

**Lecture 12: Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, Books III-V**

- Book V
  - The point of view seems abstract, moving among the European capitals of the Old World
  - Things are divided into two halves of the world, stitched together by travels back and forth.
  - Caribbean ↔ European. These connections between European history and Caribbean history is a kind of trope of the Caribbean.
  - Critical scrutiny of art and of these locations
    - Art can absolve you of political guilt
  - At the end of Book V the narrator tries to trace his path back to where he got Homer's real name
  
- Names in Book III
  - Achille and Afolabe consider the true meaning of names
  - What do you make of this passage?
    - Like you're not anything without a name
    - Names connect you to your roots
    - How can you lose a name?
    - Achille and his father have forgotten his original name
    - Accept the sound you were given
    - Achille doesn't really understand what his father means
  - This is one of the book's central problems – you leave Africa and forget the language of where you came from
  - God has intervened personally to let Achille go back to Africa and get his name – you hope that he's going to be given the magical apple in some way, but he isn't. He gets an unbridgeable gap.
    - Then again, you can't really expect the poem to change history
    - Achille gets to see what happened, and say, "well, I have this name now"
  
- Another passage later on:
  - Trees become these godlike, colossal figures
    - They can turn back into gods at any time
  - What does the waiter have to do with those powerful tree trunks washing up on the shore?
    - "Remember us"
    - You're struck by the incongruity – it seems sarcastic
    - But at the same time, this guy is also struggling to survive. It gives him the message of his history.
  - What's the perspective on this waiter character in general?
    - Remember the "Lawrence of St. Lucia" passage from earlier on, where he kicks the bucket of champagne
    - That earlier passage is clearly comical, but what else is going on?
    - The black waiter is bringing a bill, and it's not just a bill for drinks. It is something bigger and more nebulous, and it is too big to be paid, as he demands payment for history.

- Think about the Polish waitress who pops up in Book IV. Not all oppression and opposition is colonial.
- A passage from the end of Book III
  - Achille is raking the yard for Seven Seas
  - Achille digs up history
  - He finds a carved stone and throws it away in horror
    - Why does he do that?
  - Does this passage remind you of anything else?
    - He removes the stone from its context, angering the archaeologists
  - What do we understand about Achille's fear of the past?
    - He knows that the ancestors will be mad to have lost their history. They will be mad because of his invasion. He doesn't belong there.
  - Remember when Achille was listening to Marley's "Buffalo Soldier." It creates an opposition.