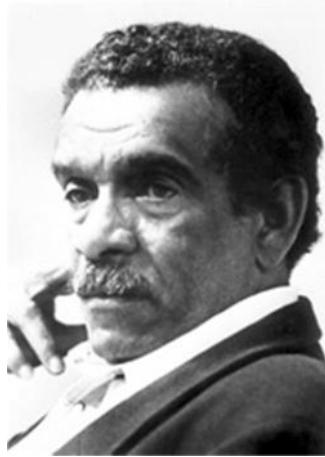


## **Nobel Prize in Literature 1992**



**Derek Walcott**

**The Nobel Prize in Literature 1992 was awarded to Derek Walcott *"for a poetic oeuvre of great luminosity, sustained by a historical vision, the outcome of a multicultural commitment"*.**

This year the Swedish Academy has decided to award the Nobel Prize for Literature to Derek Walcott. Walcott, who is 62 was born in Saint Lucia but now lives in Trinidad. He has both African and European blood in his veins. In him West Indian culture has found its great poet. He also has a chair in English at Boston University.

Walcott showed his mettle early on. As the title of his substantial volume of "Collected Poems 1948-1984" shows, he was already writing poetry of lasting value at the end of his teens. Like Brodsky and Paz he has an intense belief in poetry and poets and he has made this one of his themes.

Otherwise it is the complexity of his own situation that has provided one of the most fruitful sources of inspiration. Three loyalties are central for him - the Caribbean where he lives, the English language, and his African origin. In the poem "A Far Cry from Africa", he says "How choose / Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?" One of his major

works, the long poem "Another Life" (1973), is devoted to his development and the course of his education in this environment.

In his collection of poems "The Arkansas Testament" (1987) he continues the broadening of perspective which is also a characteristic of his oeuvre. Among these poems can be found works dedicated to Marina Tsvetaeva and W.H. Auden ("Strict as Psalm or Lesson, / I learnt your poetry").

Walcott's latest poetic work is "Omeros" (1990), a majestic Caribbean epic in 64 chapters - "I sang our wide country, the Caribbean Sea". This is a work of incomparable ambitiousness, in which Walcott weaves his many strands into a whole. Its weft is a rich one, deriving from the poet's wide-ranging contacts with literature, history and reality. We find Homer, Poe, Mayakovsky and Melville, allusions are made to Brodsky ("the parentheses of palms / shielding a candle's tongue"), and he quotes the Beatles' "Yesterday". Walcott's metaphors and images are numerous, and often striking - "And beyond them, like dominoes / with lights for holes, the black skyscrapers of Boston". He captures white seagulls against a blue sky in the image "Gulls chalk the blue enamel". His poetry acquires at one and the same time singular lustre and great force.

Walcott is in the first place a poet but he has also produced interesting work for the theatre. His masterpiece was "Dream on Monkey Mountain" (1970), a striking but scenographically demanding Caribbean fresco. The same dream-like atmosphere can be found in several of his plays, such as "Ti-Jean and His Brothers" (1958) and, to a certain extent, in "The Last Carnival" (in "Three Plays" (1986), which deals with two important decades in the recent history of Trinidad. A significant feature of his plays is the skill with which the author plays on his own complex range of voices. It is impossible, however, to reproduce this in the totally different language situation of Sweden.

Walcott's style is melodious and sensitive. It seems to issue principally from a prolific inspiration. In his literary works Walcott has laid a course for his own cultural environment, but through them he speaks to each and every one of us.



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