

WALCOTT'S PAINTINGS, POETRY AND PLAYS  
AS REFLECTIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN LANDSCAPE



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## Outline

**Thesis Statement:** Derek Walcott's use of imagery in his paintings, poetry and plays reflects his personal artistic vision of the Caribbean landscape and expresses an angle of perception that is at once unique and universal.

### Introduction

- I. Walcott's Artistic Development
  - A. Early Life
  - B. Influences
- II. Themes
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  - B. Interpretation of Themes
- III. Artistic Expressions of the Poet
  - A. Metaphors
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- IV. Language and Culture
  - A. How language influences his work
  - B. How his work influences the Culture
- V. Definition of Artistic Vision

### Conclusion

*In the mist of the sea there is a horned island  
with deep green harbors . . .  
a place of light with luminous valleys*

*under the thunderous clouds . . .  
Her mountains tinkle with springs among  
moss-bearded forests.*

*And the white egret  
makes rings stalking its pools . . . a  
volcano, stinking with sulphur, has made it a healing place.*

Excerpts from Derek Walcott's *Omeros*.

Like the treasured paintings of Van Gogh and Rembrandt, there is an intensity of vision only possible when looking at the same scene over a long period of time. An articulation of this passion comes from William Shakespeare who wrote, "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and, one man in his time plays many parts" (As You Like It 239). Shakespeare predicted the birth of a wild spirit, a strong, intuitive, creative activist who had the ability to unlock the cultural richness and diversity of the Caribbean islands and the rest of the world. Among a small band of living legends, stands an artist, an icon for the people of the Caribbean, who thus far has transformed cultures, ethnic identities, religions and ideologies into a vivid, living masterpiece that is applauded worldwide. This paper is an attempt to examine perception through Derek Walcott's use of imagery in his paintings such as "Self Portrait" and "Boy on a Wall"; imagery in his book of poetry "Another Life" – Chapters 8 and 9; and imagery in two of his plays "Ti Jean" and "Dream on Monkey Mountain" which reflect his personal artistic vision of the Caribbean landscape.

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As a moistened paint brush is picked up for the first time and glides on the canvas, one will see the memoirs of an artist's life open up, unveiling the works of a prodigy through the techniques of each brushstroke. With each brushstroke, the painting comes to life, just as his work takes shape from the first idea that permeates his mind.

Derek Alton Walcott was born in Castries St. Lucia, on January 23, 1930, son of Warwick and Alix Walcott and twin brother of the late, Roderick Aldon Walcott and an older sister, Pamela. The St. Lucia into which he was born is a tiny island of only 238 square miles situated in the Caribbean archipelago about halfway between French Martinique to the north and English St. Vincent to the south. It is on this island that, under the warm sun, he became infused with a deep understanding of a rich culture laced with folklore and history that saturated the surrounding countryside where he grew up. His father, Warwick, who died when Walcott was only a year, had already etched the canvas of Walcott's future by leaving behind his artifacts – books and paintings. His mother on the other hand, provided the light and the ambience for his early intellectual influences by developing the natural color scheme of pride and education. In addition, the religious mores of the Methodist church in which he was brought up also inspired his creative expressions.

This young man embarked on a journey, soaring from the Methodist School to the St. Mary's College, always keeping vigil to his mother's expectations that all her children attain the highest standards. This is in concordance with Shakespeare's quote of each man having his part to play. In describing Derek's childhood, McDonald Dixon, his longtime friend points out:

*“While his friends played the boyish games of cowboys and crooks, Derek’s sense for excitement was filled by exploring literature that graced his hands. It was this thirst that unraveled the inner voice which he would use as a catalyst for his self-expression.”* (Telephone Interview 2003)

Walcott’s autobiographical painting “Self Portrait” brings to mind the world of painting that seized his youthful imagination. This image is not just a representation of the physical appearance of the painter, Derek Walcott, but rather it is an emotional expression of his inner traits passed on by his father. Walcott sees the reflection of his father in his “Self Portrait” as he captures and embodies the tenderness of what it represents for the young artist. The early self-portrait of Walcott starts the landscape of his life as he sees it and heralds the mature efforts of the adolescent painter. The later self-portrait appears as an abstract painting and it is reminiscent of a computerized image. Long before his exposure to the world of computer technology, Walcott had already manufactured his perception of himself. The reproduction looks like a very detailed computerized image of a photograph.

Walcott specifically painted his eyes in the later portrait as though he was looking at the viewer or the viewer was looking directly into his green eyes. In order for him to create this image of such detailed expressions, he may have used a photograph of himself or he may have been sitting in front of a mirror. Walcott’s vision of “Self Portrait” was influenced by great artists such as Claude Monet, the Virgin Islands born Camille Pissarro and Paul Cezanne, who also painted self-portraits. In many Self-portraits, the individuals often dress in formal attire,

whereas, in Walcott's "Self Portrait" he is dressed casually in a green sweater that compliments the color of his eyes. His use of warm colors such as yellow and orange with a black background brings out a natural artistic expression of Walcott. A striking exception in his usage of colors is the vivid purple cap, which is a focus of attention in the painting. (Tiepolo's Hound 154)

In another painting, "Boy on the Wall", Derek Walcott captures the true essence of peace and serenity of his island life. He is a visual artist and uses water colors for his scenes. His paintings are simple and beautiful and give the viewer a sense of feeling that he or she is a part of the scenery. The perception of this portrait highlights the dreams and aspirations which are indicative of a young lad in search of wisdom. His back is turned to his present world as he looks beyond the horizon in search of greener pastures for the experience of another life.

One can see that through this painting, the young lad banishes the shadows of night with confidence and grace and embraces the new day as the morning sun rises swiftly and vibrantly over the land. In his imagination, the greener grass, the light breezes, the fresh smell of the dazzling white sea, and the blue horizon, transport his mind from his present thoughts into another realm. This particular spot means a lot to him...he has his radio to his right which is a source of information that connects him to the outside world; his shoes are off and placed to his left, indicating that he is comfortable and chooses to be alone in his thoughts. The overcast sky and the whiteness of the ocean add tranquility and peace of mind to his surroundings. Rat Island, to the north, which is depicted in this picture, is comprised of gold and green that locks the artist Walcott in a perpetual spring bubbling with the sheer excitement of life, trembling with the glory and splendor of achievement that he may one day possess. (Tiepolo's Hound 28)

This world beyond is a reality that Walcott as a young lad anticipates and which he wants to explore. He looked to this new world trusting that he may one day find bliss and success in another life. He may have felt the power of art to recreate this world, because today, this young man has become successful through his art. He achieved the joy and security from the world beyond by means of his conventional framed stanzas re-spoken in Caribbean context. His poetry contains the light of the hills on his island home and so, upon receiving his Nobel Prize, his life long dream imaged in “Boy on the Wall” materializes. Generously, he contributed some of the money he received for the construction of an international center for the arts on Rat Island (The St. Lucia Star 1993).

In addition to the island’s mountainous and nostalgic charms, Walcott’s visual and artistic expressions were coaxed by a multitude of silhouettes from his father’s friends, and his teachers at St. Mary’s College. Harold Simmons, a compassionate botanist, editor, anthropologist and painter, became Walcott’s mentor, close friend and father-substitute. Furthermore, under the tutelage of Simmons, Walcott became acquainted to another painter, the notorious Dunstan St. Omer, affectionately known to Walcott as ‘Gregorias’.

Simmons realized that of these two prodigies, the paint brush would be St. Omer’s citadel and the pen would be Walcott’s paint brush. Through the etching of his mental canvas, the young Walcott exploded with his brush and pen, sparking the vibrant colors and crystalline beauty of his homeland revealing a never-ending love affair for art. Walcott’s love of the arts had not been confined to only painting, he later moved into poetry another medium of art bringing out images which are long-lasting, intimate, and mystifying that filter to his poetry leaving the viewer with a sense of comfort.

Walcott further proceeds to describe his life as a painter in his poem entitled “Another Life”. This book is an intimate adventure and is divided into three parts with poems that are enlightening and penetrating. It involves a precise choice of words that have implications and suggestions of his experiences and his early life, his experiences in the world beyond and his physical return to his island home. He realizes that his gift emerged in his poetry, in the character of his image making, his visual imagination as well as in his sense of line and composition.

In Another Life, Walcott makes it clear that painting is crucial to his development. It is in this book of poems Walcott describes his epiphanic experiences which seemed to have confirmed his destiny as a poet. The connection between poet and painter in Walcott lies deeper than eye-level, rooted in his early experience of the world. The poet’s metaphorical recreation of his world is now physically aligned as his painting and poetry are equal. To Walcott art is his way to explore that misalignment in order to create a vivid image. His own hand was “*crabbed by that style,/this epoch, that school/or the next*” (Another Life 59)

He recognizes this artistic skill of blending his paintings and poetry when he describes in Book Nine the artistic objective, and the enthusiasm and dedication to work which he shared with Gregorias. This section of “Another Life” begins with a celebration of the young men’s hard drinking back in the day. However, the drunkenness also acts metaphorically, suggesting their elation in their art and ambition.

Drunk,  
On a half-pint of joiner’s turpentine,  
Drunk,  
While the black, black-sweatered, horn-soled  
fisherman drank



Their *l'absinthe* in sand back yards standing up,  
 On the clear beer of sunrise,...  
 Gregorias plunging whole-suit in the shallows,  
 painting under water, raring and spewing spray,...  
 (Another Life 49)

In chapter nine we see the young boy toiling at his landscape as he tries to recreate his act of painting in 'another life'. His sense of hard work is brought out in forceful verbs: "insists", "breaks", "frowns", "seizes", "ignites", "sweat", "gnaw", "bristles" "scrapes" and so on till his landscape is complete (53-55). Equally vivid is the final sense of exhaustion, of having been 'sucked dry as a seed' (57) and the sense of failure of having been so encouraged by his creative efforts.

*Beyond this frame, deceptive, indifferent,  
 Nature returns to its work,  
 Behind the square of blue you have cut from that sky,  
 Another life, real, indifferent, resumes. (58)*

There is a suggestion here of Walcott's artistic attempts to shape the disorder of life, to capture on canvas the supposed reality of the world beyond. He feels the limits that his ambition to be a painter is thwarted and defeated.

In Another Life, Walcott goes on to analyze his personal failure. He defines his basic differences between the artistic personalities and processes of St. Omer (Gregorias) and himself. He makes certain statements such as '*I lived in a different gift,/its element metaphor*' (59) about his work realizing that Gregorias was more natural to the medium of paint while Walcott was not satisfied with his own work. It is by embracing poetry that Walcott satisfied his drive to create and give up his compulsion towards uncertainty and contradiction for painting.

In every surface I sought  
the paradoxical flash for an instant  
in which every facet was caught  
in a crystal of ambiguities...(58)

Walcott finally confirms his poetic craft and vision which developed as he matures.

Ultimately, Walcott chooses a more "sculptured" approach toward his life subjects, and precision and detail remain a hallmark of his style. The passion and tenderness of the brushstroke visible in Walcott's paintings continue to echo through his own words, especially in various poems from his book "Tiepolo's Hound."

*I passed, climbing the hot hill to the college,  
him and Fitz Mebye sketching in the shade.*

*I stopped. I heard their charcoals scratch the page  
And their light laughter, but not what they said.*

*..(but how could he, what colour was his Muse,  
and what was there to paint except black skins?)  
of flame trees in the fields of Santa Cruz;(Ll. 13-16; 81-83 )*

Walcott's vision is not only focused on St. Lucia; he also presents the dilemmas and the promise of the Caribbean as whole and rarely views the Caribbean region from a single perspective. He recognizes that these islands are faced with the same sociological issues that plague the Western world: racism, ethnocentricity, stereotyping, the struggles of art, life and death. These issues unravel Walcott's desire to overpower his struggles by his rising above them and on one hand dealing with them. On the other hand, he exults in the promise of seeing art as healing. In The Penguin book of Caribbean Verse in English, Walcott presents the poem "A Far Cry from

Africa”, and he confronts conflicts of his complex background, his African and European ancestry: (243)

*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?  
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?  
How can I turn from Africa and live? (L1 26-33)*

In spite of these dilemmas, Walcott also illustrates this rise by the contributions that he and other Caribbean artists have made to their local culture. Walcott in his own way have ennobled this cultural setting that we inhabit and shape it into art. The reality lies in his belief that all people and cultures are created equal, but very little is done to challenge assumptions that say that they are not. He was raised up in a time when European culture, history, and philosophy were presumed to be superior and values of many were basically different.

Despite his discontent and deep struggles, he is a St. Lucian and revels in his Caribbean origins as evident especially in his epic masterpiece, Omeros. He is telling us that he has not forgotten where he came from. He lives, sleeps and speaks of his island home. No one could describe Walcott’s bond with art any better than his friend Dixon did: “To separate him from his art would make him a lost soul. Something of a dispossessed spirit, he knows nothing else, breathes nothing else.”

Walcott’s experiences which represent a continuum of forms and methods of art bring to mind a few questions, “How can an individual conceive such sophisticated and unrelenting ideas?” “How does one acquire such uniqueness?” Responses to these questions are evident in

his development of an aesthetic spark that ignited ideas which allowed him to illuminate and to further develop from painter, to poet, to playwright. Walcott's dual language is simply another form of sensory perception of his world. It is his way of translating his work to help readers and viewers participate in his work. He initially learned his language at home as part of primary socialization. However, he was born in an English and Creole country filled with Afro/French and Anglo/Dutch heritage and loved both languages. It is his to do what other poets before him did. It is this passion and vanity which makes him fuse both the noble and the common language in a tone that is true to his own voice in which both accents are heard naturally. In addition, his narratives advance from one idea to the next, flowing from one kind of light to another and molding an object into an abstract context. He emphasizes and complements themes using metaphors, imagery and symbolism to capture the Caribbean landscape:

*The sun is wholly up now; things are white or green:  
Clouds, hills, walls, leaves on the walls, and their shadows;  
Dew turns into dust on the quiet municipal cedars. (Mid Summer  
XLIII ii)*

Walcott's genius as a writer goes far beyond the use of metaphor, imagery and symbolism; he also possesses the language skill of code switching. Code switching allows him to move with ease from his Creole dialect to Standard English – a process that has effectively added to the essence of his profound eloquence. The whole idea of being Creole is a positive innovation that connects us linguistically to our forefathers. The original definition of Creole refers to a person of European parentage born in the Caribbean or the Americas. However, Creole is the result of contact between African languages and French or English: this contact produced a new language. The population of St. Lucia is bilingual; English, the official language,

English Creole and French Creole co-exist. This interesting phenomenon came about because the control of the island alternated fourteen times between the British and the French.

The aesthetics of the existence of the Creole language in St. Lucia is illustrated by Walcott himself when he in an interview with Bill Moyers, refers to an episode of the inseparable use of the two. Walcott recalls a man saying to his wife:

*“temps après temps, moi ja di pas slice bwapain a”, which means “time and again I have told you do not slice the breadfruit.” Now the operating word there is slice. There is a Creole word for slice. One might say “pas couper bwa pain a.” ‘Couper’ which is the French word for “do not cut the breadfruit. But the word slice is better.*

Walcott’s writing and personal background embody the rich and complex racial and cultural mix of St. Lucia. His work often depicts his appreciation for the adroitness of the St. Lucian dual language. He has an equal concept of both English and Creole. On that subject, Walcott also stated in an interview with Bill Moyers in reference to language:

*If one has to have a priority or choice in terms of which language is prevalent, I would be reluctant to say it was English because I think and write in English. If I am doing a play or parts of a poem that need Creole then I have to think Creole. I think it is a good distinction to make because one has often had criticism or accusation of a sort of betrayal to Nation language or a tribal language which questions why one writes in French Creole. (Bill Moyers 1994)*

This aforementioned quote of Derek Walcott sheds light on the complexity that exists between English versus Creole. In Walcott’s case, because his mother was a teacher, he was able to fully embrace the English language by living in the context of English right through childhood. But also he managed to master the Creole that was used in a wider context. As a result, Walcott took advantage of that learning and applied it to his writing.

Walcott also paints with his language providing a vehicle for his art which broadens the gateway to the outer world. He knows how to transverse the contour of language by taking it to the very extreme without breaking the rules. A specific example is Walcott's use of French words when he is writing Creole. He uses the French "l'eau" for water when writing Creole. If he were to stick to the convention of writing in Creole, then instead of using "l'eau" he would use the phonetic spelling "d'lo" or "dlo". But Walcott prefers the spelling that is more French – a language associated with centuries of literary masterpieces. The alignment with the classical and traditional writing along with Walcott's genius may have influenced the Swedish Academy in 1992 to award the poet and playwright the Nobel Prize.

On the progress of Walcott's writings, Judy Stone states:

Walcott's writing has passed through several phases in its development. It has moved from the free verse through a lyrical dialect to a dialogue similar to realism, but his work remains rooted in the ancient classical work of Europe. Time has muted the poet's use of heightened language, but the hallmarks of his work have not changed: an exceptional ability with words and love of word play, inspired imager, and the flung gauntlet of his intellect.

The distinction that Stone makes of Derek Walcott's writing transition is clearly visible in his Nobel lecture of 1992. This lecture exudes characteristics of a Caribbean surrealism:

*Drummers had lit a fire in the shed and they eased the skins of their tables nearer the flames to tighten them. The saffron flames, the bright grass, and the hand-woven armatures of the fragmented god who would be burnt were not in any desert where imperial power had finally toppled but were part of a ritual, evergreen season that, like the cane-burning harvest, is annually repeated, the point of such sacrifice being its repetition, the point of the destruction being renewal through fire. (Nobel Lecture 1992)*

The quality of his work and his use of art very often allowed the poet/artist to sketch landscapes to make the world more indigenous, more Caribbean. Walcott grew up and out of affluence of this Caribbean culture filled with strange folk customs that he further developed into plays. Walcott becomes the voice of this rich mixture when he speaks about folktales. He speaks not just about myths but about fairy tale stories that ordinary Caribbean folks tell in order to entertain themselves or express some level of existence that is mystical. Myths are so intimately bound to Walcott's culture, time and place that unless he keeps the imagery, symbols and metaphors alive by his constant recreation through the arts, the value just slips away from Caribbean people.

Years later Walcott worked this pattern into his play Ti Jean and His Brothers, which is a rich mythology which recounts from beginning to end the difficult choices three brothers made, and what happened as a result. The curtain rises on four forest creatures and the impoverished mother of the three brothers. As the daunted tale unfolds, the reader is thrown into a bowlful of adversity where the three brothers had to answer to the Devil's challenge to make him angry. The eldest brother, Gros Jean, is dreadfully proud of his great strength, the second brother, Mi Jean is a self-educated fool who is infatuated with rhetoric and philosophy; they each in turn try to get ahead by dealing with the devil (in the form of a white planter and Papa Bois). The deal with the devil is that the first to become vexed will be eaten. The two brothers failed, while the youngest brother Ti Jean succeeds because he relied on his instinct and common sense.

A comment in his book "What the Twilight Says" Walcott made it clear that he knew the legends from an early age and was fascinated by its narrative structure:

Best of all, in the lamplit doorway at the creaking hour, the stories sung by old Sidone, It had sprung from hearthside or lamplit hut door in an age when the night outside was a force, inimical, infested with devils, wood demons, a country for the journey of the soul, and any child who has heard its symmetry chanted would want to retell it when he was his own storyteller, with the same respect for its shape.

(21)

Walcott's own version of the Ti-Jean legend seems to have more affinity with the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, or the movement of a Caribbean Anancy story. The creatures in Ti Jean by place, by language are the sounds of the Caribbean and his St. Lucian folklore – animal fables, tales of fantasy and adventure, and tales of the numerous supernatural beings with which the folk imagination had colonized the already mysterious mountains and rainforests. As anthropologist Daniel Cowley has written:

The great majority of St. Lucians are convinced that their island harbors a large number of *ja gaje* (in French: *gens engagés*, persons conscripted, so to speak, bound by an obligation) This generic term is used to denote a large variety of supernatural manifestations associated with the practice of obeah. (Baugh 1978)

The character Bolom is the play's most strikingly symbolic figure; He is depicted as a lost soul, an unborn fetus trapped in the devil's world awaiting reincarnation. He is also seen as a spirit that lives among us from the ex-living. He is a wandering energy that remains after the physical being has gone. The context of scene one, pages 96 and 97, and in the final scene page 163, tends to solidify my opinion on Bolom:



Mother: (Turning, searching) ...Peace to you, unborn you can find comfort here. Let a mother touch you, for the sake of her kind.

Bolom: ...Not till your sons die, Mother, shall this shape feel this life.

Bolom: ...This is the shriek of a child which was strangled, who never saw the earth light through the hinge of the womb, strangled by a woman, who hated my birth, twisted out of shape, deformed past recognition, tell me then mother, would you care to see it?

Gros Jean: Let us see you!

Bolom: Ask him for my life! O God, I want all this to happen to me!

Ti-Jean: Is life you want, child? You don't see what it bring?

The colonial planter or Papa Bois is also associated with the Devil (serpent). He is a wolf in sheep's clothing fleecing the unwise into sin. He is a trickster a conniving and a mischievous character that preys on the brothers' weaknesses. Walcott also identifies the devil as a symbol of the dispossessed Caribbean peasantry's fight for survival under colonialism and gradual movement towards independence. The old man's impersonation of being the Planter is unveiled when they both give the same directives to Gros Jean and Ti Jean. (112 and 147)

Planter: Yes, yes Well Horace, (Gros-Jean) time is flying, and I want these leaves checked, counted, field and classified by weight and texture and then stacked...

Old Man: Now, listen to this, go down by the cane-fields and before the next cloud start checking every blade, count each leaf on the stalk, file them away properly as fast as you can...

Although the play obviously refers to racial, economic and class matters, its main message is spiritual. Woman brings life into the world, and this story indicates that life is a reminder of the Garden of Eden – no time, no birth, no death, no life. The interplay of man and nature is illustrated in this relationship with the devil, casting off life and being reborn like the moon or like the snake shedding its skin and renewing life. The power of life causes the snake to shed its skin, just as the moon sheds its shadows. They are equivalent symbols. Sometimes the serpent is represented as a circle eating its own tail. That's an image of life (the circle of life). Life sheds one generation after another, to be born again.

The play is a parable of mankind's various confrontations with the devil, and more particularly of black man's confrontation with the white devil. The underlying story of "Ti Jean and His Brothers" is also structured as a classical play drawing on influences such as Shakespeare. For example, Walcott puns on the name of the Greek dramatist Aeschylus which is rendered as the frog's sneeze. It is equally clear that the story is a Caribbean play and this aspect proves to be the dominant influence as the play unravels, using a rich blend of music/song (the choric voices of the four animals), dialect (the use of French Creole), dance and impersonation (papa bois, the planter and the devil). In addition, the Cricket's "creek-crack" is the Caribbean storyteller's invitation to call-and-response context to establish dialogue between narrator and audience. Another reason why this play is uniquely Caribbean is that the play does not simply celebrate the folk tradition....the devil is identified with Papa Bois, a traditional St. Lucian figure.

Moving from the mythical masterpiece to the environment of the island, Walcott is equally influenced by the life forces of one of his best known dramatic characters, Makak from Dream on Monkey Mountain. The story tells of a lonely old man who experiences a messianic (the Messiah) vision to save all the peoples stolen and then lost in the Americas. His quest for a new world leads him on a mystic journey back to Africa, where he assumes the mantle of a great warrior chief with the power to put the western world itself on trial. This is the pretentious and surrealistic dream around which the whole action of the play centers. Makak, an old hermit, has lived alone on Monkey Mountain his whole life. The dream he dreams one night forces him off the mountain and on a journey toward Africa. How Makak will get from a small Caribbean island to Africa does not seem to trouble him in the least. With his only friend, Moustique, unwillingly accompanying him, Makak becomes a sort of faith healer. When Moustique is killed in a marketplace riot, Makak is jailed and once he manages to escape with two other convicts he only wants to go home to Monkey Mountain.

Dream on Monkey Mountain explores the nature of Caribbean cultural identity, Caribbean origins, specifically the region's relationships with Africa and Europe. The story is intensely of and about Caribbean people and places, as well as the rest of the world. It also represents Makak's search for home, but it is also about native man being oppressed by colonial rule and the clash of West Indian and English culture. The play is a typically fierce yet elegant mixture of island patois and drama in poetry. The play is a dream, one that exists as much in the given minds of its principal characters.

The themes/conflicts in all of Walcott's works are both realistic and universal. He looks at recurring themes such as success vs. failure, good vs. evil, the necessity of human relationship. To Walcott, success is putting in the appropriate amount of effort to achieve fame or prosperity

while failure primarily exists in the minds of others who have not achieved success. In the play the reader sees that success brings freedom and a wish granted while failure results in a man's being eaten by the devil.

In the two plays, Walcott creates many conditions in which humans live in the world. The main characters in the play are used to portray his ideas to the reader who is presented with the encounter between the deceitful forces of evil (the devil) and the innocence of good (Ti Jean and Makak). It is these forces of evil that ultimately lead to the breakdown of Gros Jean and Mi Jean. This same evil created by the devil is outweighed by good in Ti Jean's world.

The two plays tell of heroes who risk their lives for something bigger than themselves to recover what was lost. Gros Jean and Mi Jean were heroes; however, they succumbed to the devil's tricks and died. Ti Jean and Makak were also heroes, but then their story implies that out of the given life comes new life. It may not be their life, but it's a new life for Caribbean people a new way of being or becoming. What Walcott is suggesting is that a hero lurks in each one of us and as we go on with our daily lives we find out more about ourselves. When we explore the world beyond, our thinking primarily about ourselves and our own self-preservation, undergoes a truly heroic transformation of consciousness. We satisfy our natural love of dance and song; the West Indian temperament goes back to this root instinct surviving on ritualistic modes of observance which prevail in folk culture. Walcott thus sought to create his style drawing on our Caribbean dramatic resources.

Walcott's literary accomplishments have brought about a cultural awareness which subsequently evolves in the preservation of tradition. His works obviously blossom in the continuum of art. Walcott's artistic vision is the creative choices he makes in shaping form and

content. Clearly his depiction of metaphors, symbolism, imagery and his manipulation of language reveal the allure of the Caribbean landscape for the poet. This vision coincides with Dixon's remarks of Walcott: "he drowned himself in a self-pitying love of country than runs its deep thread through all his works."

Standing before the canvas, adding the final touches to a masterpiece, the brush slowly fades, giving rise to a pen – a pen which ignites life into the paper set before me. My imagination, rich with an array of colors, reflect the realization of who he is and what he represents. The genius of Derek Walcott resides within each one of us as Caribbean people.

Throughout his work Walcott emphasizes that there are no set boundaries to the creative imagination. Realization comes through one's visual and artistic expressions that emanate from the textures and tones that make up your soul. For Walcott, the medium chosen to produce those effects that create a landscape of art lies with the brush, the pen, the hands, the body, the language...

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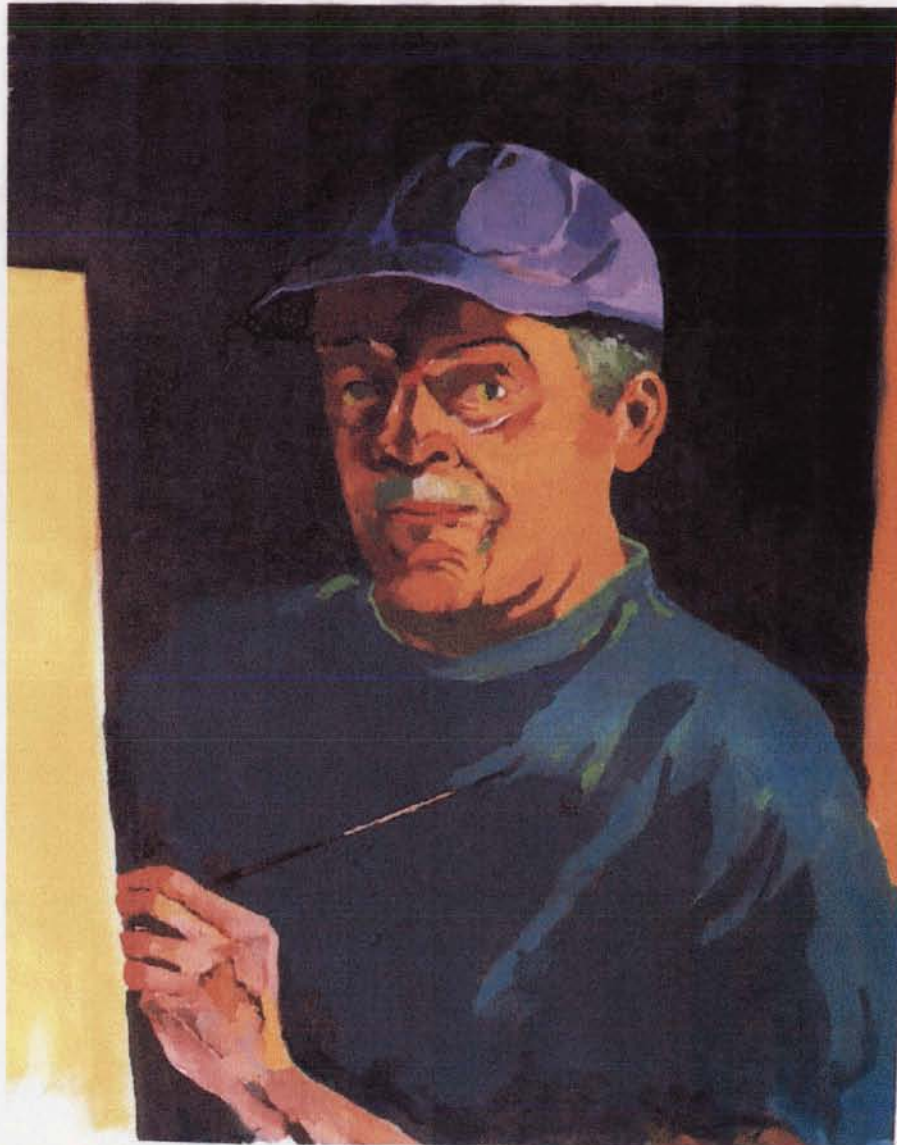
***A Tribute to a Great Man***

*By Anna-Lee*

*"Walcott, whom time has encrusted  
with a rich but boastful flavor of the warm Caribbean,  
Proudly displays the deep golden ambers  
edged in the heart of a native son".*



# SELF-PORTRAIT



# BOY ON THE WALL

