

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,900
Okay, hi. I'm Angie Meller. As Dr.

00:00:04,900 --> 00:00:12,760
Dena said, I'm a graduate student in the MTL program and also an assistant professor in the English department.

00:00:13,579 --> 00:00:19,620
And today I'm going to be talking about a paper that I'm still working on. So like Dr.

00:00:19,620 --> 00:00:25,360
Taylor did last night, if you guys would like to offer me any criticisms or feedback, that would

00:00:25,360 --> 00:00:28,040
be excellent and awesome and I would appreciate it.

00:00:28,200 --> 00:00:35,740
And my paper is focusing on Derek Walcott's book of poetry, which he said was his last book of poetry, *The Prodigal*.

00:00:36,880 --> 00:00:39,299
And it's really interesting because in Dr.

00:00:39,520 --> 00:00:49,799
Dena's paper he talked a lot about some of the same things that I have gone over in mine regarding his Nobel Prize speech.

00:00:50,080 --> 00:00:55,279
So you'll see or hear several of those references as well.

00:00:56,599 --> 00:01:01,240
So I'll just kind of go through my paper and you guys can tell me what needs work.

00:01:02,319 --> 00:01:06,680
Alright, so it's called *Writing the Wounded Memory*, *The Journey in Walcott's The Prodigal*.

00:01:08,779 --> 00:01:13,379
Derek Walcott's latest book of poetry, *The Prodigal*, like the Bible story of the same name,

00:01:13,720 --> 00:01:20,199
is the story of the son of Colonial Antilles, educated and reared under the British rule, who

00:01:20,199 --> 00:01:22,849
journeys to Europe to discover he can't leave home behind.

00:01:23,470 --> 00:01:26,510

From Italy to Spain, he is always remembering St. Lucia.

00:01:27,889 --> 00:01:32,269

Walcott describes his split identity he developed, a concept that appears in much of his poetry

00:01:32,269 --> 00:01:38,949

in his Nobel Prize speech, which begins with the description of an Indian celebration of Ramlila,

00:01:39,209 --> 00:01:46,010

in which the epic dramatization of Hindu epic, the Ramayana, was going to be performed.

00:01:47,290 --> 00:01:51,550

Walcott demonstrates some metaphoric coins of the people of the Antilles as a broken vase.

00:01:52,209 --> 00:01:57,349

He wrote, break a vase and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love

00:01:57,349 --> 00:02:00,230

which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.

00:02:00,930 --> 00:02:05,569

The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape.

00:02:06,250 --> 00:02:11,330

It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms

00:02:11,330 --> 00:02:13,649

whose restoration shows its white scars.

00:02:14,250 --> 00:02:19,550

This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are

00:02:19,550 --> 00:02:24,389

disparate, ill-fitting, they contain more pain than the original sculpture.

00:02:25,470 --> 00:02:29,470

Those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places.

00:02:30,589 --> 00:02:36,130

And this is the exact process of the making of poetry, or what should be called, not its making,

00:02:36,289 --> 00:02:43,850

but its remaking, the fragmented memory." Through the wounded collective memory of colonialism,

00:02:44,369 --> 00:02:49,630

Walcott attempts in the Prodigal to gather the broken pieces of the Antilles through image and

00:02:49,630 --> 00:02:56,869

memory, using poetry as a way to heal, to be the glue that fits the pieces in its original shape,

00:02:57,130 --> 00:02:59,770

as well as the love that reassembles our fragments.

00:03:00,610 --> 00:03:07,750

He also uses another metaphor, that of the Prodigal son, to represent the journey of his travels

00:03:07,750 --> 00:03:09,850

around Europe and finally back to the Caribbean.

00:03:10,910 --> 00:03:16,229

In a sense, this journey and the return home becomes a journey of healing, healing of that fragmented

00:03:16,229 --> 00:03:20,589

memory and reconciling the split identity he has spent much of his career exploring.

00:03:21,809 --> 00:03:27,729

Through this book of poems, he is able to use the power of writing as a way to heal the wound

00:03:27,729 --> 00:03:36,630

of the disparate, ill-fitting pieces containing more pain than the original sculpture, that is the Antilles. Born in St.

00:03:36,770 --> 00:03:42,029

Lucia in 1930, he studied at the University College of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica.

00:03:42,770 --> 00:03:48,460

He moved to Trinidad in 1953, became a theater and art critic, and taught in schools in the

00:03:48,750 --> 00:03:54,289

Caribbean until 1957, and has later divided his time between Trinidad and the U.S.

00:03:54,789 --> 00:03:59,970

A poet from a very early age, Walcott was born with an inherent subject in which to write about.

00:04:00,649 --> 00:04:07,080

As David Mason wrote in his article, Derek Walcott, Poet of the New World, Walcott had something

00:04:07,080 --> 00:04:11,740

to say because he was born in a place that embodies so many diverse elements.

00:04:12,919 --> 00:04:16,700

These diverse elements were a subject that Walcott was determined to write about.

00:04:17,799 --> 00:04:23,839

Helen Vendler wrote he would not give up his topic, his geographical place, his historical time,

00:04:23,839 --> 00:04:27,579

and his mixed blood, in all things he was a divided child.

00:04:28,380 --> 00:04:34,970

It is in this divided child who he writes through both plays and poetry as a way to heal, but

00:04:34,970 --> 00:04:39,089

he could not begin to do that, it seems, until he was able to leave home.

00:04:39,910 --> 00:04:43,410

For many Caribbean writers it was necessary to leave the Caribbean.

00:04:44,250 --> 00:04:46,269

John Robert Lee, a reporter for the St.

00:04:46,410 --> 00:04:55,929

Lucian Star, said upon Walcott's announcement of receiving the Nobel Prize, Derek had to go outside.

00:04:56,429 --> 00:04:58,429

Do not foolishly blame him for that.

00:04:58,570 --> 00:05:00,730

He has made the path clear for us.

00:05:01,750 --> 00:05:06,709

Jeffrey Green, in his article Walcott's Traveler and the Problem of Witness, described Walcott's

00:05:06,709 --> 00:05:13,850

work as crafting hundreds of metaphors for conflicted identity caught between or shuttling between two worlds.

00:05:14,609 --> 00:05:21,309

In the context of Walcott's history of place and self, a reader can easily understand why you may be wounded.

00:05:22,029 --> 00:05:26,170

In his epic poem, Omeros, Walcott uses the wound as metaphor.

00:05:27,549 --> 00:05:32,450

Quote, Walcott's radiant metaphor of the wound helps to dramatize poetry's promise as one of

00:05:32,450 --> 00:05:35,549

the richest and most vibrant genres of post-colonial writing.

00:05:36,329 --> 00:05:43,609

Quote, Walcott himself called the wound a deep amnesiac blow of slavery and colonialism.

00:05:43,609 --> 00:05:48,970

This wound is partly to blame for Walcott's divided self and through the narrative of the prodigal,

00:05:49,429 --> 00:05:53,920

he uses writing as a way to attempt to reconcile these selves in a form of healing.

00:05:54,899 --> 00:05:59,299

While Walcott stresses that the two selves will never be completely whole, nor does he want

00:05:59,299 --> 00:06:04,500

them to be, the act of recognizing the fracture itself through his poetry is a way of healing.

00:06:05,440 --> 00:06:10,880

For example, in the second part of the book, in the second part of the second poem of the book,

00:06:10,920 --> 00:06:19,779

which the poems are all numbers and have separate Roman numeral parts, none of them have titles per se.

00:06:20,579 --> 00:06:25,179

In the second poem, he demonstrates how writing had brought him to acknowledge his two selves.

00:06:25,980 --> 00:06:31,000

He wrote, a conspiring pen had brought him thus far.

00:06:31,660 --> 00:06:37,760

All that he had dared lay in the elegant ambush whose bright noise was like the starlit surf

00:06:37,760 --> 00:06:39,640

whose voice had reared him.

00:06:40,019 --> 00:06:43,239

But this was a different climate, a different country.

00:06:44,140 --> 00:06:46,519

Now both lives had met in this achievement.

00:06:47,339 --> 00:06:51,079

He turned his head away from this time and walked back towards the road.

00:06:51,899 --> 00:06:57,339

The scene was just like something he had read, something in boyhood before he went abroad.

00:06:58,260 --> 00:06:59,820

But cowardice called to him.

00:07:00,359 --> 00:07:07,399

He went back inside, secure and rigid in their printed places, all of the dancers in that frozen ballroom.

00:07:09,100 --> 00:07:12,519

Here Walcott has demonstrated a coming together of the selves.

00:07:13,079 --> 00:07:15,820

As he wrote, both lives had met in this achievement.

00:07:16,579 --> 00:07:22,440

However, though both of his lives have met, there is still a hesitation about which one to choose.

00:07:22,880 --> 00:07:29,920

He refers to his homeland in the lines, whose bright noise was like the starlit surf whose voice had reared him.

00:07:31,320 --> 00:07:33,899

And part of the self is what he embraces.

00:07:35,359 --> 00:07:40,579

Walcott remembers the situation as one he had only read about before going abroad, but now it

00:07:40,579 --> 00:07:44,059

was actually him living it, not some character from a novel.

00:07:44,059 --> 00:07:50,600

This realization that he is now able to experience what he had only read about as a child somewhat frightens him.

00:07:51,279 --> 00:07:57,459

He refers to it as cowardice calling to him and his return to the inside, secure and rigid.

00:07:58,019 --> 00:08:03,940

He is unable to reconcile the selves of the surf whose voice had reared him and the self of

00:08:03,940 --> 00:08:06,320

a different climate, a different country.

00:08:07,799 --> 00:08:15,480

The road to self-discovery is treacherous and complicated for any poet, let alone a poet of Walcott's background. His, as Dr.

00:08:15,480 --> 00:08:24,679

Dena said, mongrel, schizophrenic identity as he uses as a source in much of his poetry.

00:08:25,700 --> 00:08:31,079

For Walcott, self-discovery has become a negotiation between the post-colonial homeland and

00:08:31,079 --> 00:08:36,020

the exploration of the colonizer's countries in his volume of poems, *The Prodigal*.

00:08:37,359 --> 00:08:42,520

Throughout his journeys through Germany, Italy and several other European countries, he explores

00:08:42,520 --> 00:08:49,020

the landscapes and people through his critical imagistic eye, yet frequently returns to and references his home.

00:08:50,159 --> 00:08:55,919

For example, in the second part of the ninth poem in *The Prodigal*,

Walcott reminisces, I carry

00:08:55,919 --> 00:09:03,840

a small white city in my head, one with its avenues of withered flowers, with no sound of traffic but the surf.

00:09:04,580 --> 00:09:11,219

No dusk at dusk on the short street where my brother and our mother live now, at the same address.

00:09:11,859 --> 00:09:13,119

So many are their neighbors.

00:09:14,219 --> 00:09:19,520

Make room for the accommodation of the dead, their mounds that multiply by the furrowing sea,

00:09:20,140 --> 00:09:26,140

not in the torch-lit catacombs of your head, but by the almond-bright, spoon-blown cemetery.

00:09:27,020 --> 00:09:30,479

What was our war, veterans of three score years and ten?

00:09:31,380 --> 00:09:35,940

To save the salt light of the island, to protect and exalt its small people.

00:09:37,219 --> 00:09:43,219

In this poem, Walcott proclaims that he always carries his home, his true sense of place, that

00:09:43,219 --> 00:09:46,539

small white city, with him no matter his location.

00:09:47,099 --> 00:09:53,059

But through part of this journey, the path to save the salt light of the island, to protect

00:09:53,059 --> 00:10:00,119

and exalt its small people, there's also a negotiation of voice and culture.

00:10:00,979 --> 00:10:08,440

This is demonstrated, it's demonstrated in the later section of the text, in which Walcott questions

00:10:08,440 --> 00:10:10,840

the way he presents his journey through poetry.

00:10:12,219 --> 00:10:17,580

In which self and in which voice does he speak of his home?

00:10:18,099 --> 00:10:25,020

He writes also in the ninth poem, in what voice, since I now have changing voices, the change

00:10:25,020 --> 00:10:29,099

of light on a pink plaster wall is the change of a culture.

00:10:30,000 --> 00:10:37,020

How the light is seen, how it is steady and seasonless in these islands, as opposed to the doomed

00:10:37,020 --> 00:10:43,119

and mortal sun of midsummer, or in the tightening circle of shadow in the bullring.

00:10:43,679 --> 00:10:50,080

This is how a people look at death, and write a literature of gliding transience as the sun

00:10:50,080 --> 00:10:52,400

loses its sight, singing of islands.

00:10:54,200 --> 00:11:00,000

Not only must Walcott navigate the complexities of the split self, but also the diverse and

00:11:00,000 --> 00:11:01,080

changing culture of the Caribbean.

00:11:02,059 --> 00:11:06,940

Walcott writes, this is how people look at death, and write a literature of gliding transience.

00:11:07,460 --> 00:11:13,219

In these lines, he looks at the death, perhaps of colonialism, and the disparate ill-fitting

00:11:13,219 --> 00:11:20,599

pieces that are the shards of the whole vase, and focusing on the worth of a literature that

00:11:20,599 --> 00:11:24,780

brings all of the pieces together throughout his poetic journey.

00:11:26,340 --> 00:11:31,619

And though his attempt is not to heal the broken self completely, but to recognize the selves

00:11:31,619 --> 00:11:35,960

and their characteristics, Walcott does write about the healing process of poetry.

00:11:36,599 --> 00:11:41,659

In poem five, part four of the Prodigal, he addresses the origins of the healing narrative,

00:11:41,919 --> 00:11:46,599

that they begin in the heart, in the memory, and rather than seeing the split of selves warring

00:11:46,599 --> 00:11:49,760

against each other, Walcott is able to praise them both.

00:11:50,299 --> 00:11:57,200

He wrote, narrative originates in the heart, times pendulum and apostrophe, until the heart

00:11:57,200 --> 00:12:04,599

scales are swung to a standstill, to a breathing balance, a light meridian of the hemispheres,

00:12:05,280 --> 00:12:13,780

saying to the sea in Europe, here I am, division swayed by justice, poetry unbiased to an absolute

00:12:13,780 --> 00:12:18,940

pivot, that is my sores surrendering victory over myself, my better halves.

00:12:20,580 --> 00:12:25,919

Walcott describes the narrative here as a standstill, a breathing balance, saying that he belongs

00:12:25,919 --> 00:12:27,539

both to Europe and the sea.

00:12:28,440 --> 00:12:33,739

In the next line, he addresses the divided self on one hand, justice for the original wound,

00:12:33,820 --> 00:12:37,039

and on the other, poetry, which attempts to heal it.

00:12:37,580 --> 00:12:41,979

He declares that he reached victory over the selves, speaking of them collectively, rather than

00:12:41,979 --> 00:12:44,400
a separate entities as my better halves.

00:12:45,500 --> 00:12:50,039
It is through his narrative journey of the prodigal that Walcott is able to write his way into

00:12:50,039 --> 00:12:52,239
a healing compromise between his selves.

00:12:52,700 --> 00:12:58,239
Just as the biblical prodigal son must leave home to find it, and peace within himself upon

00:12:58,239 --> 00:13:04,859
his return, so is Walcott able to use his travels throughout Europe as a way to reconcile his

00:13:04,859 --> 00:13:11,340
fractured self, not healing it entirely, but rather using his poetry as the glue that fits the

00:13:11,340 --> 00:13:13,919
pieces, is a healing of its original shape.

00:13:14,820 --> 00:13:20,140
It is such a love that resembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose

00:13:20,140 --> 00:13:22,219
restoration shows its white scars.

00:13:23,059 --> 00:13:29,700
These white scars become the words and language of Walcott's poetry as he finds his way along his journey of self-discovery.

00:13:38,260 --> 00:13:41,559
Comments? Suggestions?