

All generations before
me and far cry from
africa



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Poem is of Nazi period. The poet expresses his feeling which he experience during that period. Yehuda Amichai is a German Jew whose family fled the Nasis and emigrated to Palestine in 1936. The poem talks about the Nazi regime and the period. He fought the World war II and the Israeli war of Independence. | He has written novels and plays and has taught from time to time in American Universities. He is known for his deeply spiritual and philosophical writings and his ironic reflections on man's destiny in a world of divisions and hierarchies.

To talk about the poem, the poem " All the Generations Before me" is a remarkably personal reflection of a man and artist in a specific space and time. In the poem " All the generations Before me", the following personal reflections are noted. - A man and artist in a specific period of time. - Jerusalem and the 20th Century - The poem speaks of self as the sum of tradition and history - Political, economic and social circumstances. - The poet begins the poem by saying that all the generation before him donated legacy bit by bit, so that he has become a full fledged Jew.

He compares himself to a house of prayer in Jerusalem or charitable Institution that has been erected as a result of charity and donation. The poet wanted to have bonding to all those who have contributed to his existence. My name's, my donor; s name actually means that the poet has changed his original surname Pfeuffer to Amichai meaning " My people live". In the second stanza of the poem, the poet has grown old and he is approaching the age his father when he died. He is trying to recollect life's experiences patched with many patches. The poet says that each day is new experience for him and he has the duty of fulfilling the prophecies that some

day all the Jews will be back to the promise land. There is a binding in the promises and none of them were lies.

Finally the poet concludes and says that he have passed forty years of age and that forms a hindrance for him to be eligible for job. Sarcastically he says that where he been in Auschwitz he would not be bothered for searching a job, as he would have been sent straight to the concentration camp, gassed and killed. May be this is a recollection of what happened to his father and forefathers during the Nazi regime. Far cry from Africa A Far Cry from Africa by Derek Walcott deals with the theme of split identity and anxiety caused by it in the face of the struggle in which the poet could side with neither party. It is, in short, about the poet's ambivalent feelings towards the Kenyan terrorists and the counter-terrorist white colonial government, both of which were 'inhuman', during the independence struggle of the country in the 1950s. The persona, probably the poet himself, can take favor of none of them since both bloods circulate along his veins.

He has been given English tongue which he loves on the one hand, and on the other, he cannot tolerate the brutal slaughter of Africans with whom he shares blood and some traditions. His conscience forbids him to favor injustice. He is in the state of indecisiveness, troubled, wishing to see peace and harmony in the region. Beginning with dramatic setting, the poem ' A Far Cry from Africa' opens a horrible scene of bloodshed in African territory. ' Bloodstreams', ' scattered corpses,' ' worm' show ghastly sight of battle. Native blacks are being exterminated like Jews in holocaust following the killing of a white child in its bed by blacks. The title of the poem involves an idiom: " a far cry" means an impossible thing. But the poet seems to use

the words in other senses also; the title suggests in one sense that the poet is writing about an African subject from a distance. Writing from the island of St. Lucia, he feels that he is at a vast distance- both literally and metaphorically from Africa. " a far cry" may also have another meaning, that the real state of the African ' paradise' is a far cry from the Africa that we have read about in descriptions of gorgeous fauna and flora and interesting village customs.

And a third level of meaning to the title is the idea of Walcott hearing the poem as a far cry coming all the way across thousands of miles of ocean. He hears the cry coming to him on the wind. The animal imagery is another important feature of the poem. Walcott regards as acceptable violence the nature or " natural law" of animals killing each other to eat and survive; but human beings has been turned even the unseemly animal behavior into worse and meaningless violence. Beasts come out better than " upright man" since animals do what they must do, any do not seek divinity through inflicting pain.

Walcott believes that human, unlike animals, have no excuse, no real rationale, for murdering non -combatants in the Kenyan conflict. Violence among them has turned into a nightmare of unacceptable atrocity based on color. So, we have the " Kikuyu" and violence in Kenya, violence in a " paradise", and we have " statistics" that don't mean anything and " scholar", who tends to throw their weight behind colonial policy: Walcott's outrage is very just by the standards of the late 1960s, even restrained. More striking than the animal imagery is the image of the poet himself at the end of the poem.

He is divided, and doesn't have any escape. " I who am poisoned with the blood of both, where shall I turn, divided to the vein? " This sad ending illustrates a consequence of displacement and isolation. Walcott feels foreign in both cultures due to his mixed blood. An individual sense of identity arises from cultural influences, which define one's character according to a particular society's standards; the poet's hybrid heritage prevents him from identifying directly with one culture. Thus creates a feeling of isolation.

Walcott depicts Africa and Britain in the standard roles of the vanquished and the conqueror, although he portrays the cruel imperialistic exploits of the British without creating sympathy for the African tribesmen. This objectively allows Walcott to contemplate the faults of each culture without reverting to the bias created by attention to moral considerations. However, Walcott contradicts the savior image of the British through an unfavorable description in the ensuing lines. " Only the worm, colonel of carrion cries/ ' waste no compassion on their separated dead'. The word ' colonel' is a punning on ' colonial' also. The Africans associated with a primitive natural strength and the British portrayed as an artificially enhanced power remain equal in the contest for control over Africa and its people. Walcott's divided loyalties engender a sense of guilt as he wants to adopt the " civilized" culture of the British but cannot excuse their immoral treatment of the Africans. The poem reveals the extent of Walcott's consternation through the poet's inability to resolve the paradox of his hybrid inheritance. Lines 1-3

The first three lines depict the poem's setting on the African plain, or veldt. The nation itself is compared to an animal (perhaps a lion) with a " tawny pelt. " Tawny is a color described as light brown to brownish orange that is

common color in the African landscape. The word “ Kikuyu” serves as the name of a native tribe in Kenya. What seems an idyllic portrayal of the African plain quickly shifts; the Kikuyu are compared to flies (buzzing around the “ animal” of Africa) who are feeding on blood, which is present in large enough amounts to create streams. Lines 4-6

Walcott shatters the image of a paradise that many associate with Africa by describing a landscape littered with corpses. He adds a sickening detail by referring to a worm, or maggot, that reigns in this setting of decaying human flesh. The worm’s admonishment to “ Waste no compassion on these separate dead! ” is puzzling in that it implies that the victims somehow got what they deserved. Lines 7-10 The mention of the words “ justify” and “ colonial policy,” when taken in context with the preceding six lines, finally clarifies the exact event that Walcott is describing — the Mau Mau Uprising against British colonists in Kenya during the 1950s.

Where earlier the speaker seemed to blame the victims, he now blames those who forced the colonial system onto Kenya and polarized the population. They cannot justify their actions, because their reasons will never matter to the “ white child” who has been murdered — merely because of his color — in retaliation by Mau Mau fighters or to the “ savages,” who — in as racist an attitude as was taken by Nazis against Jews — are deemed worthless, or expendable. (“ Savages” is a controversial term that derives from the French word *sauvage* meaning wild, and is now wholly derogatory in English. Walcott’s use of “ savage” functions to present a

British colonialist’s racist point of view.) Lines 11-14 Walcott shifts gears in these lines and returns to images of Africa’s wildlife, in a reminder that the

ibises (long-billed wading birds) and other beasts ruled this land long before African or European civilization existed. The poet also describes a centuries-old hunting custom of natives walking in a line through the long grass and beating it to flush out prey. Such killing for sustenance is set against the senseless and random death that native Africans and European settlers perpetrate upon each other. Lines 15-21 These lines are simultaneously pro-nature and anticulture.

Animals kill merely for food and survival, but humans, having perfected the skill of hunting for food, extend that violent act to other areas, using force to exert control — and prove superiority over — other people; they seek divinity by deciding who lives and who dies. Ironically, wars between people are described as following the beat of a drum — an instrument made of an animal hide stretched over a cylinder. Walcott also points out that for whites, historically, peace has not been the result a compromise with an opponent, but a situation arrived at because the opposition has been crushed and cannot resist anymore.

Lines 22-25 These lines are difficult to interpret, but they appear to be aimed at those judging the Mau Mau uprising from a distance — observers who could somehow accept brutality as necessary and who are aware of a dire situation but wipe their hands, or refuse to become involved, in it. The poet appears to condemn such an attitude by comparing the Mau Mau Uprising to the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Leaders of France and Great Britain wanted to avoid another war that would engulf all of Europe, so they introduced a nonintervention pact that was signed by twenty-seven nations.

Nonetheless, the Insurgents, or Nationalists, (under the leadership of General Francisco Franco) were aided by and received military aid from Germany and Italy. The Loyalists, or Republicans, had no such backing; they fought valiantly but were outmanned, lost territory, and were eventually defeated in March of 1939. Line 25 presents a cynical view of the Mau Mau Uprising as just another colonial conflict where gorillas — negatively animalized Africans — fight with superman — a negative characterization of Europe. Lines 26-33

This stanza is a change of scene from primarily that of Africa, to that of the poet. Walcott, being a product of both African and English heritage, is torn, because he does not know how to feel about the Mau Mau struggle. He certainly is not satisfied with the stock response of those from the outside. Walcott is sickened by the behavior of Mau Mau just as he has been disgusted by the British. By the end, the poet's dilemma is not reconciled, but one gets the sense that Walcott will abandon neither Africa nor Britain *- Source is from different websites.