



Update Page for Class of 4/24/23

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

For our sixth and final class (that of 4/24), we will attempt to work our way through the end of *Omeros*, picking up where we left off in 54.2-3 (pp. 270-272), the sequence which features the narrator's "methodological" questions on p. 271 (e.g., "Why make the smoke a door?" and "When would the sails drop / from my eyes...?" and "when would I enter the light beyond metaphor?"). We'll then turn our attention to book 7, the poem's final book. So please complete your reading of the text, and try to come to class armed with evidence – including evidence from book 7 – supporting your conclusion(s) about what you think *Omeros* is ultimately arguing. As usual, here are some specific passages (one from each chapter in book 7) which might prove helpful as you work toward your conclusions.

Chapter 56) What do you make of **56.3 (pp. 282-4), in which the narrator tells Omeros "I never read it" [evidently the *Odyssey*] / ... "Not all the way through"** (56.3.11-12/p283), immediately after which his narrative voice adds "I turned cold the moment I had said it" (56.3.14/p283)?

Chapter 57) What do you make of **57.3 (p. 288), the final section located aboard chapter 57's "black canoe / [with its] grizzled oarsman"** (57.1.1-2/p285), which takes the narrator through a "ghostly fleet" (57.3.1/p288) until "each mast / after reflection changed to a spindly fence / at the curve of a mangrove river" (57.3.14-16/p288)?

Chapter 58) What do you make of **58.2 (pp. 290-292), the first half of which contemplates** (on p. 291) **three levels of narration** (in lines 15-16, narrator/narrator's "wanderer"/narrator's wanderer's "narrator"), **"tricks with time"** (line 17), and **"two journeys / in every odyssey"** (lines 17ff.)?

Chapter 59) What do you make of **59.2 (pp. 296-298), which begins with the question "Why waste lines on Achille, a shade on the sea-floor?"** (59.2.1/p296), a question the narrator seems to answer in part when we are told: "History has simplified / him. Its elegies had blinded me with the temporal / lament for a smoky Troy, but where coral died / it feeds on its death, the bones branch into more coral, / and contradiction begins" (59.2.24-28/p297)?

Chapter 60) What do you make of **Achille's journey in chapter 60 (pp. 299-303),** which begins with Achille "convinced ... that somewhere people interfering / with the course of nature" (60.1.4-5/p299), then features his search (with Philoctete) for "some cove he could settle like another Aeneas, / founding not Rome but home" (60.1.47-48/p301), and finally ends with his "sail / turned home" (60.3.20-21/p303)?

Chapter 61) What do you make of **chapter 61 (pp. 303-309), our final extended visions of the Plunketts,** which begins "framed forever in the last century" (61.1.1/p303), and progresses to a point at which Major Plunkett's "wound healed slowly" (61.3.1/p309)?

Chapter 62) What do you make of **62.2 (pp. 312-315), in which "a lizard ... raises its question"** (62.2.5/p312), which is quoted beginning in the next line?

Chapter 63) What do you make of **63.2 (pp. 318-319),** which begins as "Helen came into the shop" (63.2.1/p318), includes the text's final split line "in time too | "We shall all heal." | The incurable"

(63.2.24/p319), and ends when "A swift squeaked like a hinge, then shot from the windowsill" (63.2.30/p319)?

Chapter 64) What do you make of **chapter 64, the poem's concluding chapter** (pp. 320-325), with its final visions of the narrator "wrapped in a flour-sack sail" (64.1.23/p321), of Helen "at the Halcyon" (64.2.1/p322), and of Achille as "aching Achilles / wash[ing] sand from his heels, ... / ... sniff[ing] his name in one armpit /[and] ... lik[ing] the odours / of the sea in him" (64.3.23-28/pp324-325), followed by his final act, "put[ting] the wedge of dolphin / that he'd saved for Helen in Hector's rusty tin" (64.3.30-31/p325)?