“African Savana Grounds “

SCRUTINIZING

A Far Cry from Africa – Derek Walcott

ANDREW EUGENE ANALYSIS

# THE POET

**erek Alton Walcott**, OBE OCC (born 23 January 1930) is a Saint Lucian poet and playwright. He received the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature. He is currently Professor of poetry at the University of Essex. His works include the Homeric epic poem, *Omeros* (1990), which many critics view "as Walcott's major achievement." In addition to having won the Nobel, Walcott has won many literary awards over the course of his career including an Obie Award in 1971 for his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award, a Royal Society of Literature Award, the Queen's Medal for Poetry, and the 2011 T. S. Eliot Prize for his book of poetry, *White*

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*Egrets (Wikipedia)*

##  HIS WORK

POEMS

 1948 *25 Poems*

 1949 *Epitaph for the Young: Xll Cantos*

 1951 *Poems*

 1962 *In a Green Night: Poems 1948—60*

 1964 *Selected Poems*

 1965 *The Castaway and Other Poems*

 1969 *The Gulf and Other Poems*

 1973 *Another Life*

 1976 *Sea Grapes*

 1979 *The Star-Apple Kingdom*

 1981 *Selected Poetry*

 1981 *The Fortunate Traveller*

 1983 *The Caribbean Poetry of Derek Walcott and the Art of Romare Bearden*

 1984 *Midsummer*

 1986 *Collected Poems, 1948-1984*, featuring *Love After Love*

 1987 "Central America"

 1987 *The Arkansas Testament*

 1990 *Omeros*

 1997 *The Bounty*

 2000 *Tiepolo's Hound,* includes Walcott's watercolors

 2004 *The Prodigal*

 2007 *Selected Poems* (Edited, selected, and with an introduction by Edward Baugh)

 2010 *White Egrets*

 2014 *The Poetry of Derek Walcott 1948-2013*

PLAYS

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | (1950) | *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle in Seven Scenes* |
|  | (1951) | *Harry Dernier: A Play for Radio Production* |
|  | (1953) | *Wine of the Country* |
|  | (1954) | *The Sea at Dauphin: A Play in One Act* |
|  | (1957) | *Ione* |
|  | (1958) | *Drums and Colours: An Epic Drama* |
|  | (1958) | *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* |
|  | (1966) | *Malcochon: or, Six in the Rain* |
|  | (1967) | *Dream on Monkey Mountain* |
|  | (1970) | *In a Fine Castle* |
|  | (1974) | *The Joker of Seville* |
|  | (1974) | *The Charlatan* |
|  | (1976) | *O Babylon!* |
|  | (1977) | *Remembrance* |
|  | (1978) | *Pantomime (Walcott play)* |
|  | (1980) | *The Joker of Seville and O Babylon!: Two Plays* |
|  | (1982) | *The Isle Is Full of Noises* |
|  | (1984) | "The Haitian Earth" |
|  | (1986) | Three Plays *The Last Carnival*, *Beef, No Chicken*, and *A Branch of the Blue Nile*) |
|  | (1991) | *Steel* |
|  | (1993) | *Odyssey: A Stage Version* |
|  | (1997) | *The Capeman* (lyrics, in collaboration with Paul Simon) |
|  | (2002) | *Walker and The Ghost Dance* |
|  | (2011) | *Moon-Child* |
|  | (2014) | *O Starry Starry Night* |

OTHER BOOKS

 (1950) *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle in Seven Scenes* , Barbados Advocate (Barbados)

 (1990) *The Poet in the Theatre*, Poetry Book Society (London)

 (1993) *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory* Farrar, Straus (New York)

 (1996) *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, University of Mississippi (Jackson, MS)

 (1996) (With Joseph Brodsky and Seamus Heaney) *Homage to Robert Frost*, Farrar, Straus (New York)

 (1998) *What the Twilight Says* (essays), Farrar, Straus (New York, NY)

 (2002) *Walker and Ghost Dance*, Farrar, Straus (New York, NY)

 (2004) *Another Life: Fully Annotated*, Lynne Rienner Publishers (Boulder, CO) (*WIKIPEDIA*)

# THE POEM

+ GLOSSARY (LINES 239 – 264)

Tawny is a colour, like a yellowish-brown. a pelt is an animal

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt Of Africa. Kikuyu, quick as flies,

Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt. Corpses are scattered through a paradise. Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:

flesh, meat

open, uncultivated country or grassland in southern Africa

Group of Bantu people inhabiting Southeast Africa

“Waste no compassion on these separate dead!” Statistics justify and scholars seize

Sliced

an outward bulge in a line of military attack or defence.

The salients of colonial policy.

What is that to the white child hacked in bed?

To savages, expendable as Jews?

Threshed out by beaters, the long rushes break In a white dust of ibises whose cries

a large wading bird with a long down-curved bill, long neck, and long legs.

Have wheeled since civilization’s dawn From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.

Dry, arid, scorched

The violence of beast on beast is read

As natural law, but upright man Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.

Wrecking, perpetrating

Holiness, spirituality

Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum, While he calls courage still that native dread Of the white peace contracted by the dead.

Employed, committed

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again

A waste of our compassion, as with Spain, The gorilla wrestles with the superman.

I who am poisoned with the blood of both, Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?

I who have cursed

The drunken officer of British rule, how choose Between this Africa and the English tongue I love? Betray them both, or give back what they give?

Massacre, butchery

How can I face such slaughter and be cool?

How can I turn from Africa and live?

# SCRUTINIZE IT

##  TITLE & BACKGROUND

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he title of this poem ‘A FAR CRY FROM AFRICA’ means a different story from Africa. Derek focuses on the events of Mau-Mau uprising. Being a hybrid of both black and white, he comments

impartially on the savage massacre. The poem is filled with pain and craving for blood.

##  SUMMARY

The poem is divided is divided into two. The first two stanzas focuses on the Kenyan conflict and the next two stanza refers to the poets own roles. The insider/outside role which has affected his feelings. The colonial policy says that killing children is prohibited but the black people has buried that rule below their feet. “What is to the white child hacked in bed”? Dead bodies of the white are scattered throughout the place like ibises eggs thrashed out by beaters. Ibises eggs are metaphors for white children. The beaters are the Africans.

Then Derek leaps into the topic where he says he can’t choose who’s right and wrong. “The gorilla wrestles with the superman”. This is a metaphorical sentence where the gorilla means the black people and superman, the white. He claims to be poisoned by the blood of both and he has no option to select. He questions how to choose between two by betraying one. Should I do what they do? – He questions. He loves the African culture and country but adores the English language meanwhile. He has no options but bear what happens because he’s ahybrid.

##  POSSIBLE THEMES

* IRRATIONALITY OF PEOPLE
* CULTURAL VIOLENCE



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