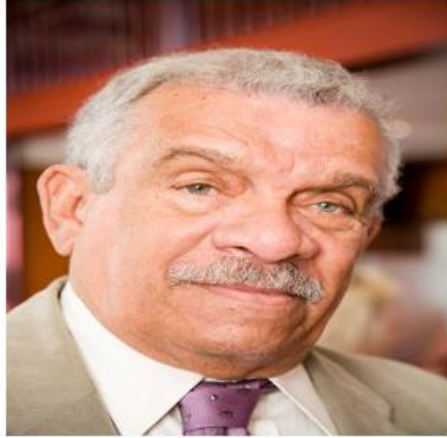


MUSINGS OF SIR DEREK WALCOTT'S LIFE AND WORK

by Leonard Dabydeen



Derek Walcott, Nobel Prize in Literature 1992; picture taken at his honorary dinner, Amsterdam, May 20th 2008

By Bert [Nienhuis](#) - File of the [Werkgroep Caraibische Letteren](#), The Netherlands, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4750253>

SIR DEREK WALCOTT

His heart palpitates

in island breeze

wind guiding mind's sail

island swaying island

from Castries to Port of Spain

from Bridgetown to Kingston

like 'fireflies caught in molases'.

~ Leonard Dabydeen

BREAKING NEWS on the early morning hours of Friday, March 17, 2017, in sombre silence in his home in Cap Estate near Gros Islet in St. Lucia in the Caribbean Sea, and best known as the "Helen of the West Indies", Sir Derek Anton Walcott passed away. He was 87. He was suffering from a bout of illness, but died peacefully in his sleep. His son, Peter made the announcement. According to William Grimes of The

New York Times, on March 17, 2017, his (Walcott) “death was confirmed by his publisher, Farrar, Straus and Giroux. No cause was given, but he had been in poor health for some time...”

(https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/books/derek-walcott-dead-nobel-prize-literature.html?_r=0).

He was survived by three children.

Walcott was a phenomenal connoisseur of the Caribbean literary brew as a poet, playwright and painter, with a penchant to make master boundaries on the international playing field. His Anglo-centric foundation was strong and irresistible in confluence – creole and English. The UPI’s Eric Duvall says, “Walcott’s complicated personal narrative mirrored that of the West Indies itself, where a mishmash of cultural imports have created a diverse, often complicated society ensconced in tropical paradise.”

Walcott was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992.

(http://www.upi.com/Entertainment_News/2017/03/17/Nobel-winning-poet-Derek-Walcott-voice-of-the-Caribbean-dead-at-87/9541489790001

As if he had a premonition of his life with a literary affluence, Walcott writes,

Love After Love

*The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other’s welcome,*

*and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was yourself.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you*

*all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,*

*the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.*

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-after-love/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_6mgbRSUzo

Derek Walcott won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992. In 2016 he became a Knight Commander of the Order of St Lucia. His was a gratifying life of dreams and visions, commandeering imaginary with the visual, even as a playwright.

OF FUNERAL, OBITUARIES AND TRIBUTES: DEREK WALCOTT

On March 27, 2017, **St. LUCIA TIMES** reported the funeral of Derek Walcott. The funeral took place at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Castries on March 25, 2017. There were a swath of professors, writers from across the globe, government dignitaries and media personnel in attendance, offering condolences and sharing the loss of this Caribbean literary giant.

<https://stluciatimes.com/2017/03/27/derek-walcott-laid-rest>

Sir Derek Walcott was given a State Funeral by the Government of St. Lucia

State Funeral of Sir Derek



[Government of Saint Lucia](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQRfHaNeW8o)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQRfHaNeW8o>

The funeral service was held close to where Derek Walcott grew up as a boy. It was as if he wished this connectivity with home and island to underline his final moment.



<https://www.quotehd.com/Quotes/derek-walcott-playwright-quote-visual-surprise-is-natural-in-the-caribbean-it-comes>

A special dignitary in the name of Professor Emeritus Edward A.C. Baugh, a Jamaican poet and scholar, and an authority on the work of Derek Walcott, delivered this eulogy (only an excerpt),

"We mourn and we celebrate a genius who was a prodigy, a maker. A Caribbean man who has made us and the world see more clearly the Caribbean landscape, Caribbean light. But we also mourn and celebrate a person. Someone with the virtues and the shortcomings that defined him, as the persons who knew him valued."

He was finally crested to rest at Morne Fortune near the Inniskilling Monument, within a short distance from the resting spot of Nobel Laureate, Sir Arthur Lewis.

<https://stluciatimes.com/2017/03/27/derek-walcott-laid-rest>

In another eulogy, according to ST. LUCIA TIMES, under the header, “*World bids farewell to Derek Walcott*”, Monsignor Patrick Anthony made a fervent appeal to the packed congregation,

“to be proud of what Derek has done for us as a Caribbean people ... to lift our heads high and say we can stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world.”

<https://stluciatimes.com/2017/03/26/world-bids-farewell-derek-walcott>

This writer finds it alarmingly voluminous in magnitude to plunge deep into the Caribbean Sea to capture all the prodigious voices that echoed, or continuing to echo, tributes and obituaries for the transiting of this literary giant from the island shores of St. Lucia, Sir Derek Anton Walcott. Suffice it to say, a non-exhaustive list of online players is presented here. This is followed by an almost comprehensive, glasnost olio of youtube voices that explode the life and work of this colossal literary West Indian son.

ONLINE TRIBUTES and more...Global connectivity:

The PARIS REVIEW: *Searching for Derek Walcott*

<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/03/31/searching-for-derek-walcott/>

Repeating Islands, Derek A. Walcott, St. Lucia, January 23, 1930 – March 17, 2017: *ONLINE TRIBUTES*

<https://repeatingislands.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/derek-walcott-1930-2017-online-tributes.pdf>

the star.com – News. World: *Poet Derek Walcott, a Caribbean giant and Nobel Laureate dies at 87*

<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/03/17/poet-derek-walcott-a-caribbean-giant-and-nobel-laureate-dies-at-87.html>

An olio of **youtube** voices ...collected online by this writer...

YouTube State Funeral Sir Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQRfHaNeW8o>

Artists Hold Special Wake For Sir Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCULPfVEJ4>

Sir Derek Walcott on His Life and Work

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_6mgbRSUzo

Sir Derek Walcott Reads Beginning of Omeros

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQupJNRE3b0>

Sir Derek Walcott's Extended View on Omeros

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z67iA4QCF14>

Sir Derek Walcott Laid To Rest

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4XSOS5IN6Q>

Sir Derek Walcott : Family Moment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUoN0ufS060>

The Walcott Brothers: A Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYsZORiVTb8>

Sir Derek Walcott On Empire and Language

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrqKsGY9urM>

A Reading by Sir Derek Walcott

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSH4qjN2v_c

Derek Walcott: The Perpetual Ideal is Astonishment | 92Y Readings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZxySOMSxOs>

Sir Derek Walcott: Black Writers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsYKDAUetE>

Sir Derek Walcott: Oprah Pays Tribute

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDfoA_dfwvs

Sir Derek Walcott: Love After Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSS5Y9az4il>

Love After Love by Derek Walcott: Read by Roger Housden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B36L9Av7uO4>

Derek Walcott tribute: Linton Kwesi Johnson reads Love After Love - BBC Newsnight

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_3QbH_aNmc

(short skit) Love after love by:Derek Walcott

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_Ni9a2cPIE

Sir Derek Walcott: POETRY IS AN ISLAND

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zWLloaVgPg>

Love After Love by Derek Walcott - Read by Tom Hiddleston

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z850LNbudlw>

love after love poem by derek walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvytgrDO4eg>

Love after Love by Derek Walcott: Kim Rosen and Jami Sieber

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V8ltOfLjKM>

David Whyte recites Derek Walcott's "Love After Love"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOqxUrkJgc4>

Oprah recites Love After Love

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rltojO-WxA

Love After Love - Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlljQKq25zs>

Poem reading by Derek Walcott, Nobel Laureate in Literature

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxdjlqiz4q4>

Derek Walcott reads Crusoe's Island

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tr1emY_omZM

derek walcott died at 87 | derek walcott poems | derek walcott love after love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vMZ08OpQOY>

Tribute to the Honorable Sir Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYvPV87ZgOM>

derek wolcott, Nobel laureate Derek Walcott dies at 87, St Lucia - Pigeon Post News

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn-mDXp9KbQ>

"A far cry from Africa" by Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CF-8wIXJRVY>

Tribute to 2015 Griffin Lifetime Recognition Award recipient Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ7bDCUpmtg>

Derek Walcott Photostory FINAL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tg9eTcMqViA>

The Light of the World - Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnqIO--1Kk8>

Derek Walcott - The Glory Trumpeter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCy5uZN21AM>

IN AMSTERDAM, Poem by Derek Walcott.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80bU-owHmG8>

"Star" by Derek Walcott (5:21 AM)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8btxEf1qF84>

1 - Derek Walcott : a Saint Lucian poet, playwright, writer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLdX9n1JJkw>

2 - Derek Walcott : a Saint Lucian poet, playwright, writer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOWztBOMsjA>

UCSD Convocation: Derek Walcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0T3KPmc6ZM>

Derek Walcott Caedmon Audio

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6Olxc6u31g>

Adios Carenage - Part 1, Derek Walcott's epic poem, "The Schooner Flight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVw8uqIPreo>

Derek Walcott reads White Egrets at Lesley University Part 1 of 5

[Lesley University](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVjDnz59hIA>

Derek Walcott reads White Egrets at Lesley University Part 2 of 5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GotLXZFpxNY>

Derek Walcott reads White Egrets at Lesley University Part 3 of 5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZMgQfyKa-M>

Derek Walcott reads *White Egrets* at Lesley University Part 4 of 5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29RP6doR2qI>

Derek Walcott reads *White Egrets* at Lesley University Part 5 of 5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hdSz0dIJ9w>

Matthew St. Ville Hunte, who lives in St. Lucia, reminisced in *the PARIS REVIEW* on March 17, 2017 just after the death of Derek Walcott, that

To be born on a small island, a colonial backwater, meant a precocious resignation to fate.

—Derek Walcott

<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/03/31/searching-for-derek-walcott/>

Derek Walcott's Life and Work spanning almost nine decades are a rich, delightful musicality, imbued with an effervescent glow of Caribbean history, literature, culture and arts and an intoxicating blend of Western canon. From Britain to Boston to his homeland in St. Lucia, and skipping over to Jamaica and settling in Trinidad, he was a maverick trumpeting poetry, painting and plays with untiring energy and colossal power. His life was his work, and vice versa.

Derek Walcott was born, together with his twin brother, Roderick, on January 23, 1930, to Bohemian Methodist parents in the hometown of Castries, St. Lucia. Theirs were a family in a minority group, obscured for inherent religious and cultural beliefs against a backdrop of predominant Catholic denominations. And the island, St. Lucia was a firm British colonial protectorate underscored by African slavery, fragments of Indian indentureship and splashes of French. In its cultural embroidery this island of volcanic, tear-drop landfill is made up in a pastry of African, French and English blend. Walcott's mother, Alix (Maartin) Walcott was a school teacher/headmistress of a local Methodist school; his father, Warwick Walcott was an inspirational watercolourist, civil servant and poetry writer. He died when Walcott was just a little child. Walcott also had a sister named Pamela. And his grandparents were known to be descendants of African slaves. Grandfathers being white; grandmothers African slaves.

Growing up in Castries, Walcott was quickly immersed in the beauty and glamour of St. Lucia as one of the Windward islands of the Lesser Antilles. He was slated early in life to focus his mind in the arts, with painting as, perhaps, his first choice. He was enthralled by professional artist Harold Simmons who mentored him in the facilitation of the Walcottian dream of plural ambrosity in the arts – painting, poetry and later being a debutante playwright. However, his mother, Alix, in the penchant educator fraternity, embossed in Walcott a spirited love for language. Around the home as opportunities unfold, she would vehemently recite Shakespeare and moisten Walcott's mind in the flowering classics of English literature. Books in English classic literature were a life-line in his upbringing. In the same breath, Walcott was inwardly marinating thoughts of equality and race and his imbued passion for British poetry. According to Guy Ellis and David McFadden in *The Associated Press*, dated March 17, 2017, Walcott reflected that,

[“wrestling contradiction of being white in mind and black in body, as if the flesh were coal from which the spirit like tormented smoke writhed to escape.” But he overcame that inner struggle, writing: “Once we have lost our wish to be white, we develop a longing to become black.”]

<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/03/17/poet-derek-walcott-a-caribbean-giant-and-nobel-laureate-dies-at-87.html>

With the refreshing breeze of the Caribbean sea, Walcott as a teenager at age 14, published his first poem of 44 lines in a local newspaper, *The Voice of St. Lucia*; the year was 1944. The title of the poem was *1944*. His poeticity in life had just begun. Unfortunately, a review of this publication was dampened in local circles by an English Catholic priest, who considered the write-up free versification as blasphemous. This did not deter Walcott.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derek_Walcott

Four years later, in 1948, Walcott manuscript a collection of poems, titled *25 Poems* and struggled to attract a publisher. He quickly solicited the assistance of his mother, Alix for a loan of \$200 to self-publish the book. Eventually he was able to sell the book himself and repaid his mother. The book was actually dedicated to his mother.

The following year, 1949, Walcott went on to publish his second book, *Epitaph for the Young XII Cantos*. This was the collected work that set Walcott’s epic ambition writing and shooting an arrow to Walcott’s path, leading to *Omeros*, which gifted him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992.

By the time Walcott was 19 years of age, he had this deep, inner awareness of a determined struggle against the Catholic clergy in the island territory. He wanted out. For him,

“As a young boy, he would often go out to watch the poor people living in shanties; some of whom would later appear in his autobiographical poem, ‘Another Life’. He also found the sea, with its different moods and legends, fishermen and schooners, and sounds of the sea, very fascinating.”

<http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/derek-walcott-110.php#Qv895Uf6LtBzeQi4.99>

After the *Epitaph for the Young XII Cantos* (1949), Walcott completed a college programme at St. Mary’s College in St. Lucia and was offered a Colonial Development Welfare scholarship to study at the University of the West Indies in 1950. During this university study period, Walcott produced two dramas, *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle* (1950), and *Henri Dernier* – a play for radio production (1953). Mixed with numerous poems, essays and journalistic rotisserie.

Upon graduation with a B.A. (1953), and already surfing rising waves in the Caribbean literary oeuvre in poetry, compounded with plays and art criticisms, Walcott drifted to Trinidad. And it is in this Land of the Humming Bird that he set himself in an exploding career path to literary fame, that marked his highest achievement as Nobel Laureate for Literature in 1992.

Chronicling Walcott’s career achievements certainly deserves more than a book-length feature (already many authors out there). It would therefore be reasonably gratifying to allow this writer to mark Walcott’s evolvment, to express a sentiment of David Biespiel, literary critic and published author of the book, *A Long High Whistle*, as...

"an elegant West Indies murmur against history's colonial narrative of bondage."

And in the same breath, continues, *"His poems expose the discrepancy between blooming flowers and sparkling waters with these island economies built on the history of sugar plantations and slavery and forced labor..."*

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/17/511608932/derek-walcott-who-wrote-of-caribbean-beauty-and-bondage-dies-at-87>

Between 1953-1954, Walcott entrenched himself with confidence and allure in the theatre and art critic world as he settled in Trinidad. Literature was his forte.

By 1958, Walcott caught the eyes of international glimmer, earning him a Rockefeller Foundation Grant for his brilliant play, *Drums and Colours*. This coveted prize earned him a view of New York City and the ears of off-Broadway Directors. His stay was short-lived. His heart longed for Trinidad. Some inner island spirit.

In 1959 Walcott made his way back to Trinidad. He decided to set up home here and organized the Trinidad Theatre Workshop. His brother and playwright, Roderick Walcott also joined him in the workshop programme. Apart from profuse writing of poems and plays, a stint of teaching was now emerging with his work. Watercolour painting was also on the palette.

Between 1960-1968, Walcott added a stint of journalism to his work. He was a reporter for the *Trinidad Guardian* – having his name in the local news. Yet he never swayed from his love of poetry and playwright. He explored island drumbeats of history, of slavery and indentureship, culture curating myths and superstitions in the rhapsody of folk lore.

His early poetry, such as "In a Green Night", with its references to Andrew Marvell's "Bermudas", was influenced by English metaphysical poets and the classics.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/poetry/2017/03/green-night-derek-walcott-1930-2017>.

As a result of a very successful launch of this book, *In a Green Night*, the famous Boston Brahmin poet, Robert Lowell made a spirited and special trip to meet with Walcott. This meeting led to Walcott being signed up with world class publishers, *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*.

This amabilité between poet and publisher paved the way for a genre of Walcott's books in the 1970's and onwards. The list is comprehensive and absolutely impressive to view through this official web site of the Nobel Prize,

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1992/walcott-bibl.html

In Walcott's continuing international acclaim, *Selected Poems* (1964), *The Castaway* (1965) and *The Gulf* (1969) took centre stage.

The [Saint Lucia National Trust](#) acquired Walcott's childhood home at 17 Chaussée Road, Castries, in November 2015, opening it to the public as *Walcott House* in January 2016.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derek_Walcott

In 2011 Walcott copped the T.S. Eliot Prize for his collection of poems, *White Egrets*. In the heart of his majestic literary career, Walcott was influenced by the works of Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and classical poets in the name of Renaissance Petrarch and Middle Age Dante Alighieri. The book arrived late when Walcott was in his prime age of 80, but the collection of poems was inked with the rich backdrop of the book, *Omeros*.

And so now we take a serendipitous view of this book, *Morning, Paramin* – a collaboration between a colossal Nobel prize-winning laureate of literature, Sir Derek Walcott, and a world class figurative painter, Peter Doig, living in Trinidad since 2002.

Within the immense cosmopolitan literary amphitheatre of Walcott's musings in poetry, plays, paintings, essays, readings, workshops and book publications to say the least, there is a sculpted bouquet of awards that embosses his life and work. For us to wit, his most important achievement was the Nobel Laureate Prize in literature in 1992 at the age of 62. His itinerary was from birthplace St. Lucia to Jamaica, then Trinidad and out of the islands to Boston in the U.S.A., Canada, United Kingdom, other European countries and back to the Caribbean islands. For him, the world was only a small place in which he engaged in imaginings.

It was in Trinidad in 1953 that Walcott set up part-time residence, after graduating from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. His first initiative was becoming the Founding Director of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop in 1959. Most of his earlier stay was at the Hotel Normandy, but cost of living was too expensive, and he badly needed a job. Eventually, he was offered a part-time position at Boston University, and travelled back and forth to Trinidad. Later, in 1981 he received a Mac Arthur Fellowship for his magnificent theatre performances. Then he decided to take up residence in the U.S.A and continued to work at Boston University, but vacationed in Trinidad. His heart was so deeply rooted in the theatre, that he became obsessed about the quality of performers.

https://books.google.ca/books?id=EOq6genaAwC&pg=PA70&lpg=PA70&dq=Derek+Walcott+living+and+working+in+Trinidad&source=bl&ots=j3bF0MjgX5&sig=VHnV2No-aY78HHaiDKzalWrzZ9g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwifkej2_7bTAhVB6YMKHRBGApi4ChDoAQgsMAI#v=onepage&q=Derek%20Walcott%20living%20and%20working%20in%20Trinidad&f=false

While working with the *Trinidad Express* as a journalist, he came into contact with an emerging West Indian and Trinidadian writer, Viadhar S. Naipaul. They both became friends with common interests in the arts and literature. They both captured the Nobel Laureate prize in literature, although this grandiose achievement happened nine years apart – Walcott in 1992, and Naipaul in 2001.

However, Walcott soon became suspect as Naipaul's nemesis. In an earlier interview with Naipaul in 1961, Walcott mustered Naipaul to be "one of the most mature West Indian writers". Yet later, in 1964 Walcott's critical commentary of Naipaul's *Mr. Stone and The Knight's Companion*, refracted a fanning of a thin biographical veil of generation change, an epic acclaim of rootlessness, a sense of shocking failure of people in the Caribbean scolding in colonialism and post-colonialism, and a splurge of disinheritance. The feud never faded, but evolved in name-calling, even accusations of racism bordering on Walcott's African heritage and Naipaul's Indian indentureship from India.

<http://www.guardian.co.tt/lifestyle/2017-03-25/walcott-journalist>

Walcott had many wives in his long life and career. In 1954 he married Fay Moston, a secretary – divorced her in 1959; one son, Peter Walcott.

In 1962 Walcott married Margaret Maillard. Almoner in a hospital – divorced in 1976; two daughters, Elizabeth and Anna.

In 1976 Walcott married Norline Metivier, actress – divorced in 1993.

1993 – 2017 a long time companion in former art gallery owner, Sigrid Nama.

Yet we will forever remember Sir Derek Walcott as an astute creative artist, and a magnificent Nobel Laureate in literature, saying to us ...



<https://www.pinterest.com/loriarmour78/derek-walcott/>