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Caught Between: Achille, the Instar and Intention/ Reception in Walcott's Omeros

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Caught Between:

Achille, the Instar and Intention/Reception in Walcott's *Omeros*

Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts at Bates

College

By

Peter Nadel

Bates College

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[The Angel of History's] face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet... But a storm is blowing from Paradise... The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm.

Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* (IX)¹

¹ Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zorn. London: Pimlico, 1999. Page 249.

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Preface

In the climatic moment before his death, Jesus famously cries to his Lord, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?,” which both Mark and Matthew translate from the Aramaic as, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” The two evangelists also agree on what happened after, that the people surrounding him, his followers, praised him by saying, “This man is calling for Elijah” (Mark 15:34-5, Matthew 27:46-7 NSRV). To the onlookers, simply Christ’s utterance of the syllable “Eli” confirmed what they already knew: that the prophet was calling for Elijah, a Jewish figure who is present at birth and death. Of course, as we hear from Mark and Matthew, this is not what Jesus sought to convey. But how can we know this besides through the *authority* of gospels themselves, which underwent a process of canonization that required nearly three hundred years of early Christian/new Jewish sects coming to literal and theological blows over, among other things, this very passage. My contention, however, is not that Mark and Matthew could not know what Christ had said, rather that the process of their knowing, their epistemology, is built upon the difference between what Jesus meant to say (“Lord, why have you forsaken me”) and what people understood him to have said (an invocation to Elijah). This biblical passage shows us that an undergirding of communication is the distinction between intention and reception. What qualifies so-called *successful* communication if it is not reducible to the difference between the intent of the speaker and the reception of that intention by an audience. A troubling of this duality will be the focus of the present work.

Recognize that, by troubling, I do not mean *disregarding* nor *forgetting*, instead what I propose is constructive in altogether different way. I ask, what if distinctions of intention and reception did not seem to lie at the core of communication, by what institution might they be

(re)placed into that position, and under what process of (re)placement? Indeed what is so narratologically significant about Christ's deathrattle is the evangelists' use of dramatic irony and narrative distance to speak towards a similar disconnection that the lay people at his death had to Jesus. This is rare in the text, yet here, in the crux of religious despair, it is apparent. This example speaks to the way that authorship remains distinct from intention, intention from identity and identity from institution.

In a more contemporary context, this dualistic notion has remained. In fact these questions of authorship and ownership are of the utmost concern to postcolonial literature and literary theory. One Caribbean poet, playwright and painter (among other equally artistic and intellectual occupations), Derek Walcott synthesizes these questions in his work about his island home of St. Lucia. Walcott's *Omeros*, itself a synthesis of epic tropes and quotidian life, mobilizes a wide ocean of literary techniques to evoke a similar feeling of discursive distance, perhaps for different reasons. Unlike the Bible, whose main modes of description often shy away from Walcott's, *Omeros* sustains these liminal features far beyond one scene or chapter. Instead, *mis*interpretation characterizes the text. I am concerned specifically with how intention is applied to characters within the poem, just like how Jesus's onlookers apply to him an intention which he did not have. The plights and ingenuities of one of his main characters, Achille, is particularly subject to his misintentioning. Throughout Walcott's text, he transforms from a stubborn vector of postcolonial anxiety to self-aware and subversive referent of the power of hybridity.

Into this narrative, Walcott encodes the common tropes of classical epic. Achille, while not standing in directly for Homer's Achilles, is rivaled with another St. Lucian, Hector. Unlike in the Iliad, Helen is in a relationship with Achille, yet is alienated by his actions and takes up

with Hector. Besides in Helen, the rivalry between the two men interfaces through another St. Lucian named for a Homeric character, the exile, Philoctete. Walcott's narrator, who figures into the plot of the poem, and a English plantation owner named Plunkett provide the text with a sense of self-awareness to this recopying of Homeric tropes. Achille's story follows him as he attempts to contribute to his community. First, we see him carving his boat from a tree trunk so he can go fishing, but as the weather gets worse, Achille finds himself out of work. With Philoctete, he secures a job at Plunkett's farm, yet feels unfulfilled and wishes he was on the waves. In an attempt to make money for both himself and Helen, he tries to dive for gold in a wrecked Spanish Galleon. After almost dying to that scheme and separated from Helen after he hurt her, Achille embarks with a friend to be fishermen. Immediately, he sees a swift, or small bird, flying and follows it. As they get closer and closer, Achille can see that this a messenger bound for him. Before he realizes it, he wakes up in Africa and is told by God that he is home. While he is there he witnesses his ancestors be taken as slaves. He tries to free this the new slaves but realizes it is too late. He wakes up back in St. Lucia, with only trace memories of the experience, but is clearly changed.

Indeed, Walcott is careful to not let epic commonalities, between his poem and the epics of Homer and Virgil, remain stagnant, instead Omeros reinvents all of them, speaking towards Walcott's own feelings about the development of the postcolonial world. Unlike some of his contemporary thinkers, Walcott did not believe in Back to Africa movements -- groups he refers to as African Pastoralist -- because he thought their discourse overwrote the epistemic violence that was wrought alongside the physical violence by colonization. As he tells us in an essay called "What the Twilight Says," "Pastoralists of the African revival [Thinkers associated with

movements like Negritude or Black Power] should know that what is needed is not new names for old things, or old names for old things, but the faith of using old names anew....” (Walcott “What the Twilight Says”, 9). For Walcott, the process of naming supersedes the process of being, meaning that the production of categories of being are shaped by the epistemic principles of naming. Using an old name then is like buying into those outmoded principles, while a using a new one is like inventing a new principle all together. Using old names anew is a halfway place between this opposition, Walcott suggesting that “what is needed” is not remaining the same or radical change, but problematizing each of them. Embedded here is Walcott’s aversion to a certain Western dualism that tends to enforce mutual exclusivity above all. However in this essay, Walcott sees that words, discourse, can be used as a paradigm by which to compare the old and the new.

This motif that is recorded in “What the Twilight Says” finds representation in *Omeros*. The poem then participates in a theoretical conversation, one whose history coincides with Walcott’s. With the conclusion of the Second World War, the epistemic structures that had to that point prevailed, began to fall under harsh criticism. What many literary theorists claimed was that the process of knowing was underlined by series of institutions that were constituted and also constituted others institutions that encoded actions and decisions as sensical or nonsensical. This area of study was referred as poststructuralism and influenced many areas with methodologies and frameworks.² The way that this body of work interacted with the

² The work in philosophy and the human sciences of which I speak are called *poststructural* if only because these works’ most unifying characteristic is that they came after structuralism. Because this relationship seems to be more complicated than temporal distance alone, the name ‘poststructuralism’ may strike the reader as arbitrary. This is, perhaps, because it is; however it is not the goal of the present work to examine the differences between what is called structuralism and what is called poststructuralism, suffice it to say that this distinction is one that much polemics has been devoted to, so much so I do not wish to recite it here.

decolonization efforts after the Second World War is often categorized in the West as *postcolonial*. This term seems to be as arbitrary as poststructural is, yet to say that the one supercedes or subsumes the other would not be totally accurate.

In an attempt to sort out the complicated web of ideology that is poststructural and postcolonial theory, I will turn to the observations and vocabulary of deconstruction. Usually thought of as an esoteric methodology of reading, deconstruction, as it is imagined by critic and philosopher Jacques Derrida, comes from the observation that everything is first manifested as something that can be deconstructed.³ Deconstruction, Derrida tells us, “stems from the fact that all the predicates, all the defining concepts, all the lexical significations, and even syntactic articulations, which seem at one moment to lend themselves to this definition or to that translation, are also deconstructed or deconstructible...” (Derrida “Letter to a Japanese Friend”, 274). Derrida’s exhibition of the blurred virgule between definition and word is fundamental to any understanding of deconstruction. This notion presents itself in Jesus’s deathcry to God: even the most genuine feelings, those of Christ, thus those closest to their essential meanings, can be deconstructed and rendered plain in their abstraction from themselves. However, Derrida does not view this constant shifting of paradigms as a negative or even as a way to explain misunderstandings. Instead, Derrida claims, his observations trouble the static epistemic structures that we have inherited, exhorting their stubborn resistance to change.

As the new millenium drew closer, however, many of the theories of Derrida and poststructuralism fell out of fashion. The limitations of these notions, that they were full of philosophic jargon, that they privileged discourse as opposed to action, that they ignored

³ This is often formulated from Derrida’s famous line from *Of Grammatology* as “there is nothing outside-text” [il n’y a pas hors-texte]. Text is to mercury as Derrida is to an alchemist. Deconstruction hinges on the mutability of all discourses to resemble each other.

literature, were discussed at length. Thinkers like Benita Parry and Stephen Greenblatt critique postcolonial theory's ability to carry forward the radical change that it proposed, calling into question both its effectiveness as a literary theory and as a philosophy interested in political activism.⁴ Despite these limitations, Derrida will help supplement the vocabulary with which to discuss Walcott's notion, of using "old words anew." However, it will not be sufficient by itself; instead I posit a new theoretical term in the next section based in deconstruction, but not totally dependant on it. I have chosen to focus on intention and reception, a duality that Derrida rarely speak directly towards. Walcott employs the grey area between the two, intention and reception, to cover up the motivations and structures that influences his characters. Achille, liminal in many other ways, feels at the behest of these mix-ups, constantly deferring his desires into the hegemon of colonial epistemology. However, Achille operates as an base to the superstructures of the poem itself, which find themselves in a similar position relative to the institutions it inherits from, namely those European, colonialist ones. If we can say that a poem may have an argument, the argument of *Omeros* is revealed in its metonymy. Walcott builds the structure of his epic to reflect itself. A main character, a subject, a lesson are always already deferred, constantly only referring to each other. Similarly the formal qualities that make up the epic are carried over to its characters and their growth. In *Omeros*, everything is a part of another whole.

Achille, in particular, embodies this partitive motif. Caught between capitalist (and tourist) hegemony and a community he has alienated, his character forces us to reconsider the ways in which ontology in the postcolony and postcolonial theory, in general, are called into

⁴ For a more complete instantiation of these critics' discussion of the limitations of the postcolonial theory see: Parry, Benita. *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. Routledge: New York (2004), and Greenblatt, Steven. "Towards a Poetics of Culture." *Southern Review*, volume 20, no.1, March 1987, 3-15.

question. In fact, his very presence within the text conjures these challenges in the same way that Walcott does in writing *Omeros*.

Given this background, the following questions will synthesize the suggestions I have made towards reframing deconstruction and *Omeros* around the intention/reception divide. First, by what mode are intention and reception mobilized in text, and how? And second, what role does Achille play in this mobilization of this distinction, in other words, what effect does *Omeros*'s reiteration of epic tropes have on the supposedly clean line between intention and reception.

Section One: The Instar Emerges

To fully explore the many levels of meaning in Walcott's narrative, I will introduce a theoretical term. There is a rare word in Latin, *instar*, whose meaning Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short's *A Latin Dictionary* offers as: appearance, or a likeness of. This is the origin of its biological meaning: a stage of arthropod development. The insect no longer is what it was and is not quite yet itself. The instar is like a watershed, a perhaps uncomfortable moment when traditional boundaries of ontology are ruptured. Importantly though, with instar comes the connotation of *metamorphosis*, a likeness which in its development as a likeness it becomes totally unlike. Just as Derrida's specter is that which defies standard ontologies of life and death, the instar resists the duality between intent and reception, historical past and its expected future. I believe that, by way of answering the questions I posed at the end of the Preface, the instar can shed light upon how and why intent/reception dialects is mobilized as a vector for Western epistemology in the colonial setting of *Omeros*.

A scene between Ma Kilma and Philoctete and how it is interpreted in one instance demonstrates the principles behind the instar well. Philoctete finds himself in the No Pain Cafe talking to Ma Kilma about his wound, a subject to which I will return. Their conversation with in French Creole is split and almost scattered across the page:

“*Mais qui ça qui rivait-’ous, Philoctete?*”

‘*Moin blessé.*’

“But what is wrong wif you, Philoctete?”

“I am blest wif this wound, Ma Kilman, *qui pas ka guérir pièce.*

Which will never heal.” (Walcott 18)

The translation of Philoctete's words does not give the full meaning of what he is saying. As Jahan Ramazani tells us in *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English*, Walcott is "mistranslating Philoctete's complaint in French Creole that he is wounded, 'Moin blessé,' as 'I am blest'" (Ramazani 67). What Ramazani calls a mistranslation confuses the English 'to bless' with the French 'blesser', and in it Walcott investigates the ways in which Philoctete resists traditional boundaries, in the case, of language. Ramazani uses the word "mistranslate," however the translation is not a mistake. Instead it shows Philoctete transcends the authority of these borders, becoming instar between a multiplicity intentions, troubling the already weak line between intention and reception. What I hope to show is that part of colonial epistemology is the insistence on the monotonicity of intent, that the divisions between intent and reception are as stark as black and white, male and female, able-bodied and disabled. This relationship is such that when intention and reception match, when the epistemic line between the two is solid, the social order of colonial epistemology is upheld, yet when intention defies social reality, colonial epistemology begins its cruel process of erasure. Pinned between these polar opposite archival tendencies, *the instar emerges*. The physical referent of the transcendence of colonially enforced dualism, the instar is pharmakon to the dialectics of intention and reception.⁵ By way of a textual analysis informed by close readings of *Omeros's* Achille, I wish to show the apparatus by which the instar produces the intention/reception dialectic. As I present in my second section, Achille's

⁵ This term, pharmakon, originates from Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy." In Greek, this word can either mean medicine or poison. As he describes in that work:

The *pharmakon* is that dangerous supplement that breaks into the very thing that would have to without it yet lets itself *at once* be breached, roughed up, fulfilled, and replaced, completed by the very trace through which the present increases itself in the act of disappearing. (Derrida "Plato's Pharmacy," 440).

In other words, the pharmakon is a moment when a duality fails to its own internal contradictions, but at the same time it is solely constituted from that failure. When I call the instar a pharmakon between intention and reception, I mean that the instar is an aberration from that dualistic institution such that the instar gives rise to it while also providing the fodder for its destruction (deconstruction).

sense perception characterizes him as an instar, opening the space between intention and reception through the catachrestic process of unmeeting. This apparatus of colonial epistemology, as I demonstrate in my third section, is shown to Achille and the reader when both are brought to Africa in a dream to see Achille's family be taken into slavery. In my fourth section, I examine key moments that characterize this new form of the instar, Achille returned, now aware of the dynamic productivity of the instar's placement between intention and reception -- as well as Walcott's narrator incorporating what Achille has learned into his desire to represent. The tripartite form of Achille's story mimics the same transformation he undergoes as an instar, indeed this form also models the way *Omeros* operates as an epic, within the postcolonial and Western canons. However, I must first analyze the mobilization of the instar as the physical referent of unmet expectations.

Colonial epistemology uses the expected intention of the colonial body to construct the norms that surround it. Thus, this acquisition of knowledge ignores those bodily performances which do not fit in it. As instars, these manifestations are necessarily catachrestic: representations of the juxtaposing forces of history, that not just displace, as Derrida's specter, but *replace*. While this distinction may seem polemic, the instar as physical referent is in a constant state of flux, not because of deferral or denial, but by a system of metonymizations, called identity, which incorporate it into the colonial hegemon of what Sylvia Wynter calls the overrepresentation of Man. Wynter's seminal essay *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument*, recounts the invention of "Man," the institutionalization of the Western, Christian conception of Otherness as natural. This naturalization, Wynter claims, comes first from the

Renaissance humanist urge to displace Church authority and structure onto the lay, indeed, human sciences.

Employing Wynter's paradigms, I hope to design a vocabulary around the instar, its traces as (in) text. Wynter's term, "descriptive statement" characterizes the predicate institutions that this redescription -- the deferral of Western Christianity into the natural sciences -- both creates and feeds off of. In doing, Wynter opens the interpretive opportunity for the instar. Take for example, her turn, describing Man1, the humanist displacement of the True Christian self:

it was to be the peoples of the militarily expropriated New World territories (i.e., Indians), as well as the enslaved peoples of Black Africa (i.e., Negroes), that were made to reoccupy the matrix slot of Otherness—to be made into the physical referent of the idea of the irrational/subrational Human Other, to this first degodded (if still hybridly religio-secular) 'descriptive statement' of the human in history, as the descriptive statement that would be foundational to modernity.
(Wynter, *Unsettling the Coloniality*, 266)

Her language of the passive voice is integral to discussing the instar for, like the New World peoples and those of "Black Africa," it is a fate prescribed. In Wynter's analysis, these oppressed peoples become instars, having been prescribed an identity as the genre of their otherness. In other words, the catachrestic utility of the instar is institutionalized into Western epistemology as less than. Indeed, the monotonicity of fact-value gives no allowance to catachresis. Instead, the instar is cast to lack the facility of facthood, insofar that that inability disqualifies it from ownership, and importantly, *authorship*. With an inability to have control over its own epistemology, the instar is identified as a double genitive, that which is constituted as a part of a part of a whole. In English, the genitive, the case of description, constitutes identity on an adjectival level, describing inhabitants of certain regions or families together and as one. The double genitive, constitutes a group within that first one that is not too different enough to be

ejected, yet also not the same enough to be included in the single genitive. The instar argues that the implicit unity suggested by the genitive is institutionalized into the West as identity, thereby stripping the instar of self-authorship, personal intention, and at the same time rejecting it from Western epistemology. Thus the institution of the genitive as identity (the partitive genitive) is the same force of difference that demarks intent from reception. With any intention and reception comes an interpretive leap that comes along with it a series of expectations of what the subject/object intends and how it participates. For Wynter's example, the "matrix slot of Otherness" must be filled by an instar because of its definitional assumed participation in an identity which is inherently not its own. Indeed Wynter goes on to tell us that this process is further naturalized in Man2, the birth of rationalism and the biocentric descriptive statement, when the peoples of "Black African descent" were constructed as "the negation of the generic 'normal humanness,' ostensibly expressed by and embodied in the peoples of the West" (Wynter, *Unsettling the Coloniality*, 266). Notice her use of the word, "generic." This word suggests an institution of the categorization of people (one to which Wynter is clearly aware), yet also signals a development of expectation. If genre is the expectation of the intent, a "generic 'normal humanness'" would be the expectations that the institutionalization of the genitive implies; in this case: the whole history of ontology. However, importantly, this logic would also suggest that the instar is placed between genre, not simply defying it, but inventing it. The instar is the anxious possibility that the overrepresentation of Man might be overturned, as inherent within it are the materials for its deconstruction (Derrida, *Glas*).⁶ Thus genre has been formulated within the Western canon as a denial of the permeability of intent and reception, thereby

⁶ To suggest that this idea was Derrida's alone would be to discredit some of the parallel work that Hortense Spillers has contributed to literary theory. Her work is expansive and I do not intend to reduce it here, but rather I bring it up to offer another path of research that I, given my familiarity with Derrida, did pursue.

re-enforcing the True Christian self of the Western “descriptive statement,” and justifying the instability of the instar.

As Wynter attributes to Althusser in her 2015 essay, *The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition*:

our contemporary “human sciences” necessarily induce us to know our social reality overall and its third and hybrid level of existence in the same rigorously “abductive” (Bateson, 1969), “world in little” (Hocart, 1936), or “knowledge of categories” (Moraes Farias, 1980) terms in which both the physical and purely biological levels of reality had been millennially and lawlikely known from the origin of our species history (Wynter, *The Ceremony Found*, 2015; Althusser 2001).

The programming of these human sciences justifies themselves not just by suggesting that they were present from some primordial time, but rather by teaching the expectation of identity. “The origin of our species history” could ever have been a moment, instead its place in the imagination can only be understood as an assemblage of our expectations. The instar fails these expectations by design, and as a result is deferred them. The expectation of the instar is a tautology, infinitely iterable like the phrase “genre of genre” or “trace of trace.”

Derrida speaks towards instar’s self-reference/resistance in *Of Spirit*, telling us that “I’m thinking in particular of all those modalities of ‘avoiding’ which comes down to saying without saying, writing without writing, using words without using them...” (Derrida, *Of Spirit*, 2). In the same way, the instar resists itself, sees itself as other. Like the subaltern, it is at once the product of a system that claims it cannot exist and the economic resources of that same system. Take this instance of the use of the word instar from its original Latin context from Suetonius’s biography of Virgil, which will return to as an uncanny description of Omeros, “Novissime Aeneidem

inchoavit, argumentum varium ac multiplex et quasi amborum Homeri carminum instar.”

[Lastly, [Virgil] began the Aeneid, whose subject is varied and wide and is as if an instar to both the poems of Homer.] Here, the instar is placed between Virgil’s supposed intent, to copy, mirror and recontextualize the Homeric epics, and, from his simile, Suetonius’s (and the reading public’s) impression of the Aeneid itself. The Aeneid as Virgil’s is secondary to Suetonius, instead what is on display is the Aeneid as instar. It is not Homer’s nor Virgil’s, instead it is Suetonius’s Aeneid, formed out his expectation of Virgil’s intention. The instar of Suetonius’s prose exists by resisting itself. In doing, the instar manifests as catachrestic: mixing up the versions of the poems through the expectation of resemblance and replacement. The process by which resemblances are made is constituted through the institutions of memory that Suetonius makes clear. The lineage of the text forces in between intent and reception. Achille, as the postcolonial body, is plague by this same duality of authorship, his body fragmented between what he wants to do and what he is expected to do, unable to differentiate the two until Hector’s death the end of the poem.

Instars, filled with the institutionalized expectations that design them, are not merely the psychological internalization of those norms. Instead the instar, as the meeting place of intent and reception, resembles Derrida’s notion of the archive. “The question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past... It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself... The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come. (Derrida “Archive Fever” 27). The seeming simplicity of this formulation of the archive and the instar becomes tragic when put into Wynter’s context. Just as, according Derrida, the archive is concerned with the future by virtue of its recording the past, the instar always faced

towards the future by virtue of its “descriptive statement.” *No matter the instar’s condition* its genitivization and subsequent identification places it firmly in the past, yet its denaturalized, or rather subnaturalized place in Wynter's matrix of otherness forces it perpetually into the realm of expectation, the inexplicable future.

This feature of the instar is much like what Derrida says of Hegel’s teleology, “it [Hegel’s philosophy] obliges one to wonder if the end of history is but the end of a *certain* concept of history” (Specters 19). The instar beckons the urgency of revelation while at once deferring it, a physical referent of a decentered metaphysic. As Derrida later articulates through Shakespeare’s tongue in *Specters of Marx*, the instar points to a “disjuncture of time,” a moment of trauma that has wrenched the timeline apart. Due to the catachrestic nature of the instar, this traumatic moment is ambivilized, neutralized, and eventually naturalized to the point where every moment of the instar’s becoming is plagued by the “messianic: the coming of the other” (Derrida *Specters* 33). In Addendum B of Benjamin’s *Theses of History*, he remarks on the Jewish perception of time that speaks to the instar, “the future did not... turn into a homogenous and empty time for the Jews. For in it every second was the narrow gate, through which the Messiah could enter” (Theses B). The other is encoded into the instar so much that, following on Wynter’s claims, every part of the instar would seem foreign to itself. Indeed, because the instar is the physical referent of the way the meeting of the other has been institutionalized, the instar will only see the instar as instar. Thus there is no being of the instar outside of the instar -- for if there was then the instar could be naturalized as not other. There is no exteriority to the instar because it is *the* exteriority, the final exteriority, more Silver Surfer than Galactus. A Silver Surfer whose Galactus can never come, the sign of promise -- Law.

Given this placement on the margins, the ontology of the instar must be closely examined. Recall that the process of colonization invented the instar as an embodied duality. Thus, while the instar satisfies the rupture of traditional ontology, it is not without a becoming-being. Indeed Nietzsche's notion of the becoming being of the future in the present gives us a helpful vocabulary for examining the instar-becoming. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche remarks that the "species of philosophers" will have tastes and inclinations that, "are somehow different and reverse of those hitherto -- philosophers of the dangerous Perhaps in every sense" (Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil*, 2). This notion of "perhaps" as the performative moment when the limits of an idea come into question can help us identify the instar as a performance of perhaps-ness. Pushing further than Bhabha's claims in *The Location of Culture*, the instar troubles even hybridity, suggesting the main interface of postcolonial metaphysics is instead of proximal intermixing, the praxis of alternative history. The instar is an embodied perhaps, calling forth the future by remaining past.

Derrida toys with this section from *Beyond Good and Evil*, as well. From his book on Nietzsche's metaphysics *Ear of the Other*, he begins with a discussion of "academic freedom," a term which Derrida suggests is impossible, demonstrating the notion of his unhearing ear with Nietzsche image of "an ear as big as a man." Perhaps coincidentally in this essay, Derrida enters into one of his only digressions related explicitly to "intent" ["voulu ça"]: Defending Nietzsche from claims of providing the intellectual lineage for Nazi treatises on ethnic supremacy, Derrida tells us that "the effects or structures of a text are reducible to its "truth," to the intended meaning of its presumed author, or even its supposedly unique and identifiable signatory" (Derrida *Ear of the Other* 29). The demarcation of the quotations, usually a point of key interest for Derrida, is

uncharacteristically lax in this section. The quote-unquote-truth, which Derrida tells us is reducible to the equally as hand-wavy “effects or structures of a text,” speaks to the lack of vocabulary that Derrida has when observing the dialectic between intent and reception. The quotes that surround the truth suggest that there is some *other, secret, hidden truth* that is proper to the text, which remains unreadable in the form of the quotation, just as cinders mark the location a fire, but cannot not recreate it. The instar is held in Derrida’s quotation marks, in the limbo between text and outside-text, and as a result between being and not.

Embodied and institutionalized expectation are motifs that run throughout postcolonial literature at every level. The metonymies that Walcott works on (narrative, metanarrative and epistemic) reflect Derrida’s notion of the “telephonic yes.” From his essay on Ulysses of the same name, he tells us, “The *yes* can only speak *itself* if it promises itself its own memory. The affirmation of the *yes* is the affirmation of memory. *Yes* must preserve itself and thus reiterate itself, archive its voice in order to give it once again to be heard and understood....” (Telephonic Yes Derrida) As well Homi Bhabha comments on a similar phenomenon he calls the third space of enunciation, from *The Location of Culture*: “The evil eye, which is nothing in itself, exists in its lethal traces or effects as a form of iteration that arrests time - death/chaos - and initiates a space of *intercutting* that articulates politics/psyche, sexuality/race” (The Location of Culture, Bhabha). While Derrida implicates an unhear hearing thing (we will return to this in a discussion of the *Ear of the Other*), Bhabha is caught up in the project of visibility. His “evil eye” is invisible and Derrida’s “telephonic yes” is unheard because they participate in a dualistic structure of intent and reception that has naturalized and neutralized itself, indeed justified itself as something that has preceded us that is in fact natural and neutral. The instar as what is proper

to the subaltern therefore is the product or remnant, cinders of the (in)visible conspiracy of Western metaphysics.

All of these notions considered, the instar operates within a postcolonial discourse as the catachrestic praxis of alternative history, which is to say that by being constituted by Western epistemology to oppose the monotonicity of intent/reception, the instar represents the dynamic power of historical juxtaposition. Within *Omeros*, Walcott uses the instar on three different levels. First many of his characters follow the logic of the instar, yet Achille acts as Walcott's vector to answer questions predicating the instar in the plot of the poem. Next the writing of *Omeros*, its literary techniques, allows for Walcott to shed light on the anxious becoming-being of the postcolonial canon. Last, these two levels of metonymy form a third for given Walcott's desire [voulu ça] to do the above, *Omeros*, as a book, becomes an instar, one of postcolonial epistemology.

Section Two: Sense perception and the instar

As I have discussed, the instar offers a utility to Walcott in rendering the postcolonial world. The metaphor and metonymy that he uses to characterize Achille are often straightforward, what is not is how this meaning is produced. The instar gives us insight into the dynamics of expectation in postcolonial discourse and then how these expectations play a part in motivating Achille's actions and relationships. My readings of the instar will be focused, therefore, on perspective and proximity to certain narratives naturalized as true. Achille's instar-becoming can be read onto his sense perception, putting on display the merging of those expectation and reality that is fundamental to Western epistemology. Derrida and Wynter converse here: using the vocabulary of deconstruction as a way to interface with the matrix of Otherness.

The first moment that we see Achille is permeated with images of these expectation deferred, a rendering of the old colonial world with the anxiety of the new postcolonial reality. His becoming being as an instar is denied: Walcott chooses to encode Achille's surroundings with a confusion of naming. The archaic and the contemporary are not bended, instead, like oil and water, they remain distinct and form a hierarchy. For instance while Achille begins the work on his canoe, he notices the first swift of the novel:

...Then he saw the swift

crossing the cloud surf, a small thing, far from its home,
confused by waves of blue hills. A thorn vine gripped
his heel. He tugged it free. (Walcott 6)

The image of the swift, a small bird whose migratory path goes between the Caribbean and the west coast of Africa⁷, appears many times during the poem, yet it is uniquely personified in this moment. By making the subject of the first sentence Achille (“he”), Walcott not only pushes the actions of the swift in adjectival phrases, but therefore indicates to the reader that these observations are Achille’s. The placement of the independent clause at the beginning of the sentence too, helps to equate these descriptions of the swift, yet they are not the same type of description. In fact, we see that Achille’s observations move from a physical description of “crossing,” to a supposition about what the swift feels, homesickness and confusion. This assertion of emotion (a personification, itself) of the swift reflects the imposition of Achille’s postcolonial identity. By applying to the swift these suppositions, Achille both turns the swift into an instar and, in doing, defers his own instar-becoming. This perception of the swift as himself suggests that Achille desires push beyond Western epistemological categories, blurring what is human and what is not.

While not every swift in the text represents Achille, the way the syntax and the semantic of this image operate show the reader how the implication of selfhood as the instar becomes reproduced as natural. Indeed to Achille the swift is a natural image, yet Walcott shows us that the expectations that he puts on the bird speaks much more to Achille’s bifurcated identity than it does to the swift’s. He assigns a meaning which cannot exist, a feeling that is amplified with the following two sentences. Terse, this image creates even more ambiguity between the swift and Achille. While the pronoun, “he” could refer to the swift, the pronoun which referred to it just a

⁷ For more information on the swift and how it adapted to European colonization see Steeves, T. K., S. B. Kearney-McGee, M. A. Rubega, C. L. Cink, and C. T. Collins (<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/chiswi/introduction>)

line above is “its,” while the last “he” refers to Achille. The he/it divide is blurred in the same moment that Achille makes the swift instar. The power dynamics are reversed and Achille becomes the swift. The specific image too, of an animal reaffirming its freedom, articulates Achille’s anxiety to the reader in a way that he consistently is unable to do for the other characters of the poem. So ingrained in his mind is this anxiety around identity that it shapes his perception through the first part of his story.

This motif of a sense perception permeated with instars is continued further in this chapter with Achille’s invention of the canoe, *In God We Troust*. First we see that:

....he prayed:

“Tree! You can be a canoe! Or else you cannot!” (Walcott 6)

I call this an invention in Heideggerian sense by way of Derrida. The canoe is invoked, passively and literally, called forth from the tree that it was. The act of calling forth underlines the instar nature of that endowed in Achille’s imagination. Achille’s affirmation of being redoubles this notion: couched in a question of ability, this invocation reenacts Achille’s designation of the swift. Just as he personifies the bird to speak to his own longing, he identifies the tree as canoe, placing the expectations of that institution on the lifeless wood. Walcott encodes in Achille’s vision the expectations of Western epistemology, suggesting that the project of sense reception that Achille participates in (is coerced into participating in) renders expectations as reality, thereby encoding them as truth.

Still other examples of this process of phenomenology rear their heads here, for instance, the “speech“ as a “babble,” warping our sonic expectations of language and the water. These examples reflect Achille’s instar-becoming because we see them through his eyes. This interiority and its association with Achille’s assumed expectations comes again when he is

diving for gold, looking for a wrecked Spanish galleon. The narrator moves again into Achille's voice, telling us:

...Everything was money.
Money will change her [Helen], he thought. Is this bad living
that make her come wicked. (Walcott 44)

Notice how we start in the past tense with "was," move to the future with "will change" and end in the present with "is." This confluence of time speaks to the way that the instar breaks traditional categories of time. As a postcolonial body, Achille faces a tension between what is current, money (*currency*), and the past, yet as instar, Achille's future is guided by the expectations of what that currency and the present means (to him). As we have said, the instar reveals the contradictions always already hidden in the institution of the double genitive as otherness. Walcott troubles not just the notion of being, but rather of being-something. As the next section of the chapter begins:

Why was he down here...
...What on earth had he come for,
when he had a good life up there? (Walcott 45)

These questions are not meant to be answered, or rather they cannot be answered. No longer is the narrator reflecting the voice of Achille, instead this voice is of the institutions of expectations that turned Achille to instar, that forced him between land and sea, past and future, being and expectation. For indeed, these seeming natural accusations disregard the colonial history of money, of Achille's money, of St. Lucian money.

Of course, Achille's money problems are tied directly to his relationship with Helen and in turn with Hector. In fact much of that Achille interacts with Helen is in a context of economy. Take for instance when Helen leaves Achille in the marketplace. Even before Achille incites the violence of the scene, Walcott sets it in monetary terms:

The stalls of the market contained the Antilles'
history as well as Rome's, the fruit of an evil,
where the brass scales swung and were only made level

by the iron tear of the weight, each brass basin
balanced on a horizon, but never equal,
like the old world and new, as just as things might seem. (Walcott 38)

This meticulous image of the market scales reminds us of the very physical terms that wealth is expressed in the poem. Notice, too, how Walcott alludes to a theory of historical production, one that is, with the verb "contained," circumscribed by the production of value. This notion is compounded when read alongside Derrida's theory of exchange from *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*. He tells us the, "motif of circulation can lead one to think that the law of economy is the--circular--return to the point of departure, to the origin, also to the home. So one would have to follow the *odyssean* structure of the economic narrative" (Derrida, *Given Time* 7). The "odyssean" structure surely has resonance with Walcott's epic, but more importantly is the implication that Achille is displaced from his home. In the Derridean context, the words "origin" and "home" are equated, but Walcott cannot agree. Instead, the postcolonial condition implies that where one lives, ne's home, is not the same place as their place of origin. The difference between these two is what forms the incomplete circle⁸ of Achille's exchange, the same

⁸ I imagine the excerpt of a spiral with one end labeled "Antilles," the other labeled "Rome." These points exist on the same cartesian line, but their other coordinate does not match.

difference that defers “Antilles” and “Rome.” In this juxtaposition is the instar. Walcott uses this image of historical intermingling of place across time to present the contradictions that Achille as the instar embodies. While Achille’s sense are not explicitly references, his perception of time is warped relative to the standard that the West enforces. The image of the scale furthers this notion: associating trade with a sense of justice. Embedded in a the geographic metaphor of the “horizon” of the scale and the geopolitical concepts of the “old” and “new” worlds, the narrator is dubious to the blindness of this justice. However, placing this image here, just before Achille attacks Helen and they fight outside of Hector’s van, gives the impression this violence is not just condoned by expected.

Even the “iron tear of the weight” is reflected when Achille, “had tears in his eyes,” after Helen claws at his face (Walcott 39). In this section, Walcott moves in and out of Achille’s perspective to show us the instar-becoming of his narrative. For example when Helen says:

“Give it [a basket of fruit] to me!”

Achille said: “Look I not your slave!

You bound to show off for people?” Of course, she laughed with that loud ringing laugh of hers, then walked ahead of him. And he, feeling like a dog that is left

to nose the scraps of her footsteps, suddenly heard his own voice ringing over the street. (Walcott 38)

The mention of slavery is doubly resonant, first because of the history of the Transatlantic slave trade, which displaces all of Walcott’s characters in this section to St. Lucia, and second because its setting a market place. The trade and sale of fruit become equated with the reduction of humans to chattel. This image, coming from the mouth of Achille, reaffirms what Wynter tells us

of the institutionalized “matrix of Otherness”: that “the enslaved peoples of Black Africa” did not just fill that position in Western culture, but also within Western epistemology. We see that the misogyny that pushes Achille to later disregard Helen’s bodily integrity intersects with the creation of race as the absence of whiteness. There is no coincidence that Achille feels *enslaved* by Helen’s *supposed* promiscuity, her showing “off for people.” This rendering of toxic masculinity and race brings us into Achille’s point of view. The colloquialism, “Of course,” that begins the next sentence, speaks to this collapsing of the narrative distance between Achille and the narrator. Yet, we leave Achille’s voice almost as quickly as we entered it; the passivity of the following stanza, his “suddenly” hearing himself “ringing over the street,” signals to us that Achille is experiencing this moment outside of our expectations for him. Indeed Walcott warps the space around the narration to reflect Achille’s rage. The violence that ensues is written in a similarly passive way, as if to suggest that he is not in control. The complicated mix of narrative style reflects the equally complex intersectional forces that are present in Achille. In this section, his instar-becoming is highlighted when he attempts to participate in the colonial discourse that will not have him. Indeed, it is this colonial force, through the circular exchange of money, that sparks the dispute between Helen and Achille. In this moment, Achille deviates from his Greek analogy, acting much more like a secret Odysseus, a selfhood hidden even from himself.

In fact, Walcott deviates significantly from the Iliadin plot that his character’s names come from, yet what details he retains speaks to his use of the instar. While in the *Iliad*, Achilles and Hector are the most important fighters to their respective sides, but they are not the ones in competition for Helen. In Homer’s epic, the Trojan War is inseparable from the conflict between Menelaus and Paris, yet Walcott redesigns this trope. By recasting Achille as both Achilles and

Menelaus and Hector as both Hector and Paris, Walcott refers Homer's epic in the same way Suetonius rewrites Virgil's *Aeneid*. *Omeros* becomes a collection of texts: a *con*-text, one crafted out of the expectations and interpretations that Walcott brings to the seemingly monolithic Homeric tradition. Outside of the hexameter, the quotidian and the epic blend together not by what is explicitly written but by readerly expectation. Walcott is aware that it is impossible to write a poem about an Achille, a Hector and a Helen without Homeric reference, an exaggeration of a larger notion, that it may be impossible to write postcolonial literature without reference to the colonial. In this theoretical move, Walcott does not suggest that postcolonial writing suffers from a deficiency, instead, that it holds a self-awareness to the forces that shaped it in a way that the Western canon refuses. Walcott reflects the Derridean mode: everything is always already deferred, claiming that a tradition [*trado, tradere, tradidi, traditus: to hand down*⁹] is a chain of constant deferrals and that postcolonial literature, as *instar*, is uniquely situated to comment on this history. Between the history that formed it and the expectations that that history is reducible to, the *instar*, which is the postcolony, operates like Achille does, disregarding the epistemic categories that denaturalize it.

Walcott's *Philoctete* acts as physical referent of this complicated legacy *Omeros* inherits. Although a counterpoint to Achille, *Philoctete* is made *instar* by a wound cut into his shin. Derrida's *Archive Fever* sheds light on *Philoctete*'s perspective on history, given his wound. Introducing the word, "consign" to describe the way an archive is formed, Derrida claims, "There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority" (Derrida *Archive Fever*, 14). *Philoctete*'s body, therefore, consigns

⁹ For more etymological details see: Charlton T. Lewis (1891) *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*, New York: Harper & Brothers (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0060:entry=trado>).

an archive through the pain that he must endure on his shin. He not only insists his wound repeats a history of his ancestors, he makes himself an archive of them. The narrator's rhetorical question:

He believed the swelling came from the chained ankles
of his grandfathers. Or else why was there no cure?
That cross he carried was not only the anchor's

but that of his race... (Walcott 19).

slips into Philoctete's mind, showing us that he believes that nothing can fix this history, that no act and heal what has been broken. According to the soley Derridean mode, Philoctete defers his history into the wound, yet as instar he also replaces it with the wound. Indeed this archival understanding of his body does not connote an awareness to history. Instead, Derrida claims that the archive is "hypomnesic," meaning that in its reduction, it must forget history. For Walcott to suggest that Philoctete embodies an archive of his past is also for Walcott to tell us that this obsession Philoctete has with his wound is a groomed version of history.

As Derrida tells us, the archive (by extension Philoctete's wound):

not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as mneme or anamnesis, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to mneme or to anamnesis, that is, the archive, consignation, the documentary or monumental apparatus as hypomnema, mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum.
(Derrida *Archive Fever*, 14)

Thus we ought to view the wound not as a permanent part of Philoctete's being as it is naturalized by the Western matrix of Otherness, but rather as an apparatus. One that places Philoctete in between invention and appropriation, the placement of an instar. He is bound solely by the expectations that it holds. This history, therefore, that he crafts is a reflection of the same history that naturalized the wound in the first place. As Derrida continues:

the question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past... It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come. (Derrida *Archive Fever*, 27).

Thus, the narrative that Philoctete tells himself, about himself, matches his constantly arriving future, not because he is actually inferior to the West as he is naturalized to think, but rather because his notion of history is not of the past but of that very future. Walcott paints the wound as self-fulfilling prophecy, one that grooms the past as the future.

This grooming is one that is in a constant state of being seen. Philoctete's instruction, compared to Achille's introduction into the text, put Philoctete on display. It is an image of exploitation and not confusion. As the poem begins:

“This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes.”
Philoctete smiles for the tourists, who try taking
his soul with their cameras. (Walcott 3)

Ironically, Philoctete is telling the tourists about the activity that introduces Achille, the the creation of *In God We Trust*. Formally, Walcott implies a connection that these characters share, however while Achille's canoe carving was an introspective narrative, Philoctete's exposition is a performance. The epic form lets us see why this difference is critical. While the dactylic hexameter of Achille's introduction is loose, the meter surrounding the poem's opening is much more strict. Speaking to the poems epic form, Philoctete's performance invokes equally the tourists of St. Lucia and the reader. Our speaker is not like Homer, inviting a muse for inspiration, rather a muse of tourism and economy. The anapests of this first line of dactylic hexameter are a spondee, following the pattern of the first five feet. This form puts emphasis on

the undeclared antecedents: “This,” “one,” “we,” and “them.” As a result, Walcott’s opening offers the reader suspense and mystery, even exocitism. Notice too how this form, while placing emphasis on nameless, bodiless actors, relegates any familiarity the reader may have to the spondees. All of the action takes place as an unstressed afterthought to inaction. Walcott renders Philoctete as caught between this active and passive syntax. As an instar, Philoctete differs from Achille because where Achille is attached to ambivalence, boredom and stagnation, Philoctete is associated with subjecthood and performance. In other words, we never hear Philoctete’s interior voice in the same observing way we hear Achille’s because Philoctete must appease us in the same way he appeases the tourists, at a distance. Instead we heard his interiority directed at the reader, an interiority that is made exterior through the archive that rest on his shin. Placed between this duality, Philoctete instars himself so that he can participate in St. Lucian society, while Achille, on the other hand, does not.

Both Philoctete and Achille, however, share that their denial of their instar-becoming. In this opening section of the epic before Achille visits Africa or Ma Kilma cures Philoctete, the matrix of Otherness that these characters fill refuses them any self-awareness. Built into colonial epistemology and metaphysics is the denial of the subject/object’s ability to understand their sense perception. If they could, then they could no longer be subject/object, instead their experience would be naturalized into an affirming institution. Walcott shows us that the West invents the instar so as to provide the reason for the monotonicity of intent and reception. Notions of whiteness, colonialism and imperialism are rarely mentioned despite shaping Achille’s becoming, yet his being-towards-instar requires his position between these naturalized hierarchies and own selfhood. We see that Philoctete is held in this spot by the physical referent

of his wound and the eyes that are on him, while Achille lingers there by virtue of the invisible, inexplicable force of colonialism, which Walcott renders as narratological as a space between passive and active narration, as well as a collapsing of narrative distance between the narrator and Achille.

Section Four: Deconstructing the instar

To this point, I have shown that Walcott's narrative is multivocal. Indeed, I demonstrated that this literary ambivalence is principle to its becoming as an instar. Yet Achille's journey to and return from Africa is a poetic digression that is unlike any other in the text. An epic inside an epic, this section raises provocative questions about the role of authorship and narration in the poem at large. The theoretical notion of the instar, as I have proposed it, is designed to, if not to answer these questions, respond to them.

I have identified Achille as an instar and gestured towards a deconstruction of that attribution of identity. If the instar is *the physical referent of unmet expectations*, then the zenith of Achille's story should also be the moment that he *unmeets* the most weighty expectations not just prescribed to him by institutions of colonialism and whiteness, but also other institutions of social pressure, like family. Employing the work of the theorists in the opening chapter and using the model of analysis developed from applying the instar to the opening of the epic, I hope to show that Achille's African pilgrimage places him firmly between the expectation (as we have said, identity) and his reception. To Walcott, the Africa of Achille's dream reconciles the narrative anxieties around Achille's sense perception as an instar, the resistances we witness in the previous chapter, and the postcolonial condition of fragmentation and trauma. I intend to read Achille's journey as a deconstruction of the instar permeated sense perception that characterized him in the previous chapters.

The section that preludes Achille's going to Africa acts a sort of vestibule to the African narrative, yet it is this ancillary position that requires rigorous analysis. All of the literary

apparatus that appears in this last chapter of Book Two demands of us epistemic questions which will become more clear once we reach its conclusion, the conclusion of Book Two, and thus the opening of Book Three, of a new epic.

Marked by breakage, this literary antechamber represents the same phenomena of the “disjointure of time” that Derrida claims conjures forth specters, as he tells us in *The Specters of Marx*, “Hamlet declares ‘Time is out of joint’ precisely at the moment of the oath, of the injunction to swear, to *swear together* [conjurer], at the moment in which the specter, who is always a sworn conspirator [conjuré]... has just ordered ‘Swear’” (Derrida *Specters of Marx* 34). Derrida is telling us in this section that the ghost of Hamlet’s father is made of the same oath that he demands Hamlet swear to him. In this swearing together, a conjuring, time gives the impression of jointure, to two ends of breakage sewn together in this conjuration. In this way, Achille and his journey to Africa can be mapped onto Hamlet and his task to avenge his father. This imperative approaches the tragedy of global colonization. Walcott suggests to us that the institution of colonialism understands Achille as a trace of a massive breakage, that his being hinges on the moment his family was stolen from their home. These traces *manifest themselves through the archive of colonial learning as expectations* of actions. Achille, like Hamlet, is bound by his duty, however where Hamlet is single minded, Achille is denied explanation for the expectation in front of him. Instead, he is an instar -- unable to fulfill the impossible task of recollecting his history -- benighted, driven off back to Africa to relive the moment which equally creates and condemns him. The similarity between these tragic heroes is most apparent when Achille is on *In God We Trust*, just before he is carried away to Africa. The form of his

father's face rises up out of the water and the narrator characterizes this vision in terms of specters, telling us:

Achille saw the ghost
of his father's face shoot up at the end of the line.

Achille stared in pious horror at the bound canvas
and could not look away, or loosen its burial knots.
then, for the first time, he asked himself who he was. (Walcott 130)

Like Hamlet's father rising from beneath the stage, Achille's father meets him, seemingly from the ocean floor, in an oath. His "pious horror" reflects the religious qualities that this relationship takes on. This choice shows us that this no occult or horrific summoning, instead Walcott paints the image to have the moral authority of piety. Too, the "burial knots" which confine Achille to the boat, are a clear symbol of the intractability of escaping the image of his father's face. Already, Walcott has begun to deconstruct Achille sense perception: Achille's staring, a fixed sight that forces him the question the fact value of his organs, pushing him past the Western epistemic mode of seeing and believing. Walcott's dramatic language in this section suggests the gravity of Achille's new found introspection, notice his use of exclusion of the subject in the linked clauses of the first two lines. This concatenation reflects growing lack of control Achille has over his boat, over the ocean and over his life. Then in the final line of the stanza Walcott presents Achille's seemingly out of place questioning as the logical conclusion of his lost agency. The loose construction of this line captures the drama and excitement of Achille's horror. This mixing of the introspective and the violent natural reflects the same mixing that Achille embodies, and speaks to why he is having such trouble figuring out who he is. It has struck him that, as Derrida tells us in *Specters of Marx*, "Inheritance is never a given, it

is always a task” (Derrida *Specters of Marx* 67). He cannot avoid his past any longer. Achille is facing this obligation he has forgotten. He must now learn to inherit his past by asking himself who he is. In fact though Achille refuses this task, he refuses his history and in doing makes history.

Thus Achille can be seen as a specter, in the Derridean sense, but he is also unique, the only character of the poem afforded a return to Africa. Because, in the turn of a page, we travel thousands of miles, finding Achille and ourselves displaced between past and future, historical fact and alternate reality, we see that his spectral-becoming is one, too, of instar-becoming. Walcott pushes Achille between the tropes of literature and questions of how to be an individual, a genitivizing act that Achille, as the subject and object of the poem, remains unaware of, but nonetheless effects the readers, and importantly effects readerly expectation of *Omeros*.

Walcott’s final omen to the reader before we follow Achille to Africa comes in the last image of Book Two, which also happens to be the first thing that we see from Achille’s perspective, the swift. The narrator implies that this swift is the very same that Achille saw while carving *In God We Trust*:

She was the swift he had seen in the cedars
in the foam of the clouds, when she had shot across

the blue ridges of the waves, to god’s orders,
and he, at the beck of her beak, watched the bird hum
the whipping Atlantic, and felt he was headed home. (Walcott 131)

Given her migratory paths, the swift is returning home, reflecting Achille’s journey, yet Walcott subverts our impression of the swift again. Recalling Walcott’s treatment of the bird in the first pages of the poem, although in this section it takes she/her pronouns, it vacillates between

he/him and it pronouns. Here the pronouns do the same work that they did in the first section, where they acted as a way for Achille to explain his relationship with the bird. With she/her pronouns, the swift fills the typically epic role of the muse, which invites our protagonist on to the journey we read. Unlike other invocations in the epic, this is a personal one that speaks to the singular nature of what Achille is about to experience. The phrase, “at the beck of her beak,” furthers this sense, acting both as a suspension of action and attributing human traits to an otherwise natural event. The transfiguration of the swift as a secret omen acts a form of communication that links Achille to metatextual literary apparatus. Walcott encodes in Achille the capacity to see the swift not just as swift but as a transitory, instar-image of himself. This intervention spits in the face of the colonial project of epistemology, giving Achille powers beyond his station. It is this unique ability that sets Achille apart from other St. Lucians, that makes him the epitome of an instar. If he even an inkling as to the structural, indeed thematic, knowledge of the swift’s significance, then Walcott has placed him unneatly between expectation and reality.

Achille, silenced with the end of the chapter, lingers in our mind even across the chapter break. This final image of the swift acts like a cut or fade to black might in a film, an intentional breakage in narrative and thus reveals some of the narratological mechanisms readers often take for granted. The chapter that sets us out on Achille’s journey comes as the last one of the Book Two. Usually the divisions of chapters and sections are concerned with two things: the plot developing; and narration changing. Simply put, often Walcott chooses to divide the chapters where he does to draw attention to either a progression of the plot or and shift in perspective. However, Walcott deviates from this pattern for Achille’s journey. It sticks out to us because its

beginning, when Achille leaves, comes at the end of a super-chapter category, called “Book,” while the story re-begins, this time in earnest, with the start of the Third Book. A single blank page creates this seemingly arbitrary division in Achille’s tale. We are reminded of Derrida’s analysis of Mallarmé, *The Double Session*, when he tells us, “The ‘materialism of the idea’ is nothing other than the staging, the theater, the visibility of nothing or of itself. It is a dramatization which *illustrates nothing*, which illustrates *the nothing*, lights up a space, re-marks a spacing as a nothing, a blank: white as a yet unwritten page, blank as a difference between two lines” (Derrida *Dissemination* 208). Derrida’s comments forces us to trouble our common notions of texts. Should we include these blank pages in our definition of text? What do they add or take away from the reading experience? Are they part of the drama that unfolds in the epic just as a space which separates two actors on a stage does? Indeed this blank page *is* a literary representation, that of the ocean crossing itself; more, however, than just a clever way to represent the abyssal space between Old and New Worlds, Walcott divides the Books here to play with the reader’s expectations of the transatlantic. Usually shown in the opposite direction (from Africa to the Caribbean), the transatlantic voyage of Walcott’s blank page is naturally ambivalent, a void-like impression that is proper to the ambivalence of the Ocean. The space of the travel, itself unclear if it is actually happening to Achille, is covered in the turning of a page, and pushes against our expectation of the opposing, traumatic trip as a symbol of chattel slavery. Thus, Walcott uses the breakage implied in the act of turning the page, which is also a structural and formal subversion of expectation, to suggest that “time is out of joint.”

The first image we see after the chapter break is of the mangrove trees standing in water. Walcott collapses ontological categories across the natural world around Achille in this new old world. For instance when the narrator tells us:

The endless river unreeled

those images that flickered into real mirages:
naked mangroves walking beside him, knotted logs
wriggling into the water, the wet, yawning boulders

of oven-mouthed hippopotami. (Walcott 133)

The descriptions here range from fantasy (“endless river”) to oxymoron (“real mirages”). More importantly, however, notice how Walcott uses descriptors from outside of the expected categories of being to characterize the images Achille sees. The hippo seems much more like a patchwork of non-living things stitched together before his eyes than a living, breathing animal. This technique suggests that Achille’s journey not just displaced him physically and temporally, but also denaturalized the colonial project of epistemology that tints all that he sees. Suddenly he is not able to have the same confidence in his sight that marked his time in the Caribbean. Even further, through the passive of setting the subject of the sentence as the “endless river” and placing these images in subordinate clauses governed by the object “those images, Walcott tells us that Achille has even been alienated from the Western institution of causality, the epistemic belief that causes have effects in the first place, or rather that the relationship between cause and effect is a necessarily linear one. This Africa, Walcott indicates, is not the ahistoric and static facade of Hegel or Conrad; instead this is a place where Achille can see with new eyes, hear with new ears and speak with a new tongue.

Walcott's descriptive language remains the same after Achille arrives. Phrases like "sunburnt river" and "the soft-lipped shallows" show us that this mingling of epistemic categories will be a fundamental quality of this representation of Africa (135). However, it is not just epistemic categories that Walcott shows this Africa transcends, it is also theological and ontological ones as well. Just after Achille has come to, he is confronted by God.

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.

And thou shalt have no God should in case you forgot
my commandments." (Walcott 134)

The abrahamic qualities of this God reflect the same struggles that Achille confronts on St. Lucia, as an instar that is not aware of himself. Walcott creates a patchwork God, one as hybrid and spectral as Achille, as instar as him. The introduction of God is an abrupt one, but one that exaggerates biblical style, the floating conjunctive transition, "And god..." appearing apropos of nothing, invoking homilic listing. God's tone with Achille is equally terse, adopting a colloquialism which does not match the solemnity of the deity's entrance. This unmet expectation, both formally and semantically, signals to us that the expectations of religion and its purpose in Achille's Africa are different from the world he lives in on St. Lucia. Clearly suggesting that this God is a Christian one, Walcott subverts the role of Christianity in Africa, no longer an accompanying apparatus of colonialism, God is permitting Achille to find himself, in theory, undoing the harsh work of colonization. The word "permission" sheds light on the nature of this relationship. Caught between a religious seriousness and a fluent colloquialism, God *permits* Achille to return home as if it has been a secret, locked away and forgotten about it.

Forgetfulness plays an important role in this section and permeates Achille's meeting with his father. Here, permission is granted to not just return, but to forget about St. Lucia. Notice that God tells Achille he can "come home," as if to tell him he has never been home in the first place, but Africa has always already been his home, one he has been taught to forget.

This forgetfulness or hypomnesia, as Derrida calls it, is a key feature of the archive. As we saw with Philoctete's wound, the archive reduces history into the metonymies and metaphors of text. In the same way, Achille's memory in Africa is constantly called into question, as it has passed through the archive of colonialism. For example when Achille's, father Afolabe, confronts him about his changed name:

AFOLABE:

Achille. What does the name mean? I have forgotten the one that I gave you. But it was, it seems, many years ago. What does it mean?

ACHILLE:

Well, I too have forgotten.

Everything was forgotten. You also. I do not know.
The deaf sea has change every name that you gave us; trees, men, we yearn for a sound that is missing. (Walcott 137)

The way forgetfulness interacts with meaning is central to their disagreement. Achille argues that the crossing of the Atlantic was a wiping clean of the archive of memory that his father demands him to have and, according to Derridean paradox, fulfilling the telos of archivation. This instar is stored in this paradox, unable to remember without the archive the condemns him, Achille is left as a floating expectation, unmet unable to participate in the epistemic projects which pervade his life. Realize that Afolabe, while untouched by Western notions of identity as the institution of

the genitive, still attributes to Achille an expectation of knowledge that is set us to be unmet. By the first mention of his name, his father witness the instar-becoming of his son. Achille cannot simply inherit the land of Africa like his ancestors who lived there did, if he was he would be able to answer his father's question and ceasing becoming instar. Achille cannot "relocate the remains of" his father; in other words, he cannot swear together the disjointure in time that God has charged him with (Derrida *Specters of Marx* 67). Instead Achille as instar reflects the hypomnesia and ambivalence of the sign, as identified by Derrida in his essay, *Plato's Pharmacy*. The Platonic dialogue *Phaedrus* has in it a description of the interaction between the Greek gods Ra, the sun god and king of the world and Thoth, the messenger god. Derrida tells us:

the figure of Thoth takes shape and takes its shape from the very thing it resists and substitutes for. But it thereby opposes itself, passes into its other, and this messenger-god is truly a god of the absolute passage between opposites... He is thus his father's other, the father, and the subversive movement of replacement... he is neither king nor jack, but rather a sort of joker, a floating signifier, a wild card, one who puts play into play. (Derrida *Dissemination* 93)

Achille's forgetfulness is not a coincidence, instead it is the way by which he inherits the role of his father. He must replace him and in doing must kill him by forgetting him. Akin to what Derrida tells us of the archive, this forgetting is a necessary process of history, and is only possible because of the impossibility Achille faces in discovering his father. Realize that Derrida draw a distinction between amnesia, the absence of memory and hypomnesia, forgetfulness. Unable to return to an Africa before slavery, while also unable to live content in a postcolonial setting, Achille is conjured as a ghost of his pre-colonial past and finally becomes aware of his instar-becoming. Now reconciled with the massive weight of his history, Achille is not saved from his postcolonial, but is no longer plagued by the decision of naming. In this way, he acts

much like the postcolony itself in its relationship to its colonial past. Under colonization, the colonized is forced to forget their home and appropriate the culture of the colonizer, and Walcott is telling us through Achille, the postcolonial space can never go back to a time before colonization. Achille as the instar has found the utility to use old names anew, ashewing expectation and living in spite of it. It is this capacity of the instar that is most frightening to institutionalized norms -- its praxis for alternative history. If the instar is, as I have suggested, the subversion colonial conscious forgetfulness to ambivalize the regime of expectation, then it holds the endless possibilities of unwritten history, the generative force that designs history -- in a word, *differance*.

Section Five: The new instar

The rest of Achille's journey through Africa sheds light on this transformative power of the instar. But we see much of his growth later as Walcott's narrator being to reflect on the differences in personality that Achille's trip inspired. He speaks to this same phenomena of instar as the praxis of alternative history. In other the words, he writes towards that what is afforded to the instar that is afforded to nothing else is the ability of ambiguous catachresis. As a product of the institutionalized epistemology of the West, which relies on a controlling of the association of signs, the instar inherits an ambivalence to fact value, and so can uses catachresis to place itself between intent and reception. The instar is able to be catachrestic, a mutability that implies the embracing of difference. This new Achille is as new as his language, that is not say not at all. His history is reappropriated, relying on the same faith that it takes to use old names anew, to be an instar. Take for example one of Walcott's last descriptions of Achille as a head of coral:

Why waste lines on Achille, a shade on the sea-floor?
Because strong as a self healing coral, a quiet culture
is branching from the white ribs of each ancestor... (Walcott 296)

The rhetorical question that opens this section is hard to ignore in the context of the narrator's journey with Seven Seas. It signals that despite the futility that accompanied the narrator's realization at Soufrière, he will continue to "waste lines," to show the power of shunning the arrogance he lost there. The image is reminiscent of a genealogy, a family tree -- born out of selective breeding and grafting. Walcott opts for the present progressive tense so as to make this constant change an assurance. Achille and the coral are composed of instars, infinitesimal,

liminal moments when the present, that which is the past, becomes the future. Given this liminality, the word “culture” takes on a more resonant tenor: describing the free association of life on the reef admits difference and non-identity into the otherwise stubborn Achille. The instars which make him up become the historical instances of these meetings of the other. Encoded in his body, the body of the coral, is simultaneously all of Plunkett’s allegorical fictions -- the storm of history. Walcott continues:

where coral died it feeds on its death
the bones branch into more coral, and contradiction begins. (Walcott 297)

He places a comma in the middle of the line to emphasize the primary caesura after the first syllable in the second foot. This division marks the very moment when death becomes life within the coral and within Achille -- marking also their metamorphosis and transformation, their quality as instars and as made up of instars. Walcott’s sentence ends with the primary caesura of the next line, this time on the first syllable of the third foot, demarking the abrupt end to when the “contradiction begins.” Indeed even Walcott’s poetics are contradictory, calling together metrical and semantic opposites and congealing, yoking and reducing them, forcing the reading to sit, perhaps uneasily, with the reality and near-verisimilitude of the contradiction extant in life. The next sentence follows:

It [the coral] lies in the schism
of the starfish reversing heaven; the mirror of History
has melted and, beneath it, a patient, hybrid organism

grows in his cruciform shadow” (Walcott 297)

Here the language of the instar is remains integral to Walcott’s view of history. The coral is created out of the collapse of something else, although it is not entirely cyclical. Instead, we see

it as instar in the present moment of its becoming something else. Walcott sticks to simple present tense verb constructions when describing it: “lies,” and “grows” (combined with the adjective, “patient”) suggest an adolescent and dependant nature to the instar. Achille as the coral is vulnerable, and of course impressionable. The final antecedent “his” feels ambiguous, with Achille being the only character in this section, yet closer to it is capital H “History.” Understanding “his” to stand in for “History” reframes the image, its cruciform looming like a predator over the developing instar beneath it. History has melted, only to re-manifest itself in the repetition and appropriation of signs. As a result, the word “hybrid” recontextualizes this notion of the instar into the contemporary postcolonial polemics. To Walcott, then, what fragments the postcolonial body is the homogeneousness of Western time, which refuses the contradiction inherent in the instar. Historically hybrid and temporally instar, Achille is pushed between colonizer and colonized, dream and memory, self and other.

What this new form of the instar does to the narrative that Walcott continues past Achille’s development lets the reader and the narrator alike to confront important questions of representations. The reduction of the instar is of great fear to the narrator: representing anything seems to be a paralyzing task. This question of reduction is most clear when Walcott’s narrator is visited by a stone statue of Homer, in St. Lucia, known as Seven Seas. Here, Seven Seas is an instar of Homer, by standing in for the canon and history that Homer inspired. Seven Seas’s body of marble is characterized in the language of instability:

They kept shifting shapes, or the shapes metamorphosed
In the worried water...
No sooner did I saw the one

Than the other changed and the first was forgotten
As the sand forget a shadow in the widening sun... (Walcott 281)

The narrator's description is one of sight, relying on his eyes to identify who Seven Seas is, and while he is able to do so once Seven Seas begins to talk to him, Walcott's inability to describe him, receive him and, as we will see, render him reflects Seven Seas untouchability, his existence outside of text and thus memory, ironically exterior to the capability to produce text. Seven Seas challenges the narrator's place as an author to the text, pushing them both into becoming instars. Like the instar, Seven Seas is unstable, defying boundaries of life and death and in doing calls into question the narrator's apathy towards history, especially given his desperate apologies to him. Seven Seas, caught in between life and death, is thrown between intent and reception by the narrator, yet he remains comfortable with being an instar. After the narrator falls into a deserted sulphur spring-turned-mine and is saved by Seven Seas, he tells us:

As I, contemptuously, turned my head away,
A fist of ice gripped it from the soul-shaping forge,
And it wrenched my own head bubbling half-lies,

Crying out its name, but each noun stuck in its gorge
As it begged for pardon, willing to surrender
If another chance were given it at language. (Walcott 293-4)

Walcott's use of the adverb, "contemptuously," gives the reader a regretful tone that is not typical of the narrator. Unlike his usual sorrow at the state of the world, this tone is suspended by the adverb, turning that fear into one of bodily integrity, instantly raising the stakes on the narrator's ignorance. In the small moment of a causal head turn, the well-travelled, yet jaded adventurer is transformed into just another fail historian, catalogued with the likes of Plunkett, a humbling which unveils the institutions which enforce the stark differences between intention and reception. Notice too that one of the nouns that governs these two stanzas, "it" refers to Walcott's head. Seemingly grammatically separated from its body, his head takes on a

This supernatural meeting that the narrator has with Seven Seas colors what he makes of Achille is the rest of the poem. In the next chapter, the narrator tells us:

I was an ant on the forehead of an atlas
... Achille with his cutlass

Rattling into the hold shared the same privilege
of an archipelago's dawn, a fresh language
salty and shared by the bittern's caw, by frieze

of low pelicans. The sea was my privilege. (Walcott 294-5)

Standing on the beach at sunrise, Walcott's narrator deftly transitions to Achilles point of view and his own. Describing Achille, the narrator is generous, pointing out that Achille like him has learned their lessons by being attentive to the traditions and norms implied in language. That this language is also "shared by the bittern's caw" signals to the reader that this "freshness" is not a total reinvention. Indeed it is quite the opposite. Much like Walcott's notion of using "old words anew," Achille has learned the nature of inheritance: that specter of the Western world inhabits him. This reinvention has Derridean overtones, the process of reinvention being also a process of rediscovery and rethinking. The reframing of a word replaces it in a new context, the juxtaposition of which gives life to new meaning and difference. Thus this "fresh language" that Achille and the narrator equality enjoy appropriates the sounds around them, of "the bittern's caw." The action of sharing is a type of creating, for the same reason that Derrida tells us that reading is a type of writing. This new language is one of composed of instars, when a word's connection to its referent is much less hegemonic than it is in this language. The way knowledge is gathered and archived is mutable, accepting difference, and while it still cannot render the full truth of human experience, it allows the narrator to manipulate classical and Caribbean tropes, massaging them and subverting them into his new characterization of Achille.

Conclusion

As I have shown, the placement of Achille in between intent and reception shows the liminal and marginal experience of the postcolonial. Indeed, as my observations displayed, Achille's sense perception characterizes his experience as that which is between intent and reception and that as he travels through Africa he deconstructs his epistemology. As his narrative unfolds, Achille and the instar become the embodiment of antithetical relationship between production and destruction. By both defying and defining this distinction, Achille finds himself excluded from the discourse of Western epistemology, but can defy this exclusion through the production of his own more malleable and changeable one.

Indeed as a manifestation of the force of catachresis, Achille's in-betweenness is not just a place of exile, it is the opportunity to use old names anew, to be a necessary part of historical unfolding, not through any radical decision, but simply by becoming. The instar is a metamorphosis -- a temporal distribution that displaces self from other, but as a result is encoded in the very mode of that displacement, and thus remains as an apparatus of the institution of identity. The instar is both what constitutes the matrix of Otherness and disassembles it, an ability not just to see the constant chain of deferral that Derrida implies is inherent in all meaning, but to control its graduation.

How does *Omeros* begin and where does it end? Indeed the turning of the final page does not delimit Walcott's poem. The troubled relationship that text has to its ending speaks to the same ambivalence that the instar has to its conclusions. As the conduit through which identity is enforced and subverted, Achille cannot be contained to himself. Instead, his postcolonial body

transforms from stagnant to the physical referent of the change. Not a maker of History, Achille is content with being the force of history, aware to the epistemic structures that operate to shape history. According to Derrida, Achille must be forgotten -- that force which is hidden in its encoding of epistemology. However Walcott renders him nonetheless.

So I will turn finally to the beginning: the evangelists, Mark and Matthew in their discussion of translation, suggest that Jesus's words, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?," do not hold meaning unto themselves. Instead, Christ like Achille, in the moment that his intentions are misunderstood, becomes an instar, driven in between intention and reception in the very same way as Achille is. Both undergo a sort of death and be resurrection, and both are hated for their aberration from the conventions of intention and reception. Perhaps the similitude ends there, but this biblical moment shows that intention and reception rely on each other and tend to constitute each other such that a line between them, if one can be said to exist, must be permeable. Thus any postcolonial theory must first take into account that this epistemic principle of the monotonicity of intent is as fabricated as those same institutions of race, gender and ability. Indeed, that this duality is as old and as encoded in our discourses as the whole wealth of Western epistemology.

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