

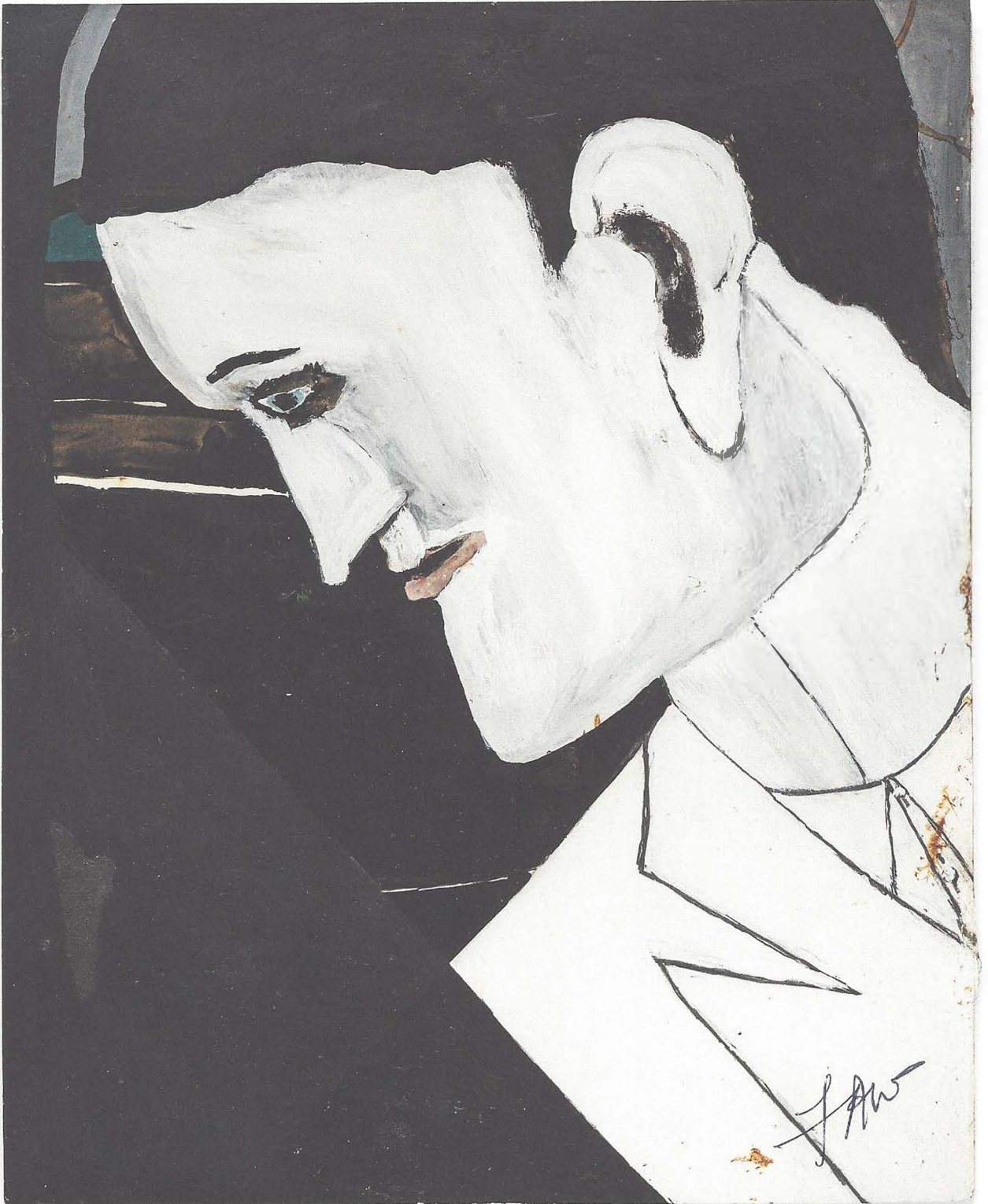
Frank Walter

A Retrospective

W. H. D. F. G.
1911

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How I Became European: Frank Walter in Retrospect

Barbara Paca

Prologue

I first encountered Frank Walter's art in Antigua during an otherwise dreary house tour. Alone in a guest bathroom, I found myself entranced by a set of small paintings that fused the figurative and the abstract in a way I had never seen before. Its honesty and immediacy was clearly rooted in Antigua, and, yet, the work resonated with a universal profundity. Its authenticity stood in sharp contrast to the house's American-style opulence so at odds with its setting in a developing country. When I asked the owner about the artwork I was told, "That is by Frank Walter, a crazy artist that lived alone in the bush. He's dead now." I left the house with my curiosity piqued.

Later that day, I had a chance meeting with a woman on a private beach. She approached me and told me that my stature and bearing reminded her of a Black man she knows—so much so that she almost mistook me for him from a distance. Intrigued, I asked for the man's name. She told me, "Jules Walter! He is tall and a historian of Antigua. He plays the extra in James Bond movies whenever they need an assassin or a dodgy African ambassador. He was even in *Star Wars*, and they made a doll after him!" With Frank Walter still on my mind, I wondered if the Walter surname meant a family connection. I gave her my card, and I asked that Jules call me.

A short time later, Jules rang. During our conversation, I mentioned how moved I was by Frank's artwork. He told me they were cousins and grew up together. He then shocked me with the news: "Frank is alive. He lives on a hillside just above me. May I take you to him?" Desperate to leave the gated community where I felt more or less imprisoned, I happily drove to the other side of the island, intent on meeting Jules and Frank.

Within the hour, I was hiking up to Frank's house, following Jules—who was indeed tall and very elegant—through a thicket of wild tamarind and *lignum vitae* trees with jumbee seed vines twirling around the delicate branches. Iridescent hummingbirds magically darted amongst the yellow blossoms on the tall, silver agave plants that dotted the hillside. When we arrived, I was immediately struck by Frank's aura of grandeur. I was transported. It was as if I were back in the familiar company of my former Princeton University professors, who, in their eighties and nineties, were revered and considered "gods." I immediately recalled the prescient words of my mentor in art and art history, William Heckscher, who was part of the first group to escape Nazi Germany bound for Princeton: "One day you will meet an artistic genius and, knowing you, it will be surreal." This was precisely that transformative encounter. And, from the moment of our first meeting, Frank Walter opened my eyes to an entirely new universe. I shall always be grateful to him and his family for sharing such inconceivable beauty with me.

Frank Walter, the Artist from Antigua

Francis Archibald Wentworth Walter, known as Frank Walter, was born in Liberta, Parish of St. Paul, Antigua, in 1926 and died a solitary resident of Bailey Hill in 2009. In between these bookends, he lived a thoroughly original life marked by a breadth of extraordinary experiences and remarkable intellectual and artistic activities. Walter's artistic practice—concerned with the past, the present, and the imagined—spanned many disciplines, including painting, sculpture, poetry, prose, playwriting, music, gardening, woodworking, and spoken-voice recordings. His 50,000-page manuscript collection, produced over the course of his lifetime, contains writings and recordings about tangible and psychic events in his life, as well as conceptual musings on his artwork. Recorded in numerous notebooks and stacks of handwritten-and-typewritten pages, his life's work has miraculously survived years of exposure in the hot-and-humid Caribbean climate.

Although he had plans to exhibit his artwork, Walter's artistic practice remained largely private during his lifetime. It was not until Antigua and Barbuda's 2017 Venice Biennale National Pavilion exhibition, *Frank Walter: The Last Universal Man*, that his lifelong dream of exhibiting in an international context was finally fulfilled—eight years after his death.¹ Fittingly tucked inside a monastic complex in Dorsoduro, away from the spotlight of the Arsenale and Giardini, Walter's fully-fledged body of work caused a sensation, with famed curator Hans Ulrich Obrist lauding him as the Leonardo da Vinci of Antigua.²

As curator and friend to Frank Walter, it has been my great privilege to strive to do justice to his life and art.³ In truth, Walter was a finely tuned and intensely fragile man, who struggled with mental illness throughout his life, often due to limiting or prejudiced cultural forces beyond his control. As a person of color, he experienced extreme hardship and endemic racism when he lived in England in the 1950s. His visions and mysticism as well as his later choice to live in solitude on Bailey Hill can be easily misunderstood or dismissed. Yet, as the New York-based neurosurgeon Caitlin Hoffman argues, such idiosyncrasies were integral aspects of his rich interior life. According to Hoffman, Walter exhibited traits of creative genius, not madness. She finds his decision to dwell close to the natural world provided him with the necessary "sanctuary" in which to pursue his gifts.

While psychiatrists and neuroscientists ascribe the behavior and thought processes demonstrated by Walter to an imbalance of neurotransmitters and receptors, the resultant capacity for exploration of other dimensions of the physical world, and one's own mind, confers astounding potential for new creation, new thought, new perspective [...]. Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gosch, Adolf Wölfli, Heinrich Anton Müller, Ralph Albert Blakelock, Peter Green, Syd Barrett, and Charles Bolden all created art forms that emanated from mentally 'altered' states labeled as psychotic, Schizophrenic.

[...]

Despite his rationality within his constructions of grandeur and purpose, Walter faced clinical scrutiny, confinement, racial exclusion, and lack of recognition during his time in the UK and Europe. It was his salvation that these pressures led him home. However grand his vision of himself and his purpose in this world, his true universalism and core philosophies found ultimate resonance in the Antiguan countryside, immersed in a wild, fragile beauty that mirrored his own. Antigua provided asylum for such a soul, a larger canvas on which to "build his sanctuary," to spread his ideas and sufferings, to create his triumphs, and to make peace. Compared to others who struggled with the same condition in different environments, sentenced to confinement, to stifling their creativity, to creating from within institutions, Walter's art, ruminations, and philosophies remained free.

[...]

- 1 In my roles as curator of *Frank Walter: The Last Universal Man*, Cultural Envoy to Antigua and Barbuda, and more, I am indebted to New School professor Dr. Nina Khrushcheva. She has been my collaborator on the Frank Walter project since 2004, and she contributed the Introduction to our Venice Biennale exhibition catalogue, Barbara Paca (ed.), *Frank Walter: The Last Universal Man, 1926–2009*. Radius Books and La Biennale di Venezia, Santa Fe, NM/Venice, 2017. Dr. Khrushcheva was the first to dub Walter a contemporary Leonardo da Vinci, and she invented his now widely known moniker, "the Last Universal Man."
- 2 "Interview with Serpentine Gallery Artistic Director Hans Ulrich Obrist," *Weltkunst* (June 2017), p. 16.
- 3 I would like to acknowledge editor Kelly Elizabeth Nosari for her help over the years in framing Frank Walter's story with nuance and sensitivity.

[...] Walter did not spend his life in an institution, drawing on rebellion against sterility and conformity, but instead was offered inspiration through the island's beauty, rock-strewn shores, and stunning sea coasts for asylum, healing, and convalescence.⁴

Walter's own experiences made him acutely aware of the complexities and possibilities of the human mind and the significant impact art could have on the psyche. In his unpublished poem, "On Art: A Painter's Feeling," Walter wrote of how his artwork should be shared with others in order to "chase from some saddened mind its sorrow." He believed heartily in the therapeutic value of art, which extended beyond his own psychological need to create. Through his music, poetry, and visual art, Walter's intention was to heal individuals and society as a whole.

I

Following his Venice Biennale debut and newfound global recognition, Walter's first museum retrospective examining his significant career achievements at the Museum für Moderne Kunst is a homecoming of sorts. Not only did Walter travel to the Frankfurt area during his lifetime and create works of art inspired by his experiences there, his ancestors originated in the picturesque rural villages to the southwest of the city along the Rhine River. His branch of the Walter family has been traced to this area as far back as the sixteenth century and continues to flourish there to the present day.

Walter lived in England and elsewhere in Europe from 1954 to 1961 and traveled circuitous routes throughout the Continent during this period. In London, Walter's poetry and keen ability at dramatic readings were briefly given a public platform by radio producer Henry Swanzy (1915–2004) on his influential BBC World Service radio program *Caribbean Voices* (1943–58), which featured many talented up-and-coming Caribbean writers during its run. Struck by Walter's elocution and regal bearing upon meeting him in 1954, Swanzy engaged Walter to read his own poetry and that of others on the show. The night of their initial meeting, Swanzy returned home, writing in his diary about Walter, describing him as a man of extraordinary genius, good looks, and fine manners before summarizing Walter with two words: "GERMAN ROMANTICISM!"⁵

Although he largely resided in Northern England during his time in Europe, he continually sought out the warmth and hospitality of Germany when the shroud of dull English weather would move in during the late autumn. We know that he spent Christmases in Germany, working in the mines and fraternizing with fellow laborers. In later recordings, he reflected on the strong connection he felt to Germany, and in particular to the Rhine region.

Every time I visit the Fatherland Germany, I make a trek. I should say I go to visit. To pay respects to Beethoven at his birthplace just beyond the marketplace of Bonn. And there I feel often the presence of Beethoven by me; urging me, inspiring me to continue in my work. And when I am at Köln on the Rhine I feel the spirit of the great Charlemagne, Charles the Great, the Roman emperor who brought all Europe to order.⁶

About midway through one of his winter sojourns in 1957, Walter trekked largely on foot from Bonn to Düsseldorf. He wrote his only titled symphony, *Deutschland und der Rhein*, as he watched the sun rising over the landscape at the Rhine River in Cologne. In his writings, he discusses the creation of the piece, and he notes its intended therapeutic value, inspired by the camaraderie of his German friends and co-workers from the Mannesmann coal mines in Gelsenkirchen.

- 4 Caitlin Hoffman, "Selected Texts," in *Frank Walter: The Last Universal Man*, pp. 334–35.
- 5 Henry Swanzy, diary entry, May 31, 1954. Swanzy Papers, MS42/2/2, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.
- 6 Frank Walter, "Therapeutic Value of Music," spoken-voice audio recording on magnetic tape, c. 1960. Frank Walter Papers, private manuscript collection (hereafter cited as Walter MSS).

I call this composition *Deutschland und der Rhein*. Such music it can be noted brings life into the body, and no doubt, anyone suffering from neurosis can find a good therapy in this sort of music. It is necessary therefore, to pursue the right cultural background, and to hear the correct sort of music. All Europeans should, not only the Germans, who have already returned to that magnificent background of culture and development of their fine musical talents.⁷

7 Frank Walter, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, p. 2672, Walter MSS.

8 Frank Walter, "How I Became European," spoken-voice audio recording on magnetic tape, 1996, Walter MSS.

While in Europe, Walter favored Germany over the United Kingdom, where he encountered a hostile environment as a member of the Windrush generation. He knew of his family's genealogical origins in Germany and personally identified as German. He wrote at length about the German music, art, and cultural connectivity that inspired his artistic practice. These interests also come across in Walter's later recorded tapes, most of which concern Europe. In an example from 1996, Walter reflects on the European aspect of his identity.

It is not that I am European in the family sense.

But how I became European.

I was constrained to be bothered as to whether I belonged to that family or not.

Not by any desire to belong to any family, but by the recognition of the family to which you belong and into which you were born.

The history of that family.

Simply because, whether I liked it or not, the fundamental aspect of the expression of your family traits were always showing in my relationship with other people.

Since I could not change myself.

Since I could not turn myself into some other family.

I had to live with it.

I had to be prepared to answer questions concerning why I speak the way I speak the way I do.

That followed me everywhere that I had ever been from the time I was a seven-year-old boy until now that I am seventy.

If I were to have thought that I would have felt strange being in Europe; to the contrary.

The closer I got to Europe, the less strange I began to feel. Because the closer I got to Europe, the more likely my travelling European companions were to stick close to me; or to allow me to stick close to them, and correspond with them.

It did not matter what language I spoke. There was a pull. A pull that is irresistible. Where some people would find cause for conflict. A very strong personality, yet, I could not consider certain expressions, which are more constructively critical than aspersions to be offensive.

I could not make an offense of questions, which are based on realities.

'Oh you speak such good English!'

'How come you speak such good English?'

'Your people don't seem to speak such good English!'⁸

Walter continues his narration after playing a long solo on his harmonica, and introduces one of his rich tapestries of imagined European royal history, describing an Indian-Germanic presence in the Habsburg-Spanish West Indies, riffing on established histories to explain his own personal family genealogy. In the same recording, he also further discusses his pressing desire to bring about a renaissance or a return to an original (imagined) European culture. In drawing inspiration from the past, he no doubt was moved by his evident compassion for his German friends and the rigorous working conditions he and his friends experienced in the mines.

One might know it from this composition, 'The West Indian Saga.' The West Indian placidity interposed upon a German tempo. One can see therefore from the music, which comes from the mind of a West Indian there is much Germanic influence, and perhaps a Germanic influence dating back to the originality of Habsburg Spanish West Indies.

Having begun to study the deeper side of European life, I came to the conclusion, and having done so, only having at first being terribly alarmed at the amount of nervous disorders which are so prevalent in Europe today, that there is need for a mild form of therapy, which I think can be found in the correct sort of music and folklore. The rebirth of European culture. The changing from this mechanical life of austerity and dubiousness, to a normal, placid life, and return first of all to a Christian way of life, and through that to find the best moral sort of entertainment that one can obtain.⁹

The Caribbean Sea is so big, and so blue, and so deep, and so warm, and so unpredictable, and so inviting, and so dangerous, and so beautiful.
—Jamaica Kincaid, "Antigua Crossings," Rolling Stone, June 29, 1978

Walter was well educated and proud of his Antiguan heritage (fig. 1). He was innately connected to the land and had intricate knowledge of horticulture, agriculture, and conservation suited to the island's unique environment. He was also a keen student of Antigua's complex history and culture—as well as his own. Out of a desire to reconcile his personal genealogical background rooted in European colonization of the Caribbean and the African diaspora of the slave trade, he invented beautiful, imaginative histories and genealogies that wove together African, European, and American cultures.

Walter knew of his German origins and spent the 1956–59 winter seasons there (fig. 2). Leaving factory jobs in Northern England, where the bleak weather and meager wages meant poor health and near-starvation, Walter sought reprieve in Germany. He worked as a miner in Gelsenkirchen, and from that austere base traveled throughout the Rhine region on a kind of introspective wanderlust deeply embedded in the tradition of German Romanticism. His temperament and artistic practice mirrored that philosophical tradition very closely, and he was personally connected to and interested in the five institutions on which German Romanticism was founded in the late-eighteenth century according to Theodore Ziolkowski: namely, mining, law, universities, museums, and mad-houses.¹⁰

It is not surprising that Romanticism was a great influence upon Walter's life and artistic practice. Established figures such as William Blake (1757–1827), Henry Fuseli (1741–1825), and Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) were, by Walter's lifetime, a key part of the art-historical canon. Their paintings of symbolically charged landscapes, religious imagery, and personal visions read like clear antecedents to Walter's own oeuvre. Blake, in particular, seems to have been an influence. Like Walter, Blake was largely unknown during his lifetime. Deeply spiritual, he experienced visions that fueled his life and work. He also created his own private mythology and steadfastly believed in the supreme importance of the human imagination.

Today, a number of contemporary artists such as Peter Doig (b. 1959), Karen Kilimnik (b. 1955), and John Akomfrah (b. 1957) have incorporated Romantic concepts into their artistic practices. Akomfrah, who shares Walter's interest in the experience of the African diaspora and postcolonial migration, explains his own personal approach to Romanticism, and his ongoing dialogue with the past. In doing so, he indirectly provides some insights into what may also have been the draw of Romanticism for Walter:

- 9 Walter, "Therapeutic Value of Music."
10 Theodore Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.



Fig. 1: *Antigua Is My Home*, n. d.



Fig. 2: *Antigua für Sonne und Meer*, n. d.

Interest in Romanticism animates the use of the tableau. Both as an art movement and as a philosophical movement, Romanticism is absolutely critical to understand the place of the Black, as it makes all sorts of claims—post religious claims regarding where the human form should sit in language and in art—which is still relevant [...]. I'm interested in it as a movement: aesthetic and narrative strategies, always slightly reformulated, always with a modernist touch. A deeply engrained movement that I always return to again and again.¹¹

Romanticism is a central element of Akomfrah's acclaimed three-channel video installation, *Vertigo Sea* (Venice Biennale, 2015). Nature—particularly the ocean—forms the backdrop of this film's montage of footage that highlights the writer, abolitionist, and former enslaved person Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745–97). With references to disparate geographies across oceans, choruses of enigmatic identities, time traveling through many centuries and places, and an emphasis upon introspection, the video conveys Equiano's life, which seems closely to resemble Walter's. As cultural critic T. J. Demos argues in language that could be directly applied to Walter, Equiano's difficult trajectory seemed to run parallel to the Romanticism that then dominated Europe:

The radical ruptures and ambivalences in Equiano's life mirror the very incongruities of beauty and terror, fear and attraction, absolute greatness and intense dread, that are often associated with nature and that were conceptualised in the eighteenth century's philosophical aesthetics of the sublime.¹²

The Landscape

Working under rustic and austere conditions, Walter's brush reveals a deep and emotive connection to memory and place. He draws the viewer into his compositions by capturing the familiar elements of landscapes in an essential way, showing well-composed swaths of fields, mountains, vegetation, and sky. At the same time, these recognizable features are rendered in unexpected, distinctive ways, with naturalistic color schemes upended. Striking silhouettes of trees take on a dramatic black; vast expanses of sky are boldly depicted as pink and red; and green canopies are turned a ghostly white (fig. 3).

I thought, I would nevertheless be able to look across at the town, or Prince Rupert Harbour, to feel that I am after all not really alone in my exile.
— Frank Walter, autobiographical manuscript, p. 4257

Walter's paintings of sunrises and sunsets bring his memories to life, and there are examples in which he inserts his own figure as though documenting the very act of experience and recollection, which defines his work. In a self-portrait (p. 228; fig. 4 shows the verso for reference) that echoes German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich's *Rückenfigur* in *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (*Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, c. 1817, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg), Walter's back faces the viewer, a single element integrated into a wider landscape. Cradled in the branches of a large tree with a generous open canopy, he seems to stare contemplatively over a gray sea with a saturated pink sky beyond. Invited into his world to bear witness to his own personal environment—here we are, positioned at Prince Rupert's Bay off the island of Dominica. In this act of meditation rooted in the landscape, Walter is identifying himself as a Romantic, an itinerant philosopher, and a student of the Earth's sublime beauty.

Walter produced a jewel-like set of eight small, horizontal landscape paintings sometime between 1968 and 1976 (see pp. 222–23; fig. 5). Painted on a support of basic cardstock and framed by the artist in mahogany, the works feature

- 11 John Akomfrah quoted from Rudolf Frieling, "Artist Salon: John Akomfrah," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (video interview posted August 7, 2019), Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40nRA8x_R8g, accessed February 16, 2020.
- 12 T. J. Demos, "On Terror and Beauty: John Akomfrah's *Vertigo Sea*," *Atlántica*, no. 56 (April 2016), online <http://www.revistaatlantica.com/en/contribucion/on-terror-and-beauty-john-akomfrahs-vertigo-sea/>, accessed February 16, 2020.



Fig. 3: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 4: Photograph on the back of *Untitled (Self-Portrait)*, n. d.



Fig. 5: *Untitled*, c. 1968–76

intense color schemes that offer heightened versions of reality. The unlikely pink skies and turbulent orange seas only serve to draw us further into the ethereal European landscapes that populated his memory.

As is common with the best writers of literature, Walter was able to recall every detail of a given place and time—transporting his audience there with him. Over the past fifteen years, I have interviewed many people about their recollections of how Walter worked. One constant I have found is the remarkable way in which he often painted landscape scenes from his mind’s eye without appearing to watch his work. Applying confident and quick brushstrokes to the support, at the same time, he would maintain eye contact with friends and visitors while holding thoughtful conversations on history, philosophy, and planting. And he could do all of this despite his often-makeshift studio environment in Antigua.

Walter seems to have effortlessly accessed experiences from his past—as well as other planes of existence—by tuning into his “television eyes.” He describes this phenomenon from a cramped hotel room in Dusseldorf on a chilly, late December night in 1957. Desperate to distract himself from a prolonged insomniac episode, he opted to lie on the floor and go on a tour of the world of his forefathers using his mind’s eye:

I tried to project my mind into a four dimensional plane, instead of sleeping. I had reached a phase of concentration, that I could bring images much like T.V. images on the cornea of my eyes, which served as a T.V. screen. Most of the scenery which I wanted to paint or write about was seen in this way, perhaps in the same light that a Drug Addict sees things. I had never in my life touched any known drugs, but I could make my memory or imagination bring beautiful and colourful pictures. I could boost the images, by concentrating with my eyes focused on light at first, taking from the light source, a Halo of Light that evolved various realistic patterns which carry tremendous data. I had been here in this room in my posture, couched, many vast pictures of the European Future. My forefathers the Black Germans, the richest and most powerful of the Aryans, as any educated human being would well have learnt, had to have as much perception as me in order to have planned such massive cities as the Twentieth Century Europeans everywhere enjoyed [...]. Charles II King of England (Francis Walter) was fortunate enough to have been able to live in the sunshine of the Caribbean. His sable hue might have been aided by the Tropical Sunshine, but I had lived for the whole twenty six years of my life in every day of sunshine that fell on the island of Antigua. I had no reason to be afraid of being Black if ever I could be [...]. The European World was my world, not because I forced myself to like it or accept it, it was inherently my world. I could no more so do without it than I could be expected to do without my limbs. I have no annoyance for West Indians who are Black, and who account differently for their blackness, which make them apparently different from the European Majorities [...]. I had a duty to perform. I had a right to make it my business to study it.¹³

Walter’s television eyes went beyond recalling vivid impressions of places and experiences, and may be understood through nineteenth-century artist Caspar David Friedrich’s theory of the inner spiritual eye. In his essay “Äußerung bei Betrachtung einer Sammlung von Gemälden von größtenteils noch lebenden und unlängst verstorbenen Künstlern” (c. 1830), Friedrich explains that the body initially receives information, but it is only translated into something higher through the spiritual eye. Friedrich believed the spiritual eye was the key to the creative process, and he challenged other artists to give it precedence as they worked.¹⁴

Always experimenting with materials, Walter adapted prints on photographic paper to his artist’s kit by using the blank, reverse side of selected photographs as the support for many of his paintings. This series of largely untitled

13 Walter, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, p. 2617.

14 Caspar David Friedrich, *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, ed. Sigrid Hinz. Berlin: Henschel, 1984, p. 120.



Fig. 6: *Untitled*, n. d.

works features some of his most atmospheric landscapes and generated interesting relationships between photograph and painted image.

In Figure 6, Walter shows a maritime view through a grove of trees, offering a glimpse into an isolated cove somewhere on the coast of the Caribbean Sea. The horizontal format at its center has carefully painted flat, white waves. At the horizon, there is a dark-blue line where the sea meets the sky, and his characteristic white lines indicate low clouds clinging to the moist atmosphere over the warm water. On the reverse of this painting is a thoughtfully composed photographic study of a bride, dressed in white, leaning proudly over her multitiered white wedding cake, reminding us of the fleeting nature of life and making the landscape even more surprising.

Walter often invites the viewer into his paintings through a central, meandering path that directs the eye through the heart of the composition. In an untitled landscape (p. 188), a tree-lined path through a forest in Northern Europe or England takes up the foreground before tapering off into the distance. The curving trail bisects the composition's black-trunked trees and gray-green forest floor—evoking a winter's day and underscoring Walter's intimate relationship with nature.

Referred to by many in Antigua as St. Francis of Antigua because of his strong Catholic faith and reclusive character, Walter often shows a mystical side of Antigua in his landscapes. Winding paths and streams and a soft color palette are used to reflect a clear morning light and seem to imbue the land with universal and spiritual depth (figs 7–12).

In one untitled landscape (fig. 7), from a set of similarly cool-toned, vertical landscapes, Walter conveys a simple rocky austerity that harkens back to Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks* (1483–86). A low-lying, meandering white path opens up the imposing, dark crags that flank it along with stands of open-canopied trees, almost cathedral-like in their sublimity.

In Figure 8, a man stands alone with his thoughts in true Romantic fashion. Surrounded by nature, he gazes toward a hill with six tall, open trees with multi-branched trunks and nearly transparent olive-green canopies. The turquoise and chartreuse grass in the foreground is balanced by a clear blue sky beyond. The solitary figure is immobile and stands as a marker in the landscape—much like the surrounding trees and vegetation—bearing witness to the vibrant undercurrents of the natural world.

In all of his landscapes, we sense that Walter was putting brush to paper in an attempt to connect to formative past experiences as well as solve larger, esoteric problems. This intellectual tension is evident in Walter's untitled vertical landscape (fig. 12) in which steep black cliffs in the foreground contrast with fragile deciduous trees on the horizon. Integral to the depiction of what is perhaps a volcanic island is the ambiguity of the centrally located red-and-black forms in a sea of tufted blue-and-black waves.

Walter's landscape paintings tell stories through their distinctly Caribbean descriptive qualities of place, and they seem to share a lot with the literary work of Windrush generation writers, including George Lamming (b. 1927), Derek Walcott (1930–2017), Jean Rhys (1890–1979), and C. L. R. James (1901–89). They similarly experienced racism and alienation upon moving to England, a reality Lamming captures so well in his work, *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953). This brutal racism elicited a longing for their home countries in the Caribbean and revealed a deep attachment to the luminous and nourishing landscapes of their youth.

In the mid-twentieth century, racial injustice at the hands of white people was an almost universal experience for people of color living in the West, and Walter's unpublished autobiographical manuscript shows the extent to which he experienced exploitation and mistreatment during his time in England. Overworked, underpaid, and discriminated against, he felt dehumanized by the racism he encountered, and he cites the Jewish factory owners he worked for and



Fig. 7: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 8: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 9: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 10: *Untitled*, n. d.

landlords he rented lodgings from as having been particularly abusive. His writing also reveals that these personal experiences led him to develop feelings toward Jewish people that today would be understood as anti-Semitic — embodying the tragic adage that prejudice begets prejudice.¹⁵

In his 1967 *New York Times Magazine* article, “Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White,” James Baldwin (1924–87) simultaneously provides insights into the phenomenon of anti-Semitism among people of color in the mid-twentieth century and warns against the dangerous mistake of blaming any individual’s racist actions on their Jewishness. Baldwin postulates that there was widespread resentment and envy toward the Jewish minority for having been able to assimilate into the oppressive white majority and be saved by it despite the historical reality that “Christendom [...] successfully victimized both Negroes and Jews.” He writes, “One can be disappointed in the Jew if one is romantic enough—for not having learned from history; but if people did learn from history, history would be very different.”¹⁶

II

However painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white.

—Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1967 [1952]

Walter grew up in an Antigua that was among the last vestiges of the British Empire. Nevertheless, he seems to have spent his youth remarkably unscarred by colonialism’s virulent institutionalized racism. He received a first-rate education at the Antigua Grammar School alongside fellow students from British plantocracies, who were sent for a sheltered education in the tropics during the Second World War. There was something innately magical and idyllic about Frank Walter’s childhood that transcended the sociopolitical realities of the day, a perspective shared by his closest cousin, Jules Walter.¹⁷

Walter also grew up with the private truth that he descended from both German slave owners and enslaved people of African descent. He learned these secrets about his family history from his grandmother and maiden aunts, as it was passed down to them in the form of oral history, and he was not able to share this knowledge with others as it was considered taboo in Antigua. It explains why Walter viewed himself as European and often identified as a white man. His elaborate heraldic symbols and self-proclaimed titles, which included 7th Prince of the West Indies, Lord of Follies, and the Ding-a-Ding Nook, actually referred to plantations where his forebears lived in Antigua. Follies, Retreat, Montgomery, and Ding-a-Ding Nook were all properties owned by the Walter family from the eighteenth century.

Walter’s affinity for German people and culture was inspired further by childhood experiences at the Antigua Grammar School where he was a student. The sensitive young Walter was alarmed at witnessing first-hand the subtle incarceration of people he knew and viewed as mentors, including his school’s headmaster; Von Berg, butterfly collector Count Overhoff, and others of German descent, who were suspected of being German spies. Heavily guarded by Americans with both a naval and army air base, Antigua was on high alert. Walter and his cousin Jules remember with irony how somewhat gregarious German submariners would sneak into Falmouth Harbour to purchase fresh fish from his relations.¹⁸ In his writings, Walter made it clear that despite his skin color, he firmly identified as German. In a naïve way commensurate to his youth and his adoration of the mythical, virtuous Germany of his dreams, he was not immune to the false ideals of Hitler’s Aryan purity. At the time, he was not alone.

- 15 Walter’s references to his experiences with Jewish landlords and business owners are a part of his larger experience with postcolonial racism, revealing his immense vulnerability as a person of color living in the UK. These experiences can be found throughout his unpublished autobiographical manuscript.
- 16 See James Baldwin, “Negroes are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White,” *New York Times Magazine*, April 9, 1967, p. 228.
- 17 Jules Walter, in discussion with Barbara Paca, January 31, 2020.
- 18 Jules Walter, in discussion with Barbara Paca, February 1, 2020.

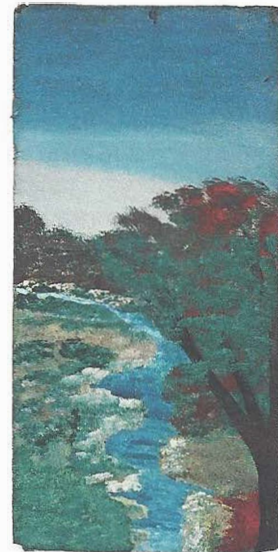


Fig. 11: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 12: *Untitled*, n. d.

The enlightened reign of Oliver Ridsdale Baldwin (1899–1958), Second Earl of Bewdley, as the Governor of the Leeward Islands from 1948 to 1950 likely had an impact on Walter as a young man. With a focus on social cohesion and inclusion, Lord Baldwin brought about a sea change to the people of Antigua. As an openly gay man, he had empathy with people who lived on the fringes of society. He was the first to bring children to the forefront of the arts, and to promote the African origins of art among Antiguan through his support for the steel band and carnivals harkening back to the earliest forms of rebellion against slavery.

Walter left Antigua for Europe in the early 1950s and would spend nearly a decade there. He first traveled to Germany in the autumn of 1956, when he left England after having lost a grueling factory job as a button dyer. Compelled by a self-professed need to honor his family history, he recorded that his visit made him the first of his Antiguan family line to return to Germany since 1895. He also noted that the most recent visit was that of his great-grandfather, who made an ill-fated journey from Trinidad to Germany and back, in which he nearly lost his life in a shipwreck on the treacherous Diamond Reef off the coast of Trinidad.¹⁹

Walter crossed the border into Germany at Aachen. He encountered problems with border guards, but managed to continue his journey. Within a short time of arriving in Hamburg, he found himself in a police station. He later casually recounted his interview and incarceration as if it were a positive interaction. He wrote that one of the German police officers invited him to his home to meet his family, but it was decided it was better for Walter to spend the night in a prison cell at the station. He clearly viewed everything in Germany through magical, rose-colored glasses—even the police station was a mystical place for him.

A “sequence of mysteries” or visions followed him during his German travels, including wandering through meadows with children in a Pied Piper-like fashion—an idyll in a meadow where he loses his wallet—and a desire to cross the border into East Germany only to be assaulted by gunfire.²⁰ He also encountered a blonde girl in Bonn by the name of Hildegard, and he returned the following year in the hope of marrying her.

The mirage of Hildegard remained a constant obsession with Walter. She would return to him time and again, including appearing to him when he was locked away in a hostel in Germany, in Leeds in duplicate form as fair-haired twins, and, years later, while he was sitting at the window of his home on the island of Dominica, she appeared to be channeling the regal, hospitable air of Mary, Queen of Scots.²¹ These visions were very real to Walter, and he documented them in detail. But these experiences seem to have prevented him from entering into relationships with women he encountered in the workman’s lodgings and bars set aside for members of the mining community. Perhaps this ideal woman was linked to the twelfth-century German Benedictine abbess and mystic Hildegard von Bingen, who was a well-known legend on the Rhine. Like Walter, she was a polymath—a writer, composer, and philosopher—who experienced religious visions and cultivated an advanced knowledge about the power of plants.

Untitled (Self-Portrait) (p. 229, bottom) is a small-scale painting that shows Walter deep in reflection in the natural world. In a pale-green meadow with a periwinkle sky, he stands among trees with black trunks. His head is cast down, away from the viewer. In contrast to the miniature nature of the work, the viewer knows that Walter is in a deep dimension of the painting, buried in thought. In another small landscape (fig. 13), rows of olive- and light-green trees under a cold white sky personify the artist’s innate union with nature.

Walter found true solace in “divine stillness,” particularly in forests and meadows at dusk, where he felt closer to God and Nature.²² The landscape was the foundation and starting point for his work, much as it was for Caribbean-born Scottish artist Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006). Both artists were fragile men who lived deep in their minds. Their interior and exterior worlds—in Scotland and Antigua, respectively—share similarly purposeful gestures toward

19 Frank Walter, “Missing Much,” unpublished autobiographical manuscript, p. 70.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

21 Frank Walter’s visions of women called Hildegard or Hilda appear throughout his unpublished autobiographical manuscript, see pp. 2226, 2292, 2452, 2578, 2615, and 4284–87.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 4269.



Fig. 13: *Untitled*, n. d.

creating a more tolerant world guided by philosophy, history, botany, the aquatic world, and art. Finlay was an impoverished writer who worked as a shepherd, sharing Walter's tendency to use isolation as fuel for artistic output. He also created his own private utopia, Little Sparta, much like the one Walter built for himself on Bailey Hill in Antigua.

Walter and Finlay combined writing and painting in a similar way. Finlay's Concrete poetry, like Walter's series on the letters of the alphabet, makes straightforward images emblematic and universal through association with a single word or brief motto. Finlay populated his verdant artist's retreat with stone carvings featuring the scientific names of plants and cryptic haiku-like poems. Their melancholic undertones are similar to Walter's Antigua and Dominican landscapes.

In retreating from society after returning to the Caribbean from Europe, Walter was no doubt also seeking reprieve from the British values imposed upon him, which were based on the superiority of whiteness over blackness—two conflicting aspects of Walter's identity. Using the landscape as a potent (and at times humorous) metaphor to describe the insidious ways white English values were foisted on the Antiguan people during the colonial era, writer Jamaica Kincaid (b. 1949) brings Walter's internal struggle into sharp relief.

Whatever it is in the character of the English people, they are led to obsessively order and shape their landscape, and to such a degree that the English landscape looks like a painting, and a painting never looks like the English landscape, unless it is a bad painting.

This pointed character that leads to obsessive order and shape in landscape is blissfully lacking in the Antiguan people [...]. I can cite in England the pity and cruelty showered at once on the weak and a love of gossip, which is why I think is one of the reasons the English have produced such great novelists. But this has not yet worked to the advantage of the Antiguan people.

When the English were a presence in Antigua, the places they lived in were surrounded by severely trimmed hedges of plumbago, topiaries of willow, casuarina, frangipani, hibiscus. Their grass was green—strange because water was scarce—and freshly cut. There were arches covered with roses, and there were beds of mangoes and cannas and chrysanthemums.

Ordinary Antiguan then, the ones who had some money and so could live in a house with more than one room, had gardens in which only flowers were grown. This would make even more clear that they were someone, because their outside spaces were not only devoted to feeding their families, but also to the shared beauty of things.

When these people, the Antiguan, lived under the influence of these other people, the English, there was naturally an attempt to imitate their rulers in this particular way by arranging the landscape. And they did this without question. They cannot be faulted for not asking what it is they were doing. This is the way these things work.²³

The Nocturne

Many of Walter's finest paintings are of landscapes at night. He was so keenly attuned to the subtle changes of light that occur as the sun withdraws from the sky that, like his other landscapes, Walter was able to paint his nocturnes from memory. *Stream & Forest* (fig. 14) is one from a series of Scottish nocturnes, which become colder in tone and more abstract as he worked through them over time in his mind's eye. This painting captures the evening light through an imaginative and attentive use of color, showing two black-trunked trees framing a white river with a cold, purple-toned night sky above.

23 Jamaica Kincaid, lecture "Landscapes and Memory: Coming of Age in a Small Place," The Presidential Lecture Series, St. Mary's College, St. Mary's City, MD, March 29, 2019.

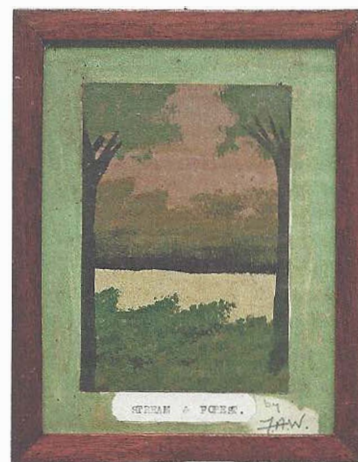


Fig. 14: *Stream & Forest*, n. d.

I had slept all the way from Yorkshire to London, as there was not much to be seen except the rise and fall of the night scenes, of light rising and falling as we sped through areas where it was possible to see far off or nearby towns and villages. My perception of Night Scenes became strengthened for painting in the future.

— Frank Walter, autobiographical manuscript, p. 1250

From 1954 to 1961, Walter hiked on foot through most of England and much of Scotland in what can be understood as protest walks. These long and arduous walks were a kind of private activism, which helped to free his mind for more urgent and personal artistic pursuits. Many of these walks were taken at night, and they remained in the front of his mind for the rest of his life, inspiring his many nocturnal studies. This set of three Scottish nocturnes (figs 15–17) brings the viewer to the edge of a frigid white pond with a chilly white night sky, and then takes us to the abstracted forests in cold chartreuse-and-purple tones.

In his nocturnes, Walter deftly brings both abstraction and jewel-like precision to brightly illustrated compositions set in an otherwise opaque black night-scape. They evoke the canvases of Friedrich—works such as *Küste bei Mondschein* (Seashore in Moonlight, 1835–36, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg), or the *Gebirgslandschaft mit Regenbogen* (Mountain Landscape with Rainbow, 1809–10, Museum Folkwang, Essen), which features a solitary hiker leaning on his walking stick and gazing away from the viewer to view a bright-white arc of light slicing across an otherwise pitch-black sky.

In Walter's self-portrait in a nocturne (fig. 18), he sits with his back facing the viewer in what appears to be either a broad, low swing or the canopy of a tree. He is very still as he witnesses a nighttime spectacle of stars and the reflection of foliage and distant brick-red land across a dark-gray sea. His presence in the composition emphasizes the subjectivity of the artist, both because of the artist's vantage point—from the open canopy of a large tree at the edge of the sea—and also by making the human figure small against the magnificence of nature. More specifically, in portraying himself as a Rückenfigur as part of the landscape, the viewer is invited to gaze at the same nighttime phenomena and absorb the sense of inner turmoil or *Sturm und Drang*.

Sturm und Drang is perhaps the only descriptor that comes close to embodying the dissonant vibrations and haunting evocations of Walter's many nocturnes, and his writing is rife with references to it. Most commonly, *Sturm und Drang* refers to the proto-Romantic artistic movement of the same name (1760s–80s), which gave reign to extremes of emotion in a reaction against the ordered rationalism of the Enlightenment. Although it did not last for long, its impact was broadly felt, according to scholar William Heckscher: "Like fireworks left to themselves, it was as a phenomenon spectacular and devastating, uninhibited, and short-lived, and often of great beauty."²⁴ As a concept, however, *Sturm und Drang* predates its eponymous movement. A term with maritime connotations, *Sturm* is defined by a positive, hopeful outlook that is somehow clouded and tempered by a sense of foreboding. *Drang* is an expression of unbridled passion—the opposite of rationality.

Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) also relies on emotion and subjectivity to rebel against the order of the day.²⁵ Rhys, who grew up on the island of Dominica and was another influence for Walter, makes the sea and its physical attributes a metaphor for the experience of colonialism's "violent disconnections" that continue to reverberate through generations. In Paul Huebener's words, "The dangerous liminal space of madness [...] symbolized by watery passages between landmasses, becomes its own destination for [protagonist] Antoinette, who believes she has been lost in the Sargasso Sea."²⁶ While we can only speculate as to the exact meaning of the sea in Walter's nocturnes, his repeated nighttime treatments are weighted with a similar sense of omnipresent foreboding.

- 24 William S. Heckscher, "Sturm und Drang: Conjectures on the Origin of a Phrase," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1966–67): pp. 94–105, here p. 96.
- 25 Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: André Deutsch, 1966. The novel was edited by Frank Walter's distant relation, renowned literary editor Diana Athill (1917–2019).
- 26 Paul Huebener, "Metaphor and Madness as Postcolonial Sites in Novels by Jean Rhys and Tayeb Salih," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 43, no. 4 (2010): pp. 19–34, here p. 20.



Fig. 15: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 16: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 17: *Untitled*, n. d.

The nocturnes (see pp. 168, 172, fig. 19) encompass the subtle changes in light that occur from dusk until late evening. Capturing a fleeting moment—a fast boat and its wake at night—Walter’s painting *Speedboat* (p. 168) shows a scene enveloped in the deep purple of nighttime. This darkness is interrupted by a yellow boat with an intense red smokestack and a long yellow wake fanning out behind it.

Walter’s nocturnes often evoke more tranquil Caribbean scenes. In one untitled nocturne (p. 172), the viewer is presented with a white-water harbor at night-time with gray-and-green land in the foreground of the composition. A soft-blue night sky gently cloaks the black mountain in the distance and the scene below. In a similar way, Walter’s nocturne with a purple sea (fig. 19) fuses together an unlikely purple seascape, blue-green meadow, and trees in red, black, and green.

The imagery that inhabits Walter’s nocturnes is also referenced repeatedly in his writing. In his autobiographical manuscript, Walter writes in detail about his trip through France and Italy in the spring of 1961. He begins by purchasing a ticket to Genoa, Italy, on the platform at the Gare du Nord in Paris, and describes his train ride through the French countryside to Strasbourg. He focuses on the geography at the Franco-German border and the Rhineland. It is at this junction he realizes that the “bright twilight of France” was disappearing into “dull alpine light” before being transformed into a deep darkness.

On the right side of the train, there were forested escarpments and valleys, but the evening light lit up the southwestern sky, and the open meadow. Alas, catching the pale blue evening sky, and roving my eyes over the plateau looking for enchanting landscapes, evening and twilight passed away into dusk, and soon we were looking down at the yachts in Lake Lucerne. The evening had become dusky enough to permit us to see the illumination stretching around the Lake [...]. As we emerged from St. Gotthard’s Tunnel, we were hit bang in the face by a white massive receding palm, like the palm of an Ogre.²⁷

Walter’s two untitled works depicting sunrays (fig. 20) and moon rays (p. 225, bottom) are painted in oil on the back of small photographs and appear to have been conceived as a study in contrasts. In the former, the sun and sky are golden yellow with long diagonal rays, and the landscape is cloaked in muted olive and subtle brown tones that seem to evoke dusk and a day at rest. As is often the case with Walter’s nocturnes, the moon-ray seascape features white, churning waves and is topped with mauve whitecaps and a gray-blue night sky. The moon’s rays, reflective of the sun, sweep toward Earth in the same dramatic way.

The nocturnes with red night skies are among Walter’s most dramatic landscapes. The nighttime schemes often incorporate black and purple alongside sections of red, as is the case with his atmospheric piece (fig. 21), which shows a seascape with distant black hills shrouded by white clouds, unfolding over a reddish-black body of water. Another example (fig. 22)—the largest nocturne—shows a dramatic view into Rendezvous Bay and the Ding-a-Ding Nook, the ancestral lands of the Walter family, situated below his final home on Bailey Hill. One of Frank Walter’s favorite tales recounted in the evening involved lengthy descriptions of how slaves disembarked from ships at the Ding-a-Ding Nook.

Walter also explores the realm of the fantastic within his oeuvre of nocturnes. The unlikely cliffs, red suns, and seascapes with purple waves, as well as eerie, dark beasts, contrast with otherwise familiar pastoral settings (see figs 23, 24).

Mankind can achieve no greater goal than to live by one’s self, unafraid of the consequences of solitude.

— Frank Walter, “Solitude,” unpublished essay

Walter’s nocturnes also powerfully evoke the condition of solitude. This perhaps is best achieved by his nocturne self-portraits (see fig. 25), which portray him when he was most at peace, connected to the landscape and to animals.

27 Walter, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, p. 3312.



Fig. 18: Untitled, n. d.



Fig. 19: Untitled, n. d.



Fig. 20: Untitled, n. d.



Fig. 21: Untitled, n. d.



Fig. 22: Untitled, n. d.

He embraced the quiet refuge of solitude from an early age. Jules Walter said that as a boy Walter lived in his mind and often spent quiet time away from other people.²⁸ He was known to compose pastoral poetry in Latin while sitting alone, high in the canopy of a tree. Interviews with people who knew Walter during his early success as a sugar plantation manager consistently reveal a direct, professional approach to his work. At the same time, Walter had an acute shyness and reticence that made him withdraw from social gatherings.

I had often looked down over the works from my bedroom window on particularly attractive moon-lit nights. I had never been particularly attracted by anything before by that window. It was certainly nothing for an Artist and Writer to miss. The night stimulated a certain anxiety for me to write. I, too, would have liked to paint the particularly bizarre scenery from that window.
—Frank Walter, autobiographical manuscript, p. 484

In an untitled painting (pp. 68–69), the viewer is presented with a view of clouds in motion seen from a window at night. The clouds' opaqueness and solidity convey an almost supernatural presence, which transforms the otherwise familiar natural phenomenon into an entirely new experience for the viewer. This trait is shared by much of Walter's artwork, which can be seen as having a symbolic life beyond its material representation. In a similar way, Romantic writers such as Germany's E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) and Russia's Nikolai Gogol (1809–52) imbued everyday objects and scenes with a heightened being, including haunted portraits, walking statues, and speaking mirrors.

Gogol's early poem "Hans Küchelgarten" (1828), volumes of Ukrainian stories, and the short story "Nevsky Prospekt" (1835) are, in the author's words, "eruptions of romanticism," much like those frequently exhibited by Walter throughout his career.²⁹ In contrast, however, Gogol consciously tried to avoid the outpourings of emotion and subjectivity associated with the movement, because he believed that "its first outbursts and trials usually came from desperately audacious people who foment social rebellions."³⁰ Despite this, as with his German counterpart, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Gogol's writing is rife with romantic topoi, including magic, beauty, doom, and suspense. Gogol's masterpiece, *Dead Souls*, is, in effect, a literary version of Walter's paintings—a detailed journey through a series of unlikely and soulful everyday encounters.

The Abstract

Walter's abstract paintings contain symbolic meanings that often reference his life experiences and work in other areas such as history, music, science, and philosophy. For Walter, stepping away from visual references in the natural world to rely more on abstraction allowed him to paint his "feelings and visions" as well as to transform "the invisible" into the "aesthetic."³¹

Walter used abstract and naturalistic approaches to varying degrees throughout his oeuvre—often employing elements of both within single compositions. This tendency is evident in *Bowl of Fruit* (fig. 26), which relates to his work as an early promoter of food security in Antigua and Barbuda and his keen interest in agricultural conservation methods. The composition centers on a large, pedestaled bowl filled with a plethora of potential crops—including guava, avocado, banana, guinep, papaya—that could be grown locally to sustain his fellow countrymen. The backdrop—an abstracted version of the flag of Antigua and Barbuda—suggests that self-sufficiency is inherently patriotic.

Firecrackers (pp. 38–39) marks the beginning of Walter's search into scientific truths. His mysterious eleven-point, orange-and-yellow star is shown against a pitch-black backdrop, emitting a cone of gray light that seems to spark bright

28 Jules Walter, in discussion with Barbara Paca, February 3, 2020.

29 Nikolai Gogol quoted from Carl R. Proffer, "Gogol's Definition of Romanticism," *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1967): pp. 120–27, here p. 124.

30 Ibid.

31 Frank Walter, "The Artist's Episode," unpublished outline, Walter MSS.



Fig. 23: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 24: *Black Beast, Red Sky*, n. d.

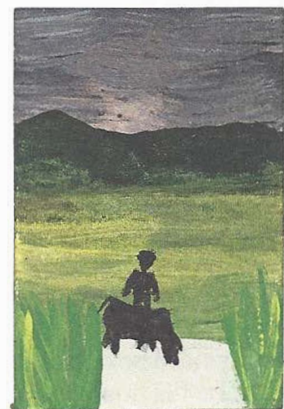


Fig. 25: *Untitled*, n. d.

orange, red, and yellow ribbons of light swirling up toward the star. Such celestial nighttime spectacles occur again and again in Walter's painting and writing and originate in his time spent in Dominica from 1961 to 1968, when he cleared a tract of forest, recycling the timber for charcoal that he sold to the townspeople of Portsmouth.

In some twilight dream, my spirit wandered into the very heart of the kiln, and for the first time in my life I had begun to have Television Dreams. I saw a drama taking place within the kilns. Huge logs exchanging their red-hot fire to one another in succession [...]. I could hardly wait until I was thoroughly rested [and] the cocks of morning began to crow. I was too heavy to lift my body as fast as my spirit commanded me to arise and return to Olympus [...]. I walked outside into the damp late November atmosphere, to face the cold front of morning before dawn. It was still pitch dark, except for lights in the neighbourhood, and the glow of street lamps. I walked the gaunt line of coconut palms laden with nuts through the dark morning, with stars showing brightly still in the sky. And there was an icy blue star, which I called Jupiter, standing in the eastern Sky almost pulling me upwards to the heaven, to make me feel mystified and exhilarated.

In quicker haste than usual I walked across the rivers, plunged up the hill and soon walked through the thick forest on the northern side of my estate, and came bang upon the kiln. A red jocund tongue was thrown out to slap me with its warm front straight on my cool face, as I walked toward the kiln to the sweet scent of methane, butane paraffin, and many an ester, as the wood sweated and poured out their aromas, including pitch and tar. As I walked up towards the kiln top to peep down into the fissure that the burning had caused to be opened, I could feel a hot front strike me back from my gaze. I became terrified to see in the burning pit as for what I could see in that bold instant, some features of what I had seen in my dream. Within a few days, I was gathering the most beautiful charcoals.³²

*Suddenly my brain was beginning to work on some hist-psycho-
psychic frequency.*

— Frank Walter, *autobiographical manuscript*, p. 4272

Walter was introduced to the world of science fiction and fantasy through the exhaustive writings of M. P. Shiel (1865–1947). As a boy, Walter read the author's supernatural romances, including *Prince Zaleski* (1895) and *The Purple Cloud* (1901). Many of Shiel's stories were set in places that resemble an extraterrestrial Antiguan landscape as well as other worlds like the North Pole and Africa, which sparked his young imagination.

In addition to his writing, Walter also likely knew of Shiel's self-proclaimed (imaginary) role as King of Redonda, a small, uninhabited rocky Caribbean island near Antigua. The author's international profile brought glamor to Antigua, as Shiel was also a friend to the famous, including Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, and Jules Verne. And Shiel's invented kingdom was populated by the so-called Court of Redonda, a facetious society that included Carl Van Vechten, Alfred A. Knopf, Dylan Thomas, and Rebecca West as dukes, dames, and other titled members of his fictitious realm.³³

Walter's formative experiences in reading science fiction no doubt inspired his many scientific interests, which continued throughout his life. When he lived in England as a young adult, he studied cerebral chemistry as a way of trying to self-diagnose hallucinations that were occurring with increased frequency, probably due to poor living conditions and near starvation. During this period, he also took up painting as a kind of cure. His work *Psycho Geometrics* (p. 33) deals with controlling the mind through abstraction.

32 Walter, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, pp. 4277–78.

33 Charlesworth Ross, "The First West Indian Novelist," *Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1968): pp. 56–60.



Fig. 26: *Bowl of Fruit*, n. d.

In 1955, Walter met Ambrose Boothby in the Central Library in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, England, and they enjoyed a yearlong friendship, discussing theories of electromagnetic impulses in the brain and schizophrenia. He explained to Boothby:

I had been prepared to prove that even Insanity and such types as Schizophrenia, is not what we think that it is, although of necessity we are constrained to cage the apparent lunatic, we are confronted with a problem which remains phenomenon for the time being. Schizophrenia I believed was actually a real world of another dimension, into which the conscious mind of an individual is transmitted, so often being of necessity to fight one's way out of brutal assault, often inflicting brutal damage as a defensive action. Surely the Schizophreniac is seeing reality in another dimension, that one is not assisted by in respect of associations, with the afflicted, if the observer is not in contact with that world one's self. The world is not visually conscious to the normal mind, but abnormalcy is not necessarily always undesirable. There is a form of abnormalcy which would soon become a virtue that the whole world is decking for physical economy, and a physical peace to enjoy it in. so I could understand the superstitious although very often the reports of pathological liars, are distortions of what is seen.³⁴

Walter's keen ability to read, write, and think in High German—a skill of unknown origin that was perhaps picked up in German coal mines and libraries—would have made the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) that much more accessible to him. And Walter's incredibly varied artistic practice finds precedent in the long arc of Goethe's career, beginning with his youthful Romantic tendencies and ending with the Weimar Classicism of his maturity.

Goethe began under the umbrella of the Sturm und Drang movement, which burnt its way into the hearts of both English and German poets, including Goethe whilst still in the throes of his tempestuous, unruly youth. After the heady success of his slightly autobiographical epistolary novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774), Goethe opted out of the Romantic siren's grasp, and ended up living in a kind of gentle seclusion, burying himself in the duties of a Minister of State in the Court of Weimar. His final monument, *Stein des guten Glücks* (*The Altar of Good Fortune*, 1777)—a simple sphere set on top of a rectangular block of stone—is a testament to his longing for stability.³⁵

The stability Goethe sought later in life finds a kindred reflection in Walter's scientific explorations into abstraction, which sought to order the natural world. Inspired by the German philosopher's theory of color in *Zur Farbenlehre* (*Theory of Colours*, 1810), Walter experimented with color as a scientist and an aesthete. He left copious notes about the effect of color when mixed with light as well as color in darkness. Oftentimes, color theory morphed into psychologizing on the—real and imagined—pigment of his and his ancestors' skin. These intellectual efforts were often visualized in Walter's abstract paintings, composed of carefully arranged geometric shapes and color choices, remarkably similar to that found in Goethe's paper cut-outs, such as *Bunte und unbunte Flächen für prismatische Versuche* (*Color and Uncolored Forms for a Prismatic Experience*, fig. 27). Walter was energized by the possibilities of using abstract forms to represent scientific concepts. The intricate shapes, patterns, and planes of color in *The Photon* (p. 43) offer a clear example. This painting brings to life a scientific concept that Walter was particularly interested in and spent quite a bit of time studying, reflecting on, and writing about. In expounding on the nature of the photon's existence, he "imagine[d] the distance [he] would have travelled" if he had lived as one:³⁶

Perhaps if I was as superstitious as Einstein seemed to me, I would have decided that I had joined the world of Spirits which he called masses or Photons of light, to be flitting about in Space and Time. As about me the cooling of

34 Walter, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, pp. 1366–67.

35 Heckscher, "Sturm und Drang."

36 Walter, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, p. 3041.

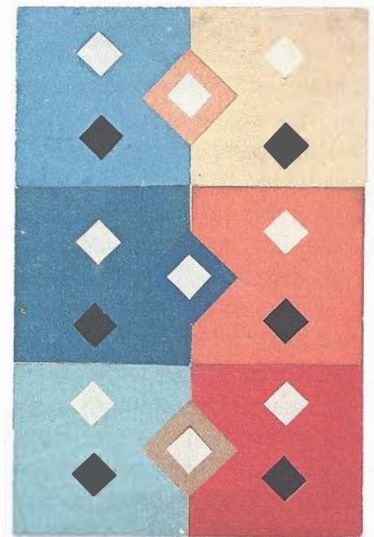


Fig. 27: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Bunte und unbunte Flächen für prismatische Versuche* (Color and Uncolored Forms for a Prismatic Experience), 1791–95

Photons of light as they joined Photo Electrons of Marshland origin, to disappear into Free Electrons, appeared to be a mysterious Phenomenon.³⁷

Walter's interest in the measured world of science and abstraction in this period was perhaps inspired by the many stresses his life of subsistence in Europe as well as his deteriorating mental health brought. *Wavelengths of Light and Heat* (pp. 46–47) and another oil painting of a similar size, *Complex of Life* (fig. 28), were painted by Walter in England in 1960, during a period in Stoke-on-Trent. Having just been released from a nerve hospital, Walter found a bedsit room with John and Betty Paulowski and their four children and enjoyed relative comfort that allowed him to create. In his unpublished autobiographical manuscript, he lists his achievements in visual art, poetry, drama, and prose and notes how he was "dreaming in Oils."³⁸

However, it was in hospitals for persons with nervous disorders in England and in Germany that Walter enjoyed some of his most stimulating conversations, as he engaged with doctors, all of whom were fascinated by the unique brilliance of their patient. They understood that he had a lot of experience with doctors in managing large populations of oftentimes overworked, exhausted people who labored on large sugar plantations. There seemed to be genuine mutual respect and a kind of fascination with Walter as a patient. Likewise, other patients gravitated toward Walter, who developed ideas about the "therapeutic value of music for [his] neurotic European friends."³⁹

After all, as a planter in the West Indies, I had myself been most associated with doctors. I had to employ doctors; or at least very often call doctors to people working on my plantation, where those people had often taken ill. And I since then began to study the many nervous conditions, which can afflict a person. I, nevertheless, had no time to develop those medical theories. Or to research more deeply into those aspects of nervous disorders which bring about a total involution of the human body so often.

I myself know that the stress and strain of life can produce a deteriorating sort of effect upon the human being; the working man, and indeed the European is a hard-working man, intellectually and from the physical, or as they say, the *Körperliche* sort of work — *Körperliche Arbeit*. Whatever sort of work the European is capable of performing, he is indeed overworked and overstrained by the dubious tasks which he imposes upon himself; and which tasks do not bring him entirely the benefits and fortunes which are occurred from them.⁴⁰

Walter's abstract works beg comparison with an abstract pioneer, Swedish artist and mystic Hilma af Klint (1862–1944). Similar to Walter, her artistic practice was a means of exploring her interest in profound spiritual and philosophical ideas, and she too wrote extensively about her art and research interests, including mathematics and botany. Af Klint was drawn to movements like spiritism, which were popular during her era, and she also sought to reach alternate planes of existence. Her work was in part informed by séances held with a group of women who called themselves De Fem (The Five).⁴¹

Af Klint's most profound body of work, *Paintings for the Temple* (1906–15), sought to express the unity and harmony of the nonmaterial world. Her works often appear like diagrams, with geometric shapes, symbols, and colors distilling complex ideas and conveying extensive narrative meanings. Many of Walter's abstract paintings can be read in a similar way, because he also viewed the world through a metaphysical lens, and magical realism was implicit in his work. In *Components of an Atom* (p. 40), for example, clearly articulated shapes and fields of color depict the smallest known component of matter. No doubt a result of Walter's tapping into his television eyes, this painting invites an imaginative departure from the everyday and a reflection on the essential nature of the divine universe.

37 Ibid., p. 1571.

38 Ibid., p. 2796.

39 Walter, "Therapeutic Value of Music."

40 Ibid.

41 For further reading, see Christine Burgin (ed.), *Hilma af Klint: Notes and Methods*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

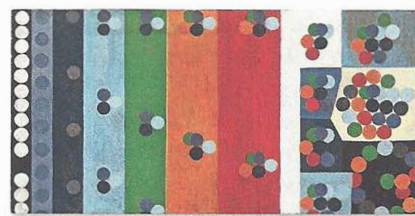


Fig. 28: *Complex of Life*, 1960

Not a single article that I have produced is unimportant. Whether I have failed or succeeded, it takes its place in the catalogue of my works, and there is always an explanation for my failure or success. Each has its period, and its history, no matter how insignificant. I have no fear that of my thousands, I have masterpieces, that shall take their places beside the masterpieces of other Artists in the world.

It would have been blasphemous to ask for more in life, especially when I had asked for what I was getting, and that was at work and in my Bedroom Studio, where creative work came suddenly easy for me.
— Frank Walter, autobiographical manuscript, p. 2816

In 1960 — during Walter’s first prolific period painting abstract works in oil — his world fell apart. Experiencing hallucinations and neurotic episodes, in part as a result of overwork and near starvation, he became obsessed with the royal family. In this fragile state, Walter was rattled by news that Princess Margaret was to marry Antony Armstrong-Jones; and, even worse, they were to honeymoon on the island of Antigua. He felt humiliated, because he believed he was the only appropriate match for the princess, and, in the midst of his nervous breakdown, he went on a journey to Scotland to claim his title to many thrones. As a Romantic, Walter channeled his intense feelings about Princess Margaret’s marriage into his creative work, writing an opera that connects his family tree to the great Odin, founder of “the European Family.”⁴²

When I think of the ancient deity of the Vikings,
And the Germans, and the Saxons,
Think of those men called ‘God’ as men and kings,
Who had to this day sent their bloods to me.⁴³

Walter wrote in detail about his protest march to Scotland on May 5, 1960, to claim his right to marry Princess Margaret. He traveled from Stoke-on-Trent to Melrose Abbey, and he had a mystical experience standing at the tomb of twelfth-century English abbot Saint Waltheof of Melrose (c. 1095–1159), whom he claimed as a noble forebear. Walter experienced the purity of a bygone era in the isolation of the Scottish Lowlands, just as he did on the island of Antigua. For him, these worlds are insulated by time and place and are protected from the contamination of fake modern nobility and their coterie of sycophants. He recounts these experiences in his ballad:

I went to the land where once my ancestors had ruled,
And from whence came they to England.
To assume the crowns and titles of all Britannia,
The Borderlands of Scotland,
Once linked with Northumbria,
In which great Waltheof had linked
The Scottish throne and the English throne,
By the marriage of his daughter Judith,
To the son of Malcolm ‘Canmore.’
David the First had given to this day,
With the bloods of all those ancient ones descended from
no lesser a man than Odin,
The Stuart Dynasty.
Men of great worth descended from the Ancient Roman kings and emperors,
To this said day.
Thus, while the world dressed up in Carnival,
Mock weddings and revelled all night long —
Thus, when the world was drunkened by wine and song,
And the flesh pots of the human profligate were smarting —

- 42 Frank Walter, “Odin, God of the Wind, God of the Sea,” c. 1960, unpublished poem, spoken-voice audio recording on magnetic tape, Walter MSS.
43 Ibid.

I, to the tombs of those great ancient men
 Had gone in pilgrimage.
 For I, as I stand here, am true blood of those men,
 Descended from those very great, great men;
 Hatched though in a new clime,
 In the New World,
 In the Indies,
 The West Indies,
 Where all the fallen houses of Scotland, England, Ireland, and Wales had gone,
 To found new lands and new estates,
 But never forgetting the tradition which their ancestors had brought down
 to them.⁴⁴

44 Ibid.

45 Franz Walthe [Frank Walter], *Sons of Vernon Hill*. New York: Vantage Press, 1987, pp. 426–30.

As a planter and a male heir in his family, Walter saw himself as an aristocratic lord of the land. He was occupied by ancestral musings throughout his life. Genealogical research has proven some of his ideas to be accurate. His branch of the Walter family, in fact, did originate in the Rhine Valley, in small villages to the east of Strasbourg. However, Walter also followed the actual roots of his own family tree into the realm of a kind of delusion and mythology, weaving a constellation of stories and fantastic histories incorporating Western mythologies and European nobility. Walter's extensive genealogical histories associate him with Caesar, Pan, Hermes, and—most significantly—Jupiter, the king of the Roman gods (fig. 29).

The god-kings of Germany, the Thors or Ottos were the Walter, who in the German language were Alte Wahlen or Alte Zahlen who were counts: the Old Counts of Franconia meaning the Franks or Franz who own here. The Frankish Counts who own the reich [...]. The Frank is Volk Walter (Francis Walter). This is like a sentence passed in a certain house in Catholic legitimacy, since before the birth of Christ on an infant lying on a cot with the genital organs of a male.

In the Far West, the African was the southerner, and the Europeans were representative of the black tribes of African (Negroes today) and the fair tribes of Europe; at the time of the Frankish explorations of an unpopulated proportion of the planet unexplored before the sons of Francis Walter as the demigod Pan came to be, after he succeeded to the throne of Jupiter. His father Hermes became the messenger god; or the minister of communications. Such offices were controlled by succession in blood primogeniture, and honor.⁴⁵



Fig. 29: *Dipsomaniac*, n. d.

Walter's abstract painting *Intergalactic Botany* (fig. 30) illustrates his central place in his own mythologies as successor to the throne of Jupiter, which he has positioned on the eponymous planet in outer space—a concept fully articulated in his untitled opera about a Jupiterian wedding. Drawing on his keen interest in botany and horticulture, Walter's composition features a bud about to burst into blossom, with small spacecrafts flying around as if pollinating the flower. At its most essential, this painting captures the right of inheritance and the new life that each generation brings forth in the continuing familial cycle of birth and death.

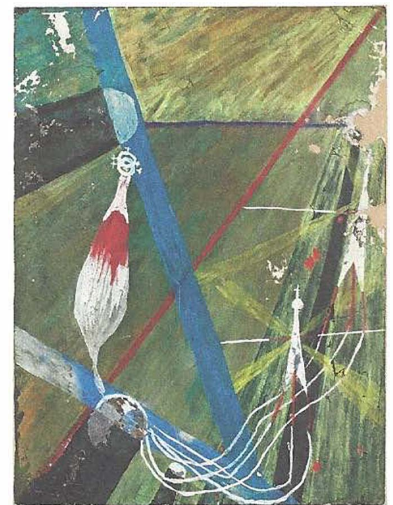


Fig. 30: *Intergalactic Botany*, n. d.

The Jupiterian Opera

When Walter looked into the enveloping darkness of nighttime, he was able to conjure fantastic landscapes informed by his own experiences and memories. He also spent time gazing upwards at the constellations and planets that became visible in the night sky, and his imagination was sparked by the grand mysteries of the universe. In his series of paintings of the Milky Way galaxy (pp. 7, 10–13),

Walter pays tribute to his fascination with Jupiter—the intriguing far-off planet that was the central theme in his Jupiterian mythology.

Walter's Jupiterian mythology takes center stage in the only known opera composition to be recorded by the artist in a private, one-man performance.⁴⁶ In the untitled work, Frank Walter takes on the role of the philosopher prince, and he begins the recording with a long harmonica solo before introducing the plot, which involves his character being jilted by an Earth princess before finding his rewards on an intergalactic stage in Act Three. The audience is told that after centuries of inbreeding, the Jupiterian court is beginning to suffer. The ruler is searching for an appropriate suitor for his daughter to remedy the situation. Walter establishes Cologne on the Rhine as the birthplace of the Jupiterian dynasty, and he takes the listener on a journey to Jupiter with excursions back to England and Europe on Earth.

There is a striking undercurrent of the plausible balanced by the fantastic—a common thread throughout Walter's oeuvre. Act One begins with a long solo ballad about dancing with the love of his life under the stars. It segues into another original song, "I'll Steal You Away to the Moon." This musical interlude is followed by a cautionary tale: A young princess from Earth is supposed to marry a prince (Charles II, privily known as Francis Walter), but she has fallen in love with a penniless handsome troubadour of humble birth. While the princess admires the prince for his genius and elevated principles, she cannot fall in love with him, because he fails to "make her heart tick at all." She proclaims her love for the troubadour, because he "has no brain" and she can "twirl [him] about [her] finger":

The prince whom I should wed is always thinking out new philosophies,
And that would make me sad.
I couldn't think of it at all,
But you are so gay all day long.
You have no brain at all and that's the thing I love about you,
Because you are just, just, just the thing
I can twirl about my finger.
You could never make a king,
And that's the thing I like about you fairly well!⁴⁷

In a chance encounter in a pastoral English glade, the prince happens upon the troubadour flirting with the princess, his betrothed. The stoic prince of noble birth embodies Socratic justice as he sets aside protocol and the betrothal contract to condone the marriage between the commoner troubadour and the princess. In doing so, he states that England is the only kingdom on Earth where such a union can work. In his surprise and apparent lack of ego or jealousy, the prince proclaims his happiness at meeting the young couple, which is mismatched but clearly deeply in love:

Good afternoon you lovers!
You eccentric lovers!
Ah, what are you doing now?
You seem to wander like a frightened mouse,
Each time I open up to say, your hand.
But let me see, you could be fair if I should make you fair.
And I'm an artist,
I have no care if I must tell the truth.
But I know that one day I shall see something in you,
That I shall make in paint to be a most exotic hue.
But perhaps in paint and canvas I shall fall in love with you.
But then you are too green and young,
And I am too gay,

46 Frank Walter, untitled, performative audio recording of Jupiterian opera (c. 1960) on magnetic tape, Walter MSS.

47 *Ibid.*

Not gay,
 I am too right, too right respectful it seems.
 You prefer a jocund guy.
 Oh, oh, oh.
 Though when I'm old I may see you there,
 I may say if I knew, I would pluck her as she was fair.
 But I might too have someone fair,
 when I am old — hmmm, fair thought too!
 So, I should give my blessings to you.
 I wouldn't give a thought that you could wish to marry me,
 Though you may try to think it out, I wish always to be free.
 Ta ta!⁴⁸

48 Ibid.

49 John Akomfrah, "John Akomfrah in Conversation with Gary Carrion-Murayari (June 20, 2018)," New Museum, New York (video), online <https://archive.newmuseum.org/videos/14353>, accessed February 17, 2020.

50 Akomfrah quoted from Frieling, "Artist Salon: John Akomfrah."

51 Jules Walter, in discussion with Barbara Paca, February 3, 2020.

The troubadour in Walter's opera originates in the medieval European tradition of the traveling performer who composed clever lyric poems or songs on subjects such as chivalry and courtly love. Despite its medieval origins, the figure of the troubadour can be seen as having key Romantic traits. Artist John Akomfrah explains that the itinerant-troubadour character possesses the "kind of yearnings" found in the German Romantics which led them to rebel against social norms. He equates their view of the world with justice and sees them as sharing in the emancipatory leanings of Romantic writers and philosophers.⁴⁹

Walter plays the role of the noble prince in his opera, but the troubadour perhaps shares more similarities with Walter's life experience as composer, artist, and philosopher. Moreover, as Akomfrah points out, the troubadour provides a useful allegory for Black identity, which contains a multitude of complexities and has evolved over many migrations.

Things are arrived at indirectly [...]. One of the devices of the allegorical is the oblique [...]. If you see three screens filled with butterflies, in part, they are just that. But they are also the notion of migration that underpins that flight.

One of the truisms of black or diasporic studies [...] is the idea that, somehow, in the course of the passage from, for instance, the west coast of Africa to the New World, a new figure emerges. They're on their way in flight elsewhere and that 'elsewhere' will bind tribes and people. Everyone gets bound together as a 'Negro' [...]. Those kinds of transformations are not simply [...] pejorative or the luxury of our species.⁵⁰

Before Act Two begins, Walter plays a harmonica solo that is over eight minutes long. Act Two is brief, and Walter continues to time travel through the cosmos in search of his celestial bride. This is followed by a fourteen-minute guitar and voice solo, which combines early Roman Catholic chants with the Ashanti Obeah humming he would have heard from his grandmother and maiden aunts during his childhood in Antigua. The complex vibrations and deep tonal qualities and rhythm of the music are rooted in Africa. It also weaves in European liturgical music that was drawn from his childhood at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in St. John's as well as his visits to all the great cathedrals in Europe. Walter spent a great deal of time in cathedrals and churches in Germany, where he would have encountered the music of Hildegard von Bingen, the influential German polymath whom Walter may have based his own visionary Hildegard upon. Walter was fluent in drawing from layered identities and influences in his creative practice, and it is no wonder that he was able to merge musical traditions in such a profound manner.⁵¹

In Act Three, justice finally prevails, and the prince is rewarded after overcoming many obstacles. Following another long harmonica solo that Walter describes as representing the heavenly Music of the Spheres, we are on Jupiter where the King of Jupiter worries about finding an appropriate suitor for his daughter, Princess Astrid. The list of eligible princes on Jupiter amounts to little

after centuries of inbreeding, and the king has to look beyond his own planet. After an exhaustive search, finally the king selects Frank Walter, publicly known as Charles II among other illustrious names.

The wedding ceremony takes place in a variety of locations, including the sky, Hyde Park, and Westminster Abbey, where Walter was able to correct the great injustice of not marrying Princess Margaret through the imaginative act of artmaking. The romance between Frank Walter and Princess Astrid is set in a kind of galactic pastoral idyll, and Walter describes how her ladies-in-waiting are clad in fine silk and look like beautiful swans as they glide up the aisle for the matrimonial ceremony.

Following a guitar solo, Walter brings his listeners into the world of the Jupiterian princess. She and her ladies-in-waiting visit Earth in their "astro-cruisers" and find the wild landscapes there enchanting.

As with Walter's many other interests, outer space and life on other planets are explored across mediums, including painting and sculpture. We see a study for the Jupiterian adventures in his painting *Moon Voyage* (c. 1994, pp. 14–15), and his wood-and-paint rocket sculpture (c. 1994, p. 305) is a prototype for the space-ships of his Jupiterian opera.

As troubadour and artist, Walter time traveled from life on distant planets, to European landscapes, and back again. As a kind of creative compensation for the discrimination he faced in Europe and the hardships he experienced, Walter's diverse interests and universalism take on added meaning. His vast knowledge and abilities in art, politics, science, philosophy, history, and spirituality meant he was capable of assessing life's many complexities, from ecosystems to treatises. In truth, Walter's ability was forged in spite of—and in response to—the unjust world in which he lived. Challenged by the bleak realities of postcolonial racism, he was able to apply the emotional pain and disillusionment from these experiences to his artmaking (see pp. 18, 187).

The Spool Series

In 1965, Walter took a break from Mount Olympus, his parcel of land in Dominica, to board the ship *Tu Ascania* on a circuitous journey to England. However, he suffered a mental breakdown on May 4, the day before they docked in Southampton. As a result, he was not allowed to enter the United Kingdom, and was incarcerated onboard the ship.

Walter experienced hallucinations from the window of his cabin during his imprisonment. He vividly recounts interacting through the porthole with a maritime world populated by Neptune and sea monsters. In later writings about this experience, he recalls the ship's oculus becoming a portal into another world known only to him:

I was terribly annoyed because I could not find my usual place in the room to sit like King Neptune, with the children all struggling to get closest to me. [...] [Walter argues with men working on the ship:]

'I am Neptune King of the Seas and the Oceans!' I shouted through the glass into the ocean.

'Madman!' shouted the man.

'Would you like to see?' I asked full of humour.

'What can he do?' asked the man.

'I can raise the winds, I can disturb the seas and the oceans, I can sink the ship!' I shouted tearing at my hairs, holding my head close to the glass. I must confess, that I had entered into a form of spirit composition. When I stared through the glass after the window was closed by the man I believe, as a hand passed from behind my back to close the porthole, after a few passengers had

entered the room only to be asked to leave likewise; I could see I imagine a great green Dolphin being ridden by a man dressed in an armour of scaly green material bearing a trident. The figure rose twice to the level of my face looking into the sea through the glass of the porthole, as if it was policing the vessel to safety in pancake ocean, which we enjoyed from Antigua until this point in the Atlantic Ocean when we were approaching the coastline of Europe.

The figure smiled, raised its trident, and disappeared below the porthole to rise again, and repeat its greeting. It was then spontaneously when asked what I could do, and who I thought that I was, I had fancied myself the man on the Dolphin, riding the waves. Somehow I felt one in being with the waves, when I beat my breast and shouted what I said dramatically. As I stood there with my eyes closed, and my spirit way off from my reach, and as I opened my eyes again to peer into the grey-green water. It was of course, a mighty giant wave, as if sent by Neptune himself to authenticate my dramatic exposition of Greek Mythology. Neptune had hurled a wave to me to qualify my boast. The vessel staggered and trembled. The men were unbalanced, and all persons in the room scampered in terror.

‘Now you see that I am Neptune?’ I turned to the unbalanced sailors to ask. I brushed my ass and walked away disdainfully. In rushed other sailors with ropes to tie down the furnitures as they skated from right to left of the vessel. The room was then no happy place to be in. In that room many a passenger found his delight or her delight, in the company of one who formerly seemed to be as mirthful as Pan, now turned Neptune Angry. Indeed, as Francis Nepomuk, which is Frank Walter, Pan had arisen to the stardom of mirth, playing the tune of Nepomuk. Perhaps it was then that the mirth of Pan was destined to change to the wrath of Neptune unchained, but I suppose that the ropes would have done well to harness the furniture dancing in the billow buffeted ship. [...] Halfway up the passage from my cabin, as I ventured to explore the *Ascania* on the restless sea, past midnight [...] I found it impossible myself to venture further [...] I returned to my cabin, rested on my bunk, as much as the billows would permit me to rest, then I scribbled the motifs for a Symphony of the angry ocean, on the wall of the cabin at the back of my bunk. At first I tried a Sonata, but nothing and nobody could be induced to sleep by any method on such a rowdy ocean.

At about One-o-clock in the early morning I heard a scream, and many a scream of wind, and the sounds of buffeting against the ship’s hull, as if something terrible was trying to crack the hull open to get us. To me it was Neptune warning all that they should honour me, because of my excellence in all things, but I must confess that to those who are not so excellent in travels by way of the Oceans, it must have been horrible [...]. I felt nevertheless a certain thrill of inner safety, as if I was promised that I would be kept alive to ride the Dolphin.⁵²

Later in life, Walter created a series of small, round oil paintings, which, like the visions he had seen through the ship’s porthole or the television screens of his mind’s eye, offer an intimate, focused view of the artist’s utterly original world (see pp. 138, 149). The circular supports of his series of spools are handmade cut-outs from everyday materials, including linoleum, biocomposite material, and an asphalt roofing tile. Each resembles at once a lens, an oculus, and even the pupil of a human eye. In their completeness as a group, the series brings together all the elements of Walter’s universe, with each painting fitting together in dynamic groupings to provide an investigation into the workings of Walter’s mind.

Walter’s use of a round format is a distinct choice loaded with symbolism. Like the whirling mechanics of a fine watch or the striking image of the carriage wheels that open and close Gogol’s epic work *Dead Souls* (1842), circles repre-

sent the cyclical, infinite nature of existence. Historically, circles have also represented perfection, wholeness, and unity. From the age of Pythagoras (around 600 BCE) to the time of Copernicus (1473–1543 CE), the Ptolemaic concept of the cosmos was widely accepted. In this theory, the universe was believed to be “finite and harmonious” with Earth at its center. It existed as “a series of concentric spheres,” with each sphere containing a heavenly body.⁵³ The Music of the Spheres originates in the interrelationship of these celestial orbs:

The idea [of the Music of the Spheres] derives from Pythagoras via Plato. The Pythagorean cosmos posited a correlation between musical intervals and the intervals between the planetary spheres, both of which can be expressed as mathematical ratios. This correlation originated from and caused the harmony of the universe [...]. This [celestial] harmony, though inaudible, could be transmitted by a sort of osmosis to the human soul by mean[s] of music [...]. Because of its likeness to the sound of the heavens or perfect harmony, music was conducive to harmony in all who heard it.⁵⁴

The idea that the heavenly Music of the Spheres inspires harmonious compositions and transcendent auditory experiences informed not only Walter’s musical scores, but also his work across a variety of mediums. To borrow the words he uses to introduce an interlude of music in his Jupiterian opera, for Walter, “Variety comes with the never-ending Music of the Spheres.” Throughout his artistic practice, Walter, in effect, is striking a balance between the universe’s larger patterns and the smaller details of lived experience. And throughout, his search for harmony consciously harnesses the therapeutic value of the arts.

Walter’s more than 200 studies of flora and fauna are a significant part of his series of spools (see pp. 123, 128; figs 31–34). Composed on round supports—as if for view under a microscope to study—they reveal Walter’s intense interest in the familiar flora and fauna of his surrounding environment. However, more than straightforward observations of the natural world, his interest in flora and fauna was also associated with his visions and richly imaginative interior life (see pp. 120–22, 150–51, 155–56).

Like Gogol’s protagonist Aksenty Poprishchin in *Diary of a Madman* (1835), Walter’s connection with animals can be seen as a self-created refuge from the isolation of his private obsessions, including those of his aristocratic lineage. Gogol’s Poprishchin imagined that he read the correspondence between Medji, the lap dog of Sophie, his boss’s daughter whom he worshipped from afar, and another dog, Fidèle. Similarly, Walter felt privy to a psychic connection with the dogs taking part in the dog races, which became an important pastime for him (see p. 154; fig. 35). By the summer of 1960, Walter was disappointed with himself and people’s racist attitudes toward him. He was often in trouble, having disputes with neighbors and the police in England, and he contemplated making Germany his permanent home:

Overnight I was forced into becoming a more serious man, and I longed to be back in Germany, strangely enough, and not in the Caribbean. Somehow, I had fixed it in my mind, that Germany is my home, if it can’t be the U.K.⁵⁵

Horses have a different approach to telling whether they believe that they are going to win than dogs. Dogs tip by their tails and ears, while horses use their bodies. In many cases the horses that bury their heads, and bow their bodies, throwing their legs forward in a digging action, with or without their jockeys, are already on the go in their minds. They only need the jockey to sit tightly and correctly. That horse that wastes its energy bucking or railing, or trembling, is likely to be all too nervy to win a race.

I had come more and more to realize that people do not need a cause to pick a quarrel. People are as unpredictable as rain storms used to be. The

53 Victoria Rothschild, “The Music of the Spheres,” in George Rylands, *Rylands*. London: Stourton Press, 1988, pp. 61–64.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63.

55 Walter, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, p. 3034.



Fig. 31: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 32: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 33: *Untitled*, n. d.

smiling friend is most likely to become in a split second the most terrible aggressor. Some foolish thing said or done, being corrected, could well be the cause of the most deadly feud.⁵⁶

Walter believed that he descended from Charles II of England. In the throes of his delusions, he often became convinced that he was, in fact, Charles II, and he believed his love of dogs originated in royal tradition:

I belong to a breed who kept packs of hounds in their bedrooms. It was said that Charles II [Frank Walter] suffered himself by keeping a lot of pedigreed dogs in his bedroom, that made his sleeping quarters so offensive, that the ladies sniffed when they had to visit him there. But they were expensive dogs that he did not want to part with even in his sleep. Perhaps Charles could have kept his dogs in Golden Kennels but it suited him to make his own bedroom a Kennel. Only a Walter from my line may really ever understand, that for some good, with the most opulent and colourfully artistic frontage, and with the finest guests in our entertainment quarters, we would still with the fullest contentment retreat to the meanest stack of straw or even a dog's kennel to sleep in peace, for even a dog might very often be more faithful and safe to sleep with than an apparently trusted friend.⁵⁷

This is why my type of face is inherently remembered on the Atlantic Coast of Spain and Portugal. I had been so often told by English Students how much I resemble three particular Stuart Kings of Great Britain. James I who as James VI King of Scotland founded the Union in 1603, his son Charles I, and his Grandson, Charles II [...]. I too possess that keen taste for Mathematics, and Chemistry, the love of Dogs, and an almost inseparable relationship with all women with whom I have been associated. In the Twentieth Century, I am able to control my sensual emotions, so I do not have to repeat the errors of my forefather, whose error was really due to the age and not to his personality.⁵⁸

The Past: Real and Imagined

Since I turned over the Trunk to the Porter at Genova, until I received it at the custom at Bridgetown, my gravest concern was about my trunk [...]. After all, the trunk contained my personality, covering centuries of civilization.
— Frank Walter, autobiographical manuscript, p. 3669

Walter's ancestral heritage was one of the most significant and defining aspects of his life. Real and imagined genealogical concerns informed his identity and directed his passions, occupying his written works and artistic practice. Because of his ancestry's omnipresence in his life, it makes sense that it was also a key part of his own Jungian theories about the subconscious and conscious mind. Walter regularly practiced "retrieving [his] ancestral spirits" through his subconscious in order to "mentally embod[y]" these spirits and access their memories through his conscious mind.⁵⁹

One might [...] be fortunate to pass genealogically back from one's own self and time, into one's progenitors, consecutively covering millennia, so retrieving ancestral spirits, even momentarily, to be mentally embodied within our own brains long enough to be photographed as memory so that the content of a dream, with its psychic contents, can possibly be replayed from the memory bank in a more conscious state of mind. The conscious mind itself holds not a suitable premise for dreaming or being sensitive to psychic Phenomena.

56 Ibid., p. 3043.

57 Ibid., p. 5463.

58 Ibid., p. 4827.

59 Franz Walthe [Frank Walter], "A Psychic Letter," unpublished essay (September 1989), pp. 9, 2, respectively, Walter MSS.



Fig. 34: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 35: *Untitled*, n. d.

What the conscious mind becomes aware of, relative to dream contents or visions or vivid drama, had to have been fabricated in the subconscious state of mind before it can be replayed as memory. To this effect, the conscious person, in order to dream, must necessarily resort to subconsciousness.⁶⁰

60 Ibid., pp. 9–10.

61 Walthe [Walter], *Sons of Vernon Hill*, p. 101.

62 Ibid., p. 261.

63 Ibid.

Walter's artistic practice was fueled by his very personal and long-held interest in genealogy. In *The Tombstone and the House* (p. 132), mourners participate in a funeral procession, many with their heads bowed. Symbolically, the gaunt figures echo the tree in both color and form. Upon closer inspection, the tombs in the foreground resemble houses. The unmistakable iconography—a passing line of people, a multi-branched tree, tombs, and houses—embodies the progression of family through time and the inheritance passed from one generation to the next. Walter's belief that the significance of one's ancestry was embodied in the tombstone and in the house is brought to life in this painting. These symbols represent the cyclical forces that define and protect a family, and, if nurtured and examined, survive as familial emblems.

Walter's ancestry was a very real part of his everyday life, and it was the catalyst for his moving to Europe as a young man. Driven by the private knowledge of his European heritage, Walter dedicated his attention to this subject and wrote extensively about it.

I am proud to have succeeded my ancestors who planted and managed these estates. In 1953, I travelled to the United Kingdom, and continental European countries, to return to my birthplace in 1961.

In Europe I saw the portraits of my forefathers painted by the greatest masters of history; read the biographies, and searched the state papers. I visited the graveyards, and the places familiar to me since my grandparents told me family history for bedtime stories. The names of the countries, cities, towns, villages, estates, and streets are all there. The civilized counterpart greeted and welcomed me. I have left nothing out.

This is the only mirror that I look into; I see my historical profile, no different for the centuries of changes in a new climate matrix. They are nobody else; they are I myself.⁶¹

When Walter's interest in his genealogy moved into the realm of the fantastic, he frequently imagined that Charles II of England (1630–85) was privately known as Frank Walter (see *Bust of Frank Walter as Charles II*, p. 284). Walter believed in the family myth that Lucy Walter (c. 1630–58), mother of the English king's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth (1649–85), was an ancestress to the Antiguan Walters, and he entertained the notion that the rumored secret marriage between Charles II and Lucy Walter occurred to protect them from "Puritan intrigues."⁶² He also believed that their son James was concealed on the island of Antigua at age fourteen. According to Walter, the duke was given the alias of Francis Wentworth Walter, and he lived as an artist. The duke led a reclusive life, concealed from the general public, and with little interest as to the governance of Antigua. Walter presents him in a contradictory way, describing him as both a "recluse" and a "quite popular person."⁶³

The Campbells were known as the red foxes of Scotland; the Douglasses were known, some of them to be black, others white, others red [...]. When they were black, they were just black. They did not automatically lose power. When they were white, they did not lose power either [...]. There was no frustration about complexions. Mankind was not as savage as today, touching upon cannibalism now.

—Franz Walthe [Frank Walter], *Sons of Vernon Hill*, p. 294

It is believed that Frank Walter created over 500 pieces of sculpture during his time on the island of Dominica. Having cleared many trees on the land, he created a network of kilns to turn the wood into charcoal, which he sold in the nearby city of Portsmouth. During evenings spent by the fire, he occupied himself by carving an array of mahogany and acacia sculptures, including Antiguan men and women, animals, ancient Arawaks, and men from outer space. Most of the carved figures represent European royalty and nobility, forming a sort of three-dimensional family tree (see p. 279, right and second from right; figs 36–38). Believing he had a psychic connection with the figures, Walter kept them close, carefully arranging their display in his home in a manner that he felt would protect him.

- 64 Frank Walter, "On Art: A Painter's Feeling," unpublished poem, August 1–4, 1994, Walter MSS.
 65 "The Artist's Exposition" and "The Artist's Episode," Walter MSS.

Epilogue

In a kind of reverie, Frank Walter and I discussed at length the kind of exhibition he envisioned and the way he hoped others would see his artwork. He consistently described the way people would move through a light-filled gallery with flat objects on the walls and three-dimensional objects in the center of the space, creating dynamic movement and flow. This choreographed journey through his entire oeuvre was intended to convey the sheer breadth of his work in a variety of mediums and categories. He intended the experience to have an emotional and physical impact on his audience, which he describes in his poem, "On Art: A Painter's Feeling:"

If my soul should ask me,
 'What makes you feel so comfortable?'
 I would answer the question positively,
 'I am very certain, it is the tableau.'

In my mind's eyes I behold a crowd,
 Feasting silently upon my artistry.
 Silent and fixed against a wall, there endowed
 With the virtue to appreciate just what they see.

Silently, silently, they stand awe stricken,
 Almost frozen to the ground.⁶⁴

In 1973, Walter embarked on a one-man marketing campaign, writing letters in hopes of staging an exhibition. He chose European locations with personal meaning for his proposed show, including a coal mine, a cruise ship, and a psychiatric institution, as well as various youth hostels. He made detailed plans for these exhibitions in two key undated documents titled "The Artist's Exposition" and "The Artist's Episode."⁶⁵ In these outlines, he carefully details a program in three "episodes" that would demonstrate his diverse artistic practice as a poet, author, actor, composer, vocalist, and painter.

Walter's exhibition program begins with a selection of his written compositions at precisely 8:30 p.m. He planned to recite five poems, including "My Dog Warwick" (read on the BBC World Service radio program *Caribbean Voices* in 1954) and poems about cricket, hurricanes, and love, as well as a piece in dialect about slavery. He also intended to recite a play titled "Old Man International" as well as an excerpt from an autobiographical prose piece, "What Glory Shines." At 9 p.m., Walter's planned program segues into musical performances with original works in English, Spanish, and German. The performance includes calypso, pop guitar, bolero, and classical opera. It also features *Deutschland und der Rhein*, his only site-specific musical composition about the Rhine region in Germany.

After allowing his audience a fifteen-minute intermission, Walter completes the evening with a forty-five-minute presentation about his visual art. The outline



Fig. 36: *Untitled*, n. d.



Fig. 37: *Untitled*, n. d.

reveals the psychological and aesthetic motivations for his work in seven categories: Landscape, Portraiture, Galactic, Sign Writing, Heraldic, Abstract, and Scientific.

Walter's landscape presentation features a discussion on "Perspectives," "Light and Shadow," "Colourmetry in general," and "morphology of Pigments." This category is followed by portraiture, with its subcategories of "Geometrics," "Expressions," "Basic attitudes," and "Pigments." The third group, "Galactic," is a deep dive into "astrophysical mathematical concepts," "reason for specific colours," and "painting galactic subjects." "Sign Writing," the fourth group, represents the "various purposes for signs, and the relative Psychology of sign advertisement," as well as the "Effect of Colour schemes, on masses." The fifth category, "Heraldic Paintings. Shields, Coats, and Arms," updates a historical tradition by exploring "Colours and their effect on our present society." In "Abstract," the sixth category, Walter plans the most personal and revealing aspect of his lecture: "the understanding of the artist's feelings and visions" as well as the "Study of the invisible made Aesthetic by [the] Artist's efforts." The final category, "Scientific," covers the "Story of Time Matter, Energy, and Mathematics in Colour and Form."

Art was his anodyne, and Walter hoped that it would also inspire others as "some elixir which had been free for the seeing—healthier than an opiate could draw."⁶⁶ The artist's ultimate desire was to affect his audience in a positive way, lifting even the most melancholic and societally bereft to a higher level of being.

Art is a festival in which a narrative is told.
It makes its drama constantly; and speaks
In human flesh, the actor ever bold,
On canvas, wood or paper, an audience it seeks.

Cold stone or clay or wood or metal.
The sculptor writes to some endearment
Of those who inevitably upon the scenes do call,
Even when rude and vulgar lips comment.

Just what one sees is what one sees,
And seeing art is also having it and hearing it.
Someone by nothing is not prone to find an ease,
Nothing is seeing something yet not having a bit.

Seeing a work of art is already having:
Some are spontaneously cured, of some depression
Of aches and pains and many another hurting.
Even an introvert does Art extoll with passion.

Hungry in wonderment spectators sit.
Whether to watch the works of dwellers in caves,
Art is to all the civil and instructor's credit.
The human mind for entertainment craves.

We are all connoisseurs of art at any stage,
Pacified by art whether young or old.
Art is a teacher, adding much to knowledge,
The comforter of the soul, when life grows cold.

— Frank Walter, "What Art Is," unpublished poem



Fig. 38: *Untitled (Self-Portrait with Dog)*, n. d.



Biography

1926

Frank Walter (Francis Archibald Wentworth Walter) is born on September 11, 1926 in Liberta on Antigua, a Caribbean island in the Lesser Antilles group.

Antigua was colonized in 1632 by the British Navy and formally annexed as a British colony in 1667. Sugar took over from tobacco as the most important commodity. The plantation economy, which was based on slavery and exploitation, developed into the most important economic sector. In 1860, Antigua and Barbuda were united.

1939–44

Frank Walter attends the Antigua Grammar School, where he achieves excellent grades, especially in the subjects Latin, modern foreign languages, and history.

1946–48

Walter gains extensive knowledge of the sugar industry by taking on various roles in production and administration. He also attends a state-funded training course at an Antigua agricultural institute.

1948

At the age of twenty-two, he becomes a manager at the Antigua Sugar Syndicate. He is the first person of color to secure a management role in the Antigua sugar industry. Moreover, he achieves social recognition through his introduction of more modern methods of cultivating and processing sugar and his efforts to reduce social exploitation and racial inequality. Although he is offered the chance to become managing director of the Antigua Sugar Syndicate, in 1953 he decides to take an educational tour of Europe in order to realize his notion of comprehensive modernization. The trip is scheduled to last ten years. A further aim of the journey is to research his family tree; the ancestors of one branch of his family came from the town of Markgröningen, near Stuttgart in Germany. Throughout his life, he conducts extensive genealogical research into his family's history.

1953

Frank Walter travels to England via France and Italy with his cousin Eileen Gallwey. Upon their arrival, her uncle Carl Walter, who lives in London, makes it clear that he disapproves of an association between the two. In light of the racism virulent in Europe, he views Frank Walter as an obstacle to Eileen Gallwey's career.

From September 1953 onwards, Walter is based mainly in England and Scotland. London, Leeds, and Stoke-on-Trent in the English Midlands region are among the locations he frequents most often. He lives in a series of short-term accommodation, and works mainly as an unskilled laborer in the mining and industrial sectors. In addition to his work, he conducts scientific and technological studies. In Stoke-on-Trent, he takes courses at several colleges and is a frequent visitor at public libraries. During this period, he produces philosophical texts, literary works, and a history of Antigua, as well poems, drawings, and paintings.

1957/58

Frank Walter goes to West Germany for an extended stay from November 1957 to February 1958. He visits Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Bonn, meeting up with friends and acquaintances from a previous travel. In Gelsenkirchen, he works in a colliery operated by Mannesmann.

1959

On Christmas Day 1959, Walter goes to Cologne and Düsseldorf once more for a brief visit. He reports having hallucinations. On December 27, 1959, he travels via Gelsenkirchen to Ostend and from there on to London. The hallucinations he describes experiencing lead to repeated short-stay admissions in clinics and psychiatric treatments.

1961

For years, Walter takes note of the racist attacks to which he is permanently exposed. This racism combined with his precarious economic situation motivates him to return to Antigua in 1961. He writes extensive diary entries about his journey back home via France, Switzerland, Italy, and Venezuela.

Upon his return, he realizes that his home island has become less reliant on agriculture than on tourism, and so he decides to settle on Dominica. He is assigned ten hectares of state-owned land, which he plows in order to make it suitable for agricultural use. Although he sets up a successful facility for producing charcoal, after five years the land is confiscated. In addition to his preoccupation with painting, poetry, and music, it is during this period that Walter starts sculpting wood.

1967

Walter returns to Antigua. According to the terms of the 1967 West Indies Act, Antigua becomes an Associated State, which means it is self-governing for internal affairs but controlled by Great Britain for matters of external policy and defense.

1968

At a constituent meeting, complete with manifesto in 1968, Frank Walter sets up the Antigua and Barbuda National Democratic Party. In 1971, he stands for election as prime minister, although his cousin George Herbert Walter of the Progressive Labour Movement ultimately wins.

From now on Walter lives at various locations in and around St. John's, the capital of Antigua and Barbuda.

1970

From 1970 onwards, he manages the family's ironmonger store. In addition to this he works incessantly on his artistic and literary output, including his sole published book *Sons of Vernon Hill* (New York: Vantage Press), which appears in 1987 under the pseudonym Franz Walthe.

1973

Frank Walter devises extensive exhibitions of his artwork, which also pursue educational objectives. He contacts the National Coal Board and ministries in Great Britain, the West German youth hostel association, as well as other companies and organizations in order to interest them in his exhibition projects.

1974

In 1974, Frank Walter registers the company Walando-Angol-PanEuro Arts and Crafts Productions. He plans to open a gallery under this name in England, which will provide a forum for the display and representation of his work.

1975–84

He looks after his uncle Stanley Walter until the latter's death in 1984; during the daytime, he works in the ironmonger store and as a photographer for the Press Photo Service. Evenings and nights are reserved for his artistic activities. After his uncle dies, he is forced to give up the store.

1981

Antigua and Barbuda achieve full independence.

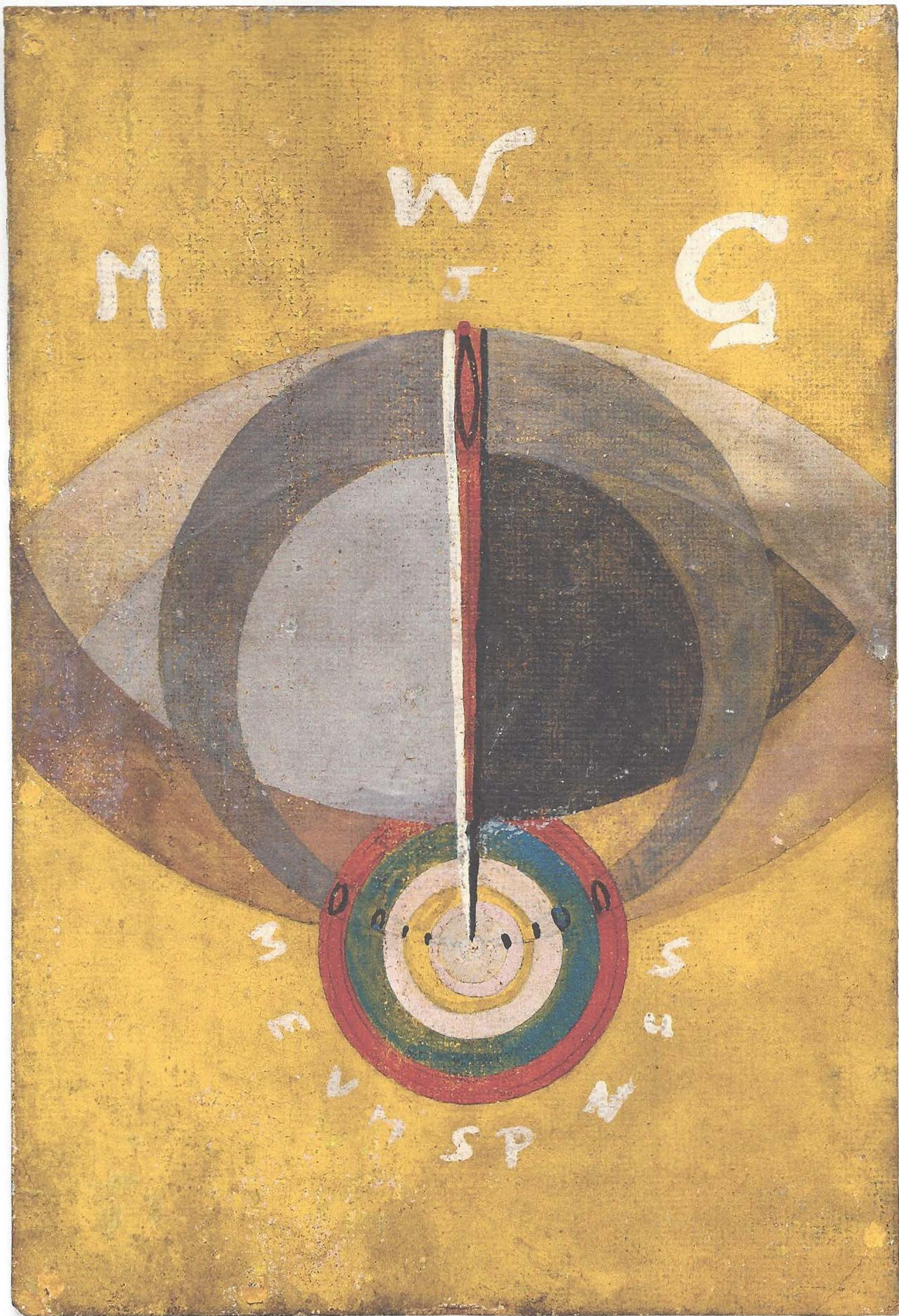
1992

After a legal dispute, he loses the house in St. John's where he has regularly lived since his childhood.

1993–2009

On a secluded property outside the town of Liberta he builds a house and studio, where he lives and works until his death on February 11, 2009.

By the end of his life, he has produced around 5,000 paintings and 600 wooden sculptures, numerous hand-made wooden toys, painted picture frames, and photos. Frank Walter also leaves over 50,000 pages of prose and poetry, and plays, texts on history, philosophy, politics, genealogy, and art, as well as more than 450 hours of audio recordings.



THE ARTIST'S EXPOSITION.

BY
FRANCIS A. W. WALTER. (FRANK)

Poet, Author, Actor, Composer, Vocalist & Painter.

A Three Episode Concert.

Episode I. 8.30 pm.***- 9.00. pm. Reading Poetry,
& Prose, written, and composed by myself.

1. "GRICHET LOVELY GRICHET." (Poetry.)
 2. "IX DOG WARWICK." "
 3. "PRINCE HURRICANE." "
 4. "A SONG TO LOVE." "
 5. "WHAT IS A SPINSTER HUSBAND?" (Dialect.)
 6. "A Scene from OLD MAN INTERNATIONAL.
(A Play.)
 7. An Excerpt from prose "What Glory Shines?"
- *** *****

Episode 2. 9.00 pm-- 9.50. pm. Music: Vocal, Guitar,
& Harmonica. Words and Music written
by myself.

1. "SWEET WORDS." (Guitar-Guitar accom.)
2. "WAVE YOU COME AND GOIN' WITH ME" "
3. "SWEET AND SO LONESOME" (Piano-Guitar)
4. "THE BEST THING IS LIFE" "
5. "OH YEAH" (Glas. & B. Minor. Guitar in
A. & Balero.
6. "LAND OF OUR FOREFATHERS." (A Classic
Opera (adapted from a Symphony in E flat
Major with Guitar set in C.)
7. "Deutschland an der Rhein" from a Harmonica
Symphony in E flat Major. (Harmonica)

See net in G.

EPISODES. 9.30--10.15.

Episode 1. 9.45--10.30. Exhibition & Explanation of Art.

1. Landscapes.

2. Portraits.

3. Galactic.

4. Sign Writing.

5. Heraldic.

6. Abstract.

7. Scientific.

END.



ON ART
by

FRANCIS A. W. WALTER

1-11/8/1994

A PAINTER'S FEELINGS

If my soul ~~is~~ ^{is} asked "as I see
"What makes you feel so comfortable?"
I would answer the question positively,
"I am very certain it ^{is} the tablet!"

In my mind's eyes I behold a crowd,
Feasting silently upon my artistry,
Silent and fixed against ~~apart~~, there ordered
With the virtue to appreciate just what they see.

Silently, silently they stand and shudder
Almost frozen to the ground. Motionless.
As somehow each person's mind was taken
To such a realm, where art they should possess.

I watched in silence too, ~~and~~ ^{and} captivated,
For then assuming what they saw, ~~as if~~ ^{as if} I pleased.
On something more, the lot seemed captured.
I too felt comfortable, seeing what I released.

Happy I am, that my mind and hand,
Had set to work to capture what I saw;
In every picture each majestically stands,
And commanding all to draw, made none of straw.

I could

by their appreciation
on a golden ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~and~~ ^{and} strike

ON ART

by

Francis Archibald Wentworth Walter

1-4/8/1994

A PAINTER'S FEELING

If my soul should ask me,
"What makes you feel so comfortable?"
I would answer the question positively,
"I am very certain, it is the tableau."

In my mind's eyes I behold a crowd,
Feasting silently upon my artistry.
Silent and fixed against a wall, there endowed
With the virtue to appreciate just what they see.

Silently, silently, they stand awe stricken,
Almost frozen to the ground. Motionless.
As somehow each person's mind was taken,
To such a realm where art they should possess.

I watched in silence too, awe captured.
For then assuming that they saw, appeased,
Or something more, the lot seemed raptured.
I too felt comfortable, seeing what I released.

Happy I am that my mind and hands,
Had set to work to capture what I saw.
In every picture each majestically stands
And commanding all to drama, made none of straw.

I was there paid by their appreciation
For I could feel more than a golden bar could strike
Upon my body, paying for what was done,
And well I knew that some haves could pay my hike.

1,000 days tomorrow,
Those pieces still could well be hung,
To chase from some saddened mind its sorrow,
Where a bell was; for a lowly soul, to be auspicious wrung.

~~There is a tall story of a body to be auspicious warning.~~
There is a tall story of a body to be auspicious warning.

Then climbs down the stubble sides of the purse,
And bids me sell my art to make it well.
I only learn that an impostor can a net to coerce.
Not a critic of ill omens, took in its journal & now to sell.
Whatever comes the case for how it seem
I know not what it mean. ~~It~~ ^{It} ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~an~~ ^{an} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~quest~~ ^{quest} ~~ion~~ ^{ion}
Takes to mind some elixir, which had been
Fare for the seeing: whether than an opiate could draw.

THE SCULPTOR.

Deep into wood his chisel graws,
On soft metal gauged to three dimensions
On a higher, angrily scratching with ill pains,
Of the artful act, or sculpturing manions!

Wood is metal, or clay, which fawns us?
Sand which like mentors pushing us along.
So soon a gargoyle, gains to end the fess.
Grotesque no more, but a sculpture will is strong.

Bending the head to every needed angle
The mind aloft, sprouting the spare bits,
His raveling the concept earlier in tangle
Until something, worthy of being seen for its perfect sets.

Gargoyle intended merely to be capricious?
Climbing upon the heights of ingenuity?
Cherish the fountain flood, to the efficacious?
The flood of thought, spouting from the head is efficacious?

What ever we perceive, or copy from nature's store
So to give shape or by with a sharp-edged artist's tool.
Whether it is the form of abstract, or the form of force
We know that it's something, nothing for the food.

Something is seen. Whether appreciate
It states its story, a sculptor makes it tell
If ever a critic, somehow feels aggrieved
I mention soon, and will be sculpted

I mention soon, and will be sculpted

etc
gargoyle
etc

Then climbs down: the stubborn holder of the purse,
And bids me sell my art to make it well:
I only learn that an imposter came not to coerce,
Nor a critic of ill omen, took in its journal venom to sell.

Whatever comes the case for having seen,
I know that, like me, some fair inquisitor
Takes to mind some elixir which had been
Free for the seeing: healthier than an opiate could draw.

THE SCULPTOR

Deep into wood his chisel gnaws,
On soft metal gauged to three dimensions
On a tiger angrily scratching with its paws,
Of the artful act, we sculpturing minions!

Wood, or metal, or clay: which favours us?
Somewhat like a mentor's pushing us along.
So soon a gargoyle, grins to end the fuss.
Grotesque no more, but a sculptor's will is strong.

Bending the head to every needed angle
The mind aloft, spouting the shaven bits,
Unravelling the concept earlier in tangle
Until something worthy of being seen upon its pedestal sits.

Gargoyle intended merely to be capricious?
Climbing upon the rooftop of ingenuity?
Changing the fountain flood, to be so efficacious?
The flood of thought spouting from the head is efficacy!

Whatever we perceive or copy from nature's store,
So to give shape only with a sharpened artist's tool,
Whether it is shown or abstract: never seen before,
We know that it is something: nothing for a fool.

Something is seen, whether appreciated,
It states its story, a sculptor makes it tell.
If ever a critic somehow feels aggravated,
I mentor soon would ask the sculptor sell.

It is all right grotesque or aesthetic,
For needless to say, we continue to chisel and to shape,
And care not who shall massage or prick
The world at large is watching behind our nape.

The transcription follows the manuscript reproduced overleaf and on the facing page. Illegible or missing parts have been completed with the help of an undated voice recording. A countercheck with the version read by Frank Walter has revealed the following discrepancies. Title: "A Planter's Feeling" vs. "A Painter's Feeling"; fourth stanza, second line: "and were pleased" vs. "appeased"; last line: without "an."

The transcription follows the manuscript reproduced on the facing page. Illegible or missing parts have been completed with the help of an undated voice recording. A countercheck with the version read by Frank Walter has revealed the following discrepancies. First stanza, third line: "Like a tiger" vs. "On a tiger"; third stanza, third line: "concept earlier entangle" vs. "concept earlier in tangle"; fourth stanza, first line: "indeed" vs. "intended"; sixth stanza, second line: "It stands and states its story" vs. "It states its story."

is a festival in which a narrative is told,
it makes its drama constantly, and speaks
in human flesh to ever told
On canvas, wood, or paper, or audience it seeks,
Gold, stone, or clay, or wood, or metal.
The sculptor writes to some ideation,
Those who understand the scene do call,
True when the lips connect.

Just what one sees is that one sees.
Some see and also hear it.
Nothing is seen, get not to find an ease,
A lot.

Seeing a sort of art already having:
Some are spontaneously caused, of some depression
Of notes in pairs and many other hurting
True and inherent that extend the passion.

Hungarian modernist, Gestalt sit,
Whether to watch the world, ~~discovery~~ ⁱⁿ ~~times~~
Art is to all the artist's instructions ~~create~~
The human mind for entertainment ~~craves~~
We are all consumers of art, at any stage.
Pacified by art, whether ~~old~~ young or old,
Art is a teacher, adding to knowledge
in a father of the soul, when ~~life is~~ life grows old.

Religion a secular moral and kind
Art is a talent bestowed by Providence,
Such divine providence, the law
to praise Art for depicting such
The labels

desire
the appearance
ear
seen
Share
be clear

WHAT ART IS

Art is a festival in which a narrative is told.
It makes its drama constantly; and speaks
In human flesh, the actor ever bold,
On canvas, wood or paper, an audience it seeks.

Cold stone or clay or wood or metal.
The sculptor writes to some endearment
Of those who inevitably upon the scenes do call,
Even when rude and vulgar lips comment.

Just what one sees is what one sees,
And seeing art is also having it and hearing it.
Someone by nothing is not prone to find an ease,
Nothing is seeing something yet not having a bit.

Seeing a work of art is already having:
Some are spontaneously cured, of some depression
Of aches and pains and many another hurting.
Even an introvert [does] Art extoll with passion.

Hungry in wonderment spectators sit.
Whether to watch the works of dwellers in caves,
Art is to all the civil and instructor's credit.
The human mind for entertainment craves.

We are all connoisseurs of art at any stage,
Pacified by art whether young or old.
Art is a teacher, adding much to knowledge,
The comforter of the soul, when life grows cold.

Religious or secular, moral and kind
Art is a talent bestowed by Providence.
Surely divine providence, the human designed
To pursue Art for delight, something more than opulence.

The labels and packages of food and ware
Are decorated by art to make them seen.
Surely, all human beings desire a share,
Once art instruct the mind how to be clean.

In Summer, when light shines brightly by day,
Out in the open nature beams out.
All nature's Art are seen in flowery display
So comes the Artist to dispel inertia and doubt.

We are all artists no doubt it is so,
Whether shapes are copied from nature's sway
Whether in [the] warmth or out in the snow,
There is something we see to be copied each day.

Virtuosos are ones who play the best
In music or painting or sculpture or drama,
Or whether in commercials [wee] talents invest,
Yet not being an expert, should not effort bar.

Life itself is the greatest expression of art.
The creator intended life to express many a joy,
Although all peoples aren't very smart,
In some way through many art forms, we find our cloy.

The transcription follows the manuscript reproduced overleaf and on the facing page. Illegible or missing parts have been completed with the help of an undated voice recording. A countercheck with the version read by Frank Walter has revealed the following discrepancies. Fourth stanza, last line: "Even an introvert does Art extoll with passion." vs. "Even an introvert does Art extoll with passion."; ninth stanza, second line: "nature does beam out." vs. "nature beams out."; tenth stanza, third line: "in the warmth" vs. "in ~~the~~ warmth" ("the" is crossed out in the manuscript); eleventh stanza, lines 1 and 2: "... are only ones who play the best / Role in music ..." vs. "... are ones who play the best / In music ..."; eleventh stanza, third line: one word [wee] hardly understandable in audio, illegible in manuscript.



Colophon

This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Frank Walter: A Retrospective In Dialogue with John Akomfrah, Khalik Allah, Kader Attia, Marcel Broodthaers, Julien Creuzet, Birgit Hein, Isaac Julien, Kapwani Kiwanga, Carolyn Lazard, Julia Phillips, Howardena Pindell, Rosemarie Trockel*

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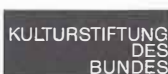
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