



**Update Page for Class of 4/17/23**

Course materials and info page: <https://sacks-richard.com/omeros-at-du-materials>

**For our fifth and penultimate class (that of 4/17)**, we'll continue our work on *Omeros*, first spending some time on the sequence framed by the Catherine Weldon episodes: namely, the narrator's 2<sup>nd</sup> visit with his father (in chapter 36, the end of book 4) along with the European journey the narrator then takes at his father's urging (in chapters 37-40, the first half of book 5), a sequence which ends with the question of "what power lay in the work / of forgiving fountains with naiads and lions" (40.3.32-33/p205, chapter 40's final lines). We'll then move on to book six and its three climactic episodes: the death and funeral of Hector, the healing of Philoctete's wound, and the death and funeral of Maud Plunkett. As per the schedule on the syllabus, for class on 4/17 please read through chapter 55 (the final chapter of book 6 which ends on page 277). Though as we've seen by now, just about everything in *Omeros* seems strategically and dazzlingly resonating and interconnected, here as usual are some specific passages from book 6 (again, one from each chapter) which you might find productive/provocative to think about.

**Chapter 44)** What do you make of **44.1 (pp. 221-222), the opening section of book 6**, which begins with "the same sunrise" (44.1.2/p221), moves to "black rain / which can lose an entire archipelago" (44.1.20-21/p222), and ends when "the rain stopped" ... "and there was a different brightness / in everything" (44.1.32...38-39/p222)?

**Chapter 45)** What do you make of **45.2 (pp. 226-229) in which the narrator** – as he looks out at the St. Lucian landscape while being driven from the airport to his hotel – **questions his own artistic motives**: "Didn't I want the poor / to stay in the same light so that I could transfix / them in amber, the afterglow of an empire, / preferring a shed of palm-thatch with tilted sticks / to that blue bus-stop" (45.2.31-35/p227)?

**Chapter 46)** What do you make of **46.1 (pp. 232-233), the funeral of Hector**?

**Chapter 47)** What do you make of **47.3 (pp. 238-239) featuring a swift carrying "the cure / that precedes every wound"** (47.3.4-5/p239)?

**Chapter 48)** What do you make of **Ma Kilman's search for the root she will use to cure Philoctete, a search which takes up most of chapter 48**, beginning when she "glimpsed gods in the leaves" (48.1.55/p242)... "the unburied god, for three centuries dead, / but from whose lineage, as if her veins were their roots, / her arms undulated, uplifting the branches..." (48.1.74-76/pp242-243), and then extending through the rest of the chapter?

**Chapter 49)** What do you make of **the question – "What else did it cure?" (49.1.27/p247) – posed in the final line of 49.1**, the section in which Ma Kilman "bathes [Philoctete] in the brew of the root [in a] basin" ... "agape in its crusted agonized O: the scream / of centuries" (49.1.1...8-9/p246)?

**Chapter 50)** What do you make of **the narrative's return to the Plunketts in chapter 50 (pp. 251-254)**, a sequence in which sections 1-2 focus on the Major in London during "their last trip home" (50.1.5/p251) when "he felt like a strolling statue" (50.2.35/p253), while section 3 suddenly switches the focus to Maud back in St. Lucia as she senses her approaching death, "knew it was coming" ... "as its rings spread the white / languid dominion of the crowned water-lily" (50.3.7...18-19/p254)?

**Chapter 51)** What do you make of **51.1 (pp. 255-257), which features a confrontation between Major Plunkett and Hector?**

**Chapter 52)** What do you make of **52.3 (p. 263), the 9-line section immediately preceding Maud Plunkett's funeral**, with its "changing shadow of Telemachus" (52.3.7/p263)?

**Chapter 53)** What do you make of **chapter 53, the funeral of Maud Plunkett?**

**Chapter 54)** What do you make of **54.2-3 (pp. 270-272), in which the narrator contemplates his/our "methodological" anxieties:** e.g., "two opposing stratagems" (54.2.16/p270), or "All that Greek manure" (54.3.1/p270), or "that light beyond metaphor" (54.3.12/p270, seemingly "glossed" by the ensuing nine lines with which the chapter ends)?

**Chapter 55)** What do you make of **55.2 (pp. 275-276) as Achille, with Helen's help, dresses for his Boxing Day dance with Philoctete**, "not [as] the usual kingfish-fighter / but a muscular woman" (55.1.28-29/p273), "and not because of Christmas, / but for something older, something that he had seen / in Africa, when his name had followed a swift, / where he had been his own father and his own son" (55.2.6-9/p275)?