Chapter Five
The Poets as Craftsmen

A study of the poetry of Derek Walcott and Nissim Ezekiel reveals a few significant aspects of the uses of Heteroglossia, intertextuality, colour imagery, light-and-darkness imagery and humour in their poetic art.

Heteroglossia is a technique self-consciously employed by both Walcott and Ezekiel. In the words of Robert Stam,

Heteroglossia refers to the dialogically interrelated speech practices operative in a given society at a given moment, wherein the idioms of different classes, races, genders, generations and locales compete for ascendancy. (121)

There is a prolific use of a good variety of West Indian dialect in Walcott’s poetry. The employment of heteroglossia seems almost inevitable in contexts in which the poets shape an art form which is essentially realistic. Walcott’s poetry shows considerable influence of the local dialect of the West Indian pidgin, popular with the public for centuries. Unless the poet accommodates the familiar, colourful and racy
idiom, his verse is bound to sound distant, elitist and unauthentic. Thus heteroglossia in Walcott enhances the native colour and ambience, rendering the poet’s feelings genuine and art realistic. The poet, almost, has no other alternative to rely on in this respect.

All the same, being highly resourceful and ingenious, Walcott is also capable of turning into a definite advantage what is merely a dire necessity.

For instance, Walcott's "Tales of the Islands" include such contrasting social dictions as: "it was quite ironic" (62), "Great stuff, old boy; sacrifice, moments of truth" (70), "They catch his wife with two tests up the beach" (76), "And wouldn't let a comma in edgewise" (79), "But that was long before this jump and jive" (84). The registers reflect the kinds of language found in the islands, ranging from standard English to French Patois and their appending social and class values.

Rob Pope defines the Creole language in the following terms:

Creoles differ from 'pidgin' language forms because they have developed all the major features and functions of a language, and have
native speakers. Many Afro-Caribbean Englishes are Creoles, carrying traces of other languages of empire Spanish, Portuguese, French and Dutch as well as of many native, non-European languages. Creoles are languages palpably in the making, much as the European vernaculars formed after the Roman Empire. 

Walcott resorts to the use of Creole for different purposes such as probity, clarity and simplicity. As he is convinced that the raw spontaneity of the dialect is richer in its expression, and implication, he would not sacrifice the syntactical power of such a dialectical form of English. To cite his own words in "Codicil", "To change your language, you must change your life" (7).

Referring to the social milieu he hails from, Walcott writes with humorous irony in his poem "Sainte Lucie": "Oh, so you is Walcott? / you is Roddy's brother? / Teacher Alix Son?" (96-98).

The persona in the poem makes a deliberate effort to repossess the nouns of his French Patois:

Come back to me
my language.
Come back,
cacao,
grigri,
solitaire,
ciseau. (43-49)

Further, Walcott's sequence includes a poem entirely in French Patois, followed by his own version in English. It is as though Walcott is rediscovering his own, native language within his limited powers of interrogation. Walcott often attempts to fuse different languages in his poetry, to underline his divided heritage:

I am a kind of split writer: I have one tradition inside me going one way, and another tradition going another. The mimetic, the narrative, and dance element is strong on one side, and the literary, the classical tradition is strong on the other. (Frontiers 25)

Walcott renders some of his poems both in his native dialect and in standard English. A fusion of the two versions serves to suggest his privilege and predicament, as these lines from Chapter Ten of Another Life bear out:
But I tired of your whining, Grandfather, 
in the whispers of marsh grass, 
I tired of your groans, Grandfather, 
in the deep ground bases of the combers.

(136-39)

Here the standard English past preterite "I tired" also figures as a dialect present indicative for "I am tired". The persona is addressing a white grandfather whose ancestral language is English and a black grandfather whose descendants speak local dialect. So the tension presented is particularly appropriate in the specific context.

Walcott's employment of dialect also highlights self-conscious craftsmanship. For instance, he uses his art as a vehicle for telling irony: Chapter V of "Tales of the Islands" mocks a fete in which "savage rites" (59) were performed "for the approval of some anthropologist" (58). The comic ironies multiply: One of the priests "was himself a student / Of black customs" (61-62). Although the dancers have the "natural grace / Remembered from the dark past whence we come" (64-65), the ritual sacrifice of the lamb seems "more like a bloody picnic" (66), an excuse to drink white rum and fight. In the next chapter, the same fete is focussed from inside the community: "Free rum free
whisky ..." (72) "and everywhere you turn was people eating" (74).

It is interesting to note that Walcott’s employment of the narrative in this poem exemplifies conflict as well as reconciliation:

Poopa da’ was a fete! I mean it had free rum, free whisky
.............................................
And everywhere you turn was people eating And drinking ...
.............................................
While he drunk quoting Shelley with "Each Generation has its angst, but we has none"
.............................................

(Black writer chap, one of them Oxbridge guys) (71-72, 74-75, 77-78, 80)

The poet’s tongue-in-cheek tone is traceable throughout the poem.

Walcott is linked to his island with manifold ties and he prefers very much to maintain them. In many ways, he is a genuine West Indian in the purest sense of the term. Creole and Pidgin are part of his real life existence. He does not allow his English strain of
ancestry to overpower his innate penchant for dialect. There is a perfect fusion of the English and the West Indian in Walcott’s sensibility as an artist.

Ezekiel’s bond with the people of his land is not so strong. Neither is he inclined to forge powerful ties with India nor Israel. He prefers to be a strider between two cultures, and to float on the surface, free and unencumbered. Such a self-consciously elective freedom bestows on him the singular advantage of passing any comment he wants to on the land of his adoption. It is also a fact that Ezekiel’s art does not reveal any intense grasp or affinity of life in Israel. His primary lack of immediate knowledge of the day-to-day life in Israel, denies him the privilege of the double vision, so essential for poetic irony. With the result, the Indian English turns out to be, invariably a veritable tool for hilarious satire in his hands.

Ezekiel has written some poems in Indian English presenting situations in various Indian social contexts. These works — most of which are deliberately designed to be periodical — offer enough evidence to show that the irony presented in them stems only when contrasted against the British idiom and grammar. In order to define Ezekiel’s use of Indian English, his readers will do well to bear in mind the following truth:
Indian English is not a pidgin .... A pidgin is a restricted code, while Indian English has expanded greatly through the processes of borrowing, coinage, etc. It has developed distinct lexical, grammatical and phonological features. At the same time it is not homogenous; and there are variations according to region, register and the educational level of speakers. (Syal 29)

Ezekiel employs Indian English often to a specific persona's social status and his lack of basic skills with regard to spoken English, thus provoking humour. Poems such as "The Railway Clerk", "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.", "Patriot", "Professor", "Soap" are witty, dramatic monologues. In each of these works, Ezekiel presents a discourse which in its idiom and style gives voice to the unfulfilled aspirations of millions of middle class Indians. With the result, the audience are treated to a play of wit and irony and they remain distant and uninvolved. They all end up in an utter lack of rapport between the 'persona' and the audience. The conclusion of the poem, "The Patriot",

You are going?
But you will visit again
Any time, any day,
I am not believing in ceremony.
Always I am enjoying your company. (43-47)

encapsulates the speaker's warmth and desire for the company of the listener who obviously leaves abruptly because he has far more urgent things to attend to, than listening to humdrum monologues such as this one is.

The persona in the poem "The Professor" literally holds the sleeve of the listener with naive warmth at the latter's imminent departure: "If you are coming again this side by chance, / Visit please my humble residence also. / I am living just on opposite house's backside" (34-36). The poem forcefully conveys the sense of anxiety and alienation felt by thousands of the mediocre in the context of life, lived in heartless urban and semi-urban conglomerations of India. However, one of the critics finds some reason to suspect the genuineness of this invitation, on some other grounds:

In "The Professor", the professor's hospitality is shown to be hollow: he can very well take his former student into his house, for they are standing close to it, but he chooses not to. It is almost as if nothing better could be expected from a speaker of such wretched English than hypocrisy and bad manners. (Raghu 31)
The use of the present continuous tense for the simple present is one of the most commonly heard mistakes amongst the Indian speakers of English which attracts Ezekiel's ridicule in poem after poem. For example, in "The Railway Clerk", "My wife is always asking for more money" (8) and "I am never neglecting my responsibility" (14); in "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.", "our dear sister / is departing for foreign" (2-3), "we are meeting today" (6), "You are all knowing" (8), "Miss Pushpa is coming / from very high family" (15-16), "I am not remembering" (19), "his wife was cooking nicely" (24), "... I am always / appreciating the good spirit" (32-33); in "The Patriot", "I am standing for peace and non-violence" (1), "I am simply not understanding" (5), "Modern generation is neglecting" (8), "Everyday I'm reading Times of India" (11), "It is making me very sad. I am telling you" (33), "... some are having funny habits" (39); in "The Professor", "Everything is happening with leaps and bounds" (21), "I am going out, rarely" (22); in "Soap": "Some people are not having manners" (1), "this I am always observing" (2), "I am needing soap" (4) and in "Irani Restaurant Instructions" "Our waiter is reporting" (6).

Mostly articles get omitted or abused in Indian English: In "The Railway Clerk": "... I am not graduate"
... I see film" (25) "and having long chat" (30). In "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.", "Her father was renowned advocate" (17), "She is most popular lady" (27), and in "The Patriot", "You want one glass lassi?" (22), "With little salt lovely drink" (24). In "The Professor", "That is good joke" (33). In "Soap", "... I'm going to one small shop" (6) and "... he's giving me soap" (9). In "Irani Restaurant Instructions", "Do not comb / Hair is spoiling floor" (3-4).

During his lifetime, Ezekiel had the habit of reading his poems written in Indian English, as deliberate occasions for providing mere comic relief to the audience, during sessions of poetry between his more serious pieces. The very tone he used to adopt while reading such poems was indicative of his ironic intent.

In Indian English, the qualifier moves into the place of a modifier to produce a more compact, condensed noun group: In "The Patriot", "student unrest fellow" (15), in "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.", "my uncle's very old friend" (23), and in "The Professor", "opposite house's backside" (36).

In "The Patriot", "Indirabehn" (14), "goonda fellow" (13), "lassi" (22) and "Ram Rajya" (42) are examples for loan words from Indian languages into English.
The phrases in "The Professor", "no blood-pressure, no heart-attack" (25), "sound habits" (26), "humble residence" (35) are examples for deliberate collocational violations. In "The Patriot", the phrase "total teetotaller, completely total" (27) is a pleonastic expression. In "The Professor", the sentence "Our progress in progressing" (19) is alliterative repetition and "hope to score century" (30) is an example for register mixing.

Indian idioms, similes and phrases constitute another characteristic feature of Ezekiel's use of Indian English. In "The Professor", "You were so thin, like stick" (31) and "Old values are going, new values are coming" (20), and in "The Patriot", "One day Ram Rajya is surely coming" (42) are cases in point.

Repetitions such as "two months, / three months" (20-21) in "The Railway Clerk" and "two three months" (14) in "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S." are typical usage in vogue amongst Indian speakers of English.

Such a self-conscious manipulation of linguistic and idiomatic styles in his poems allows Ezekiel the liberty of assuming a variety of stances — caustic, ironic, teasing, patronizing humorous etc. — towards the respective persona in keeping with the themes of the respective poems.
The striking element common to the poems under this category in Ezekiel is that they are all highly ironical. The all-pervading corruption in the Indian bureaucracy is ironically hinted at in works such as "The Railway Clerk": "My job is such, no one is giving bribe, / while other clerks are in fortunate position" (10-11).

In "The Patriot", the sting of irony is sharp when the speaker openly expresses his preferences for "a glass of lassi" over liquor. The same persona takes a jump from prohibition policy to Indian foreign policy in the same breath: "Pakistan behaving like this, / China behaving like that, / it is making me very sad, I am telling you" (31-33).

Similar tone and strategy are employed in "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.", written in the form of a farewell speech for Miss Pushpa who "is departing for foreign" (3). Typically Indian in its shallowness of content and laxity in syntax, the entire poem is a bitingly satirical comment on the way Indians respond to various situations: "Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling / even for no reason / but simply because she is feeling" (12-14). The naive, uncouth and ignorant persona is hardly aware whether he is flattering or critical of poor Miss Pushpa. The poem becomes
hilariously humorous when he says, "Whatever I or anybody is asking / she is always saying yes" (35-36).

The way several Indians employ the English language in their daily speech has been taken up by Ezekiel for ridicule. Commenting on his former student, the speaker in "The Professor" employs a collection of incongruent metaphors "You were so thin, like stick, / Now you are man of weight and consequence" (31-32). The hollowness of the persona in "The Patriot" gets exposed when he boasts, "Everyday I'm reading Times of India / To improve my English Language" (11-12).

There are instances, when the persona talks like a moron, whose words just bolt out of his mouth long before he can organize his own thought. For instance, the persona in "Soap" says, "... other day I find / I am needing soap / for ordinary washing myself purposes (3-5). The very opening sentence of "Goodbye Party for Miss Puspha T.S." reads:

Friends,
Our dear sister
is departing for foreign
in two three days. (1-4)

The poem "Irani Restaurant Instructions" has a mock stern magisterial format. The instructions are
nasty but the poem is humorous: "Do not make mischiefs in cabin / Our waiter is reporting" (5-6) or "Come again / All are welcome whatever caste ... / God is great ..." (7-8, 11). Shirish Chindhade’s critical comment on these lines is matchingly humorous:

A cantankerous patron may interpret this as 'Get lost. And if you dare come despite these instructions, God alone may save you’, while a patient customer will be tempted to say, 'Lord, forgive them for they know not what they mean!’. (15)

The difference in the attitudes of Walcott and Ezekiel towards the use of native language, when it gets intricately mixed with English is quite obvious. In Walcott, the dialect employed is a genuine voice of a native Caribbean enhancing the authenticity of the feeling in the persona. In contrast, the Indian English employed in Ezekiel is a dubious, laughable variant of what is recognized as the standard English, showing but Ezekiel’s sneer at some of the Indian mannerisms and cultural traits and notions, the contempt of a superior being towards mediocrity.

To sum up, as regards heteroglossia in Walcott and Ezekiel, there is no deliberate ironic intent, traceable
in the former, as the device is employed merely to vivify the life in the West Indies. In contrast, the device of irony is consistently pressed into service purely for the sake of ridicule in Ezekiel, to a considerable extent, for Ezekiel chooses to remain an outsider in such poems. However, such an aloofness, stems out of Ezekiel’s sensibility as an erudite, and talented individual and not from any narrow, racist or partisan considerations. Perhaps, R.K. Narayan, among the modern Indian writers, shows a similar kind of ironic aloofness, with regard to his creations.

Intertextuality is another technique employed by both Walcott and Ezekiel. "Intertextuality", coined by Julia Kristeva, is founded on the proposition that "every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text" (Kristeva 146) in the form of parody, allusion, source criticism or casual resemblance.

Judie Newman defines "intertextuality" as "the transposition of one or several systems of signs into another" (2). Divine inspiration on imitation comes from Ecclesiastes where it is stated:

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which
shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, see, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. (ECC. 9-10)

In an interview, he gave to Mujibur Rehman, Walcott has gone on record:

Everything I have read thoroughly has influenced me, I hope. Right from reading the literature of the Anglo Saxons, the Jacobean, or of the Shakespearean period or, for that matter, any English poet, one begins with a sense of apprenticeship .... Some of the influences are obvious in the works I did earlier. I think in terms of a collection of voices I hear in my head and the works of so many people I have read - it is a tribute to that. People trace the influences. I am not interested in originality. An originality of identity is the worst kind of vanity. (31)

Walcott refers to himself even as a "mulatto of style" which is perhaps best expressed with the voice of Shabine whose multiple linguistic inheritance is outlined in "The Schooner Flight" as "rusty headed sailor with see green eyes" (36); Shabine's name is "... the patois for / any red nigger" (37-38).
Walcott has imitated several poets in his early
days. In his poem "A City's Death by Fire", he sings
like Dylan Thomas: "All day I walked abroad among the
rubbled tales, / Shocked at each wall that stood on the
street like a liar; / Loud was the bird-rocked sky ...
(5-7).

The line, "they have drunk the moon-milk" (181) in
Chapter One of Another Life is suggestive of Coleridge's
"Kubla Khan".

Like Walcott, Ezekiel too in his early phase,
comes under the influence of various writers. Echoes
from Eliot can be heard from his "At 62":

I want my hands
to learn how to heal
myself and others,
before I hear
my last song. (29-33)

Ezekiel's closing line of "Enterprise", "Home is
where we have to gather grace" (30) too is reminiscent
of the Four Quartets. He not only borrows the title of
his major work The Unfinished Man from Yeats, but also
like the great Irish poet, aspires to have "the right
mastery of natural things". The poem "The Great" brings
in overtones of Spender's "I Think Continually of Those
Who Were Truly Great". The line in "The Old Abyss", "This girl, once married with a child" (1) recalls the rhythm of Dylan Thomas's "This bread I break was once the Oat" (23). The opening line of "The Worm", "I saw a worm the other day" (1) suggests Vaughan's, "I saw eternity the other night" (18).

It is true that Ezekiel has gone on record: "I am aware of the influences on my work but I always try to be ultimately independent of them" (Ram 41), but Ezekiel cannot be said to be completely independent of influences. He makes the following confession elsewhere:

An influence is usually quite extensive at first, and may be later focused on a few ideas or attitudes.... I sorted them [the poets' doctrines] out for myself, modified them to suit my temperament, ... their influence was far-reaching, even comprehensive, but I was never dominated by it. I used it and went back to it from time to time, noting how my growth changed my attitudes to their outstanding creative as well as critical writing. (Sharma 44)

Perhaps, both Walcott and Ezekiel do not totally succeed in their efforts to evade all influences on
them, but their art does bear the stamp of a remarkable originality of their own.

For instance, they both may wear the dress of Shakespeare for the nonce, but the tone is theirs. A few of Walcott’s lines have the ring of Shakespearean aphorisms. In "A Far Cry from Africa", he desperately cries, "Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?" (27). In "Codicil", he affirms, "To change your language, you must change your life" (7). Similarly, Ezekiel’s "Something to Pursue", presents Christ’s arrest following the betrayal of Judas in the garden of Gethsemane. Here, Judas who cannot forgive himself subsequently is agitated with certain metaphysical issues, upon his belated realization of duplicity of his own self:

... Is sin supportable?
Does commerce with it damn the soul?
Is it the road to dissolution?
Or must we know it first to reach the end
Which may be beatitude, achieved by few?
Or will it be the tragic view? (116-21)

The tragic situation brought into a sharp focus here has a touch of intertextuality evoking the names of Marlowe, Kyd and Shakespeare despite its remarkable originality.
One of Walcott’s most significant poems in this regard is "Sea Chantey" which opens with:

Anguilla, Adina,
Antigua, Cannelles,
Andreuille, all the l’s,
Voyelles, of the liquid Antilles,
The names tremble like needles
Of anchored frigates. (1-6)

In "Night of the Scorpion", Ezekiel’s chants can be heard:

May he sit still, they said.
May the sins of your previous birth
be burned away tonight, they said.
May your suffering decrease
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.
May the sum of evil
balanced in this unreal world
against the sum of good
become diminished by your pain. (18-26)

These lines tend to imitate fairly closely the ritualistic, even liturgical style of language. The repetition of "May" and "they said" intensifies such a ritualistic ambience in the passage. Acquiring a
liturgical lilt, both the poems gush out with a deliquescent locomotion.

It is interesting to note that both Walcott and Ezekiel are fond of identifying themselves or their protagonists with biblical personalities. As John, the disciple of Jesus, "was in the isle called Patmos, he received the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1.9). In his turn, Walcott stays in Saint Lucia, an isolated Volcanic island, formerly a British colony. In "As John to Patmos", he writes,

As John to Patmos, in each love-leaping air,
O slave, soldier, worker under red trees
sleeping, here
What I swear now, as John did:
To praise lovelong, the living and the brown dead. (14-17)

The poet identifies himself with John, and compares his own poetry to the Revelations of John. In "Crusoe’s Island", he calls Crusoe "the Second Adam since the fall" who "... watched his shadow pray / Not for God’s love but human love instead" (50-51). Adam, as a social animal, would have longed for the company of his fellowmen. Crusoe himself would have felt the same in the island he arrived at, after his shipwreck. The poet feels one with Crusoe here.
The poem *Another Life*, Chapter Four opens with the lines "Thin water glazed / the pebbled knuckles of the Baptist's feet" (1-2) referring to John the Baptist, "the voice ... in the wilderness" (John 1.23). On the eighth line, the poet says, "I ran among dry rocks, howling, "Repent!" (8) thus identifying his vision as an artist with a prophet's intuitive foresight.

In "Castaway", Walcott identifies himself with the Christ figure: "That green wine bottle's gospel choked with sand, / Labelled, a wrecked ship, / Clenched sea-wood nailed and white as a man's hand" (29-31).

In Chapter Nine of *Another Life*, his lady love Anna is compared first to Eve and then to Ruth. When she gets up from bed, she resembles Eve: "and after service, Sunday lay / golden, a fucked Eve / replete and apple-bearing" (153-55). When she goes out to work in the fields, she resembles Ruth:

as your hair gold, dress green.  
sickle-armed, you move  
through a frontispiece of flowers  
eternal, true as Ruth. (166-69)

Walcott's words in Chapter Twelve of *Another Life* "we were the light of the world!" (136), recall Jesus's "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5.14).
Ezekiel too identifies himself with several characters of the Old Testament. In "Psalm 151", the poet is uneasy because he is not quite sure about the girls, after a girl turns down his offer. His present agitation is compared to Samson’s restlessness before death:

Evening comes like Samson, blind,
I who tasted power know him,
Turning round and round like him
Double-crossed within the mind. (5-8)

The great Samson who killed one thousand Philistines with a lion’s jaw bone and who tore a lion apart with his bare hands is compared to the poet, who in his youth, could cast a great spell.

In "Something to Pursue", Ezekiel assumes the voice of Solomon. However, while the biblical Solomon advises young men to be faithful to their wives, "Drink waters out of thine own cistern" (Prov. 5.15), Ezekiel advises the youth to listen to their own inner selves: "But drink at first the waters of / your own soul ..." (79-80). Again, in the same poem, he says, "... The honeycomb / is sweet and too much honey is / too much sweetness" (83-85). He warns the youth not to indulge too much in sensual pleasure. It is the authentic voice
of Solomon again here: "Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it" (Prov. 25.16). All the same it is ironic that Solomon who "had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines" (I Kings 11.3) and Ezekiel who has confessed in "Poster Poems" that he has made "love to many women / as to the same woman" (84-85) could offer such a counsel on temperance.

There are also further ironic instances of biblical intertextuality in Walcott and Ezekiel:

Ironic intertextuality ... functions in two ways. On the one hand, it makes a rupture with, or at least a subversion or critique of, the text parodied; On the other, it establishes a community of discourse among readers and thus marks a kind of interpretive continuity. (Hutcheon 96)

In Walcott's poem "Crusoe's Journal", there is a mixture of irony and humour: "... we make his language ours, converted cannibals / we learn with him to eat the flesh of Christ" (12-13).

The miracle of Jesus walking on the water and Peter's walking on the water along with him is referred to in the poem "Laventille":

Which of us cares to walk
even if God wished
those retching waters where our souls
were fished
for this new world? ... (64-67)

In a nostalgic mood, Walcott can sing in Chapter Twenty-two of Another Life:

holy is Rampanalgas and its high-circling hawks,
holy are the rusted, tortured, rust-caked,
blind almond trees,
your great-grandfather's and your father's torturing limbs,
holy the small, almond-leaf-shadowed bridge.
(188-91)

This stanza brings in associations of the devotional hymn: "Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, which was, and is and is to come" (Rev.4.8).

Some may view these lines as an incongruent but clever juxtaposition through which Walcott expresses a compromise of the sacred and the profane and mundane. However, to some others, this may appear as a typical instance where the poet like Whitman exalts and sanctifies things whose sacredness is not sufficiently
realized by the ordinary people, disadvantaged by their own "film of familiarity".

Biblical irony can be seen best expressed in Ezekiel’s *Latter Day Psalms*, a modern-day reinterpretation of nine of biblical *Psalms*. Though it echoes the original text in its lay-out, tone, mood and passion, its import is quite different. According to the author of the Book of *Psalms*, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners ..." (Ps.1.1); but to the author of the *Latter Day Psalms*:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the conventional, and is at home with sin as with a wife .... (1-4)

Here the syntax of Ezekiel’s sentence borrows the same stem from *The Bible*, for an ironic purpose. Ezekiel’s parody generally affirms the world of reality, the loss of innocence and the desirability of sin as a means towards greater human tolerance, understanding, reason and salvation. Instead of fear of temptation, in Ezekiel there is an advocacy for deliberate indulgence of the sensual delights.
The Psalmist's God is sectarian, relevant to a particular sect: "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people" (Ps.3.8) but Ezekiel widens the scope of God's governance and concern.

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. It is not through One or other Church. Thy blessing is upon all the people of the earth. (46-50)

The Psalmist is very confident that "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps.23.1). Living in an age of interrogation and cynicism, Ezekiel has his own reservations: "Is the Lord my Shepherd? / Shall I not want?" (76-77). The Psalmist declares, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Ps.127.1) evoking Ezekiel's response in the form of a witty word-play.

... Yet, it is better to build than to abstain from building, and no labour is altogether in vain. (200-03)

When the Psalmist advises the Lord's beloved to take proper rest, Ezekiel offers a suggestion to the contrary: "It is not vain to rise / up early, to sit up
late, / to eat the bread of sorrow" (204-06). If the Psalmist tries to assure saying "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps.127.5) referring to the children, Ezekiel is not so sure: "... but a quiver / full of them is not essential for happiness" (211-13).

Both Walcott and Ezekiel are fond of parodying well known phrases from The Bible with impunity. In "Tales of the Islands", Walcott declares "Don't worry, kid, the wages of sin is birth" (24). Again in "Gulf", he says of the rock of the ages: "there's no rock cleft to go hidin' in" (77).

In "Hymns in Darkness", Ezekiel is even more light-hearted when he says, "His house is built on rock. It shakes in the wind" (66-67). He is also quick to add "There's one thing to be said for hell: / it's a pretty lively place. / A man could be happy there" (81-83).

Not only from The Bible, but also from other works, there are intertextual references in the works of both the poets and such allusions are handled with undeniable originality. Allon White is not far off the mark when he observes that intertextuality...

... is not the same as allusion or "echo-bearing" in that discourses are transformed
within the work and are often not direct quotations, but adaptations of the codes and languages available in the culture and its traditions. (59)

The title of Walcott's poem "In a Green Night" comes from line eighteen of Andrew Marvell's "Bermudas". Marvell's "Bermudas" speaks of an idealized voyage to an eternal spring. In ironic contrast, Walcott describes a more realistic orange tree which grows "green yet aging" (19), suffering from the "cyclic chemistry" (17) of "Moult" (6) "dew and dust" (13) and "rust" (15) and "blight" (25). Walcott's lyric appears to disapprove of Marvell's poetic rhetoric by pointing out that religion, nature and art, and all such things, are also perishable in the final analysis and that "each living thing" (7) is doomed and gloried by its mortality: "By noon harsh fires have begun / To quail those splendours which they feed" (11-12).

Walcott's epigraph in "Ruins of a Great House" makes an oblique reference to Browne's "Urne Burial" and its closing quotation refers to "Meditation XVII" of Donne's "Devotions". It is interesting to note that Donne and Walcott discuss the property of affliction from entirely different perspectives. Donne expresses his view on an affliction from the vantage point of a
colonial subject, while Walcott employs affliction from that of a colonial master. Walcott, therefore, appropriates a piece of Browne’s and Donne’s poetry as his own property, claiming it "as well as if a manor of thy friend’s ..." (51).

Similarly, Walcott’s "The Fortunate Traveller" seems to be clearly based on Thomas Nashe’s prose work The Unfortunate Traveller. Jack Wilton experiences the same sense of displacement as Walcott’s protagonist does in his work. But Walcott’s vision of the future is by far, more sombre and ominously apocalyptic, in comparison with that of Nashe.

In "Goats and Monkeys", Walcott feels terribly sorry for the damage the Shakespearean play, Othello has done to the white-and-black divide in general as exemplified by the line: "His smoky hand has charred / that marble throat". A sooty African killing a white lady has halved the world with a critical doubt. The immortal coupling of the "Virgin and ape" (20), maid and malevolant Moor" (20) has created an eternal blot on the black race. In this poem, Walcott presumes to champion the cause of his race: "And yet, whatever fury girded / on that saffron-sunset turban, moon-shaped sword/ was not his racial, panther-black revenge" (24-26) and in the last two lines of the work, points out wryly: "this
mythical, horned beast ... [is] no more / monstrous for being black" (48-49). The poet is convinced that the Shakespearean play has tended to divide the whites and the blacks humanity into separate camps of the wrong associations.

In The Wasteland, Eliot writes that gods are buried to be reborn, but in his islands, Walcott assures in "From this Far", "... no gods are buried, / They were shipped to us, Seferis, / dead on arrival" (15-17) suggesting that no real rebirth of any kind of Western kind of religion is possible in the islands of West Indies.

Ezekiel also has a tendency to borrow ideas from several other writers in order to present them in a new light in his poetry. For instance, fire is a symbol of annihilation, purification and rebirth as employed by Eliot. In The Wasteland, the moral bankruptcy of the majority of the Europeans in the wake of the First World War is alluded to thus:

    Burning burning burning burning
    O Lord Thou pluckest me out
    O Lord Thou pluckest
    burning. (308-311)
The text of the Fire Sermon of the Buddha can profitably be quoted in this context: "All things, O priests are on fire ... with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair are they on fire" (Warren 352). Ezekiel’s poem, "For Her" from The Third, employs the imagery of 'fire' in a paradoxical kind of conceit, bringing in simultaneous associations of annihilation and sustaining vitality:

Love breaks the incendiary laws,
Blazing in a high wind
But staying good. The more you love
The less you burn away. (6-9)

In the poem, "Paean", the imagery of 'baptism' is employed in Ezekiel as an ambivalent and apparently paradoxical metaphor for instinctual burning and consequent means of gratification suggestive of lovers’ communion:

Always the body knows its nakedness.
The first baptism is not in water
But in fire. The limbs are shaped to lock
And love, the eyes- they say - show a
strange light,
And lives are welded which exist apart.

(11-15)
Being well aware of the ambivalence in his art and its preponderant reliance on paradox, Ezekiel does go through moments of doubt as regards to his place in Poetry's Hall of Fame. In "Dilemma", he wonders:

Should I be surprised:
trader in paradoxes,
ally of the dialectic?
I shake with intimations -
not of immortality. (7-11)

Both Walcott and Ezekiel are fond of colour imagery. Walcott's art presents a plethora of colours. In "Sea Chantey", he describes a city buzzing with vitality and life against a backdrop of water and land abounding in fish and music, employing imagery of striking colours suggested by phrases like "the green chrome of water" (32), "the white herons of yachts" (33), "Barques white as white salt" (39), "the blue heave of Leviathan" (44), "A fish breaks the Sabbath / with a silvery leap" (50-51), "the town streets are orange" (54) and "the music curls, dwindling / Like, smoke from blue galleys" (60-61).

Walcott's "As John to Patmos" paints similar landscape employing colourful epithets and arresting imagery such as the following: "the blue live air" (1),
"the strewn-silver on waves" (3), "the green and dead / leaves" (4-5), "by these blue scapes" (7), "worker under red trees sleeping" (15), "the living and the brown dead" (17). In this backdrop, "beauty has surrounded / Its black children" (12-13).

Talking of the black children of Saint Lucia, Walcott writes in "Sainte Lucie",

in the indigo mountains
of Jamaica, blue depth,
deep as coffee,
flicker of pimento,
the shaft light
on a yellow ackee. (53-58)

Teeming colours follow one after another in line after line in Walcott: "the fruit rotting / yellow on the ground" (88-89), "the earth purple" (92), "the thick/green slopes of cocoa" (104-05), "blue-green" (111) valleys and "yellow leaf" (149), "green fery hole/by the road in the mountains" (131-32), "red-brown earth" (135).

The sky looks beautifully burnished in a shifting riot of myriad colours in Chapter Seventeen of Another Life: "the sky was warm pink thinning to no colour" (81) and the next moment, "A wash of meagre blue entered the sky" (87). Below the sky is "the grey sea" (118) with
"the shallow green / breaking in places" (120-21) and fish with "the silver glinting on the fuselage" (122).

Walcott's "Koenig of the River" offers a fine example of synaesthesia where colours and feelings merge with culture and landscape:

Around the bend the river poured its silver like some remorseful mine, giving and giving everything green and white: white sky, white water, and the dull green like a drumbeat of the slow-sliding forest, the green heat;

(69-73)

The following lines from Chapter Twenty-two of Another Life too depict the fusion of colours and emotions of the epic of the Caribbean: "the yellowing poems, the spiked brown paper, / the myth of the golden Carib" (35-36). All of the epics are "blown away with the leaves, / blown with the careful calculations on brown paper" (43-44). All grandeur is gone, what remains is "only the narrow silvery creeks of sadness" (48).

Humanity too comes alive in Walcott's art in vivid colours: Describing Anna in Chapter Nine of Another Life, Walcott writes: "gold and white Anna / of the peach-furred body" (159-60) and "stone-grey eyes" (162)
and "your hair gold, dress green" (166). In Chapter Seven of the same poem, he perceives "A schoolgirl in blue and white uniform, / her golden plaits a simple coronet" (109-10). An exile comes in "Tales of the Islands", "in white linen suit, / Pink glasses, cork hat, and tap-tapping cane" (117-18).

In Chapter One of Another Life, Walcott employs a montage of synaesthetic imagery to describe a group of officers, where the visual imagery fuses into the oral and the tactile:

... colonels in the whisky-coloured light
had watched the green flash, like a lizard’s tongue,
catch the last sail, tonight
row after row of orange stamps .... (95-98)

Being an imaginative writer, Walcott also brings about several innovations in his poems which include inversions of stereo-typed symbols; white colour, normally identified with purity and goodness, is associated in Walcott with violence and victimization. In "Old New England" for instance, the "white church spire whistles into space / like a swordfish" (3-4) and the "white meeting house" (14), wounds the hillside with its spire, causing "brown blood" (15) to trickle down
and God uses "the white lance of the church" (29) as his harpoon:

The hillside is still wounded by the spire of the white meetinghouse, the Indian trail trickles down it like the brown blood of the whale in rowanberries bubbling like the spoor on logs burnt black as Bibles by hellfire.

(13-17)

In "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen", white is associated with evil and black with good. The surrounding place is threateningly white: "What had I heard / wheezing behind my heel with whitening breath?" (20-21). And again, "The night was white. There was nowhere to hide" (23). On the other hand, "I longed for darkness, evil that was warm" (19).

Talking of "The White Town", in "Guyana", Walcott writes: "... all the men in that doomed country mad!" (33). Other instances can be seen in phrases like "white finical houses" (118) and lines such as, "there was the burgher’s glare of whitewashed houses / outstaring guilt (36-37). And in "The Flock", "the white" connotes the "funeral of the year" (12) while "the black wings ... cross it ... as a blessing" (43).
Such a deliberate inversion of connotations of colour imagery in Walcott, lends not only a peculiar individualistic flavour to his poetry, but also lends a valuable hand in the definition of his iconoclastic vision as an artist.

Ezekiel too has a predilection for colours. In "Colours" from "Edinburgh Interlude", Ezekiel declares, "Colours still matter / to the community" (11-12) and in "Advice to a Painter", he gives "expression to ... feelings / in colours" (2-3). In "Hymns in Darkness", he talks of how he lives in a world which "is colourful and full of poetry" (9).

Ezekiel does accord a high place to colour in art. In "Testament", he writes, "After the resurrection / fact and fiction, / we owe the event a colour" (5-7). Ezekiel affirms in his prose poem, "Encounter", "Rhythms, shapes, colours, forms they are yours. In them is embodied the language with which the laws of the universe brighten existence". In "Emptiness", he is "Brooding on design and colour / Even in this emptiness" (27-28). In "To a Certain Lady", Ezekiel prays: "Sharpen our responses to the colours of creation" (92).

Ezekiel has a predilection for 'green' perhaps because it stands for love and life in his eyes. In "Lamentation", he pleads, "And let my leaf be green with
love / And let me live" (17-18). In "Townlore", he records how "the wayside trees expectantly / Have filled the air with green / And hope of love" (5-7). In "Lawn", he does not fail to observe how "At last / a thin transparent green appears / and there you have the lawn" (39-41). In "Song for Spring", Ezekiel expects the "green" even to wash his "words" (16) thereby lending it freshness and vitality: "Freshness of the first spring green / On turf unnoticed, wash my words" (15-16). Thus, if Walcott prefers 'black' in his poetry, Ezekiel favours 'green' in his.

Further, Ezekiel garnishes in gold whatever he cherishes most in life. In "The Child" he recalls his childhood and the "happy giants in the golden books / Whose colours sang the wonder I was born into" (8-9). In "Tonight" his child is described as "The silver nutmeg / golden pear" (4). He describes in "In the Queue", a belle's "skin is warm and golden brown" (14).

In Ezekiel, white is associated with only purity. In "Morning Prayer", "white wings of morning / shelter men" (1-2) where morning is fresh and pure and in "Marriage Poem", "... in the soil of wedded love / Rears a white rose" (5-6) namely an innocent child. Elsewhere in Ezekiel, white stands for pallor and weakness. In "Nakedness I" one can see, "limbs so sad, so thin, / so
shapeless, white and lost to earth" (4-5) and in "Drawing Room", Ezekiel confesses, "a new idea burns the white / of my view to bloody red" (15-16).

Ezekiel gets so absorbed in colours that at times, he overlooks the wearer. For instance, "On Bellasis Road", he observes a prostitute:

I see her first
as colour only,
poised against the faded
red of a post-box:
purple sari, yellow blouse,
green bangles, orange
flowers in her hair. (1-7)

In "Encounter", he describes his meeting with a woman purely in terms of colours.

I wore my tie of brown and green,
She came in white,
..................................................
And after, sporting brown and green,
With her in white. (1-2, 7-8)

There are many poems in Ezekiel's body of verse cast in the autobiographical mode, which pay scant regard to mutability of feelings between the poet/
protagonist and his sexual partners underlining a trenchant cynicism in his attitude. Significantly, Walcott's poems do not present any such large-scale scorn or contempt for the partners in bed. The deliberate importance assigned to colours hints at the latent irony in such cynical poems, which suggest the expendability of human relationships.

If Walcott employs 'black colour' with strikingly uncommon originality in his art, Ezekiel's handling of the 'black' is in comparison more conventional. In "In India", Ezekiel points out how, "to celebrate the years end: / men in grey or black" (29-30) attended a party.

Ezekiel's penchant for colours can be seen also in "Paradise Flycatcher". "Its mask of black, with tints of green" (8), "chestnut wings" (21) and white breast is made even more colourful with the splash of blood and white at the end, "It lay with red and red upon its white" (18).

Often, in Walcott and Ezekiel, the imagery employed is not aimed at capturing some objects with vividness but simply to suggest the inner momentous feelings of the poet. The use of each image bears an eloquent testimony to I.A. Richard's observation: "What gives an image efficacy is less its vividness as an
image than its character as a mental even peculiarly connected with sensation" (187).

Walcott, for instance, associates light with strangeness, evil and cruelty. In "Return to D’Ennery: Rain", there is "filth and foam" (17) everywhere. "The rain seeps slowly to the core of grief" (21) and "The hills are smoking in the vaporous light" (20). In "Tales of the Islands", a civil war was "fought ... at the hour / of bleeding light" (100-101). In "Negatives" one could find "black corpses wrapped in sunlight" (2). In "Guyana", "The dead face of an orator revolved by lamplight, / the glazed scar itches for blood" (121-122). In Chapter Twenty-two of Another Life, Walcott calls light, "cruel, hawk bright glory" (107); in "Elegy", "brightness of the mad" (19); in "The Tales of the Islands", "He watched the malarial light / shiver the canes" (95-96) and "In the queer light / we all looked green" (47-48). In "Star", Walcott observes, "in the light of things, you fade" (1) and in "The Banyan Tree, Old Year’s Night", he talks of "candy-striped innocents and sticky sweets / fading in lemon light, as ribbons fade" (8-9). In "The Glory Trumpeter", "Old Eddie’s face [is] wrinkled with river lights" (1) and in "Orient and Immortal Wheat", there are "Cripples limping homeward in weak light" (18). In Chapter Three of
Another Life, the poet introduces his boyhood friends and neighbours against a backdrop of "a sickle / of pale light" (2-3).

In "Tales of the Islands", ordinary women are compared to ordinary light: "A Sancta Teresa in her nest of light" (9) and "black bodies, wet with light" (13) and in "The Schooner Flight", he confides, "... I ain't want her / dressed in the sexless light of seraph" (57-58). But in "Goats and Monkeys", the naive Desdemona is "God's light": "Put out the light, and God's light is put out" (8), but it is a direct derivation from Shakespeare.

In Another Life, Chapter Twelve, Walcott describes Anna only in terms suggestive of the opposite of 'light' as "her golden body like a lamp blown out / that holds, just blown, the image of the flame" (99-100). By suggesting the invisible but genuine sensual charm of the body through the imagery of darkness, Walcott is Lawrentian.

In comparison with Walcott's art, Ezekiel's use of the imagery of light can be called only more conventional. In "Morning Prayer", he writes,

Light, light, light
Unveil, expose, expound
Your metaphors of meaning,
And let them know lucidity,
White wings of morning. (12-16)

In "Tribute", "This girl to whom the lights belong" (12) invites the persona, saying "Let's go to see the light" (1). In "Occupation", "A Long stretch of light shoots up at me" (13), and the persona sees in "Conclusion", "the oblique light of mind" (9), in "Mind", "The light of reason" (17) and in "Townlore", "the clear light of words" (9).

Ezekiel also employs light in the same negative mode like Walcott does. For instance, in "Philosophy", the persona tries to go "Towards a final formula of light" (13), but cannot do so because in "Two Adolescents", there are "gropings of the inner light" (18).

In striking contrast, "darkness" is an imagery which figures prominently in the poems of both the poets. To them, "darkness" stands for all that is good in this world. Perhaps both these poets along with other great modern writers like D.H.Lawrence see in "darkness" an image whose richness remains in the dark for most of the conventional writers as well as readers. C.Day Lewis defines "image" as follows:
An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage... conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality. (18)

For Walcott, fertility and growth are possible only in darkness. In Another Life, Chapter Eight, he declares, "whole generations died, unchristened, / growths hidden in green darkness..." (195) and again in Chapter Ten, "the darkness of that life was gathering / like oil in the cruses of husked shells" (61-62). In "The Swamp", "... the wild saplings slip / Backward to darkness" (27-28). Darkness connotes positive virtue in Walcott. In "Dark August", he admits, "I am learning slowly / to love the dark days" (12-13) and in "North and South", "... others sure in the dark of their direction" (84). The poet is so steadfastly in tune with darkness that he observes, "For I have married one whose darkness is a tree" (130).

According to Walcott, only darkness facilitates actual vision. In "A Map of Europe" he talks of "the gift / To see things as they are, halved by a darkness/ From which they cannot shift" (20-22) and in "Love in the Valley" he states, "I shake my head in darkness, I stare / in slow vertiginous darkness" (14-15). Walcott
also equates darkness with peace in "The Season of Phantasmal Peace", "... like the pause / between dusk and darkness, between fury and peace" (32-33). Here, darkness suggests the unconscious, invisible human psyche.

One could perform God's duty better in darkness as he suggests in "A Letter from Brooklyn": "Lost though it seems in darkening periods, / And there they return to do work that is God's" (36-37).

Ezekiel also refers to darkness as "pure" and "dear". In "Declaration", he asserts,

The sensual form may serve to calm
The senses and keep the darkness pure.
Darkness, disturbed and turbulent,
Is also dear: ... (9-12)

He calls darkness in "Two Nights of Love", "The centuries of darkened loveliness" (12). Talking of his catch, the persona exclaims in "The Fisherman", "It comes to me at last / As the darkness falls upon the sleepy waters, / Fish in the darkness comes to me at last" (13-14). In "The Country Cottage", the persona mentions how, "He waited for the dark" (8) because there are "No visions, except in darkness" (23) as in "Counsel". The persona prefers "A darkened room" (6) in
"Nocturne" and "The room is in semi-darkness" (10) in "Happening". He avows in "Song", "Within the room's enclosed dark / How safe it is" (1-2). In "A Poem of Blindness", he is happy that he is "within the certitude of darkness" (8). In "December 58", he says, "At night, returning home, I bring / with me the darkness" (13-14). In "Cleaning Up", he himself becomes "their Prince of Darkness" (9). Ezekiel goes to the extent of equating darkness with God in "Perspective": Leave "the rest to darkness or to God" (23).

Light and darkness are juxtaposed in a number of Ezekiel's poems. In "Description", his woman's hair lies "secret / in light and in darkness" (7-8). In "Nudes XI", he could see both light and darkness in her body. "I listened to the darkness breathing: / Your body had an inner light" (8-9). In "Tribute to the Upanishads", he understands, "a ferment in the darkness, / finally a tearing light" (18-19). In "Recluse", he analyses, "Mellow in the melody of light / That keeps the darkness dark" (11-12). He likes darkness, but he is not sure of light. That is why he advises in "Hymns in Darkness":

    Don't curse the darkness
    Since you're told not to,
but don’t be in a hurry
to light a candle either. (112-15)

In "December 58", Ezekiel prefers darkness to light: "I see the morning light" (1) but "I bring / with me the darkness" (13-14). In "Hymns in Darkness" there is "so much light in total darkness" (34). He values darkness more than the light: "The darkness has its secrets / which light does not know" (116-17) and to him darkness means happiness and light, sorrow:

I saw him cheerful
in the universal darkness,
as I stood grimly
in my little light. (136-39)

It is true that both Walcott and Ezekiel employ "darkness" as a positive image, but in the art of the former, this image is explored in greater variety and profundity. Walcott’s embrace of ‘darkness’ has a passionate, warm touch about it and because of his self conscious commitment to ‘darkness’, Walcott’s art tends to explore all the charming nuances, it presents. In contrast, Ezekiel, being an erudite poet, intellectually responds to the associations of ‘darkness’ and articulates almost to full extent the value of its implications. His art does not show as much evidence of any persistent and passionate pursuit of ‘darkness’ as
found in Walcott's art. Further, Walcott finds in 'darkness' an archetypal attraction which can be best described only as seductive, being a champion of the 'black' culture of the West Indies. Of the two poets compared, Walcott's eyes and tastes are better tuned for a fuller apprehension of 'darkness'.

On the whole, Walcott's world can be described as sombre, devoid of humour with an unmistakable undercurrent of melancholy running through it all. However, there is a kind of profound humour in Walcott which emerges bubbling to the surface despite all the surrounding sobre streams of thought. The following lines from Chapter Eight of *Another Life* provide a good example:

... One day the floor collapsed.
The old soldier sank suddenly to his waist, wearing the verandah like a belt. Gregorias buckled with laughter telling this, but shame broke the old warrior. The dusk lowered his lances through the leaves. In another year the soldier shrank and died. Embittered, Gregorias wanted carved on his stone:

*PRAISE YOUR GOD, DRINK YOUR RUM, MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS.* (53-61)
There is a curious mix of sartorial metaphor in the poem which renders the bravado of the drunken soldier ironically absurd, and humorous in the end.

From time to time, there also breaks out a tirade in Walcott against the modern church. In Chapter Six of *Another Life* his words are bitter: "Pigs bring bad luck. And priests" (140).

Walcott's "Guyana" presents an instance of wry humour in the antithetical inversion: "Ant-sized to God, god to an ant's eyes" (15).

Ezekiel's humour is often situational. For instance, in "Ten Poems in the Greek Anthology Mode", "Radha says she longs for Krishna / As the soul longs for union with god. / Krishna likes the idea" (10-12). Obviously, there is a Krishna, in the scene standing around.

Irony and consequent humour can be seen in Ezekiel, even in the case of lovers, for often love can be quite casual and cheap as in "Ten Poems in the Greek Anthology Mode":

Bitten by bugs in her friendly bed,
He sent her the next morning
Instead of a bouquet of flowers
A packet of the New Tik-20,
Which was the more practical gift
And less expensive. (21-26)

In the following lines from the same poem, there is a subtle dig at the bureaucrats too:

When the female railway clerk
Received an offer of marriage
From her neighbour the customs clerk,
She told him to apply in triplicate,
And he did. (39-43)

Often, as in the case of several ironists, there is in Ezekiel, an implicit assumption that he is a cut above most men. Added to these is also a self-conscious cultural divide, underlined in Ezekiel, which makes him feel like an alien in India. It is also true that most of the humour in Ezekiel is inherent in the verbal antithesis of his initial statements. In the poem, "The Way it Went", the punch line invariably occurs at the very end: "As bride and groom / we went for what is usually called — / I don't know why — a honeymoon" (3-5). Here the humour lies in the fact that one does not know whether the persona’s puzzle at the end lies at the verbal or physical level.
Ezekiel’s humour can also be bawdy as in the following instance, cited from "Passion Poems IV":

She gave me
six good reasons
for saying No,
and then
for no reason at all
dropped all her reasons
with her clothes. (18-24)

Walcott does not show any tendency to contrive such occasions for cheap humour.

Walcott and Ezekiel emerge as conscious craftsmen, who employ heteroglossia for different purposes in their art. To Walcott, it ensures authenticity while for Ezekiel, it stands primarily for irony and humour. The art of both reveals instances of intertextuality. The Bible and several well known writers of English have left indelible marks on them both. If the biblical rhythm can be perceived in Walcott’s verses, biblical pronouncements are parodied at length in Ezekiel. While Walcott’s verse shows some definite marks of influences of modern poets on his craftsmanship, Eliot’s profound impact can be easily detected in Ezekiel’s art.
The art of Walcott and Ezekiel abounds in phrases and passages of intertextuality, vouching for their erudition and capacity for original vision. These writers are not simple book worms, but great thinkers each in his own right. They tend to define their insight at times, by fine-tuning the pronouncements of some of their illustrious predecessors.

The delectable ironic twist that they often give to certain biblical statements show their agnostic reservations about religious texts. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the points of their departure from naive acceptance of religious cliches, emphatically set their humanistic tolerance and acceptance in bold relief. Turning down the consolations proffered by the conventional religious beliefs, these thinkers would still endeavour to love their neighbours till Kingdom comes, showing no discrimination on the growth of colour, caste, race or religion.

It may be a play of wit or an ironic dual insight that makes their vision off a popular line or sentiment in a particular instance. Such an alertness does not necessarily imply any kind of frivolity. Often, it is indicative of another great scrutinizing mind, endowed with an equally indomitable voice, at work.
Intertextuality, in the case of Walcott and Ezekiel, is thus a literary phenomenon meant to enliven and entertain the readers on one hand, and to extend empathy to embrace the entire human race and to offer enlightenment, transcending narrow barriers of religion on the other.

Colour imagery has rendered the art of both colourful, though in the case of Walcott, it emerges as a greater obsession, being highly evocative of his native landscape and seascape. Light-and-darkness imagery is employed by both the poets in question, and both the artists tend to review the imagery from a modern ironic perspective. However, Walcott's passionate commitment to darkness is missing in the case of Ezekiel, whose treatment of the imagery is confined to merely the conscious, intellectual level. Nevertheless, Ezekiel endeavours to amuse his readers to varying degrees through his employment of irony and burlesque while in the case of Walcott, there is no self-conscious preoccupation with humour. Thus an appreciation of the techniques of these two poets enables us to define the value of their art in finer, comparative terms.