

Lecture 10: Derek Walcott, *The Star-Apple Kingdom*, *The Fortunate Traveller*

North and South

What does the North mean in this poem?

- Stagnation, rotting
- Cold and dead, he chooses to describe it in winter

Snorkeling through the ruins – colony is still here, the empire is destroyed
The threat of nuclear war – if someone drops the bomb, it won't be on the Caribbean
North is the metropolis, South is the colonies
It's too much – he's tired of words
the South is ignorant but raw
Is the American South (Virginia) considered part of the South, in this poem?

"I am a monkey" – why does he say this in French?

- The play on words
- Makes him sound cultured
- Dissociation from American heritage, to not even speak the language

The Spoiler's Return

Calypso has a four-beat line (Spoiler was a calypso singer)

- Does this sound at all like Heaney?
- No, sounds like rap...
- This is faster, tumbling over itself at the end of a line, no break in the middle

This is Walcott's longest dialect poem.

Feels like it could be sung – what's the difference between a song and a poem?

Telling the tale of a calypso singer who's gone away and come back (so it's like a little calypso epic?)

Can be paired with *Season of Phantasmal Peace*

Map of the New World

What happens to the rain?

You can take the blurriness of something and make it into something new – the mist obscures things

But it tightens, rather than becoming soft and diffuse.

Then becomes a line – solidifies into a song.

The precondition for art seems to be losing your history.

The Sea is History

He describes the history of the Caribbean through nature, not battles or monuments.

Similar to Heaney's excavation poems

What can we figure out about these voices? Who is asking, who is answering?
Sounds like a frustrated tourist, at the beginning.

"How can you write poetry when you have no history?"

Why is History capitalized?

Could it be the poet questioning himself?

These conjectures are interesting, but need to be grounded with a close reading.

"Sirs" at the beginning – plural askers, regarded with deference.

Military, examinations, anthropology?

Why does he distinguish between Lamentations and history and faith?

Now it sounds like the speaking voice that is saying these things are not history.

The last part of the poem emerges from the sea, coming out above water.

And now there can be history. This part is funny – "fireflies with bright ideas",
caterpillar judges. Depth and voice change (both physical and emotional depth).

At the end, there's a certain lightness that allows you to make history yourself,
rather than inheriting it as in the beginning.

Taking away metaphors. Now the rock is not a cathedral, just a rock.

"Then came" – first very spaced apart, becomes fast at the end.

Bureaucracy, not monuments – synod, secretary, votes, ambassadors. We have all
these so now history can begin.