

DEREK WALCOTT'S ONE ENDEAVOUR

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In 1970 Derek Walcott dedicated a collection of his dramas, Dream On Monkey Mountain And Other Plays, to his twin brother Roderick also a distinguished playwright. "For my brother, Roderick," the dedication reads, "engaged as long in the one endeavour." What was that endeavour? Thirty four years later in The Prodigal, his most recent book length poem, Walcott seems to provide an answer to this question. "What was our war, veteran of three score years and ten?" (51), he asks Roderick, and the answer he gives for Roderick, for Roderick is now dead, "To save the salt light of the island, to protect and exalt its small people" (51), seems to tell us what the endeavour was that he and his brother were engaged in for so long, and also, coming as it does in what he says will be his "last book" (99) to sum up the central theme of his life's work .

I begin with Walcott's famous 'dividedness,' often mentioned both by his critics and admirers and also by himself, as for example when he describes himself in his famous poem "A Far Cry from Africa" as "divided to the vein." Here the epigraph to "The Divided Child," the first chapter of Walcott's masterpiece Another Life, should prove helpful. It is a passage from André Malraux's Psychology of Art and its concluding sentences read as follows:

But according to the true biographies, it is never the sheep that inspire a Giotto with the love of painting: but, rather, his first sight of the paintings of such a man as Cimabue. 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. (Qtd. in Walcott, 1)

Malraux's point is obviously about painting or perhaps more generally representational art. Although Walcott is primarily a poet (he is also a gifted painter, but that may not be relevant here), the fact that he chose Malraux's passage to introduce a chapter in his autobiographical book length poem suggests that he believes that the passage is true of him, when he was in his youth and that it helps explains or at least has something to do with his dividedness. The first point, namely, that he believes that the passage is true of him, seems reasonable. I am not sure that all poetry is representational art, but some of it appears to be. That is, some poetry appears to portray things. For example, Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," and countless other English lyrics seem to portray or at least be about daffodils. So I will suppose that Walcott believes that it was true of him when he was a child that he was more deeply moved by poetry than by the things that poetry portrays, and that this was the case because he was going to be a poet.

Indeed, it seems that Walcott holds a position here that is perhaps a little stronger than Malraux's. After telling us in "The Muse of History" that, "like any colonial child I was taught English literature as my natural inheritance" (62), he adds that "the snow and the daffodils" (62) presumably as described in the poems in that literature, "were real, more real than the heat and the oleander" (62). I take this to mean that the snow and the daffodils that he grew up reading about in English poems as a child in tropical St. Lucia were more "real" to him, I suppose more deeply moving, than the "heat and the oleander" that were all around him.

This is a stronger claim than Malraux's. Malraux says that for the artist as child art is more deeply moving than the things that it portrays. But Walcott does not say that English poems about daffodils were more deeply moving than the things those poems portrayed, namely, daffodils; he could not say that because he had never ever seen daffodils. He says that the poems were more deeply moving than the oleander that he did see, clearly implying that, at least for himself as a child fated to be an artist, art (presumably good art, for example a poem by Wordsworth) was more deeply moving than nature in general.

What can be said in favor of these views? Malraux's thesis – that the artist as a youth is more deeply moved by works of art than by the things that they portray – is substantive and

even controversial. Is it true? As the passage itself intimates, that thesis seems contradicted by the more straightforward apparently commonsensical view that the artist in his youth is more deeply moved by the beauties of nature than by works of art that portray those beauties, and that it is the beauties of nature that inspire him to become an artist.

And of course Walcott's thesis, or implied thesis, that great art is always more deeply moving, not only of the things that it portrays, but of nature in general, seems even stronger, and therefore more controversial, than Malraux's. Should not he as a child have been more moved by the tropical beauty around him, the oleander, than by flowers that he had only read about?

Of course, there are critics of Walcott who will insist that he was more deeply moved by the daffodils than by the oleander because he wanted to be an English poet, and deeper down, an Englishman, and even deeper down, white. But he seems to believe that the Malraux passage, or his own stronger version of that passage, better explains his childhood attitude to poems about daffodils and to oleander, and I suggest that we consider his explanation before we consider ad hominem speculation.

What then can be said in favor of Malraux's / Walcott thesis? There is a suggestive discussion in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's essay "On the Origin of Languages." He wrote there:

Beautiful colours, nicely modulated give the eye pleasure, but that pleasure is purely sensory. It is the drawing – that endows these colours with life and soul, it is the passions they express that succeed in arousing our own. (278)

Rousseau is not making *exactly* the same claim as either Malraux or Walcott. He is not speaking of future artists, but of everyone; and he is not contrasting art with nature. He is contrasting the impact of a drawing or painting (presumably of something in nature) with the impact of pretty colours on a canvas. But I think that his claim can easily be extended to include a claim about nature. After all, beautiful or pretty colours abound in nature. This suggests that the contrast Rousseau is making is between a work of art and nature, that is, something purposely done by another human being, in order to express passion is more deeply moving than the random colours of nature, however beautiful they might be.

As I noted, Rousseau made the above claim in his essay "On the Origin of Languages." It was meant to support his main point, in his debate with the musician Rameau, concerning the relative contributions that melody and harmony make to music. Rousseau gave the prize to melody. He maintained that music owed its power to give pleasure more to its melody than to its harmony. Harmony is simply a combination of sounds that is pleasing to the ear. Melody is a tune written by a human being. "Everyone," he wrote, "will take pleasure in listening to beautiful sounds; but unless this pleasure is enlivened by familiar melodic inflections it will not be totally delightful, it will not become utter pleasure" (281). His argument for that claim was that in a melody "sounds act on us not only as sounds but as signs of our affections, of our sentiments; that is how they arouse in us the emotions that they express and the image of which we recognize in them" (283). The similarity of this claim to the earlier one about paintings and beautiful colours should be clear. Just as in a drawing a human being arranges colours so as to express emotions, so in a melody a human being arranges *sounds* to express emotion; and in both cases the pleasure derived from art, whether it is melody or drawing, is more deeply satisfying than the pleasure derived from colours and sounds that no human being has arranged to express emotion, however beautiful and pleasing to eye and ear these colours and sounds may be. And presumably art remains superior to beautiful colours and sounds as they occur in nature, for of course nature does not purposely arrange these colours and sounds so as to express emotion.

We can think of Rousseau as making three points here. First, there is a distinction between the purely sensory and fairly superficial pleasure we can get from beautiful sounds and

colours, and the pleasure that we get when someone arranges sounds so as to make melodies and colours so as to make drawings or paintings. Second, melodies and drawings arouse emotions in us by expressing emotions. Third, the pleasure derived from emotions aroused by art that expresses emotion is more deeply satisfying than the pleasure derived from beautiful sounds and beautiful colours.

For example, on this account a person in a beautiful wilderness would find its sounds and colours pleasurable, but would not be deeply moved by them. But she would be deeply moved, or at least more deeply moved, by a less beautiful *garden* that some human being had designed (successfully we assume) to express emotion. Or again, a flute, well played to express emotion, is always more deeply moving than the sounds of a babbling brook, though those sounds may be more beautiful than the sounds of a flute. (Here of course I make the assumption that the brook was not designed by some human hand to babble in a way that expresses emotion.)

It would be a serious misreading of Rousseau to attribute to him the view that art is more deeply moving than nature because art arouses emotion, nature does not, and the pleasure of aroused emotion is always more satisfying than the pleasure of beautiful sounds and colours that nature provides. This view is not Rousseau's, and a good thing too, for it is false, even absurdly so, for at least three reasons. First, the passage says that nature does not arouse emotion, but of course, nature *does* arouse emotion. Hurricanes, tornadoes, and storms arouse fear, and indeed, one would not be far wrong to say that many emotions would be pointless if nature did not arouse them. We have many emotions precisely because in being aroused by nature these emotions alert us to its dangers and opportunities.

Second, the experience of many emotions is not pleasurable. Where is the pleasure in fear, terror, horror, sorrow, sadness, regret, resentment, humiliation, and so on and on? And it is no accident that these emotions are painful. Take fear again for example. Typically, we are afraid when we believe we are in danger and the belief that we are in danger is hardly likely to be pleasurable. And similarly for many other emotions like terror, horror, sorrow, and dread: they are not pleasurable because they all involve a belief that something is the case that we would very much prefer to be not the case. (And this is to say nothing of the unpleasant physiological goings on that typically accompanies emotions.) A somewhat different analysis may explain why other emotions like pity and compassion are also not pleasant. These emotions may not imply a belief that we ourselves are in danger, as in the case of fear, and they may to some extent be pleasurable. For example, Rousseau admits in Book 4 of *Émile* that pity is a "sweet sentiment" (229) insofar as it involves believing that one is not in the position of the pitied. But they are overall often burdensome rather than pleasurable because they dispose us to do something for the pitied that we often do not want to do.

Taken together these two points imply that the reason why the experience of art is always more pleasurable than the experience of nature is not that nature arouses no emotions, or that art arouses emotion and the experience of emotion is always pleasurable.

A third reason why the view mistakenly attributed to Rousseau above is false is that nature often arouses emotions the experience of which is pleasurable. Nature does not only arouse fear, horror, terror, and so on. I am not thinking primarily of emotions like love, for as we know, love can be painful. I am thinking of emotions like awe, wonder, and perhaps elation, which are typically and most strongly aroused by nature. These emotions seem very much to be pleasurable, and indeed to be deeply so. Consequently, since nature does arouse pleasurable emotions, it seems that we are left with no good reason to say that the experience of art is always more pleasurable than the experience of nature.

So let us state Rousseau's position carefully. It is this: art is more deeply moving than nature because art arouses emotion by expressing emotion, and emotion so aroused, is always more deeply moving than the pleasure of beautiful sounds and colours that nature provides in good measure, and also than whatever pleasure is derived from the emotions that nature arouses.

There are of course complications. I think I am safe in assuming that nature has no emotions and therefore cannot express any. But what about false beliefs which, of course, can be of many different kinds? Could someone be deeply moved by the sounds of a babbling brook as much as by the sounds of a well played flute, if she believed, *falsely*, that the brook was designed by some human or other hand to express emotion? Or what if she believed that all of nature is a work of art created by God to express his emotions, for example his love of humanity? Or again, what of someone who imagined, but did not believe, that someone designed the brook as a work of art to express his emotions, or that God created nature as a work of art to express his love of humanity? I will try to take up these issues presently.

Setting them aside for the present, what can be said in favor of Rousseau's position? Indisputably people often enjoy experiencing emotions that are aroused by the expression of emotion in art. Indeed, in this way we often enjoy the experience of emotions that would be downright painful if they were aroused by nature. Rousseau gives the story of the tyrant Sulla who enjoyed the theatre because the dramas made him weep with pity, but avoided actual pity like the plague for he persecuted his subjects pitilessly. And, of course, we flock to see horror movies precisely to be frightened.

But the question remains: although many emotions aroused by nature are painful or burdensome, some are not. We have seen that nature arouses or can arouse many pleasurable emotions. Wonder, awe, delight, elation, for example. Why is the pleasure so aroused always less deeply pleasurable than the emotion aroused by the expression of emotion in art? Consider Wordsworth's famous lines from "The Rainbow":

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;

The rainbow is nature. And Wordsworth certainly seems to be telling us that as a boy he was filled with wonder and awe when he beheld a rainbow. In other words, a rainbow, which is a part of nature and can therefore *express* no emotion, directly aroused the deeply pleasurable emotions of wonder and awe in Wordsworth. The poem is art. It arouses wonder and awe too for its readers, but not directly, like the rainbow, but by its expression of wonder and awe. Rousseau seems to be telling us that we are likely to be more deeply moved by Wordsworth's poem than by the rainbow that aroused the emotions that it expresses. And if Walcott is right, at least the poet or artist in his youth, if not everyone, will be more deeply moved by Wordsworth's poem than by the rainbow that aroused the emotions it expresses. Can either Rousseau or Walcott be right?

An affirmative answer seems deeply counterintuitive. We tell people to go see the Grand Canyon if they want to experience a lifetime thrill. If Rousseau is right, we should tell them instead to go read a poem about the Grand Canyon. This seems absurd. Further, Wordsworth's famous account about the writing of poetry also makes Rousseau's view seem absurd. In the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth claimed that poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins. (665)

In other words, poetry is the expression of an emotion recollected in tranquility. But why should, indeed, how *could*, a *recollected* emotion be more powerful than the original of which it is a recollection? If the recollection is exact, it can at best be just as powerful as, but not more powerful than, its original.

To help out Rousseau at this point we should concentrate on the fact already emphasized that his point is not that art is deeply moving just because it arouses emotion, but that it is deeply moving because it arouses emotion by *expressing* emotion. If we can make sense of this perhaps we will see what he is driving at.

I just noted in the above paragraph that a recollected emotion could at best be equal in power to its original. This sounds obvious. I hope it does, for that is why I said it. But it is not obvious. Suppose that when an emotion is recollected in tranquility or, more cautiously, suppose that when an emotion is recollected in the right way, something very important is added to the emotion? In that case, it would not seem at all odd or counterintuitive that an emotion, recollected *in the right way*, may be more powerful than its original.

This is what I will try to do. That is, I will try to show that when an emotion is recollected in the right way something important is added to it that makes it in a sense more powerful than the original. To tie this back to Rousseau's claim about the power of expressed emotion, I will argue that recollecting an emotion in the right way is just what we mean by expressing an emotion.

I will begin by trying to explain what goes on when emotion is expressed in art. Then I will try to show why it makes sense to say that expressing emotion in art is like or even identical to recollecting it in the right way and that this involves adding something to the original emotion. It will then be clear why, if not Rousseau, then at least Walcott and probably Malraux, are right to say that the future artist is more deeply aroused by works of art than by nature or the things that the works portray.

Clearly the first thing to do is to say what it means to express an emotion, and for that I will begin with R. G. Collingwood's classic claim that to express an emotion is to become conscious of it. He writes:

When a man is said to express emotion, what is being said about him comes to this. At first, he is conscious of having an emotion, but not conscious of what this emotion is. All he is conscious of is a perturbation or excitement, which he feels is going on within him, but of whose nature he is ignorant. While in this state, all he can say about his emotion is: 'I feel . . . I don't know what I feel.' From this helpless and oppressed condition he extricates himself by doing something which we call expressing himself. (109)

I will begin with showing a sense in which I think that Collingwood is right about what goes on when emotion is first experienced. Consider what emotions are. Emotions are complexes of ideas, beliefs, desires, preferences, behavioral dispositions, and physiological states. In particular to have a certain emotion or sentiment is to have a certain belief and consequently certain idea or ideas. This is true of all sentiments and emotions. For example, to feel guilty a person must have the idea of wrongness and a belief that he has acted wrongly. If a person does not have the idea of wrongness and consequently cannot believe that he has behaved wrongly he literally cannot feel guilty, cannot experience the sentiment of guilt. And similarly for other sentiments like pride, vanity, shame, contempt, disgust, and so on. They all necessarily contain ideas and beliefs; they are all *distinguished* by the different beliefs and ideas that help to constitute them; and no one can possibly experience a sentiment if he or she lacks the ideas that help to constitute the sentiment.

But emotions contain several other elements besides certain ideas and certain belief or beliefs. As I noted, they also contain a preference or preferences, various behavioral

dispositions, and various physiological disturbances. Emotions are distinguished not only by the kind of beliefs they contain but also by the preferences or desires, behavioral dispositions, and physiological disturbances. (This last point about physiology may not be true, but that does not matter.) Thus, for example, to concentrate on the first three elements of emotion, fear is distinguished from resentment and from despair by the various different beliefs, preferences or desires, and behavioral dispositions that help to constitute these three emotions. In fear, there is a belief that something dangerous like a tornado is likely or at least possible, a preference or desire that it does not occur, and a disposition to flee from it or to think hard to make sure it does not occur. In resentment, the belief is that one has been wronged, the preference or desire is to punish the supposed wrongdoer, and a disposition to actually do so. And similarly for despair, shame, contempt, hatred, and so on.

Now clearly, given the number and variety of our ideas, desires, and preferences, probably no one actually experiences fear or any one emotion all by itself. We may have the appropriate ingredients for fear, that is the appropriate ideas, beliefs, desires, preferences, dispositions to behave, and so on, but we have too many ideas, beliefs and preferences for it to be likely or even physically possible that all we feel is fear. Fear, love, hate, and so on are abstractions, groups of beliefs and preferences, desires, and dispositions to behave that we pick out from the numerous and immensely varied welter of beliefs, preferences, desires and dispositions to behave that we are likely to be experiencing at any one time, and which of course are continuously changing. So at any one time, though we may feel fear, besides fear we also inevitably feel a whole lot of other emotions, of varying intensity, some just being born and growing strong, others waning, some we have never experienced before, some that perhaps no one has experienced before and are therefore nameless, and some that will never be repeated.

Further, his fear, besides being mixed with many other emotions, is certain to be somewhat different from *other* fears he has experienced: what he fears will be different, his beliefs about its likelihood will be different, and so will his desires and the other variables that go to make up fear. His fear, right at that moment, will differ in its texture and in its nuances from other fears that he has had and will have. This is true, of course of all general terms. We may describe many different walls as yellow, though they are not all the same to look at. Similarly we may describe many of our states as states of fear, though they do not all feel quite the same.

If these claims are true, then the first powerful experience of emotion is likely to be experienced as Collingwood says. As he put it, the person says, "I feel . . . I don't know what I feel." Perhaps the person experiencing the emotion will say instead "I am afraid," but this statement though possibly true is certainly not an accurate account of how he actually feels at the moment, for if what I have said is true, it must be the case that he is also simultaneously feeling many other emotions, some of them familiar, some unfamiliar, some he has never experienced before, and some he will never experience again. And further, his fear will be different from his other fears.

Given all this complexity, it is no surprise that most people do not try to express how they actually feel. Most people simply say of their feelings "I am afraid," or "I am angry," or "I am ashamed," or "I feel guilty," or "I am in love," and so on. Sometimes, someone trying hard to say how she feels will say "I feel very, very, afraid," "I feel a mixture of guilt and shame," or "I feel both happy and sad," or both "elated and depressed," and so on. But usually it goes no further, though the honest may admit there are nuances they cannot describe or that there is a whole lot more that they feel though they cannot really say what it is. This admission is almost certain to be true, given what I said earlier about the number and variety of our beliefs and desires. Anyone who says "I am afraid" is likely to be feeling other things besides fear and even his statement, "I am afraid," is certain to be inaccurate or at least not fully informative. Further, however many emotion words he uses to describe

his feelings, he is still very likely to fall short of a full and accurate expression for the same reason that one emotion term falls short. Namely, he has more emotions that he can name, many of his emotions are nameless, and even those that are named are different from other states that have the same name.

Now make the following, I think, plausible assumption. Suppose that the poet or the artist is someone who is not satisfied with incomplete, inaccurate, imprecise, expressions of how she feels, and further is able to some degree to express her feelings. If this is the case, the artist will avoid emotion terms in trying to express his feelings. As I have indicated, such words inevitably distort and mislead. Just as no wall is simply and only yellow, no state is simply and only a state of fear. The poet has discovered other better and more accurate ways to express his feelings. Sometimes people grow exasperated by a poem that they cannot understand and demand of the poet that she tell them what she meant to say in the poem. The poet, equally exasperated, responds "read the poem again. It best expresses what I mean." If he is a real poet, and not a charlatan, his response is true. The people who demand that he explain his poem want him to simplify, to use emotion terms. But he refuses to do this because to use emotion terms is to simplify and distort.

To illustrate this claim, I will use an example you are likely to know of. You remember in the play Cyrano de Bergerac (in the Hooker translation) when Christian finally has Roxanne all to himself and she asks him to tell her how he loves her, and poor Christian, who is decidedly not a poet can only say "I love you," and "I love you very much." Roxanne is disappointed and sends Christian away. Later, Cyrano, the poet comes disguised by the night as Christian and tells Roxanne "Your name is like a golden bell hung on my heart, and when I think of you the bell rings and rings Roxanne, Roxanne, along my veins, Roxanne," and wins her back for Christian.

Christian's words disappoint and put off the discriminating Roxanne because "I love you very much" is not an accurate expression of how she thinks a man in love with her should feel, though it has been good enough for women less discriminating than Roxanne. Cyrano's words, on the other hand, more accurately express to Roxanne how she thinks a man in love with her should feel and she is won by them.

Let us return to Wordsworth's account of poetic composition, and consider again his claim that poetic begins with the poet recollecting an emotion in tranquility. What work does tranquility do in his account? Why does the poet need it? It seems that the poet needs it because, for the reasons I have given, his emotional state is likely to be very complicated and he needs tranquility to get a really accurate recollection of it. But this is not how Wordsworth describes it. Wordsworth's beholding the rainbow is an example. We can take it as given that in beholding the rainbow Wordsworth was filled with a powerful perturbation or excitement that he knows is some kind of emotion though he is not clear what it is exactly. He may call it awe or wonder, but that is for want of a better term, for he is more likely to say that he is not sure what he is feeling except that whatever it is, it is powerful. Later, in tranquility, he tries to recollect exactly what it was that he was feeling. This involves trying to make himself clearer about what it was that he was feeling, which is to say he expressed his emotion in his famous poem that we have quoted. So, when Wordsworth beheld the rainbow, it would have been false for him to say "I feel wonder," or "I feel awe," or generally to use any emotion term to describe his feelings. What he is feeling is always far, far more complicated than any of that.

Sounds and colours may arouse the sentiments in many different ways. For example, first and most obviously, sounds and colours may cause emotions directly when, for example, they signal that a violent storm is approaching, and we become afraid as a result. Second, sounds and colours may arouse emotions when someone's face, or gait, or voice, reveals that he is experiencing an emotion, perhaps he is scowling, or his voice is trembling, and through those signs his emotion is transmitted to others as if by contagion. This case differs

from the first because it shows how a person can become afraid not because he sees a storm approaching, but because others see a storm is approaching, become afraid, and transmits their fear to him. Third, sounds and colours may arouse emotions when someone *imagines* them to be expressing an emotion, even when they are not, and as a result catches that emotion or some other emotion. Thus, for example, someone may describe a storm as "angry," and may become angry himself or fearful as a result. Finally, sounds and colours may arouse sentiments in us when an *artist* successfully arranges them to express his emotion in a work of art and these emotions are communicated to us when we view that work. And, of course, there are many ways that the artist may acquire the emotions he expresses in his work. He may have been awed by a mountain range, frightened by a storm, moved to sadness by another poet, or he may have imagined that Nature was expressing its anger in a storm and *therefore* became afraid – where, of course, that fear would be different from the fear of being harmed by the storm.

With these distinctions in hand, we can put Malraux's thesis as follows: all children including future artists take pleasure in the sounds and colours of nature, and find a simple delight in its curious arrangements of colours and noises. And all children will tend to be fearful of nature's terrors like storms, thunder, and lightning, and many may be awed by nature's marvels, as for example rainbows and mountain ranges, and may even be able to *imagine* that nature has feelings and moods, for example, that an exploding volcano is angry, or that a babbling brook is cheerful. But no child, even a future poet, can imagine nature expressing the full range of emotions that a mature artist can imagine nature expressing.

The power of children, even that of future artists, to imagine nature expressing emotion, nature being angry, or lazy, or cheerful, or sad, or fretful, or ebullient, for example, is invariably less than that of the mature artist. And supposing finally that only the future artists among them are attuned to the emotions expressed in works of the mature artist, if that is, only such children receive the awe, wonder, dread, horror, terror, love, hatred, disdain, disgust, contempt, respect, esteem, resentment, indignation, hope, despair, shame, guilt, pride and humiliation, and the other emotions that mature artists express in their work, then Malraux's claim that future artists are more deeply moved by works of art than of the things which these works portray, seems true.

It will be easily granted that most children, even the precocious ones and the future artists, will not be able to imagine nature as expressing the full range of sentiments that a mature artist will be able to imagine nature as expressing. Since to experience a sentiment is necessarily to have a certain belief and, therefore, a certain idea, and given that children have far fewer and far less sophisticated ideas than do artists, it follows that they cannot imagine nature expressing the sentiments that an artist can imagine nature expressing.

Clearly, then, no child, even one fated to become an artist, can on his own account imagine nature expressing the range of sentiments that a mature artist can imagine nature expressing. Children do not have the complex, sophisticated and subtle ideas that artists have, cannot therefore have the complex, sophisticated and subtle sentiments that artists have, and consequently cannot imagine nature expressing the full range, subtlety and depth of sentiments that mature artists can imagine nature expressing.

It does not follow, however, that future artists cannot study the work of mature artists and in this way begin to understand the ideas and consequently the sentiments expressed in such work. It is not necessary that the future artist understand these ideas and sentiments completely or at once. It may be sufficient that he have some vague inkling of their meaning, or some sense that they are important even if he does not know exactly why, for what helps to make him an artist is that he is troubled by such ideas and is determined and perhaps even driven to make them clear to himself.

To make Wordsworth's lines consistent with Malraux, we could argue that as a child beholding a rainbow, Wordsworth was experiencing what Rousseau would describe as the superficial pleasures derived from looking at interestingly arranged colours. But Wordsworth's exalted language does not permit this interpretation. It implies that even when as a child he beheld a rainbow, he experienced the deep and moving pleasure of certain profound sentiments. Neither do I think that we can save Malraux by supposing that though Wordsworth as a child was deeply moved when he beheld a rainbow, he was even more deeply moved when he beheld some work of art for as far as I know there is no mention of such a work. Nor, finally, is it plausible to argue that Wordsworth was an exception to Malraux's rule and was as a child already a mature artist. This seems ruled out by his concession in his ode "Intimations of Immortality" that though he was always deeply moved by Nature, his appreciation became more philosophical as he grew older.

I think that the best way to make Wordsworth and Malraux consistent with each other is to make another appeal to the imagination. We have supposed that artists and even children can imagine nature expressing emotion. Now suppose that Wordsworth imagined the rainbow to be a work of art, and that God himself is the artist, expressing in the rainbow and in nature generally his unfathomable and indescribable emotions. Naturally, considering the artist, the emotions transmitted to Wordsworth by the rainbow would be forever beyond his grasp and comprehension, and he would go on for his entire life always trying but always falling short of understanding and expressing the emotions. If so, when Wordsworth beheld the rainbow, the depth and power of his emotions would vindicate Malraux's claim that the future artist is always more deeply moved by works of art than by Nature.

Imagining nature to be a work of art and the artist God is not at all unusual. When artists write of being moved by Nature, as distinct from being merely pleased by its colours and sounds, they often refer to mysterious phenomena that defy our efforts to understand them, though they seem purposeful and well-ordered, and therefore almost compel us to suppose, or at least imagine, that they were created by a God with infinite power and intelligence and a taste for beauty. Thus, we have Blake who wonders aloud whether the "HE" who made the lamb could also make the "fearful symmetry" of the tiger; and Kant himself when struck with wonder by the incredible beauty of a leaf, insisted that even the merest blade of grass cannot be understood without appeal to teleology, that is to ends and design, and that, more generally, we have to assume an infinite designer if we were to make sense of Nature at all (Critique of Judgement 66, 71).

Conversely poets have often complained that the advance of science, with its explanation of previously mysterious phenomena, has undermined their inspiration and endangered their work. Interestingly this is true in particular of the rainbow. Keats and Lamb, for example, complained that Newton's discovery had "destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to prismatic colours" (qtd. in Abrams, 303). I surmise that this is because scientific explanations of previously mysterious phenomena tend to push God the designer further and further into the background, even if they do not ultimately eliminate his necessity entirely. It is another story why Wordsworth, who of course, also knew of Newton's discovery, continued to be moved by rainbows, but he too seemed to feel that scientific discoveries undermined poetic inspiration. Remember his lament in "The World is Too Much with Us; Late and Soon" that to make himself "less forlorn" he would rather be a "Pagan" who could have "glimpses" of "Proteus" a god, "rising from the sea."

Let us see if Malraux's paragraph helps us to understand Walcott's dividedness. As he tells us in Another Life, the literature and art he grew up with were overwhelmingly English. Since he was meant to be a poet and was thus precociously receptive to the emotions expressed in art, we can suppose that he was filled with typically English sentiments. But where is the dividedness in this? If the passage from Malraux is true, the tropical Nature that surrounded him would move him less deeply than the English art he studied, and

consequently could not be the source of emotions powerful enough to provide a counterweight to his English sentiments and to cause him to be divided. We have his word on that. He writes, "Forget the snow and the daffodils. They were real, more real than the heat and oleander, perhaps, because they lived on the page, in imagination, and therefore in memory" (62). In other words, Walcott's apparent exclusive exposure to English art suggests that he was emotionally all English.

In "What the Twilight Says," Walcott seems to admit that this criticism was once true of him. "My first poems and plays," he writes, "expressed this yearning to be adopted, as the bastard longs for his father's household. I saw myself legitimately prolonging the mighty line of Marlowe, of Milton, but my sense of inheritance was stronger because it came from estrangement" (28). This yearning was, of course, never satisfied. As he continues, "I would learn that every tribe hoards its culture as fiercely as its prejudices, that English literature, even in the theatre, was hallowed ground and trespass, that colonial literature could grow to resemble it closely but could never be considered its legitimate heir" (28). In desperation, he tried to write about local things using the majestic English language he had learned from English drama and poetry but, he reports, "when I tried to talk as I wrote, my voice sounded affected or too raw" (28), and this led him to believe that "twilight had set me apart" (28) and then naturally to the "heresy" (20) that "landscape and history" (28) had "failed" (28) him.

We are to suppose that with maturity, he came to see through that heresy: St. Lucia history and landscape had not, after all, failed him. But why was this heresy? If, as seemed to be the case, there was no art portraying St. Lucian landscape and history and if Malraux is right that art moves the future artist more deeply than nature, it follows that St. Lucian landscape and history *had* failed him. The oleander might have been beautiful and observing it might have been pleasurable, and might even have aroused a few simple emotions; but because he was a child and because it was only nature, the oleander could not arouse the full perplexing array of human sentiments that only art can produce and that eventually seek clarification and expression in art.

It may be protested that there was a mature artist in St. Lucia who attempted bravely to portray its history and landscape, namely, Harry Simmons. But, while Simmons was certainly an important influence on Walcott, I believe that something else was also at work.

In Chapter 3 of "The Divided Child" (which is Book One of Another Life), after telling us of himself as a child going to bed with Tanglewood Tales and Kingley's Heroes, Walcott goes on to portray, apparently through the eyes of the child who was reading stories of Greek myths and heroes in the books he took to bed with him, an alphabetized list of St. Lucian "derelicts" (16), from "Ajax" (16), both a "cart-horse" (16) and a "thoroughbred on race-days, once a year" (16), to "Zandoli" (22), the "mosquito-murderer" (22), calling these "the stars of my mythology" (22). This may suggest that he was imagining the derelicts expressing the sentiments and attributes of the Greek myths and heroes he had been reading about in the books he took to bed with him, and raises the old complaint that Walcott is basically a European poet attempting the impossible task of portraying St. Lucian fishermen and peasants as Greek gods and heroes. But the view that Walcott Europeanized the small people of St. Lucia is not correct. Whether as a child or as a mature artist reflecting on his experiences as a child, Walcott came to realize that the derelicts he had dramatized as Greek heroes were not as artistically inert as he had believed. In other words, he came to realize that there was an indigenous poetry in the people and landscape of St. Lucia and that though he might have imagined the derelicts expressing the emotions of the Greek heroes, they were in fact, using themselves as works of art to express their own emotions. This is clear in "What the Twilight says" where he listed again many of the same derelicts he listed in Another Life. As he put it, these derelicts "*mimed* their tragedies" (22). They were "*satirists*" (20), they "*improvised absurd monodramas*" (20), and their

"determined self-destructive desolation was *performed*" (21). I can vouch for what he says here, for I grew up observing the same derelicts. Their agonized confused feelings led them to behave oddly, as a result they were closely observed, and then, becoming aware that they were being observed, and wanting to communicate and express what they were feeling, they went at it seriously, and in this sense, 'performed.'

We can now explain the sense in which Walcott describes himself as a 'divided child.' He was divided in the sense that he was deeply moved by sentiments aroused by two very different artistic traditions, one European and the other St. Lucian. But this conclusion, sound as far as it goes, does not explain why Walcott became a West Indian poet, and he writes emphatically in "The Muse of History" that "that was the only thing I could see myself becoming, a West Indian poet" (63).

I think it will be useful in coming to grips with this question to consider a well known debate in political philosophy between liberals and communitarians over the nature of the self. This debate is sometimes described as the debate between the view of the self as unencumbered, which is the liberal view, and the view of the self as embedded and encumbered, which is the communitarian view. The liberal view derives from Kant who maintained that the self is free only insofar as it is able to hold at a distance all the roles obligation and relationships given to it by history and society and judge them according to the requirements of reason (see chapter 3 of Kant's "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals"). John Rawls, the contemporary Kantian, compresses this view into the maxim that "the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it" (560). Communitarians reject this view as radically mistaken. The self, they argue, is formed by its social position and its history and is always encumbered by roles and obligations that it cannot stand back and judge in the light of some impartial reason. In particular it is not 'prior' to its ends, as Rawls, says, but is at least partially constituted by these ends. Thus, according to Michael Sandel, a prominent communitarian, the self comes by its ends not by "choice" (22) but by "discovery" (152), by reflecting on itself and inquiring into its constituent nature. My suggestion is that viewing Walcott on the liberal Kantian side of this debate will prove illuminating.

Let us begin by considering more closely the communitarian account of how we come by our ends. The communitarians, remember, say that we come by our ends by discovery, by reflecting on ourselves as we have been formed by our history and society. Although this process may go smoothly, in many cases it is easy to see that in some circumstances it will not. One such case is where the individual is 'divided' by radically different artistic traditions, as Walcott reports that he was. In such a case, the individual clearly cannot come by his ends simply by discovery because the ends his two traditions give him may be conflicting. Either then, he must remain stymied, frozen into inaction, or he must choose.

He cannot avoid having to choose by appealing to history. As Walcott emphasizes in "The Muse of History," history is always to some degree made up. Our historical knowledge is full of gaps, history as he put it is "subject to a fitful muse, memory" (37), and the gaps must be filled in by "invention" (37). Second, there simply cannot be any complete, objective history from which we can read off our ideals. As Walcott notes repeatedly, "history is written" (37), and "everything depends on whether we write" it "through the memory of hero or of victim" (37). In other words, we cannot avoid choosing by appealing to history, for every written history is necessarily selective, told from some point of view, with some interest in mind, and consequently, for all of us, there are many different but equally valid histories. If we try to appeal to history to discover our ends, we therefore still have to choose. That is, even if we could discover our ends in history, we would still have to pick one among our different and equally valid histories to discover what our ends are.

Walcott signals his most radical rejection of history as the source of our ends, in a sentence from Joyce that introduces his essay "The Muse of History." The sentence reads: "History is the nightmare from which I have been trying to awake." In other words, just as a man having a nightmare does not want to wake up from it and continue having the nightmare, we can and should simply refuse to look to any of our many possible and equally valid histories to discover the direction in which we should go. According to Walcott, the "patrician writers" (36) of the New World saw this clearly. Their vision of man, he reports, is not of a "creature chained to his past" (37), but of a creature set in a new "Eden" (64), which is, of course, without history, and therefore without a past that man can use to discover what to do.

Walcott's emphasis on our freedom from history may suggest that his view is existentialist, but he denies that it is. "Adamic, elemental man," he writes, cannot be existentialist. His first impulse is not self-indulgence but awe, and existentialism is simply the myth of the noble savage gone baroque. . . . Existentialism is as much nostalgia as is Rousseau's sophisticated primitivism. . . . (42)

His point, I take it, is that although Rousseau's natural man, the solitary primitive we meet in "The Discourse on Inequality" is Adamic, he is so in a different sense from the man of the New World. Rousseau's natural man is Adamic in the sense that he literally has no history, does not understand the idea of history, and consequently cannot even conceive of blaming it for his choices; he is free, but lacks the concepts necessary to understand that he is free. The New World man is Adamic in the sense that although he has a history, and understands that he has one, and could in 'bad faith' blame it for his choices – the pastoralists of the African revival do – but he refuses to do so; he is free and he understands that he is free. Yet the theory of the Adamic New World man is not existentialist either, for although existentialism allows that man may come to realize that he is free, it also supposes that once or if he realizes this, he often finds his freedom to be an intolerable burden and may come to believe that it is better not to be free. That is why he often succumbs to 'bad faith,' and tries to deceive himself that he is not free, and can blame history for his choices. The Adamic New World man on the other hand is not oppressed and burdened by his understanding of his freedom; he is 'awed' and, one of Walcott's favorite words, 'elated' by it. This view is more appropriately Kantian than existentialist. It was Kant who wrote in the "Critique of Practical Reason" that one of the two things that filled his mind with "ever-increasing wonder and awe" (66) was as he put it, "the moral law within me" (71), that is his freedom, his capacity to choose.

But although the Adamic New World man is free and is 'elated' by his freedom to choose, he must have reasons for his choices, otherwise he could not regard his choices as real choices. He would have to regard them as impulses of nature or as pure chance, which would of course be another example of 'bad faith.' Now, Walcott chose to be a West Indian poet. He tells us that in "The Muse of History." And in choosing to be a West Indian poet, he also chose to engage with his brother Roderick in the "one endeavor" of exalting the small people of St. Lucia. What were his reason for that choice? In other words, what made it a choice, rather than an action based on the result of a coin flip? This I think: England did not need another poet; it had its Shakespeare, and Milton and Marlowe, and a thousand others, all busily engaged in the evolving task of clarifying, expressing and recording English ideas and sentiments, and raising and answering English questions. But St. Lucia needed poets. Of course it already had artists aplenty. The derelicts were its artists. But their art was never recorded because they used their persons as the medium in which to express their St. Lucian sentiments and ideas, and therefore could not move and perplex future St. Lucian artists and recruit them to the task of answering St. Lucian questions for St. Lucian artists even further into the future. In other words, St. Lucia needed him more than England needed him. It is important to stress that this choice was not dictated by history. Walcott did not choose to be a St. Lucian poet because he was born in St. Lucia. If he was

'encumbered' by his exposure to the derelicts of St. Lucia and entranced by the ideas and sentiments they expressed, he was *equally* encumbered and entranced by the ideas and sentiments expressed by the poets and artists of England. Neither did he choose to be a West Indian poet because he would be more comfortable, more at home, more at ease, with St. Lucian sentiments and ideas. He was as a child equally exposed to both traditions and was comfortable with both sets of ideas. Of course as already noted the English hoarded their culture, and considered their theatre to be 'hallowed ground,' and would never welcome or accept him as one of their own. But that altered nothing. It could not make him less at ease, less familiar, with English ideas or reduce his moral and intellectual entitlement to ideas. And an English schoolboy fated to be a poet who was by chance exposed to the St. Lucian derelicts could have chosen with as much right and propriety as Walcott to be a St. Lucian poet.

But it is one thing to choose freely, to choose for reasons, and another to act faithfully on that choice. This should be obvious. Who has not chosen conscientiously and found it difficult to act on that choice? Kant maintained that the bare knowledge that a choice was right could always motivate us to act on it ("The Metaphysics of Morals" 574-575). But even he admitted sometimes the need for ancillary motivation. Thus, for example, though he declared that we have a duty to seek peace, he did not rely only on our knowledge of that duty to motivate us to persevere in the search for peace. He argued that there was solid hope – the great motivation – that we will eventually succeed in establishing peace ("Toward Perpetual Peace" 351).

Now we have seen that Walcott chose to be a West Indian poet and that his choice was made freely and for good reasons. What did he use to help him persevere in that choice? The temptation to be an English poet must have been great for reasons that I have amply stated. He did not rely only on the conviction that he had made the right decision. Like Kant, he sought a further motivation. It is found in the magnificent closing lines of "The Muse of History":

To you, inwardly forgiven grandfathers, I give the strange and bitter and yet ennobling thanks for the monumental groaning and soldering of two great worlds, like the halves of a fruit seamed by its own bitter juice, that exiled from your own Edens you have placed me in the wonder of another, and that was my inheritance and your gift. (64)

In other words, by an act of imagination, Walcott sees the Antilles as his 'Eden,' the gift of his slave and slavemaster grandfathers, relying on all the emotional weight and sense of responsibility that such a gift would arouse, to help motivate him to persevere in his choice to be a West Indian poet.

At other times, he imagines the Antilles as "given" (64) to him by God. And not only to him, but to all other West Indian artists. Thus referring to himself and Gregorias in Another Life, he writes:

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

This view of the New World man as 'Adamic' does not encompass only the artists and patrician writers. The slaves too, Walcott reports, in time "surrendered to amnesia" (39). In other words, history no longer provided direction, and the slave therefore forgot it, and fell back on his own creative resources to live in his new environment. Indeed, according to Walcott the "act of imagination" (48) that began "our poetic tradition" (48), the "new naming of things" (70), was "the creative effort of the tribe" (48). The New World poet who accepts the Antilles as the gift of his grandfathers only repeats the effort. The "process of renaming, of finding new metaphors" (70), Walcott writes in "The Antilles," is the

same process that the poet faces every morning of his working day, making his own tools like Crusoe, assembling nouns from necessity, . . . even renaming himself. The stripped man is driven back to that self-astonishing, elemental force, his mind. (70)

Motivated by his imagined gift we can understand why. As Walcott put it himself, these small people "do not read, they are there to be read, and if they are properly read, they create their own literature" (81).

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