronicling of his development as both a painter creating pictorial depictions of the St Lucian setting and as a poet forms the core plot of the poetic *künstlerroman* *Another Life*, and *Tiepolo’s Hound* is dense with imagery and techniques taken from art history and theory. Key secondary texts will include John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* (1972) Sarah Phillips Casteel’s study of *Tiepolo’s Hound* and Edward Baugh’s ‘Painters and Painting in “Another Life”’ (1980). I will explore those representations of landscape in Walcott’s poetry that allude to the tradition of pastoral artwork, as well as direct references to individual paintings or painters who were known for producing pastoral scenes, such as Jean-Antoine Watteau and Claude Lorrain. This will be achieved through navigating methodologies employed not only by the literary critic, but also by

¹²¹ The second chapter of this thesis will involve an investigation of the arguments volunteered in the following critical studies: Emily Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues Between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Justine McConnell, *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Lorna Hardwick, ‘Singing across the Faultlines: Cultural Shifts in Twentieth-Century Reception of Homer’, in *Homer in the Twentieth Century: Beyond World Literature and the Western Canon*, ed. by Barbara Graziosi and Emily Greenwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 47-71; Maeve Tynan, *Postcolonial Odysseys: Derek Walcott’s Voyages of Homecoming* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011).

the art critic and art historian.

The final chapter will turn its attention to Walcott's dramatic works, specifically *The Sea at Dauphin*, alongside a shorter comparative commentary on *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*. I will argue that *Dauphin* can be read as a work heavily invested in the anti-pastoral tradition, in part due to its complex engagements with a specific branch of the mode: the piscatory pastoral. Techniques of characterisation will be explored, as well as the play's treatment of religion and the economic status of its small cast of characters. In comparison, *The Odyssey* may appear to offer a more traditional vision of idyllic spaces (*loci amoeni*) than *Dauphin*. However, a close reading of such scenes as Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus complicates any notion of this play as including straightforward, unquestioning pastoral tropes. This reading of *The Odyssey* also sheds further light on Walcott's engagements with the classical tradition, adding to the conclusions of this thesis' second chapter.

My selection of poems for textual analysis rests upon an intention of highlighting the breadth of Walcott's stylistic range, and the variations as well as consistencies evident in his approach to pastoral tropes. *Omeros* features heavily in this thesis, alongside *Another Life*, in part because these are both long narrative poems and therefore exhibit prolonged and rich engagements with the themes central to this study, but also because each of these texts offers a significant insight into two different aspects of Walcott's uses of the mode: his dialogue with the classical tradition, and his engagement with the visual arts, respectively. Other poems are chosen upon a straightforward basis: their intensity and style of interaction with the pastoral mode, and their potential for evidencing the wide-ranging nature of these interactions, both temporally and stylistically. The poems selected span decades, marking distinct

moments in Walcott's literary career and highlighting the long-running nature of his dialogue with the pastoral mode, from *In a Green Night* (1962) to *Morning, Paramin* (2016). The choice of poems analysed, therefore, should reflect the longevity, breadth and significance of Walcott's engagement with the pastoral mode, including the elegies and eco-elegies offered in *White Egrets*, which navigate the genre of the pastoral elegy, alongside the Edenic symbolism of 'Crusoe's Island' and selections of lyric poems from *Midsummer* and *The Bounty*, which demonstrate the variances at work in this employment of Edenic imagery, whilst also reinforcing the consistency of Walcott's imagining of a second Eden, one which is both distinct from and informed by the past.

It is often the case that Walcott's role as a dramatist is kept at a distance from his position as a poet, and those studies which do engage with both tend to prioritise his poetry. As Baugh has noted: 'For anyone who attempts a commentary on Walcott's extensive range and output, a primary challenge is to bring his poetry and his plays into discursive relationship'.¹²² My approach to this issue is strongly influenced by Paula Burnett's comment in her introduction to *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* (2000), which states that in this study:

Poems and plays are included on an equal basis, since it is central to my intention to consider the drama alongside the poetry. There is a tendency for these to be discussed as radically distinct areas of endeavor and to be evaluated according to different criteria, when in fact they have been synchronic, mutually involved, and reciprocally reinforcing throughout Walcott's career.¹²³

¹²² Edward Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p.1.

¹²³ Burnett, *Politics and Poetics*, p. iv.

The general conclusion which Burnett hopes to reinforce is ‘the overall sense of a single oeuvre, variously explored’, a notion well worth highlighting.¹²⁴ Similarly, I intend to support an understanding of Walcott’s combined poetic, dramatic and prose works forming ‘a single oeuvre’, with shared themes, styles and, specifically, ‘reciprocally reinforcing’ approaches to the pastoral mode.

The intention of this thesis is to illuminate and analyse engagements with the pastoral mode in the poetry and plays of Derek Walcott. I will investigate the influence of the pastoral mode, in a variety of its iterations, on the poetic output of Walcott as well as his dramaturgy, and analyse the ways in which this influence is navigated by the poet. I will highlight the changing nature of Walcott’s uses of pastoral tropes over the course of his literary career, from the Wordsworthian undercurrents of *Another Life* to the Edenic symbolism of *Omeros*. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to substantially expand and enhance understandings of Walcott’s engagements with the frequently overlooked and under-estimated pastoral mode, and to illuminate the complexities and innovation of these engagements. Walcott’s multifaceted skill as a poet and his creative and radical engagements with various modes, genres and poetic devices are worthy, I would argue, of greater critical attention; the line of enquiry employed in this study will contribute towards this end. For Walcott, pastoral is a double-edged sword; an aesthetic mode which offers a productively specific vision of the setting and a means for exploring connections between human subjectivity and the natural world, and a method of representation which has been employed for reductive colonial-era depictions of the Caribbean region, with a capacity for artificiality and

¹²⁴ Burnett, *Politics and Poetics*, p. iv.

problematic idealisation. His reluctance to allow for an uncomplicated, accepting pastoral representation of these islands is made clear in a short comment from ‘The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory’, the speech given at his acceptance of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992: ‘The Caribbean is not an idyll’.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Walcott, ‘The Antilles’, p. 83.

EDENIC SYMBOLISM

In a letter detailing his third journey to the Americas in 1498, Christopher Columbus states:

I have already described my ideas concerning this hemisphere and its form, and I have no doubt, that if I could pass below the equinoctial line, after reaching the highest point of which I have spoken, I should find a much milder temperature, and a variation in the stars and in the water; [...] I believe it is impossible to ascend thither, because I am convinced that it is the spot of the earthly paradise, whither no one can go but by God's permission¹

This passage suggests that Columbus' belief in the Garden of Eden, the 'earthly paradise', was a significant drive behind his expedition to the Caribbean archipelago in the last decade of the fifteenth century, and that this understanding of Eden as a material realm, an actual location on Earth, was far from unusual in the Europe of this period. The story of Adam and Eve and their experience of contentment followed by exile from the paradisaical garden takes up a short amount of the book of Genesis, and yet it is a story which has had a profound, transnational and lasting influence on literature and the visual arts. As Stephen Greenblatt observes: 'the story of Adam and Eve has over centuries decisively shaped conceptions of human origins and human destiny'.² A belief in this tale contributed to the determination of such individuals as Columbus to travel to the Americas, with the hope of discovering lush, fertile land which needed little labour, a sanctuary which could be utilised for agricultural and consequently economic gain. Accordingly, the quest for an earthly Eden was a key motivation behind the

¹ *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus: With Other Original Documents, Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World*, ed. by Richard Henry Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1847 and revised in 1870; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 141.

² Stephen Greenblatt, *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017), p. 3.

colonial project in the Americas, and has resultingly become a highly charged, explored and debated topic in the literature of this 'New World'.

Edenic symbolism and metaphor would play a vital role in the emergence of a literary tradition of works seeking to depict a Caribbean setting, present in the writings of poets as wide-ranging as Nathaniel Weekes (c. 1730-1765), Luis Palés Matos (1898-1959) and Olive Senior (b. 1941).³ In the case of Walcott, this topic has been recognised as a key concern across his collections of poetry, plays and essays. Eden is also a significant concept in relation to the pastoral mode, as Edenic spaces became conflated with the classical *locus amoenus* of the pastoral tradition, offering poets a temporal and physical realm at once idealised and sacred whilst, paradoxically, being necessarily associated with corruption, loss and exile. In this chapter, I will analyse uses of Edenic symbolism in a selection of Walcott's shorter poems and *Omeros* (1990), arguing that the trope of Edenic symbolism, which is so central both to the pastoral mode and to the context of writing about the Caribbean, offers Walcott a productive means of exploring and interrogating various methods of depicting this setting, examining the relationship between human subjects and the landscape in which they are placed, and projecting the concept of a second Eden, a fundamental feature of his poetic imagination. Throughout his poetry, Walcott appropriates the technique of employing Eden as a key symbol in depicting both a pastoral and a Caribbean setting, projecting pluralistic visions of Edenic spaces which are not prelapsarian, but postcolonial, not imagined through a purely nostalgic gaze, but focused upon the present and future, and not reductively

³ For Weekes's references to the Caribbean as Eden, see the introduction to this thesis. Luis Palés Matos engages with Edenic symbolism and the themes of desire and sin in 'Forbidden Fruit' (a poem translated by Ian Craig), in *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Verse*, ed. by Stewart Brown and Mark McWatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 12. Olive Senior explores Edenic imagery and metaphor in 'The Tree of Life' in the collection *Gardening in the Tropics* (Ontario: Insomniac Press, 2005), pp. 93-94.

idealised, but typified by complexity and the artistically productive clashing of differing ideologies and methods of aesthetic representation.

In his landmark study of the history of Caribbean literature, J. Michael Dash observes: ‘Whether the prevalent trope is savage wildness or pristine innocence, the New World is overwhelmingly the realm of the natural. To even the most benign commentators, there is no culture or civilization worthy of mention’.⁴ Representations of the Caribbean throughout its literary history have been shaped by the recurring metaphor of Eden, a space reliant upon an absence of urbanity, positioned in comparison to Europe, supposedly ‘the domain of culture, even if that culture is seen as decadent or repressive’.⁵ This, too, is the fundamental basis of pastoral opposition; the contrast between city and country, to employ Williams’s influential phrase. Thus, the Caribbean has been represented as a conflation of Arcadian and Edenic spaces, within a dichotomy which situates Europe as its opposite. For Dash, this is ‘an obvious but vital feature of the exotic discourse imposed on the Americas’.⁶ A similar view is offered by Lorna Burns, who highlights ‘the persistence of paradisiacal and Edenic tropes’ as a ‘marked feature of Caribbean writing’.⁷ Burns directly links this to the pastoral writings of poets working before the 1930s, texts which she views as working to ‘reinforce the colonialist idealisation of plantation life’.⁸ The view of many Caribbeanists is that this act of comparing the landscape to Eden results in reductive idealisation. This is, in part, due to the fact that Eden is imagined as a temporal, as well as a physical space. ‘The

⁴ J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), p. 28.

⁵ Dash, pp. 28-29.

⁶ Dash, p. 29.

⁷ Burns, ‘Sites of Resistance’, p. 52.

⁸ Burns, ‘Sites of Resistance’, pp. 52-53.

essential quality of Eden', Terry Gifford suggests, 'is that it is, by definition, a pre-lapsarian Golden Age'.⁹ This would imply that literary projections of Eden neglect present realities, positing a regressive immersion into a nostalgic vision of an imagined, lost realm of innocence.

Similarly, pastoral is often treated with caution by those critics who recognise nostalgia for a lost, past realm as one of its essential features, a theme pioneered by Laurence Lerner's *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry* (1972).¹⁰ This point is succinctly outlined by Frederick Garber: 'Given the nature of nostalgia, which is essentially a looking back, a longing for what one no longer has, it is clear how pastoral, described as basically nostalgic, has come to be seen as escapist'.¹¹ However, as Gifford notes, 'Eden also contains the serpent and the apple by which human innocence will be tested'.¹² Thus, Edenic symbolism rests upon an essential paradox. Writers seeking to project a vision of Eden must offer a realm in which humanity is in absolute harmony with God and nature, in a space at once divine, ideal and idyllic, whilst at the same time acknowledging that their reader will be aware that this is an unstable condition, on the precipice of a sequence of events involving sin, expulsion, loss and the beginnings of mortality. For Walcott, this presence of corruptibility is of vital importance to the Edenic symbolism employed in his works. Walcott posits the

⁹ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 34.

¹⁰ The notion that nostalgia and a sense of longing for a lost idyllic space are key features of pastoral is treated with scepticism by Paul Alpers, who, in a discussion of loss in pastoral literature, remarks: 'The usual ideas of nostalgia and idyllic retreat wrongly construe the way pastoral deals with such themes, but there is no doubt that from its beginnings, the form has been concerned with various human separations and their implications'. He continues to argue: 'Pastoral songs and representations are conceived as dealing with, not avoiding or retreating from, present situations and occasions'. Alpers, *Pastoral?*, p. 92.

¹¹ Frederick Garber, 'Pastoral Spaces', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 30 (1988), 431-460, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40754867 (p. 443).

¹² Gifford, *Pastoral*, pp. 33-34. It should, of course, be noted that the fruit eaten by Adam and Eve is not said to be an 'apple' in Genesis, and that this became a convention in later discourse.

notion of a second Eden, one which is not a mirror of its predecessor, but a creatively fertile space; based not on a temporal plane, but rather bearing localized spatial integrity, and accepting of the presence of contemporary political complexities, rather than reductively idealising or escapist. This involves a navigation of pastoral tropes, as traditional conventions of representing Edenic settings are deconstructed, destabilized and interrogated by the poet, with an ultimate fragmentation of any singular, monolithic vision of Eden into a mosaic of second Edens, shifting in tone and style, forming a rich assortment of stylistic approaches to Edenic symbolism, achieved through the transformation of conventions of the pastoral mode.

Gifford describes Eden as ‘the original Arcadia of Christian culture’.¹³

Similarly, Laurence Lerner states:

Pastoral and Christianity conflict because of the Fall; and so the Christian poet has one way of avoiding the conflict. If he writes about the time when man was unfallen, he can with good conscience use pastoral imagery and the feeling of innocence. The Christian Arcadia was Eden.¹⁴

But what is the connection between the setting for a tale from the biblical book of Genesis and the pastoral mode? In answer to this, I would highlight the significance of three interrelated concepts: The Golden Age, Arcadia and Eden. The Golden Age of Greek mythology is usually traced back to Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (c.700 BC), which Gifford, like many critics of pastoral, directly links to Theocritus’s *Idylls*: ‘The complete picture of agriculture and trading presented in *Work and Days* has been narrowed mainly to herding by Theocritus, thereby setting what became a pattern for the later pastoral mode’.¹⁵ The Golden Age is characterised by its temporal distance;

¹³ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 33.

¹⁴ Lerner, p. 197.

¹⁵ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 17.

it is, like Eden, a lost realm, one from which humankind is contemporaneously exiled. This sense of loss is vital to its Hesiodic iteration, as Raymond Williams outlines: ‘We shall see the long influence of this myth of the Golden Age, but for Hesiod, at the beginning of country literature, it is already far in the past.’¹⁶

Virgil’s decision in the *Eclogues* to make use of the setting of Arcadia, an existing rural area of Greece, was an innovative and highly influential modification to the Graeco-Roman pastoral tradition. However, it is important to recognise that ‘Arcadia’, rather than referring to its actual Mediterranean namesake, acts overarchingly as a pseudonym for a highly stylised, imagined space throughout the later pastoral tradition. Gradually, and particularly during the Renaissance in Western Europe, an increasing tendency emerged to conflate the Arcadian setting of pastoral writings with the biblical Garden of Eden, a technique which is perhaps at its clearest and most influential in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667).¹⁷ The process and effects of this emergence of Eden as a key symbol are surprisingly neglected in many seminal studies of pastoral literature. Indeed, the Edenic dimension of the pastoral mode is explained in a footnote in an essay by Baktygul Aliev, rather than included in the main body of the essay, implicative of the widespread critical understanding in modern literary criticism of the Fall as an accepted, conventional element of pastoral writings, meriting little explanation: ‘By the Middle Ages, pastoral themes entered drama and

¹⁶ Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Baktygul Aliev, ‘Desacralizing the Idyll: Chekhov’s Transformation of the Pastoral Author(s)’, *The Russian Review*, 69 (2010), 463-476, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25677249 (p. 463). As Lerner observes, through reading Milton’s *Paradise Lost* through the lens of pastoral theory ‘we are looking at the poem as Milton intended us to. He could, after all, have called it *Adam’s Fall*, or *Mankind’s Corruption*, or at least *Adam Unparadis’d*. He has invited us to place Paradise, rather than Adam or God, at the centre of our thoughts’. Lerner, *Uses of Nostalgia*, p. 197.

prose writing, where they intermixed with Christian images (God as the ultimate shepherd and people as the flock, the rural setting as the Garden of Eden, and so on)'.¹⁸

Aliev offers further analysis of the implications of this development, notably conflating the Golden Age with Eden:

The pastoral is typically concerned with a mythical Golden Age of humanity that precedes a Fall, be it the Biblical Fall from Eden or a loss of gods in the more archaic and universal mythology. The loss of a Golden Age means a loss of one's gods, of the mythical connection between human beings and the environment – what used to be sacred becomes profane.¹⁹

The central significance of conventional settings in pastoral works, from this critical perspective, is their relationship to a lost realm. This loss is a destructive, degenerative process, as the 'sacred becomes profane', and marks a spiritual distance between humans, their environment, and the divine. This would suggest that pastoral literature offers a projection of Eden which necessitates a sense of melancholy, loss, and the existence of corruption. Humanity suffers, in this worldview, from a self-imposed separation between mankind and its creator(s), a theme explored by Walcott in such poems as 'Crusoe's Island', which presents a distancing, dichotomous relationship between the practice of creating art in an Edenic setting and the observation of religious faith. Ultimately, as I will later argue, this poem elevates ambiguity, rather than resolution, in its final stanzas, indicating Walcott's intention to complicate and revise traditional conventions of pastoral visions of Eden.

Consequently, Eden, Arcadia and the Golden Age are difficult terms to clearly differentiate and define, with each having undergone significant shifts in semantics,

¹⁸ Aliev, p. 463.

¹⁹ Aliev, p. 467.

usage, and conventionality over the course of centuries, as well as a wide range of treatments in literary criticism. In *What is Pastoral?* Paul Alpers argues against too great a critical emphasis on idealised nature as an essential element of the pastoral mode. Rather, it is the interactions between pastoral personae which constitutes the mode's vital trope: 'we will have a far truer idea of pastoral if we take its representative anecdote to be herdsmen and their lives, rather than landscape or idealized nature.'²⁰ Such a comment appears to suggest that Edenic symbolism can have only a modest impact on pastoral works, as idealised locations become somewhat interchangeable, simply various forms of 'idealized nature', their significance paling in comparison to the centralised trope of human interaction. I find this argument valuable in terms of recognising the significance of human dialogue and activity as an essential feature of the pastoral mode, an element which has been present in pastoral writings from their first known conception, and one which allows the mode social and political weight; Walcott's 'second' Eden would not have the same, or perhaps any, amount of creative potential if it were not peopled with a 'second Adam'.²¹ In Virgil's *Eclogue I*, the reader or listener learns of Meliboeus' exile through an instance of human interaction: his dialogue with Tityrus, and it is this information which shapes their understanding of the landscape in which these characters are placed as proto-Edenic, its inhabitants at permanent risk of exile. Indeed, through the device of pathetic fallacy, nature itself responds to these tales of human pain; when speaking of Tityrus' time spent in Rome, away from the rural idyll, Meliboeus claims: 'Tityrus was not there. The very springs

²⁰ Alpers, *Pastoral?*, p. 22.

²¹ Derek Walcott, 'The Muse of History', in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 36-64 (p. 40).

and pine-trees | Called out, these very orchards were crying for you, my friend'.²² However, as previously outlined, I attribute more significance to the choice of setting than Alpers. I argue that whilst human relationships with the land and with one another constitute the central value and convention of pastoral works, representations of landscape reveal vital poetic, political and social considerations. As a result, the specificity involved in selecting an Edenic setting for pastoral writings does need to be recognised as a meaningful choice by the poet, particularly in the context of the Caribbean, and one which requires appropriate analysis.

In the Americas, Edenic symbolism has taken on specific complexities in consequence of colonialism, and the frequency with which Europeans, such as Columbus, employed Eden as a comparison for the setting of this continent. As Gifford outlines: 'In Eden nature was not wild, but a garden for the delight of Adam and Eve. American Arcadias are usually set, not in a garden, but in a wilderness that is presumed to be in an innocent, original state that is beyond "the frontier" in both space and time.'²³ As a result, 'American Arcadian innocence is therefore located in a land before colonisation'.²⁴ This Eden, then, is a precolonial vision, as well as prelapsarian; the two states correspond to one another in Gifford's reading, marking a spatial and temporal zone positioned before the corruptive and destructive forces of this process of colonisation. However, Gifford stresses an important irony underlying this impulse to depict a precolonial state, pointing out that 'the American vision of its land was created

²² Virgil, p. 4. This also relates to the strain of pastoral elegy, a fundamental feature of which is the mourning of anthropomorphised nature for the loss of a human figure, as will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

²³ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 33.

²⁴ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 33.

by the colonialists through Eurocentric imagery’, and thus pastoral imaginings of an innocent Edenic realm which seek a temporal detachment from colonial history are constructed through a gaze which colonists themselves imposed upon the region.²⁵

In a study of Walcott’s poetry, George Handley remarks upon the concept of ‘[n]ostalgia for Eden’:

Christian discourse has traditionally placed nature in two positions: prior to and after human history. On the one hand, its innocence and newness come prior to the Fall and to the beginnings of human history, and therefore it is relentlessly and nostalgically beyond the reach of history’s irrevocable march forward in time. On the other, the earth becomes paradisiacal and innocent again only after the end of time when it has finally been cleansed of the stains of mortal time. Caught in between these two unreachable possibilities, Western imperialism has historically expressed its nostalgia for terrestrial paradises by exerting its economic will on the wilderness of the New World and other territories whose geographies and historical otherness challenge the integrity of its unilinearity.²⁶

Handley’s ensuing exploration of the relationship between representations of nature and conceptions of history in Walcott’s poem ‘The Bounty’ seeks to relate these themes specifically to Edenic symbolism, elevating the significance of projections of Eden in Walcott’s poetry by suggesting that these instances express engagements with ecological consciousness and colonial history. However, this essay contains no mention of the pastoral mode in connection to these readings, a critical absence all too frequent in Walcott studies. In contrast, Sarah Phillips Casteel has analysed the concept of Eden specifically in the context of Caribbean literature in a study which incorporates a recognition of the importance of the pastoral mode to expressions of landscape and belonging, noting that ‘the pastoral mode has considerable appeal for diasporic writers in the Americas because of its unique capacity to register simultaneously the attachment

²⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

²⁶ George Handley, ‘Derek Walcott’s Poetics of the Environment in *The Bounty*’, *Callaloo*, 28 (2005), 201–215, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3805546 (p. 202).

to place and the anguish of dispossession'.²⁷ In its 'complex form', Casteel suggests, 'pastoral is sharply double-edged, bringing into tension the ideal and the real, nature and history'.²⁸ I argue that an understanding of the mode's intrinsic connections to these tensions is vital to any reading of the pastoral and Edenic symbolism in Walcott's writings.

For Casteel, 'Caribbean writers come to the landscape and to the garden in particular bearing a considerable historical burden'.²⁹ This 'burden' is due to the influence of uses of Edenic symbolism in the discourse of early colonists:

While the early explorers' hopes of recovering the original Garden of Eden in the New World were eventually abandoned, paradisaical associations with the Caribbean persisted, shifting by the beginning of the eighteenth century to accommodate the taste for cultivated, pastoral landscapes, and then in the late eighteenth century to reflect an emerging interest in wild, sublime scenes.³⁰

Casteel continues to argue that 'paradisaical and natural scientific readings of New World nature and the historical aftermath of the plantation' have been persistent features in Caribbean literature, combining to 'ensure the continued reliance of twentieth-century Caribbean writing on the trope of the regenerative Edenic garden that promises sanctuary from history and a return to origins'.³¹ Eden as a 'sanctuary from history' is a concept which necessitates consideration, as Casteel's wording suggests that it relies upon nostalgia and a retrospective gaze for a retreat from the trauma of colonial history. Casteel adds that: 'the search for precolonial and preslavery origins through a retreat into nature is one of the dominant motifs of Caribbean and New World writing'.³² In

²⁷ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 109.

²⁸ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 109.

²⁹ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 135.

³⁰ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 135.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

his prose writings, Walcott is openly critical of this impulse to project a ‘sanctuary from history’ in an idealised, precolonial Eden, cautioning against what he deems a ‘revenge in nostalgia’, a ‘schizophrenic daydream of an Eden that existed before its exile’.³³ Rather, the artistic power of Edenic symbolism is not confined to nostalgic imaginings of a lost, idyllic realm, but is shifted to an emphasis upon the present, and an optimistic sense of joy in linguistic creativity, symbolised by the biblical Adam’s act of naming, as he expresses in a direct addressal of ‘[p]astoralists of the African revival’: ‘what is needed is not new names for old things, or old names for new things, but the faith of using old names anew’.³⁴ However, this seemingly unequivocal rejection of nostalgic imaginings of a precolonial setting is complicated in Walcott’s poetry, for instance through Achille’s redemptive journey into an ancestral past in *Omeros*. The overall effect of Walcott’s portrayal of nostalgia in this poem, I will argue, is one of ambiguity and melancholy, in contrast to the explicit sentiments presented in his prose essay.

Edenic Symbolism and the Concept of a Second Eden in ‘The Muse of History’ and Walcott’s Shorter Poems.

Walcott’s engagements with Edenic symbolism, and the significance of Adam as a representative figure, charted a constant and complex course throughout his literary career. ‘The Muse of History’ (1974) may be read as Walcott’s most explicit prose exploration of the Edenic and Adamic motifs. In this interrogation of ‘history, that Medusa of the New World’, Walcott encourages Caribbean writers to recognise that

³³ Derek Walcott, ‘What the Twilight Says: An Overture’, in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), pp. 3-40 (p. 20).

³⁴ Walcott, ‘Twilight’, p. 9.

for the ‘great poets of the New World, from Whitman to Neruda’, their ‘vision of man in the New World is Adamic’.³⁵ These poets recognise the ‘elemental privilege of naming the New World’, and in their roles as new, plural Adams they have ‘faith in elemental man’.³⁶ Thus, Adam becomes representative not of humankind, but of poets, his act of naming elements of the natural world elevated and celebrated as signifying linguistic creativity. This leads to an artistic manifesto based upon Edenic metaphor:

A political philosophy rooted in elation would have to accept belief in a second Adam, the re-creation of the entire order, from religion to the simplest domestic rituals. The myth of the noble savage would not be revived, for that myth never emanated from the savage but has always been the nostalgia of the Old World, its longing for innocence. The great poetry of the New World does not pretend to such innocence, its vision is not naïve. Rather, like its fruits, its savour is a mixture of the acid and the sweet, the apples of its second Eden have the tartness of experience. In such poetry there is a bitter memory and it is the bitterness that dries last on the tongue. It is the acidulous that supplies its energy. The golden apples of this sun are shot with acid.³⁷

This is not a call for perceptions of a lost innocence regained, or for simplistic representations of Edenic wonder; it recognises that any ‘longing for innocence’ is fundamentally flawed. Good poetry, Walcott claims, does not require such longing, ‘its vision is not naïve’. Instead, ‘its savour is a mixture of the acid and the sweet, the apples of its second Eden have the tartness of experience’; this is a decidedly postlapsarian vision of Eden, a ‘second’ Eden rather than a mirroring of its predecessor, this ‘bitterness’ symbolic of the region’s traumatic colonial history. This is a poetry which incorporates ‘a bitter memory’, as for the Caribbean people ‘the tribal memory is salted with the bitter memory of migration’, rather than nostalgia for an idyllic, lost and imagined realm.³⁸ Thus, the Eden myth is both vital to Walcott’s poetic vision, and unsatisfactory in the form in which it has been traditionally projected through the

³⁵ ‘Muse’, pp. 36-37.

³⁶ ‘Muse’, p. 40.

³⁷ ‘Muse’, pp. 40-41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

framework of the pastoral mode. Walcott must, therefore, embark on a revisionist project, one which rethinks and appropriates past uses of Edenic symbolism in the context of representing Caribbean settings, interrogating and undercutting tropes of the pastoral mode in order to present this ‘political philosophy rooted in elation’.

The element which must be emphasised is this notion of a ‘second Eden’, one which Walcott presents as acknowledging the corruption of the first. This concept not only indicates Walcott’s use of pluralistic visions of Eden, but also highlights a rejection of the pastoral trope of envisioning and idealising a lost, past realm. Walcott does not seek the dismissal of ‘history’, despite his tense relationship with the concept, but fragments temporalities in order to project a defamiliarizing vision of various postlapsarian Edens. If ‘The Muse of History’ is to be read, then, as a clear outlining of intent with regards to the employment of Edenic symbolism in Walcott’s poetry, he seeks to produce representations of the Caribbean which recognise the horror of its colonial history, thus undercutting pastoral nostalgia, and reject any Eden which has been neatly conflated with the pastoral mode’s idealised Golden Age. Such a sentiment is similarly present in Walcott’s essay ‘The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?’ (1974), which states: ‘The New World originated in hypocrisy and genocide, so it is not a question for us, of returning to an Eden or of creating Utopia’.³⁹ This notion of a ‘second’ Eden, tinged with the ‘bitter’ taste of corruption, rather than a ‘return’ to the first, is a recurring and vital element of Walcott’s writings. This, I argue, results in a radical appropriation of conventional engagements with Eden in pastoral poetry, and a seminal reworking of the relationship between Edenic symbolism and representations

³⁹ Derek Walcott, ‘The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?’, in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. by Robert D. Hamner (U.S.A.: Three Continents Press, 1993; repr. Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1997), pp. 51-57 (first publ. in *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 16.1 (1974), 3-13) p. 57.

of Caribbean spaces.

Edenic symbolism is employed frequently throughout Walcott's poetry, forming a fundamental element of his poetic craftsmanship. As Philippe Hackens observes: 'That the myth of Eden is of special relevance to Walcott's work is of course quite explicit in his poetry, which repeatedly explores imaginative connections between the Edenic situation and the New World predicament'.⁴⁰ Indeed, this has been noted by several critics; Edward Baugh, for example, has explored references to Eden in Walcott's shorter poems, referring to 'The Cloud' and 'Adam's Song' as 'Eden-myth poems', thus coining a Walcottian type.⁴¹ Paula Burnett claims that 'as one who is well aware of the power of myth, Walcott realizes that the most effective resistance to a memorable myth is a countermyth', continuing to stress the significance of Walcott's second Adam as part of this process: 'It is this fully mature awareness of the postlapsarian Adam that Walcott employs'.⁴² Paul Breslin has drawn attention to the relationship between Adam and Robinson Crusoe in Walcott's poetry, stating that: 'For many years, Walcott has closely associated the idea of the New World Adam with what he called, in a 1965 lecture, "The Figure of Crusoe"', and observing that references to this 'Adamic motif', after 1965, begin to appear on their own, without connections to the figure of Crusoe, who 'lies dormant through the late 1960s and early 1970s', signifying the flexibility and malleability of Walcott's engagements with the Adamic motif.⁴³ Breslin highlights 'the naming of creatures' as 'one of Adam's most important privileges', as well as the complex, even paradoxical, nature of this concept of a

⁴⁰ Hackens, p. 11.

⁴¹ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 104.

⁴² Paula Burnett, *Politics and Poetics*, pp. 59, 116.

⁴³ Paul Breslin, *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), ProQuest Ebook Central, p. 102.

‘second’ Adam: ‘if the defining trait of Adam was his temporal priority to all other men, then the second Adam, on the face of it, would seem no Adam at all’, a paradox which may similarly be applied to Eden, and from which Walcott draws creative strength.⁴⁴

However, these critics are, in comparison to this study, less interested in Eden as a setting. Breslin’s understanding of Walcott’s vision of Adam as being ‘pluralistic’ is shared by this thesis, but this is not extended to a treatment of pluralistic visions of Eden, or to analysing the setting in relation to Edenic symbolism in any significant depth.⁴⁵ Moreover, like the majority of critics who have approached this topic, Breslin does not connect his readings of the Adamic motif in Walcott’s works to the pastoral mode, although he similarly recognises the significance of Walcott’s refutation of any reclaiming of pure, lost innocence, claiming: ‘Walcott’s Adamicism [...] acknowledges from the outset that Adamic innocence, if it remains possible at all, emerges from violence and must somehow come to terms with the guilt or rage past violence has provoked’.⁴⁶ This absence of an engagement with the connections between Edenic symbolism and the pastoral mode is typical of most critical approaches to both the Adamic and Edenic motifs in Walcott’s work. Indeed, at present, no extended consideration of Edenic symbolism specifically in relation to the pastoral mode in Walcott’s poetry exists, aside from Philippe Hackens’s pioneering treatment of this topic in his study of what he terms the ‘pastoral design’ in the poetry of Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott.

For Hackens, this ‘design’ rests upon the notion of a ‘counterforce’: ‘the

⁴⁴ Breslin, pp. 102-103.

⁴⁵ Breslin, p. 104.

⁴⁶ Breslin, p. 104

pastoral design contains within itself the seeds of conflict, hence of a dialectic process that will tend to accommodate the thesis (the pastoral ideal) and the antithesis (the counterforce)'.⁴⁷ The Garden of Eden is a suitable fit for both representations of the 'pastoral ideal' and the 'pastoral design', as it contains a 'counterforce' in the form of the Tree of Knowledge, ensuring 'evil was there *in potentia* from the start'.⁴⁸ Hackens argues that Walcott has a clearly identifiable target in what he refers to as 'Walcott's *anti-pastoralism*', namely the 'African revival in the political form that it has taken in the West Indies', and suggests that there is a paradox underlying this aim:

the fact is, however, that Walcott's utopia expresses itself, like that of the African revivalists, in terms that pertain to the pastoral mode (it might perhaps be termed a "messianic pastoral"): the longing for a second Eden is, at the same time, a nostalgia for the first one, a craving to reconcile the two hyphenated, schizophrenic selves of the poet into a pre-schizophrenic whole. Like Heaney's, Walcott's vision thus originates in a sense of loss, and pertains, therefore, to the elegiac trend of pastoral.⁴⁹

Such an argument is convincing to an extent, in that it highlights the close links between Edenic symbolism and the pastoral mode in Walcott's poetry, the interest in an 'elegiac' sense of 'loss' in much of his work, the direct dismissal of attempts to recreate a precolonial vision of Edenic wonder, and the complexity of expressing supposedly anti-pastoral sentiments through the framework of the pastoral mode. However, Hackens recognises more of a thematic and technical distance between pastoral and anti-pastoral than this thesis, as, despite demonstrating an understanding of the two as interrelated, he suggests that their relationship is antithetical in nature: 'the pastoral and the anti-pastoral, though the latter defines itself in reaction to the former, are actually, in a sense, two sides of the same coin'.⁵⁰ In the case of the 'traditional pastoral', the form becomes

⁴⁷ Hackens, p. 15.

⁴⁸ Hackens, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Hackens, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰ Hackens, p. 17.

‘bound’ to ‘turn into its dialectic antithesis, the anti-pastoral, whose rural setting realistically represents the harshness of the actual rural condition in order to denounce its pastoral, nostalgic idealisation’.⁵¹ Ultimately, claims Hackens, ‘Walcott’s intention is anti-pastoral’.⁵² I would suggest that there is more interplay and ambiguity at work in Walcott’s employment of elements of pastoral and anti-pastoral than this statement suggests, as strands of each are interwoven and complicated in a way which allows more frequently for ambivalence in regards to modal tropes than a resolute, dedicated opposition of traditional pastoral conventions in favour of a purely anti-pastoral approach.⁵³ Indeed, I would argue that Walcott does not, in fact, seek to offer a straightforwardly anti-pastoral projection of Eden in the Caribbean, but rather centres the processes of deconstruction, destabilization and fragmentation to this mythopoeic project, elevating a pluralistic approach to Edenic symbolism in relation to the pastoral mode, and conveying what Isidore Okpewho refers to as ‘an inclusive geopolitical framework that recognizes contemporary realities’ through a mosaic of representations of this ‘second’ Eden.⁵⁴

Moreover, my readings do not support the suggestion that Walcott’s vision of a ‘second’ Eden constitutes ‘a nostalgia for the first one’, an argument Hackens develops further: ‘what Walcott shares with the advocates of the African revival is a sense of loss’, alongside a ‘longing to redeem that loss in some way: the means are different but the end is the same. His project is thus nostalgic, not in intention, but in essence. The idea

⁵¹ Hackens, p. 15.

⁵² Hackens, p. 90.

⁵³ The relationship between pastoral and anti-pastoral features in Walcott’s writing is a theme which will be explored in greater depth in the final chapter of this thesis, through a reading of *The Sea at Dauphin*.

⁵⁴ Isidore Okpewho, ‘Walcott, Homer, and the “Black Atlantic”’, *Research in African Literatures*, 33 (2002) 27-44, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3820928 (p. 31).

of a “Paradise Regained” necessarily presupposes that of a “Paradise Lost”.”⁵⁵ Whilst it is clear that Walcott demonstrates a fascination with loss and a strong engagement with the elegiac strand of pastoral, I would propose that Walcott’s interest lies almost exclusively in exploring nostalgia in its many iterations, not in expressing it, and, for the most part, connotes an acceptance of ‘loss’ without seeking its redemption, although it should be noted that the fluidity and variability of Walcott’s engagements with Edenic symbolism allow variances to this otherwise consistent rule.⁵⁶ In addition, it is worth considering what ‘nostalgia’ refers to in the specific context of the pastoral mode.

Frederick Garber argues that etymology and literary historical scholarship are essential to an understanding of the presence of nostalgia as a key trope of the pastoral mode:

the primary emotion of nostalgia, agreed by most critics to be central to the pastoral mode, cannot be taken solely in its status as an emotion. To do so is to stop at one level of the mode and to argue that this is all there is to be known, though in fact that level is only a surface manifestation. Nostalgia is more than a feeling because, in its pastoral form, it is also the creator of an act.⁵⁷

This ‘act’, one which ‘nostalgia performs, or causes to be performed’, is the ‘*nostos*, the act of return, the homecoming (in its pastoral version actually a *seeking* for return or homecoming) that appears in all pastorals and is essential to the workings of the mode’.⁵⁸ Therefore: ‘If you are eager for a *nostos*, that means you are not where you want to be. [...] What *nostos* is aiming at, in every version of the act, is a point of origin, the place where we used to be’.⁵⁹ Virgil’s *Eclogue I*, suggests Garber, complicates

⁵⁵ Hackens, p. 90.

⁵⁶ My argument here is similar to that of Paul Alpers in relation to Virgil’s first eclogue: ‘Rather than expressing nostalgia, the poem anatomizes it’. In the same way, I would suggest that Walcott demonstrates far more of an interest in examining and exploring nostalgia than in expressing it, in both his poetry and in his prose essays. Alpers, *Pastoral?*, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Garber, p. 444.

⁵⁸ Garber, p. 444.

⁵⁹ Garber, p. 445.

superficial readings of nostalgia as a homogeneous mood present across pastoral writings, as it offers differing examples of mechanisms for this act of *nostos*; Tityrus follows the arc of *nostos* as he returns home to his farm after living in Rome for a time, whereas Meliboeus ‘will never act out the shape of the returning curve that is the skeletal frame of *nostos* but goes, instead (deepening the distance and absence), in precisely the other direction’, as he is ‘compelled on a linear excursion toward an unspecified relocation’, furthering the intricacy of representations of nostalgia as a fundamental feature of the pastoral mode.⁶⁰ For Garber, *nostos* is an act which is ‘essential to pastoral’s workings’.⁶¹ However, this does not, he claims, involve a turning away from the present or from history. Indeed, pastoral is described as rendering ‘a condition of being [...] pastoral can be seen as a mode of conceiving and seeking to control some of the radical situations that history has visited upon us and some of the forms of relation that stem from those situations’.⁶² As a result, ‘The way of being-in-the-world that is essential to the workings of pastoral also involves a being-in-history’.⁶³ Ultimately, Garber suggests: ‘Pastoral in all its forms is not a flight out of history but an acknowledgement of its hold and an attempt to understand the conditions of that hold’.⁶⁴

I would suggest that the essential quality of pastoral representations of *nostos* is their apparent futility. Pastoral’s tendency towards a cyclical, rather than a linear, timeframe is often remarked upon, but in the case of nostalgic longing this is especially significant, as circular time suggests inescapability, an eternalizing of this process of imagining a lost realm, without the possibility of reclamation. Ultimately, to quote

⁶⁰ Garber, p. 446.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 456.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 458.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 459.

Garber, whilst pastoral ‘seeks to act out a complete realization of *nostos*’, it relies on the lack of completion of this return, as ‘pastoral is always and everywhere only a perpetual moving *toward*, an uncompleteable act’.⁶⁵ I do not, however, share Garber’s confident assertion that a recognition of history is ‘essential’ to the pastoral mode. Rather, its nostalgic impulse can be, and certainly has been, employed to seek a space before history, through a dismissal of the present and past events. However, there is certainly a deep complexity at work in its sustained, perpetual longing for a lost realm, as it both stresses the irretrievability of this sacred space and highlights its absence, whilst simultaneously solidifying and eternalizing it through the act of producing poetry. As Aliev observes: ‘since the pastoral represents an escape from a certain time and place, this results in that other place forever looming on the periphery of the pastoral’, and the same is true in reverse; the Eden imagined in pastoral looms on the periphery in the same manner as the present reality.⁶⁶ As a result, nostalgia is a deeply complex concept in pastoral, and Walcott’s own engagements further an intricacy already present in the mode, as well as subverting this process of *nostos*. In addition, as Baugh observes, ‘contradiction and paradox are characteristic features of Walcott’s thought’, even acting as valuable ‘rhetorical features’.⁶⁷ This can be recognised in the uses of Edenic symbolism in Walcott’s poetry, which see notable variation in terms of stylistic approaches, themes and mood, although these modulations are not always ‘contradictory’ in nature. Thus, to return to an earlier point, his approach is more complex than Hackens’s suggestion of a straightforward ‘anti-pastoral’ agenda in opposing traditional generic uses of Eden would allow, although the majority of

⁶⁵ Garber, p. 446.

⁶⁶ Aliev, p. 470.

⁶⁷ Baugh, pp. 4-5.

instances of Edenic symbolism are consistent in their rejection of any ‘longing for innocence’ and insistence upon the ‘bitter’ taste of the existence of corruption, in whatever form it takes.

‘Return to D’Ennery, Rain’, included in the collection *In a Green Night* (1962), offers an important insight into Walcott’s early engagements with pastoral tropes in relation to Eden, as, like many of his poems, it simultaneously explores, interrogates and inverts archetypal pastoral renderings of island spaces, ultimately undercutting any sense of static idyllicism in favour of a celebration of transience and change and an emphasis upon the experience of exile.⁶⁸ A refusal to conform to the literary tradition of conjuring Edenic idealism in depicting Caribbean spaces is evident from its opening stanza. The scene portrayed, a ‘village’ in the St Lucian quarter of D’Ennery (the name of both the quarter and a village within it, typically anglicised to Dennery, as it is in Walcott’s poem ‘Sainte Lucie’), is ‘stricken with a single street’, the violent verb immediately conjuring an ominous, increasingly fatalistic mood (p. 33).⁶⁹ The voice is firmly positioned as a passive, isolated observer, with the implication that this poem considers the pastoral theme of the relationship between human subject and landscape, whilst simultaneously revising its reliance on communal interaction in favour of the lyric trope of a single, meditative figure, the speaker emphatically mediating the rendering of the setting presented: ‘Imprisoned in these wires of rain, I watch | This village’ (p. 33). Through pathetic fallacy, the speaker (implied to be the poet, as is the case in much of Walcott’s poetry) is presented as both physically and psychologically

⁶⁸ Derek Walcott, ‘Return to D’Ennery, Rain’, in *In a Green Night* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), pp. 33- 34.

⁶⁹ The poem ‘Sainte Lucie’ is included in the collection *Sea Grapes* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), pp. 43-55 (p. 43).

trapped by the natural setting, unable, in the poem's first stanza, to escape a singular gaze through which to view this island. This gaze is shaped by melancholy and lethargy, as the observer's viewpoint is drawn to symbols of poverty and suffering, the humanised 'weathered shack' which 'leans on a wooden crutch', with a simile here employed to compare this structure to 'a cripple in defeat' and a reference to the 'hospital'; human frailty is thus imposed upon the physical landscape (p. 33). The 'place' in which the speaker finds himself 'seemed born for being buried there', as 'any human action seemed a waste' (p. 33). It is stressed that 'human' acts, alone, are purposeless; like Adam and Eve after the consumption of the forbidden fruit, only death lies ahead, regardless of human endeavour. This is a postlapsarian Eden in stasis: 'It could not change', even as the speaker reflects upon his own maturity into adulthood (p. 33). The protagonist pleads directly with his faith: 'O God, where is our home?', intensifying the poem's religious imagery and theme of displacement: only the 'exiles' remain capable of belief (p. 34). Any sense of idyllicism is decisively undercut, as the scene further fragments into a melancholic, even despairing, meditation upon belonging, the boundary between physical environment and imagined space blurred entirely, as the speaker reflects upon prior attempts to escape the claustrophobic confines of 'the mind's dark cave', a further subversion of the communal dynamic of the pastoral tradition (p. 34).

'Return' broadly employs iambic pentameter, its loose rhyming structure suggestive of Miltonic blank verse, alongside further allusions to Milton's pastoral-epic *Paradise Lost*, a work which has been hugely influential in shaping representations of prelapsarian Eden and which recurs as an intertextual presence in Walcott's poetic works. This includes several references to birds: 'scissor-birds' hunt for fish, a 'beaten

heron' washes up on the shore, and 'herons' are envisioned as 'stoned by the rain', alluding to the cormorant of Milton's poem, Satan in disguise, thus contributing to an unsettling mood of foreboding; *evil in potentia* (pp. 33-34). Moreover, the heavy sibilance prevalent in its opening stanza echoes the hissing of the serpent: 'stricken', 'single street', 'shack', 'sweet', and 'sea', again implying that this is an Eden caught on the brink of doom (p. 33). However, the frequent instances of metrical irregularity and recurring, if uneven, employment of an alternating rhyme scheme ensure that this is not an exact replica of Milton's influential prosody. Moreover, the birds in this poem are not a source of threat to the human subject, but victims of natural violence: the heron 'beaten' by the alliterative 'filth and foam' of the crashing sea, a simile which conjures the image of 'herons' similarly harmed by the heavy rain, 'stoned' like religious martyrs (pp. 33-34). The setting itself, it suggests, resists these allusions. Human habitation is stressed through references to 'roads' and buildings, and unnamed subjects fulfil the roles of archetypal pastoral characters: a 'naked boy drives pigs into the bush', 'laughing labourers come from shelter' and 'charcoal burners heap their days' (pp. 33-34). However, these are transient images, captured briefly in a state of action by the poet and shaped into a mosaic of a world in motion which is simultaneously '[i]mprisoned' by the permanency of poetry, signified by metaphors of immutability and perpetuity such as an 'anchor of suffering', 'a grave, | Or a bed' (pp. 33-34). Human action is presented as futile, the expulsion of humanity from Eden as a result of a single human act is here irredeemable; ultimately 'no one will save | The world from itself' (p. 34).

However, the language itself undercuts this mood of stasis and futility. The technique of repetition and uses of the past tense combined strongly imply a note of ambiguity in relation to this retrospective reverie: 'seemed born for being buried there',

human action 'seemed a waste'. The use of the past tense evidences that time has, indeed, passed, despite the sense of immutability cultivated. Moreover, the frequently repeated verb 'to seem' implies uncertainty, a questioning of this impressionistic gaze upon the setting, implying such a viewpoint is merely illusory. Indeed, the opening stanza remarks that '[f]ive years' has passed since the speaker believed that 'even poverty seemed sweet', and the 'air' appeared to be dreamily 'azure and indifferent', indicating that a previously idealising, romanticizing vision of the island has transitioned into something new in the mind of the poet, whilst the physical environment, connected to this interior psychology, is similarly in a state of flux, intensified through the use of the present tense: 'The surf explodes' (p. 33). Although the sentiment is one of futility, redemption is implied through the reference to Christ: 'no one will save | The world from itself, though he walk among men', alongside the martyred 'herons' and the confident assertion that, despite a loss of faith:

[...] Heaven remains
Where it is, in the hearts of these people,
In the womb of their church, [...]
(p. 34)

The church is here conflated with Mary, the mother of God, representative of new life, and references to 'these people' suggest comfort found in human companionship, as Eve offers to Adam. Nonetheless, when read in the light of the statement of artistic intent expressed in 'The Muse of History', it seems that original sin has ensured that death remains present in this scene, and that this remains a 'second' Eden: 'the rain's | Shroud is drawn across' the 'steeple' of this church, and the speaker's sense of isolation and self- condemnation reaches a crescendo: 'You are less than they are, for your truth | Consists of a general passion, a personal need' (p. 34). The poet refutes self-growth, stating: 'Nor have you changed', in a final shift in the uneasy equilibrium between

permeability and transformation on which this poem rests, as he ends by declaring himself ‘the most | Accursed of God’s self-pitying creatures’, a second Adam distanced from the divine and from paradise (p. 34).

‘Crusoe’s Island’, included in *The Castaway* (1965), contains several direct references to Eden, unlike the more nuanced treatment Edenic symbolism receives in ‘Return’.⁷⁰ This is reflective of a more general trend, as allusions to Eden intensify in this period of Walcott’s literary career, as do references to the figure of Crusoe. That perceptions of space and setting will be explored is immediately posited by the poem’s title: ‘Crusoe’s Island’. From its outset, land is positioned as under the ownership of a human figure, territory which can be possessed by a single individual. Its structure is tripartite, each section consisting of differing numbers of stanzas, which, in the first two sections, are themselves irregular in length and, to an extent, in metre. In the third section, a stronger sense of order is imposed, as, after its isolated opening line (reflecting the similarly isolated human figures of whom the poem speaks, Crusoe and Adam), it is formed of three octets, predominantly following a regular pattern of iambic trimeters, employed to further a sense of close unity of structure. This implies a movement towards resolution, of order restored, as the poet appears to reach the conclusion that religious experience supersedes art:

And nothing I can learn
From art or loneliness
Can bless them as the bell’s
Transfiguring tongue can bless.
(p. 57)

That this apparently confident assertion of an elevation of religious faith over ‘Art’ which is ‘profane and pagan’ is straightforward is thrown into question by the

⁷⁰ Derek Walcott, ‘Crusoe’s Island’, in *The Castaway and Other Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), pp. 54-57.

emergence of metrical and structural regularity, techniques of the ‘art’ of poetry, in its closing stanzas (p. 57). The speaker’s loyalties, it suggests, remain at the least divided, insinuated by its increasingly tight craftsmanship. This is a poem which openly engages with religion and religious imagery, forming the suggestion of an opposition between art and faith, only to complicate the very dichotomy that it introduces, a dichotomy symbolised by the tense lack of resolve between trochaic and iambic metres in the opening line of its closing section: ‘Art is profane and pagan’.

‘Upon this rock’, begins the fifth stanza, ‘the bearded hermit built | His Eden’ (p. 55). The poem’s title implies this unnamed ‘hermit’ to be Crusoe, the ‘castaway’, here echoing the role of Adam through the building of a new ‘Eden’ in the Caribbean archipelago, the use of a possessive pronoun again suggesting proprietorship over this space (p. 55). That it is built on a ‘rock’ indicates a reflection of Jesus’s words to St Peter: ‘I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church’ (Matthew 16. 18-19, KJB), and thus the formation of the church itself, the embodiment of religious doctrine, intensifying these engagements with religious imagery and further complicating the representation of this isolated human inhabitant, who becomes a conflation not only of Crusoe and Adam, but also of the first pope in the Roman Catholic tradition (the predominant religion of St Lucia, although Walcott was himself raised as a Methodist). This ‘Eden’ consists of elements of agricultural productivity and leisure: ‘Goats, corn-crop, fort, parasol, garden’ (p. 55). The final three nouns are suggestive of colonial history; a ‘fort’ like those built by Europeans to protect their colonies, a ‘parasol’ and ‘garden’ conjuring images of the pastoral renderings of these islands produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, those ‘tinted engravings’ criticised

in 'The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory'.⁷¹ Economic and aesthetic gain, then, appear to be important features of this version of a second Eden, and this 'second Adam' is closely associated with colonial history, having dominion over a new 'Eden'. Any sense of idealism is quickly undercut, not only through these allusions to colonial history (working as proponents of the 'bitter' note of 'Muse' and signifiers that this Eden is uneasily positioned in the midst of its Fall), but through the declaration that this space bears a major absence: human companionship. It is this which sends the Crusoe-Adam figure 'howling for a human voice', ironically animalistic in his need for human company, developing into a pivotal transitional moment in this extended stanza – the poem's longest at thirteen lines in length – in which this second 'Eden' gradually inverts into a vision of hell:

Exiled by a flaming sun
The rotting nut, bowled in the surf
Became his own brain rotting from the guilt
Of heaven without his kind,
Crazed by such paradisaic calm
The spinal shadow of a palm
Built keel and gunwale in his mind.
(p. 55)

The 'castaway' is thus '[e]xiled' not only from the biblical, prelapsarian Eden, and from human companionship, but from the hellish, 'flaming' heat of the sun, becoming an internal exile, trapped in these mock-Edenic, decidedly unidyllic surroundings.

This appears to align more closely to an anti-pastoral projection of this 'second' Eden than an anti-pastoral approach to pastoral longing for the first Edenic state, with language relating to the semantic fields of disease, death and isolation furthering a deconstruction of familiar pastoral Edenic tropes: a repeated use of 'rotting', '[c]razed',

⁷¹ Derek Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 75. This comment will be explored in further depth in Chapter Three.

and ‘spinal’, implicative of skeletal remains. The landscape becomes imbued with horror, the nautical imagery of ‘keel’ and ‘gunwale’ recalling the ships used to convey slaves across the Middle Passage, the ‘palm’, emblematic of this tropical landscape and more usually employed for the projection of paradisaic imagery, creating a misshaped, ominous ‘spinal shadow’, which does little to help block the scorching rays of the sun. Prolonged enjambment alongside the extended length of this stanza contributes to an effect of rapid, unpreventable transition into Eden’s antithetical opposite: hell. These poetic techniques, I suggest, position this transition as the Fall in action, its momentum thrusting forwards through enjambment, increased length and metrical irregularity. This is an Eden at once postlapsarian – in that its exiled ‘second Adam since the fall’ seeks out a ‘second’ Eden – captured in the process of its Fall, signified by the presence of ‘Corruption’ in the form of allusions to colonial history, and transitioning from ‘Eden’ and ‘heaven’ into a hellish realm, achieved through the jarring together of temporal spheres and of differing methods of representing Edenic settings, integrating both pastoral and anti-pastoral tropes. Ultimately, it both alludes to and subverts the very notion of a ‘second’ Eden posited in ‘Muse’, exemplifying Walcott’s deeply complex approach to pastoral imaginings of Eden.

Maeve Tynan reads ‘Crusoe’s Island’ as a rehearsal of ‘the idea of the writer as an exilic figure living on the fringes of society’, thus demonstrating an understanding of this ‘second Adam’ as also referring to the poet, signified by the mention of the castaway as a ‘Craftsman’, a metaphor Walcott frequently employs for the production of poetry.⁷² Tynan similarly suggests that this ‘second’ Adam is ‘not naïve, he may inhabit an earthly paradise but it is an Eden arrived at through the violence of the

⁷² Tynan, *Postcolonial Odysseys*, p. 36.

Atlantic slave trade, here referred to as “the fall”⁷³. However, this ‘island imagery’ is ‘complex’, as whilst ‘identifying it as an “Eden,” Walcott’s imagery also suggests a hellish landscape, a dearth of opportunity for the descendants of slaves’, who roast under the ‘Red, corrugated iron | Roofs’ which ‘roar in the sun’ (p. 54).⁷⁴ Indeed, the poet reflects upon the blurring of sacred and profane spheres within this poem, claiming: ‘I have lost sight of hell, | Of heaven, of human will’, complicating the rendering of Edenic spaces by imbuing them with hellish imagery (p. 56). The recognition of human isolation and mortality, results of the biblical Fall, triggers an impulse towards the pastoral *nostos*, as the poet declares: ‘O love, we die alone! | I am borne by the bell | Backward to boyhood’, thus regressing to memories of childhood, recalling pastoral images of a ‘grey wood | Spire, harvest and marigold’, and those who have since been lost to death:

To those whom a cruel
Just God could gather
To His blue breast, His beard
A folding cloud,
As he gathered my father.
(p. 56)

The capitalization of ‘His’ indicates a lingering respect for the tenets of the Christian faith, despite a feeling of detachment from the divine and the conflict between art and faith on which the poem rests: ‘I labour at my art. | My father, God, is dead’ (p. 54). Ultimately, ‘Crusoe’s Island’ offers a complex, even contradictory, vision of the ‘second’ Eden proposed in ‘Muse’. Its gradual inversion into a hellish space may also be read as opposing the very concept of Eden as it is typically envisioned in pastoral poetry, not simply demonstrating an inclusion of the corruptive forces

⁷³ Tynan, p. 37.

⁷⁴ Tynan, p. 37.

of sin but overturning them, in the light of colonial history, into its extreme opposite.

Nonetheless, remnants of Edenic innocence and sacredness remain:

Black little girls in pink
Organdy, crinolines,
Walk in their air of glory
[...]
For vespers, every dress,
Touched by the sun will burn
A seraph's, an angel's
(p. 57)

The distancing between divinity and secularism explored throughout this poem, and encapsulated in its treatment of Edenic space, is thus left on an ambiguous note, as the faithful remain connected to symbols of the sacred – the seraphs and angels – inhabiting this deeply problematized ‘second Eden’. I use the term ambiguity in relation to Walcott’s engagements with features of the pastoral mode in the sense that it is eloquently expressed by Paula Burnett: ‘Ambiguity, therefore, should not be understood as uncertainty of meaning [...] but multiple meanings, clearly and simultaneously held in view’.⁷⁵

This complex, deconstructive approach to Edenic symbolism continues in *Sea Grapes* (1976). ‘The Cloud’ cultivates a sense of *otium* in its portrayal of Adam and Eve at rest in the Garden of Eden, sexual imagery implying that this is a moment of ‘Tenderness’ after intercourse:

And, laterally,
to Adam’s pulsing eye,
the erect ridges would throb and recede,

a sigh under the fig tree and a sky
deflating to the serpent’s punctured hiss,
repeating you will die.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Burnett, *Politics and Poetics*, p. 161.

⁷⁶ Derek Walcott, ‘The Cloud’ in *Sea Grapes* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), p. 17.

This peaceful, leisurely image of a 'sigh under the fig tree' may as easily be read as rendering a Mediterranean landscape as a Caribbean one, alluding to the Virgilian *Eclogues*, punctuated by the pastoral tradition's later insistence upon Edenic symbolism, here embodied by 'the serpent's punctured hiss'. The scene is at risk of disappearing, 'deflating' into oblivion, an Eden once again destabilized through an emphasis upon transience and corruption, the 'Cloud' of its title symbolising change and fluidity, the 'serpent' signifying sin and the metonym of its 'hiss' further emphasising formlessness, the threat of death repeated in an inescapable cycle. Unlike the 'second' Adam of 'Crusoe's Island', this Adam and Eve are presented as in harmony with their surroundings, this Eden on the cusp of its Fall, with a simile equating the unnamed Eve with the natural landscape: 'The woman lay still as the settling mountains'. The scene may well appear to be an idyllic one, an example of a nostalgic, idealising vision of the original Eden, the relationship between humanity and nature one of concord. However, the poem is dense with ominous symbols of death and destruction, working to erode the mood of tranquillity: 'the silent shudder from the broken branch', the 'torn tree', Eve as a symbol of 'his death'. The overall effect is one of artificiality, an idyll prone to deflate at any moment, an illusion of Edenic wonder.

This is further complicated by a note of ambivalence:

the phosphorescent air
was both God and the serpent leaving him.
Neither could curse or bless.

This statement appears to undermine the authority and power of these embodiments of both good and evil, further fragmenting the structure of dichotomies upon which traditional pastoral writings and Edenic symbolism tend to rest.

Similarly, 'New World' turns its attention towards this first Adam, in contrast

to the 'second' Adam of 'Crusoe's Island', although it positions itself in a postlapsarian temporality:

Then after Eden,
was there one surprise?
O yes, the awe of Adam
at the first bead of sweat.⁷⁷
(p. 18)

This 'sweat' is only necessary after the Fall, when, according to theological tradition, humanity began to need to work the earth, rather than enjoy bounteous produce without physical effort. Indeed, as the poem states:

Thenceforth, all flesh
had to be sown with salt,
to feel the edge of seasons,
fear and harvest,
joy, that was difficult,
but was, at least, his own.
(p. 18)

This pastoral rhythm, the 'seasons' and the 'harvest', is predicated upon human labour and agriculture, more closely aligning this poem to a georgic dynamic than pastoral *otium*. However, the stressing of 'joy' indicates Walcott's intention, stated in 'Muse', of offering a philosophy 'rooted in elation'. For the Adam of this 'New World' – a clear, direct reference to the Caribbean setting, expressed in this poem inclusively as 'our New Eden' – despite the trauma of exile there is hope, not of redemption but of 'renewal', in the sense that it is employed in 'Culture or Mimicry': 'Poets and satirists are afflicted with the superior stupidity which believes that societies can be renewed, and one of the most nourishing sites for such a renewal, however visionary it may seem, is the American archipelago'.⁷⁸ Breslin notes: 'When Adam is mentioned in *Sea Grapes*, the serpent is usually at his side'.⁷⁹ In 'New World', he argues, 'Adam and the snake, the

⁷⁷ Derek Walcott, 'New World' in *Sea Grapes*, pp. 18-19.

⁷⁸ Walcott, 'Culture or Mimicry?', p. 57.

⁷⁹ Breslin, p. 113.

formerly colonized and their former colonizers, cut a deal, and through that corruption the New World is made'.⁸⁰ As a result, this poem 'envisions a postlapsarian Adam who has sold paradise'.⁸¹ But this seems a surprisingly straightforward and singular use of Edenic metaphor for Walcott, in comparison to the examples considered so far. Indeed, further analysis illuminates issues with this reading. For instance, it is unclear why Adam should be recognized as symbolic of the 'formerly colonized'; he is, rather, described as 'exiled', and, as has already been noted, Adam is frequently used pluralistically to refer to a range of subjects and themes, as evidenced in 'Crusoe's Island' (p. 18). I would argue that this poem is not limited to a singular narrative and metaphoric propulsion, but rather offers a meandering, meditative consideration of the central tenets of Edenic symbolism in their pastoral guise, its aligning of Adam and the serpent signifying the combining of archetypal and appropriative renderings of Edenic myth.

Midsummer (1984) sees a reduction in direct engagements with Edenic and Adamic symbolism in comparison to *Sea Grapes*, in part, I would suggest, because it does not seek to consistently represent Caribbean settings in the same manner, but to expand its geographical reach, depicting settings (most frequently, as is usual with Walcott, non-urban landscapes) spanning across continents. The same methodology does not, then, appear to apply in representing landscapes and urban environments outside of this region, reinforcing the localized, spatial significance of Walcott's vision of a 'second' Eden. The figure of Crusoe also becomes distanced from that of Adam, having reached its apotheosis in *The Castaway*. Nonetheless, these engagements remain

⁸⁰ Breslin, p. 114.

⁸¹ Breslin, p. 114.

present and impactful, if less self-proclaimed. This sprawling collection of sixty-two poems is based upon the structuring temporal framework of the seasons, a fundamental feature of such influential pastorals as Edmund Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) and James Thomson's 'The Seasons' (1730).⁸² However, this is again defamiliarized; only one season is elevated for consideration, the summer – and specifically 'midsummer' at that – subverting a pattern of temporality based upon this seasonal, georgic rhythm. The tone is similarly resistant to idyllicism and idealisation, expressed through metapoetic meditations: 'I have never pretended that summer was paradise | or that these virgins were virginal'.⁸³ This point is developed further: 'No, what I have plated in amber is not an ideal, as | Puvis de Chavannes desired it, but corrupt' (XIX, ii). Chavannes (1824-1898), a painter known for creating murals envisioning biblical and allegorical scenes in an imagined past, is an apt allusion for this exploration of chronological time, aesthetic modes of representation and idyllic, temporally distant spaces.⁸⁴ Moreover, this statement indicates that a drive to 'corrupt' any vision of a mythic past is again central to the portrayal of an Edenic realm, a theme furthered in the instruction: 'tell the Evangelists paradise smells of sulphur' (XIX, ii).

Death, here signified by a 'mask', is again pivotal to any notion of an 'earthly', postlapsarian Eden:

I placed a blue death mask there in my Book of Hours

⁸² Thomson's poem is often rather simplistically referred to as georgic in form, however the complex relationship between pastoral and georgic ensures that at least some critics have recognised this text as incorporating major tropes of the latter. Indeed, Natasha Sumner refers to Thomson's text as 'philosophically imbued pastoral poetry' and Thomson as 'very dependent on narrativized, pastoral depictions of rural life during each season'. Natasha Sumner, 'James Thomson's "The Seasons"', *Gone Gaelic: The Emergence of a Poetic Trend*, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 30 (2010) 236-258, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41219662 (p. 240).

⁸³ Derek Walcott, *Midsummer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 30. Further references to poems in this edition are given after quotations in the text in the form of the corresponding Roman numerals.

⁸⁴ Chavannes also produced portrayals of fishermen, a theme which is of great significance to Walcott, as will be explored in the fourth chapter of this thesis through a reading of *The Sea at Dauphin*. (1954).

that those who dream of an earthly paradise may read it
as men. [...]
(XIX, ii)

The reference to a 'Book of Hours', an item which conjures the religious structures and doctrines of the medieval period, furthers the collapse of temporalities which takes place throughout *Midsummer*, as well as contributing to a framework of references invoking the Christian theological tradition; the poet is positioned as a new Adam through allusions to Genesis, having consumed 'the fruits of my knowledge' (XIX, ii). And yet, the Christian religion is not the only one present: 'My frescoes in sackcloth to the goddess Maya. The mangoes redden like coals in a barbecue pit, | patient as the palms of Atlas, the papaya' (XIX, ii). Maya, a fundamental concept in Hinduism, here also acts as a homonym for a Mesoamerican civilization, one which was almost entirely decimated by Spanish conquest. Thus, this poem transitions into an exploration of loss in its many forms and various representations of religious faith; the imagery of the Renaissance 'frescoes' of Catholic churches combine with the vital philosophical constructs of Hinduism, alongside references to the traumatic colonial history of the Americas. The mention of 'mangoes' and 'papaya' are symbolic of the physical environment of the tropics, the likely Taíno and Arawak roots of the term 'papaya' signifying the Caribbean more specifically, ultimately indicating a fragmentation and integration of cultural, geographic, temporal and religious structures into a mosaic of pluralistic images and references in which no single mythology, faith or space is elevated, and relating this to the Caribbean cultural sphere.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary offers the following account of the etymology of the term 'papaya': '<Spanish *papaya* (1535–57, designating the tree, now *papayo* ; 1780 designating the fruit), probably <Taíno *papaya* , Arawak *papaia* . Compare Middle French, French *papaye* (1579 as *papaie*), Italian *papaia* (1565), Portuguese *papaia* (1596), scientific Latin *papaya* (1753 in Linnaeus)'. See 'papaya, n.' in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press < www.oed.com/view/Entry/235222> [accessed 04 February 2020].

Midsummer is one of Walcott's only collections to be organized almost entirely through a numbering system without linguistic titles.⁸⁶ The use of Roman numerals for this purpose is unique for the poet, and implies a purposeful allusion to classical literature, to texts such as Virgil's *Eclogues*, which are themselves widely known via this Roman numerical system. The lyric is elevated over any narrative impulse, and movement is paramount to its thematic structure. Baugh observes: 'as *Midsummer* proceeds, the poet's imagination travels outward and back, outward and back, between home and elsewhere, between South and North'.⁸⁷ *Nostos*, then, forms an important structural element in this collection, with shifts in scenic imagery from the picturesque picture of 'thatched cottages fenced with dog roses' in 'Warwickshire' (XXIII), to the 'rusty harbour | around Port of Spain' (I) to an 'Appalachian idyll' (XLV). These transient, amorphous projections of settings are not restricted to existing environments, but are integrated with mythic and literary spaces, conjuring the 'idyll' of Theocritean pastoral (XLV), the 'island kingdom' of *The Tempest*'s 'Prospero' (XLVIII) – Shakespeare's vision of a 'brave new world' – and, of course, Eden.⁸⁸

This Eden is one which evades homogeneity in its processes of representation and effects, with a strong element of defamiliarization at work in Walcott's approach to Edenic symbolism, facilitated and intensified by the themes, form and structure of this collection. Each poem may be read as a vignette; a brief, emotive illustration of a landscape imbued with psychological, literary, social and historical implications, for

⁸⁶ There are few exceptions, the majority of which are proper nouns used to invoke the work of various painters: 'Watteau' (XX) and 'Gauguin' (XIX), for instance. Other collections which employ a numbering system without titles are *The Bounty*, *The Prodigal*, and *White Egrets*.

⁸⁷ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 174.

⁸⁸ William Shakespeare, 'The Tempest', in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, 2nd edn, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 1221- 1243 (l.186).

the most part without the authoritative anchor of a verbal title. The eighth poem of the group titled 'Tropic Zone', for example, intersperses traditional pastoral imagery with its evocation of 'paradise': 'the cattle fold their knees; | in the quiet pastures, only a mare's tail switches' (XLIII, viii). Adam is portrayed as a labourer, detached from his predecessor through the failure of memory: 'Now the first gardener, under the tree of knowledge, forgets that he's Adam' (XLIII, viii). That he is a 'gardener' reinforces the conjuring of an archetypal pastoral scene, signified by both the 'cattle' and the *otium* produced by a refusal to acknowledge temporal urgency:

[...] Things topple gradually
when the alarm clock, with its conductor's baton,
begins at one [...]

(XLIII, viii)

The overall description suggests that this 'Adam' works for a landowner, the stately home and cultivated garden of the eighteenth-century poetic pastoral tradition, shaped by writers such as Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and his influential poetic rendering of a pastoral garden setting in 'Windsor Forest' (1713). This pastoral vision, however, is complicated and undercut through a stressing of the heat and its accompanying mood of lethargy and stasis, the speaker insisting through the direct, abrupt opening employment of the second-person pronoun: 'If you were here [...] you would sprawl, knocked out by *la hora de siesta*' (XLIII, viii). This state of rest is ominously close to that of death: 'you couldn't rise for the resurrection bell' (XLIII, viii). Only the 'gnats' remain active, 'spiralling to their paradise', a bathetic reversal of the biblical expulsion from Eden (XLIII, viii). Pastoral *otium* is here intermingled with threat and signifiers of mortality, 'a sacramental stasis' which 'would bring you sleep', which cruelly 'divides its lovers without rancor', progressing into a series of disorienting Petrarchan paradoxes, the first predicated upon Adam's role in necessitating physical labour on

land through the transgression of original sin: ‘sweat without sin, the furnace without fire, | calm without self, the dying with no fear’ (XLIII, viii). The ultimate effect is one of ambiguity as to whether this mood is one of peace or entrapment: ‘as afternoon removes those window bars | that striped your sleep like a kitten’s, or a prisoner’s’ (XLIII, viii). This is a decidedly complex and unsettling projection of a pastoral Eden, and one in which the dominant mood is one of lethargy and ominous threat, amplifying an atmosphere of foreboding which refuses to be limited through the conventions of pastoral bounteousness and leisure.

The Bounty was published in 1997, thirty-five years after Walcott’s first major international publication, *In a Green Night*. Throughout this intervening period, clear fluctuations can, then, be recognized in Walcott’s employment of Edenic symbolism, rather than a singular underlying agenda. *The Bounty*’s twenty-eighth poem may be read as envisioning a cathartic release from the hold of Edenic symbolism.⁸⁹ Its opening line is evocative of the ‘second’ Eden conjured in ‘Muse’: ‘Awaking to gratitude in this generous Eden’.⁹⁰ However, this poem sees a gradual, growing sense of detachment from this opening vision of Edenic wonder, one in which ‘gratitude’ to the divine creator, provider of the ‘generous’ bounteous produce of the natural world, is centred in an archetypal rendering of Edenic innocence and elation. This detachment is signalled by the suggestion of physical and temporal ‘distance’ between the Edenic sphere and a realm typified by chaos and threat: ‘far from frenzy and violence in this discretion of distance’. Thus, a fundamental pastoral dichotomy is evoked: that between

⁸⁹ This collection again follows a numerical structure with few titles, although it does not employ Roman numerals, suggesting less of an interest in a dialogue with the classical literary tradition than *Midsummer*.

⁹⁰ Derek Walcott, ‘Awaking to gratitude in this generous Eden’ in *The Bounty*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), p. 61.

a realm of innocence and one of corruption. These two spatial and temporal realms are antithetic, one afflicted by ‘the disease of power’, the other positioned ‘far’ from this malevolent force, which equates political hegemonic structures with ‘disease’. The Tree of Knowledge is here reimagined as a ‘copper-beech tree whose roots are Ireland’s’. This mention of Ireland is linked to the poem’s direct references to William Butler Yeats, a poet well known for an interest in myth, rural environments, nostalgia and national politics, themes Walcott, of course, treats as considerable concerns of his own.

This poem consists of twenty-four lines, with an end-stop after the tenth line implicative of a structural break, and thus a transition into what resembles a fourteen-line sonnet form. The pastoral dichotomy between a realm of Edenic innocence and one of ‘frenzy’ and ‘violence’ is overturned in a volta-like moment of transformation, indicated by the first three lines of this almost-sonnet:

There is no wood whose branches bear gules of amber
that scream when they are broken, no balsam cure,
nothing beyond those waves I care to remember

The mood is no longer one of ‘gratitude’ and joy, but of negation, indifference and ambivalence. As Baugh suggests: ‘In *The Bounty* the expression of thanksgiving for life’s bounty is suffused with a quiet, retrospective elegiac gravity that comes out of long experience of vicissitude’.⁹¹ In this instance, an ‘elegiac gravity’ is conjured by the mention of ‘a few friends gone’, and the futility of any search for redemption, for which there is no ‘balsam cure’. It is important to note that ‘nothing’ is a significant concept in Walcott’s writings, one which is appropriated from statements made by

⁹¹ Baugh, p. 205.

James Anthony Froude and V. S. Naipaul.⁹² In this instance, it marks an absence of the continuation of any longing for Edenic bliss; this poem, it suggests, does not require or evoke the redemptive or renewing force of a second Eden. Instead, it denotes an acceptance that:

[...] No bounty is greater
than walking to the edge of the rocks where the headland's
detonations exult in their natural metre,
like white wings at Coole, the beat of his clapping swans.

This 'natural metre' is an intertwining of the production of poetry and the surroundings of the natural world, the 'waves' of the sea similarly reflective of poetic prosody, which 'soothe in their unrest'. The speaker finds comfort and solace in this interaction between the natural world and the process of poetic craftsmanship, one which becomes a unifying factor between this poem's creator and a temporally and geographically distant predecessor in the form of Yeats, in a Caribbean environment which is not forced to reductively conform to the imagery and dynamics of a Eurocentric pastoral poetic tradition: 'where December | is as green as May'.

Altogether, I argue that this selection of shorter poems successfully demonstrates the rich variety, plurality and significance of Walcott's engagements with Edenic symbolism. There are both consistencies and key variances clearly present in these long- running engagements, with one consistency being the rejection of any

⁹² Froude suggests that the region contains 'no people' with 'a character and purpose of their own'. James Anthony Froude, *The Bow of Ulysses* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/10.1017/CBO9780511783272>> p. 347; V. S. Naipaul's *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies – British, French and Dutch – in the West Indies and South America* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1962), includes the comment: 'The history of the islands can never be satisfactorily told. Brutality is not the only difficulty. History is built around achievement and creation, and nothing was created in the West Indies' (p. 29). In the first poem of the collection *Midsummer*, Walcott directly alludes to these and similar comments: 'there's that island known | to the traveller Trollope, and the fellow traveller Froude, | for making nothing. Not even a people' (p. 11).

simplistic nostalgia for an idealised, temporally distant lost realm. Walcott's notion of a 'second' Eden is paramount to his employment of Edenic symbolism, and the close associations between this symbolism and the pastoral mode are both stressed and explored in his poetry. As a result, Walcott works to reclaim this space from the constraints of reductive comparisons between the Caribbean region and the biblical Eden, overturning these metaphorical structures in favour of a vision of 'second' Edens, each imbued with creative potential, positioned in the present moment rather than a lost past, and allowing poets the linguistic freedom of 'new Adams'.

***Omeros* and its Edens**

Omeros (1990) is a work which has seen considerably more critical attention than any other of Walcott's single poems or collections. The critical lenses which have been applied are varied; some focus upon its navigation of the postcolonial condition, some analyse its intertextuality, others investigate its explicit and complex allusions to the classical literary tradition. However, whilst its vast framework of intertextual and generic references has been recognised and explored, its engagement with Edenic symbolism in relation to the pastoral mode has not been commented upon. For example, whilst its use of hexameters has been widely highlighted, and connected to the epic verses of Homer and Virgil, it is rarely mentioned that pastoral writings have their own significant relationship to this metrical technique. Indeed, as Nancy Lindheim points out, 'pastoral has a long and complex association with epic, since antiquity classified genres by meter and pastoral's meter is the heroic dactylic hexameter'.⁹³ Similarly,

⁹³ Nancy Lindheim, *The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition: From the Renaissance to the Modern Era* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005), p. 8. This point has also been made by David M. Halperin, alongside

whilst its intertextuality is outlined and explored by a number of critics, one text which has, I would argue, seen insufficient recognition as a productive frame of references for the poet is John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667).

Milton's text has been a highly influential one in shaping connections between Edenic symbolism and pastoral poetry, offering an innovative, even radical, approach to the representation of Adam and Eve in the paradisaical Garden of Eden, and employing features of the pastoral mode for this purpose. There are important similarities between this work and *Omeros*, as can be evidenced through Barbara Kiefer Lewalski's insightful reading of the role that genres play in Milton's seminal reworking of literary representations of Eden: 'Critics have long recognized and continue to discover in Milton's poem an Edenic profusion of thematic and structural elements from a great many literary genres and modes; as well as a myriad of specific allusions to major literary texts and exemplary works', a comment which could just as easily be applied to Walcott's complex, densely intergeneric and intertextual narrative poem.⁹⁴ This 'panoply of kinds' in *Paradise Lost* 'includes pastoral: landscape descriptions of Arcadian vistas, pastoral scenes and eclogue-like passages presenting the *otium* (ease, contentment) of heaven and unfallen Eden; and scenes of light georgic gardening activity', all employed to describe a 'prelapsarian life in Eden'.⁹⁵ My analysis of Edenic

a further exploration of the issue of defining ancient texts as pastoral when employing a modern conceptual framework for this term: 'The criteria which contemporary critics use today to identify works of pastoral literature in all times and places were simply not perceived in antiquity as constituting a basis for literary groupings. At the time when Theocritus was composing the Idylls, and in the intellectual community for which he was writing, it was the custom to classify poetry chiefly according to metrical criteria, and so the hexameter poems of Theocritus and Virgil were included in the ancient genre called *epos*. Thematic considerations, which are highly pertinent to the modern concept of pastoral, were subordinated to metrical ones and did not figure prominently in any ancient scheme of literary classification from the Hellenistic period until the second century A. D. [...] Hence, no body of pastoral literature was recognized as such in antiquity'. Halperin, p. 15

⁹⁴ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, 'The genres of *Paradise Lost*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. by Dennis Danielson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 113-129 (p. 113).

⁹⁵ Lewalski, pp. 114, 117.

symbolism in Walcott's poem will demonstrate its engagement with pastoral, an engagement which is similarly radical, although with far less reliance on *otium* in its projection of Eden(s) than that of Milton, and a greater emphasis upon the notion of 'new' Edens, rather than an Eden regained.

Maik Nwosu is one of few critics to both recognise and interrogate Miltonic presences in Walcott's work, in a study of '*Omeros* and the refiguration of the Caribbean Eden' (2008).⁹⁶ Nwosu illustrates the complex dialogue and negotiation which takes place between these works, drawing attention to the connections between the blind figure of 'Seven Seas' and John Milton:

Notably, Milton's *Paradise Lost* evokes the "New World" destroyed as a result of imperialist designs. But Milton's politics was theological, and his epic operates within a theological imagination. *Omeros* extends that imagination beyond its solely Christian frame into a more inclusive spirituality. So, *Seven Seas* is neither Walcott nor Milton exclusively.⁹⁷

This is a perceptive reading of Walcott's engagement with Milton's 'theological' vision, and one which fits well with the readings offered of various poems so far in this chapter, which similarly denote an interest in extending the theological imagination 'beyond its Christian frame into a more inclusive spirituality'. However, Nwosu does not relate the Edenic symbolism at work in *Omeros* with the pastoral mode, despite a clear demonstration of interest in the role that nostalgia and memory play in the text: the 'Caribbean Eden' represented in *Omeros* is also 'a Caribbean reckoning that traces a path back to Africa. The trajectory of *Omeros* includes a projective journey into the future as well as a vital reconnection with the renewing past – Africa in this instance –

⁹⁶ Maik Nwosu, 'Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and the refiguration of the Caribbean Eden', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 44 (2008), 127-137 <DOI: 10.1080/17449850802000514>

⁹⁷ Nwosu, p. 134.

via language and memory'.⁹⁸ Similarly, it is argued that: 'The return to the origins in *Omeros* – through language and memory – is also a new genesis'.⁹⁹ But the concept of a 'renewing past' is one which Walcott appears to have criticised in such texts as 'The Muse of History'. The main issue here, I would suggest, is the intentional ambiguity of Walcott's projections of nostalgia in *Omeros*.

In part, this is related to the poem's deeply complex approach towards temporality, as has been productively explored by Sean Seeger, who argues: 'Fundamental to Walcott's work – both early and late – is a stark refusal to view history as possessing anything like an inherent teleology, however this is conceived'.¹⁰⁰ In the case of *Omeros*, this is encapsulated by a fraught negotiation with the concept of a capitalized 'History': 'History in *Omeros* is conceived of both as a series of discreet events and as a larger, malevolent force, which Walcott, following Joyce, promotes to the status of a proper noun: "History"'.¹⁰¹ For Seeger, it is this conception of 'History' which prevents *Omeros* from being a purely pastoral work: 'Why could *Omeros* not have taken the form of, say, a harmonious Caribbean pastoral? It becomes clear reading Walcott that none of his work ever frees itself once and for all from the shadow of History'.¹⁰² This is too strong a dismissal of the presence of pastoral features in this poem, but it is the case that the mode has a tense relationship to 'History', in the manner that the term is here employed by Seeger.¹⁰³ As Hackens observes: 'Cyclical time – as

⁹⁸ Nwosu, p. 127.

⁹⁹ Nwosu, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰ Sean Seeger, *Nonlinear Temporality in Joyce and Walcott: History Repeating Itself with a Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 67.

¹⁰¹ Seeger, p. 76.

¹⁰² Seeger, p. 78.

¹⁰³ The sea is closely tied to history for Walcott. The theme of an interconnection between the sea and history is engaged with in the poem 'The Sea is History' and 'The Muse of History', an essay which Emily Greenwood has described as the 'classic articulation' of 'Caribbean engagements with Greek and Roman classics' which are 'characterized by knowing tricks with time that play on the gulf between their newness

opposed to linear, historical time, – is characteristic of the pastoral consciousness'.¹⁰⁴ As a consequence, 'the pastoral ideal always defines itself in opposition to a counterforce which often stands, in one form or the other, for history'.¹⁰⁵ Hackens relates this argument to Walcott's work, with a recognition of its tendency towards ambiguity, even 'contradiction': 'it seems to reverse the pattern, for while traditional pastoral utopias confronted a progress-oriented history by being past-oriented and based on nostalgia, Walcott's project seems present- and future-oriented while history is seen as a burden'.¹⁰⁶

However, not all critics of pastoral have recognized such an antithetical dynamic between the pastoral mode and linear temporality. Gifford, for instance, makes the claim that although many 'commentators have taken the view that because nostalgia is an essential element of Arcadia, the pastoral is always a backward-looking form', this verdict is not universally applicable.¹⁰⁷ There is, he suggests, a 'more complex set of tensions within the construct'.¹⁰⁸ To the extent that 'pastoral represents idealisation, it must also imply a better future conceived in the language of the present'.¹⁰⁹ In the same way that 'the country location enables a direct or indirect critique of the town, and the evocation of a past Golden Age has implications for the present, so this must also have implications for an ideal notion of the future'.¹¹⁰ If not, 'pastoral would lose its oppositional potential'.¹¹¹ However, it must be stressed that much of the pastoral

and the antiquity of Greece and Rome', through 'denying the temporal, historical distance and asserting simultaneity in its place', a theme which will be returned to in the following chapter. Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Hackens, p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ Hackens, p. 90.

¹⁰⁶ Hackens, p. 90.

¹⁰⁷ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁹ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 36.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 36.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*.

tradition, as Gifford acknowledges, is ‘backward-looking’. The exceptions to this rule reinvigorate and shape the mode, allowing it greater creative potential to comment upon contextual issues and to contemplate future events. Nonetheless, this tense relationship with linear temporality is shared by Walcott. As Baugh outlines, ‘[t]he challenge of coming to terms with West Indian history assumed particular, acute significance for West Indian writers of Walcott’s generation’, although, as will be evidenced in this thesis, there is decidedly ‘no denial of the past in Walcott’.¹¹²

Omeros presents the reader with a landscape (and indeed a seascape, strengthening the specificity of this island setting) which is peopled with workers relying upon the island’s natural resources, immediately establishing its use of allusions to pastoral motifs. This includes the presence of impoverished fishermen, predominantly unnamed workers labouring on Plunkett’s pig farm, and, in an innovative play upon pastoral tropes, those working in the tourism trade; a trade which rests upon a recognition of the natural beauty and produce of the local landscape. This reliance on the land is consistently associated with violence and loss, as indicated in the poem’s opening stanzas.

In an allusion to epic conventions, it begins *in media res*, yet the act portrayed is a seemingly bathetic one.¹¹³ The cutting down of cedar trees to make canoes is portrayed as a moment of heightened tragic violence, a violation of the dignity of these ‘bearded elders’ (6).¹¹⁴ As tourists voyeuristically watch on, the fishermen gain ‘the

¹¹² Baugh, pp. 8, 10.

¹¹³ Early iterations of this close reading of *Omeros* in relation to postcolonial and ecocritical approaches to the text were presented in my unpublished paper: ‘The combined approach: Reading Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* through an ecocritical and postcolonial lens’, delivered at the Northern Comparative Literature Network’s symposium ‘Of Borders and Ecologies: Comparative Literature and the Environment’ (Birmingham City University, 28 October 2017).

¹¹⁴ Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 6. Further references to page numbers in this edition are given after quotations in the text.

spirit to turn into murderers’ and axe down these ancient, unnervingly anthropomorphic trees (3). An added, disconcerting intimacy is achieved through the use of the faux-confessional, first-person voice – as though the reader is forced to witness this act firsthand – alongside a sudden emphasis on the present tense: ‘I lift up the axe and pray for strength in my hand | to wound the first cedar’ (3). This sense of wounding, of physical injury to the island’s flora and fauna, forms a core concern of the first section of *Omeros*. The initial act of violence sets in motion a series of destructive repercussions: ‘an egret stalks the reeds with one rusted cry | as it stabs and stabs the mud with one lifting foot’, as simultaneously the ‘silence’ is ‘sawn in half by a dragonfly’, an unusual lexical choice which reinforces the unsettling mood cultivated in this depiction of the natural world (4). The fallen tree is further humiliated by its ‘wound’, as the ‘gangrenous mould’ is ‘scraped off’, and the ‘wound’ is ‘ripped’ clear of its vines (5). These abrupt, plosive and monosyllabic verbs reinforce the apparent violence of these acts. However, as this opening section draws to a close, the reader appears to be led in the direction of harmony, of a traditional pastoral scene in the Caribbean: ‘Now, over the pastures | of bananas’, it begins, soft imagery and enjambment implying a peaceful vision, only to be undercut with: ‘the island lifted its horns. Sunrise | trickled down its valleys, blood splashed on the cedars’ (5). The abruptness of this intruding image, as ominous ‘horns’ lift above the pastoral scene and ‘blood’ vividly splashes the wounded trees, exemplifies the use of pastoral conventions in this poem, including its Edenic symbolism and employment of elegiac tropes. This is not a naively optimistic, idealised vision of the St Lucian landscape, but one marked by disillusion, complexity and threat. Whilst pastoral elegiac conventions may well serve their purpose of elevating the local

landscape and those that work it, it is immediately suggested that this poem will not endorse the representation of land as a purely decorative source of aesthetic pleasure. The balance between man and nature in this opening scene is problematized, and this is reflected through its language, in the form of unnerving metaphors, jarring syntax and melancholic bathos.

Whilst the opening section of *Omeros* offers an unnamed and unspecified narrative voice, Achille soon enters the narrative as a named character, fulfilling the ritualistic act of shaping a canoe from the wood of the felled cedars. There is a continuation of the sense of violence and loss already established, as Achille ‘hacked the limbs from the dead god, knot after knot, | wrenching the severed veins from the trunk’ (6). This moment evidences the fascination with the relationship between humanity and nature which permeates *Omeros*, as it offers a consideration of conflicting notions of purpose in this relationship between a human subject and the natural world. It is unthinkable for this tree to remain as it is, a corpse, an echo of the living thing that it once was. It must become an object of function, of purpose to the islanders, in a demonstration of the loss of harmony between man and nature that forms a key trope in this narrative. Nevertheless, this transformation of function is presented not only as a loss, but as potentially liberating, indicated by the exclamatory remark of Achille: “Free! You can be a canoe! Or else you cannot!” (6). This statement works to elevate the position of the cedar, through its syntactic reflection of Shakespeare’s celebrated consideration of life’s purpose in Hamlet’s existentialist remark: ‘To be, or not to be’, an allusion which elevates the cedar to the status of iconic tragic hero, and consequently ensures that the portrayal of its death becomes one which self-consciously engages with generic conventions, innovating upon the trope of the loss of a heroic

figure and the mourning of personified nature, fundamental tropes of the pastoral elegy.¹¹⁵ However, whilst Hamlet's meditation is presented through soliloquy, with autonomy over the result of this decision to 'be' or to die, in this case the choice has been made for the silenced tree, in a subversion of the power of the natural world. The tree's elevated status serves to strengthen the antithetical dichotomy here presented between man and the natural environment, and this is the result of an inventive, transformative appropriation of the conventions of the pastoral mode, and its elegiac strain. The moment can be read as an example of the ecoelegy: an elegiac response to the destruction of nature.

However, there is an additional layer of meaning at work in this passage, one related to Walcott's use of Edenic symbolism. As Achille crafts the canoe, there occurs a gradual intensification of allusions to religious symbols. These references are again pluralistic, relating to a variety of faiths. One is Christianity, evidenced through Achille's act of making 'a swift sign of the cross' with his cutlass (6). This is furthered with two references to 'thorns', a symbol of loss and sacrifice in the Christian faith (6). However, these allusions are interspersed with signifiers from other belief systems, most prominently that of the religion of the Aruacs, which has been 'brought down' along with their 'lost' language: 'the Aruacs' patois crackled in the smell | of a resinous bonfire that turned the leaves brown' (6). In this case, the silencing of nature correlates to the loss of language and pantheistic faith: 'The gods were down at last' (6). I would

¹¹⁵ William Shakespeare, 'Hamlet', in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd edn., ed. by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 681-718 (l. 58). Often, this mourned figure in pastoral elegy is presented as Daphnis, a convention established in the *Idylls* of Theocritus. See James Holly Hanford, 'The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's Lycidas.' *PMLA*, 25 (1910), 403-447, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/456731. There will be an extended consideration of the role that pastoral elegy plays in Walcott's poetry in the following chapter of this thesis.

argue that this self-conscious use of religious imagery connects the cedar tree not only to the loss of the Aruac peoples, and to the uneasy relationship between humanity and nature expressed in *Omeros*, but also to one of Walcott's many visions of Eden in this island environment. The silencing of the tree appears to be an inverted allusion to the Tree of Knowledge in Edenic myth, as in this case the wisdom of this 'bearded elder' is lost, rather than gained (6). This offers a disillusioned vision of Eden, and its focus is firmly placed upon irredeemable loss, rather than renewal. The obliteration of the Aruacs is, in this moment, concrete and unalterable, and it is this re-imagining of the role of the Tree of Knowledge that tapers the optimism of the implied Edenic vision and complicates its engagement with pastoral motifs. Achille is presented as a new Adam in this scene, but it is he who axes the silent tree. This Eden, it would seem, is not one that can be regained, and its wisdom is inaccessible.

This moment encapsulates the oxymoronically weighty presence of loss in *Omeros*; that of place, of peoples, of individuals, of languages and of histories. In this vision of Eden, man has become detached from his paradisaical environment, consequently casting a shadow on the harmonious co-existence between mankind and nature that is so intrinsic to traditional visions of Eden. Achille is not a mere reflection or imitation of Adam in this passage, but a transformed figure, one who inverts the actions of his mythical predecessor in a stark demonstration of this difference, in the same way that the spelling of his name distances him from the nomenclature of the epic hero of Homer's *Iliad*. Altogether, the elevated projection of a moment of tragedy, in the form of the death and destruction of the cedar tree, is made more potent through its transformative, unconventional use of pastoral elegiac conventions and Edenic symbolism. The island itself appears to be affected by this symbolic act, as 'the grove

flooded with the light of sacrifice' (5). Thus, *Omeros* opens with a concrete, irredeemable sense of loss. This is most clearly exemplified by the final stanza of its second section:

After Mass, one sunrise the canoes entered the troughs

of the surplice shallows, and their nodding prows
agreed with the waves to forget their lives as trees;
one would serve Hector and another, Achilles.

(8)

The loss of the memory and purpose of these anthropomorphised trees is here made absolute, intensified by the final, decisive rhyming couplet. Nature has been transformed to suit the needs of man, and, as a result, man is detached from nature, in contrast to the harmonious relationship between Adam and Eve and the prelapsarian Garden of Eden. In this scene, the optimism of Walcott's concept of a 'second' Eden and a new Adam is demonstrably tapered with melancholy, loss and a firm acceptance that this is not an Eden regained, but an Eden transformed, a postlapsarian realm which is aware of the 'bitter' taste of its traumatic history, and firmly rejects reductive idealisation and simplistic nostalgia. In the case of *Omeros*, as with all of Walcott's poetry, it is more appropriate to speak of plural Edens than a singular Eden.

'What the Twilight Says' (1970) includes a condemnation of the use of Eden as a vehicle for 'revenge' by contemporary Caribbean writers:

Yet revenge is a kind of vision. The West Indian mind historically hungover, exhausted, prefers to take its revenge in nostalgia, to narrow its eyelids in a schizophrenic daydream of an Eden that existed before its exile.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Derek Walcott, 'What the Twilight Says: An Overture', in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 19-20.

Walcott is highly critical in this instance of an Eden which uses ‘nostalgia’ as its driving force, condemning such a projection of this prelapsarian, pre-colonial locale as a ‘schizophrenic daydream’. Nonetheless, nostalgia and the retrospective gaze are powerful elements of *Omeros*, albeit concerns which are treated cautiously and, I argue, ambiguously by the poet. This nostalgia is not only communal, but also personal and introverted, as characters consider their own individual feelings of loss, and engage in a variety of nostalgic, retrospective gazes. Thus, nostalgia becomes as fragmented a concept as Eden, closely associated with pastoral tropes and similarly deconstructed and defamiliarized.

For example, Maud Plunkett expresses nostalgic impulses to return to Ireland: ‘Sometimes the same old longing descended on her | to see Ireland’ (29). These moments of retrospective idealisation, which appear to conform to the pastoral trope of envisioning a lost, idealised landscape, are complicated through the establishment of a conflict between Maud and her paradisaal surroundings. During a storm, she decries the severe weather: “‘I miss the light northern rain, I miss the seasons,’” (48). This exclamation is presented as an affront to the personified elements, through ‘implying that the climate lacked subtlety. | Some breeze reported the insult’ (48). Consequently, the monsoon’s ‘anger’ causes a worsening of the rain, and onomatopoeic plosives reinforce the destructive effects of this hostility between Maud and localized nature: ‘the galvanized guttering belching with its roar’ (48-49). In this instance, the impulse of *nostos* results in demonstrably negative effects, and the use of both the present participle and a gerund reinforces the detachment between Maud’s retrospective imaginings of Ireland and the actual, urgent present. In this passage, the convention of pastoral nostalgia appears to have exacerbated a sense of displacement, melancholy and

loss.

Frequently, Maud Plunkett is directly associated with Eden. Major Dennis Plunkett (her husband) reminisces on their shared past, through which the reader learns that he had hoped to transport her to ‘where what they called history could not happen. Where? [...] She deserved Eden after this war’ (28). Their escapist, idealised projection of Eden in the Caribbean – an area, for Dennis Plunkett, without ‘history’ – is perhaps the most problematized construction of Eden in *Omeros*. Whilst it works to elevate the landscape through conventional pastoral tropes, it also implies that this must be an environment without a past, to ensure the success of their projection of a prelapsarian, pure Caribbean Eden. This vision of Eden refuses to accept the presence of corruptive ‘sin’: “‘It’s so still’”, Maud remarks to Dennis whilst they sit admiring the landscape, “‘It’s like Adam and Eve all over,’” Maud whispered. “‘Before the snake. Without all the sin.’” (63). This viewpoint is firmly refuted in ‘The Muse of History’, with its emphasis upon a ‘second’, postlapsarian projection of Eden, one which incorporates the ‘bitter’ taste of corruption. Indeed, this idealised vision of a regained, uncorrupted Eden is challenged in *Omeros* through Dennis Plunkett’s sudden recognition of the surrounding presence of poverty, as he admits: ‘Only the dead can endure it in paradise, | and it felt selfish for so long [...] There’s too much poverty below us [...] All roots have their histories’ (63) Their idealised vision of Edenic innocence is, for Dennis Plunkett, shattered by this recognition of poverty and its historical roots. Through this stirring of his social conscience, the reader is encouraged to identify irony in Maud’s suggestion that this landscape is not one corrupted by ‘original sin’. This forceful undercutting of any naïve projection of a reductively idyllic Eden in this setting acts as a clear rejection of idealised uses of Edenic symbolism in *Omeros*. The scene ends with

a bathetic exit by the Plunketts from their Eden(s):

[...] He switched on the engine
and they bucketed, wobbling over rain-huts, hurled
on the groaning springs down to the flat, real world.
(63)

Thus, the vision is lost, and replaced by a disillusioned, 'flat' picture of the unidealized 'real world'.

Maud Plunkett's experience of nostalgia is not an isolated one in *Omeros*. Achille's inner turmoil culminates in an extended dream sequence detailing a journey to the African village of his ancestors, an episode marked by deep pathos and a nuanced exploration of belonging, memory and loss. Whilst the early stages of Achille's journey evoke a mood of foreboding and resistance to the past through an emphasis upon modernity, as 'Achille wanted to scream, he wanted the brown water | to harden into a road' (134), this mood transitions into an acceptance of the imagined retrospective gaze, and a liberating loss of any sense of linear temporality: 'he came into his own beginning and his end, | for the swiftness of a second is all that memory takes' (134). This is strengthened through a divine blessing for Achille's dismissal of linear temporality, an embracing of this elevated moment of time suspended in pastoral semi-stasis, offering comfort to the isolated figure:

And God said to Achille, "Look, I giving you permission
to come home. Is I send the sea-swift as a pilot,
the swift whose wings is the sign of my crucifixion.
(134)

The vernacular, distinctly Caribbean divine voice reinforces and enhances the notion of return to Edenic bliss, of this transformed second Adam returning to his 'home'.¹¹⁷ The

¹¹⁷ I read this passage as chronicling a complex and highly emotive *nostos* for Achille, a homecoming to an ancestral space. However, in a study of classical reception in this text, Justine McConnell makes the claim: 'Derek Walcott makes it clear that Achille's dream-voyage to Africa is a *katabasis* rather than a *nostos*,

moment is marked with poignancy as much as joy, as Achille finds himself 'weeping', struggling to bear the 'homesick shame | and pain of his Africa' (135; 134). Despite this sympathetic projection of Achille's Edenic bliss, the reality of the present – the enemy of nostalgia – is irrepressible, and only works to deepen his pain: '[the] sadness sank into him slowly that he was home [...] the future reversed itself in him' (141). This suggests that the 'sacred site' outside of temporality (to employ the words of Aliev) in which Achille has found himself is an unsustainable one, and the loss of this almost-timeless, idyllic space is both inevitable and traumatic.¹¹⁸ Achille begs, instead, for the loss of the present and future: 'Make me happier, | make me forget the future' (141). The Edenic space has, again, been overshadowed by loss, combined in this instance with catharsis and a sense of futility: 'in the one pain | that is inconsolable, the loss of one's shore' (51). For Achille, this vision of a pre-colonial Eden is not simply idealised, like that of the Plunketts', but pierced with an irrepressible sense of pain and loss. Ultimately, the evocations of nostalgia and retrospection in *Omeros* are as plural and varying as its uses of Edenic symbolism and generic conventions, though consistently associated with suffering and grief, rather than the 'elation' heralded in 'Muse'.

If Achille is to be understood as a new Adam – and I would suggest that this is made implicit through his association with the cedar tree, which acts as a transformed Tree of Knowledge – then his relationship to the natural world is problematized through the motif of a loss of language. This is not an Adam who freely and flexibly names

which may confound the expectations of some of those of the Black Power movement, but should not surprise readers of Walcott'. However, perhaps it may be both; a simultaneous *nostos* and *katabasis*, an experience which enriches Achille's sense of his place in the world, without undercutting the power or integrity of his experience of homecoming. McConnell, *Black Odysseys*, p. 121.

¹¹⁸ Aliev, p. 472.

elements of nature, but one who is aware that language can lead to a sense of detachment from these surroundings, and in response has a complex and uneasy relationship to the act of naming. Achille's refusal to conform to rigid structures of language use is confirmed by the name of his canoe, '*In God We Troust*' (8). When challenged on his spelling, he alludes to an Adamic sense of divine permission to name as he wishes: "Leave it! Is God's spelling and mine" (8). Nevertheless, Achille frequently expresses an un-Adamic sense of disconnect between himself and the natural world around him, expressed through a perceived loss of language. When searching for conchs to sell to tourists, he is stirred by a sudden awareness of the tragedy of their silence:

Then, one by one, he lifted the beautiful conchs,
weighed each in his palm, considering the deep pain
of their silence, [...]
(41)

This irrational notion of a silencing of these voiceless creatures leads Achille to sympathetically return them to the seabed. However, as is the case with the cedar tree before them, this action leads to an elegiac evocation of their deaths: 'as the fisherman drowned them he closed his eyes, | because they sank to the sand without any cries' (41).

Whilst Achille is disconnected from the natural world through the motif of a loss of language, Ma Kilman's detachment from language and nature is presented as forgetfulness. Through her act of sourcing and offering a healing plant from the natural world, as well as the maternal implications of her title, Ma Kilman could be read as a transformed Eve, albeit one who is unconventionally isolated from Adam and whose actions are restorative, rather than destructive. Her relationship to the apparent conflict between nature and language present in *Omeros* is symbolised by her inability to remember the name of a curative herb, which she hopes to use to heal Philocete's rotting

wound:

In the Egyptian silence she muttered softly:

“It have a flower somewhere, a medicine, and ways
my grandmother would boil it. I used to watch ants
climbing her white flower-pot. But, God, in which place?”
(19)

Once again, a direct reference to ‘God’ alludes to the Adamic act of naming. ‘Where was this root?’, she wonders, ‘What senna, what tepid tisanes, | could clean the branched river of his corrupted blood, whose sap was a wounded cedar?’ (19). Breslin suggests that Ma Kilman’s curing of the injured Philoctete allows this suffering fisherman ‘to be healed of his wound of history and emerge as “Adam” in “Eden”’.¹¹⁹ This act of recovery allows ‘history’, which Breslin recognises as the ‘crippling deformation of the present’ in *Omeros*, to be removed, ‘allowing an Adamic consciousness of the present as open, facing toward the future.’¹²⁰

Indeed, the moment of cure is a transformative – even redemptive – one, with both Ma Kilman’s remedy and water acting as symbols of renewal and cleansing. As an inverted version of Eve, Ma Kilman provides a curative, rather than corruptive, natural substance to Philoctete, and assertively takes control of a return, rather than an exile, to this new ‘Eden’ (248). For a moment, the fractured relationship between man, nature and language is healed in conjunction with the curing of a physical wound: ‘The yoke of the wrong name lifted from his shoulders’, ‘his flexed palm enclosed an oar’, made from the wood of the cedars, followed by the ‘closure of a mouth around its own name’ (248). The moment ends with a clear reference to the projection of a second Eden

¹¹⁹ Breslin, p. 250.

¹²⁰ Breslin, p. 250.

envisaged in 'The Muse of History': 'So she threw Adam a towel. | And the yard was Eden. And its light the first day's' (248). However, this is not, as would perhaps be expected, the close of the narrative. Substantial space remains to allow further investigation into the extent of this recovery, and whether it can truly be considered redemptive. Moreover, the elevated moment is characteristically undercut with bathos: 'That was why the sea stank from the frothing urine | of surf, and fish-guts reeked' (248). Once again, this vision of a new Eden is marked by disillusionment as much as optimism and loss as much as renewal, with a recognition of irredeemable 'loss' (248).

For Terry Gifford, a recognition of the specificity of Eden as a garden is important to understanding connections between the pastoral mode and Edenic symbolism. In his analysis of Alexander Pope's 'Windsor Forest', it is Pope's representation of the garden setting which is of particular interest:

In the English tradition the image of nature as garden or estate confirms the religiously endorsed right of humans to exploit nature. Eden was the garden that paradise promises to be at the other end of time. In both, humans will be provided for naturally.¹²¹

In *Omeros*, Philoctete's 'yam garden' is not a paradisaical sanctuary, but an area littered with the ominous 'ruins' of colonial history: 'huge rusted cauldrons, vats for boiling sugar' (20). In the same manner as the felling of the cedars, the productive use of plants in this garden is a source of unsettlingly anthropomorphised pain: 'The yam leaves recoiled | in a cold sweat. He [Philoctete] hacked every root at the heel' (21). Their pain reflects the agony which Philoctete suffers whilst working on this small, sparse area of land, ultimately leading him to an outbreak of cathartic anguish, as he 'sobbed, his face down in the slaughtered leaves' (21). If this garden can be recognised as a reflection of Eden, it is a very bleak projection indeed, and its lone inhabitant appears to be unwilling

¹²¹ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 33.

to consider himself as having dominion over this environment, but rather becomes a participant in a shared suffering. After the cutting of these leaves, nature is again portrayed as linguistically disconnected from the isolated human figure: ‘He looked up at a blue acre | and a branch where a swift settled without a cry’ (21).¹²² The jarring reference to an absence of sound reinforces this detachment between human subjectivity and nature, in a mirroring of the silenced cedar trees at the poem’s opening. However, this passage ends with a slight movement towards reconciliation, as nature provides a supportive function for Philoctete when he attempts to stand: ‘He held to a branch and tested his dead hoof once | on the springy earth’ (22). This closing moment could well be read as a gradual step towards a more unified and harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world; albeit a very minor one. However, the boundary between the human and nonhuman is blurred to allow for this sense of harmony; the zoomorphism of this ‘dead hoof’ inverts the recurring employment of anthropomorphism in this text, whilst supporting its effect of a collapsing of the divide between the human subject and the nonhuman. Perhaps the most significant lines in *Omeros* in relation to this study are those which succinctly evidence the plurality, flexibility and originality of its uses of Edenic symbolism: ‘The New World was wide enough for a new Eden’ it states, ‘of various Adams’ (181).

¹²² The ‘swift’ here alludes to divinity, reflecting the ‘swift sign of the cross’ made by Achille and God’s words: ‘Is I send the sea-swift as a pilot, | the swift whose wings is the sign of my crucifixion’ (6; 134). Philoctete is thus detached not only from the natural world, but from the divine. It is worth revisiting Aliev’s outlining of the pastoral space in relation to the sacred: ‘[t]he pastoral is typically concerned with a mythical Golden Age of humanity that precedes a Fall, be it the Biblical Fall from Eden or a loss of gods in the more archaic and universal mythology. The loss of a Golden Age means a loss of one’s gods, of the mythical connection between human beings and the environment – what used to be sacred becomes profane’. Thus, this moment demonstrates a fundamental trope of the pastoral mode: the sense of detachment between the human subject, the environment, and the divine. Aliev, p. 467. Further discussion of the convention of birds and birdsong in the pastoral mode will be offered in the following chapter.

Conclusion

In an interview with George B. Handley, Walcott was asked to discuss his views on the Adamic motif in the poetry of Walt Whitman, and specifically Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), a collection which made use of Edenic symbolism alongside various other pastoral conventions. Whitman's uses of Edenic motifs are evidently considered to be unsuccessful by Handley, who asks: 'Why do you suppose Whitman's views of Adamic poetry didn't survive [?]'.¹²³ Walcott's response indicates a frustration with literary uses of a New World-based Adam which lack the 'bitter' taste put forward in 'The Muse of History', as he criticizes Whitman's lack of inclusion of various racial groups in America, and the absence of any recognition of the region's traumatic history:

[Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*] doesn't include slavery. It doesn't include the decimation of the American Indian. It's too idealistic for me to completely take it in. Had it taken in the guilt and the horror of becoming America, it might have been a greater achievement. It's a splendid achievement, it's immense, magnificent, but it's exclusive, and it does not include American sin.¹²⁴

It is this lack of 'sin', meaning in this instance a lack of acknowledgement of the colonial process and its effects, which Walcott views as a flaw in Whitman's projection of a new Eden. It is not a nostalgic mirroring of the first Adam which is needed, but a 'second' Adam, one who incorporates the bitterness of experience and the understanding that humanity has lost any original innocence. For Walcott, 'the idea of Adam contains original sin'.¹²⁵

As a result, whilst it is clear that Walcott's approach to Edenic symbolism is

¹²³ George B. Handley, "'The Argument of the Outboard Motor': An Interview with Derek Walcott", in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, ed. by Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), pp. 127-139 (p. 132).

¹²⁴ Walcott, "'The Argument of the Outboard Motor'", p. 132.

¹²⁵ Walcott, "'The Argument'", p. 133.

typified by complexity, ambiguity and plurality, it remains the case that there is an underlying, predominantly consistent theme of resistance to pastoral idealism and reductive nostalgia. Throughout his poetry, Walcott fragments and interrogates pastoral tropes in relation to Edenic symbolism, employing such techniques as bathos, elevation, metaphor and anthropomorphism in order to achieve the aim of defamiliarizing and complicating these conventions, and to work towards the construction of a mosaic of pluralistic imaginings of these postlapsarian second Edens.

ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

The poem 'Sea Grapes' centres itself around the image of a schooner sailing upon Caribbean waters, bound, the poet imagines, for 'home' in a reflection of Homer's 'Odysseus, home-bound on the Aegean'.¹ However, this technique of classical mirroring is abruptly shattered in the poem's jarring final line: 'The classics can console. But not enough'. The process of Odysseus's *nostos* is thus subverted, as this lyric poem employs imagery and form, in particular through its brusque refusal to complete a final stanza after a series of tercets, to cultivate a sense of unease, ambiguity and resistance in its employment of classical allusions. 'Sea Grapes' thus evidences a fundamental element of Derek Walcott's poetic craftsmanship, revealing that this is a poet whose work is suffused with allusions to the Graeco-Roman literary tradition, whilst consistently challenging and questioning the significance of these tropes. In Walcott studies, *Omeros* is by far the most widely cited poem in examinations of classical reception, containing as it does numerous references to classical texts. However, it is important to recognise that this theme of a complex and ambiguous engagement with the classical tradition is demonstrated consistently across Walcott's poetry, ensuring that a multifaceted discourse with this tradition forms a core component of his poetic *oeuvre*.²

¹ Derek Walcott, 'Sea Grapes', in *Sea Grapes* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), p. 9.

² In this chapter, the term 'classical tradition' will be employed to refer to texts from the Graeco-Roman tradition. This is not to dismiss Walcott's engagements with classical texts from a variety of cultural sources, but to ensure clarity in its examination of engagements with the Hellenistic pastoral tradition. Emily Greenwood explains this use of terminology succinctly in her comment: 'Throughout this book I use the capitalized noun "Classics" to denote the study of the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. This is not to suggest that these cultures have a monopoly on the terms "Classics" and "classical", even if modern European scholarship has sometimes taken this relationship for granted. [...] However, the proprietary process whereby these cultures were designated as "classical", and claimed for Europe, is an inalienable part of the history of their reception in the modern world, not least in the Caribbean [...] It therefore makes good sense to retain this use of Classics in the present study, the better to expose it through dialogues with

This dialogue with classical genres and modes has been of notable interest to critics, with several studies dedicated to analysing the treatment of specifically epic conventions in Walcott's writings, predominantly through close readings of *Omeros*. However, I suggest that this may well be overshadowing a more nuanced recognition of Walcott's broader, multifaceted engagements with the classical tradition. I argue that it is not only epic which is of interest to Walcott, but a spectrum of classical modes and genres, including the pastoral mode and its related genre of pastoral elegy. Therefore, I view Walcott's allusions to the classical tradition less as correlating directly with an interest in epic tropes than as corresponding to a wider engagement with classical modes and genres, forming a rich mosaic of allusions. I stress, also, that epic and pastoral are in themselves tied closely to one another, and have been intricately linked since pastoral's Hellenistic origins, eliding the tighter generic boundaries often attributed to epic in studies of Walcott's poetry. This chapter will include close readings from a range of works, including *Omeros* and selected shorter poems, such as the sequence *Italian Eclogues*, the 'Eulogy to W. H. Auden' and various examples from the collection *White Egrets* (2010). I argue that Walcott's wide-ranging engagements with the classical tradition involve a strong element of dialogue with the pastoral mode, and that this has not been sufficiently recognised in critical studies of Walcott's writings. These engagements with pastoral allow Walcott to explore themes fundamental to the mode, including the relationship between humanity and nature, the notion of a mythical past, nostalgia, human relationships, and the representation of both urban and rural spaces. I argue that Walcott's long-running and varied uses of classical modes and genres form part of a process which is ultimately transformative, allowing the pastoral

Caribbean literature'. Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks*, pp. 12-13.

mode (and its interrelated anti-pastoral features) the vitality and nuances required to act as a meaningful, productive tool in the creation of a literature which speaks both from and about the Caribbean archipelago, revising understandings of both the classical pastoral mode and the epic genre in the process.

The learning of classical texts would have formed a key component of the curriculum studied by Walcott as a student at St Mary's College, St Lucia. As Bruce King outlines, this institution modelled itself, at the time, as a 'British-style public school', with a syllabus which included 'French, Latin, English Literature, English Language, History'.³ Moreover, Walcott would later complete a BA at the University of the West Indies in subjects including Latin.⁴ As a result, not only the wider classical tradition, but Virgil's bucolic and epic writings more specifically are likely to have been familiar to Walcott through his studies. Indeed, King recounts that as an undergraduate student Walcott once 'fainted at the Student Union from drink and overwork while trying to study for examinations in Milton, nineteenth-century French literature, and Virgil's *Georgics*'.⁵ This colonial education placed a firm emphasis upon the classical tradition, and ensured that whilst Walcott would likely never have been required to study Caribbean writers during his formal education, an understanding of the works of such poets as Virgil, Homer and Theocritus was expected.⁶ It was this problematic value judgment, the elevation of the classical tradition as seen through a Eurocentric lens over

³ Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 24-25.

⁴ King, *A Caribbean Life*, p. 85.

⁵ King, *A Caribbean Life*, p. 98.

⁶ A relevant further detail is that Walcott's works would later be considered useful for the teaching of Latin texts. George Fredric Franko would write an article recommending the use of Walcott's *Italian Eclogues* in the teaching of Latin poetry to students, claiming that they are 'particularly useful both for illustrating such poetic figures as alliteration and chiasmus and for demonstrating the persistent vitality of the classical tradition'. 'Derek Walcott's *Italian Eclogues* and the Teaching of Latin Poetry', *The Classical Outlook: Journal of the American Classical League*, 77 (1999), 1-14 (p. 1).

the regional, which would need to be navigated by the poet in his later literary career.

‘Homecoming: Anse La Raye’ contains a passage reminiscing upon this colonial curriculum, referring to the poet’s younger self and his fellow classmates as: ‘solemn Afro-Greeks eager for grades’.⁷ The importance of Walcott’s writings in any attempt to explore the classical tradition in this context is evidenced by Emily Greenwood’s employment of this same term for the title of a seminal study of classical reception in the works of Caribbean writers in the twentieth century, in which she argues that ‘the reception of ancient Greece and Rome in anglophone Caribbean literature works both ways’.⁸ In this study, Greenwood suggests that the familiarity with the classical tradition ensured by the colonial educational curriculum resulted in Caribbean writers turning ‘the metaphor of the Caribbean as new Aegean or the new Mediterranean into an enabling trope’.⁹ This chapter will further develop Greenwood’s demonstration of the transformative effects of these interactions, arguing that Walcott not only offers original and innovative approaches to classical themes and techniques in his own work, but enhances perceptions and understandings of the primary texts themselves, in a dialogic process which is ultimately transformative. It is not simply the case that Walcott adapts and appropriates classical genres and forms, but that he frequently takes on the role of critic of them, reshaping and transforming the tradition and its legacy in the process. A recognition of the generic flexibility at work in his engagements with classical models, therefore, highlights the poet’s achievement in developing a complex negotiation with this tradition, using these sources as a means to explore contemporary

⁷ Derek Walcott, ‘Homecoming: Anse La Raye’, in *The Gulf and Other Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), pp. 50-51 (p. 50). The poem is dedicated to Garth St Omer.

⁸ Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks*, p. 2. For Greenwood, ‘the hyphenation or articulation in “Afro-Greeks” is not an occasion for mockery or a site of mimicry, but an opportunity for invention’ (p. 7).

⁹ Greenwood, p. 68.

and local themes.

In *Afro-Greeks*, Greenwood outlines a distinction between ‘European cultures and the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome’, suggesting that one explanation for the frequency with which the two are conflated is the historic process of an appropriation of ‘the civilizational authority of Greece and Rome’ by European colonizers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the aligning of these ancient civilizations with modern European colonialism.¹⁰ This is an important distinction, and one too often overlooked in critical approaches to engagements with the classical tradition in Walcott’s writings.¹¹ Greenwood also highlights the widespread, prolonged practice of the formation of metaphoric connections between ancient Greece and the modern Caribbean, suggesting that this is a consequence of the tradition of the Greek archipelago being ‘mapped onto the Caribbean’ in both ‘actual and literary cartography’, thus ‘leading to the figure of the “new” or “Caribbean” Aegean’, a notion frequently referred to in Walcott’s poetry (as indicated by ‘Sea Grapes’).¹² Thus, the interrogation and rejection by twentieth-century Caribbean writers of European cultural authority over the classics results in a symbiotic, creatively productive relationship between these ancient texts and the literature of the modern Caribbean: ‘Caribbean

¹⁰ Greenwood, pp. 2-3.

¹¹ For instance, Line Henriksen appears to conflate European perspectives with classical literature in the study *Ambition and Anxiety: Ezra Pound’s Cantos and Derek Walcott’s Omeros as Twentieth-Century Epics* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006), ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹² Greenwood, p. 20. Froude is directly referred to by Greenwood as a source for this projection of ancient Greece onto the Caribbean setting. The conflation of the ancient Aegean and the contemporary Caribbean is similarly evident in Walcott’s poem 29 of the collection *The Bounty*: ‘Yet those silver currents threaded the old tapestries | with dolphins and dragons, and embroidering seams | followed channels winding from the Pillars of Hercules | to this width. In maps the Caribbean dreams | of the Aegean, and the Aegean of reversible seas’ (p. 62). Both an interest in the concept of reversibility and a direct reference to the cartographic gaze are also clear in these lines, themes which will be further explored in this chapter, and which appear to be closely connected to Walcott’s depictions of ancient Greece and Rome. I interpret the projection of a cartographic gaze as alluding to their militaristic and political power, thus forming an association between these ancient civilizations and the notion of space as territory, under clear strictures of ownership.

receptions do not merely receive Greece, but transform it as well'.¹³ This, I would suggest, is certainly the case for Walcott's engagements with the pastoral mode. The process of engagement becomes a transformative one, seeking to undercut Eurocentricity and temporal distance in its approach to Hellenistic pastoral models, shaping the classical canon of bucolic writings into a mode capable of representing contemporary Caribbean settings and experiences. Through Walcott's interventions, a uniquely Walcottian interpretation of the pastoral mode develops; one which offers writers a relevant and productive means of exploring themes relating to localized spaces and contemporary concerns.

Greenwood's scholarship has been highly influential to this area of Walcott studies, highlighting both plurality and ambivalence as markers of Walcott's approach to the classical tradition: 'the *Odyssey* with which Walcott engages is a fragmentary *Odyssey* that has arrived in the New World in bits and pieces. [...] there are many different, sometimes contradictory, Odysseuses in Walcott's oeuvre'.¹⁴ Methodologies employed by Walcott in this fragmentary engagement with the classics include an examination of temporality and history: 'The question of the past and its role in the present is at the centre of the historiographic nexus of *Omeros*'.¹⁵ This is a development and continuation of ideas expressed in an earlier essay by Greenwood, which similarly argued that 'Walcott's engagement with the Greek and Roman past is characterized by ambivalence and equivocalness', through an insightful analysis into the use of such temporal adverbs as 'since' in Walcott's poetry: 'As a polysemic word that is hard to pin down, *since* aptly expresses the complex relationship between past and present, and

¹³ Greenwood, p. 37.

¹⁴ Greenwood, pp. 45-6.

¹⁵ Greenwood, p. 169.

the complexity of Walcott's relationship with Homer'.¹⁶ The final emphasis upon 'Homer', however, is worth noting. Critical studies of classical reception in Walcott's works, including Greenwood's, have overwhelmingly focussed upon the Homeric epics, rather than a wider range of Graeco-Roman materials.

Indeed, Walcott is well represented in *Homer in the Twentieth Century: Between World Literature and the Western Canon* (2007). This collection includes essays by such scholars as Lorna Hardwick, Gregson Davis and Oliver Taplin, each of whom highlight and analyse Walcott's writings in their contributions. This emphasis upon Homer significantly limits the scope for comment upon Walcott's engagements with the pastoral mode, more readily associated with Theocritus and Virgil, and again indicates a critical bias towards the singular study of epic conventions in Walcott's works, rather than the interrelated mode of pastoral. Nonetheless, this scholarship is relevant to the present study. Hardwick, for example, demonstrates an interest in negotiations between past and present in Walcott's engagements with the classical tradition, arguing that in *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* and *Omeros*, Walcott 'denied the primacy of the genealogy of Homer in the Western tradition and allowed for disruption in the relationship between the "past" text and its readings and the present perception'.¹⁷ This 'concept of simultaneity', suggests Hardwick, allows 'present concerns', which are 'influenced' but not 'constrained' by the 'intervening pasts', to 'create an unoccupied site for old and new to meet and act afresh'.¹⁸ This notion of a 'concept of simultaneity' is a helpful one, signifying the fluidity and nonlinearity of Walcott's poetic temporalities, and his uneasy relationship with the concepts of a linear

¹⁶ Emily Greenwood, "'Still Going On': Temporal Adverbs and the View of the past in Walcott's Poetry", *Callaloo*, 28 (2005), 132-145, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3805539 (pp. 133, 135).

¹⁷ Hardwick, 'Singing across the Faultlines', p. 66.

¹⁸ Hardwick, 'Singing', p. 66.

progression of history and teleology.

Gregson Davis examines the concepts of *nostos* and *katabasis* in his study, illuminating the representation of the titular ‘homecoming’ in ‘Homecoming: Anse Le Raye’.¹⁹ As has been outlined in the previous chapter, this theme of *nostos* is an important feature of the pastoral mode, however associations with pastoral are not explored by Davis in this essay, an absence which limits a recognition of the breadth and plurality of Walcott’s references to classical literary models. Other studies of Walcott in connection to Homer include both Justine McConnell’s *Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odyssey in the African Diaspora since 1939* (2013) and Maeve Tynan’s *Postcolonial Odysseys: Derek Walcott’s Voyages of Homecoming* (2011), each of which turn their attention to Homer’s *Odyssey* as a specific source text.

McConnell’s monograph investigates a range of postcolonial and anticolonial responses to Homer’s epic, including an extended analysis of Walcott’s *Omeros* and *The Odyssey* (which was first staged in 1992 and published in 1993), stressing the plurality and variety of later receptions of the Homeric text and making the important point that ‘the Homeric epics do not belong inherently to Europe, [...] they can be as African, Caribbean, and American, as they are European, as “black” as they are “white”’.²⁰ McConnell demonstrates the significance of Polyphemus to these later works: ‘For Polyphemus, Odysseus and his men are intruders who invade his home to steal from him’.²¹ Indeed, the ‘Homeric Odysseus’s cool appraisal of the merits of the

¹⁹ Gregson Davis, “‘Homecomings without Home’: Representations of (Post)colonial *nostos* (Homecoming) in the Lyric of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott, in *Homer in the Twentieth Century: Beyond World Literature and the Western Canon*, ed. by Barbara Graziosi and Emily Greenwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 191-209.

²⁰ McConnell, p. 9.

²¹ McConnell, p.9.

Cyclops' island' alongside the 'disparagement of its inhabitants as lacking the qualities of a civilized society [...] become almost unmistakably colonial'.²² I would expand this argument by highlighting that Polyphemus is also a recurring figure in the classical pastoral tradition, a precedent set most clearly in Theocritus's *Idyll XI*, a poem which was later parodied by Ovid in his influential *Metamorphoses*.²³ Walcott's own uses of this character can, therefore, be considered in relation to the pastoral tradition, in which Polyphemus appears more often as a pathetic, lovelorn figure than a violent, malevolent one (although he does, of course, appear to have characteristics of both representations in Ovid's reimagining). McConnell, like Greenwood and Hardwick, highlights the 'denial of temporal linearity' as a significant aspect of Walcott's dialogue with the classical tradition, observing that 'if ancient Greece has much in common with the modern Caribbean, then the gap of three millennia must lack much of the strength and alienating impact usually ascribed to it'.²⁴ Although Walcott is 'removing classical Greece from its pedestal', he does so 'without lowering its value; this is a part of his assertion of simultaneity rather than linear history'.²⁵

There is, evidently, a strong tendency towards a focus on solely *Omeros* and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* in studies of Walcott's engagements with the classical tradition. Although these studies make important arguments, I would suggest that this may be resulting in the effect of an elision of critical interest in works beyond this relatively small selection of Walcott's copious and wide-ranging canon. Maeve Tynan is one of few critics to substantially analyse works outside of *Omeros* in the first book-

²² Ibid., p. 9.

²³ See *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, trans. by David Raeburn, intro. by Denis Feeney (London: Penguin, 2004), Book 13, ll. 740-898. In *Idyll XI*, Polyphemus expresses his unrequited love for the sea-nymph Galatea.

²⁴ McConnell, p. 107.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

length study of Walcott's relationship to Homer's *Odyssey*, although *Omeros* is stated as marking the 'apogee' of Walcott's 'multifaceted' engagement with Greek myth.²⁶ For Tynan, the process of journeying (and the related concept of *nostos*) is key, as the many journeys in Walcott's verse 'are circular in nature'.²⁷ In Walcott's poetry, suggests Tynan, 'the voyage trope belies the possibility of stasis', as the 'person returning' is never 'fully identical with the person who set out; the voyage therefore represents a process of continual transformation, with the final destination being the point of embarkation'.²⁸ Tynan's singular focus on epic involves an overlooking of the plurality of classical genres and modes with which Walcott engages, however this emphasis upon 'transformation' is important, as well as the broadening of interest beyond a limited selection of Walcott's writings. I would suggest that it is not only Walcott's characters who are transformed by processes relating to this dialogue with the classical tradition, but the conventions and tropes of these genres and modes themselves. Poems such as *Omeros* can be read as expressing a process of transformative appropriation, the circular temporalities at work in the text paralleling a cyclical, shifting course of productive engagements with classical texts, a repetitive pattern of movement between direct and indirect allusions to the classical tradition, followed by subsequent dismissals of their significance, alongside a fluctuating mood of ambivalence towards this framework of references.

Despite the evident emphasis upon allusions to Homer present across the bulk of critical studies of his work, Walcott's engagements with the Virgilian tradition have not gone entirely unrecognised. Indeed, this forms the foundation of the limited amount

²⁶ Tynan, p. xvi.

²⁷ Tynan, p. xx.

²⁸ Tynan, p. xx.

of critical material available examining Walcott's engagements with the pastoral mode, with no scholarship seeking to recognise Theocritus as a major influence.²⁹ As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, both Gregson Davis and John Van Sickle have explored this area of Virgilian influence, again with a specific focus upon *Omeros*. However, this remains a surprisingly overlooked topic, one which is absent from most major critical studies of Walcott's relationship to the classical tradition. One reason for the somewhat disproportionate interest in epic conventions evidenced in critical studies of Walcott's poetry at the expense of other genres and modes such as pastoral may be the traditionally high prestige that has been attributed to this genre, an issue which needs to be recognised not uniquely in Walcott studies, but in literary criticism and classical reception studies more widely.

The roots for this high status are ancient ones; early epic was thought to be a source of ethical knowledge, of great value as a means of educating society and spreading understandings of contemporary moral codes.³⁰ As this study has already indicated, the sheer scale of literary history from the classical era to the modern day ensures that any stable, satisfactory definition of the pastoral mode proves extremely difficult, and, I would suggest, any rigid definition is neither possible nor desirable. The same is broadly true of epic. Judith Haber observes that the long-held critical practice of viewing pastoral as a 'static, idealizing genre' with a purpose of the 'recovery of an Edenic past' has been proven overly simplistic, noting that when looking back to classical pastoral: 'I found not a stable origin from which other works

²⁹ It should be noted, however, that Cashman Kerr Prince has offered a hugely unusual comparison of one of Walcott's poems ('Cul de Sac Valley', in *The Arkansas Testament*) to Theocritus's *Idyll I*: 'for Theocritus, as for Walcott, the trees speak [...] this is not servile imitation, however, but the invocation of a conceit from classical poetry in order to create it anew with speaking stones'. Prince, p. 176.

³⁰ Shadi Bartsch, 'Classical Poetics' in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Roland Greene et al., 4th edn (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 252-260 (p. 253).

deviated, but a mode that worked insistently against itself, problematizing both its own definition and stable definitions within its texts'.³¹ However, Haber still recommends a return to the examination of Theocritus as a founding figure in the pastoral tradition, noting that critics of English pastoral are too likely to 'ignore or oversimplify his poetry', thus perpetuating a limited understanding of the genre.³² This is in part due to an apparent generic complexity: Theocritus wrote, claims Haber, 'within the epic tradition'.³³ As a result, his poetry is not merely an expression of a 'longing for simplicity', but an acknowledgement of generic 'limitations', which serves the purpose of 'ironically distancing himself and his contemporaries from the epic poets and heroes that preceded them'.³⁴ Theocritus's ironies, suggests Haber, are 'consciously two-edged'; the *Idylls* see the poet and his characters 'recreate, in diminished forms, the heroism they leave behind'.³⁵ As a result, 'at its most extreme, the bucolic perspective becomes identified with and indistinguishable from the heroic'.³⁶ The same complexity, I argue, is at work in Walcott's engagements with the classical tradition, which blur the artificial dividing lines between the epic and the pastoral.

Haber is not the only critic to stress the importance of seeing pastoral and epic

³¹ Judith Haber, *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction: Theocritus to Marvell*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 1.

³² Haber, p. 7.

³³ Haber, p. 7. Haber cites David M. Halperin as evidencing this recognition of Theocritus as a poet working in the epic tradition. Halperin's study of Theocritus's writings sheds light upon the relationship between the bucolic and the epic (it is important to note that Halperin clearly differentiates between the terms bucolic and pastoral). One theme explored is the role that inversion plays: 'This is the technique of inversion. A heroic theme is inverted when it is detached from the heroic world and set instead amid the prosaic activities and humble personages of daily life [...] Theocritus repeatedly uses the technique of inversion to incorporate in the *Idylls* subjects belonging to heroic literature, thereby reminding the reader that his poems represent in actuality a more modest, but nonetheless authentic, kind of *epos*'. Halperin later concludes that 'bucolic poetry should not be viewed simply as a series of realistic miniatures or genre scenes but as a recasting of the high traditions of Greek literature into an anti-heroic context where they can recover something of their original freshness and can accord with the tastes of the Alexandrian age. Theocritus thereby rescues the genre of *epos* from obsolescence'. Halperin, *Before Pastoral*, pp. 219, 231.

³⁴ Haber, p. 7.

³⁵ Haber, p. 8.

³⁶ Haber, p. 8.

as closely intertwined. As well as David M. Halperin's impactful argument for recognising connections to *epos* in Theocritus's *Idylls*, Nancy Lindheim states that pastoral 'is always contaminated by and partly assembled from other kinds of poetry such as epic, mime, or erotic lyric. It carves its territory from areas already mined by other forms; nowadays we might consider it *bricolage*'.³⁷ For Richard Hunter, pastoral is the 'rustic cousin' of epic.³⁸ Indeed, Theocritus's *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues* contain several references to the Homeric epics, including mentions of the characters Polyphemus, Circe and Achilles.³⁹ Pastoral writings, then, are formed from tropes, references and conventions amalgamated from various generic sources, including epic, thus making it a malleable, adaptable mode, albeit one which seemingly cannot escape from the shadow of the more highly esteemed and discussed genre of epic. Such an understanding aids with the recognition of the complexity at work in Walcott's engagements with – and highlighting of – generic flexibility within the classical tradition.

³⁷ Lindheim, p. 10.

³⁸ Hunter, 'Introduction', in *Theocritus: Idylls*, p. vii.

³⁹ Theocritus's *Idyll 7*, for instance, includes the comment: 'Was it nectar like this that once on Anapus' banks | Impelled that shepherd, the mighty Polyphemus, | The one who bombarded ships with mountains, to | Dance about his sheepfolds?'. *Theocritus: Idylls*, p. 29. Virgil's much-debated *Eclogue IV*, which heralds a celebrated birth, contains an intertwining of pastoral and epic motifs and imagery: 'Then shall grapes hang wild and reddening on thorn-trees, | And honey sweat like dew from the hard bark of oaks. | Yet there'll be lingering traces still of our primal error, | Prompting us to dare the seas in ships, to girdle | Our cities round with walls and break the soil with ploughshares. | A second Argo will carry her crew of chosen heroes, | A second Tiphys steer her. And wars – yes, even wars | There'll be; and great Achilles must sail for Troy again'. *Virgil: Eclogues and Georgics*, p. 19. In Virgil's *Eclogue VIII*, Alpheisiboeus sings: 'Magic spells can inveigle the moon from the sky; | With her magic did Circe transform into beasts | The men of Ulysses; and magic can blast | A cold-clammy snake as it slides through the meads'. *Virgil: Eclogues and Georgics*, p. 35. Alongside the references to Polyphemus, Circe and further characters from the Homeric canon, there are several further symbols present in these lines which recur in Walcott's poetry: the grapes are reminiscent of sea-grapes, a distinctly localised interpretation of this pastoral symbol of nourishment both spiritual and physical, alongside the snake (a creature whose important presence in Walcott's poetry has been explored in the first chapter of this thesis), the employment of Circe as emblematic of the process of transformation and the moon as symbolic of permanence, here in contrast to Circe's transformative magic, a theme which will be further explored in a reading of *Another Life* in Chapter Three.

Engagements with the Classical Pastoral Tradition in ‘Greece’ and the *Italian Eclogues*

Undoubtedly, *Omeros* has been the primary – if not exclusive – focus of most studies of Walcott’s works in connection to the classical tradition. However, it should be stressed that complex allusions to this tradition are present across Walcott’s poetry, evidencing the significance of these engagements to the poet’s craftmanship and vision. Whilst ‘Sea Grapes’ offers a contemplation of classical mirroring, the ancient Greek archipelago imposed upon the physical space of the contemporary Caribbean, ‘Roman Outposts’ is a dreamlike exploration of the Roman world, and its apparent modern-day equivalents; the ‘hot core’ of empire is said to be ‘Washington’, where it was once ‘Whitehall’, the collapsing of temporalities here signifying shifting developments in international relations throughout history and their contemporary effects.⁴⁰ The poem is centred around the dualistic imagery of day and night, the ‘moonlight’ washing the scene in a silvery glow, leading to a pun upon historical categorisation, as this ahistorical realm is described as the ‘Silver Age’, denoting Walcott’s ambivalence towards historiography and its labelling of epochal eras and events. The ‘moon’ itself emerges as the nexus of empire, emblematic of the apparent constancy of imperialistic drive as a force across humanity’s history, undercut by the void in which it is positioned: ‘that white empire, is lost | in the black mass’. The realm of Roman imperial politics clashes and converges with the present in an example of the ‘concept of simultaneity’ which shapes Walcott’s representations of temporality and history, the ‘light’ of the moon ‘burns | all night in office like Cato’s ghost’.⁴¹ The Caribbean seascape similarly

⁴⁰ Derek Walcott, ‘Roman Outposts’, in *The Fortunate Traveller* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 28.

⁴¹ Hardwick, ‘Singing’, p. 66.

converges into the scene, the ‘wet dawn’ smelling of ‘seaweed’, the ‘concrete cracks’ on the pier wall resembling ‘frontiers on a map of Roman Europe’, the cartographic image conjuring the field of military expansion, working to project the landscape as territory, vulnerable to colonial intervention. Ultimately, the theme is one of repetition, history seen as the repetitive movements of the waves on the sea: ‘The same tides rise and fall’, the same ‘moon’ with its constant cycle shines over the present archipelago as over the furthest reaches of the Roman empire.

Although these themes and techniques are in keeping with Walcott’s characteristic approach to the classical tradition, ‘Roman Outposts’ is actually somewhat unusual. Overwhelmingly, Walcott favours allusions to ancient Greek history and literature, rather than Roman contexts.⁴² Roman rule is associated with the British empire in his writings, as indeed it is in ‘Outposts’, and it is the Greek setting which is more frequently associated with both the Caribbean and the pastoral mode. For instance, in the poem ‘Greece’ the opening scene is, at first, one of idyllic wonder, rapidly undercut through adjectives signifying sterility and decay: ‘Beyond the choric gestures of the olive, | gnarled as sea almonds, over boulders dry | as the calcareous moles of a Cyclops’.⁴³ A nod to pastoral idyllicism, strengthened by the allusion to the Cyclops, is

⁴² In an interview in 1980 (two years before the publication of *The Fortunate Traveller*) Walcott remarked: ‘Perhaps it’s the situation in the Caribbean, perhaps it’s becoming older and getting a deepening sense of history, but I find myself very drawn, not so much to the style but to the *idea* of the Roman poets. I have this feeling of being on the outskirts, in a colony or provinces that have changed empires, from British to American [...] I’ve felt parallel with some of the Latin poets, coming from my archipelago on the fringe towards the capital [...] I also think that very often the capital can become numb, because its preoccupation is with power, with the function of power, and somehow the poetry goes out of it. If you want to put it this way you can say that where there’s concrete, there the power is, and the further you go from the concrete the more you come to the vegetation, to nature and so on’. (Walcott in interview with Ned Thomas, in *Conversations*, pp. 67-68). Both Britain and the United States are here associated with the Roman metropolis, and the sense of ‘outskirts’, alongside a contrast between the ‘concrete’, here symbolic of the urban space, and both ‘vegetation’ and ‘nature’, again evidences a dichotomy which is central to classical pastoral writings, such as the Virgilian dialectic, in which the powerful Rome is posited, in the first eclogue, in opposition to a rural space of leisure and communality.

⁴³ Derek Walcott, ‘Greece’, in *The Fortunate Traveller* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), pp. 35-36.

inverted through instances of descriptive language which resist the projection of an idyllic pastoral space. Polyphemus is thus positioned in a landscape which is at once marked as pastoral and, simultaneously, as the interrelated realm of anti-pastoral, the two working in an uneasy equilibrium. ‘Greece’ returns to the theme of an Adamic naming of elements of the natural world (which has been explored in relation to the pastoral mode in the previous chapter of this thesis) as the speaker stands at the ‘cliff’s edge’ – implying an allusion to Romantic poetics and its themes of sublimity and wonder – only for the word ‘wind’ to here sound ‘different’, disconnected to the experience being lived. ‘I held air without language in my hands’, the poet continues, as ‘[m]y head was scoured of other people’s monsters’.

In ‘Greece’, major themes of Walcott’s engagement with the classical tradition, and with the pastoral mode more specifically, are signalled. A distance is reinforced between the literary tradition itself, signified by the emphasis upon the *logos* in connection to negation and defamiliarization, whilst the overarching ‘concept of simultaneity’ – a collapsing of temporal distance between the present experience and the archaic past – tempers any sense of irredeemable alienation from the structures of references employed.⁴⁴ The declaration that the poet’s mind has been cleared of ‘other people’s monsters’, a suggestion of an intellectual and creative detachment from the image of the Cyclops at the poem’s opening, is thrown into question by the closing image of the ‘Minotaur | at the dead end of the classic labyrinth’, thus highlighting Walcott’s characteristic cultivation of ambiguity and ambivalence in his dialogue with the classical tradition. This labyrinthine framework of classical references is

⁴⁴ This disconnect between place and language is similar to that expressed and explored in *Omeros*, as examined in this thesis’ chapter on Edenic symbolism.

investigated and interrogated by the poet throughout his poetic writings, but never accepted as a straightforward, unquestioned convention of his poetic practice. Walcott's approach to the classical tradition is not imitative, but transformative.

The Bounty contains a sequence of poems under the title *Italian Eclogues*. This self-conscious, self-defining allusion to the classical pastoral tradition should certainly not, however, be read as suggestive of an homage to the Virgilian eclogues, or as an accurate and complete description of the generic qualities of this series of six poems. Nonetheless, it does emphatically draw attention to Walcott's engagement with the classical pastoral tradition, further revealing that these allusions have been unnecessarily and misleadingly overlooked in critical studies. The first poem in the sequence continues this process of emphasising an open dialogue with the Virgilian pastorals, hovering around the metre of hexameter and opening with a 'bright road to Rome, beyond Mantua', thus harking to the *topoi* of Virgil's bucolic writings.⁴⁵ These first lines cultivate a sense of *otium*, through such features as the personified 'wind's elation', with modified archetypal pastoral symbols including 'reeds of rice'. Van Sickle has highlighted and explored the effects of the symbol of 'Virgilian Reeds' in *Omeros*, though I would suggest that it is essential to recognise that allusions to such fundamental features of the classical pastoral go beyond this single poem, recurring, as can be witnessed here, in the shorter poems, and thus forming a larger structural framework of – to employ Gregson Davis' term – 'bucolic scaffolding'.⁴⁶ Van Sickle offers a succinct, compelling overview of the centrality of 'reeds' (in Greek *kalamos*) to the pastoral tradition, noting that the term, through a complex set of connections,

⁴⁵ Derek Walcott, 'Italian Eclogues' in *The Bounty*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), pp. 64-70. (p. 64). Later references to this sequence will refer to the corresponding numerals.

⁴⁶ Davis, "Pastoral Sites", p. 43.

signified the ‘pipe that *Pan* invented from the reeds he clutched when trying to rape *Syrinx*, the nymph who escaped her stalker by metamorphosis into a reed’.⁴⁷ This would later become *calamus* in Latin, leading then to the Italian *calamaio*, meaning a container for the ink which was used with a reed pen; thus *calamus* as ‘reed and pipe’ became, due to the linguistic nuances of Virgil’s writings, an ‘emblem for pastoral poetry’.⁴⁸ Consequently, the opening lines of this poem may be read as a metapoetic exploration of the process of writing pastoral verse, involving a direct engagement with the Virgilian style.

Although this sequence demonstrates the characteristic ambivalence and ambiguity of Walcott’s dialogue with the classical tradition, it does so to less of an extent than would be expected when compared to such works as *Omeros*, ‘Sea Grapes’ or ‘Greece’. The scale of its involvement with conventions of the Virgilian pastoral are striking, and, I would suggest, mark an apotheosis of Walcott’s engagements with Virgil’s *Eclogues* in the same way that critics such as Tynan have claimed that *Omeros* is the ‘apogee’ of Walcott’s exploration of the Homeric epics.⁴⁹ The imagery of its first poem confirms that this is a self-conscious meditation on the eclogue-style, as the poet witnesses ‘fields fenced by poplars, stone farms in character, | nouns from a schoolboy’s text, Virgilian, Horatian’. Moreover, the poem is shaped and inspired by a journey, in this case a car ride across the Italian landscape, a scenario directly tied to the pastoral dichotomy of the past – in this case symbolised by classical texts and the language of Latin – in conjunction with modernity: ‘brown dogs of Latin panting alongside the car’. The ‘concept of simultaneity’ is thus very much present. One

⁴⁷ Van Sickle, ““Virgilian Reeds””, p. 39.

⁴⁸ Van Sickle, p. 40.

⁴⁹ Tynan, p. xvi.

possible reason for the unusual extent of investment in Virgil's bucolic writings evident in this sequence is the context of its creation, as indicated by its dedication to Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996). Virgil's eclogues are widely regarded as inspired by Theocritus's *Idylls*, their conception an act of respect for a fellow poet, and a marking of dedication to the poetic craft, involving a complex negotiation of the process of *imitatio*. Of course, these positions are notably shifted in the case of Walcott and Brodsky, both of whom worked as more or less contemporaries, and I certainly would not suggest that this is in any way an act of emulation on Walcott's part, just as Virgil's own writings marked a radical departure from their Greek source. It may be read, rather, as signifying friendship and camaraderie, a gesture from one poet to another, employing a classical precedent for the purpose.⁵⁰ The poet and his dedicatee become new versions of Meliboeus and Tityrus, although the reader hears only one side of this dialogue; *The Bounty* was published a year after Brodsky's death, thus the tone is conventionally elegiac, the absence of Brodsky stressed: 'You refreshed forms and stanzas; these cropped fields are | your stubble grating my cheeks with departure'. Nonetheless, this is not a straightforward demonstration of *et in Arcadia ego*.

The bounteous allusions to the pastoral tradition in this opening poem of the sequence remain highly complex, illustrated by the efforts of the 'dogs of Latin panting', the combining of present and past here presented as a struggle, rather than a

⁵⁰ The role of the pastoral elegist who marks the death of a fellow poet has been explained by John Heath-Stubbs: 'Theocritus's immediate successors are Bion (c. 120 BC) and Moschus (fl. c. 150 BC). Several pastoral poems by Bion are extant, in which he follows Theocritus's manner closely. But his best known poem is a lament for the dying god, Adonis, probably intended to be sung at a religious festival. He died young, allegedly by poison. Moschus's most important poem is his lament for Bion. In this he developed the Pastoral Elegy a stage further, by picturing the deceased poet as himself a shepherd, and casting him, as it were, in the role of Daphnis in an idealized pastoral world. The form thus established was to become the standard mode in which one poet mourned the death of another'. John Heath-Stubbs, *The Pastoral* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 5.

seamless process. A pun is also at work, the phrase ‘dog Latin’ referring to mocking inventions of Latin terms, or incorrect uses of the language, the ‘shadows’ of these animals only precariously ‘on the verge of smooth translation’.⁵¹ This implies a knowing irreverence towards these source texts, an ambivalence which allows for a distancing from its Virgilian source, and from authoritative translations or interpretations of this material. This is not a scholarly effort to replicate the style of Virgil’s influential poems, restricted by a hegemonic structuring of cultural authority, but a transformation of their techniques and ethos and a refusal to endorse any limitations of their creative potential.

By locating the scene in the same geographical location as Virgil, Walcott harks to the *genius loci*, although in this case it is one of change and transience, the ‘phrases from Ovid passing in a green blur’ as he looks out of the window of the vehicle, the world seen in dynamic movement rather than pastoral stasis. The emphasis upon loss is similarly complicated; at first, the evocation of the memory of an absent friend is in keeping with pastoral conventions, including a suggestion of connections between the natural world and the lost human figure: ‘this voice that rustles out of the reeds is yours [...] your corn- wisps of hair blowing away’. A reference to the seasons is similarly typical of the pastoral elegiac strain, with its consolation in the flow of life, death and decay evident in the seasons: ‘To every line there is a time and a season’.⁵² However,

⁵¹ It could also be read as a further allusion to the first Virgilian Eclogue, in which Tityrus states: ‘Thus I came to know how dogs resemble puppies’. *Virgil: Eclogues and Georgics*, p. 4.

⁵² As Lindheim observes of pastoral elegy: ‘the moving elegiac motif that pits the cyclical rebirth of flower or tree against the simple mortality of the human being has been a feature of the genre since the *Lament for Bion*’ (Lindheim, p. 86). This theme will be further explored in the section on pastoral elegy later in this chapter. This notion is strongly engaged with in ‘The Bounty’, an elegy for the poet’s mother (Alix Walcott), these lines also highlighting Walcott’s interest in Edenic symbolism: ‘But here there is one season, our viridian Eden || is that of the primal garden that engendered decay, [...] There is no change now, no cycles of spring, autumn, winter, | nor an island’s perpetual summer; she took time with her; | no climate, no calendar except for this bountiful day’. Walcott, *The Bounty*, p. 15.

the process of evocation of this absent human figure, who is conflated with the natural world, reaches a pivotal moment only to be bathetically undercut through colloquial language and ambivalence, intensified through jarring caesurae: ‘Say you haven’t vanished, you’re still in Italy. | Yeah. Very still. God.’ The journeying is thus abruptly ended, pastoral stasis overtakes, as the scene becomes ‘Still as the turning fields | of Lombardy’.

That the setting is described as ‘still’ as ‘turning fields’, however, complicates this transition from movement to stasis, implying a potentially oxymoronic meaning – ‘turning’ working as either an adjective or verb in this line – alongside flowing enjambment in place of the previous line’s harsh rhythms. Thus, the equilibrium between movement and stasis remains unresolved, paralleling a lack of resolution on the relevance of its employment of references to the Virgilian *Eclogues*. Moreover, the poem closes with a mention of ‘exile’: ‘Though his landscape heals the exile you shared with Naso, poetry is still treason | because it is truth. Your poplars spin in the sun’.⁵³ These final lines offer a direct contrast to Virgil’s first eclogue. Whilst Meliboeus must soon depart for his exile, Walcott writes after Brodsky’s own exile (from the Soviet Union in 1972). The suggestion that the landscape heals this experience is close to, but

⁵³ This mention of ‘Naso’ is worth exploration. The most obvious way of reading this is as a comparison between Brodsky and Publius Ovidius Naso, more commonly known as Ovid, a figure who is widely recognised as significant to the classical pastoral tradition (see for example Hugh Parry’s essay ‘Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: Violence in a Pastoral Landscape’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 95 (1964), 268-282). This strengthens the engagement with classical pastoral evident in the *Italian Eclogues*. However, to refer to Ovid as ‘Naso’ is unusual and implies further layers of meaning. It is not unusual for Walcott to, in a sense, rename classical poets. For instance, Homer is written as Omeros, a Greek translation of the name. I would also highlight that ‘Naso’ may simultaneously refer to a town in Sicily, an indigenous people of Panama and Costa Rica, and an important word in the cycle of Torah reading in Judaism. Each meaning is relevant; these are, of course, the ‘Italian’ eclogues, Walcott consistently demonstrates an interest in the history and indigenous peoples of the Americas, Brodsky was himself Jewish, and Walcott often demonstrates an interest in Jewish history. As is often the case, Walcott’s nuanced language invites a reading which is pluralistic and inclusive of various faiths and cultures.

not quite in keeping, with the sentiments of *Eclogue I*. Whilst Tityrus offers his friend a resting place in this rural setting, as well as its natural resources (apples, chestnuts and such), Virgil's poem ends with a lack of resolution. Indeed, the response of Meliboeus is not heard. Walcott thus transforms the ambiguous closing moment of Virgil's poem, creating a new type of eclogue, one which occurs after the separation of its two principal figures, and implies that redemption and healing from such a loss are attainable. It ends with an optimistic note of movement, an emphasis upon the living landscape in which the speaker is positioned: 'Your poplars spin in the sun'. This is not a backwards-looking envisioning of Virgil's bucolic world, but a poem which insists upon present experience, its final line projecting an incomplete, unending act, and harking towards an unknowable future.

These readings of both 'Greece' and the first poem of the *Italian Eclogues* highlight major themes and techniques which are employed across Walcott's wide-ranging engagements with the classical pastoral tradition. These include a stressed note of ambivalence towards its structures of references, a closer alignment to Greek rather than Roman contexts, an interest in the figure of Polyphemus, a pronounced use of the 'concept of simultaneity', a tendency towards the subversion of pastoral and epic tropes alongside features of anti-pastoral and an engagement with the genre of pastoral elegy. Both poems, however, are overlooked in most critical studies of Walcott's relationship to the classical tradition, an absence which limits a deeper recognition of the breadth and complexity of his transformative dialogue with the Classics. The singular reliance on *Omeros* notable in a significant proportion of critical studies of Walcott's engagement with the classical tradition has, I would suggest, deflected attention from a recognition of the complex, long-running employment of 'bucolic scaffolding' at work

in Walcott's wide-ranging poetic output. Nonetheless, this is not to dismiss the importance of *Omeros* to such studies. This is a poem which openly invites a consideration of Walcott's dialogue with the classical tradition, employing as it does such clear references to classical texts, including such direct intertextual features as the nomenclature of its central cast of characters: Helen, Achille, Hector and Philoctete. The following section, therefore, will seek to reposition the critical lens more usually applied to *Omeros*, in order to illuminate the complex, multifaceted allusions to classical literary models at work in this rich, highly innovative text.

Temporality and History in *Omeros*

As already outlined, a great deal of critical debate surrounds the dialogue with the classical tradition present in *Omeros*, with a notable focus upon its adaption of epic conventions. Line Henriksen suggests that *Omeros* may be defined as a novelised modern epic, discussing the distance created by differing world-views within the narrative, and the significance of the narrator's voice as an active presence.⁵⁴ Robert Hamner argues that Walcott is 'too traditional' to produce an 'anti-epic', although the adaptation of conventional epic devices does work in *Omeros* to 'interrogate conventional expectations'.⁵⁵ For Katharine Burkitt, *Omeros* is an example of the 'post-epic'.⁵⁶ Both Timothy P. Hofmeister and Joseph Farrell criticise the understandings of classical epic at the heart of this debate, with the latter pointing out that *Omeros* does

⁵⁴ Henriksen, p. 239.

⁵⁵ Robert D. Hamner, *Epic of the Dispossessed: Derek Walcott's Omeros* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), p. 33

⁵⁶ Katharine Burkitt, 'Imperial Reflections: the Post-Colonial Verse-Novel as Post-Epic', in *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds*, ed. by Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillepsie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 157-169 (p. 157).

not conform to rigid expectations of epic as a ‘closed, authoritative genre’, objectively detailing a ‘heroic past’, as the usefulness of such a definition remains ‘limited at best’.⁵⁷ There has always, Farrell argues, been a ‘countertradition of reading epic as more open to pluralities of interpretation than the conventional view of the genre would seem to allow’.⁵⁸ As a result: ‘To deny that *Omeros* is an epic on the grounds that it is something “other” than the *Iliad* or *Paradise Lost* is to misunderstand the development of European epic’, as Walcott’s uses of these generic conventions may be read as a ‘logical extension of the genre’s capacity to reinvent itself through inversion, opposition to epic predecessors, and ironic self-reflexion’, an argument which could, I would suggest, be similarly applied to Walcott’s engagements with pastoral, a mode which is itself highly capable of reinvention and self-reflexion, and in part defines itself in opposition to epic.⁵⁹

Hofmeister’s argument similarly explores developments in contemporary critical understandings of epic:

in general the traditional epic genre as it is now being reformulated by scholars is more dynamic than such new approaches to the long poem as the dialogic or the deconstructive seem often to assume. If an epic text is unitary it does not for that reason necessarily deserve the charge of “monism.” Walcott’s *Omeros* is a good example of such a dynamic text, which gives evidence of an assimilative character that is in the long-term perspective one of the most important constitutive features of the epic poem. Once one posits that the epic genre has continuously evolved by assimilating within itself the characteristics of other genres, then the hierarchic relation of generic elements in any fresh instantiation of epic appears to be self-evident.⁶⁰

The concept that epic relies upon the assimilation of features of other genres is vital to

⁵⁷ Joseph Farrell, ‘Walcott’s *Omeros*: The Classical Epic in a Postmodern World’, in *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community*, ed. by Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus and Susanne Wofford (University of California Press 1999) pp. 270-292 (p. 283).

⁵⁸ Farrell, p. 283.

⁵⁹ Farrell, p. 283.

⁶⁰ Hofmeister, p. 539.

any reading of the classical tradition in *Omeros*, allowing for a recognition of the nuanced employment of tropes of such genres and modes as the pastoral. Whilst neither Farrell nor Hofmeister demonstrate a clear interest in the role that the pastoral mode plays in *Omeros*, their arguments facilitate a recognition that any study of this text which places a sole focus on *epos* as a ‘closed’ genre is limiting a richer understanding of the generic complexities of this poem, and, indeed, of the fluidity and malleability of generic criteria in general. In this section, I will consider two key themes in relation to *Omeros*, one which, I argue, marks a clear departure from standard conventions of the epic genre, and one which signifies a motif which is closely intertwined across both epic and pastoral: non-linear temporality and the *locus amoenus*, respectively. Through this, I intend to further illuminate the multifaceted, complex engagements with the classical tradition at work in *Omeros*, in contrast to a critical approach which elevates epic as its central focus.

Timothy Saunders has described widespread critical understandings of the relationship between classical pastoral poetry and history:

And so it is that the bucolic ground of the *Idylls* – at least as it is revisited and re-envisioned in the *Eclogues* – has often been characterised by critics as a framed and static landscape, which cannot help but then be shattered and lost as it suffers a constant series of incursions: of time and history upon the timeless and ahistorical, of culture upon nature, of politics upon the apolitical, and so on.⁶¹

However, the pastoral mode depends upon such dichotomies for its very existence, paradoxically ensuring that the ‘framed and static landscape’ that it appears to project, one which is seemingly unaffected by history, politics and time, is innately

⁶¹ Timothy Saunders, “Using Green Words” or “Abusing Bucolic Ground”, in *Pastoral and the Humanities: Arcadia Re-inscribed*, ed. by Mathilde Skoie and Sonia Bjørnstad-Velázquez (Bristol: Phoenix Press, 2006), pp. 3-13 (p. 8).

unrealisable. The pastoral space is not an ahistorical realm ‘shattered’ by seemingly external factors, but an imagined topography that is shaped by those very factors. The process of *nostos* is not, for instance, possible without an earlier exile. As has been well argued by critics such as Raymond Williams and Roger Sales, the pastoral idealisation of landscape and livestock often takes place as a reaction against forces such as industrialisation or land seizures. Thus, pastoral has a deeply complex and vital relationship to history. The same is, of course, true for the poetry of Derek Walcott.

‘This was history’ remarks the enigmatic narrator of *Omeros*, ‘I had no power to change it’, yet, ‘I still felt that this had happened before. | I knew it would happen again’ (217). As these lines imply, temporality and teleology – the ideological notion of a fixed endpoint in the course of history – are central concerns of this long narrative poem.⁶² Ultimately, and like much of Walcott’s work, *Omeros* rejects any linear sense of temporality and teleological thinking. Rather, its preference is for fleeting glimpses into the past, for a sense of transience in its dealings with the passing of time, and for a questioning and challenging of the proper noun ‘History’, as it has been explored in ‘The Muse of History’. I would suggest that an analysis of the techniques used to craft a sense of temporality and history in *Omeros* is key to an understanding of Walcott’s engagements with the pastoral mode in this text.

Traditionally, classical epic begins *in media res*, and charts a course of key events to a fixed conclusion.⁶³ There are, however, notable variances in the

⁶² The *OED* includes the following relevant definitions of the term ‘teleology’: ‘The theory or belief that divine purpose or design is discernible in the natural or physical world; the theory or belief that certain acts, processes, or phenomena are to be explained in terms of intention, design, or purposiveness rather than by prior causes; explanation in such terms’; ‘(The presence of) purposiveness, design, or final causality in nature; the fact of being directed towards a goal’. See ‘teleology, n.’ in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press <www.oed.com/view/Entry/198710> [accessed 06 February 2020]

⁶³ This point has been well made by David Quint, who argues: ‘If the plot of imperial history projected by

representations of temporality and history present across epic poetry. Whilst works such as *The Aeneid* demonstrate a distinct teleology propelling events to a formative endpoint – the founding of Rome – *The Odyssey* rests upon a framework which more closely resembles a cyclical sense of narrative time, portraying the meandering but constant journey of Odysseus’ return to Ithaca. Later works modelled upon classical epic would similarly embrace teleological thinking; *Paradise Lost*, for instance, imagines the course of events leading to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, a fixed point in Christian theology. The emphasis is thus upon cause and effect, the hero(es) facing challenges and in consequence being either rewarded or punished for their actions by the gods or their equivalents. In contrast, Nancy Lindheim notes that classical pastoral writings often reveal a ‘lack of temporal dimension’.⁶⁴ ‘Pastoral poems’, states Lindheim, ‘usually avoid meditating on time’.⁶⁵ However, this assertion is qualified; this is not ‘because engagement with time necessarily destroys pastoral’, but that ‘their sense of timelessness may arise from the important absence of any narrative thread that can act as a dominant organizing principle among the poems or within them’, and this ‘lack of temporal dimension [...] is not inherent in the nature of the herdsmen’s lives. They do not live “outside time.”’⁶⁶ Classical pastorals, then, do not rely upon the creation of a timeless sphere, but rather do not place a core, linear narrative at their heart. *Omeros*, I would suggest, aligns itself more closely to classical pastoral’s conventional sense of temporality than epic’s purposeful narrative propulsion,

Virgilian epic may already be modeled upon a classical idea of literary form, this plot, in turn, seems to lend its linearity and teleology to the epic narrative itself, which typically recounts a critical, founding chapter in that history. If epic usually begins *in media res*, it moves towards a fixed endpoint, the accomplishment of a single goal or mission’, in ‘Epic and Empire’, *Comparative Literature*, 41 (1989), 1-32, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1770677 (p. 14). Quint’s theories of epic will be further explored in this section.

⁶⁴ Lindheim, p. 138.

⁶⁵ Lindheim, p. 138.

⁶⁶ Lindheim, pp. 137-8.

in part through its rejection of epic's reliance upon teleology, and also through its tendency towards lyric rather than narrative poetry, exemplified through the authorial intrusions of the speaker. This work engages with the Hellenistic distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*, challenging epic's obsession with decisive, epoch-making events and exploring temporality through plural perspectives. It explores the notion of a 'lack of temporal dimension', whilst simultaneously acknowledging time's effects. In *Omeros*, the course of time does not head towards a fixed endpoint. Rather, the 'concept of simultaneity', alongside pastoral tropes, allows for a collapsing of temporalities and a liberation from teleological thinking.

Walcott's resistance towards the label of epic for *Omeros* is well-documented, and several theories have been put forward for the reasoning behind this. The most convincing of these is that Walcott, as an anticolonial poet, rejects the definition of epic for his work due to its strong historic connections with imperialism. Indeed, David Quint argues that there is an innate link between epic narrative and imperial ideology:

The formal completion of the epic plot speaks for the completeness of its vision of history: telling a full story, epic claims to possess *the* full story. Other accounts that might compete with the victors' version of history are merely dismissed as historical accidents, deviations from the straight line of imperial triumph: opposed to epic's end-directed narrative, these rival narratives appear directionless and beside the point.⁶⁷

Quint recognises *The Odyssey* as differing from other classical epics in its looser narrative structure, relating this to the concept of the romance episode, and claiming that 'the romance narrative bears a subversive relationship to the epic plot line from which it diverges', as 'it indicates the possibility of other perspectives [...] upon the epic victors' singleminded story of history'.⁶⁸ As a result, Walcott's evident tendency

⁶⁷ Quint, p. 14.

⁶⁸ Quint, p. 15.

to employ references to *The Odyssey*, rather than its epic parallels such as *The Aeneid*, gains further significance. Walcott cultivates a distancing effect from epic teleological frameworks, a resistance to its ties with imperialistic domination over historical narratives, and a closer alignment to Panhellenic, rather than Roman, contexts. As Quint argues, epic ‘draws an equation between power and narrative’, with this ‘power’ being the ability to be victorious in warfare and end its indeterminacy, thus ‘showing that the struggle had all along been leading up to its victory and thus imposing upon it a narrative teleology’.⁶⁹ Therefore, the lack of narrative propulsion intrinsic to the pastoral mode becomes one alternative to epic narrative teleology, a method of subverting the ideological frameworks on which epic rests, whilst maintaining a strong, transformative dialogue with the classical tradition. Through alluding to pastoral, Walcott furthers the rejection of epic narrative and its intricately linked teleological frameworks that takes place in *Omeros*.

In *Omeros*, moments of stasis are as significant to the diegetic framework as those of action, and frequently the action is shifted to the natural world from the human subject in a subversion of the emphasis upon human agency central to classical epic narratives. For example, midday is marked by a cry from a bird, its sound seemingly unending:

At noon a ground dove hidden somewhere in the trees
whooped like a conch or a boy blowing a bottle
struck on one note with maddening, tireless cries;

(152).

The presence of birds and song in a setting shaped by *otium* is highly typical of the classical pastoral, and Walcott continues to explore the familiar trope of birdsong in lyric poetry: ‘it was lower than the nightingale’s full throttle | of grief’, an allusion to

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

the elegiac nightingales of poets such as John Keats and Thomas Hardy, this transtemporal intertextuality furthering the ‘concept of simultaneity’ at work in *Omeros* (152).⁷⁰ That this bird is a ‘ground dove’, rather than a nightingale, ensures that Walcott’s characteristic defamiliarization of archetypal lyric poetic tropes takes place.⁷¹ The unquantifiable, nonchronological moment of time marked by the bird is momentous to Helen; the alliterative ‘monadic moan’ comes from the ‘hole in her heart’. The passing of time is thus closely related to absence and loss in this passage, alluding to the genre of pastoral elegy through this exploration of grief in a pastoral setting, the emphasis upon the interactions between the human subject and the natural world similarly marking a closer alignment to pastoral than to epic.

Temporalities collapse as the island’s past is conjured: the sound of the ground dove is described as the ‘low-fingered O of an Aruac flute’ (152). As recurs elsewhere in the text, both the present environment and Helen briefly lose solidity as past and present collide, and she becomes ‘Penelope, | in whom a single noon was as long as ten years’ (153). Her absence from Achille is here contrasted to *The Odyssey*’s separation

⁷⁰ Theocritus’s *Idyll* 7, for instance, charts a singing contest between Lycidas and Simichidas. After the singing of the human subjects ends, the sounds of the natural world are described in a scene of pastoral *otium*: ‘The sacred water ran with a bubbling sound as it fell. | Soot-black cicadas chattered relentlessly on | Shady branches, and the muttering of tree-frogs | Rose off from the impenetrable thorn bush. | Larks and finches were singing, the turtle-dove moaned, | And bees hummed and darted about the springs’. *Theocritus: Idylls*, pp. 28-29. The symbol of the ground dove occurs elsewhere in scenes of pastoral *otium* in Walcott’s work. For instance, the opening poem of the ‘Homecoming’ sequence in *The Bounty*, a title which denotes an act of *nostos*: ‘My country heart, I am not home till Sesenne sings, | a voice with woodsmoke and ground-doves in it, [...] The shac-shacs | rattle like cicadas under the fur-leaved nettles | of childhood’ (p. 31). The mention of ‘cicadas’ reinforces the strength of the pastoral imagery employed in this poem, and a clear connection to Theocritus’s projection of pastoral idyllicism. In this instance, the St Lucian singer Sesenne (Dame Marie Selipha Descartes, née Charlery, who lived 1914-2010) is centred above the poetic trope of the singing dove, her voice allowing the poet the sensation of *nostos*. That she sung in St Lucian patois is significant, demonstrating the vital significance of the St Lucian context to this use of the mode.

⁷¹ The poet-narrator later remarks: ‘Even the nightingales have forgotten their names’ (282). As Paul Alpers observes: ‘Nightingales are of course not confined to pastoral poetry, but they are very much at home in it’. Alpers, *Pastoral?*, p. 56.

of Odysseus and Penelope for a decade, suggesting that in this apparently fleeting moment Helen's grief is as deeply felt as Penelope's during that long absence, defining her emotional experience through an apparent classical equivalent and centring a sense of loss to the process of the nonlinear marking and passing of time. However, this is not a straightforward classical parallel. Indeed, a direct questioning of classical allusions takes place in these stanzas, as it does throughout *Omeros*. The sound of the ground dove, and that of Helen's heart, is 'not the song that twittered from the veined mesh of Agamemnon, | but the low-fingered O of an Aruac flute' (152). Thus, the island's precolonial past is elevated above the classical parallel, furthering a questioning of the relevance of such references to the environment depicted. Moreover, Helen herself resists these allusions, throwing stones at the 'noise | in that lime-tree past the fence' (152). As well as being a central character in *Omeros*, Helen is presented as symbolising St Lucia (an island which was known as the 'Helen' of the West Indies), a metaphor which is problematized through Plunkett's ill-conceived attempts to chart her and the island's history as an intertwined entity through a firmly Eurocentric and chronologically linear gaze.⁷² Thus, her resistance to classical allusions which signify a structure of metaphorical comparisons between the contemporary Caribbean and classical Greece – including her mythical namesake – marks the rejection of any conflation of the two temporally and physically distant locations. Walcott employs the comparison as the 'enabling trope' that Greenwood has outlined, but he also refuses the

⁷² Walcott recalls that 'In elementary school we had been taught that Saint Lucia was "The Helen of The West" because she was fought for so often by the French and British. She had changed hands thirteen times. She had been regularly violated'. The personification of the island here matches the conflation of Helen and St Lucia which takes place in *Omeros*. Derek Walcott, 'Leaving School' (1965), in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. by Robert D. Hamner (U.S.A.: Three Continents Press, 1993; repr. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), pp. 24-32 (first publ. in *London Magazine*, 5.6 (1965), 4-14), p. 24.

topoi of this poem material solidity and consistently rejects classical parallels, thus undercutting the process of any envisioning of the Caribbean as merely a ‘new Aegean’.⁷³

Like many in this text, this is otherwise a moment of stillness and domestic ordinariness – Helen is taking in the laundry from Hector’s yard – however the natural world in *Omeros* is not eternalized as an unchanging, idealised idyll. The passing of time in this setting marks decay, transience and absence, ensuring that what may at first appear to be a ‘timeless sphere’ is complicated and punctured by evidence of time’s effects, and by a fascination with its representation in a text which purposefully alludes to ancient writings: ‘How fast it fades!’ Maud thinks, ‘the enamelled sky, | the gilded palms’ (29). Change and transformation are treated as innate, essential features of the setting represented, the majestically ‘gilded’ palms and ‘enamelled’ sky defying the sense of permanence that such adjectives imply, transitioning from images related to the static decorative arts – a hobby of Maud’s, in a mirroring of *The Odyssey*’s Penelope, and thus closely associated to her interiority – to dynamic, ephemeral elements of a landscape which is constantly in flux.

This is evident in the emphasis that *Omeros* places upon pathetic fallacy. For instance, Achille’s feelings of entrapment and hopelessness are paralleled by the urgent and immediate ‘thudding lances of rain’ which pin him to his door (50). Whilst Hector is out struggling at sea ‘thunder’ and ‘lightning cracked’, this ‘Cyclone’ said to be ‘howling because one of the lances | of a flinging palm has narrowly grazed his one eye’ (51). The pastoral trope of connections between the psychology of its characters

⁷³ Greenwood, p. 68.

and the natural setting in which they are positioned is furthered by a wordplay upon the ‘Cyclone’ and the etymologically-related term Cyclops, thus evidencing close ties between the natural world and Polyphemus, who becomes a force for anti-pastoral representation.⁷⁴ This can be witnessed in the after-effects of the storm:

In the devastated valleys, crumpling brown water
at their prows, headlights on, passenger-vans floated
slowly up roads that were rivers, through the slaughter

of the year’s banana crop, past stiff cows bloated
from engorging mud [...]

(53)

The potent effects of this anthropomorphised natural force, which is fluid and mutable, include the inversion of pastoral pastures into ‘devastated valleys’, whilst symbols of modernity and the urban realm – roads and vehicles – are at the mercy of a natural world which has the power to turn ‘roads’ into ‘rivers’, the clashing of symbols of dichotomous urban and rural spaces resulting in destruction. Crops and livestock are similarly altered and harmed by the combined effects of nature and time, as the Cyclone/Cyclops leaves irredeemable damage in its wake. Nonetheless, the tone is not entirely one of despair and pessimism: ‘There would be brilliant days still, | till the next storm, and their freshness was wonderful’, remarks the narrator (54). Like the first poem of the *Italian Eclogues*, there is a marked refusal here to commit to a solely retrospective treatment of the classical tradition. *Omeros* does not escape into a

⁷⁴ The *OED* describes the etymology of the noun ‘cyclone’ as the Greek terms *κύκλος* or *κυκλῶν*, meaning ‘circle’ or ‘moving in a circle’. The etymology of ‘Cyclops’ is said to include the first of these terms, to describe its circular eye. See ‘cyclone, n.’ in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press <www.oed.com/view/Entry/46537> [accessed 16 December 2019] and ‘Cyclops, n.’ in *OED Online*, Oxford University Press <www.oed.com/view/Entry/46556> [accessed 16 December 2019].

classical, archaic past, but places a decided emphasis instead upon the present moment, and upon a future which is not defined through teleological frameworks. The narrator betrays his implied omniscience through the vagueness of the timing of the ‘next storm’, an event which is inferred to be unpredictable. In this poem, representations of the natural world and the crafting of temporality work together to ensure a detachment from the conventions of the epic tradition, navigating pastoral tropes as part of a process of liberating the narrative from epic’s problematic relationship to imperialist narrative structures and teleology.

Often, pastoral poetry depicts a sense of temporality that allows for reflection upon previous events and circumstances, in a manner similar to the nostalgic reminiscences of the poet-narrator in *Omeros*, who visualises meeting the father who died shortly after his birth, and reflects upon the island’s colonial and precolonial history (through envisioning the Battle of the Saints, for instance).⁷⁵ Through this technique, Walcott crafts a sense of temporality that does not endorse a linear chronology, whilst the text simultaneously dwells heavily upon the concept and effects of time itself. There is, I suggest, clear political significance in Walcott’s avoidance of a straightforward epic teleology. To return to Quint’s argument:

If the plot of imperial history projected by Virgilian epic may already be modelled upon a classical idea of literary form, this plot, in turn, seems to lend its linearity and teleology to the epic narrative itself, which typically recounts a critical, founding chapter in that history.⁷⁶

For Quint, ‘epic linearity – the sequential linking of events – becomes a teleology: all events lead to a final end’.⁷⁷ The ‘narrative shape’ is one of ‘history-as-triumph’.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ This occurs, for instance, in *Eclogue I*, in which Meliboeus reminisces upon Rome.

⁷⁶ Quint, p. 14.

⁷⁷ Quint, p. 14.

⁷⁸ Quint, p. 14.

Therefore, epic teleology, chronological linearity and narrative are all tightly related to imperialism: ‘Epic draws an equation between power and narrative’.⁷⁹ It is important to note, then, that *Omeros* does not rely upon a stable narrative presence. It is digressional, metapoetic and shifts between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration. There are moments of indirect free speech, first-person seemingly autobiographical reflections from the poet, dialogue, song and a wide range of further narrative techniques. It rejects the narrative style of these supposed ‘epic victors’, to offer a nuanced, meditative consideration of the role that narration can play in this literary genre, often leaning towards the form of lyric.⁸⁰

For example, during its opening exposition, the narrator interrupts to offer an atemporal plea to the poem’s supposed muse, ‘Omeros’, with the cry:

As in your day, so with ours, Omeros,
as it is with islands and men, so with our games.

A horse is skittering spray with rope for its rein.
Only silhouettes last. No one remembers the names
of foam-sprinters. Time halts the arc of a javelin.

(33)

The passage is almost one of ekphrasis, the capturing of a moment of action – the running of a horse, the sprinter, the movement of a javelin – as though describing a classical frieze, then concluding to question its permanence and value; ‘no one’, he observes, ‘remembers [their] names’; the overarching mood here, as is the case in much of *Omeros*, is one of ambivalence, and the technique employed for this is the subversion of generic expectations. There are several further direct dialogues with Omeros, who can be read not only as representative of Homer but as more generally symbolic of the classical tradition, each metapoetic dialogue marking a dismissal of temporal distance:

⁷⁹ Quint, p. 27.

⁸⁰ Quint, p. 13.

O open this day with the conch's moan, Omeros,
as you did in my boyhood, when I was a noun
gently exhaled from the palate of the sunrise.

[...]

[...] Only in you, across centuries
of the sea's parchment atlas, can I catch the noise
of the surf lines wandering like the shambling fleece

of the lighthouse's flock, that Cyclops whose blind eye
shut from the sunlight. [...]

(12-13)

Omeros, a Greek translation of 'Homer', is separated from the poet by a past which is symbolised by the ocean, the entity which similarly physically separates continents: 'centuries' of the 'sea's parchment atlas', the 'lines' of the classical texts matching the 'surf lines' on the ocean's surface, which resemble the sheep in Polyphemus's cave, an image steeped in pastoral symbolism. However, readers are reminded of the narrator's fallibility frequently throughout the poem – 'every "I" is a fiction', we are informed – implying as it progresses that Omeros is not merely an influence for the poet, but an ambiguous figure, later to be removed from chronological time entirely, whose significance to the narrative will be openly debated by its narrator: 'When would it stop', he wonders, 'the echo in the throat, insisting "Omeros"; | when would I enter that light beyond metaphor?' (28; 271). *Omeros's* principal narrative voice is resolutely ambiguous, his narrative reliability as ephemeral as the view of temporality that he crafts. He is distanced not only from Homer/Omeros, who is presented as a distinctly distant narrative presence, but from his own consciousness, reminding himself in a digressional moment of his apparent duty to offer an account of events: 'Phantom narrator, resume' (28).

These narrative techniques, employed to craft an exploration of temporality and narrative (un)reliability in *Omeros*, are also associated with the concept of memory, as

the narrator nostalgically reflects upon his own past alongside that of the island. Memory is an important component of the classical pastoral tradition, as shepherds recall incidents and speak of past events in their discourses, as evidenced by Virgil's *Eclogue IX*, in which Moeris states: 'Time robs us all, even of memory; oft as a boy I recall that with song I would lay the long summer days to rest. Now I have forgotten all my songs'.⁸¹ The twelfth chapter of *Omeros* involves a contemplation of the poet's childhood home, reflecting upon its 'bougainvillea trellises': 'my own images were reprinted' the poet states, 'as I remembered them in an earlier life' (67). However, this reflection shifts into fiction, as he imagines a meeting with his father, who advises him upon the 'foreign machinery known as Literature', a reminder of the alienation which has been experienced in engaging with both a personal and literary past (68). Memory becomes an equally fleeting presence, its reliability questioned, reduced to the metaphor of 'reprinted' images.

Omeros's examination of memory allows for a subversion of linear chronology. The term 'yesterday' is introduced by Helen, as she sings a song of the same name whilst walking on the beach, a setting particularly associated with non-linear temporality in *Omeros* (and indeed in Walcott's writings more widely).⁸² It is on the beach that a fleeting 'battle broke | out' and 'Troy burned' (35). These epochal events are again dealt with using a note of ambiguity and rejection of both chronological linearity and

⁸¹ Virgil: *Eclogues and Georgics*, p. 89.

⁸² It is worth here highlighting the significance of the act of singing in the context of the classical pastoral tradition; singing contests form a major aspect of this canon. As Halperin observes: 'Singing and composing music are both natural occupations for a person of leisure; herdsmen can be observed, empirically, to practice them. Such activities also facilitate the identification of the shepherd with the poet, a theme as old as pastoral itself and as essential to its vitality'. Halperin, *Before Pastoral*, p. 64. The concept of the beach as a space associated with non-linear temporality is of course linked to the notion of the sea as symbolic of history in Walcott's writings. The in-between space becomes a signifier of the vision of history as amorphous, unstable and fluid, and of equating temporal distance with physical distances between shores.

teleological narrative frameworks:

And yesterday these shallows were the Scamander,
and armed shadows leapt from the horse, and the bronze nuts
were helmets, Agamemnon was the commander

of weed-bearded captains; yesterday, the black fleet
anchored there in the swift's road, in the wiry nets
thrown past the surf when the sea and a river meet;

yesterday the sightless holes of a driftwood log
heard the harp-wires on the sea, the white thunder
off Barrel of Beef. [...]

(35)

Isocolon is here employed to circumnavigate linear, teleological notions of temporality, as classical allusions create and sustain a sense of temporality that is, to an extent, liberating, breaking Helen free from classical similes and revealing her role in the poet's claimed personal memory as a nameless vendor, selling items to tourists and 'vanishing' at will from the otherwise omniscient narrative presence. Once again, memory and history are closely associated, neither foregrounded as the more reliable, both offering only fleeting glimpses of a past which appears to escape from narrative control. This is not a timeless sphere, but it is one which evades placing a narrative plot at its heart, in a reflection of Lindheim's explication of the 'lack of temporal dimension' at work in classical pastoral writings. Through aligning itself more closely to pastoral's conventional structures of temporality, *Omeros* ensures that epic's reliance upon teleological frameworks is undercut, thus subverting its close relationship with imperialistic ideology and dominance over historical narratives.

Ultimately, history is closely tied to teleology in *Omeros*, and the sense of temporality crafted in this text defies teleological thinking in its nonlinearity and reliance on such pastoral tropes as memory, transience, decay and change in the natural

world, consequently defying the very notion of history itself as defined by the poet in 'Muse'. Often, the sea is employed as a symbol of this non-linear temporality, detached from events both past and present in this narrative sphere: 'yesterday, in that sea without time, the golden moss of the reef fleeced the Argonauts' (36). The effect is frequently one of disharmony, as differing ideological notions of temporality juxtapose, causing the texture of the narrative to fragment and the environment depicted to lose solidity: 'behind her, trembling air | divided by her echo that shook like a reed', this reference to a 'reed' further signalling the text's strong links to the classical pastorals, and Walcott's extended 'bucolic scaffolding' (37).

Plunkett's view of the history of the island, symbolised by Helen, is one of simplicity and linearity: 'He had won a prize for an essay | on the Roman Empire', the narrator notes, before appearing to take on Plunkett's consciousness to remark: 'In those days, history was easy' (113). It is also Plunkett who decides that 'Helen needed a history [...] Not theirs, but Helen's war', as he views the fact that the island was once referred to as the 'Helen' of the West Indies possessively as 'his Homeric coincidence' (30;100). However, Plunkett's view of a singular, linear progression of history is rejected through the narrative, structural and generic features present in *Omeros*. His vision is representative of an interpretation of classical materials which Walcott seeks to reject; one which is closely associated with imperialistic ideology and Eurocentric readings of ancient texts. History, in *Omeros*, becomes a montage of voices, places and persons, a 'mythical hallucination' that, of all the characters, only Plunkett recognises as having a localised 'Homeric association' (31). This concept of history, propagated by Plunkett, causes suffering, leading to a pensive 'moan' which is stiflingly 'exhaled from a vase' (15). It is this conventionally epic crafting of temporality and teleology,

one which elevates heroes and traditional social frameworks ('kings floundering in lances of rain') as well as a sense of purpose through the establishing of a linear chronology of events, which Walcott seeks to challenge and ultimately subvert in *Omeros*, choosing instead to foreground the pastoral trope of 'the prose | of abrupt fishermen cursing over canoes', their wanderings free from the constraints of epic teleology (15).⁸³

The *locus amoenus* in *Omeros*

The *locus amoenus* is widely recognised as a vital element of the classical pastoral tradition. Descriptions of real and imagined places are similarly crucial to Walcott's poetry, forming a major component of his poetic artistry. In *Omeros*, Walcott at times employs imagery of idyllic scenery, filled with lush vegetation and a sense of tranquillity, conforming to the pastoral trope of envisioning a *locus amoenus*. For instance, in a passage which visualises the pre-colonial history of North America, the scene set is one of an archetypal Arcadian realm:

The elegies of summer sighed in the marram,
to bending Virgilian reeds. Languid meadows
raised their natural fly-screens around the Parkin farm.
(176).

However, this convention of cultivating a poetic *locus amoenus* is also closely tied to the epic literary tradition. As Philip Hardie observes, this 'literary topos' depicting an 'idyllic landscape, typically containing trees and shade, a grassy meadow, running

⁸³ Hofmeister observes: 'The confusion of victors and victims [...] is a central project of *Omeros*'; the poem demonstrates a 'revision of the traditional heroic ideal'. This is not, as I will argue in greater depth in the last chapter of this thesis, typical only of *Omeros*, but of Walcott's writings more widely. Hofmeister, p. 546.

water, song- birds, and cool breezes’ goes back as far as ‘Homer’s descriptions of the grotto of Calypso and the garden of Alcinous’ in *The Odyssey*.⁸⁴ In *Omeros*, Walcott complicates this intergeneric convention of the classical tradition, emphasising the environmental degradation, violence and poverty present in this setting, shattering a naïve understanding of the St Lucian environment as a mere idyll, and any reductive process of idealisation. This concern meets its crux when the narrator questions: ‘Hadn’t I made their poverty my paradise?’ (228). The combination of conventional idyllic scenic descriptions alongside features more closely aligned to anti-pastoral achieves the effect of a rejection of any simplistic, idealising renderings of the *locus amoenus*.

One of the many allusions to *The Odyssey* in *Omeros* is the pig farm, owned by Dennis Plunkett, a space which is associated with the sorceress Circe’s act of transforming Odysseus’ men into swine. However, I argue that this is not the only classical reference at work here. Indeed, the inclusion of a farm in a text which engages so self-consciously with the classical tradition can be read as demonstrating a direct engagement with the pastoral mode, and its central feature of agricultural workers tending to their flocks on cultivated land. Achille’s period of labour at Plunkett’s farm is the result of economic necessity, the extreme environment of hurricane season making fishing a near-impossible task:

In hurricane season, when everything is rough,
Achille ran out of money. His mate, Philoctete,
found him land-work. His canoe was a concrete trough

in Plunkett’s pig-farm. A broom his oar. Through the wet,
whistling grass near the road, a sack shielding his head,
he saved money and walked six miles to the estate.

(47)

⁸⁴ Philip Hardie, ‘*locus amoenus*’, in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford University Press) <<https://oxfordre.com/classics/>> [accessed 6 March 2020]

In contrast to conventions of the classical pastoral mode, in which herdsmen more usually discourse in a leisurely manner, in this passage the physical toil involved in land-based work is heavily stressed, alongside the necessity of committing to this labour in order to survive a difficult season on the island. Rather than a bounteous, lush environment, Plunkett's farm is a challenging, hostile space, with traditional pastoral imagery such as pastures, reeds, cows sheltering under trees and a mild climate consistently undercut:

Rain hissed under black leaves, a white ground mist drifted
from the torn pastures, the hillside bamboos were broke
as he was [...]

[...] Cows groaned under trees,
the ochre track to the farm zigzagged in runnels

of soft, squelchy clay that fretted between his toes.
(48)

It is also an alienating environment for Achille, who longs to return to the sea, in a transformation of Meliboeus' opposing longing for a farming space: 'In the dirty gusts he missed the sea's | smell' (48).⁸⁵ Walcott here addresses the ethical dimension of animal farming, highlighting the suffering of the pigs in these conditions, in a radical modification to pastoral's relationship to nonhuman subjects:

In sucking Wellingtons he shovelled out the mash
into the steaming troughs of the jostling pen,
then jumped back from the bristling boulders that would crash

⁸⁵ It should be noted that Virgil does not fully commit to a straightforward idealisation of the farming landscape in his first eclogue, a tactic which recurs throughout the classical tradition. Meliboeus highlights the challenges which will face Tityrus whilst envying the stability of his land-owning status: 'Fortunate old man! – so your acres will be yours still. | They're broad enough for you. Never mind if it's stony | soil | Or the marsh films over your pastureland with mud and | rushes', *Virgil: Eclogues and Georgics*, p. 5. Again, Walcott can be seen as engaging with the classical pastoral in a way that is more direct than the intervening literary tradition would dictate, with the gradually increasing tendency of presenting uncomplicated *locoi amoeni* which took place, for instance, in the eighteenth century, thus transforming contemporary understandings of the mode.

against his knees as their wooden gate swung open.
Then Achille scraped the dung-caked cement with a yard
broom, and the clogged shit spidered out into the drain

[...] Inside, he cursed the screams
of the doomed, panicking swine matted with their shit
(48)

The exploitation of these creatures is brought to the forefront, reflecting the presence of violence in the process of animal husbandry, the suffering of the ‘doomed, panicking swine’; in this case not sailors transfigured into pigs, but nonhuman subjects who are similarly worthy of pity and empathy, their suffering not elevated through fictional magical properties but shaped by an unsettling depiction of the fraught relationship between human subject and livestock in the agricultural industry. The ‘steaming troughs’ indicate a hellish scene, a place of Dantean despair for these creatures. This serves as a reminder that in the Caribbean the practise of agriculture has predominantly involved the violent exploitation of human labour, thus elevating politico-historical dimensions, rather than aesthetic idealisation. As a result, this passage does not mirror William Empson’s definition of pastoral as ‘putting the complex into the simple’, choosing instead to highlight complexity and unease in its representation of a traditional pastoral space.⁸⁶ The relationship between human and nonhuman subjects is not one of harmony here, but one of mutual suffering.

In Virgil’s pastorals the natural world is filled with music and song. In the first *Eclogue*, the trees are asked to join in the herdsmen’s singing contests: ‘teach the woods to repeat “Fair Amaryllis”’.⁸⁷ In *Omeros*, the voices of the natural world are frequently

⁸⁶ Empson, p. 22.

⁸⁷ *Virgil: Eclogues and Georgics*, p. 3.

silenced or muted, the ‘talkative brooks’ carried out to the vast sea, the cedar trees enduring:

[...] the decimation
of their tribe without uttering a syllable
of that language they had uttered as one nation,
(6)

However, Walcott offers a contrast between the anthropomorphised voices of nature on land and those in the ocean, as Achille interacts with the creatures under the sea’s surface whilst diving for conch shells:

Why was he down here, from their coral palaces,
pope-headed turtles asked him, [...]

[...] Why? asked the glass sea-horses
curling like questions. [...]
(45)

The moment establishes the ocean as a *locus amoenus* for Achille, a place which is referred to as his ‘garden’, which offers him a *nostos* in the form of a nostalgic return to the homeland of his ancestors.⁸⁸ Pastoral conventions are thus adapted and appropriated to craft a ‘pleasant place’ which is detached from the classical canon and is distinctly Caribbean, celebrating the fact that this is an island nation with a close relationship to and reliance on the surrounding ocean.

An important theme to consider when analysing pastoral motifs in *Omeros* is the uneasy tension created between idyllic and non-idyllic imagery of the natural world. This is evidenced in a description of the land on which the island’s youths play sport:

The village was bounded by a scabrous pasture
where boys played cricket. On its Caribbean side
was a cemetery of streaked stones and the tower

of a Norman church where the old river died.
Like reeds in the old lagoon the French in their power

⁸⁸ This projection of the sea as a *locus amoenus* is alluded to via an anti-pastoral representation of this concept in *The Sea at Dauphin*, as will be outlined in the final chapter of this thesis.

had lifted a forest of masts with Trojan pride.
(98)

Through this imagery, the combination of idyllic and anti-pastoral scenic descriptions work to create an appropriation of a traditional pastoral space: ‘pasture’ surrounding a village in which leisure activities take place, with the presence of a signifier of death – an allusion to the concept of *et in arcadia ego* – alongside symbols of historic events considered important to national identity, thus alluding to the presence of pastoral spaces in the nation-building rhetoric of epic poetry. These images are utilised to complicate the text’s relationship to pastoral tropes, and thus to the classical tradition more widely, with the adjective ‘scabrous’ indicating a barren patch of land, rather than one of bounty, the tower located where a personified river has ‘died’, the cemetery filled with stained stones intensifying the foreboding note of morbidity, the ‘reeds’ furthering the ‘bucolic scaffolding’ at work in Walcott’s poetry. This scene appropriates the pastoral mode to indicate a questioning of classical motifs, signalling an elevation of modernity and regional specificity, foregrounding the Caribbean present above an imagined, distant classical past. The culmination of this process occurs in the poem’s closing chapter: ‘but now the idyll dies’ (321).

To conclude, Walcott’s allusions to the epic genre in *Omeros* have long been of interest to critics, who have arrived at a variety of conclusions in relation to this theme. This has led to a disproportionate level of interest in Walcott’s engagements with the epic genre, rather than a multifaceted recognition of the broader spectrum of classical (and indeed nonclassical) genres and modes that have been adapted, appropriated and transformed throughout his work. There is a risk that this tendency to dwell on epic conventions will lead to monolithic readings of these texts and perpetuate a suggestion that this is the only discourse with the classical tradition present in Walcott’s poetry.

Walcott himself addressed the critical debate surrounding epic conventions in

Omeros:

In the reviews that have been coming out, they've been using the word "epic" a lot. I just reread it again, and I suppose in terms of the scale of it – as an undertaking – it's large and does cover a lot of geographic elements, historical ground. I think that's the word. I think the reason why I hesitate about calling it that is I think any work in which the narrator is almost central is not really an epic. It's not like a heroic epic. I guess that's what I think of it, that since I am in the book, I certainly don't see myself as hero of an epic, when an epic generally has a hero of action and decision and destiny.⁸⁹

This comment indicates a profound sense of unease at the notion of 'a hero of action and decision and destiny', which may be read as implying a reluctance to conform to the trope of epic, teleological, victor-dominated narrative, in favour of a more inclusive framework less connected – to employ Quint's term – to 'epic's end-directed narrative'.⁹⁰ I argue that my readings of classical reception in Walcott's narrative poem evidence that both epic subversion and epic inversion feature heavily in *Omeros*.⁹¹ The employment of characters from the Homeric canon and reimagining of them as inhabitants of a provincial space, working upon tasks from the realms of agriculture and domesticity, forms part of a transformative dialogue with the epic tradition, one which is adapted and appropriated from bucolic sources. It works to interrogate the effect of teleological frameworks on narrative, the relationship between narrative and

⁸⁹ Derek Walcott, in interview with Rebekah Presson in 1992, 'The Man Who Keeps the English Language Alive: An Interview with Derek Walcott', in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 189-193 (first publ. in *New Letters*, 59 (1992), 7-15), p. 189.

⁹⁰ Quint, p. 14.

⁹¹ This strengthens a recognition of Walcott's engagements with the Theocritean *Idylls*, rather than simply the *Eclogues* of Virgil. Halperin has highlighted the significance of epic subversion and epic inversion in Theocritus's bucolic texts: 'Theocritus' purpose in these poems has been seen as a destructive and ironical critique of traditional heroic values (and their place in literature) mounted according to Alexandrian standards of good taste and contemporary moral sensibilities. But the poet's irony is not merely destructive, nor is Theocritus concerned only with demonstrating how epic poetry should *not* be written. Theocritean irony serves a positive, constructive purpose insofar as it provides the device – here designated epic subversion – by which traditional subject matter can continue to be treated in heroic verse and treated, moreover, in a manner congenial to a modern – that is, Alexandrian – aesthetic'. Halperin, p. 236.

lyric poetry, representations of rural space and connections between human and nonhuman subjects. As Edward Baugh observes: ‘*Omeros* is monumental, but it is not monolithic’.⁹² This rich, highly complex text achieves a radical and transformative dialogue with the classical tradition, and engagements with the pastoral mode form a vital aspect of this process.

Rather than a singular focus upon epic, engagements with classical materials in *Omeros* are better understood through a recognition of the variety and plurality of the generic categories with which it interacts. This notion of pluralistic associations and references is surely key to an understanding of the role that such categories play in *Omeros*. Through combining a range of generic allusions, and indeed reshaping, questioning and ultimately transforming these conventions, the text does not act as a straightforward adaptation or appropriation of one generic model, but elides generic boundaries to self-consciously question the desire to allude to such literary types, and posit a new methodology in its simultaneous use of references to and inversions of such tropes.

The vigorous critical debates surrounding *Omeros* and its links to the epic genre are useful in that they shed further light on the work itself through detailed textual analysis and help to highlight Walcott’s relationship to this genre specifically, but the prevalence of these studies ultimately works to suggest that there must be one core genre to which Walcott alludes, and that epic is this genre. I do not believe this to be the case. *Omeros*, I would argue, finds its artistic potency through its construction of a bricolage, or mosaic, of generic categories, and the significance of its allusions to

⁹² Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 186.

pastoral have not been fully appreciated. This is in part the result of a lack of emphasis on the shared properties of epic and pastoral. As Jasper Griffin has observed:

From heroic epic to bucolic pastoral seems a very long journey. The ringing plains of windy Troy and the *locus amoenus* under the trees; the manslaying heroes and the innocent flocks and swains: what can be more dissimilar. Indeed, the two worlds can be seen as in principle polar opposites.⁹³

However, numerous similes throughout the Homeric epics ‘attest to the closeness of the farmer’s life to the exploits of the hero’.⁹⁴ These include the activities of ‘ploughing, reaping, threshing, shelling beans, milking cows’. It is evident that pastoral and epic are closely tied, and this should be recognised in any reading of the discourse with the classical tradition present in *Omeros*. The effect of this poem’s interactions with classical literary models is the formation of an ambiguous discourse with the classical tradition, as it seeks to liberate itself from the confines of this ancient canon whilst consistently employing allusions to it in an a paradoxical effort to ‘see Helen || as the sun saw her, with no Homeric shadow’ (271).

The Pastoral Elegy

As Jonathan Bate observes: ‘The mode of pastoral has always been closely linked to the mood of elegy’.⁹⁵ William C. Watterson regards the pastoral elegy as ‘an academic category invented by scholars seeking to establish a link between Theocritus’s first

⁹³ Jasper Griffin, ‘Theocritus, the *Iliad*, and the East’, *The American Journal of Philology*, 113 (1992), 189-211, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/295557 (p. 192).

⁹⁴ Griffin, p. 193. This sentiment is reflected in Sidney Burris’ entry for ‘Pastoral’ in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: ‘Models for the centrality of performance and the herdsman as a poetic subject can be found in earlier lit.: the songs of the fictional bard Demodocus and the pastoral life of the Cyclops in Homer’s *Odyssey* are esp. important’. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Burris stresses that the ‘existence’ of pastoral as a ‘genre’ is the result of the writings of Theocritus, ‘who synthesized those elements of Panhellenic literary myth with mythical and performance trads. of his native country, making the legendary herdsman Daphnis the prototypical pastoral singer’. (pp. 1005, 1005-1006).

⁹⁵ Jonathan Bate, *Song of the Earth* (London: Picador, 2000), p. 73.

“Idyll” (Thyrsis’s lament for Daphnis) and all subsequent mourning poems set in the *locus amoenus* or green world’.⁹⁶ The first *Idyll* addresses the theme of death through employing natural imagery and anthropomorphic descriptions of grieving, ensuring that loss, absence and grief would become fundamental elements of Hellenistic pastorals. John Heath-Stubbs summarises the poem thus: ‘All nature laments the death of Daphnis. He seems to have been originally a minor vegetation god, who died seasonally with the year, like Attis or Adonis. Here we have the beginnings of the type of Pastoral Elegy’.⁹⁷ It is this engagement with the presence of death in a pastoral space which ensures that Theocritus’s poems are: ‘far removed from that depiction of a wholly idealized and artificial world of refined poetical shepherds into which pastoral poetry was to evolve in later ages’.⁹⁸ This connection between pastoral spaces and death would continue in the works of Theocritus’s immediate successors, including Bion (c. 150 BC) and Moschus (c. 150 BC). Bion’s elegy for Adonis and Moschus’s lament for Bion would contribute to the prolonged development of the pastoral elegy, Moschus’s poem further helping to establish the tradition of this genre as the standard choice for poems in which one poet mourns the death of another, a technique which has already been examined in the sequence *Italian Eclogues*, and which will be explored further in this chapter through an analysis of Walcott’s ‘Eulogy to W. H. Auden’.⁹⁹

Pastoral elegy is also closely connected to themes of ecology and environmental fragility, through its emphasis upon pastoral spaces, anthropomorphised plants and animals and the presence of loss and decay. Timothy Morton claims: ‘Elegy appears to

⁹⁶ William C. Watterson, ‘Nation and History: The Emergence of the English Pastoral Elegy’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. by Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 135-152 (p. 139).

⁹⁷ Heath-Stubbs, *The Pastoral*, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Heath-Stubbs, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Heath-Stubbs, p. 5.

be a quintessential mode of ecological writing’, continuing to state that if ‘ecology is often elegiac, elegy is also ecological. Whether or not it is explicitly ecological, elegy’s formal topics and tropes are environmental’.¹⁰⁰ The *locus amoenus* as a space for mourning and consolation lends itself to ecocritical readings, alongside the pathetic fallacy and anthropomorphism so often employed in these works. As Morton’s study outlines, the rapid development of environmental crises has contributed to an increased prevalence of elegies for nature itself, a theme which is explored in such poems as Walcott’s ‘The Acacia Trees’. As a result, in recent years there has been increasing interest in ecocritical readings of works which employ the motifs and tropes of pastoral elegy, as a means of further investigating and understanding the often-fractured relationship between humans and the natural world that they inhabit and portray.

Much of Walcott’s poetry deals with elegiac themes, although pathos in relation to the Caribbean setting appears to be heavily condemned in ‘The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory’. By ‘writers even as refreshing as Graham Greene, the Caribbean is looked at with elegiac pathos, a prolonged sadness’ remarks the poet, continuing to state:

Their *tristesse* derives from an attitude to the Caribbean dusk, to rain, to uncontrollable vegetation, to the provincial ambition of Caribbean cities where brutal replicas of modern architecture dwarf the small houses and streets. The mood is understandable, the melancholy as contagious as the fever of a sunset, like the gold fronds of diseased coconut palms, but there is something alien and ultimately wrong in the way such a sadness, even a morbidity, is described by English, French, or some of our exiled writers. It relates to a misunderstanding of the light and the people on whom the light falls.¹⁰¹

It is, therefore, the ‘attitude’ behind these representations of Caribbean landscapes and

¹⁰⁰ Timothy Morton, ‘The Dark Ecology of Elegy’, in *The Oxford Handbook to Elegy*, ed. by Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 250-271 (pp. 251-252).

¹⁰¹ ‘The Antilles’, p. 76.

seasons which Walcott rejects, a ‘misunderstanding’ of the setting which is rendered by the poet and artist who is unable to represent the scene without the ‘infection of their own malaise’, their ‘prose’ thus ‘reduc[ing] the landscape to melancholia and self-contempt’.¹⁰² This denunciation of reductive representations of Caribbean landscapes which are typified by elegiac pathos may at first appear to suggest that Walcott entirely disapproves of elegiac portrayals of this setting. However, they rather offer the poet material for an appropriation of tropes of the pastoral elegy, setting out the intention to resist these reductive portrayals, and to poetically render the landscape through adapting such conventions in order to meet the requirements of his own artistic vision. ‘It is such pictures’, he remarks, ‘that are saddening, rather than the tropics itself’.¹⁰³ Walcott’s crafting of poetic ‘pictures’ of the landscape involves an avoidance of reductive pathos, favouring a vivid, often dynamic vision of natural scenes in his elegies, exemplified in the depiction of a ‘glorious’ setting filled with action and movement rather than stultified melancholy in the elegy ‘for Oliver Jackman’, included in *White Egrets*.¹⁰⁴

The theme of loss is present throughout Walcott’s poetic canon. As Charles W. Pollard observes, ‘Walcott accepts loss as the defining condition of the New World and affirms his capacity to create a tradition and identity from that loss’.¹⁰⁵ As a result, it is unsurprising that elegies form such a major component of *White Egrets*. However, as Elaine Savory has observed in a pioneering study of uses of elegy in Caribbean women’s poetry, the elegy is ‘curiously marginalized in literary anthologies and critical

¹⁰² ‘The Antilles’, pp. 75-76.

¹⁰³ ‘The Antilles’, p. 75.

¹⁰⁴ Derek Walcott, *White Egrets* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ Charles W. Pollard, *New World Modernisms: T. S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), p. 71.

examinations, and not only in the Caribbean'.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, continues Savory: 'It is tempting to suspect that whereas we as writers and readers make temporary space for the elegy in times of grieving, we as literary critics pay it scant attention as often as we are able'.¹⁰⁷ Savory offers an insightful analysis of 'The Bounty' (an elegy for the poet's mother), focussing upon postcolonial ecopoetics, connecting this reading to the pastoral mode through a consideration of the 'aesthetic strategies' employed by Walcott.¹⁰⁸ For Savory, this poem is marked by a 'mixture of lament, even agony, and pastoral admiration for the beauty of nature'.¹⁰⁹ Its imagery 'makes something new' of 'the age-old use of cycles of nature by poets to signify cycles of human life', as 'in the Caribbean, tropical cycles are different from those giving rise to myths such as Demeter and Persephone, where winter is explained; in the tropics, climate and flora are far more subtle in their changes'.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the poem inverts this trope of equating cycles of seasons and of human life, the collapsing of temporalities both appropriating an ancient literary technique of representing human experience and furthering the concept of simultaneity so characteristic of Walcott's poetic style:

There is no change now, no cycles of spring, autumn, winter,
nor an island's perpetual summer; she took time with her;
no climate, no calendar except for this bountiful day.

Whilst Savory's investigation of Walcott's ecopoetics and employment of aesthetic modes clearly involves a recognition of the presence of engagements with pastoral, Savory does not seek to offer an extended analysis of the specific type of the pastoral

¹⁰⁶ Elaine Savory, "'To Sing Me Home": Elegy and Anti-Elegy in Caribbean Women's Poetry' *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 8 (1999), 50-67, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23019791 (p. 50).

¹⁰⁷ Savory, 'Elegy', p. 50.

¹⁰⁸ Savory, 'Towards a Caribbean Ecopoetics', p. 86.

¹⁰⁹ Savory, 'Ecopoetics', p. 86.

¹¹⁰ Savory, 'Ecopoetics', p. 88. Paula Burnett relates Walcott's representations of the seasons to Edenic symbolism: 'As the Eden story relates the introduction of the seasons to the postlapsarian world, so Walcott emphasizes that the tropical climate is blessed in its constancy'. Burnett, *Politics and Poetics*, p. 59.

elegy. The focus is more firmly placed upon Walcott's ecological consciousness and methods of negotiating between postcolonial theoretical models and ecocriticism in readings of the natural world in Walcott's poetry.

Nevertheless, Savory's insights are rare; tropes of the pastoral elegy are often overlooked or marginalised in studies of Walcott's work, despite the clear emphasis that the poet places upon its key themes of loss, mourning and absence in a rural space. Examples of pastoral elegiac conventions have, of course, already been analysed to some extent in both this and the previous chapters. Nonetheless, this area merits much further consideration in any study of Walcott's dialogue with the classical tradition. Several of his shorter poems, concentrated mainly in the later works but also more generally scattered across the breadth of Walcott's literary career, reveal carefully crafted engagements with the pastoral elegy. Often, this marks the passing of friends, a theme explored in the melancholic 'Sea Canes', which begins with the simple statement: 'Half my friends are dead'.¹¹¹ This poem is elegiac in tone, rather than dependent upon conventional tropes of the formal elegy, as the poet imagines the anthropomorphised earth offering to 'make [...] new ones'. 'Sea Canes' supports the conclusion that landscape and death are closely aligned in Walcott's works, offering rich material for this study.

Michael D. Hurley and Michael O'Neill claim that 'elegy's defining trope cannot be classified as a concrete feature but is instead better described as a movement: from grief to consolation. Without this movement the poem is merely *elegiac*'.¹¹² In contrast, Bonnie Costello argues: 'Modern modifications to pastoral elegy are most

¹¹¹ Derek Walcott, 'Sea Canes', in *Sea Grapes*, p. 81.

¹¹² Michael D. Hurley and Michael O'Neill, *Poetic Form: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), <<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/10.1017/CBO9780511982224>> p. 101.

evident in the lack of closure and consolation in the work of mourning, reflecting modern poetry's more general preference for exposure over resolution of problems'.¹¹³ There is a lack of critical consensus here; whilst Hurley and O'Neill insist upon a structured movement from grief to acceptance as a fundamental convention of elegy, Costello allows for more flexibility in her definition of the pastoral elegy type. For Costello, contemporary pastoral elegies are more likely to avoid a movement towards consolation and to embrace ambiguity, unease and unresolved emotional quandaries in their dealings with existentialist questioning, and this does not render the work uncategorizable. Walcott's elegies, I argue, are more inclined to fulfil Costello's criteria than that of Hurley and O'Neill, whose definition I find too rigid and precise for a genre which poets have so consistently and influentially adapted and appropriated for their own specific contexts. As a result, whilst I employ their description of the movement from grief to consolation as a useful backdrop for central themes in Walcott's elegies, I do not consider variations of or rejections to this movement as rendering the poems impermissible in the category of pastoral elegy. Rather, I would favour Costello's approach in accepting that contemporary adjustments to this genre have reshaped its conventions to allow for more flexibility in its representations of emotional experience.

The collection *White Egrets* contains several examples of both formal elegies and poems infused with elegiac themes and pathos. One such example is 'The Acacia Trees', a poem which reminisces upon the destruction of a cluster of 'shade' giving cedar trees, a *locus amoenus* for the poet in which he may contemplate and write, to allow space for the building of 'yet another luxury hotel' – a typically pastoral theme

¹¹³ Bonnie Costello, 'Fresh Woods: Elegy and Ecology Among the Ruins', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. by Karen Weisman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 324-342 (pp. 324-325).

of nature versus modernity and urbanization.¹¹⁴ In this poem, it is the trees themselves which replace the traditional absence of a human figure, an example of what Costello considers to be a key development in the literary legacy of the pastoral elegy, a poem: ‘which practices mourning not *in* nature but *for* nature’.¹¹⁵ ‘The Acacia Trees’ begins with a nostalgic mood, rooting itself in the past tense:

You used to be able to drive (though I don’t) across
the wide, pool-sheeted pasture below the house
to the hot, empty beach and park in the starved shade
of the acacias [...]

The scene is one of tempered pastoral bliss; whilst the ‘pasture’ is ‘wide’ and offered ‘shade’ by the acacia trees, the adjective ‘starved’ denotes a sense of scarcity rather than pastoral lushness, the ‘hot’ sun only moderately muted by this foliage.

The poem is characteristically self-aware, its speaker observing that ‘blank, printless beaches are part of my trade’. The neat pentameter of this line plays with the concept of the poet’s ‘trade’, a craft which relies upon metrical skill, the trochaic opening therefore working to emphasise absence, breaking from iambic stresses: a ‘blank’ space where the acacias had been. As with most of the poems in this collection, the sonnet form is loosely alluded to, with sixteen lines in total and a flowing movement around hexameter and heptameter lines. Heavy enjambment contributes to this sense of flow, with infrequent caesurae offering emphasis and a relaxed structure. As a result, the single-line ending has the feel of a half-couplet, ending abruptly the sequence of

¹¹⁴ Derek Walcott, ‘The Acacia Trees’ in *White Egrets* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 11. The poem shows thematic links, as well as a shared interest in the symbolic use of acacia trees as markers of death and mourning, to poem number 13 of *The Bounty*: ‘There is a tree I know that groans when it bends | accommodating the wind. At first, because of its heaving, | I thought the earth shook in the shade of thorned acacias, | but I had rested my sole on a trunk, and its grieving | came from its roots underground; if earth heaves like us | then the dead, even in their silence, may still be breathing’. *The Bounty*, p. 38. The elegiac treatment of the felling of trees is also closely connected to the opening stanzas of *Omeros*, a topic explored in the first chapter of this thesis.

¹¹⁵ Costello, p. 329.

long sentences which precedes it. After the poet has recalled that he ‘watched the doomed acres’ where the hotel would be built, ‘with ordinary people fenced out’, the island set in his mind to become an urbanized ‘mall’, the poem ends with a simple conclusion: ‘I felt such freedom writing under the acacias’. The sense of pathos is profound, the loss of the trees marking the ongoing loss of natural spaces in the area. The absence of the trees further symbolises nostalgia for past methods of working, as the destruction of this *locus amoenus* affects the poet’s ‘freedom’ to write. This lack of freedom is reacted to in the poem’s loose, free prosody, the refusal to conform to metrical or formal constraints indicating a resistance to this loss. In its decision to foreground the loss of a natural space, and in particular the titular ‘Acacia Trees’, the poem appears to fit the category which Costello refers to as ‘ecoelegy’, a concept related to ‘the long literary link between landscape and absence, so central to Romanticism, in which the shepherd is displaced by the landscape itself as the focus of pastoral meditation’.¹¹⁶ This poem simultaneously mourns a group of trees and, to an extent, the island of St Lucia itself, as a nostalgic dreamscape in the poetry’s memory, which has been and will be changed through the relentless passing of time and socioeconomic transformation.

Edward W. Rosenheim’s analysis of W. H. Auden’s elegy ‘In Memory of W. B. Yeats’ (1939) highlights prosody as essential to its engagement with genre, describing Auden’s metrical craftsmanship as demonstrating: ‘some effort to do things the hard way’.¹¹⁷ In the first two sections ‘there are powerful echoes of the lengthy

¹¹⁶ Costello, p. 333. Costello also highlights the relevance of *nostos* to the pastoral elegiac tradition: ‘The rhetoric of return is embedded in the elegiac tradition, which expresses the longing to recover a time of fullness and presence, to be in harmony with nature’s cycles, where losses are restored and sorrows end’. Costello, p. 339.

¹¹⁷ Edward W. Rosenheim, ‘The Elegiac Act: Auden’s “In Memory of W. B. Yeats”’, *College English*, 27 (1966), 422-425, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/373268 (p. 423).

dactylic lines which make the classical elegy’, whereas the final section ‘adopts a more typically (older) English hallmark of elegy, the couplet – preserving, in the trochee, the ancient emphasis on the first syllable of the elegiac foot’.¹¹⁸ Rosenheim argues that this poem is ‘about much more than Yeats himself’, citing the month of the poet’s death, January 1939, as essential to a richer understanding. This month marked the fall of Barcelona, a pivotal moment in the Spanish Civil War. As a result, claims Rosenheim, Auden ‘deliberately sets himself to write a single elegy for both a poet and a nation – an extraordinary challenge’.¹¹⁹ This notion of a technically and conceptually challenging type of elegy, one which ambitiously seeks to cultivate virtuoso poetic craftsmanship in a gesture of respect to the death of a fellow poet, is an important consideration in any reading of Walcott’s ‘Eulogy to W. H. Auden’, included in *The Arkansas Testament* (1987), a collection in which Walcott projects the figure of Sextus Propertius, the Roman elegist, indicating an explicit statement of interest in a dialogue with the classical elegiac tradition.¹²⁰ This poem, which was read at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York on 17 October 1983, is self-aware, working at times as a meta-elegy, one which evaluates its own conventions, purpose and effect in offering consolation to mourners of an influential poet. It is described by John Thieme as a ‘*tour de force* in which Walcott deploys the full range of his poetic repertory’, marking a formative moment in Walcott’s literary career; the practice of one poet constructing an elegy for another, elder poet whom he has considered a ‘mentor’, simultaneously acknowledging ‘both the literary influence which Auden exerts on Walcott as well as Walcott’s quite different cultural space’.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Rosenheim, p. 423.

¹¹⁹ Rosenheim, p. 424.

¹²⁰ See ‘A Propertius Quartet’ in *The Arkansas Testament* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), pp. 97-100.

¹²¹ John Thieme, *Derek Walcott* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 179.

William Pratt has noted that the three sections of Auden's elegy for Yeats 'form the major parts of a pastoral elegy, placing his poem', suggests Pratt, 'in the long tradition from the Greeks, who invented it, to English poets such as Milton, who used it in "Lycidas," and American poets such as Whitman, who adapted it in "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd."' ¹²² As this statement suggests, in a manner similar to epic, pastoral elegy has frequently been elevated to a place of high cultural prestige, with an insistence upon its lineage from Hellenistic poets. As a result, Walcott is addressing not only the legacy of Auden in his poem, but also the weight of the classical and European literary traditions. The challenge of composing this elegy is therefore heightened by the political associations between this genre and Eurocentric literary and critical practices, a burden which is navigated by the poet, I argue, through engagements with cartographic themes and planetary imagery, rather than traditional tropes of pathetic fallacy, and a focus on urban spaces rather than the conventional *locus amoenus*. For Pratt, Auden's elegy for Yeats is constructed from three mutually reinforcing parts: 'In the first part of Auden's pastoral elegy for Yeats, following the formal tradition, the poet depicts all nature mourning for the dead person; in the second, he eulogizes the dead poet; and in the final part, he affirms the immortality the dead man has achieved by his work, which will keep his memory enduringly alive'. ¹²³ Walcott's poem is also explicitly split into three sections, however their functions differ significantly from those attributed to Auden's influential work.

Similarities between Walcott's elegy for Auden and Auden's own elegy for Yeats appear at first to be very clear – the movement from sestets to quatrains, examples

¹²² William Pratt, *Singing in the Chaos: Madness and Wisdom in Modern Poetry* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1996), p. 283.

¹²³ Pratt, p. 283.

of selected imagery, the transcending of personal grief to a broader questioning of public affairs and philosophical meditations – however, the major contrast between these two related poems is their individual approaches to the genre of pastoral elegy. Whilst Auden’s opening lines engage with the pathetic fallacy convention of the genre, moving between symbols of modernity and a *locus amoenus* in which the ‘brooks were frozen’, the ‘wolves ran on through the evergreen forests’ and the ‘peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays’, Walcott’s opening stanzas shift between ‘this chapel’ and a less localized sense of place, elevating at times a cartographic gaze, applying the metaphor of Auden’s ‘fissured face’ as a vast landscape in itself: ‘Each granite feature, cracked and plain | as the ground in Giotto’.¹²⁴ A sequence of celestial images further marks a distinct rejection of the conventionally earth-bound setting of pastoral elegy, paralleling the complex relationship between these two highly technical, transformative interpretations of the genre.

Variances between the two texts are therefore made apparent from the outset, the opening of Walcott’s poem employing bathos in contrast to the bleak plosive opening of Auden’s elegy, beginning with a mock-dismissal of the occasion as ‘solemn rubbish’ in the eyes of the dead poet, in contrast to Auden’s sombre rendering of a death similar to that of Adonis in its relationship to seasonal change in his opening lines: ‘He disappeared in the dead of winter’.¹²⁵ The harsh sounds employed by Auden both in

¹²⁴ W. H. Auden, ‘In Memory of W. B. Yeats’, in *W. H. Auden: Collected Poems*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber 1976), pp. 247-249 (p. 247). Derek Walcott, ‘Eulogy to W. H. Auden’, in *The Arkansas Testament*, pp. 61-65 (p. 61). This poem was read at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, on 17 October 1983. An overlooked influence at work here may well be George Campbell’s ‘Hymn to Being’, which contains the lines: ‘Coffin me not in space | Heaven my starry face | Give me the whole of earth | Wisdom in death in birth’. George Campbell, *First Poems* (Kingston: the author, 1945; repr. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2012), p. 85. Campbell will be further discussed as an important influence on the poet in the following chapter.

¹²⁵ Walcott, ‘In Memory’, p. 61. Auden, ‘Yeats’, p. 247. Further references to individual page numbers of these poems in the editions specified above are given after quotations in the text.

this line and in the recurring leitmotif, ‘The day of his death was a dark cold day’ (247), is supplanted by Walcott in favour of softer fricative sounds, ‘that fissured face’ is said to ‘frown on our canonizing farce’ (61). Humour is employed to combat generic expectations, not only through the image of a frowning, distempered Auden but also through the pun upon the verb ‘canonizing’, which at once playfully elevates the poet to a saintly status whilst also alluding to his place in the literary canon, the implication being that this sentiment would be viewed as ‘devout and snobbish’ in the poet’s lifetime (61). This elegy, it suggests, will not eulogize the poet to divine status, but recognise him as ‘the mortal Auden’, who has been ‘freed’ of ‘Time and its burden’ (61).

Throughout the first section of the poem – unlike the mourning of nature specified by Pratt as conventional within the themes of pastoral elegy – meadows and pastures are replaced with ‘pavements’ and the ‘darkened church’, the outside world only dimly lit by a ‘street lamp’ and a complete absence of acts of mourning (62). Soft sibilant sounds contribute to a mood of hushed contemplation, rather than outpourings of grief, a single ‘falling || leaf’ is compared to a ‘seraph’ as it ‘sign[s]’ the light made by a ‘street lamp’, whilst ‘footsteps’ echo ‘in the dark | street’. Consolation arrives earlier in the poem than would be anticipated, the sixth stanza stating that those who leave the service will ‘have, for their companion, | his shadow with us’. The second section sees the transition into quatrains in loose trimeter lines, often with an additional metrical foot, predominantly following iambic rhythms but frequently employing trochees. These lines are a near match for Auden’s seven-syllable line quatrains, although the AABB rhyme scheme is adjusted to alternating rhyme, leading to a less rigid sense of structure, and a mixture of iambs and trochees prevent the dirge-like

movement of Auden's closing paragraphs. The 'beach' again appears as an elegiac space, however an unconventional addition to Walcott's style of elegy is the cosmic imagery:

though shredders hum with rage through
the neon afternoon,
and dials guide earth's marriage
to an irascible moon;

not needling Acturus,
nor Saturn's visible hum
have, on their disks, a chorus
of epithalamium;

the farther the space station
from the Newtonian shelf,
the more man's conversation,
increases with himself.
(63)

The poem takes a rather abstract, decidedly contemporary turn in this section, its emphasis upon modernity, a world in which a 'space station' orbits the earth directly, contrasting with the archaic notion of a 'flat world' conjured in its opening line. This abandonment of a land-based pastoral setting also sees a self-conscious discussion of genre, with the claim that we have moved from elegy to 'epithalamium', a reassuring reminder that just as death continues to affect the inhabitants of this earth, such human experiences as romantic love and birth continue on equally constant courses.

The poem insists upon the continuance of ordinary life, not only through the noting of events such as marriages, or through reminders of the eternal movement of celestial objects, but also through the actions of animals. They are depicted not as mourning, but journeying as they always have:

Soon, from the whistling tundras,
geese following earth's arc
will find an accurate Indies
in the lime-scented dark.
(63)

The seasonal journey of geese avoiding harsh winters in favour of warmer climes, travelling to the 'lime-scented dark' of the Caribbean archipelago, introduces the theme of the St Lucian landscape and upbringing that the poet has experienced, as he continues to reminisce upon his own epiphanic discovery of poetry:

Once, past a wooden vestry,
down still colonial streets,
the hoisted chords of Wesley
were strong as miners' throats;

in treachery and in union,
despite your Empire's wrong,
I made my first communion
there, with the English tongue.

It was such dispossession
that made possession joy,
when, strict as Psalm or Lesson,
I learnt your poetry.
(63-64)

These stanzas engage overtly with the central themes that the poem seeks to address: the legacy of the absent poet, nostalgia, a perception of the crafting and reception of poetry which is imbued with religious connotations, and the burden of political and literary history. Walcott recalls that his first experience of 'your poetry', which can be presumed in context to be the works of Auden but may well simultaneously be referring to the tradition of poetry in the English language more generally, took place in 'still colonial streets', in contrast to the lamplit pavements of contemporary New York where this reading took place. Walcott acknowledges the bitter legacy of colonial rule, that

‘Empire’s wrong’ which ensured his Eurocentric literary education, but recalls making what he deems to be the empowering choice of making this language his own ‘possession’, in spite of the ‘dispossession’ with which he is surrounded, taking a ‘joy’ in his own ability to craft poetry, an act he treats with the seriousness of a religious ‘communion’. The humour and bathos of the poem’s first section is undercut with this elevation of the act of writing poetry, and its reminder that such an act can be a powerful gesture, perhaps purposefully addressing the widely debated comment in Auden’s earlier poem: ‘For poetry makes nothing happen’.¹²⁶ Rather than eulogizing upon the absent poet, Walcott here sombrely explores the importance of poetry itself, as it offers poets such as himself and Auden the power to make a meaningful ‘communion’ with language, a theme which will continue in the closing section of this poem.

The third section of this elegy, if Pratt’s three movements are to be adhered to, should affirm ‘the immortality the dead man has achieved by his work, which will keep his memory enduringly alive’.¹²⁷ This definition is perhaps the one which is most closely aligned to by Walcott’s poem, as its final section does consider the notion of immortality through the crafting of poetry. It begins with an allusion to the ‘dark cold day’ motif Auden attributes to the day of Yeats’ death, with the single word: ‘Twilight’ (64). Once again, however, the space depicted is decidedly urban, as opposed to pastoral: ‘Grey pigeons batten | on St. Mark’s slate’ (64).¹²⁸ The transition into a

¹²⁶ Walcott directly rejects this understanding of poetry in an interview in 1977: ‘Somebody, Auden I think, said that poetry makes nothing happen. Poetry itself may not make anything happen, but it has incited people to make things happen. The danger for a poet – for there is excitement in the passion of what he is believing – is to confuse what he thinks a poem can do with poetry itself’. Walcott in interview with Sharon Ciccarelli in 1977, ‘Reflections Before and After Carnival: An Interview with Derek Walcott’, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 34-49 (first publ. in *Chant of Saints: A Gathering of Afro-American Literature, Art, and Scholarship*, ed. by Michael S. Harper and Robert S. Stepto (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 296-309), p. 41.

¹²⁷ Pratt, p. 283.

¹²⁸ Walcott has himself drawn attention to this fact, noting that ‘the final scene of the poem highlights the

conventional exploration of eternalization is therefore a slight surprise, and the introduction of anaphora allows it to read like a prayerful interlude:

O craft, that strangely chooses
one mouth to speak for all,
O Light no dark refuses,
O Space impenetrable
(64)

The repeated use of the letter ‘O’ intensifies the notion of poetry as an eternalizing craft, through its appearance in type as an endless circle. In addition, the ‘Light’ called to by the poet counteracts the ‘dark’ day motif, denoting a sense of optimism and consolation despite the comparatively gloomy opening stanza. Walcott’s cry to the muses of ‘Craft’, ‘Light’ and ‘Space’ continues into a request that they:

fix, among constellations,
the spark that we honour here,
whose planetary patience
repeats his earthly prayer

that the City may be Just,
and humankind be kind.¹²⁹
(64)

This plea for the mourned poet to be positioned amongst the eternal stars, his ‘spark’ of poetic craftsmanship defying the poet’s own mortality, forms a culmination of the

fact that he [Auden] contained so much love and concern with him – and also within an industrial context, not simply in a pastoral setting, not sitting outside the city brooding on the rocks, but in New York City’. Derek Walcott, in interview with William Baer in 1993, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 194-206 (first publ. in *The Formalist*, 5 (1994), 12-25), p. 206.

¹²⁹ This imagery is also reminiscent of the elegiac *Italian Eclogues*, which include the lines: ‘lamps bud like fruit in the village, above roofs, and the hive | of constellations appears, evening after evening, | your voice, through the dark reeds of lines that shine with life’ (vi), and ‘The Bounty’, which reads: ‘therefore we see in the glint of immeasurable spaces | not stars or falling embers, not meteors, but tears’. *The Bounty*, p. 12. Similarly, poem 14 of *The Bounty* includes the lines: ‘all that it knew was this craft, all that it wanted – | what did it know of death? Only what you had read of it, | that it was like a flame blown out in a lowered lantern, | a night, but without these stars, the prickle of planets, lights | like a vast harbour, or devouring oblivion’ (p. 39).

themes of 'planetary' imagery and the dualism of light and darkness, its mood and visual descriptions thus far more optimistic and vivid than the bleak concluding stanzas of Auden's own elegy, which includes the drastically contrasting lines:

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate.
(248)

Throughout this poem, Walcott refuses to endorse a number of thematic and formal elements of 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'. Rather than a pessimistic tone and dark imagery, for example, Walcott charts the movement from darkness to light as symbolic of optimism and 'joy', emotions that he relates to the practice of crafting poetry. In addition, rather than the traditional structural elements of the pastoral elegy, or the inclusion of such generic tropes as anthropomorphised nature mourning the loss of its subject, Walcott favours urban and planetary imagery, supplanting the *locus amoenus* for a vast, wide-ranging poetic topography. Nonetheless, some features remain in an adapted form, including the passing of seasons represented by the migrating 'geese' and the immortality of the poet achieved through the physical existence of his poetry imagined in its closing section. Altogether, this poem demonstrates a complex questioning of and dialogue with the conventions of the classical pastoral elegy, working to offer a profound and technically virtuoso examination of a breadth of its related themes.

To return to *White Egrets*, its inclusion of an elegy for Oliver Jackman, the Barbadian politician and journalist, engages with the notion of a simultaneously civic and personal elegy which has been explored by Jahan Ramazani, addressing as it does a

noted civic figure with whom the poet also shared a friendship.¹³⁰ This poem strongly alludes to – and at times directly contravenes – the generic expectations of pathetic fallacy which are associated with the pastoral elegy. It begins somewhat conventionally with the suggestion of a movement from grief to consolation, launching immediately into an existential crisis: ‘It’s what others do, not us, die’. That this poem is an elegy is made apparent from the outset, the themes of death and the limits of human knowledge quickly established. However, rather than the mourning of nature which has come to be expected from the pastoral elegy – the wailing of foxes and wolves in Theocritus’s first *Idyll* or the mourning of the ‘woods and desert caves, | With wild thyme and the gadding vine o’ergrown’ to be found in Milton’s influential pastoral elegy for ‘Lycidas’ – the ‘yellow or golden palms’ in the setting of Walcott’s poem are ‘glorious’ before they also ‘die’ in their ‘sparkling splendour’, a scene of vivid colour and dynamism rather than bleak lamentations.¹³¹ Music is present in this setting, not sombre dirges but rather ‘calypsos’, a carnival atmosphere conjured through this and the ‘putting up and pulling down [of] tents’, as ‘vendors are slicing | the heads of coconuts’. The sense of motion, vibrancy and energy injected into this imagery marks a contrast to the generic expectations that are brought to pastoral elegies, indicating a determination to highlight and elevate the experience of living rather than a prolonged meditation upon death.

Time, insists Walcott, continues its course in a manner unaffected by the loss which has brought the poet and others to a halt in shared grief: ‘a moon will be rising |

¹³⁰ Jahan Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death: Elegy, Self-Elegy and the Sublime* (Yale University Press, 1990), p. 32.

¹³¹ John Milton, ‘Lycidas’, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt et al., 9th edn, 6 vols (New York and London: Norton, (1962-2012), vol B (2012), pp. 1918-1923 (p. 1919); Derek Walcott, ‘for Oliver Jackman’, in *White Egrets*, p. 15.

tonight in the same place over Morne Coco'. The moon is similarly employed for this symbolic purpose in *Another Life*, in which, regardless of the young poet's suffering, 'The moon maintained her station' (53). Nonetheless, the impact of grief recounted halfway through the poem adjusts the tone to one of increased sombre reflection, whilst the device of pathetic fallacy is similarly modified to more closely conform to the expected tropes of the pastoral elegy: 'the full grief will hit me and my heart will toss | like a horse's head or a threshing bamboo grove'. The sense of movement thus cultivated through the semantic fields of these verbs switches from a comforting sense of regularity – the continuous nature of 'practising', the oppositional nature of 'putting up and pulling down', the dynamism of 'leaping into pirogues' and the moon 'rising' – to the discomfoting tossing and 'threshing' of anthropomorphised nature, and the unnerving connotations of 'the daily dial of the revolving shade' highlights that the 'shade' of death continues its endless, circular course.

However, the poem fulfils its movement towards consolation, despite its uneven route to this sense of acceptance:

The pain is over, feathers close your eyelids, Oliver.
What a happy friend and what a fine wife!
Your death is like our friendship beginning over.

Once again, the natural world is employed as a tool for the poet's meditation upon loss, 'feathers' softly closing the 'eyelids' of the absent friend, who is directly referred to for the first time in the poem. The consolation is not entirely unexpected, as it is hinted at throughout due to the poem's careful crafting of a regular alternating rhyme scheme, implying a sense of structure and resolve. However, the rhyme scheme notably breaks down within these final, consoling lines, with the final four reclaiming the ABAB structure that has been briefly abandoned. This ensures that the number of total lines,

seventeen, contributes a jarring, almost uneasy effect to the poem's final section, refusing to allow for metrical and formal regularity. Perhaps this should, then, be read as a slight undermining of the elegy's closing sentiments, a sense that all is not, and indeed cannot be, entirely resolved through the process of the pastoral elegy's movement from grief to consolation.

Moreover, I would argue that a further allusion is at work signifying an interest in existential angst in opposition to the acceptance of mortality in this text: the use of the term 'vainglorious'. This unusual, archaic word is employed in a slightly differing form in Thomas Hardy's influential fatalistic work: 'The Convergence of the Twain', a public, elegiac poem contemplating the then recent sinking of the Titanic on its maiden voyage. The stanza in which it appears is strikingly similar to *Omeros*'s conjuring of an undersea wreck:

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" . . .¹³²

In addition, Walcott employs lines from Thomas Hardy's elegiac 'During Wind and Rain' as an epitaph for Chapter Twenty of *Another Life*, implying an affinity with the poet that Jahan Ramazani considers to be 'a key transitional figure' in the development of elegy, as 'Hardy presages the tension in much twentieth-century poetry between the elegiac and the anti-elegiac, his best work springing from the convergence of the twain'.¹³³ Thus the 'austere anti-elegy' fashioned by Hardy appears to be subtly alluded to in this otherwise seemingly rather traditional and consoling example of the genre,

¹³² Thomas Hardy, 'The Convergence of the Twain' in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th edn, 6 vols (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1962-2012), vol. F (2012), pp. 1940-42 (p. 1941).

¹³³ Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 34.

exemplifying the complexity at work in Walcott's adaptation and appropriation of the tropes of the classical pastoral elegy and its more recent modifications.¹³⁴

That consolation is resisted works to reinforce Walcott's notion of the second Eden alluded to in 'The Muse of History'; just as Eden becomes irretrievably transformed by the 'bitter taste' of corruption, how can the experience of death be satisfyingly resolved through the practice of crafting poetry, in particular in a setting which has been shaped to such an extent by trauma and death, including the deaths of its Amerindian inhabitants and the African slaves conveyed across the Middle Passage? Walcott's elegiac writings mark the loss of individuals such as Auden, but also more broadly mourn loss on a vast scale, the cosmic imagery so frequently employed indicating this range of vision, the spanning of temporal, physical and cultural spheres. The resistance to consolation becomes emblematic of the limitations of poetry in the face of extreme suffering and absence. Just as Walcott's poetry resists attempts towards 'recreating Eden' or 'returning to an Eden', his interactions with the melancholia and emotional complexity of pastoral elegy involve a rejection of straightforward consoling resolution, one which is closely connected to his engagement with colonial history.¹³⁵

Altogether, I argue that through poems such as 'The Acacia Trees', 'Eulogy to W. H. Auden' and 'for Oliver Jackman', Walcott establishes a dialogue with the classical tradition which seeks to explore and address the reductive nature of the 'elegiac pathos' in representations of Caribbean settings which he outlines in 'The Antilles'. Although pathetic fallacy is frequently employed, this is more likely to be used to celebrate ongoing life and change in the natural world, whether seasonal or otherwise, than to be employed

¹³⁴ Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning* p. 34.

¹³⁵ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 75; Walcott, 'Culture or Mimicry?', p. 57.

as a vehicle for the conventional mourning of nonhuman bystanders for the dead subject in a *locus amoenus*. In addition, these poems are as likely to mourn the death of nature itself, meeting the definition of the ecoelegy put forward by Costello, allowing a consideration of environmental fragility and urbanisation in the Caribbean setting. These elegies are not only introspective, but work more broadly to question poetic meaning itself, evidencing a self-awareness in their adaptation and appropriation of specific source texts and both formal and generic conventions. For Walcott, the elegy is a genre which is not limited to charting the movement from grief to consolation, but rather a tool for considering the emotional experience of grief, expressing an awareness of the absence of a lost friend, fellow poet, people or a landscape, and exploring both poetic craftsmanship and poetics in relation to this loss. This involves a complex navigation of the poignant wish explored in ‘Sea Canes’: that the earth be able to bring ‘those we love before us, as they were | with faults and all, not nobler, just there’.¹³⁶

Conclusion

Derek Walcott’s final collection of poetry *Morning, Paramin* (2016) begins with an elegy to Seamus Heaney (‘Dedication to S.H.’).¹³⁷ It seems apt that this concluding work opens with a poem dedicated to the memory of a fellow poet and friend, a theme which recurs throughout much of Walcott’s substantial poetic canon, which so profoundly explores experiences of loss and connections between poets and creatives across historical, cultural and geographic divides. It is also fitting that this poem engages with the Caribbean (in this case specifically the Trinidadian) landscape and seascape: ‘A

¹³⁶ Derek Walcott, ‘Sea Canes’, in *Sea Grapes*, p. 81.

¹³⁷ Derek Walcott, ‘Dedication to S.H.’, in *Morning, Paramin* (London: Faber and Faber, 2016), p. 3.

crest, and then a slope of barren acres, | a forest on its flank, the wide sea-swell'.¹³⁸ The tone of this poem is not one of elegiac melancholy, a mirroring of the tradition of mourning poems dedicated to versions of Lycidas or Daphnis, but one of optimism, awe and celebration. It is inclusive and exuberant; the artist Peter Doig, Walcott's collaborator on this collection, is declared to be 'welcome' to this space, the poet celebrating 'everything that offers my land | to be utterly yours'. The 'scene' is one of 'startling' beauty and dynamic movement, 'that sweet landscape behind Gros Piton, | its fertile precipices, its circling hawks [...] they're yours:', the poet states, 'those scenes I knew in my green years | with a young man's joy at Choc, at Blanchisseuse'.¹³⁹ This retrospective reflection allows for the poet's memory, the imagined topography of the mind, to combine with a living, present reality, with a refusal to endorse pastoral nostalgia in favour of a celebration of transience and the present. Loss is, once again, symbolised by the destruction of trees, in this case 'an avenue of casuarinas', a reminder of the poem's function as marking the death of Heaney, although the overwhelming mood conveyed is one of hope. For Walcott, the classical tradition is a useful tool, a framework of references and poetic techniques ripe for transformative adaptation and appropriation. This can be clearly recognised in his engagements with the pastoral mode.

Line Henriksen remarks that: 'from the very outset of his poetic career, Walcott has been working on one project: the composition of an epic'.¹⁴⁰ This chapter, and indeed this thesis in its entirety, seeks to challenge such a conception of Walcott's connection to classical literary models. The relationship between Walcott's poetry (in

¹³⁸ Derek Walcott, *Morning, Paramin*, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Derek Walcott, 'Dedication to S. H.', in *Morning, Paramin*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Henriksen, p. 233. Henriksen continues to complicate this notion, although this takes place through an analysis of *Omeros* in relation to specifically epic tropes.

particular *Omeros*) and epic has been significantly overstated and misinterpreted. Rather than a monolithic, narrowly focussed feature of his writings, this forms a fragment of a multifaceted, pluralistic engagement with classical modes and genres. An awareness of the employment of pastoral and anti-pastoral features in his work can shed further light on major themes present in these texts, including their approach to colonial hegemonic frameworks of literary value, Eurocentrism, methods of representing the Caribbean setting, characterisation, poetic renderings of temporality, history and an anti-teleological sentiment, which is tied to Walcott's anticolonialism. Moreover, the effects of this engagement with the classical tradition are, I argue, transformative of the source texts themselves. As Greenwood suggests: 'If we, particularly those of us who are classicists, are going to talk about Homeric interference in our reception of *Omeros* as a potentially colonizing force, then we should also extend this potential to Walcott's reception of Homer.'¹⁴¹ Ultimately, in 'Walcott's aesthetics and his empire of art, he can just as readily colonize Homer's poetry as Homer can his'.¹⁴² It is essential, however, to note that it is not only 'Homer's poetry' that is transformed by Walcott's engagements with classical models, but a far wider legacy of generic categories and associations, including the complex and multifaceted pastoral mode.

¹⁴¹ Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks*, p. 234.

¹⁴² Greenwood, *Afro-Greeks*, p. 234.

REPRESENTATIONS OF LANDSCAPE

In the extended, autobiographical poem *Another Life* (1973), Walcott retrospectively explores the growth of his relationship to the realms of the visual arts and poetry. This work outlines his ambition as a young man of becoming an artist, and it is a poem which cements the importance of the visual arts to Walcott's poetic practice. These blurred divisions between poetry and painting which are so central to his craft are, I argue, never clearer than in the projections of landscapes included in his writings. In this chapter, I will explore the significance of allusions to pastoral pictorial depictions of landscapes, predominantly in *Another Life*, alongside a comparative consideration of *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000). This will be achieved through navigating methodologies employed not only by the literary critic, but also by the art critic and art historian. Walcott's engagements with the tradition of pastoral artworks rest upon a select few key themes: the connections between poetic craftsmanship and the techniques of visual artists, the notion of stasis versus movement, the eternalizing or preserving gaze in both the visual arts and poetry, the relationship between human subjects and the landscape, and the mediation between the mind of an artist and representations of the natural world.

Edward Baugh convincingly argues that the repeated references to an 'amber glow' in *Another Life* work to glorify Walcott's 'memory of the island and his young life', reflecting the 'amber glaze used by the Old Masters' as 'the poet's imaginative memory modifies and enriches the "colours" of the world which it recreates'.¹ Baugh

¹ Edward Baugh, 'Painters and Painting in *Another Life*', in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. by Robert D. Hamner (U.S.A.: Three Continents Press, 1993; repr. Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1997), pp. 239- 250 (first publ. in *Caribbean Quarterly*, 26 (1980), 83-93), p. 245.

continues to state that this ‘notion of the amber glaze “locking”, sealing, fixing, preserving the painting is also crucial’, as the ‘amber glaze of the poet’s memory/ imagination, therefore, not only transfigures the remembered world but also transfixes the memory and the vision. Paradoxically, it actualises and idealises at the same time’.² However, Baugh does not extend this analysis to a consideration of the role that engagements with the pastoral mode play in this process. In my reading, *Another Life* is intentionally ambiguous in its suggestion of a statement of intent to preserve the St Lucian landscape through the use of the notion of artistic stasis, adapting the artistic techniques of projecting pastoral space and temporality as well as the literary tropes of the pastoral elegy, which combined imply a nostalgic eternalizing of its setting in the ‘amber’ glow of a painter’s glaze.³ It is a work which, at times, allows the natural setting to act as a space for leisure and discourse, a fundamental trope of the pastoral mode, whilst elsewhere it embraces a typically Romantic understanding of the natural world as a vital and nourishing resource for the poetic and artistic imagination, only to generate further ambiguity in its process of portraying the island’s setting through alluding to a variety of other modes of representing and seeing the St Lucian landscape.

Another Life explores and questions these traditional artistic and literary perceptions of rural space, as well as the relationship between nature and the poetic imagination, refusing to fully endorse pastoral conceptual understandings of its setting and allowing ambiguity, flexibility and plurality in its poetic rendering of the natural world. Two major characters in this work epitomize its artistic vision: Harry, the name given to Walcott’s art tutor Harold Simmons, and Gregorias, a pseudonym for St Lucian

² Baugh, ‘Painters and Painting’, p. 245.

³ Derek Walcott, *Another Life*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973; repr. with a critical essay and notes by Edward Baugh and Colbert Nepaulsingh, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2009), l. 20. Further references to line numbers in this edition are given after quotations in the text.

artist Dunstan St Omer, Walcott's childhood friend and a fellow student of Simmons.⁴ This concept of plural 'ways' of seeing has been influentially posited by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* (1972).⁵ It also shapes a section of Sarah Phillips Casteel's analysis of *Tiepolo's Hound* in relation to the pastoral mode, in which she argues that Walcott is 'deeply preoccupied with the problem of landscape representation', as he is 'acutely aware that landscape is always a creation of history'.⁶ For Casteel, the narrator of *Hound* 'vacillate[s] between two models of landscape representation' which 'coexist' in this text: 'an idealized, coherent vision of landscape on the one hand and an experiential, fragmentary vision of landscape on the other'.⁷ In an interview with Dennis Scott in 1968, five years before the publication of *Another Life*, Walcott referred to this notion of ways of seeing, after observing that he was, at the time, doing 'a lot of painting': 'when I say the visual I don't mean a visual thing that has the solidity of an object. It's a way of looking, you know, a concentration that is calmer'.⁸ I argue that it is vital to recognise that Walcott's poetic representations of landscape rely upon this

⁴ Walcott describes Harold Simmons' tutorship in an interview in 1985, as well as accepting the reading of Gregorias as a pseudonym for Dunstan St Omer and outlining his father's passion for painting as an inspiration for the poet's younger self. Warwick Walcott's watercolour copy of Jean-François Millet's 'The Gleaners' (1857), for instance, was displayed in their living room. In this painting, three peasant women hunch over as they work, gleaning a field of wheat. That the subject matter is traditionally georgic is worthy of note for this study. Derek Walcott, in interview with Edward Hirsch in 1985, 'The Art of Poetry XXXVII: Derek Walcott', in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 95-121 (first publ. in *The Paris Review*, 101 (1986), 196-230), pp. 98-99.

⁵ John Berger in collaboration with Sven Bloomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb and Richard Hollis, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Cooperation and Penguin Books, 1972).

⁶ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 32. The notion of ways of seeing is also referred to by Emily Greenwood, in a study of connections between Walcott's work and Homer's *The Odyssey*: 'Although [...] Odysseus is an instantly recognisable Homeric icon, his appearance in New World contexts is not what it seems and demands closer inspection, if not a new way of seeing'. Emily Greenwood, 'Arriving Backwards: the Return of *The Odyssey* in the English-Speaking Caribbean', in *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds*, ed. by Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillepsie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 192-210 (p. 210). In a similar vein, Paula Burnett remarks: 'Nostalgia, to him [Walcott], is a way of seeing'. Burnett, *Politics and Poetics*, p. 80.

⁷ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 33.

⁸ Derek Walcott, in interview with Dennis Scott in 1968, 'Walcott on Walcott', in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 10-16 (first publ. in *Caribbean Quarterly*, 14 (1968), 77-82), p. 12.

concept of pluralistic perspectives, and that this shapes his engagements with aesthetic modes and generic categories. Unlike Baugh and Casteel, my analysis will focus upon Walcott's engagements with the pastoral pictorial tradition as it was iterated between the years of approximately 1650 and 1850 in a selection of shorter poems and *Another Life*, alongside a comparative reading of *Tiepolo's Hound*.

Tiepolo's Hound offers a consideration of landscape in relation to the visual arts similar to that of *Another Life*, although in contrast to the earlier text it aligns itself more closely to biography than to autobiography, imaginatively exploring the life and works of the artist Camille Pissarro (1830-1903). It also contains less of an emphasis upon depictions of the Caribbean landscape. This novel-length poem sees a continuation and, in some cases, development of certain themes formulated in *Another Life*, including the concept of an eternalizing gaze in the realm of the visual arts, adaptations and appropriations of various pastoral tropes and a reflection upon the role of the European artistic tradition in relation to contemporary Caribbean literary and artistic output. I argue that it is in his uses of landscape art and references to landscape artists that Walcott most clearly indicates an interest in interrogating, appropriating and transforming the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of the pastoral mode and its gaze in the visual arts, and a call for both re-envisioned ways of seeing this landscape and a reconceptualization of the relationship between people and land, rather than a reliance upon traditional artistic and literary tropes.

Walcott is a highly visual poet. In the *Italian Eclogues*, a richly conjured scene of rural idyllicism is projected through the theme of an intertwining of poetic imagery and material reality: 'In this landscape of vines and hills you carried a theme | that travels across your raked stanzas' (*The Bounty*, 31, iii). The crafting of poetry and the

act of agricultural cultivation are here conflated, in the creation of a scenic image which reflects the compositions of pastoral landscapes in the visual arts. However, the scene is not static, in the manner of the eternalizing gaze of pictorial depictions, but amorphous, a typically Walcottian feature of representations of rural landscapes:

[...] clouds whose shapes
change angrily when we begin to associate them
with substantial echoes, holes where eternity gapes
in a small blue door. All solid things await them

A ‘dove’, a symbol familiar from *Omeros*, is both ephemeral and in motion, ‘in the echo of its flight, the rhyme its echo’. The reference to ‘rhyme’ furthers the process of interconnecting the crafting of poetry and the material presence of a rural setting, whilst both the straightforward repetition and polyptoton upon ‘echo’ contribute to the sense of a lack of solidity, as well as to the structure of classical references at work in Walcott’s *oeuvre*. The process of change is similarly signified by the awaiting fate of the ‘tree’ – another recurring symbol in Walcott’s poetic engagements with the pastoral mode – here on a path to become ‘kindling’, this ‘kindling’ then to become ‘hearth-smoke’, an image which recurs in the climactic moment of *Another Life*, one in which the poet has an epiphanic vision of the relationship between his artistic creativity and his physical surroundings, as will be explored in greater depth in this chapter.

This single poem from the *Italian Eclogues* evidences the key themes which will be analysed in this study of Walcott’s engagements with the pastoral mode as it has been iterated through the visual arts, and which I highlight as fundamental features of these engagements. Through exploring these themes, Walcott not only contributes to the complexity and variety of his ‘bucolic scaffolding’, but works to subvert typifying elements of European pastoral artworks, in particular those of the colonial era; the ‘tinted engravings’ which he so robustly rejects in ‘The Antilles: Fragments of Epic

Memory’.⁹ This is in part achieved through the deconstruction of familiar elements of pastoral compositions and moods in the visual arts, as well as through a mosaic of references and allusions which reflects that of his engagements with classical pastoral tropes and motifs, thus defamiliarizing and complicating these techniques and structures of references. Walcott subverts pastoral visions of the Caribbean which centre stasis and negation as their core elements, instead emphasising dynamism and movement, counteracting the eternalizing process of producing pictorial art. Through imaginatively exploring the lives and works of notable artists, he further questions concepts of artistic validity and canonisation, questioning why certain artworks and artists have been elevated and glorified, and employing irony and bathos in order to distance his work from Eurocentric, hegemonic structures of cultural value. As Casteel has observed, this is evident in the premise of *Tiepolo’s Hound*, as the poetic narrator admits an inability to recall a painting – which possibly included the titular ‘Hound’ in its composition – which itself may or may not have been produced by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770), thus centring a sense of ambivalence and ambiguity to the core of the poem’s narrative structure.¹⁰

The Pastoral Mode in the Visual Arts

The process of painting pastoral landscapes has a long and complex history. Similarly to pastoral poetry, its roots in the Western tradition are thought to date from the Hellenistic era.¹¹ As Helen Langdon outlines, during the European Renaissance

⁹ Derek Walcott, ‘The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory’, in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 65-84 (p. 75).

¹⁰ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 24.

¹¹ Helen Langdon, ‘Landscape Painting’, in *Grove Art Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) <<https://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000049026>> [accessed 14 February 2020].

landscape scenes were created by artists depicting either ‘pastoral scenes of aristocratic leisure or Georgic landscapes enriched by agricultural activities that the aristocrat could observe with satisfaction’.¹² Over time, these archetypal visions of pastoral landscapes became shaped by influential artists such as Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), Claude Lorrain (born Claude Gellée, c.1600-1682) and Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), each of whom demonstrated shared traits (frequently idealised natural settings, the presence of rustic figures such as shepherds, spaces utilised for leisure and discourse), but also significant variety in their interpretations of the pastoral mode (the reliance on mythology or presence of architectural ruins, for example).¹³ In the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke’s theories on the ‘Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful’ (1756) contributed to a new fascination with ‘nature’s violence’.¹⁴ Visions of the Romantic landscape were rendered by artists such as Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and, in the United States, Thomas Cole (1801-1848), widely regarded as founder of the Hudson River School. It is difficult to state with certainty those elements which made a visually depicted landscape pastoral (or indeed Romantic). As Leo Marx observes: ‘To decide whether the essence of pastoral is inseparably bound up with abandoned conventions [...] we would have to adopt a more or less explicit conception

¹² Langdon, ‘Landscape Painting’.

¹³ In his seminal and highly influential study of art history, E. H. Gombrich highlights the role of each of these three artists. On Poussin’s famous pastoral artwork *Les bergers d’Arcadie* or *The Arcadian Shepherds* (c. 1640), Gombrich states: ‘It is inscribed in Latin ET IN ARCADIA EGO (Even in Arcady I am): I, Death, reign even in the idyllic dreamland of the pastorals, in Arcady’. It is, he continues, ‘for the same mood of nostalgic beauty that the works of another Italianized Frenchman became famous. He was Claude Lorrain (1600-82). Lorrain’s landscape *The Father of Psyche sacrificing at the Temple of Apollo* (1662-3) is described as ‘a nostalgic vision of a land of serene beauty’. On Watteau, Gombrich summarises his major themes thus: ‘He began to paint his own visions of a life divorced from all hardship and triviality, a dream-life of gay picnics in fairy parks where it never rains, [...] where the life of the shepherds and shepherdesses seems to be a succession of minuets’. Direct references to Lorrain and Watteau in Walcott’s poetry will be explored in this chapter, and in my explorations of Walcott’s relationship to pastoral elegy I would stress the significance of Poussin’s influential rendering of death’s presence in Arcadia. E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th edn (London, New York: Phaidon, 1950; repr. 2006 (Phaidon), pp. 302, 320, 342-343.

¹⁴ Langdon, ‘Landscape’.

of its essence. What was – what is – the essential characteristic of pastoral?'.¹⁵

For Marx, the answer at least partly lies in an understanding of its function as a mode, rather than a genre, its character derived not from 'formal properties', but rather 'a special perspective on human experience'.¹⁶ Such an understanding then allows for an incorporation of the various mediums associated with the pastoral: 'This modal conception of pastoral accords with its long history of migrating from the classical shepherd poem to various other expressive forms, among them drama, painting, music, dance, the novel, film, landscape architecture, city planning, and political philosophy'.¹⁷ However, this does not fully clarify the definitive 'essence' of pastoral. Its 'essential character', admits Marx, remains 'peculiarly elusive'.¹⁸

There are certain features which are broadly considered conventional to the practice of producing both pastoral literature and pastoral artworks – the presence of shepherds or their equivalents, nostalgia for a lost Golden Age, an idyllic setting, an opposition between the rural and the urban environments and the creation of a space for tranquil contemplation and discourse, to name a few – however there has always been, and remains, ongoing critical debate as to the essential features of the mode. Nonetheless, there does appear to be some consensus on the properties and importance of such features shared across both literary criticism and studies of the visual arts. As previously outlined, in his study of pastoral literature, Paul Alpers suggests that it is not the landscape that is the mode's definitive feature, but rather the specific way of being which is represented by its rustic inhabitants, as representatives of the human

¹⁵ Leo Marx, 'Does Pastoralism Have a Future?', *Studies in the History of Art*, 36 (1992), 208-225, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42620384 (p. 209)

¹⁶ Marx, p. 210.

¹⁷ Marx, p. 210.

¹⁸ Marx, p. 210.

condition.¹⁹ Similarly, for Luba Freedman, the central feature of the mode in the visual arts is ‘the portrayal of the idealized life of the shepherd in pleasantly natural surroundings’, with the ‘shepherd’ acting as ‘an archetype of idealized humanity’.²⁰ Although this thesis demonstrates an understanding that the presence of the human figure is the feature that most clearly appears to constitute the influence and particular significance of the pastoral mode in both literature and pictorial art, I would attribute greater importance than both Alpers and Freedman to the projection of an idyllic setting, one which frequently exists out of recognisable, localized space. Consequently, I argue that in *Another Life* Walcott directly engages with the pastoral process of envisioning a peopled landscape, exploring the notion of a nostalgic gaze, alongside idealised descriptions of the natural world, moments of opposition between town and culture versus countryside and physical labour, and incorporating the presence of figures associated with agriculture, such as fishermen. These depictions rely upon topographical exactitude, with its third chapter naming and describing the actual inhabitants of the island whom Walcott encountered whilst living in Castries, thus cementing the significance of a highly localized, specifically St Lucian setting to Walcott’s artistic-poetic vision.

I would also draw attention to the variances and shared traits which can be recognised in both representations of pastoral landscapes and sublime depictions of landscape, associated with the Romantic movement, clearly alluded to by Walcott in *Another Life* through this autobiographical narrative poem’s similarity of form and premise to William Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*.²¹ I will further explore references to

¹⁹ Paul J. Alpers, *What is Pastoral* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) p. 22.

²⁰ Luba Freedman, *The Classical Pastoral in the Visual Arts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 1-2.

²¹ This has been highlighted by Edward Baugh and Colbert Nepaulsingh in the essay ‘What the Poem Came

Wordsworth's poetry in *Another Life* in this chapter, as I argue that there are more connections at work than have previously been recognised.²² One of the paramount considerations in any study of pictorial depictions of nature, whether employing the pastoral or the sublime aesthetic mode, is whether such works are affected by being produced either directly from life, *en plein air*, or (re)created in a studio. This notion of creating art from life versus predominantly from the imagination is evidently of interest to Walcott, as he retrospectively discusses the wanderings of himself and St Omer, seeking views of the island that they can artistically render, relating to larger questions of the role of *mimesis* in his crafting of both poetry and visual art, as well as wider processes of imitation, apprenticeship and creative independence from their 'turpentine-stained editions' of 'Old Masters' (1140-410). This theme is developed in *Tiepolo's Hound* through its interest in the Impressionist movement, and its focus upon capturing an image from life in a raw, fragmentary manner, as well as through an exploration of the process of depicting a landscape in motion through mediums which eternalise and preserve such a vision.

Due to its influence on celebrated poets and its literary origins in such works as those of Theocritus and Virgil, critical responses to the pastoral mode have been open to a charge of logocentrism. Seminal studies of the mode by critics such as William Empson, Raymond Williams, Annabel Patterson and Paul Alpers have been weighted

to Be', with the comment: 'Like *The Prelude*, *Another Life* is not only a self-portrait, it is also the portrait of a society'. Edward Baugh and Colbert Nepaulsingh, 'What the Poem Came to Be', in *Another Life*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973; repr. with a critical essay and notes by Edward Baugh and Colbert Nepaulsingh, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2009), pp. 163-217 (p. 200). There are three dates of publication for Wordsworth's poem, referring to three versions of *The Prelude*: 1799, 1805, 1850.

²² The Romantic movement is described by Langdon as reliant upon 'the power of landscape to express passionate feeling', with the painting of 'visionary landscapes of waste and solitary places; which create a sense of the transcendental and of man's longing for the infinite', simultaneously striving to 'recover a moral purity and truth, equated with the unsullied vision of childhood'. Langdon, 'Landscape'.

heavily towards the literary, with little discussion of pictorial depictions of the pastoral. As a result, Walcott's own elevation of connections between paintings and literary projections of space becomes problematic to the critic of pastoral, necessitating a navigation of tropes of literary critical models alongside an understanding of the complex and diverse tradition of landscape art to which Walcott alludes. In 1992, *Studies in the History of Art* published an issue focused upon the pastoral mode, with an introduction by John Dixon Hunt titled 'Pastorals and Pastoralisms'. The plurality of this essay's title indicates an essential theme of this important study: that there are various types of 'pastoralisms' in art, a concept which reflects Arthur Lovejoy's influential essay 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms' (1924), which argued against any establishment of a single definition of the term 'Romanticism'. Hunt claims that although it may well be the case that 'romanticisms are many more various than pastoralisms', nevertheless 'a striking result of the analyses collected here is that they suggest how pastoralisms vary with their period, the culture that produces them, and the medium and genre of their representation', attributing flexibility to the process of 'pastoralism'.²³ Hunt, then, identifies the importance of plurality and variety to understandings of uses of the pastoral mode in art, and highlights the relationship between pastoral visual depictions of landscape and Romantic projections.

He also draws attention to the process of representing pastoral space in the visual arts, arguing that the *locus amoenus* as the setting for pastoral scenes may be more consistently employed than other tropes, including the presence of stock characters such as shepherds: 'the essential vocabulary of the pastoral place is modified

²³ John Dixon Hunt, 'Pastorals and Pastoralisms', *Studies in the History of Art*, 36 (1992), 10-19, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42620373 (p. 13).

in its transmission from the Veneto to the Low Countries and, incidentally, continues to function without obligatory pastoral *dramatis personae*’, a clear distinction from the arguments of Alpers and Freedman.²⁴ I argue that Walcott’s allusions to (and interrogations of) visual depictions of landscapes in *Another Life* work to render the St Lucian setting through innovating upon and appropriating established tropes, demonstrating an awareness of a creative agency which transcends artistic mediums and generic conventions. Walcott pushes for the development of a localized artistic tradition, one which at times preserves and elevates, and elsewhere dynamically projects its setting. I would suggest that it is this sense of a variety of plural ways of seeing and intentional ambiguity that are the defining features of Walcott’s projection of a Caribbean artistic ethos, one which is intricately tied to his engagements with the pastoral mode.

In a study of the impact of literature on conceptual understandings of the relationship between humanity and nature – and more specifically the development of a supposedly increasing alienation between man and nature, which is both reflected and shaped through literature and art – Jonathan Bate offers a summary of the crux of this issue of using visual representation in relation to the natural world:

At one level, what we are addressing here is the perennial problem of artistic representation in any form, whether painting, poetry or fiction: artists try to tell you something about the world, about life – they hold up a mirror to nature – but they can only do so via a repertoire of techniques and conventions that are inherited from previous art.²⁵

²⁴ Hunt, p. 14

²⁵ Bate, *Song of the Earth*, p. 126. A similar point is made by Robert Bensen in his analysis of the role of the visual arts in *Midsummer*: ‘To create art = to paint pictures = to write poems. Between infinitive and object, between the making and the made, the triggering subject cannot intrude, merely follow appended by a preposition: to paint a picture *of*, to write poems *about*. The artist is removed from his subject by the very act of creating’. Robert Bensen, ‘The Painter as Poet: Derek Walcott’s *Midsummer*’, in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. by Robert D. Hamner (U.S.A.: Three Continents Press, 1993; repr. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997) pp. 336-347 (first publ. in *The Literary Review*, 29 (1986), 257-

This would suggest that the central concern here is one of *mimesis*. The artist, suggests Bate, is a mediating figure, restricted by the conventions of the artistic tradition as it stands. This ‘intrusion’ of artistic tradition, he states, is paradoxically ‘necessary’ to the process of composition and to the effect and impact of response on the part of the viewer or reader, whilst it simultaneously ‘contaminates the purity of the relationship with nature itself’.²⁶ The rendering of this experience is affected by the process of representation: ‘An artistic representation of a figure in a landscape cannot but be *mediated*’.²⁷ Nonetheless, there is an added layer to this process. After all, suggests Bate, ‘Is it possible, though, for a figure to stand in a natural landscape and relate to it in a manner that is *unmediated*?’²⁸ Thus, we reach the nexus of issues relating to artistic renditions of landscape, in seemingly all mediums. The painter or poet acts as an intermediary between nature and human viewer or readership, shaping the environment through an array of established conventions, and incorporating traditional techniques. As a result, it becomes clear that Walcott faces a challenge in his rendering of rural settings in the Caribbean archipelago. How can the poet (or artist) ensure an appropriate rendering of experience, for a natural setting which has been so frequently and consistently idealised and reduced to a fixedly Eurocentric gaze, when they must use established techniques and conventions in order to undertake the actual process of representation? How, in short, can Walcott re-envision a portrayal of this landscape?

Another Life is a work which is rich in various modes of seeing the natural world.

Walcott’s interest both in the mediation between artist and object highlighted by Bate

68), p. 345.

²⁶ Bate, p. 126.

²⁷ Bate, p. 126.

²⁸ Ibid.

and in the visual arts more broadly is clear from its outset, indicated by the epigraph taken from André Malraux' *The Psychology of Art*: 'What makes the artist is the circumstance that in his youth he was more deeply moved by the sight of works of art than by that of the things which they portray'. The poem's opening stanzas address this concept of artistic representation in relation to the St Lucian setting through drawing attention to the materiality of the text itself, referring to 'the pages of the sea' as 'a book left open by an absent master' (1-2). The poem is thus compared to the ocean, the poet to a divine creator. Art is presented as a process of creation in a quasi-religious sense, thus elevating the act of mediation between the natural world and the reader.

There is an early suggestion, in the poem's third stanza, that *Another Life* will be projecting a pastoral vision of the island:

There
was your heaven! The clear
glaze of another life,
a landscape locked in amber
(17-20)

This at first appears to be an idealised, idyllic depiction of the landscape, a nostalgic eye turned on the poet's past, with the 'amber' glow bearing connotations to the pastoral works of artists such as Claude Lorrain, who later will be referred to as having created a 'light-furred luminous world' (1041). However, the verb choice 'locked' implies ongoing preservation and stasis, whilst also being suggestive of entrapment. The landscape becomes confined by such a portrayal, in contrast to the previous elevation and celebration of the mediation between landscape and reader at the poem's opening. There are also early indications that this vision will be interrogated by the poem's creator: 'for the tidal amber glare to glaze | the last shacks of the Morne', until they become 'transfigured sheerly by the student's will, | a cinquecento fragment in a gilt

frame.’ (35- 38). Immediately, the implied tranquillity is questioned by the presence of ‘shacks’, a synecdoche for the island’s impoverished inhabitants, the amber ‘glaze’ thus appearing to be an artificial gloss over the island’s socioeconomic condition; the moment bears striking similarities to the undercutting of Dennis Plunkett’s vision of a St Lucian Eden in *Omeros*. The scene is an artifice conjured by the mind of a child seeking aestheticization of the surroundings, the failed attempt to do so symbolised by the metonymic ‘cinquecento fragment’ in its ‘gilt frame’. Only fragments of this vision remain, more frame than image. This refusal to endorse the Lorrain-like pastoral vision is furthered by a distinct note of finality and bathos: ‘The vision died’, the poet admits, ‘the black hills simplified | to hunks of coal’ (39-41). Walcott thus simultaneously conjures and rejects the ‘leisured gaze’ of pastoral in this poem’s opening moments, a ‘gaze’ here projected onto the scene via this unnamed ‘master’, exemplifying an awareness of the ways of seeing this setting that are both anticipated by the reader and ripe for exploration by the poet (70).

The Caribbean Artistic Tradition

Walcott’s interest in the visual arts has not escaped critical notice, including the pioneering criticism offered by Edward Baugh and Colbert Nepaulsingh in their annotated edition of *Another Life*. However, it should be noted that there are relatively few studies of the role of landscape art in the Caribbean more broadly, especially when compared to the substantial body of scholarship on European landscape art.²⁹

²⁹ Works addressing this field which have been produced in recent years include *The Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Art* ed. by Jane Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and *Caribbean Art* by Veerle Poupeye (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998). It is worth highlighting that a hugely important artist in terms of any overview of the history of landscape art in the region is the Trinidadian

Walcott's apparent and understandable frustration with this neglect is an important consideration, and I will explore this through readings of his prose essays.

Considering the comparative scarcity of critical material available on the Caribbean artistic tradition in contrast to that of the European tradition, it is worth noting that the ambitious, wide-ranging work: *Caribbean: Art at the Crossroads of the World* (2012), edited by Deborah Cullen and Elvis Fuentes, selects an excerpt from Walcott's Nobel Lecture, 'The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory', as its opening section, indicating the significance of Walcott's voice to recent studies of the topic.³⁰ In this speech, Walcott meditates upon the specificity of this archipelago's natural setting as inspiration for its art: 'Visual surprise is natural in the Caribbean; it comes with the landscape, and faced with its beauty, the sigh of History dissolves'.³¹ Therefore, it is evident that the physical 'landscape', for Walcott, is viewed as a significant aspect of the region's potential for visual aesthetic appeal. However, he quickly complicates this viewpoint. This same 'sigh of History', he remarks, 'rises over ruins, not over landscapes, and in the Antilles there are few ruins to sigh over, apart from the ruins of sugar estates and abandoned forts'.³² As well as offering a direct acknowledgement of the issue of navigating the island's colonial past in any rendering of its image, this appears to be a reference to another branch of landscape art: the picturesque.

artist Michel Jean Cazabon (1813-1888). Cazabon produced many landscapes, which depict such localized settings as bamboo groves, and include depictions of agricultural labour. Lawrence Scott offers a unique exploration of the life of this pioneering painter in *Light Falling on Bamboo* (London: Tindal Street, 2012).

³⁰ *Caribbean: Art at the Crossroads of the World*, ed. by Deborah Cullen and Elvis Fuentes (New York: El Museo del Barrio, in association with the Yale University Press, 2012). This work accompanied the exhibition of the same name, organized by El Museo del Barrio in collaboration with Queens Museum of Art and The Studio Museum in Harlem.

³¹ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 68.

³² Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 68.

Described in relation to the Caribbean context by Jefferson Dillman as ‘a mode of viewing and interpreting a landscape’, the picturesque’s ‘paradisial’ and ‘Edenic’ connotations have resulted in its close association with the pastoral mode, its purpose deemed by Dillman as: ‘[to] produce an emotional response or strike an evocative chord within the viewer’s memory’.³³ Architectural ruins are a common feature of the picturesque, and artists who often projected pastoral scenes, such as Claude Lorrain, frequently used ruins in their compositions, blurring the boundaries between pastoral and picturesque ways of seeing.³⁴ The convention of the presence of picturesque ‘ruins’ in the landscape, a familiar trope in European landscape art, are consequently questioned and rejected by Walcott in the context of projections of Caribbean

³³ The close links between the pastoral mode and the picturesque are indicated by the title of Dillman’s chapter: ‘The Rural Landscape: The Pastoral, Picturesque and Tropical’. Jefferson Dillman, *Colonizing Paradise: Landscape and Empire in the British West Indies* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2015), ProQuest Ebook Central, p. 139. Ann Bermingham draws attention to the specifically eighteenth-century context of the picturesque’s popularity: ‘The eighteenth-century taste for nature and the natural reached an apogee during the 1790s in the cult of the picturesque’, continuing to argue that ‘[t]he picturesque vision of landscape represents an ideological as well as aesthetic commitment’. Its close links to the pastoral mode can be recognised in Bermingham’s outlining of its central features: ‘The picturesque love of the ruined and the dilapidated was in keeping with the period’s general elegiac mood and graveyard melancholy. Coming at the height of the agricultural transformation of the countryside, the picturesque was suited to express the complexity of the historical moment. In its celebration of the irregular, preenclosed landscape, the picturesque harkened back nostalgically to the old order of paternalism. In its portrayal of dilapidation and ruin, the picturesque sentimentalized the loss of this old order’. Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), pp. 57, 66, 70.

³⁴ For example, Lorrain’s *Capriccio with Ruins of the Roman Forum*, (1634). The Reverend William Gilpin, a pioneering theorist of the picturesque, commented that: ‘*A painter’s nature* is whatever he *imitates*; whether the object be what is commonly called natural, or artificial. Is there a greater ornament of landscape, than the ruins of a castle?’. William Gilpin, *Essays on Picturesque Beauty*, 2nd edn. (London: R. Blamire, 1974; repr. Westmead: Gregg, 1972), p. 27. For Handley, the presence of ruins in a rural space is linked to imperialistic ideology: ‘Ruins in a landscape represent an historical claim on nature’s meaning; preference for ruins over an apparently empty nature is symptomatic of a deep intolerance for the ambiguous relationship nature has to our conception of history and time. In a colonial condition, the local landscape seems insufficient and regrettable in comparison to Europe’s nature, which is seemingly inseparable from its human stories and monuments; by comparison, the light, the vegetation, the vistas, and the culture derived from a native environment signify colonial inferiority’. Handley, ‘Poetics of the Environment’, p. 203. Walcott also stressed a connection between ruins, colonialism and linear history in an interview in 1990: ‘If you are on land looking at ruins, the ruins commemorate you. They more commemorate than lament the achievement of man. They may contain a moral lesson but underneath that there is still a praise of the tyrant or hero. [...] And that’s what the ruins of any great cultures do. In a way they commemorate decay. That’s the elegiac point’. Derek Walcott, in interview with J. P. White in 1990, ‘An Interview with Derek Walcott’, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 151-174 (first publ. in *Green Mountains Review*, 4 (1990), 14- 37), p. 159.

landscapes.³⁵ This leads to a forthright rebuttal of this tradition of Eurocentric landscape art in the region:

If you wish to understand that consoling pity with which the islands were regarded, look at the tinted engravings of Antillean forests, with their proper palm trees, ferns and waterfalls. They have a civilizing decency, like Botanical Gardens, as if [...] the sky were a glass ceiling under which a colonized vegetation is arranged for quiet walks and carriage rides. Those views are incised with a pathos that guides the engraver's tool and the topographer's pencil [...] A century looked at a landscape furious with vegetation in the wrong light and with the wrong eye.³⁶

I read this passage as a direct dismissal of the monopolization of representations of the Caribbean landscape by European artists using the dominant tropes of the picturesque and the pastoral. The implication is that these images are archaic and redundant, belonging to the region's traumatic eighteenth century. This should be read as a declaration of artistic liberation from a tradition of landscape art that was simultaneously idealising and reductive, that regarded the natural surroundings as requiring a gaze suffused with patronising colonial 'pity' and 'pathos'. The central element at work here is that referred to in the last sentence: 'looked at a landscape furious with vegetation in the wrong light and with the wrong eye'. This notion of a 'wrong eye' is paramount to understanding Walcott's vision. It is the wrong way of seeing that is to blame; not merely the conventions that are used to produce a representation of landscape, but the very method by which the land is seen and consequently rendered. These ways of seeing, 'the art of seeing' as it is referred to in *Tiepolo's Hound*, form a central concern not only in the two texts discussed in this

³⁵ In *Another Life*, Walcott also considers the 'ruined temples' of the European pastoral tradition, relating this trope to the 'luminous world of Claude' and the 'drizzling twilights' of Turner' (1041-42).

³⁶ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 75. References to 'engravings' recur in poetic works such as the second poem of the series 'Signs', in *The Bounty*, again with connection to the European art tradition and history: 'the faith of redemptive art begins to leave us | as we turn back old engravings to the etched views | that are streaked with soot in wet cobbles and eaves' (p. 21).

chapter, but in a wide range of Walcott's poetic works (7).

There are further references to the pastoral mode in this speech. The first of these is a reference to its trope of an opposition between rural and urban realms: 'A culture, as we all know, is made by its cities'.³⁷ The second is the reference to idyllic viewpoints: 'The Caribbean is not an idyll, not to its natives [...] Its peasantry and fishermen are not there to be loved or even photographed'.³⁸ Thus, purely idyllic representation is rejected; the land is beautiful, this Walcott accepts, but it is functional too. The reference to a 'photograph' indicates a recurring theme throughout 'The Antilles', as the camera becomes a complex tool, one which can problematically simplify, preserve and potentially dynamically portray this environment. 'Photogenic poverty!', Walcott exclaims, 'Postcard sadness! I am not recreating Eden'.³⁹ The pastoral is a mode which has frequently relied upon the beauty of this 'poverty', the labourer romanticized and objectified within the gaze of an idealising, distanced observer. This is a concern which Walcott directly alludes to in 'What the Twilight Says': 'We romanticised the poor. But the last thing which the poor needed was the idealisation of their poverty'.⁴⁰ In contrast, the film camera, which disallows stasis in favour of movement, is a tool which possesses creative potential: 'Looking around slowly, as a camera would, taking in the low blue hills over Port of Spain, the village road and houses [...] I wanted to make a film that would be a long-drawn sigh over Felicity'.⁴¹ This can be read as illustrating a frustration with the immobility enforced in the tradition of idealised scenes of the Caribbean landscape, ones which impose a sense of permanence, and a gaze which

³⁷ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 71.

³⁸ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 83.

³⁹ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 75.

⁴⁰ Walcott, 'Twilight', p. 19.

⁴¹ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 68.

merely preserves. The preference, in this moment, is for representations of landscape which do not disguise the active physical and creative labours of its peoples, achieved through the film camera's mobile and panoramic gaze, rather than preserved single images.

The recent publication of *Morning, Paramin* (2016), a collaboration with the artist Peter Doig which incorporates several visual landscape scenes alongside corresponding poems by Walcott, indicates that an interest in interconnections between poetic and artistic representations of landscape spanned the full breadth of Walcott's literary career, and, as a result, acted as a relevant topic for contemplation on the occasion of an award as highly publicised as a Nobel Prize. A much earlier essay by Walcott, titled 'Society and the Artist', bears notable similarities in tone to the later speech, despite its publication almost forty years earlier in 1957. In this essay, Walcott calls for a localized development in artistic practice and for the representation of the St Lucian environment by its own artists:

I do not think that there is any minority in the entire archipelago with more pride in the islands, with a deeper love for their roots, with a more anguished sense of a people's suffering and progress, than the old men and their young inheritors, who think that they write for themselves, who long for the metropolitan centres of civilization, temporarily conquer them, and then yearn for more than the sunlight and the sea. They know where they are planted, and know where they should like to die.⁴²

The natural imagery employed here is striking: the artists have a love for their 'roots', they know where they are 'planted', as though the artists themselves have sprung from the soil and are tightly connected to the natural world around them. There is also a sense of social and artistic duty on the part of these artists, they share and understand the

⁴² Derek Walcott, 'Society and the Artist', in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. by Robert D. Hamner (U.S.A.: Three Continents Press, 1993; repr. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997) pp. 15-17 (first publ. in *Public Opinion* (Jamaica), 4 May 1957: 7), p. 15.

‘anguished sense’ of the islands’ history, they learn from the ‘old men’ in a reflection of the dynamic between master and apprentice, working to hone their craft. The natural settings of these islands do not merely act as inspiration for the artist in this passage, as the emphasis is also upon the labour and learning which must be allowed and encouraged to help artists to develop their craftsmanship, and the need for provisions for this purpose. There is, again, a distinction made between the urban and the rural space, with the city linked to ‘civilization’ in a harking of the traditional dichotomy made between these spheres. However, this is a notably localized space, refusing the tradition of inland, agricultural imagery for the ‘sunlight and the sea’; these are distinctly Caribbean seascapes rather than abstract, unspecified rural Arcadias.

Indeed, this theme of a localized spatial sphere in artistic representation is continued throughout the essay. There ‘is no serious West Indian artist’, claims Walcott, ‘painter or poet, who would not prefer to say something of his country than of a view of Venice. Europe does not belong to them’.⁴³ The ‘West Indian artist’, who has experienced being on this land, wishes to render this experience, rather than an artificial projection of a distant, supposedly more artistically validated space.⁴⁴ This ends with a

⁴³ Walcott, ‘Society and the Artist’, p. 16.

⁴⁴ The mention of Venice, I would suggest, is significant. Venice is a space which is represented as having an unusual and vital relationship between land and water. In terms of the Caribbean archipelago, Walcott stresses the importance of the connections between sea and land; indeed, this connection forms a major theme in his literary output. Due to his evident interest in and knowledge of art history, it is highly probable that Walcott would have been familiar with Gombrich’s impactful study ‘The Story of Art’, in which he titles the chapter on Venice in the early sixteenth century ‘Light and Colour’. Light is a recurring theme in *Another Life*, an allusion to the etymological root of the island’s name ‘Lucia’, but also, perhaps, a more subtle allusion to this reading of the role that ‘light’ played in the burgeoning artistic tradition of Venice, as claimed by Gombrich: ‘Its architect was a Florentine, Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570) [...] he had completely adapted his style and manner to the genius of the place, the brilliant light of Venice, which is reflected by the lagoons, and dazzles the eye’ (p. 247). The Venetian artist Giorgione (c. 1478-1510) is highlighted as achieving a ‘revolutionary’ use of light, the creator of the strange pastoral ‘The tempest’ (p. 250). The name is not dissimilar to the pseudonym offered in *Another Life* to Dunstan St Omer: Gregorias. Walcott demonstrates a habit of playful adaptations of names of iconic characters and individuals (Achille and Philcotete in *Omeros*, Afa in *The Sea at Dauphin*, as will be outlined in the following chapter), and it could be argued that the name Gregorias is, at least on one level, a nod towards this founding figure in Venetian art, as St Omer, this proclaimed, St Lucian ‘light of the world’, radically re-envisions the light of

plea for greater support and encouragement for the Caribbean artistic community: ‘Our artists and writers should not be forced, like soldiers to die on foreign soil, or to return wounded and crawl famously into a hole’, Walcott states.⁴⁵ They ‘are part of what can be one of the finest and most beautiful of countries. I mean these islands. Without them, Greece would have been a Tourist resort, and these islands will be beautiful but dumb’.⁴⁶

The picturesque and the pastoral may be regarded as commonly interested in stasis, projecting the land as a space for meditative contemplation, rest, social interaction or gentle labour.⁴⁷ But what does this notion of meditative stasis in the landscape signify for Walcott? The Caribbean has too often been projected as an area where little or nothing is created, an area of inaction or negation, due predominantly to the negative comments made by James Anthony Froude in *The English in the West Indies; or The Bow of Ulysses* (1887), with the suggestion that the islands had ‘no people’ with ‘a character and purpose of their own’.⁴⁸ This theme was then taken up by V. S. Naipaul, with the widely-cited remark in *The Middle Passage* (1962) that:

the island in his paintings in the same manner as Giorgione achieved new techniques for representing the setting of Venice (*Another Life*, 3625). Venice is also a central theme of the elegiac *Italian Eclogues*, as a location which had been influentially explored by its dedicatee, Joseph Brodsky, who described the city thus: ‘Water equals time and provides beauty with its double. Part water, we serve beauty in the same fashion. By rubbing water, this city improves time’s looks, beautifies the future. That’s what the role of this city in the universe is. Because the city is static while we are moving’. Joseph Brodsky, *Watermark: An Essay on Venice* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992; repr. London: Penguin, 2013), p. 134. This sense of an equilibrium between movement and stasis is explored in both the *Italian Eclogues* and, as this chapter argues, *Another Life*.

⁴⁵ Walcott, ‘Society’, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Walcott, ‘Society’, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Langdon describes Claude Lorrain’s early pastoral as ‘convey[ing] an aristocratic dream of bucolic peace’, and states that the picturesque allows ‘pleasing meditations on transience’ (Langdon, ‘Landscape’). For Kenneth Clark, ‘the Virgilian element in Claude is, above all, his sense of a Golden Age, of grazing flocks, unruffled waters and a calm, luminous sky’. Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art* (London: John Murray, 1949), p. 65.

⁴⁸ Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p. 347. Emily Greenwood argues: ‘Froude’s description of the leisured life on the average Antillean homestead, where the soil brings forth fruit in abundance, untoiled, blends the prelapsarian world of genesis, golden-age mythology, and the description of the Cyclopes’ island in *The Odyssey*’. Greenwood, ‘Arriving Backwards’, p. 196.

‘nothing was created in the West Indies’.⁴⁹ Baugh observes that ‘nothing’ has been ‘a central theme in Walcott. He has sought to transform it imaginatively from a stigma of non-achievement and hopelessness to an inviting challenge and opportunity, a blank page on which there is everything to be written’.⁵⁰ Such a sentiment is directly referred to in the closing moments of *Another Life*: ‘We were blest with a virginal, unpainted world | with Adam’s task of giving things their names’ (3626-7). As a result, any injection of movement into what may otherwise appear to be a traditional pastoral idyll gains added significance. Any sense of creative agency is a rebuttal to the accusation of artistic inertia, and thus a portrayal of this landscape which is imbued with movement and creative energy may work as a loaded and important symbolic tool.

Visualizing Landscape in *Another Life*

There are frequent references to a sense of stillness and permanence in *Another Life*, as exemplified by the line: ‘The world stopped swaying and settled in its place’ (147). The caesura on which this line ends adds to the sense of perpetuity of this hyperbolic moment, as the landscape is transformed into a frozen frame in a mirroring of the process of painting its image. *Another Life* explores the process and effects of the eternalizing, preserving gaze of visual depictions of landscape, alongside an almost paradoxical contemplation of the flexibility and variety of pluralistic ways of seeing the land. It offers an exploration of modes of representation, demonstrating an interest in utilising prior artistic and literary models offered by predominantly radical thinkers:

⁴⁹ V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*, p. 29.

⁵⁰ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 8. A clear articulation of this sentiment in Walcott’s poetry is offered in poem number 11 of *The Bounty*: ‘It is only your imagination that finally ignites it | at sunset in that half-hour the colour of regret, | when the surf, older than your hand, writes: “It | is nothing, and it is this nothingness that makes it great.”’ (p. 36).

Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh, George Campbell, William Wordsworth and James Joyce are key examples. Nonetheless, I would argue that it does not seek to conform to these models, but rather employs them as a background mosaic of ways of seeing, with the poet projecting, interrogating and often rejecting these visions in the poem's foreground. This is evident in the poem's eighth chapter, with a sudden change of form indicating a burst of creative energy, the poet claiming to have been 'drunk':

Drunk,
[...]
as Van Gogh's shadow rippling a cornfield,
on Cézanne's boots, grinding the stones of Aix
to shales of slate, ochre, and Vigie blue,
on Gauguin's hand shaking the gin-coloured dew
(1151-1162)

The use of metonymy allows each influential artist's vision to be referred to in an unsubstantial, abstract way: Van Gogh's representations of cornfields are a 'shadow', Cézanne's 'boots' are representative of his wanderings in search of productive viewpoints. Each allusion is amorphous and fleeting, contributing to the effect of a fragmented mosaic of perspectives.

At first, the younger self of the poet and Gregorias wish to render the island exactly as it is through their art:

But drunkenly, or secretly, we swore,
disciples of that astigmatic saint,
that we would never leave the island
until we had put down, in paint, in words,
[...]
all of its sunken, leaf-choked ravines,
every neglected, self-pitying inlet
(1183-89)

However, this purpose is ultimately unfulfilled and unsatisfying, the personified landscape itself displeased with the rendering produced: 'Over your shoulder the

landscape | frowns at its image' (1255-56). The poet faces consistent frustration during the period in which he seeks an exact reproduction of the island's landscape, as the land evades capture:

I was disciplined, humble, I rendered
the visible world that I saw
exactly, yet it hindered me, for
in every surface I sought
the paradoxical flash of an instant
in which every facet was caught
in a crystal of ambiguities
(1345-51)

The poet regards this inability to preserve the gaze as a 'failure', a waste of his artistic labour (1334), but it ultimately leads to a moment of epiphany, as he realises that this lack of success in eternalizing the landscape has not only encouraged him towards his true calling of becoming a poet, rather than a painter, but is indicative of the island's own indifference to how it is represented, allowing this setting greater potency in light of the many attempts at reductive preservation that it has been subjected to:

Beyond this frame, deceptive, indifferent,
nature returns to its work,
behind the square blue you have cut from that sky,
another life, real, indifferent, resumes.
(1335-38)

Not only is this anthropomorphised landscape presented as indifferent in response to its representation in art, but militaristic imagery is used to connote defensiveness: 'The moon maintained her station' (53). In this play upon perspective and viewpoints, the moon's movement is conveyed through the frame of artistic representation, as an unchanging element of a painting's background. However, the employment of the lexical field of warfare ensures that the moon, in this moment, is not merely preserved through imagery, but is reactive, responding to its own capture by the artist. It is not only the moon which is connected to the semantic field of combat, but also creatures

as diminutive as ‘scattering red soldier crabs’ (91). In contrast to the defensive moon, these crabs are in motion, attempting to evade their entrapment in an eternalizing artistic gaze, as ‘symmetry and contour crumbled’ around them (94).

It is, therefore, evident that the process of mediation between artist and nature, and the consequences of a preserving gaze upon the landscape in this process, are significant themes in *Another Life*. Nonetheless, they are addressed in a manner which frequently – and characteristically – appears to be intentionally ambiguous. This is partly achieved through the poem’s emphasis upon the concept of the unreliability of memory. For instance, an apparent recollection is offered detailing a moment from the poet’s childhood, during which he creates an artistic rendering of the island setting. The image is then presented to the unnamed ‘master’, whose ‘spectacles’ and role as tutor in this context strongly imply the figure of Harold Simmons. In response, Simmons ‘wafted the drawing to his face’ as though ‘dusk were myopic, not his gaze. | Then, with slow strokes, the master changed the sketch.’ (77-79). This visual depiction of the landscape thus remains malleable and in a state of flux, able to be adjusted and transformed through the efforts of this skilled ‘master’. The reasons for its inability to give satisfaction are hinted towards in the following stanza: ‘In its dimension the drawing could not trace | the sociological contours of the promontory’ (80-81). The image, it seems, has been too idealised and reductive, unable to demonstrate the complexity of the social landscape of its setting. The legacy of the European artistic tradition is partly to blame for this gap in representation, as the sketch’s original creator admits in hindsight: ‘from childhood he’d considered palms | ignobler than imagined elms’ (103-104). The use of the third person pronoun to refer to his younger self indicates a sense of distance and resistance to this ideological viewpoint, a suggestion

that the artist's growth in this poetic *künstlerroman* has relied upon a realisation that these 'palms' are, indeed, as artistically valid as the 'imagined elms' of European art and poetry. However, the changes made to this visual depiction by the 'master' remain unstated, and he remains silent as he works. As a result, the improvements remain a mystery to the reader, illuminating the ambiguity and emphasis upon ephemerality at this poem's heart.

Another Life is not only difficult to categorize in terms of its genre, but in its use of various modes of visualising landscape it evades any one specific method of mediating between landscape and reader, in the same way that the personified landscape itself evades capture within a single image in the poem. Baugh and Nepaulsingh have explored its resistance to any single mode or genre through comparing the work to Wordsworth's *Prelude*, suggesting that this text is 'the only other poem in English that approaches *Another Life* in kind'.⁵¹ This, they argue, is because however much *The Prelude* 'approaches the novel or creates its own mode, it still sets itself, though shiftingly, within traditional poetic modes, such as epic, pastoral, and descriptive-reflective'.⁵² However, variances do exist, as they observe that *Another Life* 'takes its bearings as much from narrative prose [...] as from *The Prelude* or any other long poem that may have influenced it'.⁵³ This blurring of the forms of prose and poetry is a notable feature of *Another Life*, and this ambiguity and experimentalism in relation to its form and genre is similarly paralleled by its plural, varying approaches to depicting the St Lucian landscape through the use of allusions to traditional conventions in the visual arts.

⁵¹ Baugh and Nepaulsingh, p. 200.

⁵² Baugh and Nepaulsingh, p. 200

⁵³ Ibid.

However, the *Prelude* is, I would suggest, not the only Wordsworthian source at work in *Another Life*. I would stress the significance of reading ‘Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey’ in order to more greatly appreciate Walcott’s engagement with key themes in Wordsworth’s shorter poems. In particular, I would draw attention to the following lines from Wordsworth’s nostalgic evocation of a specific, localized landscape, recollected from his personal memories, a premise which closely reflects that of *Another Life*:

[...] For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by,
To me was all in all. – I cannot paint
What then I was. [...])⁵⁴

This notion of an inability to ‘paint’ the imagined setting is markedly similar to the theme of unsatisfactory portrayals of the St Lucian landscape produced through the medium of the visual arts explored in *Another Life*, as well as its exploration of a sense of an intertwining of the techniques of poetry and painting.

In addition, Wordsworth’s lyric contains a symbol which is familiar from both the *Italian Eclogues* and *Another Life*: ‘wreathes of smoke | Sent up, in silence, from among the trees’.⁵⁵ This ‘smoke’, combined with the ‘trees’ from which it is produced, signifies ephemerality and the passing of time in Walcott’s *Eclogues*, a meaning it also carries in *Another Life*, where it is intensified and further complicated through the extended, epiphanic moment in which it is employed:

rifling smoke climbed from small labourers’ houses,
and I dissolved into a trance.
I was seized by a pity more profound
than my young body could bear, I climbed

⁵⁴ William Wordsworth, ‘Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey’, in *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 131-135 (p. 133).

⁵⁵ Wordsworth, p. 132.

with the labouring smoke,
I drowned in labouring breakers of bright cloud,
then uncontrollably I began to weep,
inwardly [...]
(1001-1008)

In this passage, the smoke is a reminder of human habitation, for a poet-artist's mind which has previously been aestheticizing the natural surroundings with, he implies, an insufficient recognition of the role that its existing inhabitants should play in such portrayals. Baugh and Nepaulsingh relate this symbol of rising 'smoke' to Homer, however I suggest that Wordsworth is a more apt model in this instance, not only on account of the similarity of form and premise to both the *Prelude* and 'Tintern Abbey' demonstrated by *Another Life*, but also as a result of the conjunction of this 'smoke', an amorphous embodiment of the invisible spirit of poetic composition, with the homes of 'labourers', and, indeed, the act of labour itself. This is a direct allusion to the *dramatis personae* of the pastoral mode, and it is a connection which takes place in 'Tintern Abbey', with its references to cultivated 'pastoral farms'.⁵⁶ Both poems also convey a strong sense of isolation, the poet distanced from the social fabric of their surroundings as a result of the impulse to render this material setting through the 'labour' of artistic craftsmanship.

In a similar vein, I would further highlight the importance of George Campbell (1916-2002) to Walcott's artistic vision, an influence which has been greatly overlooked. 'He read the spine', recalls the mature narrator of *Another Life*, reflecting upon his childhood self:

[...] FIRST POEMS:
CAMPBELL. The painter
almost absently

⁵⁶ Wordsworth, p. 132.

reversed it, and began to read
(117-121)

These ‘lines’ would match ‘the exhilaration which their reader, | rowing the air around him now, conveyed’ (127-129).⁵⁷ Campbell’s work contains a complex and productive engagement with pastoral tropes, as can be witnessed in the imagery and sense of *otium* in the following stanza:

Above the sea
Peace in the lofty hills
Birds sing with me
My inspiration is in love with me.⁵⁸

Campbell’s impulse towards elegiac, romanticised descriptions of island settings offers Walcott a rare model for his own pioneering engagements with aesthetic modes, and his passionate celebrations of the region’s beauty are explored and complicated by the later poet (‘I could kiss this place | This rich scenery’).⁵⁹ It is in this interest in imagery, shapes, forms and topography that Walcott evidences a notable influence from Campbell in *Another Life*, as can be recognised through a reading of Campbell’s ‘Oh! You Build A House’. The act of creating a scenic image through poetry is here explored via a simile relating it to the creation and nurturing of new life:

Here you build a cottage in the hills
And raise up trees every leaf of them
As parents build up their children, wilfully

Who would construct the sky?

⁵⁷ Further evidence of Walcott’s strong engagement with Campbell’s poetry are the comments made in an interview in 1977 with Edward Hirsch. When asked about his poetic influences, he names the Jamaican poet George Campbell, whose book he became ‘elated’ with: ‘I was struck by it, not because it had anything particularly new to offer in terms of its structural devices, but just because the man was a poet and he was mentioning things I knew’. Derek Walcott in interview with Edward Hirsch in 1977, ‘An Interview with Derek Walcott’, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 50-63 (first publ. in *Contemporary Literature*, 20 (1979), 272-92), p. 54.

⁵⁸ Campbell, *First Poems*, p. 45.

⁵⁹ Campbell, p. 39.

Do you know how many visions
Of space to fill the view of your vision.⁶⁰

This concept of a plurality of ‘visions’ is amplified and interrogated in Walcott’s poem, its emphasis upon various ways of seeing allowing for an investigation of aesthetic modes, whilst refusing any elevation or acceptance of stable, monolithic or reductive representation.

Numerous references are made to the act of seeing in *Another Life*, signifying the ambiguity and multifaceted nature of its own vision. The poet’s narrator confesses to a past jealousy of a local blind resident of Castries, named as ‘Darnley’, stating that: ‘Seeing him, I practise blindness’ (383-87). The reason offered for this is a wish to bear more of a similarity to ‘Homer and Milton in their owl-blind towers’, an indication of the young poet’s desire to emulate those whom he deems to be significant literary figures (388). The emphasis on vision is further achieved through synaesthesia: ‘the revered, silent objects ring like grass, | at my eyes’ touch’ (242-43). The silence of these objects implies that the ‘sounds’ offered by literary representation are of greater potency than a stationary, silent visualisation. Moreover, the visible is presented as amorphous and unstable. In a contemplation of the act of painting the landscape, the poet notes:

There are already, invisible on canvas,
lines locking into outlines. The visible dissolves
in a benign acid. [...]
(1247-49)

Thus, the image is simultaneously transcendent and concrete; it exists as a form of interconnected ‘outlines’, a physical shape, but the actual vision – the act of seeing this

⁶⁰ Campbell, p. 169.

landscape – remains formless and fleeting as the artist works, adjusting and changing the image in the process.

The landscape at times conforms to its portrayal, in a reflection of the actions of human sitters: ‘The mountain’s crouching back begins to ache’ whilst the artist works, as though such a position of stillness is, ironically, unnatural for it. The artist’s ‘eyes’ begin to ‘sweat’ with the focussed intensity of seeing, the attempt to visually depict the landscape becoming, rather than an act reminiscent of pastoral leisure in a rural space, instead a laborious, physically challenging event. The notion of an eternalizing artistic gaze is further questioned and inverted through the establishment of a motif of attributing eyesight to the natural world itself:

[...] the sea’s huge eye stuns you
with the lumbering, oblique blow
of its weary, pelagic eyelid
(1282-84)

Moreover, the artist views ‘the enormous, lidless eyeball of the moon’ (2807). These references continue the development of a pattern of allusions to Polyphemus, associating the Cyclops with rural spaces in an advancement of the Homeric and Theocritean traditions. The anthropomorphised landscape thus refuses the role of preserved subject, and through the technique of metaphor, which is itself made possible by the craft of poetry, becomes instead the active observer of the human sitter.

Baugh’s essay ‘Painters and Painting in *Another Life*’ (1980) illuminates the dense web of allusions to art employed by Walcott, placing this in the context of a nation emerging from colonial control: ‘This deliberate and extensive use of imagery from the arts is appropriate to the recall of a youthful dream of a society dedicated not

to power but to art'.⁶¹ The 'painterly images' that Baugh identifies are thought to be derived from a book which bore great influence on the young poet: *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces: From the Renaissance to the Present Day*, by Thomas Craven (1939).⁶² In their annotations for this poem, Baugh and Nepaulsingh offer detailed notes describing the references made to this work, and succinct analyses of how these relate to the poem's themes and concerns. However, they do not place a focus upon the pastoral mode, and, unlike the emphasis on eighteenth-century art indicated in Walcott's 'Fragments of Epic Memory', Baugh instead highlights references to Renaissance paintings and painters made in *Another Life*, attesting to the influence of Craven's *Treasury*, and indicating 'the hold which Renaissance had on Walcott's imagination [...] In the Renaissance he found a supreme example of a great age defined by art, so to speak, the idea that it is the art that brings the age to fullest self-awareness, that "signs" the epoch'.⁶³ This theme of a relationship to the artistic contexts of the Renaissance will be further explored in the following chapter through an exploration of connections between Walcott's dramatic works and Jacobethan pastoral plays, however it is important to outline the linguistic roots at work in this labelling of a historical period. 'Renaissance' of course translates as rebirth, a process which could be equated to the title of Walcott's poem: 'Another Life', another experience of living. This also relates to the concept of a re-envisioning, a revised and transformed portrayal of its setting, 'another life' for the island as much as for the poet, as it is liberated from reductive representation. However, I argue that Walcott's direct engagement with post-Renaissance pastoral imagery is equally significant to the interrogation of European art

⁶¹ Baugh, 'Painters', p. 39.

⁶² Baugh, 'Painters', p. 240.

⁶³ Baugh, 'Painters', p. 240.

history which takes place in this poem, bearing particular significance to its exploration of methods of representing landscapes.

Craven's *Treasury* appears to have influenced the poet to a notable extent, as can be recognised in *Another Life's* vast array of references to art and artists featured in this text, as well as direct mentions of 'Thomas Craven's book' (1855). Craven's *Treasury* includes prints of paintings which employ pastoral conventions, including Claude Lorrain's 'Narcissus and Echo' (1644), Antoine Watteau's 'The Embarkation for Cythera' (1717) and John Constable's 'The Haywain' (1821). Watteau's painting is directly cited in *Midsummer* (1984), in a poem titled 'Watteau', implying an open statement of intent to navigate his artistic legacy.⁶⁴ Connections to *Another Life* are evidenced from this lyric poem's opening, with a reference to the 'amber' glow which similarly suffuses the later work: 'The amber spray of trees feather-brushed with the dusk', the mention of 'brush' furthering the intertwining of the act of painting and the crafting of poetic language. The scene crafted in this ekphrastic poem is one which is at first an unsettling reflection of Watteau's characteristic style: 'the ruined cavity of some spectral château, the groin | of a leering satyr eaten with ivy', the inclusion of symbols from classical literature here linked with an ominous note of threat and foreboding. The notion of the 'ruined cavity' of a 'spectral château' implies a reference to the restrictive engravings of the colonial picturesque, its reliance on monuments and ruins here equated to the realm of horror, intensified through the near-cannibalistic

⁶⁴ Derek Walcott, 'Watteau', in *Midsummer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 31. David Richards offers an insightful reading of this poem and an analysis of the role that Watteau plays in Walcott's work in the essay "'So Where is Cythera?'" Walcott's Painted Islands', *Kunapipi*, 25 (2003), 43-52 <<https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol25/iss1/10>> [accessed 31 May 2020]. Connections between these references and Walcott's engagements with the pastoral mode specifically are not centred as a key theme in this reading, however Richards eloquently highlights the significance of Watteau and the Rococo sensibility to Walcott's poetic writings.

image of the consumption of the satyr's flesh. 'In the distance', the speaker witnesses 'the grain of some un-reapable, alchemical harvest, the hollow at | the heart of all embarkations'. The construction of a negative-signifying morpheme with the verb 'reap' here inverts a basic tenet of the pastoral mode: the need for a bounteous, fertile setting. Here, the 'harvest' is instead 'hollow', a sterile core within all 'embarkations'. In 'The Embarkation for Cythera', Wateau appears to allow for a central note of ambiguity: namely, whether this is an embarkation to, or from, the isle of Cythera. This is allowed for by Walcott's own engagement with the painting, alluded to by the sense of 'distance', the 'hollow' at the 'heart' of the destination depicted, and the ironic, bathetic question: 'So where is Cythera?'; the mood offers a drastic contrast to the exploration of *eros* and leisure which typifies Wateau's rendering of a journey either to or from the island on which Aphrodite was said to have been born. Rather than a soft, pastel dreamscape, Walcott employs the craftsmanship of poetry to present a harsh, sterile interpretation of this rococo pastoral idyll.

'Nothing stays green', remarks the poet, 'in that prodigious urging toward twilight'; in 'all of his journeys the pilgrims are in fever | from the tremulous strokes of malaria's laureate'. Ephemerality is again signified, the transition from greenery which takes place either through the changing of seasons or the course of time and decay. These 'pilgrims' – the term widely employed for the human subjects of Wateau's painting – are in a 'fever', vulnerable to disease, their mortalities stressed, alongside a continuation of a resistance to idealising and eternalizing representation. Cythera itself 'is far and feverish', it 'dilates on the horizon of his near-delirium, near | and then further', thus collapsing temporal and physical distances between this imagined setting and the material surroundings in which the poet is positioned. Cythera is 'as much nowhere |

as these broad-leafed islands’, a dismissal of any elevation of the classical topos above the island on which this poet resides, as well as a recurring rejection of the accusations levied by Froude and Naipaul. The poem ends with a modified version of its opening scene: ‘Paradise is life repeated spectrally, | an empty chair echoing the emptiness’. The sense of negation which has been applied through the medium of pastoral pictorial depiction to the Caribbean setting is thus inverted, held as a ‘mirror’ to the ‘dream-life’ and ‘fairy parks’ of Watteau’s fictional, neoclassical topography, signifying a hollowness at the heart of this *fête galante*. The gathering of aristocratic and allegorical figures in idyllic surroundings is thus infected with the ‘disease’ of negation, imbued with a mood of horror and unsettling, morbid imagery. Watteau’s scene becomes one shaped by ‘near-delirium’, held together with fragile ‘spidery-rigging’, susceptible to ‘break’.

In a similar manner to this exploration of a remembered image from Craven’s *Treasury*, Constable’s ‘The Haywain’ is directly alluded to in *Another Life*:

Starved, burning child,
remember “The Hay Wain”
in your museum, Thomas Craven’s book?
The time was coming then
to your parched mind,
in love with amber.
(1853-58)

For Craven, this painting formed part of a movement that sought to ‘kill the lingering disease of antiquity’.⁶⁵ Constable, he claims, ‘added direct observation to landscape painting’ and in the process ‘invented a new poetic language which marked the decline of the mechanical exteriors and conventionalized foliage of those who tried so hard to

⁶⁵ Craven, p. 430.

paint in the grand manner'.⁶⁶ For Walcott, the meaning is tied with the drunkenness of the speaker and Gregorias, the amber glow reflecting the alcohol's colour, the 'parched' mind similarly drunk on art, literature and creativity, the works in Craven's book of interest but also archaic, belonging to the past, to a 'museum'. It is to the future that the poet turns, the 'time' that is 'coming'. The pastoral nostalgia with which *Another Life* engages due to its autobiographical elements and temporally fragmented narrative structure is thus resisted through an implied dismissal of art as seen only through a retrospective gaze, in favour of the act of creation, one which is informed, but not confined, by the conventions of the artistic tradition as it stands.

Craven's book also includes a print of a painting by Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732- 1806), titled 'Storming the Citadel'.⁶⁷ Much of the output of Fragonard contains archetypal pastoral tropes, including the presence of shepherds and shepherdesses, an idealised natural space utilised for leisure and discourse, bounteous nature and a sense of bucolic tranquillity. This artist is directly referred to in *Another Life*, alongside his contemporary François Boucher (1703-1770): 'the shepherdesses of Boucher and Fragonard', with reference to their eroticised portrayals of female figures (1392).⁶⁸ Langdon outlines the role of Fragonard, Boucher and Watteau in European landscape

⁶⁶ Craven, p. 430.

⁶⁷ Craven, pp. 382-383.

⁶⁸ 'I raved', the speaker admits, 'for the split pears of their arses, | their milk-jug bubs' (1393-5) The notion of a decorative 'shepherdess', a passive subject of the poet's gaze, is similarly employed in poem number 12 of *The Bounty*: 'all your sins spin in that noise, | your childhood, and now your grandchildren in turn, | like a shepherdess slowly turning on a music-box, | silvery and sparkling like a drizzle in the sun' (p. 37). It is returned to in a rather different sense in the 'Santa Cruz Quartet', which appears later in the same collection. This time the 'Shepherdess' is the Madonna, 'La Divina Pastora' (Divine Shepherdess) (p. 72). This is a reference to the Mother of Siparia (Siparia is a town in southern Trinidad), a religious statue visited by pilgrims from various faiths, although the church in which it is situated is Roman Catholic (the church is also known as La Divina Pastora). Thus, both sacred and profane decorative shepherdesses are present in Walcott's poetry. The historic representation of shepherdesses in the visual arts is explored through this highlighting of the complex and problematic gender roles which have been employed in the visual tradition, from the highly sexualised imagery of Watteau's paintings to the highly revered and sacred depictions of the Virgin Mary as the Holy Shepherdess.

art, with a specific emphasis upon their use of the pastoral mode:

Yet in the 1710s the fresh and informal vision of Jean-Antoine Watteau created a new kind of pastoral landscape with figures, the *fête galante*, and his landscape of gardens, parks and woodlands, where lovers stroll and make music, was elaborated by François Boucher, and inspired Jean-Honoré Fragonard in the 1760s. Watteau absorbed the poetic mood of Giorgione, and the grandeur of his most celebrated work, the *Pilgrimage to the Isle of Cythera* (1717; Paris, Louvre), with lofty trees and airy mountain ranges, suggests his intense study of Venetian landscape. Boucher's charming and decorative pastoral scenes, glittering with brilliant blues and greens and vivid in detail, are theatrical settings of water-mills, tumbledown cottages and rustic bridges, where pretty laundresses and peasant girls enact a tranquil rustic idyll.⁶⁹

Whilst the inclusion of the names of these seminal figures in the development of pastoral in the visual arts may appear to indicate an interest in summoning the lushness of their imagery and a mood of romance for the poet's description of his former love Anna, the brevity of their mention can be seen as undercutting any reliance on their influence. In addition, the poet confesses: 'if they [the women portrayed by Boucher and Fragonard] were my Muse, | still, out of that you rose, body downed with the seasons' (1402-04). Anna, he suggests, transcends such imagery, and is without need of the idealisation and eroticisation applied to the women of the French rococo tradition of pastoral artworks. The play upon the verb 'rose', the corresponding homograph signifying the natural, inartificial beauty of these flowers, contributes to the suggestion that such comparisons are unnecessary and limiting. Nonetheless, the urge to use the 'noble treachery of art' (2207) to record his feelings of this first love are almost impossible to resist: 'The hand she held already had betrayed | them by its longing for describing her' (2216-17). The desire to use art to celebrate Anna's beauty, which is frequently, like Helen's, paralleled to the beauty of the island itself, will result in the poet's need to leave both her and St Lucia, in order to find success and financial stability

⁶⁹ Langdon, 'Landscape'.

in the role of writer.

Frederick Jones notes that in Virgil's *Eclogues* there may well be 'traces of narrative time', but they are notably 'few compared to most other genres'.⁷⁰ *Another Life* fluctuates between moments of linear narrative flow and non-linear developments in its chronology, in a similar manner to the definition of classical pastoral temporality offered by Jones. The poem claims to begin 'in the middle of another life', before further complicating this seemingly atemporal state through the suggestion that the poet means to 'begin here again | begin until this ocean's a shut book' (3-6). This is a paradoxical claim; the ocean is frequently employed in poetry as a symbol of the infinite and eternal, and so the notion of this 'book' of the sea ending strikes a jarring note. The claim that this poem will '[b]egin with twilight', which symbolises the end of daylight hours, creates the same effect (8). Thus, the poem's opening sets out an unstable and defamiliarized sense of temporality.

As is the case in *Omeros*, nonlinear narrative becomes a means of navigating the colonial history of the Caribbean setting. The poet admits:

my hand was crabbed by that style,
this epoch, that school
or the next, it shared
the translucent soul of the fish, while
Gregorias abandoned apprenticeship
to the errors of his own soul,
it was classic versus romantic
(1360-66)

In this passage, art history as seen through a Eurocentric perspective (whether 'classic' or 'romantic') becomes a severely inhibiting force, its obstructiveness to the poet's

⁷⁰ Frederick Jones, *Virgil's Garden: The Nature of Bucolic Space* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 53. ProQuest Ebook Central.

artistic endeavours emphasised by the abrupt plosive sound in the monosyllabic ‘crabbed’. The use of enjambment and soft sibilance in the following lines indicates an opposingly uninhabited, seemingly effortless creative agency achieved through the craft of poetry, in contrast to the laborious task of painting with an adherence to any single tradition. George Handley addresses the role of history and the distinction between the act of writing and that of painting in this text, suggesting that *Another Life* ‘implicitly argues that metaphor, as opposed to mere visual representation, more ably explores doubts about the meaning of what he sees because of the poet’s awareness of the Caribbean’s multiple and competing historical legacies’.⁷¹ It is this ‘mere’ visual realm which must be ‘abandoned’ by the poet, in favour of a pluralistic mosaic of aesthetic modes, adapted and appropriated through the craft of poetry.

Not only does landscape form a core element of this work’s imagery through descriptions of its components – mountains, trees, flora, for example – but man-made structures are also frequently referred to as part of its scenic composition. Often, architecture is used to signify the island’s colonial past, and this is achieved through language reminiscent of the artistic tradition addressed in ‘The Antilles’. When speaking of the colonial era, the poet notes that he once ‘envied [...] their Roman arches, Vergilian terraces, | their tiered, ordered colonial world’ (1032-35). The mention of ‘Roman’ and ‘Vergilian’ influences alludes to classical pastoral writings, themselves shaped by imperialistic forces, and the suggestion that such a ‘world’ is ‘tiered’ and ‘ordered’ indicates the centrality of power and hegemony to such a world view. Architecture thus becomes symbolic of the island’s colonial history, and the

⁷¹ George Handley ‘Triangulation and the Aesthetics of Temporality in “Tiepolo’s Hound”’ *Callaloo*, 21 (2005), 236-256, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3805549 (p. 240).

corresponding social inequalities of its duration. The ‘engravings’ criticised in ‘The Antilles’ are also alluded to: ‘In that acid was evening etched, | a coppery glaze plated the landscape’ (2567-68). The poet similarly conjures ‘an ancient engraving | of Italianate cabbage palms’ (2559- 60). It is these ‘old landscapes’ that the poet seeks to interrogate, the static ‘ancient engraving[s]’ which are unable to reflect the island’s contemporary condition (2561).

Tiepolo’s Hound: Impressionism, Fragmentation and the Pastoral Mode

In an interview with Edward Hirsch, Walcott offered a contemplation upon the role of the visual arts in his poetry, the influence of specific artists on his work, and his interest in methods of representing the St Lucian landscape. This discussion took place in 1985, after the publication of *Another Life* and before that of *Tiepolo’s Hound*, consequently marking a convenient middle ground for the purposes of this chapter. It sees Walcott demonstrate an interest in the work of a leading figure in the French Impressionists group, a theme which would be further developed in *Tiepolo’s Hound*: ‘The painter I really thought that I could learn from was Cézanne – some sort of resemblance to oranges and greens and browns of the dry season in St. Lucia’.⁷² For Walcott, the work of Paul Cézanne (1839- 1906) appeared to reflect his own perception of the St Lucian environment: ‘It’s as if he knew the St. Lucian landscape – you could see his painting happening there’.⁷³ This concept of a connection between Impressionism and the Caribbean archipelago, alongside the clear interest in the notion of pluralistic ways of seeing this setting, is explored in *Tiepolo’s Hound*, through its imagining of the life of

⁷² Walcott in interview with Edward Hirsch in 1985, in *Conversations*, p. 99.

⁷³ Walcott in interview with Edward Hirsch in 1985, in *Conversations*, p. 99.

the painter who tutored Cézanne: Camille Pissarro. The text offers a radical re-examination of European art history, through its suggestion that Pissarro's Caribbean upbringing was an important element of his development as an artist, and thus that the Impressionist movement more broadly had its roots in the Caribbean.

Tiepolo's Hound offers an informative comparison to the relationship between poetry and painting explored in *Another Life*, and to the interrogation of the pastoral mode present in its ways of envisioning the landscape. The poem charts the life of Camille Pissarro, who was born in 1830 on the island of St. Thomas (then under Danish rule). After leaving for Paris, he became a leading figure for the Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist movements.⁷⁴ Depictions of landscapes served an important theme in Pissarro's work, and were usually situated in the areas of Pontoise and Louveciennes. Although some earlier works by Walcott included cover illustrations that he had painted, this was the first poem to be published with twenty-six copies of Walcott's own paintings interspersed across the text itself (including landscapes) firmly situating Walcott as both poet and artist. This forms a sense of parallel trajectories between his own life and that of Pissarro. The climactic moment of this text involves the choice that Pissarro makes to leave his Caribbean home to seek Paris, the apparent artistic centre of nineteenth-century Europe. Walcott considers the implications of this decision and reflects upon his own position as a poet who has left the islands for long periods of time, whilst consistently stating a belief in his identity as being that of a Caribbean poet.

⁷⁴ It is, however, important not to overstate Walcott's interest in the factual history of Pissarro's life in *Tiepolo's Hound*, as has been highlighted by George Handley: 'Even despite his own intensely historical interest in Camille Pissarro in *Tiepolo's Hound*, ultimately Walcott is uninterested in chronology and its implications of patrimonial inheritance or hierarchical alignments of cultures and geographies. Walcott prefers to imagine Pissarro's encounter with Turner as an anachronistic triangulated meeting of disparate places (France, England, the Caribbean) and times (early 1800s, late 1800s, early twentieth century)'. Handley, 'Triangulation', p. 237.

In a pioneering study of the pastoral mode in contemporary writing of the Americas, Sarah Phillips Casteel claims that *Tiepolo's Hound* evidences 'Derek Walcott's rejection of the English pastoral in favor of Camille Pissarro's brand of French ruralism'.⁷⁵ Casteel identifies the pastoral features of this poem as being a 'slow-moving pace, quiet, contemplative mood' and a 'privileging of the rural'.⁷⁶ The implication is that these features are problematic, considering the 'ideological baggage that the pastoral carries in a postcolonial context'.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, Casteel does not view this text as being one which merely adheres to pastoral conventions, but rather one which uses these tropes to investigate the complex process of 'perception' in any work which engages with a postcolonial landscape, stating that 'Walcott's emphasis is ultimately on the local Caribbean setting'.⁷⁸ Although pioneering, Casteel's analysis is, I would argue, somewhat restricted by an insufficient emphasis upon the role that *Another Life* plays in originating and developing the major themes explored in this later text, and I would also query the suggestion that *Tiepolo's Hound* explores a 'conflict between two ways of seeing'.⁷⁹ This dualistic view is, I suggest, too straightforward. This is a poem which employs allusions to the techniques, compositions and moods of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art and artists in order to fragment perspectives, forming a collage of 'ways of seeing' in which no single, monolithic method is privileged, rather than a dialectic between two aesthetic models. Like *Another Life*, it sees a strong focus upon the representation of rural settings, a feature Casteel highlights and eloquently explores, and it clearly engages with the pastoral mode in these portrayals, however it does not significantly develop or adjust these models from the

⁷⁵ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 16.

⁷⁶ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 24.

⁷⁷ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 25.

⁷⁸ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, pp. 33, 24.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

highly innovative interrogations presented in *Another Life*.

Casteel's study focuses on both *Tiepolo's Hound* and V. S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), claiming that instead of a 'departure from the rural landscape and its pastoral associations', both writers offer a 'reconfiguration of the rural that makes possible their articulation of a postcolonial sense of place'.⁸⁰ It is not, then, the rural space which is problematized in the postcolonial context, but the 'associations' connected to the long tradition of European landscape art and pastoral writings, necessitating a rethinking of portrayals of rural space in the contemporary context of writing from and about the Americas. For this purpose, Walcott engages strongly with the pastoral. These qualities are well highlighted by Casteel's study: 'pastoral dissonance between the real and the ideal' is established through the comparison between religious art of the Venetian baroque and the 'naturalistic conventions' employed in Italian genre painting, and 'Walcott's pastoral' in this text is 'not the idealized, luminous pastoral of Claude', but rather the 'more gritty pastoral represented by Pissarro'.⁸¹ It is this 'aesthetic of the everyday' that 'Walcott privileges over a romantic celebration of the sublime or the transcendent', and that will ultimately allow this 'encounter between the Caribbean artist and the European landscape' to result in 'a turning away from Europe'.⁸²

However, in my readings of the poem I am less convinced by this privileging of the 'everyday' in a 'gritty' interpretation of pastoral than Casteel, and whilst I similarly recognise a powerful ambivalence towards European aesthetic modes as the driving undercurrent of *Tiepolo's Hound*, I would argue that this ambivalence equates to

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 40, 45.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 45, 50.

a process which is more complex than a ‘turning away’; it draws attention to the notion of artistic value and canonisation, and works to question, interrogate and resist the precedents and structures of these concepts, which are so closely related to a Eurocentric cultural hegemony. It also builds upon precedents which are clearly set in *Another Life*, a text which can be read as the underlying artistic manifesto for all of Walcott’s later engagements with the visual arts. In my reading, it is not a clear divide between a European and a Caribbean aesthetic which is created, but a mosaic of references which together create a characteristically Walcottian aesthetic, one which is invested in the Caribbean context and setting, and in part achieves this through addressing the Caribbean’s past as it has been depicted by European artistic models. Its ambivalence becomes a defining and radical feature, developed through the conjunction of a mosaic of perspectives. Casteel suggests that ‘Walcott makes a case for the indebtedness of the Impressionists to Pissarro’s Caribbean way of seeing, and most profoundly to a Caribbean sense of reality as fragmented, prismatic, and multiple’.⁸³ It is this notion of fragmented ‘way[s] of seeing’ which I would similarly stress as the essential characteristic of the role that pastoral imagery plays in *Tiepolo’s Hound*, however it is important to stress that the roots of this ‘prismatic’ vision are pioneered in *Another Life*, in which the instability between permanence and dynamism equates to a lack of resolve upon one method of aesthetic representation. Through deconstructing pastoral models of visual representation, Walcott establishes a poetics which celebrates the Caribbean’s visual appeal without reducing it to a single set of generic criteria, and places emphasis upon the process of creative agency.

I would, therefore, add to Casteel’s analysis through outlining that *Tiepolo’s*

⁸³ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 42. For more on the notion of ‘prismatic’ ways of reading *Another Life*, see Pamela Mordecai’s ‘“A Crystal of Ambiguities”: Metaphors for Creativity and the Art of Writing in Derek Walcott’s *Another Life*’, *World Literature Written in English*, 27 (1987), 93-105 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449858708589008>>

Hound offers a clear furthering of the process of adapting, appropriating and transforming pastoral tropes that are established in *Another Life*, as well as a sense of duty to meticulously chart the development of the poet's own crafting of a unique, vivid aesthetic mode; one which is intentionally ambiguous and fragmentary. Like *Another Life*, this poem evidences a dedicated effort to transcend all prior modes of seeing, and to rethink the very notion of perspective itself, whether that of the relationship between human subjectivity and nature, or that of a gaze upon the specifically Caribbean landscape:

My Paris comes out of his canvases
not from a map, and perhaps, even better

than Paris itself; they fill these verses
with their own light, their walks, their weather

that will outlast me as they outlast him
(156)

These lines highlight an acknowledgement of an artistic debt to Pissarro only in any depiction of 'Paris', rather than any Caribbean landscape, or even any nonlocalized rural space. The poet also implies a superseding of this material through his engagement with the archipelago's environment and its inimitable 'own light' – the name 'Lucia' itself stemming from the etymological root of the Latin term for 'light' – its 'walks' and its 'weather', a theme which links to the projection of Gregorias as the messianic 'light of the world' in *Another Life* (3625).⁸⁴ These representations of the natural features of the landscape allow for artistic originality, one which is firmly rooted in the present rather than past artistic centres and traditions, one which embraces the beauty

⁸⁴ As Baugh and Nepaulsingh and others have highlighted, this is a reference to the pre-Raphaelite painter William Holman Hunt's painting: 'The Light of the World' (1853-54). Baugh and Nepaulsingh, p. 290.

and artistic validity of its ‘own’ localized surroundings and one which will ‘outlast’ their own creator, thus combatting any charge of negation.

Tiepolo’s Hound sustains motifs established in *Another Life*, including a repeated mention of ‘Boucher and Fragonard’, the ‘accepted masters’, a notion rapidly undercut with the bathetic description of their chief subjects: ‘(bedchamber dramas with rhapsodical faintings)’ (39). It is implied that this thought occurs in the imagined consciousness of Pissarro – an uneasy sense of narrative unreliability is, characteristically, employed throughout the poem – who also looks upon ‘golden cattle in luminous pastures, | and the Barbizon school’ (39). Of course, this poem clearly evidences far more of an interest in the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist movements than *Another Life*. Nevertheless, its engagement with Impressionist representations of landscapes bears strong similarities to the fragmentation of and fascination with perspectives evident in depictions of rural settings in the earlier text, similarly relating this to notions of pastoral stasis (here signified by the metonym of ‘Claude’) and permanency in the visual gaze:

vision was not the concentrated gaze
that took in every detail at a glance.

Time, petrified in every classic canvas,
denied the frailty of the painter’s hands,

acquired an intimacy with its origin, Claude,
[...]

Now sunlight is splintered and even shade is entered
as part of the prism [...]
(43)

In a similar manner to the opening of *Another Life*, ‘vision’ is here not a singular ‘concentrated gaze’, static and ‘petrified’ through its visual representation, but a

‘splintered’, fractured and pluralistic concept, a ‘prism’ of perspectives which are amorphous and dynamic. It is interesting to note that ‘sunlight’ is here elevated, rather than the recurring presence of the ‘moon’ in *Another Life*. This could be read as signifying a dualistic relationship between the two poems, implying that they should be read in conjunction, working symbiotically to render Walcott’s unique vision of a connecting of poetry and pictorial representation in relation to these surroundings. It may also symbolise the dawning of a creative movement, a note of optimism and an acknowledgment of Walcott’s radical vision of an emerging literary and artistic tradition. For Casteel, these lines demonstrate the crux of Walcott’s engagement with Impressionist ways of seeing:

Responding to recent discoveries regarding the nature of color and perception, the Impressionists rejected the belief in the transcendent in favour of a transient reality subject to both the artist’s attitude and the passing of time [...] Eschewing the balanced and harmonious composition of neoclassical landscape painting, they cropped their compositions to emphasize movement and the partial nature of their experiential perspectives.⁸⁵

Ultimately, suggests Casteel: ‘While Claude’s idealized landscapes engaged the viewer in a complete and transcendent experience, the Impressionists’ particularized landscapes attempted to capture the moment of perception’.⁸⁶ However, whilst I would similarly argue that imagery and techniques inspired by the Impressionist movement are employed by Walcott to illuminate and explore these notions of plural ways of seeing and permanency, I recognise this as simply one element in a dialogue which has spanned multiple texts, and employs various other methodologies. To limit discussion of Walcott’s ways of seeing to predominantly *Tiepolo’s Hound* and to the Impressionist movement is to reduce the scale and breadth of his vision, and to allow this poem too

⁸⁵ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 39.

⁸⁶ Casteel, *Second Arrivals*, p. 39.

much autonomy and force in a long-term process of radical engagements with aesthetic modes. The canvas of 'Claude' is as much an envisioning of a 'moment of perception' here as the works of the Impressionists, forming an extended scaffolding of metonyms signifying pastoral scenes, without elevating a singular artistic movement to prominence in this mosaic of perspectives.

Conclusion

Berger suggests that when we “see” a landscape, we situate ourselves in it. If we “saw” the art of the past, we would situate ourselves in history. When we are prevented from seeing it, we are being deprived of the history which belongs to us’.⁸⁷ This concern appears to be shared by the narrative voice of *Tiepolo’s Hound*, as he ponders upon the ‘distant landscapes’ that were the work of his father, ‘which his devotion copied’ (13). Did ‘they’, he wonders, ‘despise the roots’ and ‘roofs of his island as inferior shapes | in the ministry of apprenticeship?’ (13). Thus, we reach the crux of several issues addressed in this chapter. Firstly, how should the process of seeing a landscape be represented and understood, and how is this process affected by the conventions of representative art which precede such an act? Secondly, to what extent does history play a part in this process, and can, and indeed should, producers of landscape art ever attempt to evade any reference to a landscape’s history? Thirdly, what role does *mimesis* play in the mediation between the artist or poet, the natural world and the viewer or reader? Finally, is it possible to marry the craft of painting and that of poetry? In *Tiepolo’s Hound*, the poet makes a significant claim: ‘I painted this fiction’ (50). Thus, the acts of painting and writing are inseparable to the creator of this work, and the

⁸⁷ Berger, p. 11.

ambitious project of rethinking the relationship between these two realms, which reaches its strongest and most radical dynamic in the pioneering poem-painting *Another Life*, should be recognised as an ongoing theme throughout Walcott's poetic output. The intentional ambiguity established in *Another Life*, and its exploration of the concepts of stasis, eternalization and idealisation in its portrayal of the island's natural setting, is less abstract in its construction than in the later and otherwise similar long poem *Tiepolo's Hound*, which sees more of an emphasis upon ambivalence towards prior artistic models, whilst the flexibility between modes of visualisation, emphasis on the plurality of ways of seeing and dedication to a definitive and original Caribbean artistic aesthetic remain central to the core themes of both texts.

In his reading of *Another Life*, Baugh remarks:

painting is not only a subject of the poem, but also an important aspect of its style and texture. Walcott's poetry has always shown a marked interest in and influence from painting. *Another Life* is likely to remain the most profound and elaborate expression of this feature.⁸⁸

This chapter has similarly centred *Another Life* as the 'most profound' interrogation of the role that the visual arts play in Walcott's poetic works, but it is, as Baugh cautions, important to note that the theme pervades much of Walcott's poetic output. The final poem of the *Italian Eclogues*, for instance, builds its scenic imagery through references to the visual arts:

Evening is an engraving, a silhouette's medallion
darkens loved ones in their profile, like yours,
whose poetry transforms the reader into poet. [...]
(31, vi)

As Baugh succinctly outlines: 'The question of the relationship of word, or brush

⁸⁸ Baugh, 'Painters and Painting', p. 239.

stroke, to world is Walcott's subject'.⁸⁹ Through navigating the visual tradition of the pastoral mode in his literary works, Walcott achieves the ambitious project of a re-envisioning of this setting. The process of seeing, and ways of seeing, is a central and vital theme in his poetry, and this is articulated through engagements with the pastoral mode.

⁸⁹ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 169.

PASTORAL DRAMA

This chapter involves a shift in focus, turning from the emphasis placed in previous chapters upon Walcott's poetic works to an investigation of his dramatic writings. Edward Baugh has noted the difficulty involved in categorizing Walcott's plays, as they span decades-long periods as well as various contexts of production and theatrical styles: 'From his earliest efforts as a dramatist, Walcott has undertaken a variety of forms, styles and subject-matter, these variations to some extent manifesting themselves simultaneously'.¹ As a result, there is, 'inevitably, a degree of expediency and arbitrariness in any attempt to impose a schema of stages or periods on Walcott's dramatic corpus'.² However, several of these plays share certain key themes: the lives of the poor – in particular fishermen and agricultural labourers – the use of land and sea for food production and aesthetic pleasure, the human impulse to sing and create music as well as the use of music in story-telling, the relationship between humans and nonhumans (animals, plants and supernatural figures for example) and the dynamics of sexual relationships between characters. All these aspects of the plays also form fundamental elements of the pastoral literary tradition, and a study of these themes in Walcott's dramatic writings sheds further light on the engagements with the mode present in his poetry, and vice versa.

This chapter will focus on the play *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), with a shorter comparative analysis of *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (1993), exploring three key questions: What kind of representation is offered of agricultural labourers in *Dauphin*,

¹ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 57.

² Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 57.

specifically fishermen? How does Walcott make use of such settings as Caribbean seascapes, and are there engagements with the concept of the *locus amoenus*? Finally, how do Walcott's engagements with these elements of the pastoral mode in his dramatic works indicate a radical rethinking of the role that it may play in his own literary *oeuvre*, and illuminate his innovative methods of portraying the Caribbean setting on stage?

Walcott's role as a playwright remains a relatively marginal area of study when compared to the far more widespread critical interest in his poetry. Bruce King, however, has offered a formative study of the topic, chronicling the history of Walcott's dramatic career from approximately 1959-1993, thus shedding light on the intense efforts and negotiations involved in starting the Trinidad Theatre Workshop.³ It is worth considering the wide range of audiences – spanning nations, languages, social groups and time periods – for whom this sizeable canon of work was intended to be performed, across locations which spanned continents. Walcott also faced the challenge of finding funding for production costs, leading to his interest in the process of staging dramatic works without the use of 'technology', including expensive special effects:

The people at the forefront of twentieth-century theatre keep fighting technology. Brecht, Genet, Brook, they are all simply getting back to the true needs of theatre – to the human body alone, not gilded by equipment or effects. Too many plays (and I myself have been guilty of this) require the imitation of reality; whereas Aristotle's first principle still holds: drama depends not on the imitation of reality, but on the imitation of action. Real action in theatre doesn't require any furniture or machinery.⁴

Plays such as *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958) and *Malcochon, or The Six in the Rain* (1959) do not require complex set designs and technical specifications, instead conveying narrative through dialogue, soliloquy, song and dance. King observes that

³ Bruce King, *Derek Walcott and West Indian Drama: 'Not Only a Playwright But a Company', the Trinidad Theatre Workshop 1959-1993* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁴ Walcott in interview with Sharon Ciccarelli in 1977, in *Conversations*, p. 37.

Walcott's plays can be seen as 'scenes in paintings', as 'because he is a verse dramatist who uses words to set a scene and because of the conditions in which he had to work, his *mise en scène* is more a theatre of poverty without elaborate sets, props and equipment'.⁵ In a manner which reflects the limited critical attention which this strand of Walcott studies has received, the pastoral drama has too often been treated as an offshoot in the field of pastoral studies, with few studies dedicated to the singular analysis of the form. However, the classical pastorals of Theocritus and Virgil tend to take the form of dialogues between characters, in a single locus. This mirrors the fundamental process of staging most dramatic action: characters interact, in a theatre or similar precisely defined space.⁶ It is Walcott's crafting of dramatic dialogue, characterisation and representation of human interactions, subjectivity and space which this chapter will centre as its core themes.

Pastoral drama is defined by Adrienne Scullion as originating from pastoral poetry: 'A form of drama evolved from poetry – particularly the idyll, eclogue, or bucolic – which idealizes nature and the rural life'.⁷ Ostensibly, claims Scullion, pastoral writings tell stories about shepherds, however 'at root the form problematizes social relationships and ideas of modernization: the purity and simplicity of shepherd life is contrasted with the corruption and artificiality of the court, the town, or the city'.⁸

⁵ King, *West Indian Drama*, p. 20.

⁶ In a definition of the term 'dialogue' in the context of poetry and poetics, B. Ashton Nichols and Herbert F. Tucker state: 'Denotes an exchange of words between or among dramatized speakers in lit., whether or not their speeches are written with a view to theatrical representation. Dialogue has characterized writing for the stage at least since the first actor stepped out from a chorus, although there are also important uses of monologue in the drama'. See 'Dialogue', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Roland Greene et al., 4th edn (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 357-358 (p. 357).

⁷ Adrienne Scullion, 'pastoral drama', in *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 455.

⁸ Scullion, p. 455.

The device of singing contests is often used, forming a notable parallel to the prevalence of vocal music, and more specifically vocal music which conveys a narrative, in Walcott's plays.⁹ Scullion also suggests that after a period of 'renewed significance' for the pastoral mode on the early modern stage, more 'realistic' depictions of rural life became fashionable in eighteenth-century drama, and that the pastoral genre 'all but disappeared thereafter, though the dialectic of the rural and the urban, of nature and civilization, remained common dramatic themes', a description which, I would suggest, overlooks the significance of anti-pastoral in contemporary dramatic works.¹⁰

Torquato Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) is largely regarded as the play which sparked a trend in writing and staging pastoral drama in Europe, setting a fashion for the revival of what was then seen as a somewhat archaic mode in the context of theatrical production, which would soon lead to William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (c. 1599) and the more generically complex *The Winter's Tale* (c. 1611).¹¹ Although more wide-ranging studies are limited, criticism which does engage with the pastoral mode in the context of theatre often places a firm focus on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, with an overwhelming interest in the plays of Shakespeare. Both William Empson and Paul Alpers, for instance, employ analysis of *As You Like It* to aid their definitions of pastoral. Martin Gosman stresses the significance of the representation of class differences offered, as in pastoral drama 'the world of the shepherds and that of the

⁹ Ibid. For example, *The Sea at Dauphin* includes the stage direction that Gacia [Goes off, singing] (p. 47). It also includes a song performed by a 'Chorus of Dauphin Women' (pp. 69-70). Derek Walcott, 'The Sea at Dauphin', in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), pp. 41-80. Further references to page numbers in this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁰ Scullion, p. 455.

¹¹ Laurence Lerner, for instance, refers to *Aminta* as 'the most celebrated of all pastoral dramas'. Lerner, *Uses of Nostalgia*, p. 81.

nobility, fundamentally incompatible, seemingly achieve a kind of integration, which, however, does not go beyond his own acoustic and optical illusion'.¹² As a result, the 'paradox' is clear: 'pastoral drama pretends to eliminate social differences by constructing a non-existing world governed by a sociologically unacceptable equality'.¹³ This interest in the depiction of class structures achieved through the form of pastoral drama is shared by many critics, and the debate which surrounds this topic of the representation of socioeconomic dynamics presented in pastoral plays will be considered in this chapter, through analysis of Walcott's early play *The Sea at Dauphin*, which openly defies the 'paradox' highlighted by Gosman through its refusal to offer its characters full autonomy over their situations, achieved through the highlighting of economic deprivation, a theme of fatalism and the cultivating of a nihilistic mood.

Gosman's elevating of the sixteenth-century context is also relevant to this study, considering Walcott's own admission of an interest in and sense of influence from Jacobethan drama. As Baugh has observed of *Henri Christophe* (1949): 'The young Walcott, reaching after a theatre that would speak to and for the West Indies, is excited to see in Christophe a Caribbean hero in the classical Elizabethan mould'.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Baugh is quick to stress that there is a 'difference', as although the 'grand style' of *Christophe* may well allude to 'Marlowe and Shakespeare, it is not blank verse, but free verse, with a recurring suggestion of iambic pentameter within a general dissolution of the iambic beat.'¹⁵ Consequently, the 'language, for all its grandeur, is appropriately modern, the heightening due partly to Walcott's characteristic

¹² Martin Gosman, 'Some Shepherds are more Equal than Others: Socio-political "Reality" in 15th and 16th Century Pastoral Drama', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 94 (1993), 345-357, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43345956 (p. 346).

¹³ Gosman, p. 346.

¹⁴ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 61.

¹⁵ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 62.

metaphorical energy, which owes something to Shakespeare'.¹⁶ As a result, there is room to explore Walcott's engagement with the pastoral mode as filtered through the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, in the light of both the interest in early modern theatrical approaches to the mode evidenced by the majority of critics exploring pastoral drama and Baugh's illumination of Walcott's complex relationship to Elizabethan dramatic styles.

Aside from these studies of late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century approaches to the pastoral on stage, there are few historically wide-ranging critical engagements with pastoral drama and a very limited number of texts offering an extended critical engagement with pastoral in twentieth-century theatre. In a similar manner to studies of the Caribbean pastoral, the few recent critical treatments of the pastoral in contemporary drama tend to include an emphasis upon ecocritical readings; for instance, David Farrier has explored recent theatrical engagements with pastoral through the lens of ecocriticism in the essay: 'Toxic Pastoral: Comic Failure and Ironic Nostalgia in Contemporary British Environmental Theatre' (2014).¹⁷ At present, there appear to be no major studies of the use of the pastoral mode in the dramatic works of Derek Walcott, or, surprisingly, in twentieth-century Caribbean theatre more generally, a critical gap which sorely needs redressing. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Yana Meerzon has offered an insightful reading of a selection of Walcott's dramatic works, in a study which stresses that: 'The longing for leaving as well as the desire for homecoming remain central to Walcott's poetry and theater'.¹⁸ This emphasis upon

¹⁶ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 62.

¹⁷ David Farrier, 'Toxic Pastoral: Comic Failure and Ironic Nostalgia in Contemporary British Environmental Theatre', *The Journal of Ecocriticism*, 6 (2014), 1-15
<<https://ojs.unbc.ca/index.php/joe/article/view/559/503>> [accessed 17 February 2020].

¹⁸ Yana Meerzon, *Performing Exile, Performing Self: Drama, Theatre, Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 68. Google ebook.

'homecoming' reinforces the understanding that the impulse of *nostos* is a fundamental element of Walcott's poetic and dramatic style, a theme which, this thesis argues, is intricately linked to Walcott's pastoralism. Although Meerzon's study does not centre pastoral as a key theme, it nonetheless offers glimpses into the pastoral dynamic at work in these texts:

Carnival embraces the temporal-spatial stillness of "time out of time" concentrated in the dynamics of the participants' performative activities. It celebrates the bacchanal triumph of the energy of newness, the energy of re-birth, and the strength of artistic expression. It juxtaposes the linearity of urban history (as it is recognized by Western colonial consciousness) with the cyclicity of rural and non-Western (Caribbean or African) experience.¹⁹

Thus, the dialectic between rural and urban experience, as well as between teleological, linear perceptions of history and cyclical temporality, are recognised as important features of Walcott's dramatic writings. Moreover, Meerzon's study identifies Walcott's *The Odyssey*, specifically, as a play predicated upon the process of 'homecoming': 'The major focus of Walcott's *The Odyssey* remains its protagonist and its storyteller, the old warrior and wonderer, Odysseus. His longing for home mixed with his paradoxical devotion to the voyage constitute the core of the play's action'.²⁰ As a result, suggests Meerzon, the play expresses 'Derek Walcott's personal trademark of the exilic being, when the condition of exile manifests itself as a state of going away, a motion of traveling, which sets up the moment of homecoming but does not bring it any closer'.²¹ This notion of the 'exilic being' is helpful in criticism of Walcott's plays, which focus so conspicuously upon human subjects located on the periphery of certain spaces, as will be seen in my readings of *The Sea at Dauphin*, in which the action takes

¹⁹ Meerzon, pp. 88, 89.

²⁰ Meerzon, p. 107.

²¹ Meerzon, p. 107.

place in the liminal space of the beach, between land and sea.

Through examining Walcott's representation of characters marginalised by society and with traditionally low socioeconomic status (in particular fishermen) I intend to illuminate the depiction of poverty offered in Walcott's dramatic works, the methods employed to represent economic deprivation, and the ways in which these connect to the oft-cited criticism of pastoral as reductively idealising agricultural workers and the poor. The essay 'What the Twilight Says' is a valuable source for this study, as it offers a prolonged, self-reflexive critique of the role that the process of idealising the poor has played in Walcott's dramaturgy. It also presents a self-examination of the playwright's influences, with direct references to both urban and rural Caribbean settings (with a particular emphasis on St Lucia and Trinidad) and the impact of Jacobethan drama: 'I saw myself legitimately prolonging the mighty line of Marlowe, or Milton, but my sense of inheritance was stronger because it came from estrangement'.²² Some of his early plays, Walcott adds, 'were Jacobean too because they flared from a mind drenched in Elizabethan literature out of the same darkness as Webster's *Flamineo*, from a flickering world of mutilation and heresy', thus highlighting the impact that these early modern works had on the playwright's imagination.²³ Altogether, 'What the Twilight Says' highlights the significance of Walcott's relationship to two core themes that this chapter seeks to address: the representation of impoverished rural labourers in his dramatic works and the influence of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century strand of the European pastoral dramatic tradition. After an examination of this essay, I will focus on one play: *The Sea at*

²² 'Twilight', p. 31.

²³ 'Twilight', p. 11.

Dauphin, exploring these themes in depth in this compact one-act tragedy. I will also more briefly explore the representation of the sea and idyllic spaces in both this play and *The Odyssey*, with the intention of highlighting Walcott's elevation of the symbolic significance of the sea on stage for works making use of Caribbean settings, and to further illuminate his interest in anti-pastoral, made evident through the inversion of tropes of depicting *loci amoeni*.

'What the Twilight Says' and the Process of Idealising Poverty

As has already been outlined, several of Walcott's plays share the theme of an exploration of the lives of those with low socioeconomic status, with a notable emphasis upon agricultural workers. The essay 'What the Twilight Says: An Overture' (1970), a self-examination of and manifesto for Walcott's experimental approaches to the production of theatre in the Caribbean, indicates a concern for the possibility of romanticizing poverty through theatre, and an ultimate recognition that 'the last thing that the poor needed was the idealisation of their poverty'.²⁴ The realisation of this is presented as the culmination of a cognitive process on the part of the playwright as, at first, the essay engages with this romanticised vision:

To set out for rehearsals in that quivering quarter-hour is to engage conclusions, not beginnings, for one walks past the gilded hallucination of poverty with a corrupt resignation touched by details, as if the destitute, in their orange-tinted backyards, under their dusty trees, or climbing to their favelas, were all natural scene-designers and poverty were not a condition but an art.²⁵

A note of uncertainty is struck by the indefinite language: 'as if' the 'destitute' were

²⁴ 'Twilight', p. 19.

²⁵ 'Twilight', p. 3.

‘natural scene-designers’, and ‘as if’ poverty were not a ‘condition but an art’, indicating that this is an illusion, a ‘hallucination’ in this dreamy ‘twilight’ hour. The apparent romanticizing of poverty continues: ‘Deprivation is made lyrical, and twilight, with the patience of alchemy, almost transmutes despair into virtue’.²⁶ Once again, the language is decidedly uncertain: the aesthetic scene ‘almost’ transfigures the ‘despair’ of poverty into ‘virtue’, implying that this is merely a hypothetical process of transforming ‘poverty’ into ‘art’, the alchemic act of romanticizing the poor undercut by linguistic uncertainty. He continues to state that: ‘In the tropics nothing is lovelier than the allotments of the poor, no theatre is as vivid, voluble and cheap’, a relatively decisive demonstration of idealisation, however, this essay is written from the perspective of hindsight, and its author interrogates and criticises the perspective of his younger self, noting: ‘Years ago, watching them, and suffering as you watched, you proffered silently the charity of a language which they could not speak, until your suffering, like the language, felt superior, estranged’.²⁷ This highlights the crux of the issue: the playwright feels a detachment from the ‘poverty’ which surrounds him, this lyrical opening to the essay furthering the sense of distance through appearing to estrange him from colloquial registers, an idea which is further explored in *Dauphin*. However, this problematic concept of a divide between the speaker and the unnamed, abstract ‘poor’ is critiqued, as the playwright seems to accuse his younger self of a ‘melodramatic belief’ of bearing the ‘self-inflicted role of martyr’.²⁸

This essay is dense with motifs and symbols familiar from the pastoral tradition. This includes the sense of a divide between social groups, Edenic symbolism, nostalgia,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

imagery from the natural world, and the dichotomy between innocence and corruption.

The convergence of these themes is best exemplified in the following passage:

When one began twenty years ago it was in the faith that one was creating not merely a play, but a theatre, and not merely a theatre, but its environment. Then the twilight most resembled dawn, then how simple it all seemed! We would walk, like new Adams, in a nourishing ignorance which would name plants and people with a child's belief that the world is its own age. [...] We, the actors and poets, would strut like new Adams in a nakedness where sets, costumes, dimmers, all the "dirty devices" of the theatre were unnecessary or inaccessible. Poverty seemed a gift to the imagination, necessity was truly a virtue, so we set our plays in the open, in natural, unphased light, and our subject was bare, "unaccommodated man." Today one writes this with more exhaustion than pride, for that innocence has been corrupted and society has taken the old direction. In these new nations art is a luxury, and the theatre the most superfluous of amenities.²⁹

Here, Walcott nostalgically looks back to a lost 'innocence', a time which was seemingly Edenic to the artist who wished to create an influential theatrical movement in the post- colonial Caribbean, one which is related to the natural world through its description as an 'environment' and the act of naming 'plants', in the manner of 'new Adams'. The scene is at once Arcadian and pre-lapsarian, the 'dawn' of an artistic moment, a realm which has not yet been 'corrupted' by political and economic change. Poverty is openly idealised as a 'gift to the imagination', a 'virtue' which allows for greater creative freedom, and the study of 'unaccommodated man', a quasi-spiritual pursuit without an interest in materialism.³⁰ The growth of commercialism and

²⁹ 'Twilight', pp. 6-7.

³⁰ This quotation from the storm scene in Shakespeare's *King Lear* highlights an interest in the existential questions which this play considers: the presence of both kindness and cruelty in mankind and the fear of mental breakdown, somewhat undercutting the sense of naivety and innocence explored here. Each of these themes are explored in *The Sea at Dauphin*, which is similarly set during stormy conditions and considers suffering, grief, compassion, blindness and the relationship between man and nature. *King Lear* is not an unfamiliar reference for Walcott; in 'The Bounty' he creates a motif of a conflation of the poet John Clare with 'poor Tom' (*The Bounty*, p. 15). Clare's work engages with the theme of tense connections between the pastoral mode and class differences, especially the role that agricultural workers should play in the subject matter and production of pastoral verse. Similarly, 'poor Tom' in *Lear*, a pseudonym for Edgar, is represented as a character driven to madness due to the suffering of poverty and is closely linked to agricultural labour, leading Lear across the barren landscape. Fishermen are equated to 'poor Tom' in this sense, as representatives of that uneasy connection between pastoral, poverty and physical labour on land

marketization, pressed for by an abstract, dehumanised concept of the ‘State’, is blamed for the supposed demise of what a ‘handful of childish visionaries foresaw as a Republic devoted to the industry of art’, positing a dichotomy between urbanisation, commercialism and capitalism, symbols of the city, against ‘virtue’, the natural world, innocence and the Edenic, symbols of a rural idyll.³¹ Altogether, it appears to indicate an engagement with, and seemingly an acceptance of, these fundamental pastoral tropes.

However, Walcott quickly complicates this ostensibly straightforward pastoral vision. He soon criticises the notion of a return to a precolonial condition, claiming that to ‘believe in its folk forms the State would have to hallow not only its mythology but re- believe in dead gods, not as converts either, but as makers’.³² The oxymoronic concept of a ‘dead’ god alongside the implication of artificiality and hubris involved in being a ‘maker’ rather than a ‘convert’ to a past mythology frustrates the idea of a simple, nostalgic return to the past. The suggestion of an Adamic role in an Edenic space is also qualified: ‘what is needed is not new names for old things, or old names for old things, but the faith of using the old names anew’.³³ This leads to a realisation of having become ‘infuriated at the banal demands of labourer and peasant. We romanticised the poor. But the last thing that the poor needed was the idealisation of their poverty’.³⁴ It is clear that: ‘No play could be paced to the repetitive, untheatrical patience of hunger and unemployment’.³⁵ As a result, it is ‘inevitable that any

and at sea. The role of John Clare in ‘The Bounty’ has been highlighted and analysed by George Handley in ‘Derek Walcott’s Poetics of the Environment’ and Savory’s ‘Towards a Caribbean Ecopoetics: Derek Walcott’s Language of Plants’.

³¹ ‘Twilight’, p. 7.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

playwright, knowing that this is his possible audience, will not be concerned with deprivation as his major theme.’ Walcott’s relationship to the process of the idealisation of the ‘poor’, a notably abstract, perhaps rather dehumanising term which is used throughout the essay, is decidedly ambiguous. Whilst it is criticised, it is also presented as the root of certain artistic outputs, and the level of engagement with the processes of idealisation and distancing, as well as the highlighting of the suffering intrinsic to the condition of economic deprivation, implies a sense of unease and lack of finality on this issue. The framework in which it is explored is characterised by pastoral features, including references to the natural world, Edenic symbolism, apparent dichotomies between such social groups as lower and middle-classes and the educated and labourers, as well as between urban and rural environments, and the concept of nostalgia. As this essay positions itself as a self-examination of the playwright’s artistry, I argue that its elevation of these pastoral themes evidences that these are tropes which Walcott seeks to explore in his dramatic works, and to relate to representations of socioeconomic relations and Caribbean spaces.

‘Twilight’ offers the claim that the ‘sparse body of West Indian theatre still feeds on the subject of emaciation and what it produces: rogues, drunkards, madmen, outcasts, and sets against this the pastoral of the peasant’.³⁶ Whether Walcott intends to include his own work in this description is not entirely clear, but these character types frequently recur, albeit in complex incarnations, across a wide range of his plays. The archaic term ‘peasant’ implies that he is referring to a version of pastoral which is antiquated, perhaps alluding to the outburst of pastoral dramatic works in the Jacobethan era, a canon that this essay directly engages with. It also evidences that the question of

³⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

the role that the pastoral mode may play in Caribbean theatre is transparently of interest in 'Twilight', and I would suggest that the mode is, ultimately, interrogated and criticised by Walcott through the process of reaching an epiphanic understanding that the poor do not require or desire 'idealisation', a process which has frequently been employed in the pastoral literary tradition, as posited by the work of such critics as William Empson, Raymond Williams and Roger Sales. Nonetheless, this essay complicates any outright rejection of pastoral through relying upon a significant number of its conventions, including an ambiguous acknowledgement that the creative process may well, for the playwright, at times rely on the idealisation of the 'poor', who become symbolic of artistic liberation when he admits to experiencing a sense of jealousy of them in his youth:

One could envy the poor then, their theatre where everything was possible, sex, obscenity, absolution, freedom, and not only the freedom to wander barefoot, but the freedom made from necessity, the freedom to hack down forests, to hollow canoes, to hunt snakes, to fish, and to develop bodies made of tarred rope that flung off beads of sweat like tightened fish-lines.³⁷

The sense of hindsight ensures that this sentiment remains nonconcrete, however this notion that the realm of the 'poor' is intrinsically a theatrical space, where taboo topics may be explored and artistic liberation attained, is undoubtedly an act of idealisation, which is not immediately or openly contradicted. Moreover, it is again presented through language and imagery which relates closely to the pastoral tradition: 'barefoot' wandering across the landscape, acts of agricultural labour such as the hacking down of 'forests' or hollowing of 'canoes', hunting, fishing, and the experience of being deeply connected to the physical surroundings. This essay offers a conflicting, ambiguous vision of the role that the idealisation of the poor may play in Walcott's

³⁷ 'Twilight', pp. 22-23.

dramaturgy, and it does so through the framework of the pastoral mode.

‘What the Twilight Says’ acts as an ‘Overture’ for the plays which follow in the collection: *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), *Malcochon, or The Six in the Rain* (1959) and *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967), each of which centres characters who are experiencing poverty. *Dauphin* chronicles the lives of St Lucian fishermen; the titular Ti-Jean and his brothers must seek low-paid work as agricultural labourers, whilst *Malcochon* brings together a cast of impoverished individuals, one of whom has stolen valuables from a nearby stately house in order to survive, and *Dream on Monkey Mountain* charts the journey of Makak, a *charbonnier* (charcoal-burner). However, each play further complicates the process of the idealisation of poverty which is explored in ‘Twilight’. The fragility of economic certainty for these characters is symbolised in *Malcochon* when the unnamed Old Man says to his nephew: ‘You have my money, eh? Good. Don’t let it get wet. Paper money, it get wet it will get rotten’.³⁸ The transience of this short-lived economic stability is here also indicated through pathetic fallacy; the unpredictable rain can dissolve the paper on which this currency is based, its artificiality as a valuable object highlighted by its parallel to foodstuffs, as it becomes ‘rotten’ like inedible fruit. I argue that *Dauphin* can be read as signifying an attempt to directly oppose the process of the idealisation of the poor which is explored in ‘Twilight’, and that this is achieved through complex characterisation, allusions to several fundamental pastoral tropes, and significant elements of anti-pastoral.

³⁸ Derek Walcott, ‘Malcochon, or The Six in the Rain’, in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), pp. 167-206 (p. 173).

The Representation of Fishermen in *The Sea at Dauphin*

Fishermen are employed recurrently in Walcott's writings. In *Omeros*, the role of fishermen is clearly centred, as it is the trade of Achille, Hector and Philoctete. In the fourth poem of the *Italian Eclogues*, Walcott refers to 'the raw hands of fishermen | their anchor of dialect'.³⁹ In an interview in 1983, Walcott is quoted as remarking:

I do not believe in heroes [...] The search for heroes in history is a Mosaic anachronism. See Brecht. Pity the society that needs heroes. The people I honor and glorify from simplicity, not from a Marxist or political viewpoint, rather say a Whitmanesque one, are my heroes. Fishermen. Working men, isolated artists. Not political figures: That develops fascism!⁴⁰

This is a vital, recurring sentiment; in *Another Life* the poet harks to 'a future without heroes, | to make out of these foresters and fishermen | heraldic men!' (1768-1770). Fishermen also play key roles in the classical pastoral tradition. The ekphrastic description of a cup in *Idyll I*, for example, is described by Halperin thus: 'The second scene on the cup, the old fisherman, represents the new cast of characters which Theocritus will substitute for the gods, heroes, and kings of mythological epic poetry'.⁴¹ A similar tactic can be clearly witnessed in Walcott's writings, and this chapter will contribute to the argument posited in this thesis's second chapter: that recognizable techniques of epic subversion and inversion are at work in Walcott's dialogue with the classical tradition, and that this can be linked to the Theocritean strain of pastoral.

The representation of agricultural labourers has long been a vital feature of the

³⁹ Walcott, 'Italian Eclogues', in *The Bounty*, p. 67.

⁴⁰ Derek Walcott, in interview with Leif Sjöberg in 1983, 'An Interview with Derek Walcott', in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 79-85 (first publ. in *Artes*, 1 (1983), 23-27), p. 80.

⁴¹ Halperin, p. 243.

pastoral mode, and thus has become a core area of concern in several critical studies of pastoral. Raymond Williams seeks to relate the changes brought to Britain by the Industrial Revolution and development of capitalism to the pastoral literary tradition in *The Country and the City* (1973). Similarly, for William Empson, pastoral is intricately tied to the socioeconomic sphere. *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935) argues that ‘proletarian literature usually has a suggestion of pastoral, a puzzling form which looks proletarian but isn’t’.⁴² Indeed, claims Empson: ‘pastoral, though “about” is not “by” or “for” the ‘people’.⁴³ The ‘essential trick of the old pastoral’, he argues, which ‘was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language’.⁴⁴ Laurence Lerner argues that ‘the implications of pastoral are at least potentially dramatic’, as it ‘continually asserts that the peasant is a better man than the courtier’.⁴⁵ Whilst Paul Alpers’s formalist study of pastoral demonstrates less interest in socioeconomic dynamics than the readings of Williams, Empson and Lerner, the role of ‘herdsmen’ is similarly paramount to his view of pastoral. It is this that ‘connects pastoral works to each other’, and ‘makes them a literary “kind”’.⁴⁶ It is, therefore, possible to demonstrate a general critical consensus in support of the understanding that the presence of individuals from a low socioeconomic group, working on the land or at sea, forms a fundamental and essential feature of the pastoral mode.

Nonetheless, as Alpers observes, writers are able to adapt to different contexts

⁴² Empson, p. 6.

⁴³ Empson, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Empson, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Lerner, p. 116.

⁴⁶ Alpers, *Pastoral?* p. 27.

and retain a recognisable engagement with pastoral, modifying the depiction of shepherds and extending the range of characters, allowing for the inclusion of ‘other rustics or socially inferior persons on the grounds that they are the equivalent, in a given society or world, of shepherds, or that they more truly have the representative status that traditional pastoral ascribes to herdsmen’.⁴⁷ One such modification is the inclusion of fishermen in the pastoral realm. That the economic challenges faced by these fishermen are stressed by Walcott is significant, indicating an engagement with the pastoral dynamics of ‘representative herdsmen’ and the ‘relation between rich and poor’, highlighted by Alpers and Empson respectively. In the setting of an archipelago, it may appear a logical step to make use of fishermen as these ‘representative’ figures, illuminating the dynamic between the rich (and urban) and the poor (and rural). Moreover, for dramatic works set in this region, these socioeconomic issues take on added complications, the postcolonial setting shaped by long-running economic and political control from the colonial centre, including the changes brought about by centuries of the plantation economy in the region, thus adding coloniser versus colonised as a further dichotomy in these categories of opposing socioeconomic relations. However, in *Dauphin*, Walcott radically subverts the pastoral expectation of both ‘representative’ figures and the ‘beautiful relation between rich and poor’ by interrogating and resisting the trope of portraying representative, idealised labourers, and by creating a space detached from straightforward social dichotomies, centring a marginalised group with little reference to any opposing forces. As Baugh observes, *Dauphin*’s central character, Afa, ‘is both representative and different’.⁴⁸ He symbolises the plight of his fellow St Lucian fishermen, whilst also being distanced

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁸ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 68.

from the communal dynamic so essential to pastoral through his misanthropic behaviour, designed to isolate himself from human interaction and company. Afa is a deeply complex character, and his depiction symbolises the play's overall engagement with pastoral; through Afa, Walcott's characterisation works both to allude to and reject expectations of pastoral drama.

Fishermen, who would become stock characters of pastoral after the publication of Jacopo Sannazaro's *Eclogae Piscatoriae* (Piscatory Eclogues) in 1526, appear as central figures in *The Sea at Dauphin* and, to a lesser extent, *The Joker of Seville* (1974). Although agricultural labourers are included as main characters in several of Walcott's plays, this specific role is highlighted in 'What the Twilight Says':

And the fishermen, those whom Jesus first drew to his net, they were the most blasphemous and bitter. Theirs was a naked, pessimistic life, crusted with the dirty spume of beaches. They were a sect which had evolved its own signs, a vocation which excluded the stranger. The separation of town from countryside and countryside from sea challenged your safety, and all one's yearning was to enter that life without living it. It smelled strong and true. But what was its truth?⁴⁹

The emphasis upon these figures allows Walcott to explore the generic and biblical connotations attached to fishermen, as they replace the shepherds of pastoral drama and thus allude to both the Christian symbolism of a Good Shepherd and Jesus's disciples as 'fishers of men' (Mark 1: 17, KJB). These characters are also used to highlight the presence of poverty, the 'naked, pessimistic life' signalled in this essay, a life which engages the imagination of the playwright without inciting a wish to live through such hardship: 'one's yearning was to enter that life without living it', indicating a non-

⁴⁹ 'Twilight', p. 16. Plays which see a focus on the roles of agricultural labourers include *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*, in which each brother works on the land for the Devil/ Planter, as well as *Malcochon, or The Six in the Rain* and *The Haitian Earth*, both of which consider the act of working the land.

idealising awareness of the severe challenges involved in such work. However, idealisation remains present in this section of the essay, as the intense physical labour of the trade appears to signify a 'true' way of being, a life free from artifice, pretension, and stifling safety, which excludes the 'stranger' who seeks to understand this pseudo-religious 'vocation'. Moreover, Walcott envisions this role as symbolising a dichotomy central to the pastoral mode: 'The separation of town from countryside', further detailing that in this island setting and specific trade another divide is present, that of 'countryside from sea'. However, the idealisation of the symbolic fishermen evident in 'Twilight' through vocabulary from the semantic field of religion and direct allusions to Christianity, as well as the elevation of physical labour as a 'true' way of being, is consistently undercut throughout the plays themselves, occurring alongside the fragmentation of the divide between sea and countryside, and both sea and countryside and the urban space.

Whilst writers of pastoral literature have been more inclined to employ shepherds as stock characters, the presence of fishermen in works engaging with this mode dates from the earliest pastorals. *Idyll XXI* describes two fishermen lying awake at night, discussing a dream in which one caught a golden fish.⁵⁰ Their poverty is emphasised, through the description of the dwelling in which the men sleep, the references to their hunger as well as through the symbolism of the sea as a source of wealth (the golden fish symbolic of both material wealth and nourishment), and it is this interest in the hardships faced by those who labour on the sea which is consistently

⁵⁰ It should be noted that this poem has faced controversy over its authorship. Nonetheless, scholars such as Giuseppe Giangrande have defended attributing its authorship to Theocritus, although he regards the authorship as 'irrelevant' as 'whoever wrote the *Idyll*, if not Theocritus, was a Hellenistic poet who tried, not without success, to write in Theocritean style'. Giuseppe Giangrande, 'Textual Problems in Theocritus' *Idyll XXI*, *L'Antiquité Classique*, 46 (1977), 495-522, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41651075 (p. 495).

highlighted by Walcott. Similarly, Seamus Heaney, a close friend and colleague of Walcott's, elevated the death of an alcoholic, marginalised fisherman in his poem 'Casualty' (1979), which, like much of Heaney's work, engages with the pastoral mode (in this case more specifically the pastoral elegy).⁵¹ This poem succinctly illuminates themes which are shared by the earlier work *The Sea at Dauphin*, as the death of this unnamed man, killed '[o]ut drinking in a curfew' in the context of contemporary conflicts in Northern Ireland, results in 'a day of cold | Raw silence', and a series of reminiscences from the speaker, who recalls the sense of liberation and belonging he felt when temporarily taking on the role of fisherman himself:

[...] that morning
When he took me in his boat,
The screw purling, turning
Indolent fathoms white,
I tasted freedom with him.
To get out early, haul
Steadily off the bottom,
Dispraise the catch, and smile
As you find a rhythm ⁵²

Whilst the elegiac strain, pathetic fallacy, engagement with localized political contexts and colloquial language all act as similarities between each poet's approach to representing the role of fisherman, it is in the sense of 'freedom' which Heaney suggests results from this transcendent experience of being at sea seeking the 'catch' where they most differ. For the characters in *Dauphin*, fishing is not an activity which brings a sense

⁵¹ Seamus Heaney's relationship to the pastoral mode in connection with the work of Derek Walcott has been explored by Philippe Hackens, and studies of Heaney's relationship to the pastoral tradition also include: Iain Twiddy's 'Seamus Heaney's Versions of Pastoral', *Essays in Criticism*, 56 (2006), 50-71; Michael C. J. Putman's 'Vergil and Seamus Heaney', *Vergilius*, 56 (2010), 3-16; Stephanie Alexandre's 'Femme Fatale: The Violent Feminine Pastoral of Seamus Heaney's North', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 39 (2016), 218-235.

⁵² Seamus Heaney, 'Casualty', in *Opened Ground; Poems 1966-1996* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 154-157 (p. 157).

of liberation, but one which forms a vital component of a seemingly endless cycle of mortal danger and death, exacerbated by the cyclical time frame the play employs for its one-act structure, and the intensity lent to its representation of temporality through its accordance to the Aristotelian ‘Unities’. As Donna L. Potts observes, in ‘Casualty’ Heaney ‘deftly demonstrates how this seemingly socially insignificant character proves a worthy subject of elegy’, as ‘the fisherman possesses traditionally rural virtues, described not only as hard-working [...] but comfortable with solitude, honest, direct, independent, wise, and even preternaturally perceptive’.⁵³ Potts uses the term ‘piscatory pastoral’ to describe this strand of poetry, and the term ‘piscatory drama’ could certainly be used to describe such plays as *Dauphin*.⁵⁴ However, in Walcott’s play fishermen are not simply presented as subjects ‘worthy of elegy’, but as vocal critics of the risks and hardships involved in their work, the consequences of which are elegy’s chief subject. The insistence that they possess ‘rural virtues’ appears to be far from Walcott’s agenda, who allows the main protagonist of the drama, Afa, to be a flawed character. Walcott’s representation of fishermen demonstrates a significant break with the literary tradition exemplified in texts as wide-ranging as the *Idylls*, Heaney’s ‘Casualty’ and Renaissance works such as that of Sannazaro, and it is through the subversion of these expected codes of representing fishermen, predominantly through engaging with conventions of the pastoral mode, where the effects of this are made most clear.

Dauphin was first staged in 1954, and is described by John Thieme as ‘Walcott’s most fully realized St. Lucian play thus far in his career’, due to its

⁵³ Donna L. Potts, *Contemporary Irish Poetry and the Pastoral Tradition* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2011), ProQuest Ebook Central, p. 58.

⁵⁴ Potts, p. 58.

employment of ‘local registers [...] blending francophone patois elements with anglophone Creole’.⁵⁵ It is this ‘immersion in everyday St. Lucian speech’, claims Thieme, ‘complemented by a similar commitment to the local world in the use of a beach setting, which allows the sea to function as a major protagonist in the action’.⁵⁶ Walcott’s precise rendering of the pronunciations of the St Lucian vernacular also distances the work from pastoral dramas of the early modern period, in which the tendency is towards verse drama. The play maintains a sense of a convincing, naturalistic depiction of spoken dialogue. Baugh describes it as a ‘naturalistic play’ which ‘draws briefly but memorably on the ritualistic potential of the folkways [...] in the form of a folk lament for lost fishermen, sung by a Chorus of Dauphin women’.⁵⁷ *Dauphin* saw a number of varying early productions, from its first performance by the UCWI Dramatic Society to Errol Hill’s 1954 production and its performance in 1966 in Port of Spain, Trinidad, by the Theatre Workshop.⁵⁸ Therefore, its original intended audience is likely to have been the theatre-going residents of the capital of Trinidad. It was also performed in London, another major city, at the Royal Court Theatre in July 1960. As a result, the play setting’s apparent detachment from the urban realm is an artificial one in the context of its early productions; as with the majority of pastoral plays, it was intended to be staged in the urban environment, for predominantly city-dwelling spectators.

The scene is set through Walcott’s characteristically lyrical language rather than the colloquial register of its dialogue: ‘Age-grey morning before the fishermen file,

⁵⁵ Thieme, *Derek Walcott*, p. 52.

⁵⁶ Thieme, p. 52.

⁵⁷ Baugh, p. 70.

⁵⁸ King, *A Caribbean Life*, pp. 105, 109; Walcott, *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*, p. 43. It is worth noting that the play went through stages of redrafting, however for the purposes of this chapter I am using the text as it appears in the 1970 publication.

gum- eyed [...] In the sleep-tightened village a dog is coughing among the lanes, then by the grey false light of daybreak a fisherman comes down the littered beach, barefooted' (45). The scene, then, is not immediately recognisable as pastoral, although it engages with its conventions. Whilst it is a static, inactive rural space, complete with the presence of 'fishermen', the sound of a lone 'dog [...] coughing' – a signifier of illness – suggests a sense of desolation, as does the 'littered' beach. The suggestion of a lone, suffering animal on the periphery of this setting alongside the silence between the human figures indicates isolation, rather than communal pastoral interaction, as well as a sense of disharmony between human and nonhuman subjects, and the repetition of 'grey' in the description of the scenery sets a melancholy, bleak tone, as well as an ominous one; it immediately implies that these are dangerous conditions for setting out to sea. Overall, this opening description of the setting inverts the conventional tropes of depicting an idyllic pastoral space, and this technique of simultaneously alluding to and opposing pastoral tropes will be similarly achieved through the representation of this play's small cast of characters. *Dauphin's* opening, therefore, signifies its strong engagement with features of anti-pastoral.

The 'fisherman' in this opening scene is Afa, 'over forty, and gritty-tempered', and he is soon joined by Gacia, another fisherman, 'stale drunk, twice as tattered', these character descriptions adding to the technique of inverting expectations of the pastoral drama, in which labourers are more usually meditative, lovelorn or jovial than 'gritty-tempered' or 'tattered' (45). The question of mode is, nonetheless, a complex one in this play's opening, the presence of symbols of socioeconomic deprivation indicating an adherence to pastoral's portrayal of impoverished representative labourers, whilst the actions of these characters suggest a resistance to this role; they are silent, their first

act is to head towards the 'latrine', a bathetic reminder of human need rather than an act of idealised representative figures, and Afa wears a 'moth-riddled sweater against the October cold' (45). Altogether, the play will complicate the notion of 'representative' characters fundamental to Paul Alpers's theory of pastoral, and will consistently invert expectations of the pastoral mode, through its employment of bathos, a stress upon the hardships of this physical work, a lack of social harmony, an absence of romance and a refusal to conform to the process of the idealisation of poverty. *Dauphin* works to directly counteract any idealisation of stock pastoral characters, through alluding to the conventions of the literary tradition, whilst simultaneously allowing characterisation, dramatic dialogue and action to combat straightforward pastoral representation and stress the individualism of these fishermen. Through subverting the conventions of representing pastoral characters, Walcott questions the relationship between socioeconomic groups more usually portrayed in pastoral plays, suggesting that it is not binaries between rich and poor, urban and rural, colonial and colonised which is of interest in this work, but what Harry Garuba refers to as the 'quotidian lives of the islanders in their own island home', its focus firmly on these multifaceted characters rather than the process of creating a 'beautiful relation between rich and poor', or, indeed, any 'relation' at all.⁵⁹ Through such dramatic techniques as characterisation, *Dauphin* aligns itself closely to the anti-pastoral.

As Terry Gifford observes, anti-pastoral 'was embedded within the most complex pastorals from the *Idylls* onwards', thus ensuring that offering a clear

⁵⁹ Harry Garuba, 'The Island Writes Back: Discourse/ Power and Marginality in Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers*, Derek Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* and Athol Fugard's *The Island*', *Research in African Literatures*, 32 (2001), 61-76 *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3820807 (p. 66).

distinction between ‘pastoral’ and ‘anti-pastoral’ is a significant challenge.⁶⁰ Definitions of anti-pastoral are as highly debated and challenging to formulate as those for pastoral itself. Judith Haber offers a valuable investigation of anti-pastoral, noting that the ‘dominant practice among critics of Renaissance poetry’ has been to view pastoral as a ‘static, idealizing genre, whose goal was the recovery of an Edenic past’, a goal pursued through the creation of ‘images of idyllicism’.⁶¹ Thus, any deviation from this criterion has been characterized as anti-pastoral. For Haber, such an understanding involves an obfuscation of the complexity of the pastoral mode itself:

[F]rom the beginning of the genre, presence, continuity, and consolation have been seen as related to – indeed as dependent on – absence, discontinuity, and loss. While the term “antipastoral” seemed, therefore, to be clearly reductive from one perspective, it also clearly answered to a fundamental self-contradictoriness within the genre – a contradictoriness that is frequently registered self-consciously in pastoral poems⁶²

Gifford identifies Matthew Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’ as an example of an anti-pastoral poem, projecting as it does a vision in which ‘the natural world can no longer be constructed as a “land of dreams”, but is in fact a bleak battle for survival without divine purpose’.⁶³ The understanding of anti-pastoral employed in this thesis is similarly reliant on the notion that it conveys the theme of ‘a bleak battle for survival without divine purpose’, thus centring nihilism to its mood. *Dauphin*, like ‘Dover Beach’, constructs a ‘bleak battle for survival’, and the theological debate depicted in this play implies that the action is similarly ‘without divine purpose’, a sentiment most clearly expressed by the characters Afa and Hounakin. Altogether, I argue that *Dauphin* firmly meets the criteria of the anti-pastoral, furthering the complicated and transformative dialogue with classical pastorals which takes place throughout Walcott’s writings,

⁶⁰ Gifford, ‘Post-Pastoral’, p. 22.

⁶¹ Haber, p. 1.

⁶² Haber, p. 1.

⁶³ Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 120.

inclusive of his poetry, prose and plays.

Pathetic fallacy adds to the technique of an inversion of pastoral tropes. Afa remarks that the wind is 'hard', these stormy conditions far removed from any temperate pastoral idyll (46). The true dangers of working in these conditions are immediately highlighted, as he observes: 'It white like the time when Bolo drown', indicating that a fellow fisherman has already been lost at sea in recent memory (46). Nonetheless, as Gacia points out, 'is work or starve' (47). The brutal paradox is clear: to go out to sea in this weather risks drowning, but to stay on land without an income ensures starvation. The dialogue is soon tense and argumentative to match the volatile conditions; Augustin arrives late, leading to a blunt and sarcastic reprieve from Afa: 'Look, Monsieur Augustin, this fish you know it have now fifteen years, does wait for people line to hook them up? I tired use my tongue and tell you [...] work is work, and sea and I don't sleep' (49). The stoic resignation of Afa to the dangers of this work sets the tone for a play which examines both nihilism and fatalism as two of its core themes, as well as contributing to a clear refusal to idealise the conditions of these workers and the risks of the trade itself. Moreover, through creating antagonism between the fellow fishermen, Walcott alludes to a fundamental pastoral trope relating to the representation of *dramatis personae*. The classical pastoral tradition usually places a focus on two characters in dialogue, often competitive in nature, in its imagined setting. *Dauphin* begins with a suggestion of this pairing, opening with a dialogue between Afa and Gacia, the latter of whom is replaced by Augustin when he goes out to sea. The relationship between Afa and Augustin is depicted as a confrontational one, in keeping with the theme of competition usually found in pastoral literature, however, it soon surpasses the norms of the pastoral tradition's predominantly light-hearted and

superficial antagonistic rhetoric. The emotional pain that both fishermen experience as a result of their combative exchanges symbolises a wider sense of discord and distress in Dauphin; the result, it is implied, of challenging socioeconomic circumstances, unease over the role of religion in daily life and dangerous working conditions. They are also joined by Hounakin, despite Afa's protestations, the group of three actors on stage putting a decisive strain on the convention of dual characters, and symbolising a lack of conformity to the structure of the pastoral dialogue. This is an isolated community, and the fraught relationship between this handful of carefully crafted, highly individualised characters reflects a wider sense of social fragmentation and unease.

The name written on the onstage canoe furthers the suggestion of complex allusions to traditional pastoral conventions, in this case of the strain of religious pastoral: '*Our Daily Bread*' (45). Such a name denotes that labour at sea is a source of both physical and spiritual nourishment, the combatting of the natural elements for food an archetypal human endeavour, worthy of pastoral elevation. However, on an island which is predominantly Christian, the words may be most familiar as those of the Lord's Prayer, suggesting a need for divine intervention in this bleak setting, and signalling a direct engagement with religious rhetoric. As the play progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that theological debate is an explicit and essential feature. Afa's struggle with the Christian faith forms a pivotal moment which is incongruous when compared to the simple three-word phrase visible on the canoe at its opening: 'God! [*He turns and empties the fish pail on the sand*] That is God! A big fish eating small ones' (73). The play is dense with religious imagery, simultaneously elevating the fishermen to the spiritual plane of representatives of Jesus's first followers, in a mirroring of religious pastoral's Good Shepherd symbolism, as well as undercutting

such elevation through a sense of nihilism, an emphasis on the ‘blasphemous’ words of its characters and the notion that these experiences are without ‘divine purpose’.⁶⁴ Afa’s despair at the death of the grieving, elderly Hounakin leads to his conflict with Father Lavoisier:

[He turns and tears a scapular from his neck and hurls it to the ground] Mi! Mi! Pick it up, *père*, is not ours. This scapular not Dauphin own! *Gadez lui!* Look at it! You see? Poverty, dirty woman, dirty children, where all the prayers? Where all the money a man should have and friends when his skin old? Dirt and prayers is Dauphin life, in Dauphin, in Canaries, Micoud. Where they have priest is poverty.

(73-4)

This indictment of the apparently *laissez-faire* attitude of power structures such as the Church, which Afa blames for the continuance of poverty in the region, indicates a resistance to the role of detached observer, distanced from the urban environment. This fisherman does not speak from an elevated perspective, separate from the affairs of the local community, but rather is aware of economic deprivation, of the ‘[d]irt and prayers’ which are part of ‘Dauphin life’. This implies that the clear dichotomy between countryside and town, countryside and sea suggested in ‘Twilight’ is not present in *Dauphin*. These fishermen are not isolated from an awareness of and intellectual engagement with the metropole’s power structures and political concerns. In this play, poverty and suffering are not merely means to an artistic end, idealised and romanticised through lyrical language and religious imagery, but issues centred in the plot and openly debated by its disenfranchised characters. Afa’s vocal rejection of the strain of the Christian faith preached by Father Lavoisier, alongside a condemnation of the village’s continued economic deprivation, are too open and direct to conform to the traditional conventions of the pastoral mode, which tends to involve distanced allusions

⁶⁴ Walcott, ‘Twilight’, p. 16; Gifford, *Pastoral*, p. 120

to such issues rather than an open and sustained engagement with them, and it certainly rejects any idealisation of the condition of poverty, or mystification of socioeconomic relations. Rather, this play becomes increasingly more closely aligned to anti-pastoral, and its fishermen test and transcend the limits of representative stock characters.

The nomenclature of these fishermen reflects this interest in questioning the symbolism of religious pastoral, 'Augustin' perhaps alluding to Saint Augustine of Hippo, an important figure in early Christianity, a 'thinker and analyst of the human condition with an extraordinary sense of the glory and the misery of man'.⁶⁵ As this is a play which focusses almost solely on the 'human condition' in all its 'glory' and 'misery', this seems an apt allusion. Saint Augustine was born in 354 in Thagaste, Numidia, modern-day Algeria, thus referring simultaneously to the Christian faith and to the connections between Africa and the Caribbean setting.⁶⁶ The spelling change from a historical or classical source, like that of 'Achille' in *Omeros*, ensures that Augustin is in no way a mirror of his saintly namesake, but rather a complex, developed character in his own right, prone to the mixed human emotions of kindness, frustration, and fear. The choice of the name 'Afa', on the other hand, may well result from a mishearing of St Lucian pronunciation, as Paul Breslin notes:

Walcott likes to tell on himself the story of how, upon asking a group of fishermen to suggest suitable names for his hero, he misheard the creole pronunciation of "Arthur" as the exotically African "Afa." One might take this story as his wry acknowledgement that although he is St. Lucian, he too remains slightly removed from the Catholic, peasant culture of his characters. But even if he is no fisherman's son, his play shows considerable insight into the milieu of its characters.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Henry Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), ProQuest Ebook Central, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Chadwick, p. 4.

⁶⁷ Breslin, *Nobody's Nation*, p. 88. Breslin cites this anecdote to an informal conversation with the poet, which was not taped in interview, in St. Lucia, March 1995. It is also referred to in King's *Derek Walcott and West Indian Drama*, p. 13.

This creolisation of an iconic name from Western European folklore, closely interconnected with Christian doctrine through such mythology as the ‘Holy Grail’ tales, indicates an engagement with the concept of the dramatic hero, adding to the complexity of Walcott’s use of characterisation. The naming of this St Lucian protagonist is not merely the result of a misunderstanding between two individuals from differing social backgrounds, but a signal of Walcott’s intention to use this clash of understandings productively, to craft a fully-fleshed, complex and powerfully drawn character whose behaviour refuses the confines of expected literary conventions. Augustin’s explosion of anger at Afa highlights a rejection of heroic elevation (furthering Walcott’s project of an investigative circumnavigation of epic tropes), and the dialogue also rapidly intensifies the sense of hostility between these characters:

You don’t have no love, no time, no child, you have a hole where man heart should be, you have no God, no dog, no friend, that is why Dauphin afraid you, because you always enrage, and nobody will give you help of the hand, so you make it, live with it [...] And when you dead, who will cry? Only blind Batal is peeling onions for Samuel on a bench behind the café, and a few grains of rain. Not me, not Gacia. And at your wake, if they so stupid to have wake for fool like you, women saying only “They had this man Afa, who greedy make fisherman, a man that beat his woman, that have no love, no mercy, no compassion!”

(51)

As well as relentlessly condemning archetypal projections of the epic hero, the suggestion that only ‘a few grains of rain’ will grieve his passing signifies a rejection of the pastoral motif of nature mourning human loss. The unusual collocation of ‘grains of rain’ further fragments the distinction between the sea, from which the rain is sourced, and the ‘grains’ of sand on the land. Neither humans nor the natural world, it is

suggested, will mourn the passing of this complex hero.⁶⁸

Walcott ensures that Afa's character is a multifaceted one; he is quick to anger and aggressive language, but also deeply empathetic, as indicated through his actions, rather than language, towards Hounakin. His refusal to allow this elderly man to travel out to sea can be read as an impulse to protect a vulnerable figure from hardship and danger, a concern which should be read as occurring to him as he cynically resolves: 'I say I not carrying anybody dead in my boat' (54). When Augustin responds: 'Half the boat is mine', Afa remains resolute, in a moment of comedic relief: 'I not carrying nobody dead in my half the boat' (54). The relationship between Afa and Hounakin is implied, beneath Afa's derogatory language, to be one of mutual support, both emotional and physical, as Augustin recalls that during the previous night Afa sought comfort from Hounakin whilst drunk: 'Last night in Samuel café, when white rum scald you tongue, is not you tell this old man he can come? Not you what have water in you eyes from Samuel onions, and cry on the old man shoulder?' (49). The audience does not witness this moment, but through the dramatic technique of offering Augustin's vocal recollection of the memory Walcott implies that Afa's *froidueur* should be understood as a veneer, used to cloak the empathy he experiences for a fellow suffering human, one who is similarly processing grief. Baugh claims that Afa's 'fight' is 'with the challenges of his humanity'.⁶⁹ The 'compassion and tenderness that cannot

⁶⁸ That the name 'Dauphin' is orthographically similar to the mourned hero sung of in Theocritus's *Idyll I*, 'Daphnis', is worthy of note. These lines suggest that only Dauphin, symbolised here through the metonym of its 'grains' of rainfall, will mourn the passing of Afa, marking an inversion of expectations of the pastoral elegy, in which nature mourns Daphnis. If Dauphin is read as a conflation of an inverted *locus amoenus* and the iconic pastoral character of Daphnis, then the complexity of Walcott's treatment of classical pastorals is furthered in this passage. Rather than nature mourning Daphnis, here Daphnis, combined with the natural world, mourns the central character of this play – its misanthropic hero. As a result, the passage furthers the defamiliarization and interrogation of tropes of the pastoral elegy and of heroes in the classical tradition.

⁶⁹ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 69.

be altogether suppressed by Afa's hardness are crucial', he adds, as 'markers of his humanity', and Hounakin 'functions as the test and stimulus for Afa's compassion. Himself the type of isolated, reduced man, humanity *in extremis*, he is Afa's foil'.⁷⁰ Hounakin is also closely connected to the play's theme of an exploration of religious thought and the power structures of the Church, as he is Augustin's 'godfather', thus symbolising the discomfort arising from Afa's awareness of injustice, which he relates to the presence of the Christian Church on the island, an institution that he believes has become blind to this suffering. Hounakin, then, functions more as a 'foil' for Afa's personal demons than as a straightforward companion, furthering the sense of a fragmentation of communality and a revising of traditional techniques of pastoral characterisation in this representation of agricultural workers and fishermen.

The rescinded invitation to allow Hounakin to fish with Afa and Augustin can be read as another example of anti-pastoral features at work in this play, as Kimberley Huth has argued that the act of invitation is a central feature of the pastoral mode. For Huth, the 'pastoral landscape is often imagined as an ideal world of respite from the corruption of the court or city, but it is actually the invitation that creates the ideality of that world, which is only recognizable through interactions with other people in the landscape'.⁷¹ Like Alpers, Huth suggests that the 'community of shepherds interacting' in a 'rural setting' is a vital element of pastoral, although in Huth's study more of an emphasis is placed upon language, in particular 'the speech act of invitation'.⁷² In *Dauphin*, this speech act takes place offstage, prior to the action, the audience only

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Kimberley Huth, 'Come Live With Me and Feed My Sheep: Invitation, Ownership, and Belonging in Early Modern Pastoral Literature', *Studies in Philology*, 108, 44-69, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4105927 (p. 45).

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

made aware of it through the dialogue between Augustin and Afa, a dramatic technique which resists pastoral convention through refusing the audience the role of witnesses to this act of invitation. Afa's regret is made vividly clear, as he insists that he was too intoxicated to make such a decision with sound mind: 'Well, today I feel to say *non*. *Non!* Last night did drunk. Everybody drunk, you ask me when I did drunk. This morning I have sense, and so is *non, non!*' (49). The invitation is undeniably withdrawn, ensuring that no 'ideality' may be constructed in this setting through the device of representing a harmonious, willing gathering of a small community of workers. The interactions taking place in this landscape are predominantly tense, antagonistic, and fraught with emotional trauma. Through basing a significant element of the plot on an unseen act of invitation, which is then withdrawn, Walcott cultivates a strong engagement with the anti-pastoral.

Romantic relationships form a significant component of the pastoral dramatic tradition, as noted by such critics as Nancy Lindheim (who nonetheless feels that it has been overstated, and merits less treatment than some scholars seek to offer).⁷³ In *Dauphin*, romantic relationships do not form a core element of the plot, but they are frequently referred to. The depiction offered is often problematic, marred by the suggestion of neglect, domestic violence and betrayal. For example, Afa is said to have 'beat his woman', and this is offered as the reason for his current isolation and misanthropic persona (51). The absent fisherman Debel is described as ill from alcohol poisoning, with the pun that 'Rum is a bad wife' suggestive of a toxicity in marital relationships in this play (46). Suffering is frequently related to *eros* in pastoral works, including pastoral drama, such as Rosalind's pining for Orlando in *As You Like It* and

⁷³ Lindheim, p.178.

the tense courtship of Perdita and Florizel in *The Winter's Tale*, but this despair is usually the result of a love which is unrequited, sabotaged or involving a separation through either explained circumstances or fatal tragedy. This theme is alluded to in *Dauphin*, made evident through Hounakin's grief for the loss of his wife Rama. Hounakin reflects in hindsight upon his suffering in the immediate aftermath of his wife's death, a subject he speaks of in verse, in a play which is predominantly written in prose, opening with the statement: 'Since she dead it have two days I only counting birds, | And even bird have woman, fisherman know' (66).⁷⁴ In this elegiac monologue – its metrical pattern, though irregular, leaning towards the genre of poetic pastoral elegy through its hexameters – Hounakin refers to the pastoral trope of romantic relationships existing between nonhuman subjects, in this case 'birds', whilst the human speaker is isolated. This leads to a moment of surrealism, as the birds gain the power of human speech, and an existential crisis ensues as he considers the concept of mortality, with an intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, its most famous line creolised:

But they still screaming: "Rama dead, old man, old man,
Rama dead."
To dead; what is to dead? not dead I fraid . . .
For old man that is nothing, wind. ⁷⁵
(66)

⁷⁴ As has already been outlined, birds are a recurring symbol in Walcott's poetry, and are often associated with death or mourning in pastoral settings, as indeed is the case here. The melancholic, elegiac poem number 12 of *The Bounty* similarly includes the presence of birds in this context: 'the way that the dead street does not expect a drizzle | hearing the dark dove coo and the blackbird whistle | in the thorn grove as a cool wind suddenly stirs | the bamboo plot [...] a blackbird drinks and shakes it off with two shudders | of its wings and vanishes across the wild garden' (p. 37). The mention of 'thorns' increases the strength of this allusion to the Theocritean pastoral tradition, as *Idyll 7* contains the lines: 'the muttering of tree-frogs | Rose off from the impenetrable thorn bush. | Larks and finches were singing, the turtle-dove moaned' (pp. 28-29). The thorns can be read as a reference to the pain of grief in both poems; for Walcott, there is an added layer of meaning, as it acts as a reference to the sacrifice of Christ's death and the Resurrection, consequently signifying potential redemption from the experience of pain and loss.

⁷⁵ This can be linked to Achille's declaration in *Omeros* that the trees must choose whether to 'be' (6).

The use of trochees and monosyllables, as well as the irregular line lengths, intensifies the mood of angst and confusion, as Hounakin ponders his existence without the presence of his wife, the ‘one woman’ he has loved for ‘fifty years’ (66). The apparent impossibility of facing such an existence is highlighted by the paradoxical metaphor of using ‘a net in you hand to catch the wind’ (66).

Hounakin’s experience of intense suffering as a result of romantic love and death is similar to those examples offered in the classical pastorals of Theocritus and Virgil, and is projected in verse in a further allusion to this tradition, however it is countered by the bathetic, disturbing reminders of violent exploitation in romantic relationships, most notably Afa’s harming of his wife, and the poignant reminder from Hounakin that Rama’s death was not simply the result of fate, but of economic obstacles in accessing treatment:

When Rama dying she did want more medicine,
You know we could not beg, but then I beg
For one whole year, then she catch sick again.
And Rama say no medicine we must not beg.
I did not want to beg and Rama die.
(67)

Walcott’s depiction of a firmly unidealized vision of Dauphin, one in which issues relating to human relationships and economic deprivation are highlighted, has led to an interest in the notion of ‘reality’ in this play. In a reading of *Dauphin*, Harry Garuba claims:

What is explored is the quotidian lives of the islanders in their own island home, away from the colonizer’s gaze. And here again, where travel brochures or palm-strewn beaches and glorious sunshine have constructed a marketable tourist paradise, the reality of the lives of the islanders rises in unmistakable refutation of this textual representation.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Garuba, pp. 66-67.

But, to quote 'Twilight', 'what was its truth?'; what is the 'reality' that Garuba is speaking of?⁷⁷ Whilst this chapter reinforces his argument that *Dauphin* resists and undermines romanticized, pastoral representations of the St Lucian setting, the terminology remains an issue. 'Reality' is a word which resists the attribution of clear meaning, as it is a pluralistic aspect of human experience; every individual's definition of 'reality' differs. The 'reality' of the lives of St Lucian fishermen is likely to differ from Walcott's own lived experience as a middle-class, university-educated islander from Castries, and to those predominantly city-dwelling audience members viewing the play. Moreover, the notion of 'reality' in the context of theatre is a thorny and complex issue. As J. L. Styan has observed: "'Realistic" is a slippery term in dramatic criticism'.⁷⁸ In part, this is due to the fundamental artificiality behind its existence; can an experience portrayed by an actor in an imagined setting surrounded by spectators ever be termed realistic? And realistic for who, exactly? As Styan points out: 'It is axiomatic that each generation feels that its theatre is in some ways more "real" than the last [...] It is, of course, the conception of dramatic reality which changes, and realism must finally be evaluated, not by the style of a play or a performance, but by the image of truth its audience perceives'.⁷⁹ In *Dauphin*, Afa's notion of 'reality' appears to differ to that of Augustin and Hounakin, as their world views both clash and converge. Augustin's is more of an optimistic voice, in comparison to Afa's world-weary, nihilistic perception of reality and Hounakin's melancholy, in a knowing reflection of the plural, diverse world views and experiences of the play's audiences. It is also worth revisiting Walcott's comment that 'Aristotle's first principle still holds: drama depends

⁷⁷ 'Twilight', p. 16.

⁷⁸ J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 1: Realism and Naturalism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 1.

⁷⁹ Styan, p. 1.

not on the imitation of reality, but on the imitation of action. Real action in theatre doesn't require any furniture or machinery'.⁸⁰ It is not, then, 'reality' which is of interest in *Dauphin*, but rather the effects of conflicting and competing ideologies, made apparent through its long stretches of dialogue, with each of Afa's monologues commented upon by his opposite, Augustin. *Mimesis* is not a core concern in this play, and these fishermen are not simply offered as representative characters allowing an audience to experience a 'representative anecdote' of an anti-pastoral dramatic vision, in contrast to the 'realism' of the Caribbean setting which Garuba alludes to.

It is, of course, clear that the direct contradiction of this play's depiction of poverty and hardship as opposed to the 'tourist paradise' depiction of this island widely disseminated outside the region is the 'reality' that Garuba seeks to highlight. However, as well as querying the clarity of this term, I remain unconvinced that this play's main intention or effect is the formation of a clear dichotomy between pastoral paradise in a touristic sense and a picture of economic deprivation. This play is, for Walcott, relatively uninterested in landscape imagery, its bleak setting described briefly in its opening and then rarely referred to again. Lindheim argues that pastoral's "nature," [...] is human nature. It is not a poetry about place. Caves, fountains, and trees are accidental rather than essential to its existence'.⁸¹ Similarly, *Dauphin* creates and sustains an emotional landscape through its characters; its priority is the subject of 'human nature' and social issues, so a range of human experiences takes focus, rather than the material surroundings. Nonetheless, my readings would support Garuba's contention that this play is one in which 'the islanders rather than the outsiders are

⁸⁰ Walcott in interview with Sharon Ciccarelli in 1977, in *Conversations*, p. 37.

⁸¹ Lindheim, p. 162.

focalized'.⁸² *Dauphin* makes use of characterisation and dialogue in order to explore complex thought processes, with a significant interest in psychological interiority. Through depicting fishermen, a fundamental trope of pastoral, Walcott may at first appear to be creating idealised, representative characters, symbolising the central themes of nihilism, the relationship between human and nonhuman subjects, the experience of suffering and mortality. However, through dialogue, dramatic action and intertextual allusions, the social fabric of this world is fragmented and each character individualised, transcending the restrictive literary categories of the piscatory pastoral tradition, and conventional pastoral drama more widely, and creating a play rich with anti-pastoral features.

Thieme observes that 'Afa and his fellow-fishermen provide an early instance of those who elude social entrapment, existing as they do outside the constraints of colonial society in a daily encounter with death'.⁸³ I would develop this point further, by suggesting that these characters resist not only 'social entrapment' in the context of the social structures presented on stage, but also 'entrapment' in restrictively symbolic or representational roles, to counteract the conventionality of this use of the fishermen type in the pastoral literary tradition. Whilst each character necessarily functions to an extent as a representative figure, the interest evidenced in constructing flawed, complex, psychologically convincing characters ensures that this role is not reductive. One of the most significant anti-pastoral elements at work is the emphasis on an unsettling mood, imbued with restlessness and fear, the result of the localized economic circumstances portrayed. This is a direct contrast to the expectations of

⁸² Garuba, p. 72.

⁸³ Thieme, p. 53.

pastoral as outlined by Lindheim, where ‘literary shepherds like Tityrus or Hobbinol offer [...] an image of “sparseness” without deprivation or anxiety’.⁸⁴ This is the product of Walcott’s own complex relationship to the process of representing the ‘poor’ for the purposes of art, as explored in ‘Twilight’, in which he reflects: ‘To be born on a small island, a colonial backwater, meant a precocious resignation to fate.’⁸⁵ The fatalistic strain is shared by both ‘Twilight’ and *Dauphin*, and is intricately linked to socioeconomic contexts: ‘The shoddy, gimcrack architecture of its one town, its doll-sized verandahs, jalousies and lacy eaves neatly perforated as those doilies which adorn the polished tables of the poor seemed so frail that the only credible life was nature’.⁸⁶ Continuing the romantic elevation at work in this section of the essay, this ‘nature’ is typified by an apparent absence of the human subject, ‘a nature without man, like the sea on which the sail of a canoe can seem an interruption’.⁸⁷ It is ‘a nature with blistered aspects: grey, rotting shacks, the colour of the peasant woman’s dress, which huddled on rocky rises outside the villages’.⁸⁸ In this image, the presence of poverty becomes a blot on the beauty of the landscape, its ‘blistered aspects’ an obstacle to the attempt to romanticise the island setting. However, ‘through nature one came to love the absence of philosophy, and, fatally, perhaps, the beauty of certain degradations’.⁸⁹ This suggestion of ‘beauty’ in ‘degradations’ is undoubtedly an example of the idealisation of poverty for aesthetic purposes, a process which is firmly resisted and critiqued in *Dauphin*. The use of the adverb ‘fatally’ implies a sense of ominousness is at work here, as Walcott recognises the dangers implicit in such a process. Moreover, it is noted that

⁸⁴ Lindheim, p. 162.

⁸⁵ ‘Twilight’ p. 14.

⁸⁶ ‘Twilight’, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

this is a reflective consideration of the mind of the young playwright, written from the perspective of hindsight, stressing the use of the past tense: 'In that innocent vagabondage one sought the poor as an adventure, an illumination'.⁹⁰

Walcott works to counter this impulse to romanticise poverty in 'Twilight', observing that 'in the bleached, unpainted fishing village streets everyone seemed salted with a reek of despair, a life, a theatre, reduced to elementals'.⁹¹ It is striking how closely this matches the opening description of the setting in *Dauphin*, a 'fishing village' which, through its colourless, 'grey' description, is projected as 'bleached, unpainted'. Through being 'unpainted' its aesthetic veneer is stripped; this is not a scene which Walcott wishes to verbally paint, but rather to present abstractly. However, paradoxically, through describing it he has solidified the vision in writing. He prioritises sensory experience: 'One worked to have the "feel" of the island, bow, gunwhales and stern as jealously as the fisherman knew his boat, and, despite the intimacy of its size to be free as a canoe out on the ocean'.⁹² This connection between fishermen and freedom, reminiscent of Heaney's 'Casualty', is comparatively absent from *Dauphin*, in which the fishermen remain physically trapped on shore for much of the action, and are trapped in their own mental suffering of grief, anger, depression and despair.

In her definition of pastoral drama, Scullion highlights the significance of song to this tradition, and music has formed a vital component of much of Walcott's dramatic output, with works such as *O Babylon* making strong use of music and song as a feature

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹² Ibid., p. 15.

of plot exposition, mood and characterisation.⁹³ In *Dauphin*, a ‘Chorus of Dauphin Women’ sing in St Lucian French Creole, the printed script offering the song in both this language and a version translated into English. The song, which is broadly written in ballad-like quatrains of iambic pentameter in both languages, deals with such pastoral themes as death (‘The sea took Bolo who was so brave [...] If I should die, don’t cry’); the role of herdsman (‘You have a little white sheep everyone knows’); a lack of material goods (‘I have no money to give you, I have no gold, | When I die, take this canoe that is too old’); religion (‘pray for me’); parting of lovers (‘farewell, my love’) and the relationship between man and the natural world (‘Pray for all men with only the wind in their hands | Farewell, my love, farewell, when fishermen die | There is no more bad luck and no more sea’) (70). The final stanza also contains an element of foreshadowing, the mention of ‘men with only the wind in their hands’ in this elegiac context a reference to Hounakin, whose death will shortly be announced. This use of song intensifies the allusions to the pastoral mode, as well as conveying key narrative points.

This play is suffused with existential angst, meditating upon the purpose of life, fatalism, nihilism, suffering and the often-fraught relationship between humanity and nature. Hounakin’s dog is found half-starved, several fishermen are said to have drowned in recent years, and an elderly man appears to kill himself due to despair and grief. The cyclical temporality intensifies the sense of unending trauma, as the play both begins and ends with Afa and Gacia on the shore, offering each other cigarettes and a drink. In its closing scene, the repetition of this sequence is explicitly stressed through the stage directions, as Afa: ‘*sits on the stage, exactly as he did before, wrapping some*

⁹³ Scullion, p. 455.

twine and smoking. [...] GACIA the fisherman comes in, his straw hat flapping, quite drunk' (76- 77). This sense of cyclical temporality, stasis and apparent leisure in a rural setting appears to conform to the expected conventions of a pastoral drama set in an Arcadia in one of its guises, but the construction of a cyclical rather than a linear temporality in this instance does not offer the setting a sense of sanctuary and liberation from the constraints of the urban realm, but rather ensures that it becomes a hellish space, caught in a cycle of misery, grief and death. The pattern seems set to continue, as Augustin is presented as the future Afa, increasingly world-weary and disillusioned after the death of his godfather, and his nephew Jules as the future Augustin in turn, hoping to join the 'sacred profession' of fishermen (74). Whilst the presence of human kindness may appear to be a redeeming feature in this otherwise bleak worldview – represented by Afa and Augustin's actions of catching fish for Hounakin and fetching a white shell for the grave of Rama – its true capacity for change is questioned by Afa in his response to Augustin's accusation of a lack of 'compassion':

And this new thing, compassion? Where is compassion? Is I does make poor people poor, or this sea vex? Is I that put rocks where should dirt by Dauphin side, man cannot make garden grow? [...] I born and deading in this coast that have no compassion to grow food for children, no fish enough to buy new sail, no twine.

(53)

As a result of the playwright's crafting of characters, temporality and mood, this compassionless space is preserved, the fishermen trapped within its relentless circling. Afa's questioning remains unresolved, the lexical choice '[w]here' rather than 'what' indicating that compassion may only be found elsewhere, the 'coast' region itself anthropomorphised as having 'no compassion to grow food'. The barrenness of the land which cannot make a 'garden grow' is a direct contradiction of the conventional representation of pastoral space, as is the declaration that fishing is not a sufficiently

productive activity to help these men buy a ‘new sail’, or ‘twine’, basic equipment required for this work. Altogether, I argue that *The Sea at Dauphin* is overwhelmingly anti-pastoral – perhaps more so than any other of Walcott’s works – depicting a rural setting far removed from an Arcadian idyll, fishermen who do not conform to representative pastoral types, an interrogation of religious allusions and imagery, and a fragmentation of the divide between sea, rural space and the urban realm. This is predominantly achieved through Walcott’s crafting of complex, flawed characters, who defy literary expectations of the pastoral mode. These St Lucian fishermen do not merely exemplify the ‘naked, pessimistic life’ described in ‘Twilight’, but evidence a transcending of the boundaries of restrictive conventions of the piscatory pastoral.

Representing the Sea and *Loci Amoeni* in *The Sea at Dauphin* and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*

The sea is a recurring symbol in Walcott’s work, present across his poetry, plays and prose writings. This is evident in both *The Sea at Dauphin* and *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*, two plays which rely on the sea as almost constantly present on stage. Both works deal with this in differing ways, and whilst *Dauphin* appears to embrace a concept of the sea as symbolic of death and nonlinear temporality, in *The Odyssey* the sea acts as a symbol of journeying and homecoming. I argue that the anti-pastoral strain at work in *Dauphin* ensures that the sea is projected both as a hellish space and as one detached from human emotion. In contrast, *The Odyssey* represents the sea as a place of sanctuary as well as threat, complicating the more direct rejection of the sea as a *locus amoenus* in *Dauphin*. Moreover, the sea is closely connected to language in *The*

Odyssey, presented as a productive source of human speech and a vehicle for conveying narrative rather than a symbol of loss and absence. Nonetheless, the anti-pastoral trope of inverting conventional depictions of *loci amoeni* remains present in those scenes in which the action takes place on land, engaged with, for example, in Odysseus's encounters with the realm of Polyphemus and Circe's island. In his projections of these settings, Walcott continues the processes pioneered in *Dauphin*, making use of elements of anti-pastoral through the interrogation and rejection of conventions of presenting idyllic spaces. Altogether, through comparing these contrasting depictions of the sea and classical *loci amoeni*, Walcott's strong engagement with anti-pastoral in *Dauphin* becomes increasingly evident, and the long-running nature of his interest in inverting expectations of presenting idyllic realms on stage is made clear, as well as the varying methods by which this is achieved.

Maeve Tynan claims: 'The role of the sea in the Caribbean imagination cannot be overstated'.⁹⁴ Indeed, 'existence in the archipelago seems to be at all times defined by the perpetual ebb and flow of tides, lived to the rhythm of its crashing breakers'.⁹⁵ As a result, the decision to focus on a seascape, rather than a landscape, would appear to be a logical choice in an island setting. Tynan continues to state: 'The trope of the sea in Walcott's poetics operates as a polyvalent figure. He reads the sea as a repository of the continual inscription and erasure of time and thus possessive of atemporality'.⁹⁶ Whilst the emphasis in this statement is upon his poetry, I would argue that this description could also be applied to Walcott's dramatic texts. The sea is a space which can conjure, for Walcott, a void, a space absent from human existence, most clearly

⁹⁴ Tynan, p. xiii.

⁹⁵ Tynan, p. xiii.

⁹⁶ Tynan, p. xviii

recognisable in the threatening, life-devouring sea depicted in *Dauphin*. This is, of course, a theme closely connected to the Caribbean's history, working to highlight the vast loss of life which took place at sea in consequence of the transatlantic slave trade, further evidencing Baugh's claim that there is 'no denial of the past' in Walcott's work.⁹⁷ In *The Odyssey*, the ocean appears less as a space of negation than as one which encourages a nonlinear sense of temporality, the constant transitions from prolepsis to analepsis often signalled by language rich in oceanic imagery. Rather than symbolising a space outside of human understanding and existence, one which symbolises death, the sea acts as both an active protagonist and antagonist in the action, propelling Odysseus equally towards places of danger and the long-sought for harbour of his home and family at Ithaca.

Thieme suggests that in *Dauphin* 'the sea comes to signify the existential condition and going to sea a primal encounter with death'.⁹⁸ Afa insists throughout that the sea is a source of danger, at once frustrating, frightening and protecting his fellow characters. This appears to conform to the definition of piscatory pastoral as indicating a greater awareness of 'physical danger' than those works which focus upon land-based agricultural labour, aligning the play more closely to this strand of the pastoral tradition.⁹⁹ At its opening, Afa indicates that the sea is distanced from both a human sense of temporality and grief:

GACIA

Garçon, to see a next day so like when Bolo drown ...
 [*Shakes his head*] I remember ...

AFA

But the sea forget.
 (47)

⁹⁷ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 10.

⁹⁸ Thieme, p. 52.

⁹⁹ Hubbard, p. 696.

The sea, he suggests, does not mourn their loss, personification implying a cruel detachment from human suffering. However, Gacia comes to its defence: ‘the sea do what it have to do, like wind, like birds’ (47). The mourning of nature for lost herdsmen is a fundamental element of the pastoral elegy, and in this case such generic expectations are subverted. The sea does not mourn human loss, but is bathetically represented as an unidealized, abstract, nonhuman force, which defies the conventions of the natural world more usually presented in the pastoral mode. Nonetheless, in its lack of compassion it reflects the accusations levied against Afa, implying a close bond between fisherman and sea. This is noted by Afa: ‘If it is compassion you want talk to the sea, ask it where Bolo bones, and Rafael, and friends I did have before you even born...’ (53). The personified ocean is presented as predatory, feeding on the humans who seek to gain nourishment from it and refusing them the dignity of burial. This nightmarish vision of the sea is a direct contradiction of any sense of this space as a *locus amoenus*, and its literary genealogy is closer to the famous pronouncement of Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* that ‘Nature’ is ‘red in tooth and claw’.¹⁰⁰ In Tennyson’s elegy, like Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’, this ominous view of nature is in part the result of a contemporary widespread anxiety surrounding religious faith. A similar process is at work in *Dauphin*; for Afa, who doubts and rejects the religious rhetoric of a representative of the Catholic Church, the sea is fundamentally a place of threat and brutality. For Gacia, whose faith remains unshaken, it is less sinister, exemplified by the fact that it is not, for him, an anthropomorphised presence. Instead, the sea simply

¹⁰⁰ Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed., by Erik Gray, 2nd edn (New York, London: Norton, 1973; repr. 2004) l. 15.

exists: ‘like wind, like birds’, like any other element of the natural world. The play offers no final resolution of these differing perspectives, instead cultivating an ambiguity surrounding the relationship between man and nature, religious doubt, and the cruelty of a humanised sea versus a non-personified recognition of it as a space outside of human psychology.

The sea is a source of sustenance and economic freedom in a very restricted sense in *Dauphin*, whilst it consistently poses a physical threat. This dichotomy is highlighted by the recurring metaphor of the sea as land. Afa states: ‘So I must work the sea, that is my pasture.’ (53). Through positioning himself in the position of land farmer, Afa strengthens the allusions to the pastoral mode, as well as highlighting the need for productivity from working the unpredictable sea. The possessive pronoun implies a sense of ownership reminiscent of the notion in the biblical book of Genesis of humans having dominion over land and sea, solidifying the suggestion of an Edenic pastoral space. The obligatory verb ‘must’ relates to the sense of ‘vocation’ attributed to fishermen in ‘Twilight’. However, whilst Afa blurs the divide between sea and land in this moment, he stresses its differences elsewhere. His outrage at Hounakin’s request to join this trade suggests a frustration with a lack of recognition of the contrast between working the land, which Hounakin has laboured upon for decades, and the amorphous, changing conditions of the sea:

What right a man is blind, two holes where had his eyes,
To work this sea? He think is land,
But you cannot plant it, the sea food does move,
And we must follow it. Today he will learn.
(53)

Nevertheless, like the *locus amoenus*, the sea is a place which exists inextricably

alongside death and grief. Afa indicates that he feels a sense of solace and consolation in the thought that he will, ultimately, die at sea rather than be laid to rest in the earth:

I cannot sleep on land, like Gacia.
The land is hard, this Dauphin land have stone
Where it should have some heart. The sea
It have compassion in the end.
(61)

This complicates what otherwise appears to be a clear, direct rejection of the sea as a *locus amoenus*, corresponding to the anti-pastoral dynamic at work in its depiction of fishermen, however it remains the case that the titular sea in *The Sea at Dauphin* is an ominous, unnerving force; a character in its own right, as has been observed by Thieme.¹⁰¹ In contrast, *The Odyssey* offers a frequently romanticised depiction of the sea, suggesting that it is rich with symbolic value as a source for art.

Odysseus's journeying brings both freedom and dislocation, moving between enchanted islands and ominous, austere shores.¹⁰² Although it is heavily indebted to its source text, it is important to note that the play is not simply a re-telling of Homer's epic, but rather a combination of adaptation, appropriation and critical commentary of its source material, incorporating both the contemporary Caribbean and the ancient Aegean into the same imagined space. It is predominantly written in loose hexameter lines, and its prosody evidences far more of an interest in poetic craftsmanship than *Dauphin*, aligning itself to the form of verse drama. There are clearly, then, significant variances in contexts, resources, language, style and staging between these two plays.

¹⁰¹ Thieme, p. 52.

¹⁰² This play was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, on 2 July 1992; it was commissioned by the company and directed by Greg Doran. It transferred to The Pit, Barbican in London on 22 June 1993.

Nonetheless, both centre the ocean as a vital element of plot and setting. Throughout performances of *The Odyssey*, a recording of waves was played, creating an atmosphere which allowed the sea to be ever-present in the minds of the audience.¹⁰³ The language is similarly dense with oceanic imagery: the ‘foam-haired philosopher’, ‘the weed-bearded waves’.¹⁰⁴ In these two dramatic works, however, the sea is presented in radically contrasting manners. In contrast, the treatment of coastal spaces in *The Odyssey* demonstrates notable similarities to the inversion of pastoral tropes which takes place throughout *Dauphin*, ensuring that an engagement with an anti-pastoral strain in representing these topoi remains consistently present across these otherwise drastically differing dramatic works.

Act One opens with the ‘*Sound of surf*’, followed by Billy Blue’s sung Prologue, outlining that this play will chart the journey of the ‘sea-smart Odysseus | Who the God of the Sea drove crazy and tried to destroy’ (1). This immediately centres the anthropomorphised sea as a main player in the action. However, the audience’s expectations are subverted; it soon becomes clear that Poseidon is not present as a humanised character in this play. As Tynan observes: ‘In Walcott’s *Odyssey*, the roles of the gods are greatly reduced in a psychological drama that raises the existential question of human agency’.¹⁰⁵ It is not the ‘God of the Sea’ who must be faced, suggests Tynan, but the process of journeying, and the act of *nostos*: ‘In this adaptation, it is not the sea- god that thwarts Odysseus’s efforts to return home but Odysseus himself’.¹⁰⁶ This feature relates the play to *Dauphin*, in which human subjects are portrayed as

¹⁰³ *The Odyssey*, Derek Walcott, dir. by Greg Doran (Royal Shakespeare Company Production, date of recording 27 July 1993) [on VHS and DVD]. Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁴ Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993), pp. 28, 37. Further references to page numbers in this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁰⁵ Tynan, p. 154.

¹⁰⁶ Tynan, p. 154.

distanced from the divine, far from the sacred space of the *locus amoenus*.

The sixteen-line formal Prologue speaks lyrically of the sea, as though of a poetic muse:

The shuttle of the sea moves back and forth on this line,

All night, like the surf, she shuttles and doesn't fall
Asleep, then her rosy fingers at dawn unstitch the design
(1)

This suggests that the sea is the proposed antagonist of this play, in a similar manner to *Dauphin*, although differing from the earlier work through also being positioned as a fertile source of language, a poetic inspiration for the poet-playwright. This theme continues throughout *The Odyssey*, as the sea becomes ever more intertwined with human speech through metaphor:

NESTOR

Through this world's pillars, the gate of human knowledge.

SECOND ATTENDANT

He's not the surf. He gets tired of his own speech.
(27)

Rather than a source of only threat and physical danger, in *The Odyssey* the sea is a source of artistic creativity.

The Prologue indicates that the setting is within an unnamed archipelago, '[p]assing smoke-blue islands', this ambiguity allowing the location to be read simultaneously as the ancient Aegean and the Caribbean, signifying Walcott's interest in offering innovative approaches to representing the Caribbean seascape and the

‘concept of simultaneity’ again in action. Through combining the two regions and temporalities, this portrayal of Odysseus’s journey becomes representative of the artistic process of appropriating this classical text for the modern audience. As Hardwick observes: ‘Also significant are his transplantation of classical names and allusions into a Caribbean context in a way that frees Homer from narrow association with Western European cultural traditions’ and ‘allows fresh encounter with a decolonised culture, which uses a variety of linguistic idioms, including Creole’.¹⁰⁷ It is not only Homer, however, who is freed from this ‘narrow association’ with Europe, but the pastoral mode as well.

The imagery in Billy Blue’s Prologue is elemental: ‘So my blues drifts like smoke from the fire of that war’, implying the Petrarchan techniques of paradoxes and oxymorons drawn from the natural world, adding to the metaphor of the sea as a poetic muse (1). Rather than Laura, it is the sea which is the source of both idealisation and fear in this play, its vastness resulting in both wonder and horror: ‘That sea’s so wide birds take a year to cross it’; ‘From Poseidon’s charging herd, the unbridled waves’, the reference to a ‘herd’ furthering the innovative play upon Walcott’s ‘bucolic scaffolding’ (26; 24). It also represents the interior psychology of characters such as Odysseus and Nestor, the latter of whom is described by his First Attendant in a manner which connects his thought processes to the ocean: ‘His mind’s a sea-mist now’ (27). The sea is presented as an almost mystic presence in *The Odyssey*, its powers including the paradoxical connecting and distancing of characters across vast distances, signalling the Walcottian characteristic of the sea as a space symbolic of the collapsing

¹⁰⁷ Lorna Hardwick, “‘Shards and suckers’”: contemporary receptions of Homer’, *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. by Robert Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 344-362 (pp. 355-356).

of temporalities and physical distances, as has been explored in my readings of *Omeros*. For example, when seeking his father, Telemachus positions himself on the beach, and cries:

TELEMACHUS

ECHO ME, ISLANDS! ODYS-SEUS! ODYSEE ...

ECHO

SEA, SEA, SEA . . . ODYSEEEE . . .

TELEMACHUS

I WANT TO SEE YOU, FATHER!

ECHO

FARTHER,

FARTHER . . .

(36-37)

In this scene, the sea offers a temporal and geographic bridge between Telemachus and Odysseus, the punning echo imparting the knowledge that his father is on the same sea that Telemachus looks upon, but also that he is located a great distance away in human terms, ‘farther’ than Telemachus may realise. This, alongside the sound of ‘*Surf, sibilance*’, functions as a transition into the following scene, in which Odysseus appears on stage, at sea, imagining himself at home: ‘Those waves are leaves in my garden’; ‘My stone bench anchored in a foam of white flowers’ (42; 43). The sea here becomes a nostalgic glimpse of the *locus amoenus* of his garden in Ithaca, a place which he describes as a sanctuary, ‘the lawn’ over which a protective ‘hunched oak towers’ (43).

He claims that he would exchange his freedom and adventuring on the ocean for a return to this idyll: 'I'd give up all this heaving for one yard of earth' (39). These descriptions suggest that the sea acts as a positive force for pastoral representation in this play, with a further, almost direct reference to *Idyll XXI*, when Stratis asks: 'What've you got from the sea? A fistful of silver', in a reflection of the gold fish caught by the fishermen of this ancient pastoral (41).

Nonetheless, whilst evidently less nihilistic and more romanticised, *The Odyssey* is not without elements of anti-pastoral in its treatment of *loci amoeni*, in the style of *Dauphin*. However, these are most clearly present in scenes which take place on land. In Scene VIII of Act One, Odysseus and his men find themselves in a bleak coastal setting: '*A long, grey, empty wharf. A sheep's carcass, gutted, hanging from a pole. An oil drum rolls on*' (60). The dead sheep is not only a signifier that the realm of Polyphemus has been entered, but also a symbol of an anti-pastoral strain at work, the disfigured animal, so intrinsically linked to the pastoral tradition, representing a direct and unsettling inversion of pastoral tropes. Rather than a *locus amoenus* typified by lush foliage, grazing livestock and herdsmen, this isolated space is as 'grey' as the setting of *Dauphin*, imbued with a pervading sense of ominousness and closely connected to the urban environment, the oil drum signifying capitalist structures rooted to the city. As Eurylochus observes, 'This is frightening, sir. What kind of city is this?' (60). Unlike the more usual depiction of an urban setting, this is a realm detached from leisure or entertainment, there is 'no art, no theatre, no circuses', it is rather a peopleless, empty, even dystopian space: 'Like one long Sabbath, an infinite, empty wharf' (60; 62). Indeed, Hardwick identifies an Orwellian allusion at work in this setting, with the

Cyclops ‘presented as an Orwellian tyrant, characterised by the Eye’.¹⁰⁸ In my reading, the Cyclops is not only symbolic of the corruption of power, but acts as a proponent of anti-pastoral, achieved through the vital role that Polyphemus plays in the pastoral tradition. As Lindheim explains: ‘It is significant for our misperception of love in pastoral that the most influential lover in this corpus has been Polyphemus, Homer’s scary monster transformed into a youthful grotesque in *Idylls* 6 and 11’.¹⁰⁹ Walcott restores the Homeric emphasis upon terror, whilst alluding to the pastoral reincarnations of this character through repeated references to shepherds and sheep: ‘The Eye’s their shepherd, and the nation are his sheep’, ‘Lower your heads, you sheep! The Great Shepherd is here’, ‘What flocks do you have? Goats, sheep?’ (61; 63; 69). The horror is increased by the Cyclops’s simile when announcing the eating of Odysseus’s men: ‘Know what you’re eating? Your men. As good as sheep’ (67). Altogether, the space becomes one of horror, a direct inversion of the *locus amoenus*, an affirmation to Odysseus’s question ‘So this city is nothing but a giant cave?’ (61).

Unlike Polyphemus’s realm, the setting of Circe’s island at first appears to be idyllic, a ‘*beach*’ which offers bounteous natural resources through its ‘*Rich wild plantains*’, a space for leisurely activity and a mood of *otium*: ‘*Some of the crew lolling. A woman playing a drum*’, with the presence of lush natural flora: ‘That red flower nodding in agreement with the grass’ (72). However, the sense of threat and cruelty so central to the previous scene continues in this apparently archetypal *locus amoenus*, as the sailors’ sudden ‘indifference’ and leisurely postures are the result of having been drugged by this ‘red flower’, its ‘perfume’ inducing a ‘sleeping sickness’ (72). The

¹⁰⁸ Hardwick, “Shards and suckers”, p. 353.

¹⁰⁹ Lindheim, p. 180.

stillness, rather than peaceful, becomes lethargic and threatening, the result of the confident advances of a predatory force: ‘Here the lion takes a whole afternoon to yawn’ (73).¹¹⁰ Odysseus’ sailors are tricked into the belief that they have entered an Arcadian realm, an ‘island that has all you desired’, where they may ‘[y]ield like a lily to the weight of years’, when the reality is that they have entered the domain of Circe, a powerful sorceress (73). Their intoxication with the pastoral vision allows them to be willing participants of the illusion, despite a knowledge of its dangers: ‘The grave is coming towards us. No need to move’ (74). Innovatively, Walcott combines song with this vision, as the Chorus sing the name of the classical island, with lyrics which make use of linguistic structures associated with the Caribbean archipelago:

Aeaea
Aeaea
Aeaea
[...]
My emerald island
Between blue sea, and blue sky
[...]
Bacchanal
And carnival
Is the place to go
O Lord have mercy
Before I dead
Let me lie down with Miss Circe
Stroking me head
(75).

Thus, the island of Homer’s mythology is combined with the Caribbean, the ‘Bacchanal’ with the ‘carnival’, ensuring that an anti-pastoral strain is at work in both of Walcott’s depictions of land-based spaces in the Caribbean: the titular *Dauphin* and the realm of Circe in *The Odyssey*.

¹¹⁰ This connection between *otium*, lethargy and threat can be compared to poem XLIII, viii of the collection *Midsummer*, as it has been explored in the first chapter of this thesis.

As a result, it becomes clear that, despite their drastically differing styles and subject matter, there are fundamental similarities at work in terms of connections to the pastoral mode – and specifically its anti-pastoral strain – in both *The Sea at Dauphin* and *The Odyssey*, made evident through the methods by which each depict *loci amoeni*. Whilst the sea is presented in radically contrasting ways – a symbol of nihilism and death in *Dauphin*, compared to a romanticized source of artistic creativity in *The Odyssey* – both plays incorporate anti-pastoral conventions in their presentation of land-based bucolic spaces, appropriating Homeric, Theocritean and Virgilian source texts to offer radical reimaginings of these settings, freed from idealisation and restrictive literary models.

CONCLUSION

In an interview in 1966, Walcott referred to himself and certain of his contemporaries as ‘provincial or regional writers’.¹ This is not, he hastens to add, to refer to provincialism in the ‘narrow sense’, but to suggest that such writers evidence ‘a deeper communion with things that metropolitan writers no longer care about, or perhaps cannot care about. And these things are attachments to family, earth and history’.² Such a comment appears to indicate a recognition, even an acceptance, of fundamental elements of the pastoral mode: the contrast between urban and rural spaces, the emphasis upon humanity’s relationship to the ‘earth’ and to each other, a sense of spiritual ‘communion’ with the natural world in the manner of the Romantic pastoral, and a placing of importance upon a dichotomous distinction between the present and the past. However, this thesis has sought to demonstrate that Walcott’s engagements with pastoral are far from straightforward. There is no sustained, unquestioning acceptance of the foundational tropes of the pastoral mode or of the pastoral tradition, but rather an overarching cultivation of ambiguity, ambivalence and complexity in all interactions with its themes and conventions, in a process that is ultimately transformative of the mode itself.

The dominant effect of this complexity and ambivalence is to negate any sense of reductive imitation of a literary model which carries loaded ideological implications. As Jonathan Bate has observed: ‘The idealized pastoral realm of “Arcadia” was invented two thousand years ago by Virgil, the supreme poet of urbanity, of the city, of Roman

¹ Derek Walcott, in interview with Carl Jacobs in 1966, ‘There’s No Bitterness in Our Literature’, in *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), pp. 3-6 (first publ. in *Sunday Guardian* (Trinidad), 22 May 1966, 9), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

imperialism. You only need Arcadia when your reality is Rome'.³ The pastoral mode, evidently, has a long history of connections to imperialism. As Philippe Hackens argues: 'it is certainly more than a mere coincidence that the pastoral should appear in the period following the conquests of Alexander', thus coinciding with 'an age of expansion for Western civilization in which Greek culture was confronted with its Eastern "other"'.⁴ It then reappeared during the Renaissance, 'another period of Western expansion and assimilation of various forms of otherness'.⁵ That this aesthetic mode was employed by colonial writers and artists ensured it would influentially shape the wider tradition of artistic representations of the Caribbean. It is this problematic legacy which Walcott directly confronts: the associations between Caribbean landscapes and the pastoral mode. These associations, which result from European cultural hegemony in the region, are navigated via methodologies which elevate pluralistic ways of seeing and transformative approaches to key features of the mode. The notes of ambiguity and ambivalence become effective methods of undercutting Eurocentricity, allowing a radical reinterpretation of the pastoral mode in the light of an emerging canon of Caribbean literature, and the use of its tropes and motifs for a productive exploration of methods of representing this setting.

Walcott outlines his ambition to produce a poetry which declares its inspiration and muse to be the contemporary Caribbean setting and its inhabitants: 'There is a force of exultation, a celebration of luck, when a writer finds himself witness to the early morning of a culture that is defining itself, branch by branch, leaf by leaf, in that self-defining dawn'.⁶ Throughout his poetry and dramatic writings, he consistently

³ Bate, pp. 73-74.

⁴ Hackens, p. 15.

⁵ Hackens, p. 15.

⁶ Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 79.

demonstrates a fascination with the natural world. In Walcott's poetry and plays, the Caribbean landscape or seascape is frequently centred as a subject in itself. Nonetheless, Walcott refutes the suggestion that he is in any way 'dependent on landscape' in his work.⁷ Rather, the significance lies in the representation of the relationship between humanity and nature. Trees – and specifically their destruction – are a recurring metaphor, the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life transformed into symbols of history, rootedness, and solace, the loss of trees mourned in an inverted interpretation of the pastoral elegy, in which nature mourns the human subject. However, as George Handley argues: 'Walcott's nature is neither a sign of the Eternal Garden nor the inevitable victim of human destruction. It becomes a sign of an always ending, always dying present that paradoxically makes poetic language potentially always new and new futures always possible'.⁸ The pastoral mode is, fundamentally, a tool for exploring connections between humanity and the nonhuman, and human relationships with one another. It is employed by Walcott as a vital aspect of a psychological enquiry into the relationship between human subjectivity and nature, and the role that art can play in mediations between the physical environment and the mind.

Despite his open dialogue with its major themes and tropes, Walcott's engagements with the pastoral mode have been widely overlooked, including in the fields of Walcott studies, examinations of contemporary pastoral poetry and drama and, indeed, poetry studies and Caribbean studies more widely. However, as this thesis has

⁷ Derek Walcott, in interview with Dennis Scott in 1968, *Conversations*, p. 14.

⁸ Handley, 'Poetics of the Environment', p. 202.

demonstrated, this dialogue offers a vital insight into Walcott's central artistic aims and techniques of craftsmanship. It allows for a transformative approach to the classical tradition, one in which the concept of simultaneity – a feature so important to Walcott's sustaining of an examination of teleological notions of historicity and rejection of linear chronologies – is elevated through a narrative structure which resists the depiction of temporality and teleological ideology more commonly associated with the epic genre, in favour of the creation of a narrative framework which avoids a central, linear progression, thus refuting the proprietorship over plot that is so closely associated with epic narrative structures. It explores the concept of the *locus amoenus*, alongside its associations with the biblical Eden, resisting reductive idealisation and instead positing a notion of pluralistic 'second' Edens, ones which evade the reductive impulse of nostalgia and signify a rich, creatively fertile present and future. It allows for an artistic manifesto based upon ways of seeing, the fragmentation of visual perspectives, and a profound exploration of the eternalizing gaze in art, associating this with the loaded concept of negation. It facilitates an interrogation of the role that human subjects should play in poetry and dramatic writings, with techniques of characterisation that allow for a complex engagement with the archetype of heroes, and representations of experiences of poverty which resist the processes of idealisation and marginalisation.

'The best actors in the world', remarks Polonius in *Hamlet*, are 'for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited'.⁹ This farcical categorization of literary models is well-deserved; circulated definitions and

⁹ Shakespeare, 'Hamlet', ll. 398-401.

interpretations of pastoral are various and wide-ranging, and the mode blends into the form of a bricolage with such genres as epic and tragedy. However, this does not limit its importance for expressions, and indeed interrogations, of distinct ideologies. Through employing tropes of the pastoral mode, Walcott explores major themes: representations of the natural world, illness and death, religion, history, colonialism and postcolonialism, and love in a variety of its forms. The result of these interactions is the creation of a Walcottian type of pastoral, one which evades reductive idealisation, regressive nostalgia and restrictive uses of aesthetic models, in favour of a creative and profound engagement with pastoral's core themes.

This thesis has sought to follow four main research threads: the notion of second Edens and connections between Edenic symbolism, the pastoral mode and Caribbean landscapes; the dialogue with the classical tradition present in Walcott's poetry and plays and his transformative approach to classical bucolic writings; references to the pastoral mode in the tradition of the visual arts and the concepts of both plural ways of seeing and the eternalizing gaze; representations of fishermen and Caribbean spaces and the idealisation of poverty. Walcott's writings are a rich resource for the scholar of pastoral, containing highly complex and innovative approaches to an aesthetic model which dates from the ancient world, and has seen a huge variety of interpretations and iterations. His copious writings offer critics an important insight into the role that pastoral may play in poetics and dramaturgy in the modern day, and in their tendency towards metapoetry allow Walcott a significant critical voice of his own, one which contemplates the generic criteria to which his work alludes, his influences, aims and inspirations.

Through highlighting and analysing Derek Walcott's engagements with the

pastoral mode, I hope to encourage further research into areas of Walcott studies which hitherto remain overlooked, and to enrich understandings of vital elements of Walcott's poetic and dramatic craftsmanship, influences and dialogues with genres and modes. I argue that Walcott's interactions with the epic genre, in particular, have been overstated and widely misinterpreted, at the expense of a fuller understanding of the range of generic criteria with which he engages, and the defamiliarization, deconstruction and transformative power at the heart of these interactions. I suggest that the impulse of nostalgia, which is closely associated with the pastoral mode, is reimagined as a force that looks to the present and to the future, without disregarding the trauma and significance of the past; rather, it qualifies future temporalities through the lens of a recognition of the irredeemable horrors of history. There is no sense of an Eden regained in Walcott's writings, rather Edens transformed, fully aware of the corruption of their original state. The pastoral pictorial tradition is employed as a frame of references available for the exploration of dynamism and stasis in Caribbean spaces, involving a rejection of the charge of negation through an insistence upon artistic, and specifically linguistic, creativity. The landscape is freed from tightly defined conventions of pastoral representation, an active subject rather than an object, involved in its own depiction through the mediation between material landscape and artist. Finally, the process of idealisation, a concern Walcott highlights in 'What the Twilight Says', is firmly undercut and inverted in *Dauphin*. Through its embracing of nihilism, fatalism and further elements of the anti-pastoral, this play evidences the complexity of Walcott's engagements with this mode. The result is a profound examination of human subjects seemingly distanced from the divine, outside of the sacred space of the *locus*

amoenus; ‘humanity *in extremis*’, to employ Baugh’s insightful description.¹⁰

The ultimate result of these engagements is the transformation of the pastoral mode into a valuable, relevant means of artistic expression in the contemporary, postcolonial context, and an interrogation of its past iterations. I refer to this as a Walcottian pastoral, one which is employed for the self-declared aim of the creation of:

Verse crisp as sand, clear as sunlight,
Cold as the curled wave, ordinary
As a tumbler of island water¹¹

The natural world is intricately tied to poetics for Walcott, and, as a result, pastoral’s emphasis upon the relationship between human subject and rural space constitutes a significant tool in navigating this style of poetic craftsmanship. It is easy to disregard the pastoral mode as frivolous, artificial, and, to quote Greg Garrard, ‘really, possibly irredeemably, problematic’.¹² Many pastoral poems, plays and artworks have fulfilled all these descriptors. However, Walcott evidences that the mode can be productively interrogated and explored for both commentary upon and the expression of major artistic themes and ideologies. It is important that literary critics come to terms with the fact that the pastoral merits serious recognition and analysis.

This thesis has sought to evidence that Walcott’s pastoralism is highly innovative, focused upon the present and the future rather than reductively nostalgic, invested in an investigation into the relationship between the human subject and rural space as well as the mediation between physical environments and artistic expression, informed but not constrained by past iterations of the mode, employed for a navigation

¹⁰ Baugh, *Derek Walcott*, p. 69.

¹¹ Derek Walcott, ‘Islands’, in *In A Green Night*, p. 77.

¹² Garrard, ‘Radical Pastoral?’, p. 459.

of colonial and postcolonial history and identity, and, consequently, entirely worthy of greater recognition and analysis. Through his poetry and plays, Walcott reinvents pastoral, creating a pastoral type which is typified by optimism, dynamism and a rethinking of the Caribbean space and its representation in art.

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