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My special thanks to Professor John Theime, my mentor, British Council e-brary service and above all my family.

“I am content to live it all again
And yet again”.
W. B. Yeats, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul”

“Was that life? I want to say to death. Well then! Once more”.
Nietzsche: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

“We, however, want to become those who we are- the ones who are new, unique,
incomparable, self-legislating, self-creating.”
The Gay Science

Walcott’s early plays engage in a creative representation of humanity enmeshed in the existential crisis of living on the margin. Tension of hope and despair, negation and affirmation, weakness and strength animate his plots. His imaginative treatment transfigures the Caribbean island world as self-invented from a mere outpost of empire. This essay aims to study his one-act play *The Sea at Dauphin* as a creative, artistic attempt at affirming pain and suffering, seeking to validate how they enable the process of creating a unique existence. It also aims to show how by eliminating the stigma of non-scripted or “unstoried” lives, a fishing community can affirm the hidden potential within them. Constellated around the lives of the sailors are the experiences of anxiety, death and nothingness. Molded after Synge’s classic text *Riders to the Sea* and considered to be a masterpiece of his early years, here the plot spotlights the life of the fishermen mired in “naked, voluble poverty”.¹ Turmoil and perils are inextricable in the experience of daily life in this remote sea-side village; it is stripped of any organizing principles. Illusion and promises are utterly denied to the fishing folks. Falling short of ideals, life appears to be worthless here. Its protagonist, Afa is very commonly read as a “blasphemous,” “bitter,” and “misanthropic” figure by leading Walcott scholars. But to see him as vituperative despiser of all positive things and values, a mere “nay-sayer” will be extremely reductive. Far from being the voices of *resentment* or of god-denying, hard-hearted race, the fishermen compel our attention by mastering the destructive emotions. In so doing, they evince an ethical imperative to lead a life which cannot be dismissed as merely unjust or miserable but as a testing ground for self-creation in the midst of chaos and perpetual change. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche contended

¹ In his seminal essay “What the Twilight Says,” Walcott reflects upon the formidable challenge of deprivation, destitution, and West-Indian poverty to the nascent literary and other art practices, especially drama which called for melding the interior life of poetry and outward life of action and dialect.

that life is a continuum of creation, entwining past, present and future. And it is in the ways of change and passing that our earthly life may be constructed and re-constructed. In Walcott's play *The Sea at Dauphin* what permeates through the plot are the experiences of death and mishap. The impoverished fishing folk that regularly put out into sea face dire challenge for survival; terror looms large with their every new sailing. My essay will attempt to underline how the plot seeks to create a meaning and value in an existence in which all hopes of redemption and transcendence have fallen away. It is here that they embody the spirit of self-overcoming. Inhabiting a cold, inhuman world, the "unaccommodated" fishing folk do not merely figure as victims of some "nihilistic disorientation" or a group of mute sufferers in face of all hindrances to daily life. It is in grim, daily encounter with hostile and other elemental forces that they re-define life as ongoing process of becoming or the quality of what Nietzsche describes as "the affirmation and passing away and destroying, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying yes to opposition and war; becoming, along with the repudiation of the very concept of *being*..." (Cox 186).

Sea has always been a significant axis of Walcott's *oeuvre*; the life of fishermen measured against the sea has preoccupied him in his poems. In his early plays the narrative is grounded in the marginal, dispossessed lives; charcoal burner, the wood-cutter or the fishermen, his early protagonists are quintessential West-Indian men, materially and culturally "nobody." But in their daily encounter with terror and anguish, in a life of obscurity and shadowiness, Walcott's play breaks open new modes of being. Life, as described by the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, is eternal war, polarity and tension. And therefore, willing and striving are the essences of all living. As Schopenhauer believed, "willing is a sufficient condition of suffering, because all willing arises necessarily from a want or deficiency, and to experience a want is to suffer. (Janaway 42). Coping with dire wants and immeasurable suffering undergone by the fishing community is so poignantly expressed when Afa broods over it: "I born and deading in this coast that have no compassion to grow food for children, no fish enough to buy new sail, no twine" (58). But the fishing community's life is not a tragic story in a negative sense ending in failure and frustration; it is affirmatively tragic in outlining that human lives are not pre-scripted, but a process of becoming. Rather than acceding to the Christian morality, by leading life now and "innumerable times more" knowing "there will be nothing new in it," the fishermen can transcend the pointlessness of existence. While the weak might have discovered worthlessness and loss only in such life, Afa and his mates, a gritty band of sailors begin a process of self-realization; they affirm their readiness to embrace all inevitable return of all past experiences, however repelling:

AFA: [looking to the sea] Last year Annelles, and Bolo, and this year Hounakin ... And one day, tomorrow, you Garcia and me ... And Augustin ... (80)

What is spelt out here is no mere apprehension of a weak-spirited sailor or submission to deterministic world view. Facing up against mortality, Afa and his mates do not only oppose helpless subjection but also look forward to the new daybreak without hope, promise or end. By remaining agonizingly aware of the finiteness of life, being divested of illusions, they affirm the spirit of unwearied striving and self-overcoming. Resignation and defeat mark the ending of *The Riders to the Sea* but here the ending transforms the experience of suffering into something essential and positive, a stimulant to action. Withdrawal and passivity occlude the process of self-making. Dauphin life, as described by Afa, is bleak and hopeless with an existential cycle of toil, pain, frustration and failure: “Every day sweat, sun and salt, and night is salt and sleep, all the dead days pack away and stink is Dauphin life” (53). In his study of Nietzsche’s doctrine of over-coming nihilism, Bernard Reginster argues that the Sisyphuan task of pushing the rock up on the mountain is life-affirming, rather than futile.² Dauphin people regularly undergo severe physical and psychological suffering. Battered by loneliness, hunger and helplessness, life is nothing but an ocean of suffering. In life, as Schopenhauer argued in *Will to Power*, “It is far more correct to regard work, privation, misery and suffering, crowned by death, as the aim and objective of our life” (Janaway 584). Striving, hindrances and failure mark their daily sailing and life proves to be never-ending ordeal. Two hours before sunrise, in the “sleep-tightened village,” the fishermen arrive barefooted, tattered-cloaked. Late to arrive is Hounakin—appearing as the picture of weakness and misery and devastated from the recent loss of his wife. Wind at this hour is “savage” and early October chill at the daybreak hour face them with inhospitable climate. When the action opens, they are hurrying for an early departure with their canoe, significantly named Our Daily Bread. Almost photographically truthful, and brutal in realism is the story of ordinary lives of the ordinary people. Before they set out to sea, their body is exposed to inclement conditions, stressing needs, wants and necessities:

AFA: “poverty, dirty woman, dirty children, where all the prayers? Where all the money a man should have and friends when his skin old?” (73)

² Bernard Reginster invites this comparison in his study of overcoming nihilism in *Affirmation of life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* which he considers to be an overarching project of Nietzsche. The sixth chapter of this study entitled *Dionysian Wisdom* discusses suffering as constitutive of affirmation of life and Nietzschean postulate of suffering as desirable.

All the initial moments reveal how they are cast into need-laden, struggle-filled, existence. Here Afa indicts life as painfully inadequate; it offers no hope of deliverance. Poor and outcast, they face the challenges to reclaim their humanity. Afa is lonely, having no wife or children and beleaguered with too many adversaries—Sea, God, church and White man. Trapped in oppressive circumstances, life appears to him to be sordid and disgusting. He pours out bitterness against all around him; hatred is so strong in him that he almost sounds like a “nay-sayer” trying to come to terms with nihilistic crisis. A victim of painful experiences, Afa broaches a hard, fatalistic view of life; he broods over defeat at the hands of external forces which epitomize human predicament in general: “Don’t ask me why a man must work so hard/ To eat for worm to get more fat.” (96). Every time they put out to sea, the sea confronts them as destroyer of human and family relation. With every sailing, they stand on the edge of disaster. Against the timeless repetition of life and death” stand the fishermen who had “rooted themselves with a voracious, unreflecting calm,” as Walcott describes them in “What the Twilight Says.” The narrative of this play is designed to negotiate between affirmation and negation, hope and frustration. It denies any closure or a teleological end; instead, it implies a cycle, a motion without end. Afa asks Augustin, “Because one old man dead, the sea will stop?” (75) is suggestive of unending flow set against evanescence, experience of recurrence for an infinite number across infinite time and space; it finds an echo in the last line of *Omeros*: “When he left the beach the sea was still going on.” Cyclical nature of existence is stressed as counterpoint to individuals who come and pass and leave behind only a faint memory. As broached in the *Bhagavad Gita* (8.9): “This [same] elementary world only happens again and again; Annihilates upon arrival of night, and originates upon arrival of day.” Nietzsche professed that this return is ultimate affirmation of life; it testifies to the unshaken faith to continue living here on earth, rather than craving for otherworldly realm. The central exhortation of Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathursta* is this: “I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of other worldly hopes!” (3). Life-negating notion of suffering, therefore, is in need of constant revaluation and reassessment.

Having found no possibility of organizing life around some ultimate purpose like “God” or “social justice,” Afa appears for the most parts as a confirmed cynic, an unmasker of authority, divine or secular. More often than not Walcott scholars have variously described him as “misanthrope” or blasphemous. Through a major part of the action, he savagely attacks Christian morality and falseness of the Christian doctrine. He is an eloquent opposer of prayers, ritual and reverence. His God is not “dead,” missing or lost but rather a “big fish” eating “small fishes,” an inflictor of pain, a pitiless tyrant. The Dauphin life, as he bitterly describes it, “the land is hard, this Dauphin land has stone/ Where it should have some heart” (61). In stark deprivation and dismal daily existence, he takes to task

the mechanism of oppression and injustice, conducted by the God or the white rulers. Immersed in pain and toil, he hits out at religious teachings and transcendental hope offered by Christianity. He has the audacity to curse “God” for the ill-fate his people are compelled to undergo. Driven by the tribulation of fortune, he can curse God. In an altercation with the young priest, Afa bursts out in deep scorn against church and the vocation of the priest and all forms of moral values. Without taking recourse to moral values he shines in terrible loneliness, comparable to the sages only. When it comes to put out in sea, he is fearless enough to proclaim “If none going, then I will go alone.” (61) When Augustin accuses him with the remark “You have no respect for man, animal, sea or God. (61), he explains how years of experience have turned his “heart so hard” (61). Only with a fiercely independent streak, the noble-spirited individual can distance himself from the surrounding world. By vigorously repudiating the general and abstract system of values, he takes an important stride towards complete self-over-coming. As a non-conformist, suspicious of conventional moral categories of “good” and “evil,” he appears to have created the value of strong will. No doubt a self-determining man, he spurns the values of morality. Desperately sad and distressed by the news of Hounakin’s death, he proclaims that no prayer or ritual can palliate the distress of such lives. In an overt gesture of defiance, he “tears a scapular from his neck and hurls it to the ground” (73) in the presence of the priest. This sacrilegious act is suggestive of disaffiliation from ecclesiastical order, a profanity that characterizes extraordinary daring to challenge the pious life recommended by Church and the priest. The hope of salvation and beyond, as Nietzsche contended in *Beyond Good and Evil*, will only rob the individual of his free spirit. The true noble spirit does not only live beyond every established ideal of good and evil but also remains indifferent to slights and injuries. Tame, civilized social animals may believe in acquiescence but as a self-determining man, Afa decides the course of his action by creating his own values. Nietzsche believed that only noble natures can impose their own values in the world as they are spurners of conventional morality or “herd morality.” It is here that the powerful being can separate them from the weak and virtuous. As Lee Spinks observes in his commentary on *Beyond good and Evil*, “The noble nature, by contrast, is not ‘made for pity’ because it has the strength spontaneous to affirm its own nature.”³ In course of the plot, all of Afa’s words and acts, in a way, it may be said to “take a moral formula in a supra moral sense,” a Nietzschean marker of the higher man. Afa picks up a quarrel with the young priest once he mentions that the old man (Hounakin) “had God.” Death as a gateway to

³Nietzsche was scathingly critical of pity and humility cultivated by the weak which was a form of conspiracy against the strong and noble nature—as it only preserves, Spink argues, a degenerate form of life (Spinks 90).

enter into the blessed life of eternity is immediately contradicted by Afa. In a more blistering speech, he equates God with White Man: “God is a white man. The sky is his blue eye,/ His spit on Dauphine people is sea” (61). As Afa curses God, it is quite obvious that his unmitigated aversion is directed at both religious and secular authority. Ziauddin Sardar in his *Orientalism* (2002) contends “White men as God syndrome” was fairly common in the colonies, especially in such recorded events as when Captain Cook was greeted by the native Hawaiians as the God Leno upon his arrival. It seems fairly reasonable to say that the thrill and wonder associated with those events are subverted by Walcott’s sailor protagonist. The colonial fantasy that equates the white man with God is contravened by his references to oppressive mechanism fashioned by the colonial lords. The wonder and attraction of the White race have in Walcott’s hand been held up to question; in Afa, the veteran sailor’s aversive utterances, their cultural priority has been thoroughly dismissed. “God” or “white men” are perpetrators of tyranny and coerce the powerless folks into defeatist submission. He has been propelled by an imperative to live a life beyond “good” and “evil” and time and again articulates that “morality” is the historical effect of regimes of cruelty, violence and truth”. Here Afa’s part invites a comparison with that of the Russian nihilists who repudiated religious authority of the Orthodox Church, the political authority of the state and the social authority of the family before the 1918 revolution.

Now it remains to be answered, how may life be affirmed in the depth of abyssal suspicion? How can one go on loving life with so much hatefulness or affirm communal life bereft of divinity? What practices guide them through the chaotic and disenchanting world that they find themselves in? How can an individual cobble together meaning out of the nothingness of existence? The answer may be found by scrutinizing parts of Afa, Augustin and Gacia in the play. Afa’s voice is not merely the voice of all resentful sentiments or frustrated sentiments. Without persisting to stubborn opposition or defiance in the course of sea-faring life, he’s grown rock solid, a disinterested acceptor of realities. Regret and remorse suggest an unwillingness to live life again as exactly it was. Afa never appears apologetic for all his gestures and actions and his moral stance is never that of a pessimistic rejecter of life. Gacia, hesitant before setting out, offers Afa a suggestion: “Go home and sleep, die in your hut” (59) which underscores a defeatist and acquiescent attitude to the vulnerability of the sailor’s life. He has no zeal to overcome the hazards and is keener to be taken into the loving care of his woman. Contrasted to Afa’s irresistible impulse for seafaring, he is home-bound and more sheltered. Afa offers himself up as a contrast to him: “I cannot sleep on land, like Gacia” (61). Nothing can buckle up his energy; an unyielding determination marks him out from the fishing partners. In hour of crisis, he promises to stand by his old East-Indian sailor friend; he does not only console him in deep sorrow but also suggests how he will regain self-control to overcome this personal tragedy:

AFA: Old man, your wife is dead and sorry make you mad. Go on the morne and count the birds like Ragamin and play bamboo under the wood- trees for you' goat ... go on the morne behind the presbytery, watch goat, talk with priest, and drink your white rum after the night came. (64)

Tenderness, compassion, supportiveness inform his gesture. By forging creative unity of nature, individual and society, life may be redeemed or made more worth living. Such small gestures of compassion help us see him involved in the process of self-formation, bringing new values into being. After the day's sailing he even returns with a pail of fish and Augustin with a shell for their mate Hounakin. To call him a cynic to extreme is to endorse Augustin's observation that he is irreverent or a stranger to all common human emotions. He accuses him "You don't have no love, no time, no child, you have a hole where man heart should be, you have no God, no dog, no friend" (51). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche contended that goodness is often defined in moral terms like self-restraint, pity and compassion. The positive moral virtue is identified with weakness. More often than not, weak and insecure people stay content with traditional belief and myth of transcendence. To be good and virtuous often demands suppression of free will and instinct. Nothing can tame Afa into a "civilized animal" or curb his drives and passions. Weakness and humility are morally justified, and the young priest describes Afa and his community as a "hard race" (74) who are in need of spiritual help. Morality is said to be "the residue left when the constant battle of the contraries is rigidified into the religious and life-denying opposition of good and evil."⁴ Inflexible moral law is taken to task by a simple sailor Afa, as he argues that enforcing such laws would reduce men to mere dogma or mere abstraction. Asserting himself over ethical restraints, Afa embodies a powerful individuality of instinct and passion. All his bitterness and disgust and a degree of ruthlessness cannot undermine love and compassion. This quality in Afa is stressed by Edward Baugh in his analysis in critical study *Derek Walcott*: "the compassion and tenderness that cannot be altogether suppressed by Afa's hardness are crucial markers of his humanity" (69). Hounakin, a recent widower has surrendered to the chaos and confusion of his situation; unable to shake off the despair, exhaustion, he kills himself. But this crisis of confidence in loneliness of suffering is superseded by a vision of bonding between the fishermen—in their daily recreational hours of jokes, rum and Samuel Café after return from the daily chore of fishing. All the apparent meaninglessness and sense of all pervasive futility can be transcended in such affirmative gestures

⁴ This quality of strong natures is recommended by Nietzsche himself in *Beyond good and Evil*. It argues the fearless confrontation with the perilous condition to be affirmative rather than valuing good as passive conformity.

and fellow feelings. The painful end of Hounakin cannot blur such glimpses of fraternity and bonding. It is here that we find the aptness of Paula Burnett's observation regarding the endemic condition of poverty that forges the bonding of the powerless in the face of solidarity advocated by the ethics of globalization: "... poverty can remind us that we share a predicament with our neighbor, and it confirms the importance of compassion, mutual support and solidarity" (55). Such solidarity can only warm up the early morning chill of October. When Afa motivates the boy Jule, the son of Habal to join them in future expedition, a contrasting vision of a new beginning is apparent. Hounakin's self-destructive end is redeemed in Jule's decision of stepping in her father's shoe. Moreover, his readiness to join fishing expedition indicates a continuum between past, present and future. As the day moves towards its close, old challenges give away not to new day of untroubled calm and security but to even grimmer challenges. Unavailing resignation is undermined by resolute commitment and affirmation – to affirm life is to welcome its eternal recurrence, live it all over again a decided reconciliation with fate when the will does no longer will anything.

Nietzsche upheld the Dionysian point of view which regards suffering as desirable and pain as enabling condition to the affirmation of life. A true affirmation of life depends on revaluation of suffering. The real dignity of life does not rest upon empty vanity of pleasure and happiness but on striving and struggles. Afa does not only maintain a sceptic stance but also faces challenges and dangers in the hostile sea. My essay argues that the closing moments of the action is the centerpiece of the whole work as it interfaces death and life, stasis and motion. Past, present and future are interlocked here in a recurrent cycle. At the sunset hour, just before leaving the sea beach, Afa recalls his lost partners whom the sea has swallowed up—Annells, Bolo, Hounakin and also bemoans and threats that always looms large and jeopardize their stability. Gacia reminds his friends "Tomorrow again" and Afa sets the time at four o'clocks which has a deep resonance. It is not indicative of end but opens out into uncertain future. And their final action as "They furl the sail" points to the daily chore of fishing to be continued on the next day. Afa has also mockingly reminded Augustin that they will return on the next day only if he does not go the church. It attests show pain and suffering can work as stimulant rather than a frustration to it. Thus the life portrayed here in this death-saturated atmosphere is full of drive, forces and energies that demonstrate a strong affirmation. Their final promise and commitment amply suggest how they have recognized that each passing moment to be an echo for eternity rather than one brief episode in pointless succession of events. What the playwright himself calls "fatal adaptability" of the race of the fishermen, seems to suggest the ability to arrive at a state of reconciliation with fate or love of fate—to put it in Nietzschean term *amor fati*: "if it is shown to my satisfaction that pain contributes to the nurturing of the

human species as much as pleasure does, I shall say ‘yea’ to pain.”⁵ Their ethical imperative is to lead a life by tearing off the shackle of past, to look forward without getting immured by it. They act with responsibility to become what they are. This recognition of the inescapability of suffering and struggle endow upon them a more positive mode of being. Since time is cyclical and each time returns in exact repetition, they appear to be ready to live and re-live it over and over again.

Brushing aside the Christian promise of the Eternal life or salvation of, life they will the life to be caught in a cycle of “eternal recurrence,” in course of change and wearing out, of the ineluctability of death. By subscribing to the faith that this life and this world are really one is a reminder of the finitude of our life; in this way only can the despair be fended off. The closing promise of return and continuity reveal how certain painful aspects of life may not be redeemed by doctrinal cure to their pain and anguish. The closing moments add to the distress and suffering depth and power, resisting the ethics of defeat and negation. They may have recognized life as pointless, futile but suffering turns out to be something essential and positive. Rather than naïve singing of the glories of human life, Schopenhauer deemed “it is far more correct to regard work, privation, misery and suffering, crowned by death, as the aim and object of our life... since it is these that lead to the denial of the will to live” (Spinks 107). In course of their conversation and action, what surfaces is the consciousness of the future that already was and the past that will return with eternal inevitability. We find at the end Afa and Gacia are not merely resenting the injuries of the past but willing a return of the same. They will continue to negotiate with the phenomenal world of ceaseless striving and pain. The chaos and confusion of the daily life will be overcome in a willingness to re-live such life over and over again. Afa does not only mourn the death of his mates but knows the grim insecurity that they will undergo the very next time they sail out to sea. The motif of Afa, in course of the plot may be said to straddle between “dying consciousness” and “awakening consciousness,” as Nietzsche believed them to be constitutive of continuum of a human life. The ending of the plot is underlined by this different stratum of consciousness, recalling the lost lives yet also looking forward to early morning departure to sea. Their parting moments underlines the spirit of acceptance of the earthly life. Each passing moment of life is an echo for eternity, rather than fleeting moment; since time is cyclical and each time returns in exact repetition. While Hounakin has ended life prematurely, others have opted for life to repeat eternally; it is through life-affirming drive that may be staved off suicidal nihilism. Reconciliation with fate asks us to tolerate the eternal recurrence as “counterpoint to meaningful and ordered world of the religious persona and the metaphysician.” (Schopenhauer 584). Notwithstanding Afa’s sustained attack on value or belief

⁵ From *Thus Spake Zarathustra* III. Despite admitting pain and evil, Nietzsche never considered disgust with life and saying “no” to life and the world.

system, the narrative affirms an existence, without promise of material change, the miracle of living without promise and hope. He startles us with complete self-assertiveness, freeing himself from all alien influences. The grim experiences of fishing community have induced in this community a complete will-lessness or indifference to goals and purposes. Without standards and values to anchor their lives, the ethical imperative that drives them still is the present life wallowing in “dirt” and dismal “poverty.” In accepting its unchanging futility, a new existential confidence is instilled in them. As old challenges will return on a new day, only the being with exceptional strength will neither regret nor deplore his fate. In his seminal essay “What the Twilight Says,” Walcott had also observed that: “that in the new Aegean the race, of which these fishermen were the stories, had grown a fatal adaptability.”⁶ Restless, ceaseless movement, constant striving and endless, immeasurable suffering acknowledge and affirm the wretchedness of life. Life-denying skepticism and worthlessness of existence gradually give way to a new desire for living painful and horrible aspects of life. Pain and anguish are superseded in affirming the life of “eternally recurring existence” and a new mode of being is discovered at the end. In the cold, inhuman world of Dauphin, in the world of its death and degradation a great amount of energy is expended over the challenge to survive. Above death and change lies the challenge to become what they are. Nietzsche believed that the strong individual can embrace the inevitable and eternal return of all his past experiences—both good and evil. The Dauphin fishing community by promising return to daily toil and challenges begins a process of self-realization as man’s fate and freedom are inextricably woven with the totality of the cosmic fate. If evil and wretchedness are everywhere, the future is as dark as the past and the way to redemption does not lie in complete will less inaction. Like the ideal type of Nietzschean “strong” man Afa fights the harder when fate is against him. Dauphin fishermen have learnt to live without hope, without illusion and endure buffets of misfortune. Abundance of the adverse conditions inspires the strong man to fight with no desire to yield. Notwithstanding certain cruelty and ruthlessness, Afa has startled us with complete self-assertion. He has counseled Houkain against complete recoil from the chaotic and the disenchanted world. To tolerate the meaninglessness of the world, the response must be one of strength and not of weakness. Their understanding of the chaos and confusion is corroborated by their undaunted facing of the world, and in experiencing life at its most threatening. In the process of becoming, they free themselves from the chains of the past and manage to bridge the past with future. It is in the young boy Jule who will accompany them in their next sailing.

When past and future are recognized to be knotted together, any individual can cast off all ill will towards the past. It is not by evading the horrors that one can

⁶ From Derek Walcott’s lengthy prologue in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (1971).

expect to cope with life. But in embracing the unalterable pattern of creation and destruction, the past may be redeemed which underscores the contingency of existence and pain. Thus the play attests to the value of creating values, and the need to create a new, positive vision of being. In the words of the Conteur in Malcochon, or the Six in the rain: “The rage of the beast is taken for granted,/ Man’s beauty comes from enduring pain” (175) .

As the Greeks advocated the wisdom of *pathei mathos*, in negotiating with existential suffering, Dauphin fishermen’s lives demonstrate the wisdom in embracing and enduring suffering. In *Thus Spake Zarasturshta*, Nietzsche claimed that an individual life is a continuum of creation and that life is in need of being constructed and reconstructed. Here also the fishermen, a group of social outcasts exemplify not only weariness and exhaustion but demonstrates life as ongoing process of becoming. They lead an affirmative life without refusing to shrink before life’s demands. The despairing resignation in the face of the valueless world, a sort of “passive nihilism” is what Hounakin may have resorted to by ending his life. But what truly affirmed here is the strength which allows others to love it in the moments of hatefulness, accept the meaninglessness. Immersed in the organized flux of life they have complied with “law of life” and willingly submitted into its decrees and thereby evincing what Nietzsche calls “formula for greatness in a human being.”⁷ He fervently argued that the experience of eternal recurrence gives life meaning by offering an ultimate meaning for suffering. And only by healthful affirmation can be eliminated life-denying morality. As demanded by Nietzsche, we can contend that there appear in their final gestures and moves—a readiness for acceptance of Afa and his mates a certain meaninglessness, a muteness of existence, eliminating such conventional solutions as “God.” By not defusing drives and passions, they can liberate themselves from the moral constraints.

As all events are entangled with each other, they have willed eternal return, rather than resigning to it. Without gilding their bleak life with metaphysical hopes, grounding upon any belief system, they have expressed healthy, strong yearning for life; in so doing, they have attained an Olympian detachment. They tend beyond and above their existent position and surpass the inhibitions of time. Their life is a testimonial to Nietzschean process of overthrowing the old values and restoring to life new meanings. It is not only the individuals who have created their own values but also a new valuation of existence eloquently affirmed in the the sunset hour they leave the beach behind. After the void created by the disappearance of ‘highest values’ life may still be endowed with other meaning and other value. Without banishing suffering, without pre-appointed end the sailors exemplify how to risk life and happiness while remaining absorbed in the interest of the moment. And

⁷ In Nietzsche’s postulation the ethic of self-becoming is intimately connected to the ethic of self-overcoming and it is deemed a pre-requisite for attaining human greatness. (*Ecce Homo*, Trans. Walter Kaufman. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.)

here lies the significance of Walcott's artistic alternative—as Nietzsche believed every art work deals with the realities of suffering and mortality in making human life both understandable and bearable.

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