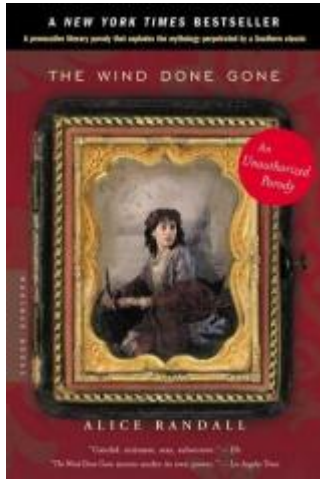


The Wind Done Gone

by Alice Randall



About the Book

In this daring and provocative literary parody which has captured the interest and imagination of a nation, Alice Randall explodes the world created in **Gone With the Wind**, a work that more than any other has defined our image of the antebellum South. Taking sharp aim at the romanticized, whitewashed mythology perpetrated by this southern classic, Randall has ingeniously conceived a multilayered, emotionally complex tale of her own - that of Cynara, the mulatto half-sister, who, beautiful and brown and born into slavery, manages to break away from the damaging world of the Old South to emerge into full life as a daughter, a lover, a mother, a victor. **The Wind Done Gone** is a passionate love story, a wrenching portrait of a tangled mother-daughter relationship, and a book that "celebrates a people's emancipation not only from bondage but also from history and myth, custom and stereotype" (San Antonio Express-News).

Discussion Guide

- 1. The Wind Done Gone** is a novel written in the form of a first-person diary. How would you describe Cynara's voice? How does her language evolve over the course of the book?
- Mammy is a very complex character: a lover, friend, mother, nurse, and possible murderer. To whom does she give life? Who suspects that she is a murderer? Who is she thought to have murdered? What is the nature of her relationship with Lady? How does the relationship change? What is the nature of her relationship with Other? How does this relationship change? What does Garlic mean when he states over her grave that she is the true mistress of the house?
- Vengeance is an important theme in this novel. The act of writing a parody of another novel can be understood as an act of literary vengeance. Which character achieves the most explicit and sinister act of literal vengeance?
- In Southern English the word "tata" is used to mean both "thank you" and "you're welcome," particularly between people of unequal status. It is also means "breast." Tata is the name of the plantation house in which Cynara is born. What does the house look like? Who designed it? What does the house Tata suggest about the nature of African-American intellect?
- The Wind Done Gone** makes significant use of a variety of homonyms (words that sound alike but mean different things). In the very first paragraph we have the word "tiers," evoking the word "tears," and the word "peridot," evoking the word "parody." Here Mammy has a first name, Pallas. How does this name enhance our sense that the people of Tata are living in the breast of Mammy?
- The cakewalk was a plantation dance in which blacks competed against other blacks to ridicule and scorn

the way plantation aristocrats danced their quadrilles. With this in mind, how does the fact that R. gives Cynara a cake foreshadow the notion that Other is part black? Where else is the word "cakewalk" mentioned in the novel?

7. What makes the Congressman attractive to Cynara? What vow does she break to be with him? What impact would the relationship with Cynara have on the Congressman's career?

8. Cynara's relationship with R. begins when he purchases her as a teenager. In what sense can she be described as a sexually abused child? What evidence do we have that Cynara is emotionally damaged by the relationship? Why does Cynara contrive for R. to meet Other? How does her competition with Other for R.'s affections parallel her competition with Other for Mammy's affections? In what significant way are the relationships different? Why does she marry R.? Why does she leave him? When does Cynara begin to be aware that R. is old?

9. Beauty and Dreamy Gentleman are both presented as gay characters. They are also two of the few white characters who "stay" white. What does this suggest? In what sense does **The Wind Done Gone** tend to erase the color line?

10. At the end of **The Wind Done Gone**, a baby is born. Who is the child's father? How is this known? Who is the child's biological mother? Who raises the child as her own? What story in the Hebrew Bible does this bring to mind?

11. If the novel **Gone With the Wind** suggests that reader in **The Wind Done Gone**. In **Gone With the Wind**, Melanie is presented as the epitome of a sweet, lily-white lady. How is the portrayal of Mealy Mouth a comment on the complicity of Southern ladies in the evils of slavery?

13. The Congressman is not the only black man in Cynarblacks are intellectually inferior to whites, that the proper role of the black mother is to tend a white charge, and that black politicians are inferior, how far does **The Wind Done Gone** go in rebuking and scorning these claims?

12. Mealy Mouth is presented as a multiple sadistic mua's life. How does Cynara's changing understanding of Garlic's power influence her attraction to the Congressman? Who is Cynara's first black male suitor? What is his claim on her heart?

14. Cynara is an herb finder, a loan maker, a songwriter, a diarist, a lover, a friend, and finally a mother. In each of these roles she is uniquely vulnerable and uniquely gifted. In which role is she most successful?

15. How does Cynara's experience as a servant influence her dealings with servants and tradespeople?

16. The scope of Cynara's world extends beyond the American South. Atlanta is not the dominant city. To what other cities does Cynara travel? What city influences her most? How is the geographical position of this city significant?

17. Throughout the book runs the theme that things or beings that look the same can be very, very different: Cynara, Other; emeralds, peridots, green glass; killing herbs, curing herbs. In what sense does this theme compel the reader to play close attention?

18. The great political tragedy of **Gone With the Wind** is the South's loss of the Civil War. The great political tragedy of **The Wind Done Gone** is the end of what?

19. What does the butterfly on Cynara's cheek signify?

20. If you were told that there is an African-American tradition of coded language, how would you connect this novel to that tradition? What does it mean for a book to talk back to another book?

Author Bio

Alice Randall was born in Detroit, Michigan, in an enclave of Motown populated almost exclusively with refugees from Alabama. She grew up in Washington, D.C., and then attended Harvard University, from which she graduated in 1981 with an honors degree in English and American literature. In 1983 she moved to Nashville to become a country songwriter. The only African-American woman in history to write a number-one country song, she has had over twenty songs recorded, including two top ten records and a top forty. Her work includes the only known recorded country songs to explore the subject of lynching ("The Ballad of Sally Ann"), mention Aretha Franklin in the same line as Patsy Cline ("XXX's and OOO's: An American Girl"), and give tribute to both the slave dead and the Confederate dead ("I'll Cry for Yours, Will You Cry for Mine?"). Ms. Randall is also a produced screenwriter (a movie of the week for CBS) and has worked on adaptations of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Parting the Waters*, and *Brer Rabbit*.

The mother of Caroline Randall Williams (who is the great-granddaughter of the Harlem Renaissance poet Arna Bontemps) and the wife of attorney David Ewing (a ninth-generation resident of Nashville and a great-great-grandson of Prince Albert Ewing, the first African American to practice law in Tennessee), Alice Randall Ewing lives deeply down south. Early in their courtship, Alice and David took Caroline on her first trip to Atlanta, a city that has long been important in Alice's family because it is where her father, George, was briefly enrolled at Morris Brown, one of the nation's oldest black colleges.

The entire family is involved in documenting and preserving the history of people of color in the American South, with particular interest in the history of enslaved women and enslaved children and in the formerly enslaved who went on to striking academic achievement or whose children did. They have lectured, researched, consulted, and written about these topics, and have served on the boards of a variety of museums, historic houses, and institutions concerned with preserving and documenting the lives of enslaved people and their descendants, including Belle Meade Plantation, Carnton, the Hermitage (Andrew Jackson's home), Traveler's Rest, the Metro Historic Commission (of Nashville), the African-American Historical and Genealogical Association, the Family Cemetery Project, the Andrew Jackson's Slave Descendent Project, and Fisk University.

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