

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU**  
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**THE EXPERIENCE OF PLACES IN DEREK WALCOTT'S**  
***THE PRODIGAL***

**MA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the experience of places in Derek Walcott's poem *The Prodigal*. The speaker of the poem journeys through physical and mental landscapes in the United States, Europe, South America, and in the Caribbean. The purpose of the thesis is to explore the representations of the places mentioned in the poem and the meanings associated with them.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two core chapters and a conclusion. The introduction presents the aims and research questions of the thesis, and provides a short biography of the author, an overview of previous research on Walcott's work, and the cultural context of his writings.

The first core chapter establishes the theoretical framework of the thesis by examining the different ways of experiencing places. The experience of places can be manifested in many ways and its significance is connected to an individual's identity and feelings of belonging. As the meaning of places may change throughout an individual's life, the temporal element of place emerges as important. In addition to real places, the significance of mythical geographies is examined.

The second core chapter applies the concepts and tools presented in the theoretical chapter in a critical reading of *The Prodigal*. Through close reading, this thesis examines the relationship between the speaker and the places mentioned in the poem. Using the speaker's description of physical places in the present and in the past, as well as his descriptions of mythical geographies, the different ways of experiencing places are identified and the significance of the experiences are explored in the second part of the thesis.

The conclusion presents a summary of the findings.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Prodigal, what were your wanderings about?” asks the speaker of Derek Walcott’s poem *The Prodigal* (Walcott 2004: 70). *The Prodigal* is a long narrative poem that moves between places and times as the speaker ponders about the life he has lived. The poem, whose title establishes a link with the biblical Parable of the Prodigal Son, progresses as a journey through different places that eventually ends in the homecoming of the prodigal, while tackling topics, such as the meaning of places, the significance of home, aging, as well as death. The poem follows the wanderings of the prodigal and explains the reasons of his longing to return home. The journey that the poet-persona has embarked upon is a self-reflective one as he explores his own fears and joys that are connected to the years he has spent abroad and as he analyzes his emotions concerning his homecoming.

The author of the poem, Derek Walcott was born in St. Lucia in 1930. His roots reveal a mixed heritage. Both of his grandfathers were white and wealthy – of Dutch and English origin – and both of his grandmothers were primarily of African descent and poor. Walcott’s father was a painter and although he died when Derek was an infant, he and his twin brother Roderick were always encouraged to pursue their talents by their mother and other “artistically inclined” family friends (Breslin 2001: 11). The future Nobel laureate grew up on a small Caribbean island – St. Lucia. His life on the small island was defined by oppositions – he had a middle-class upbringing when most of the inhabitants of the tiny island were rather poor, he was “mulatto rather than black,” and “Methodist rather than Catholic” (Breslin 2001: 12). Walcott started writing poetry at an early age and became known for the wider Caribbean public already at nineteen. His early writing is strongly influenced by modernists, such as Pound, Joyce, Yeats, and Eliot. This was partly due to the very English education that he received in St. Lucia. In his poetry, influences of English poets “appear as unassimilated borrowings and explicit allusions” (Breslin 2001: 17).

Walcott attended the university of West Indies in Jamaica at a time that was politically very tense for the Caribbean islands. During his time there, he established contacts with other prominent artists in the literary scene of the Caribbean. After graduation, Walcott worked in Jamaica, Grenada and St. Lucia before settling down in Trinidad. He also started spending some time in the United States, first because of his pursuits in theater and later because he started teaching courses in several universities in the United States. Following his being awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1992, Walcott purchased some land in St. Lucia. During this period, Walcott was observed by scholars as having an “increasing sense of himself as a St. Lucian first and last” (Breslin 2001: 43). Walcott continued writing poetry and plays throughout the 1990s and 2000s. His final poetry collection titled *White Egrets* was published in 2010. Derek Walcott died on March 17, 2017. (Als 2004, Breslin 2001, Lea 2017).

There already exists a significant amount of research on Derek Walcott’s poetry and plays. However, since *The Prodigal* is one of his later works, it has received less attention than some of his earlier accomplishments. Several scholars have published books about Walcott’s writings and several article collections focus on his poetry and plays (Burnett 2000, Breslin 2001, Ismond 2001, Bloom 2003, *Callaloo*’s 2005 special issue on Walcott), yet Edward Baugh’s *Derek Walcott* (2006) is one of the few sources that has included a chapter on *The Prodigal*. This is one of the reasons why this thesis is particularly concerned with *The Prodigal*.

Some of the issues that arise in Walcott’s works and have been thoroughly examined concern language (Breiner 2005, Figueroa 1995, Greenwood 2005, McLeod 2009), religion (D’Aguiar 2005, Jefferson 2013a), nature (Breslin 2005, Handley 2005), the sea (Cahill-Booth 2013, Jefferson 2013b), tourism (Carrigan 2010, Handley 2005, Melas 2005) Walcott’s own identity and the identity of his characters (Baugh 1997, Gray 2005, Tynan

2006, McCallum 2009), Caribbean identity (Casteel 2011, Douillet 2010, Hart 2004, King 2005, Martiny 2006, Philips 2002), and colonialism (Hart 2004, Jay 2006, McLeod 2009, Philips 2002). A considerable amount of this research draws its examples from Walcott's epic poem *Omeros* (1990).

A very important place in Walcott's poetry that connects several of these topics of discussion is the Caribbean. According to Rajeev Patke (2006:81-88), who has written about postcolonial poetry in English, the violent history of the Caribbean islands is marked by military conquest, colonization, exploitation, wars and rebellions, uprootedness and other serious inhumane acts. The rivalry of European colonizers in the region resulted in some serious ecological and psychological damage. People from all over the world were displaced due to the whims of the great military and cultural powers of Europe to gain access to every possible profit from the Caribbean islands. The influences of such a tragic history can be felt to this day. (Patke 2006: 81-88). Robert Hamner (2005: 3), who wrote the introduction to *Callaloo's* special issue on Walcott also reflects on the topic and claims that the heirs of a colonial system descend "from ancestors forcibly separated from ethnic origins and [are] subjected to an alien culture in a strange land," so they now "must come to terms with complex origins" (Hamner 2005: 3). The uprooting that took place in Africa, Asia, Europe and the islands themselves exposed the people to a tragic fate in which creating a new sense of place out of a previously unknown environment was immensely difficult. In consequence, "a particular dialectic between the land and its residents" was established, which was "specifically rooted in the region's violent history; an unprecedented upheaval and relocation of European, Asian, and African peoples and cultures, rapidly condensed within the boundaries of island topoi" (Deloughrey 2003: 299).

As European powers gained control over the space, they considered it empty. The 'emptiness' made it easy to separate the landscape and the people from their roots. Elizabeth

Deloughrey's article on the ecology of the Caribbean islands zooms in on the problem of land colonization, as she traces both figurative and literal roots in the history of the West Indies. She explains that seemingly empty space allowed for a new construction of 'isolated' and 'remote' island landscapes, an ideology which was fed by the metropole during colonization (Deloughrey 2003: 301). Thus, a space was created by those in control that could be turned into place. From the very first European discovery, "the Caribbean has been imagined as an available space for European projects" (Jefferson 2013: 292). The British colonial project truly damaged the state of the Caribbean islands and it is suggested that in the colonial mindset, "the timeless and atemporal isle can only signify as such when it is constructed in binary opposition to the modern history and urbanised geography of its continental visitors" (Deloughrey 2003: 301).

Furthermore, the islanders themselves were seen as isolated and contained within their island space and thus their histories and narratives were erased for the purposes of maintaining the colonial objectives (Deloughrey 2003: 301). Since these views were imposed on both newcomers as well as indigenous inhabitants of the islands, new narratives for the islands developed throughout the years leading up to now. Centuries of displacements, subjecting natives to slavery and importing new settlers from all over the world have turned the Caribbean islands into an example of "extreme heterogeneity" as present-day Caribbean is now known for its "restless energy that domesticates language to local rhythms and intonations" as it "partakes of the exuberant and the troubled" while continually adding layers of meaning to its own historical narrative (Patke 2006: 80).

It was not just the people that were colonized. The land was also colonized by Europeans, making the landscape of the islands unrecognizable for future generations. Human geographer Edward Relph (1976: 122-123) suggests that "[l]andscape is not merely an aesthetic background to life, rather it is the setting that both expresses and conditions

cultural attitudes and activities,” it functions both as a context for place and an attribute of it. According to Deloughrey (2003: 299), the history of island colonization is “a narrative about the relationship between landscape and power”. Once, the land was yielded, it was possible to reap the benefits. It is now impossible to trace back to the original landscapes, as they have been erased. Deforestation and sugar plantations that exhausted the soil, as well as covering the land with thousands of imported species of flora and fauna, show how the landscape was altered. This is a popular topic for several Caribbean authors. In her poetry, the Jamaican author Olive Senior, for example, warns readers to watch out for the deceptiveness of flowers and fruits, suggesting that these have “colonizing ambitions” of their own, “looking as if once rooted they know their places” (Senior 2005: 63). With ecocritic Lawrence Buell as her source, Deloughrey reads “these Caribbean texts as ‘environmentally oriented work(s)’ in that they demonstrate that ‘the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history’” (As cited in Deloughrey 2003: 300). Texts by Caribbean authors reveal that it was not just the people that were figuratively uprooted, literal uprooting was taking place: foreign flora and fauna were imported to the islands to replace the indigenous species, creating a new landscape. The reasons for such a harsh treatment of land and people lie in the “[e]nlightenment ideology and anthropological praxis” that dehistoricizes the island societies and represents them as “undeveloped and premature” (Deloughrey 2003: 302).

This historical overview of the Caribbean is necessary to illustrate what is the background of the place that the speaker of *The Prodigal* calls home. The answer to the question posed in the beginning of the introduction is scattered throughout the whole poem. Through close reading, this thesis searches for an answer to the speaker’s question about his wanderings. The thesis will examine how the places visited in the poem are experienced and



what is the significance of these experiences.

In order to answer these questions, the theoretical framework of the thesis is focused on the different ways in which places can be experienced, with the works of human geographers Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph used as a foundation for the theoretical chapter. The theoretical chapter is divided into six subchapters, each focusing on a different aspect of place experience. The first subchapter gives an overview of the meaning of space and place. The two concepts are first defined to see what are their differences and from there on, ways of experiencing place are explored. The second subchapter examines the significance of a home place and the ways in which home can be experienced. Closely linked to the first two subchapters, the third one focuses on rootedness in places. In the fourth subchapter, the significance of temporality in relation to place is studied. The fifth subchapter takes into consideration mythical geographies, places which are unknown and which may be fictional or somehow unreal and the final subchapter examines the connections between weather and places.

The second chapter first provides an overview of the structure of *The Prodigal*. A close reading of the poem focusing on its spatial aspects is then conducted and the results presented in five subchapters. These subchapters follow the division of the theoretical chapter but in a different order. The first subchapter is concerned with the intensity of experience in the places mentioned in the poem. The second subchapter takes a look at the weather patterns to see whether climate and weather have anything to do with the meaning assigned to a place. Memory and history have a great influence on the way a place is perceived and experienced, so the third subchapter is concerned with these topics. The fourth chapter examines home and how other places compare to home. And finally, the thesis ends with an examination of earthly and heavenly paradises. In a different manner, yet, using the

same questions as the speaker himself, this thesis explores the places where the prodigal wanders while examining the meaning his experiences.

# 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF PLACE

## 1.1 SPACE AND PLACE

Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, dedicates a large part of his book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (2001, first published in 1977) on explaining the subtle difference between the terms 'space' and 'place'. The two terms represent similar spatial phenomena but differ in what they signify. Tuan argues that the notions space and place are intertwined, yet the concepts have a different purpose when considering their application. According to Tuan (2001: 3), "place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to one and long for the other." According to his definition, place seems to have a more fixed and specified value while space is "having room in which to move" (Tuan 2001: 12). Place can be objectified, whereas space cannot be grasped. Tuan (2001: 17) also claims that space is defined by place, that is, a concrete entity is what helps to comprehend an indefinite existence.

Edward Relph, whose research is also focused on human geography, shares Tuan's opinions when it comes to defining space and place. Relph (1976: 4-5) claims that "geographical space is not uniform and homogeneous," instead, it "is directly experienced as something substantial or comforting or perhaps menacing," while place is something that possesses a certain "perceptual unity". According to this definition, space is something undefined and vague while place seems to be discernible and tangible. Relph's (1976: 8) argument that "space provides the context for place" is similar to Tuan's claim that place defines space, both imply that the meaning of space is derived from the experience of place.

Lawrence Buell, a more recent scholar, who is known for his work on environmental criticism, differentiates between the two notions by proposing that place is a location with meaning while space "connotes geometrical or topographical abstraction" (2005: 63). Furthermore, Buell (2005: 63) claims that places are "thick" and spaces are "thin" as place-attachment rather than space-attachment can be spoken of. Hazel Easthope (2004: 129),

whose expertise is in urban planning, shares the opinion that the two notions are “different orders of being” yet she adds that these concepts cannot really be examined side by side, as their functions are completely different. In addition, she finds it problematic that place is often defined as humanized space and as having more meaning. Instead, Easthope argues that space does not exist “to be made into places” and when the two notions are indeed compared, place “has no privileged relationship to space because everything, including events and physical things are situated in space” (Easthope 2004: 129).

As the above examples already show, there can be many definitions and views on space and place and it is not necessarily important to lay them all out in this paper. However, it is important to understand the relationship between the two concepts. While place can be seen as being more connected to the human element and thus having the quality of easier comprehension, it does not mean that space is something empty and unfathomable. Instead, “space is never empty but has content and substances that derive both from human intention and imagination and from the character of the space” and the relationship between space and place is born when space is “richly differentiated into places, or centres of special personal significance” (Relph 1976: 10, 11).

The creation of place is prompted from an “existential, or lived space” (Relph 1976: 8). While space can indeed be considered “amorphous and intangible,” it does not mean that it contains nothing (Relph 1976: 8). On the contrary, as lived spaces become “thoroughly familiar to us,” they become places (Tuan 2001: 73). Tuan’s claim means that place is created in space and once the features of space are picked apart, put together, and internalized, place becomes intimate. Tuan also claims that “[o]pen space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed” (Tuan 2001: 54). Again, this does not mean that open space has no features, it simply means that the elements of space are not familiar and

thus less noticeable. Once these elements become familiar and visible, then, according to Tuan, space becomes place. Tuan is also not suggesting that space is in itself meaningless, but rather that one's ignorance of it makes space seem meaningless. Tuan (2001: 9, 18) claims that to "experience in the active sense requires that one venture forth into the unfamiliar and experiment with the elusive and the uncertain" and once the unfamiliar is experienced, it transforms into something else, a "concrete reality". If space is unknown, it cannot display any meaningful markings, yet once it is experienced and familiarized, it becomes a place, "a calm center of established values" (Tuan 2001: 54).

Place can be perceived in a multitude of ways. It is possible to experience it physically and it is also possible to sense it psychologically. Since place "appears to possess some 'perceptual unity,'" the meaning of a certain place can only be accessed through one's experiences with it (Relph 1976: 4). When talking about space and place, Buell quotes E.V. Walter, who demonstrates well in which ways places can be experienced: "[a] place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared, revered" (As cited in Buell 2005: 63). The experience of place is tied to experiences of many other aspects of one's life. Place cannot be experienced independently, cut off from situations, and only described in terms of location. Instead, it needs to be "sensed in a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape, ritual, routing, other people, personal experiences, care and concern for home, and in the context of other places" (Relph 1976: 29).

In addition, the experience of place is also closely linked to a temporal dimension as the development of an authentic relationship to place is time-consuming and needs to be shaped, as well as preserved when finally attained, through "fleeting and undramatic" experiences, "repeated day after day and over the span of years" (Tuan 2001: 183-184). Relph (1976: 78) also expresses a similar thought and maintains that a sense of place is created by an individual in their own time and through their own personal experiences.

Although Relph (1976: 11, 57) also argues that there are landscapes that are experienced collectively, “the identity of a place varies with the intentions, personalities, and circumstances of those who are experiencing it”. This means that each individual ascribes their own meaning to places based on their own background and understanding, even when those places are accessible to anyone. The identity and essence of a place is individually constructed by each person.

Whether a place is fictitious, real, lost or always inhabited, the attachment that one forms with a place is powered by the imagination (Buell 2005: 72-73, Easthope 2004: 136). The identity of a place is composed by its landscape, its history, its feel and its people. The most visible aspect of a place is its landscape and it is there that “the spirit of a place lies” (Relph 1976: 30). The landscape of a place creates reference points that connect all other aspects. However, “the identity of a particular place can persist through many external changes because there is some inner, hidden force,” which means that the landscape of a place need not be constant but instead, the feel of place needs to endure (Relph 1976: 31). The history of a particular place also plays a big role in the creation of its identity, as there “is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now or where we have had particularly moving experiences” (Relph 1976: 43). The identity of places has a permanence that withstands the test of time, as the sense of place continues to exist in one’s memory regardless of its present condition. This is reassuring in a world full of “chance and flux everywhere” (Tuan 2001: 154). This feeling of permanence also produces a “sense of being envired or emplaced” that supplies places with an impression of nurturing safety and stability even if safety and stability are not actually offered (Buell 2005: 62).

While all of these aspects are important, there is one more element that is responsible for the creation of the essence of place: the value assigned to places is “borrowed from the

intimacy of a particular human relationship; place itself offer[s] little outside the human bond” (Tuan 2001: 140). The relationship between people and places is an important one since “people are their place and a place is its people” (Relph 1976: 34). Without this element, places would remain meaningless. Place is closely connected to its community and the two concepts each strengthen the sense of the other. Encounters between people always occur in a place and while place may sometimes be seen as a simple backdrop to the activities in which people engage, it cannot be ignored that place is often an expression of “values and of interpersonal involvements” (Relph 1976: 34). Place can influence the identity of a community and vice versa, since both impart meaning on each other.

The elements that make up a place give it meaning. However, Relph (1976: 118) recognizes aspects that may strip places of their meaning, creating a placeless geography “in which different localities both look and feel alike, and in which distinctive places are experienced only through superficial and stereotyped images”. While Relph does not directly criticize placelessness, suggesting that it is an unavoidable part of modern life, he does paint it in rather bleak colors. Relph has compiled a list of five categories in which placelessness is manifested. The list includes synthetic landscapes that are made for show (for example, tourist locations or “museumized places”), places of forced homogeneity and uniformity (such as suburbs), formless places (skyscrapers or “individual features unrelated to cultural or physical setting”), destroyed places (war sites), impermanent places (abandoned places or places of “continuous redevelopment”) (Relph 1976: 118-119). He has also recognized that media outlets and the influence of capitalism have intensified the sense of uniformity and standardization in the development of place consciousness (Relph 1976: 120). Due to the aspects that are responsible for the creation of inauthentic attitudes, the connections created between the individual and the place are superficial. Such a superficial relationship renders meaningful places into meaningless objects, as “it involves no awareness of the deep and

symbolic significances of places and no appreciation of their identities” (Relph 1976: 82). Forming authentic relationships with places is as important as authentic relationships with other people. However, placeless geographies are now even more pronounced than they were at the time of Relph’s writing, as Buell (2005: 91) argues that today’s “great cities” have become “almost interchangeable”. It seems that placelessness and inauthentic attitudes to places are spreading faster and faster as people now more than ever disregard the identities of places and only shallowly observe the elements that give meaning to places, which in turn breeds landscapes that resemble “labyrinth[s] of endless similarities” (Relph 1976: 141).

The final task in this discussion of space and place is to inspect the different levels of the experience of place. Relph (1976: 49) argues that the experience of place greatly relies on whether one is outside or inside a place, “[f]rom the outside you look upon a place as a traveller might look upon a town from a distance” whereas, from the inside, one is “surrounded by it and part of it”. Furthermore, Relph (1976: 50) recognizes several different zones of outsideness and insiderness, which determine the intensity of the experiences of place. There are three levels of outsideness that Relph identifies: existential outsideness, objective outsideness and incidental outsideness.

Existential outsideness “involves a selfconscious and reflective uninvovement, an alienation from people and places, homelessness, a sense of the unreality of the world and of not belonging” (Relph 1976: 51). Existential outsideness is the neglect of places, an experience that does not consider the identity of places and which avoids acknowledging the meaning of places.

While objective outsideness does discern the features of places, it is also an attitude that avoids emotional connections with places. Instead of forming a meaningful relationship with places, the objective outsider adopts “a dispassionate attitude towards places” and deliberately restructures places “according to logic, reason and efficiency” (Relph 1976: 51-



52). Instead of forming a relationship with a place as one entity, an objective outsider divides the features of places into separate blocks to better understand the underlying logic and structure of a place.

Incidental outsidership is “a largely unselfconscious attitude in which places are experienced as little more than the background or setting for activities and are quite incidental to those activities,” and applies to places “in which we are visitors” and which are generally unfamiliar (Relph 1976: 52). Incidental outsidership is accidentally not acknowledging places because activities are more significant and overshadow places.

Relph also distinguishes between four stages of insidership: vicarious insidership, behavioral insidership, empathetic insidership, as well as existential insidership. Vicarious insidership is the experience of place in a secondhand manner, “that is, without actually visiting them,” yet in a manner that signals “a deeply felt involvement” (Relph 1976: 52). Vicarious insiders are those who consume a place through reading, films or other mediums that convey an experience of place. Vicarious insidership is closely connected to previous experiences of familiar places: “we know what it is like to be *there* because we know what it is like to be *here*” (Relph 1976: 53).

Behavioral insidership is a disposition that pays special attention to the appearance of place. Behavioral insiders look at places in a manner that separates places from one another by distinguishing the unique patterns and features of places (Relph 1976: 53-54). Behavioral insiders attend to the visual aspects of a place and see it “as a set of objects, views and activities arranged in certain ways and having certain observable qualities” (Relph 1976: 53).

Empathetic insidership is similar to behavioral insidership as it also takes into account the uniqueness of places. However, an empathetic insider does this in a less superficial manner, since empathetic insidership “demands a willingness to be open to significances of

a place, to feel it, to know and respect its symbols” (Relph 1976: 54). The empathetic insider perceives the identity of place through all senses, and does not only observe its visual elements.

The final stage of insideness is one of existential insideness. The existential insider experiences a place “without deliberate and selfconscious effort,” yet appreciates all of the significances of that place (Relph 1976: 55). According to Relph (1976: 55), the existential insider is part of a place and that place forms a part of them. Existential insideness is about belonging to a place and can only be experienced in thoroughly familiar places, such as home.

## 1.2 HOME

Usually home, “whether a house, a village, a region, or a nation is a central point of existence and individual identity from which you look out on the rest of the world” (Relph 1976: 83). The concept of home is complex and multifaceted and can be defined in many different ways. It has distinct meanings for different people “at different times and in different contexts,” making it rather hard to have an absolute definition that applies to every situation and every understanding (Easthope 2004: 135). Defining the notion is made even more difficult by the fact that the ambivalent concept is dependent on the context in which it is used. Femke Stock, who writes about home and memory has stated that ‘home’ can refer to “multiple places and spaces in the past, present and future in various ways” (Stock 2010: 27). Due to this mixture of meanings, she even goes so far as to claim that “the concept of home becomes an empty one, one which can mean anything and, in consequence, signifies nothing” (Stock 2010: 27). Yet, for the purposes of this paper, it is important to provide some kind of an overview of the meaning and importance of home for the comprehension of further discussion.

The concept of home can be interpreted in poetic ways, as the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1994: 5) has done when he explains that “all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home”. Or home can also be given a practical purpose: another French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1979: 152) states that home is as “necessary for the life of a man” as a pen is for writing or a hammer for hammering a nail to the wall. Whatever the point of view, the notion of home is built up with many layers of meaning that together form a whole that give an understanding of the term. Another definition of home can be taken from an article by Theano Terkenli (1995: 327), who has examined the processes through which a place becomes a home; he states that “[h]ome is a multidimensional and profoundly symbolic term” that “can be depicted as one aspect of human emotional territory”. All these different views of home depict it as a significant place for one’s identify, a symbolic space, and as a place of security. Home is connected to everyday life and routines, other people, and its significance in one’s life is constantly changing, depending on one’s viewpoint.

There is, however, some disagreement among scholars whether home is a physical place or a symbol of belonging somewhere (Stock 2010: 25). But can it not be both? Home is a place because it has some kind of a value and meaning attached to it: in “both our communal and our personal experience of places there is often a close attachment, a familiarity that is part of knowing and being known *here*, in this particular place” (Relph 1976: 37). Fetson Kalua (2015: 56), who has researched the notion of home in a book about the Kalahari Bushmen, states that this particular *here* is an inhabited dwelling “that can be located and pinpointed in time and space and has an enduring quality of finality”. Home must have a location; it cannot exist without some kind of a physical setting or without a surrounding landscape. No matter what surrounds it, whether it is part of a placeless geography as a copy-paste building in the suburbs or a cabin in the woods with a

recognizable identity, the *here* that Relph speaks of has value as a physical place.

However, the place does not necessarily have to exist at all times, which means that home could also be considered as a symbolic space. Home may exist in spaces that have no location, for example, in one's memory, in a painting, or in a poem. This means that home is closely related to a person's own identity and can be considered "a master-trope, whose range of meanings becomes a blending and blurring of locality, rootedness and comfort, with rarefied notions of commemoration and nostalgic feelings about the past" (Kalua 2015: 57). Most definitions of home play with the ambivalence the notion, so home is most often seen as a fluid concept susceptible to change as humans live in it, remember it and imagine it (Stock 2010: 27). Whether it is physical or symbolic, home affects one's identity as "a parameter that infiltrates every relationship between humans and environment as humans reach out to the unknown and return to the known" (Terkenli 1995: 325).

While an important part of one's identity, the significance of home can often go unnoticed when it is regarded simply as a practical tool, only used for the purposes of habitation. There are many types of homes and most are probably simple-looking, yet the appearance of home does not matter, "it did not matter when we were children, climbed its trees, paddled our bikes on its cracked pavements and swam in its pond" (Tuan 2001: 145). Instead, what matters is whether home provides the opportunity to engage in private everyday activities, since "[e]veryday life is the life that most of us lead most of the time" (Relph 1976: 132). Such a life is comprised of "all that is humble, ordinary, and taken for granted; it is made up of repetitions, of small gestures and insignificant actions" (Relph 1976: 131). It is important that home would provide a comfortable environment for these insignificant and simple actions, activities that are repeated day by day. Thus, home must have a quality that allows for an individual to have control over it. No matter the physical appearance, home is a place where it is possible to carry out activities that are taken for

granted in privacy, as the intimate home is the “foundation of man’s existence” (Relph 1976: 41).

Knowledge of one’s own identity exists due to familiarity with one’s past, present, “feelings, preoccupations, tendencies, and intentions, which are anchored in the self” (Terkenli 1995: 325). The intimate endeavor of creating one’s identity must be partaken in an intimate place. As a place of “nurture where our fundamental needs are heeded and cared for without a fuss”, home can provide that space (Tuan 2001: 137). This creates a very strong attachment between one’s self and their home and gives the impression of home as a center for safety and as a shelter. Feelings of safety that relate to the concept of home are derived from a subconscious attachment which “come simply with familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time” (Tuan 2001: 159).

Since home is familiar and known, the idea of perpetual endurance of home “as a distinctive entity even though the world around may change” is a comforting assurance (Relph 1976: 31). As home is often seen as the center of one’s life, the stability of it determines the stability of the rest of one’s surroundings. Home can offer shelter from all that is uncertain in the world: home protects the individual from the “inclemencies of the weather” and hides one “from the enemies or the importunate” (Levinas 1979: 152). As a private space, “home is a site where people feel most in control of their lives ... because they feel free from the surveillance that is part of the contemporary world” (Easthope 2004: 134). The ability to retire from the gaze of others, the public eye, is a freedom that most people look for and one’s home can realize a space for such independence. Thus, home is a place that is “more significant for an individual than any other place” as it offers a space for developing one’s identity, as well as safety, shelter, stability and privacy (Reinders & van der Land 2008: 4).

There is another layer of intimacy laid upon the concept of home, another aspect that gives home a meaning: Peter King (2008: 76), who writes about memory, home and exile, states that “our dwelling is not just a place where we can be secure, but is where we can be with others”. Leeke Reinders and Marco van der Land (2008: 5), who have researched housing issues and have studied the meaning of home and place from the viewpoint of social sciences, support King’s idea and claim that in addition to being considered a shelter of stability and privacy, home is also often a shared space that “exist[s] in relation to other people”. Home is partly made by the social circumstances it offers and the value of home is strongly connected to how highly one values the human encounters that take place in one’s dwelling place. Since home is often seen as a place of comfort, “the absence of the right people” causes home to be “quickly drained of meaning so that [its] lastingness is an irritation rather than a comfort” (Tuan 2001: 140).

The meaning of home is even more affected by human encounters when Relph’s (1976: 34) claim “people are their place and a place is its people” is considered. According to this statement, it is impossible to separate people from the meaning of place, as people create the meaning of place. Home is an intimate place where one can be in control, yet, it is still not an isolated place, as it is rather “a physical entity that allows us to be with others and to share experiences that can still remain personal” (King 2008: 76). While this leads to home acquiring a sense of coziness, it can also lead to feelings of drudgery. Home space, and especially if it is filled with other people, may impose limits and restrictions and it may then be associated with “feeling[s] of oppression and imprisonment in a place” (Relph 1976: 42). However, since home is a place that requires a “profound commitment,” such feelings are inevitable, “and any commitment must also involve an acceptance of the restrictions that place imposes and the miseries it may offer” (Relph 1976: 42).

The importance of home goes unnoticed when one is constantly at home. In such a

case, home is usually taken for granted. Terkenli (1995: 328) suggests that distance creates a “division of personally known worlds into home and nonhome contexts,” and that people “know home much more by its absence from a nonhome perspective”. The meaning of home is discovered only when there is some distance between a person and their home. Distance creates space that allows for conscious contemplation of home. Tuan (2001: 146) explains that when at home, people are “steeped in their place’s ambience,” but when one is away from home, reflecting on one’s dwelling place turns home into “an object of thought”. As a distant object of thought, home acquires a value that increases the further apart it seems. Reasons for this seem to lie in the function of home as suggested in previous paragraphs or as expressed by Terkenli (1995: 331): home is “a refuge in the world, a cozy, warm place in juxtaposition to its immense, unknown surroundings, where people may regenerate themselves”.

Terkenli (1995: 328) also suggests that upon returning home, one may not find the same place, as “[h]ome differs with each instance of return”. This difference is caused by both the changes that the individual goes through while away from home and the changes that the place of dwelling inevitably goes through due to different factors. Upon returning, however, a “continuous process of synthesis between the home and the nonhome occurs, as parts of nonhome are embodied into home and as home is incorporated into new frameworks of understanding and new contexts of evaluation and identification,” turning home into something different upon each revisit (Terkenli 1995: 328).

The meaning of home may change for an individual during his or her lifetime. While the outward appearance of home may be susceptible to change, the “feel” of it should not change, as it “is registered in one’s muscles and bones” (Tuan 2001: 183-184). There should be a place that is permanent, unchanging and offers reassurance “to man, who sees frailty in himself and chance and flux everywhere” (Tuan 2001: 154). However, just as the individual

ages and changes every day, homes also go through a change (Terkenli 1995: 330-331). People who spend their lives at home, may not notice the change and those who have been away from home may not want to see the change, and instead both groups expect it to stay the same as it has always been or as it was left. Yet, as time moves on, home changes, whether the inhabitants are present or not. When the change is noticed, there may appear a “[d]isruption of home” or the dwelling place may “suddenly [lose] its function of a stronghold,” breaking the attachment that had been formed between the individual and the place (Reinders & van der Land 2008: 7). While home may seem as a permanent entity, it is always subject to change through its appearance and also through its function and purpose (Terkenli 1995: 331). Due to changes that home goes through, the significance once ascribed to it may be canceled by the individual.

The previous paragraphs all describe some of the meanings that home may acquire. In her article, Easthope has included a wonderful quote, where home is depicted as “an emotional warehouse wherein grief, anger, love, regret and guilt are experienced as powerfully real and, at the same time, deposited, stored and sorted to create a powerful domestic geography, which, in turn sustains a complex and dynamic symbolism and meaning to rooms and spaces” (C. Gurney, as cited in Easthope 2004: 135). Home is also the place where the most significant relationships with other people are formed, without which, life “is bereft of much of its significance” (Relph 1976: 41). Home serves as the background of unnoticed everyday activities and its significance may sometimes be ignored due to the trivialities one associates with home. Nevertheless, if the connection with home is lost due to distance, the deep attachment that was lost does not go unnoticed and home then often acquires a new importance.



### 1.3 ROOTEDNESS

Rootedness is a feature that creates a basis for the sense of home. Roots establish a secure, firm position in the world. In the context of this paper, the meaning of ‘roots’ is mostly figurative, as it refers to some kind of origins. These origins function as a steady base to start from. This is critical to one’s well-being; in Relph’s (1976: 38) words, roots provide “a firm grasp on one’s own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular”. Having strong roots – a solid foundation – may mean having knowledge of one’s heritage but its meaning also contains the significance of being deeply grounded in a place. In addition, the French philosopher Simone Weil (2005: 50) states that as one's "natural participation in the life of a community" is "automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surroundings," the state of rootedness is closely connected to a certain familiarity with the past and a vision for the future. A connection with the past in this case is especially important as it often determines the outlook for the future.

Being rooted in a place provides one with confidence in one’s identity. The place of rootedness need not be the place of one’s origin, which, of course, has its own significance. Although the significance of one’s place of origin is very poetically described by Bachelard (1994: 14): “over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us;” Relph (1976: 41) argues that the place of rootedness is simply “where we know and are known, or where the most significant experiences of our lives have occurred”. Considering this century, Bachelard’s view may be slightly out of date, since today, in the western world, most children are born in hospitals and not in houses that will later become childhood homes. In addition, constant movement in a globalized world has created a situation where roots may be set down anywhere. However, the existence of rootedness in general is what is important. Rootedness releases a “sense of deep care and concern” for a

place and protecting either a physical place or an idea of that place becomes an important purpose, which often defines one's actions (Relph 1976: 37).

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Simone Weil (2005: 41-75) strongly criticized city-living for creating an environment that encourages uprootedness and strips away the potential to develop a profound relationship with a place. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Relph continued in the same vein, recognizing that placeless geographies lack “both diverse landscapes and significant places,” and suggesting that “we are at present subjecting ourselves to the forces of placelessness and are losing our sense of place” (1976: 79). Yet, for rootedness to occur, one needs to have a meaningful relationship with a place. Belonging to a place leads to knowledge of “where you are,” and means experiencing a place from the inside while being “surrounded by it and part of it” (Relph 1976: 49). To categorize the different connections between a person and a place, Relph elaborates on ‘insideness’ and ‘outsideness’. These two concepts make up the identity of place and can be applied when discussing any kind of space (Relph 1976: 49). Rootedness can be associated with the concept of existential insideness (see page 18 above). This particular state characterizes “the deep and complete identity with a place that is the very foundation of the place concept” (Relph 1976: 55). Existential insideness stresses the importance of a particular place – *the* place – that is meaningful and part of one's identity. Existential insideness can only be established with a place that has some significance, the relationship with other places remains in a state of existential outsideness, regardless of the familiarity and knowledge one has of these places. It is also possible not to have such a bond with any place. According to Relph (1976: 55), “[t]he person who has no place with which he identifies is in effect homeless, without roots”.

The issue of having no roots and no place to identify with was already recognized in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and then the issue was seen as “an attitude and an expression of that attitude

which is becoming increasingly dominant” (Relph 1976: 80). While rootedness is a subconscious and naturally occurring state, placelessness is rather an attitude that already in the 20<sup>th</sup> century started evolving into a serious issue. (Tuan 2001: 194; Weil 2005: 40, Relph 1976: 80). Placelessness is not something one has, it is something that one chooses. What is more, placelessness is closely linked with uprootedness, which is a state of non-belonging. Uprootedness is no longer an attitude to be chosen, but a state that has been imposed on one. The word itself already exhibits signs of violence: to be uprooted is to be torn away from one’s roots, to be uprooted is to be displaced and it usually involves some kind of a conquest. This conquest may be tragic if it is coupled with oppression or it may also be softer if the conquerors “settle down in the conquered country, intermarry the inhabitants and take root themselves” (Weil 2005: 41). However, even if it is not tragic, there still remains the question of being uprooted from a previous place of significance.

There are several reasons for the dominance of placelessness and uprootedness in today’s world, ranging from military conquests to more abstract, self-induced reasons, such as love of money (Weil 2005: 41). Both Relph (1976: 80) and Weil (2005: 40-95) argued that these states were already becoming more prevalent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While mobility is not necessarily seen as a bad phenomenon, if it results in placelessness or uprootedness, it can be harmful for an individual. Instead of providing a secure identity, home without rootedness has no functionality, it becomes “a marketable, exchangeable, and sentimentalised good” (Relph 1976: 83). Without rootedness, the sense of place is erased and new forms of shallow and inauthentic attitudes take hold of experiences of place. To prevent uprootedness and only having inauthentic relationships with places, it is necessary to deliberately commit time and effort into one’s experience of places.

## 1.4 TIME

Our lives are governed by a temporal dimension that, according to our perception, seems to be moving in a straightforward direction as if it were an arrow. The relationship between time and space that inhabits human consciousness allows time to only move in one direction. However, there is a way to escape this straightforward direction that humans are limited to and that is by exercising one's memory. Memory can be defined as "thoughtful reflection" that brings "elusive moments of the past" to a "present reality" (Tuan 2001: 148). Since it is impossible to "recollect our lives in a linear manner from birth to the present," memory brings "singular events" to the "foreground of our minds without any conscious effort and for reasons we cannot readily fathom" (King 2008: 68). Memories are pieces of the past that the unconscious mind brings forth to one's consciousness. Owain Jones (2011: 877), whose research focuses on geography and memory, expresses the thought that singular events are stored somewhere in the mind and may emerge involuntarily or be retrieved in a voluntary manner. The events of the past that are stored in our minds are not like pictures stored on a hard drive, but rather like "living landscapes seen obliquely and from an always moving viewpoint of on-going life" (Jones 2011: 882).

Memory is exercised through the imagination and it is an active participant in the creation of one's identity. Depending on one's past experiences, memory can help and heal or hurt and harm. The past cannot be changed, yet memories of the past may sometimes be altered. It is also suggested that the light in which the past is re-experienced can be chosen at will: "we can either dwell on the comforting or the regrettable" (King 2008: 73). This choice also affects the present since "our dealings with(in) the present rest upon our always-at-work memories and stocks of experience to script our responses and actions" (Jones 2011: 879). Mark Currie (2007: 88), who has written about time in fiction suggests that aging is a process of "the acquisition of a history," meaning that the memories gained through time

become part of one's personal history. Such memories may be seen as a burden of yesterday or as a celebration of times past. The choice made affects the creation of one's identity in the present since "[w]e are conglomerations of past everyday experiences, including their spatial textures and affective registers" (Jones 2011: 875).

While the past can be experienced in the imagination, it is much harder to comprehend how the present is experienced. While seemingly it is not hard to understand what is the present and it appears to be the only thing that can be experienced, some philosophers suggest that it does not exist since it can always be divided into moments that have been and those that have not yet been, which means that time is stripped of tense (Currie 2007: 8). Adopting an untensed view of time may prove to be necessary when, for example, studying the act of reading. The reader's present is never the same as the author's, narrator's or the character's present. In the act of reading, the reader may experience the author's past, the narrator's present and the even the character's future. Yet in this act, the reader experiences time moving forward in their own present, the act thus corresponding "to a tensed conception of time" and the text itself to an untensed view (Currie 2007: 16). Between the reader and the text, there exists a "spiraling movement in which the fictional representation of time and the lived experience of time constantly modify each other" (Currie 2007: 94). The text may move in times and so the reader has to follow along. The experience of the present is thus taking place at different moments in time.

Time is strongly connected to spatial experiences, as "places/landscapes" are "as much as temporal processes as they are spatial entities," meaning that just as places have a spatial location, they also have a temporal location (Jones 2011: 878). Tuan (2001: 179) suggests that if time is a motion, then place is "a pause in the temporal current" and that places make time visible. This view is supported by King (2008: 69), who sees place as a stop in time. However, it is possible to see the relationship between time and place in a very

different manner. Instead of seeing place as a pause, places can be seen moving through time just as people do. Since time makes up a great deal of one's experience of place, "these experiences must be bound up with flux or continuity" (Relph 1976: 33). Whether as moving objects or as moments of rest, places are always bound to time and connect the present with the past and the future as one's immersion in landscapes is always "temporal and memorial as well as performative, embodied and spatial" (Jones 2011: 879).

The quality of one's memories of the past and of significant places affects the view of the present. Nostalgic memories of home and romanticizing the past influence the experiences acquired in the present. Dallas Rogers (2013: 270), who writes about home and memory states that home itself can be considered "a metaphorical repository for memories from the past," which reveals "the truth of the present". Rogers is not the only one who links together time, memory, and home. King (2008: 77) expresses that the meaning of past homes and present homes are created through memory and home is "full of time" (King 2008: 77). According to Tuan (2001: 127-128), home is as much in the past as it is in the present and in the future, meaning that there is no beginning or end for home, as it simply exists through all times. King (2008: 77) supports this view by saying that home "seems to form a seamless continuum of presents linked to the past and future". This means that at the same time home is disconnected from time and entwined with time, disconnected in a way that it does not need to exist in the present in the same way that other physical objects need to have a space-time location. Home is in existence regardless of its material condition and location (Rogers 2013: 268). Yet, time also "becomes the central dimension to the idea of home because habits that repetitively unfold in specific contexts differentiate these locales or circumstances from the rest of the known world" (Terkenli 1995: 326). Home is where "space and time are intrinsically linked," making the dwelling place a "store of memory" (King 2008: 75).

If the physical connection with home lost, a stand-in is called for in the form of a

remembered home. Whether or not the physical home exists, it is still “imagined, recreated, longed for, remembered in the present” (Stock 2010: 24). Most people must have many homes to choose from where to return in their memories, but often the childhood home is chosen for the return trip as “the places of childhood constitute vital reference points for many individuals” (Relph 1976: 37). The memories of childhood homes are especially significant because time has a different meaning for a child. Instead of rushing forward, time moves at a leisurely pace for children and thus memories of childhood seem extended in time (Tuan 2001: 185, Bachelard 1994: 5-6; 57). Even though memories of such a time may not be accurate, they are still significant (Tuan 2001: 19-20, King 2008: 74-75). The importance of childhood memories lies in the need to cling to something meaningful, so childhood memories serve as the perfect images to hold on to as they are free of the uneasiness of the present, even if they are indeed created by one’s imagination (King 2008: 75).

## 1.5 MYTHICAL GEOGRAPHIES

According to Tuan (2001: 86), “our imagination constructs mythical geographies that may bear little or no relationship to reality”. These mythical geographies are created in the “absence of precise knowledge,” meaning that the less knowledge an individual has of space, the more he/she uses the imagination to construct an idea of place (Tuan 2001: 85). Even though some inventiveness is always required to create an image of an unknown place, defective knowledge may sometimes create negative impressions of the unknown place. Even if the impression is positive, the unknown place is imagined as a stereotypical entity which often fails to reflect the true state of a place.

Today the reasons for creating and maintaining mythical landscapes proceed from the wish to control and consume the landscapes in question (Relph 1976: 139). The

preconceived ideas of places shape one's experiences of them and the experiences further strengthen the stereotypes. Relph (1976: 138) mentions that the "landscapes of present-day society express the myths of reason, of the ideal past and the ideal future, of progress and permissiveness, of individual freedom and material comfort, of Swissness for winter and Mediterraneity for summer". Since places are deeply imbued with their myths, it is hard to tell apart fact from fiction, myth from reality.

Maria Amoamo (2013: 107), who writes about myths concerning Pitcairn Island in the southern Pacific Ocean, suggests that throughout history, "[a]rtists, writers, poets, and adventurers have metaphorically represented islands as tokens of desire, places of possibility and promise, either an ideal inhabited island or else an empty island on which to start again". Through examples in literature about the Pitcairn Island, Amoamo explains how islands are made into utopias and representations of an earthly paradise. The mythical identity of islands is created by both the inhabitants as well as the visitors. Since the mythical place is not real and outside of time, it is not hard to maintain fictional views about such a place (Amoamo 2013: 115-118). The creation of a mythical paradisaic island is rather common and holds "a central place in western culture's mythical geographies" (Amoamo 2013: 121). Deloughrey (2003: 305), who criticizes European colonialism in the Caribbean islands, also includes an overview of the alterations and damages done to the islands as she claims that during the colonial period "tropical islands were interpellated in Edenic terms, removed in space and time from the urbanisation of Western Europe". Similarly to Amoamo's example about the Pitcairn Island (2013: 117-118), Deloughrey (2003: 300-301) connects the myth-making of island utopias to today's tourist industry and finds that even today the image of a timeless paradise is forced upon Caribbean islands for profit.

The Caribbean islands are a popular tourist destination, in fact, the region has become "the world's most tourism-dependent region" (Carrigan 2010: 154). Buell (2005: 80) claims



that this has resulted in the region “self-prostituting” itself. Tourism has proved to be rather destructive for the Caribbean as the said industry is responsible for “overcrowding, invasive and often environmentally insensitive development, cultural commoditization, pollution, and the destruction of vulnerable ecosystems,” all the while erasing the otherness of the region to appease the hunger of the tourist (Carrigan 2010: 154).

In addition, the Caribbean is portrayed in a way that hides its troubling history, as a “postcard version of paradise” in an earthly form is only displayed (Handley 2005: 202-203). Instead of seeing a unique location, the islands are made to signify “images of sea, sun, sand and swaying palms” (Carrigan 2010: 154). Just like the colonizer, the tourist sees the Caribbean as an isolated space, remote from modernity and civilization, ready to offer the consumer something exotic (Deloughrey 2003: 300-301). However, as Relph (1976: 97, 92) points out in his discussion on tourism, since the tourist does not actually want to experience the real and genuine, but to escape to fantasyland to momentarily forget the “drab, corrupt, inefficient reality,” the destinations are made into “uniform products and places”. Eventually, instead of offering authentic experiences, the Caribbean, with all of its diversity and heterogeneity, is simply diminished into “eye candy” (Phillips 2002: 114).

In Biblical terms, however, paradise is something quite different. The Old Testament first introduces the idea of paradise. In his book *A Brief History of Heaven*, Alister McGrath (2003: 43) explains that the word ‘paradise’ has been borrowed from Old Persian *paradeida*, which is believed to mean ‘an enclosed garden’. According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, in the Bible, the Garden of Eden is a symbol of God’s perfect creation and “is a touchstone of such motifs as provision, beauty, abundance and the satisfaction of human need” (Ryken et al 1998: 315). Paradise is closely associated with the image of a garden, but paradise is also connected to a heavenly experience. In the Bible, heaven is “the transcendent ‘other’ world where God lives” (Ryken et al 1998: 370). It is described as a location and a

place that can be entered. However, this place is quite far from an earthly reality and “[v]ertical imagery dominates in the placing of it” (Ryken et al 1998: 370).

The image of a city is a model for heaven. New Jerusalem, as described in the final chapters of the Book of Revelation, is pictured with streets, gates and walls. The streets are of pure gold, the walls are garnished with precious stones and the gates are made of pearls. This heavenly city has no need for a sun or a moon, since the glory of God illuminates the city and there is no darkness of the night. Those who dwell and will dwell in heaven are characterized by their purity, which is expressed in the Bible “by imagery of washed robes (Rev 7:14), white garments (Rev 3:5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13), clothing of “fine linen, bright and pure” (Rev 19:8) and chaste people who are “spotless” (Rev 14:4–5)” (Ryken et al 1998: 371). In the New Testament, the heavenly city is seen as a homeland to where the redeemed return, as the “image invites us to imagine that we are coming home to a well-loved place – a place where we belong, where a joyful welcome awaits us” (McGrath 2003: 175).

Throughout history, the heavenly homeland, to where the exiled believers return after their time on earth, has also been seen a place of reunion, a place where it is possible to reunite with lost loved ones (McGrath 2003: 140). Such an idea provides a powerful consolation since the “most distressing aspect of death is that of separation” (McGrath 2003: 139). Due to this, in a society where Christian beliefs have predominated historically, it is only natural that humans, who have lost someone, imagine their loved ones in such a dwelling place. Reet Hiimäe explores how images of the afterlife are described in memorates. Hiimäe (2016: 3, 6) explains that the way people describe the afterlife or meeting someone who has already departed, is closely connected to their belief system, and in her examples Christianity is the main influence. Her examples include the mental geography of afterlife that corresponds to a vertical view of heaven, earth, and hell (Hiimäe 2016: 4-5). Hiimäe (2016: 7-8) brings out that in memorates, the description of the location

of the departed in the hereafter is usually quite similar to what can be experienced on earth, yet sometimes the departed are described as being in a transition zone until unfinished business on earth is finished, in two places at once (the grave and some other transcendent place), or already dwelling in some kind of a heavenly place. Since images of the afterlife in the Bible and in memorates are rather hazy and ambiguous, according to Tuan's definitions they could also be considered as mythical geographies. There is no precise knowledge that could help define heavenly places and places associated with the afterlife, and since knowledge of it is never complete, such places are "necessarily imbued with myths" (Tuan 2001: 98).

## 1.6 WEATHER

The significance of weather is not connected to mythical geographies in the sources examined above. However, in literature, weather is an important element. As a term, it means "the prevailing atmospheric conditions of a location or region, its annual patterns of warmth and cold, moisture and dryness, cloudiness and clear, determined after an extended period of observation" (Dando 2005: 454). Christina Dando (2005: 455), who writes on climate and literature claims that "[w]riting about climate makes concrete human experiences and observations, rendering them in a form that can be compared and contrasted with other descriptions". Weather is something that is experienced by everyone and so has an important influence on one's daily life. It is also closely connected to place experience and the passage of time. Writers who describe weather build on this universal experience and utilize climatic conditions in various ways. In 1995, a collection of articles, *Climate and Literature: Reflections of Environment*, was published about the relationship between literature and climate. The contributing scholars called attention to the many different roles of weather in literature and concluded that weather serves as a useful element for expressing a sense and

feel of a place and even the most basic description such as hot and cold may be quite telling in the creation of a setting, whether fictional or real.

Scholars who have researched the meaning of places have also brought out some ways in which weather conditions may influence the meaning given to a place, especially to a home place. For example, both Bachelard and Tuan feel that home is a more intimate place in winter when compared to summer. Bachelard (1994: 40) explains that in the bleak, cold and snowy winter “the house’s virtues of protection and resistance are transposed into human virtues. The house acquires the physical and moral energy of a human body,” making it an intimate place to hide from “the bestial hostility of the storm and the hurricane”. Tuan’s (2001: 137) claims are very similar, as he explains that “[w]inter reminds us of our vulnerability and defines the home as a shelter”. The uncomfortable conditions of winter turn home into a sheltering presence that promises to protect the individual from the cold of the outside world. When compared to warmer months, Tuan (2001: 137) insists that summer “turns the whole world into Eden so that no corner is more protective than another”. This means that intimacy of home is directly related to the prevailing weather conditions. If the environment is uncomfortable, home provides protection. However, if the outside environment is pleasant, there is no need of the protection of home. Since Bachelard and Tuan were mostly familiar with temperate climate zones (France and Minnesota, US, respectively), their claims are only valid for those climates in which seasons have considerable temperature differences. Other climate zones have different explanations as to how the weather affects the experience of places such as home.

The weather in tropical regions, such as the Caribbean greatly differs from the descriptions of Bachelard and Tuan. In the deep tropics and subtropics, temperature changes “are generally small, and rainfall is by far the most important meteorological element,” in addition, such regions are “generally at [their] driest during the winter” (Taylor&Alfaro

2005: 183). Instead of having snow to worry about, according to Clementina Adams (1995: 69), who has written about weather in García Marquéz's short stories, regions such as the Caribbean coast of Colombia are "saturated by heat and humidity during the dry season and full of endless and depressing rains during the rainy season". When explaining how weather affects the characters of Marquéz's works, Adams (1995: 65) claims that "the heat and dampness of hot days are usually associated with feelings of anger, anxiety and skepticism, but they can also represent the drowsiness and stupor of an empty, paralyzed and hopeless life". While rain seems at first like "a refreshing change," after a long period of gray skies it becomes associated "with death, and with feelings of desolation, fear, despair and solitude" (Adams 1995: 67). Jack Jordan (1995: 116-117), who gives a good overview of how weather has been used in the literature of the French Antilles, claims that while the tropical climate may seem "friendly and inviting" and descriptions of it are often befitting for a tourist brochure, the weather in the Caribbean islands also has its rougher moments, for example, when the days are so hot that everything rots under the scorching sun. Jordan (1995: 118) also claims that the effects of the weather on the individual in the Caribbean are so strong, "[l]andscape, climate and identity are fused in a way unique to these islands".

Weather plays a big role in the life of an individual, so it is only natural that literature mirrors these effects. The conduct of an individual may depend on whether it is sunny or rainy outside and so many authors have written down their observations on how weather affects a person. Weather may have bigger roles in literature as well, some of the functions of weather that the contributors to *Climate and Literature* (1995) identified are following: it may set the mood of a setting and create the atmosphere, offer information about locations, heighten actions, indicate the passing of time, have a symbolic function, manipulate the characters, and may even be considered a character (Adams 1995, Dando 2005, Elbow 1995, Jordan 1995, McClendon 1995, Nelson 1995, Pérez&Aycock 1995). Weather is often an

important tool for writers, through which it is possible to express many different ideas either overtly or covertly.

In this theoretical overview, I have examined the different elements that determine an individual's experience of a place as place is an important aspect in one's life. One's experiences with places vary depending on one's attitude towards the places encountered. The place experiences may be profound and rich in meaning and they may also be superficial and trivial. This chapter concentrated thoroughly on home and its meaning as a place and took a look at places that have no physical location, and can thus be considered mythical geographies. In addition, the theoretical chapter explored the influences of time and weather on place experiences. On the following pages, the theoretical insights will be applied to Derek Walcott's poem *The Prodigal* to see how different places in the poem are experienced by the speaker.

## **2 THE EXPERIENCE OF PLACES IN DEREK WALCOTT'S *THE PRODIGAL***

According to Edward Baugh (2006: 222) *The Prodigal* expresses many of the concerns that have featured in Derek Walcott's work and offers a "summarizing evaluation" to many of the issues. The name of the poem refers to the story of the prodigal son, which is told by Christ in the Sermon of the Mount (Luke 15: 11-32). The Bible story is about a man who returns home after living his life wastefully abroad and about the way he is welcomed back. As it includes the story of traveling and returning home, Baugh (2006: 222) suggests that *The Prodigal* could be considered "the culmination of all the home-comings in Walcott's poetry that have been rehearsals, as it were, for this one" (Baugh 2006: 222).

The book is divided into three parts that are further split into eighteen chapters, which comprise of 4-5 short sections of poems. As Baugh (2006: 223) explains, Walcott has used a similar structure before, in *Tiepolo's Hound* and in *Omeros*, with the verse form being similar as well: blank verse, which almost slips into free verse. In *The Prodigal*, the sections contribute to the topic of the chapter and the grouping of chapters is based on a more general topic of one of the three parts. In the first part, the speaker is in the United States and travels in Europe, in the second part, he is visiting South America and finally, in the third part, the speaker arrives in the Caribbean island, St. Lucia, his home. The intensity of the speaker's experiences in these places differs greatly, so the first topic of discussion in the analysis of the poem is the zones of outsidersness and insidersness.

## 2.1 OUTSIDENESS AND INSIDENESS

The places that are featured in *The Prodigal*, show different levels of outsidership and insidership. Walcott has masterfully conveyed the images of the places visited and has beautifully expressed the sense of place in Europe, the United States, in South America and in St. Lucia. Several of Relph's zones of outside and inside (see pages 16-18 above) can be employed to describe the relationship between places experienced and the poetic persona. In *The Prodigal*, insidership is the predominant state for the speaker. However, a couple of cases of incidental outsidership can also be recognized.

The poem begins on a train in the United States. In regard to the United States, determining the zone of outsidership or insidership is rather hard. While it is clear that the speaker recognizes different features in the States and describes them in vivid detail, most of the speaker's attention is directed toward his own thoughts while on a train. Memories of childhood and thoughts of aging and time are infused with things he sees on the train and from the window: "The small station was empty in the afternoon, / as it had been on the trip to Philadelphia. / I sipped the long delight of a past time where ambition was too late" (Walcott 2004: 6). The speaker mentions that he lives close to the Hudson River, which means that he is probably familiar with the region (Walcott 2004: 7,8). While there is no deliberate reflection on this place, the speaker's description suggests that he has a meaningful relationship with New York City and Boston and is well acquainted with Northeastern United States (Walcott 2004: 6-8). For example, when he walks around on the streets of New York City, he notices people instead of the sights, yet he has his own routine when walking around and knows the features of his surroundings by heart (Walcott 2004: 6-7). This suggests that his experience in the United States is that of an existential insider. It seems that he has a deep connection with places in the United States and is thoroughly familiar with his surroundings there: "Along the smoldering autumnal sidewalks, / the



secretive coffee-shops, bright flower stalls, / wandering the Village in search of another subject” (Walcott 2004: 6).

Another place that is clearly experienced by the speaker as an existential insider is St. Lucia. However, the descriptions of St. Lucia focus on different aspects when compared to the United States as there is barely any mention of human-made landmarks or anything else human-made that caught the speaker’s attention in the United States. Instead, the description of St. Lucia mostly concentrates on nature: “the hills and gulches all briary and ochre / and the small dervishes that swivelled in the dust / were like an umber study for a fresco / of The Prodigal Son, this scorched, barren acre” (Walcott 2004: 59). The speaker’s attention is directed towards mountains, plants, trees, the weather, the smells and the feel of St. Lucia. Even in the cases where a small church or a fishing village arouses the speaker’s attention, it is nature that receives special treatment from the speaker: “Grass, bleached to straw on the precipices of Les Cayes, / running in the blue and green wind of the Trade, / a small church hidden in a grove past Soufrière, / hot dasheen and purpling pomme arac, / and heavy cattle in a pasture, and the repetition / of patois prayers by the shallows of Troumassee” (Walcott 2004: 101).

Relph (1976: 55) mentions that in the case of existential insideness, “there exists between a place and person a strong and profound bond”. It seems that such a bond exists between the speaker and both St. Lucia and the United States. However, the emotional bond with St. Lucia seems to be much stronger than it is with the United States. The reasons for such a statement are following: the majority of the whole poem itself is about St. Lucia; and while in the United States, the speaker mentions that he has an island that is calling him and that he needs to return to this island (Walcott 2004: 39). Since Relph does not further differentiate between levels of existential insideness, it can only be said that just like the United States, St. Lucia is experienced as an existential insider. However, this existential

insiderness is much deeper and more intense than the experience in the United States. No matter how small and insignificant, the speaker knows every detail about St. Lucia, the roads, the trees, the hills, the colors, and the smells of the island:

Across the dry hillock, leaves chasing dead leaves  
in resurrecting gusts, or in the ochre quiet  
leaves too many to rake on the road's margins,  
too loaded to lift themselves, they lapsed singly  
or in a yellow chute from the cedar, burnt branches;  
lyres of desiccation choked the dry gutters  
everywhere in the country, La Feuillée, Monchy  
by the caked track to Saltibus, over D'ennery. (Walcott 2004: 60).

The speaker is thoroughly familiar with the identity of St. Lucia as this is the place that is part of him and of which he is part of.

The speaker experiences existential insiderness with only the United States and St. Lucia. The relationship between the speaker and other places featured in the poem does not seem to be as profound, even though insiderness is experienced in connection with a couple more places. For example, in Colombia, it is empathetic insiderness that the speaker experiences. The description of Cartagena, Colombia, greatly relies on the sights and its image as a “walled city,” walled because of its colonial walls and fortress, but also because it is surrounded by the sea (Walcott 2004: 47). Instead of only describing the obvious visual elements, the speaker describes the feel of Cartagena in relation to its proximity to home: “on that golden road to the legendary city, / slums, shacks, a clogged river, El Dorados of garbage, / dirt tracks and canoes, the portals to paradise / to the walled city that was our Rome. / Unguarded by soldiers. Not a strange coast, but home” (Walcott 2004: 48).

Since the weather and nature in Columbia with its “sea-grape and sea-almonds and spindly palms” resemble St. Lucia, the speaker sees the elements of Colombia’s landscape in a manner which resembles the experience of an empathetic insider (Walcott 2004: 45). However, Relph (1976: 54) mentions that there “is no abrupt distinction between empathetic and behavioural insiderness,” but rather they fade into each other, so it is quite hard to distinguish between these two experiences in Walcott’s text. These examples and the rest of

the text about Colombia could either be experienced from the perspective of an empathetic insider or from the viewpoint of a behavioral insider. However, since it seems that while in Colombia, the speaker does not attend to the physical appearance of places there visited, but rather sees the meaning behind the appearance of Cartagena, Barranquilla and the northern coast of Colombia, I would suggest that the speaker's experience in Colombia is that of an empathetic insider.

The speaker's stay in Italy is another good example of how behavioral insideness and empathetic insideness fade into each other, as the speaker switches between the two different levels of insideness. There are times when Italy is described in relation to its sights, which suggests the experience of a behavioral insider: the speaker looks at the "tight fine towns," "ragged palms and pastel balconies," and "seaside hotels with their salt balconies / whose iron flowers rust with artifice" (Walcott 2004: 18, 21). He explains how lovely it was "coming through the mountains / castles on the far crest, the flashing olives / and the halted infantry of pines" (Walcott 2004: 19). Yet, Italy is not only described through its visual elements but other senses as well, signaling the attitude of an empathetic insider: the speaker recognizes "the smell of a washed street in Pescara, / the sun-on-stone smell of the hills of Tuscany" (Walcott 2004: 24). As an empathetic insider, the speaker pays attention to the atmosphere of Italy, as he mentions the "serene soft mountains, those tacit gorges that / was Abruzzi," which "looked incorruptible as the faith of a young priest" (Walcott 2004: 18). The speaker does not just look at the superficial elements of Italy but also puts some effort into properly seeing Italy: "Left-handed light at the morning on the square, / the Duomo with long shadows where clamoring bells / shake exaltation from blue, virginal air" (Walcott 2004: 25).

Unlike Italy and Colombia, Zermatt in Switzerland is described in a way that suggests that the speaker is only a behavioral insider there. For the speaker, the most obvious

aspect in Zermatt is its mountains and the snow that covers them: “Chasms and fissures of the vertiginous Alps / through the plane window, meadows of snow / on powdery precipices” (Walcott 2004: 9). These elements predominate the speaker’s stay in Switzerland and the description of Zermatt is mostly done by using different metaphors and symbols for snowy mountains, until the repetition of snowy landscapes prompts the speaker to ask: “How many more / peaks of these ice-sized mountains, and towns / locked in by avalanches” (Walcott 2004: 9-10). Relph (1976: 53) mentions that “behavioural insideness involves deliberately attending to the appearance of that place” and it seems that the speaker is doing just that when in Switzerland. This is also related to Relph’s ideas of winter Swissness and seeing only the fiction of landscapes (see page 32 above). As the sights in Switzerland are mostly comprised of the mountains and snow, the speaker is only able to concentrate on those elements until finally coming down from the mountains to Lausanne. By Lake Geneva, the speaker’s attention is taken over by the vast lake and the greyness that descends on the areas surrounding the lake: “Irradiating outwards from that grey lake, / that grey which is the hue of historical peace / Geneva was the colour of a statesman’s hair, / silvery and elegant” (Walcott 2004: 16). The speaker’s focal point becomes the lake, yet it has the same function as the snowy mountains, therefore the experience in Switzerland remains that of a behavioral insider.

While insideness is the predominant state for the speaker in the poem, there still exist some of cases of outsideness. As the speaker stays in Guadalajara, Mexico, he mourns the death of his brother Roddy. This event takes place in the middle of the book and breaks a pattern that has been forming since the beginning of the collection. Most of the places in Europe and in America have been described in vivid detail but the features of Guadalajara stay in the background as the death of the speaker’s brother is instead examined. In the beginning, the speaker starts describing “dusty fields under parched lilac mountains,” in

Guadalajara, yet the description does not last long as the speaker starts seeing the face of his brother in the barks of the trees (Walcott 2004: 50). It is clear that the speaker is deeply affected by the tragic event, as the environment of Guadalajara is completely taken over by thoughts that are connected to the death of his brother. For example, when the speaker reads of the cremation of his brother, it influences his view of the landscape in Guadalajara: “The streets and trees of Mexico covered with ash” (Walcott 2004: 50). The speaker’s stay in Guadalajara and the way he interacts with the setting suggests that the speaker remains an incidental outsider. His activities and thoughts overshadow the experience of the place and thus the landscape serves only as the background.

Incidental outsideness also appears in Spain. The features of Spain remain in the background as the speaker engages in reminiscence of previous travels, beautiful women and description of Spanish and European art. Thus, it seems that, similarly to Guadalajara, Spain is experienced as an incidental outsider. While there are some instances that suggest that some thought is given to the visual aspects of Spain, these cases are overshadowed by the speaker’s memories and discussion on art. Instead, in Spain, the speaker thinks about the places he has previously visited and remembers the beautiful women he associates with those places: “The Alps receding in the blue irises / of Ilse, the water folding itself in braids / behind Roberta’s hair in the Grand Canal, / the startled eyebrows of gentle Esperanza / like sparrows lifting from the cobbles in Alcalá” (Walcott 2004: 31). Even locations on paintings seem to be more important to the speaker than his own physical location: “on the high corner of the fresco, look – / on some obscure hill, with the size of beetles, / their pincers with the far ferocity of lances /.../ another battle is waging its own business, / inaudible and tiny, negligible” (Walcott 2004: 34).

In a similar way to Spain, the speaker’s experience in Germany is overshadowed by his own ponderings, this time on history. The physical location is disregarded and the

speaker's ideas about post-World War II Germany are highlighted:

White walls set back amidst a mutter of birches  
the house kept its cold secret – it had been  
a cultural outpost in the old regime,  
when the East was a colony of Russia.  
But there was no partition in the sunshine  
of the small rusty garden that a crow  
crossed with no permit; instead, the folded echo  
of interrogation, of conspiracy  
surrounded it, although its open windows  
were steamed envelopes. (Walcott 2004: 38).

While these lines suggest that a specific location triggers the speaker's thoughts, his ideas about history minimize the importance of the actual physical experience of this place, which means that the speaker's experience in Germany is also that of an incidental outsider. It seems that there are two reasons for incidental outsideness in the poem. In the case of Guadalajara, the speaker seemed to be emotionally affected by a traumatic event, after which he was only able to concentrate on the thoughts about his brother's death. However, there does not seem to be any special incidents in Spain or Germany that would cause the speaker to experience incidental outsideness. Instead, these places were triggers for memories and thoughts that eventually left the significance of the places themselves in the background.

Finally, there is another level of insideness that can be experienced in *The Prodigal* and that is vicarious insideness, sometimes experienced both by the speaker in the poem as well as the reader. Relph (1976: 52, 53) mentions that it is possible for the artist to depict a place in such a manner that the readers would sense what it is like to actually be there, yet this of course depends on "our own imaginative and empathetic inclinations". The speaker describes a couple of such instances. While in Italy, he says that he remembers Abruzzi

from *A Farewell to Arms*, with the soft young priest  
who invites Frederic Henry there after the war,  
and perhaps Frederic Henry got there, whether or not,  
here it was now with small hill towns on the ridges,  
where it could be infernally cold. The precise light  
defined bright quarries. It looked incorruptible  
as the faith of a young priest. Its paint still wet.  
It spun past, saying, "You swore not to forget  
fighting and the rattle of gunfire in the mountains." (Walcott 2004: 18).

Clearly the speaker was deeply engaged in reading Hemingway to be able to evoke such a

clear image of the scenes in the book and connect it with his own travels. Similarly to his experience with Abruzzi and Hemingway, Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Ice Maiden" has strongly influenced the speaker, as the images still linger in his head after reading it in his childhood. The speaker remembers reading the fairy tale in warm weather "in a jalousied room" (Walcott 2004: 14). His experience while reading was so immersive that he started feeling the coldness described in the book in his own heart, leaving an imprint of the experience that has never left him (Walcott 2004: 14-15).

Vicarious insideness can also be experienced by the reader of the poem: if the reader allows himself/herself to be transported into the places that Walcott describes and pays attention to details, such as what the weather is like or what the predominant color of a place is, it is possible to experience most of the different places that appear in *The Prodigal*. The reader of Walcott's poem and the speaker in the poem thus share an experience, that of vicarious insideness.

## 2.2 EXPERIENCING PLACES THROUGH WEATHER

Weather is a prominent element in *The Prodigal*, as weather patterns help distinguish places in the poem. Weather is connected to place experience and the passage of time and the role of weather is to offer information about the locations and to create the atmosphere of the places experienced by the speaker. The speaker travels through places and times and recognizes the "different climate" that dominates in different countries (Walcott 2004: 11). A simplified way to speak of weather in *The Prodigal* would be to say that the poem starts with autumn and ends with summer. However, describing seasons in the poem would not be very useful as the speaker stays in two different climate zones – temperate and tropical. Instead, it is necessary to inspect what kind of weather patterns are revealed. In the poem, description of weather is as changeable as the experiences of time. Seasons come and go,

months change from October to July without any warning and snow may suddenly turn into sunshine as the speaker suddenly has a flashback. Weather phenomena have an important role in *The Prodigal*, and in several cases the description of weather is what creates the mood and color of a passage.

The seasonal cycle guides the first part of the poem. The very first line demonstrates the importance of weather in the poem: “In autumn, on the train to Pennsylvania” (Walcott 2004: 3). In this line, the speaker also specifies a place, Pennsylvania, and thus the reader is able to draw conclusions as to what the speaker’s experience of weather at the given moment might be like. During the speaker’s further stay in the United States, the fall weather remains, as he walks “along the autumnal sidewalks” (Walcott 2004: 6). The months that are experienced in the United States are October and December (Walcott 2004: 3, 7). Whether the sky above the Hudson River is cloudy or cloudless, the river reflects “numinous greys” (Walcott 2004: 7). When clouds appear, “the sag of old towels, sodden in grey windows, / the far shore scumbled by the fog, / ducks bob on the grey river like decoys” (Walcott 2004: 7). Everything appears grey in light of the fall, until the speaker notices that “winter is rising / on drifts across the pavements” and he is forced to admit that he “missed the fall” as it “went with a sudden flare” (Walcott 2004: 8).

As fall switches into winter, changes occur even in the descriptions of color – gray is replaced by white. The speaker’s stay in Switzerland is dominated by winter, as he remarks that “now it was time for the white poem of winter” (Walcott 2004: 12). Winter darkness takes over the narrative as snow is the key element that influences the speaker’s experience of Switzerland:

Chasm and fissures of the vertiginous Alps  
 through the plane window, meadows of snow  
 on powdery precipices, the cantons of cumuli  
 grumbling or closing, gasping falls of light  
 a steady and serene white-knuckled horror  
 of speckled white serrations, inconceivable  
 in repetition, spumy avalanches  
 of forgetting cloud, in the wrong heaven–



paradise of ice and camouflage (Walcott 2004: 9).

For the speaker, the recurrence of snow and ice is tedious and the landscape seems to be duplicated in every direction (Walcott 2004: 9-10). In Switzerland everything is white, the mountains, the streets as skiers conquer the slopes, and the scenes resemble Christmas cards (Walcott 2004: 12). The speaker remarks that he “had never seen so much snow. It whitened night” (Walcott 2004: 15). Such a landscape is foreign to the speaker, creating in him “a fear that is farther than panic” and previously only experienced through books on the level of vicarious insideness (Walcott 2004: 10, 14-15; see pages 17, 46-47 above). However, as he comes down from the Alps to the cities beside Lake Geneva, the speaker no longer sees the snow. Instead, “after the white ridges,” he sees “ochre scarps for a long while along the grey lake” (Walcott 2004: 15). The lake is “immense and grey, with its invisible shore” and the weather in Lausanne “sounded like its name,” as “[t]hought furred and felt like an alderman’s collar, / a chocolate stick for the voracious fog” (Walcott 2004: 16). The snow no longer dominates the streets and again a grey fogginess appears in the narrative until a warmer climate is entered.

When compared to descriptions of the United States and Switzerland, weather patterns in the description of Italy are less frequent. Instead, Italy is rather described through its landscape. The climate there is probably not too cold, as the speaker immediately notices olive trees and cypresses, and palm trees eventually also make an appearance (Walcott 2004: 17, 21, 27). As the speaker drives to Pescara “through the wet sunlight,” he notices, how the “[w]ind folded the deckchairs on the esplanade,” until the “weak sunshine” makes an appearance to bring the color “back into the sea’s face” (Walcott 2004: 18). The sun in Italy is warm and the sky reminds the speaker of the Caribbean as “the cheek is warmed by a freshly ironed sky” (Walcott 2004: 18, 24). Despite the warm sun, it is still spring in Italy, since the speaker makes a mention of “the grey cool spring air” (Walcott 2004: 27). In addition, as the sun rises, the speaker remarks that the sun paints the streets with “a spring’s

gold” (Walcott 2004: 28). The warm sun in Italy is a promise of a warmer climate, one that is reminiscent of the speaker’s home (Walcott 2004: 23, 28).

The final chapter of the first part takes place in Germany. Here weather patterns create the mood of the chapter. First, the speaker describes a German phrase *unter den Linden*, which he associates with “a branch in sunshine”. (Walcott 2004: 37). The speaker connects the phrase with “the swathe of summer, green hillocks and red roofs, / through rusted pines” (Walcott 2004: 37). However, as he further muses upon the phrase, instead of describing it in terms of landscape and weather, the speaker begins talking about it in connection to the history of post–World War II Germany. He finds that the divided country was “a cold, not a hot one, and its relic / still gave me a November shudder” (Walcott 2004: 38).

While in Germany, the speaker mentions that amongst other things, history can be defined as “the flecks of blossom / on enamelled meadows the pages of spring, /.../ the music / heard in cold March through the black bars of lindens” and the sprinkling of white flowers “in a new spring” (Walcott 2004: 39). The chapter ends with a brief and sudden transition to the United States. There, “[b]lue-grey morning” and sunlight is “shaping Jersey,” and the speaker starts longing for the Caribbean (Walcott 2004: 40).

Thus far, the speaker has experienced fall, winter and spring. Summer finally arrives in Part II of the poem, in Colombia, as “[s]piked palms rattle midsummer’s consonants in Barranquilla” (Walcott 2004: 43). While on the way to Cartagena, “[t]he infinite highway went along the dry coast. The hours reeled back along the road under the hot blue sky” as the landscape that has experienced drought only reveals “khaki grass, / thorn scrub and dusty bush, and dull olive trees” (Walcott 2004: 44). Because of the hot climate, the road along the coast of Colombia is described as “dry and sour,” until the speaker finally sees beaches and “through the trees – / the Caribbean, owned and exultant grinning and comforting /

between sea-grape and sea-almonds and spindly palms” (Walcott 2004: 45). The Caribbean coast and its “tin-coloured sea” is rattled by the Eastern, “African wind” (Walcott 2004: 45). Sea-almonds, agave and “frowsty” air created by “sea-walls” in Cartagena act as evidence of a tropical climate that resembles what is “nearer home” than any other place visited in the poem – a climate of constant summer, a seasonless weather (Walcott 2004: 47-48).

‘Seasonless’ also applies to St. Lucia (Walcott 2004: 54). Whether the speaker is talking of a childhood St. Lucia or a contemporary St. Lucia, the weather is always warm (Walcott 2004: 14, 67). The speaker describes St. Lucia as a “country of the ochre afternoon” where “it is always still and hot” and where “the far hills are very quiet / and heat-hazed” (Walcott 2004: 64). Since the speaker spends more time talking about St. Lucia than any other place, the weather phenomena that appear in St. Lucia are also more numerous than in other places. The weather fluctuates between scorching heat and drought and drizzling rain. At the beginning of part III, the readers first meet a description of St. Lucia that is overtaken by drought, the island is dusty and barren, the gommier tree “unshouldering its leaves, / barrow after loaded barrow, the leaves fading, yellow” (Walcott 2004: 59-61). The drought continues until “[t]he first daybreak of rain, the crusted drought / broken in half like bread” (Walcott 2004: 65). Amidst the drought, the speaker “had forgotten the benediction of rain / edged with sunlight, the prayers of dripping leaves” and feels gratitude for the rainfall as the sunlight makes the drizzle shine and look “lovely” (Walcott 2004: 66).

The names of three months are mentioned in connection with St. Lucia: January, March and April (Walcott 2004: 61, 63). In stormy January, “the African wind blows rain across the cape /.../ It is the season of rainbows, of a thin drizzle / in the wet air /.../ and the indigo ranges heavy with the darkening rain” (Walcott 2004: 98). Even though the sun is “inching,” according to the speaker, March in St. Lucia is still rather rainy: roads and leaves are wet, which prompts the speaker to ask “in March? This blustery, this grey?”, yet

eventually to admit that “[t]his miracle was usual for the season” (Walcott 2004: 67). The sun continues its fight with the rain and the speaker comments on how “[t]he pastures were beaded, roofs shone on the hills / a sloop was working its way against huge clouds / as patches of sunlight widened with a new zeal” (Walcott 2004: 68). As the spring rains make the land fertile again, the vegetation becomes alive:

The white flowers have the fury of battle,  
they lay siege to the mountains, for war  
there is the tumult of the white ravines,  
and the cascade’s assault; they bow their plumes,  
Queen Anne’s lace, bougainvillea, orchid and oleander (Walcott 2004: 71).

When it stops raining, “heat collects in the depths between the ridges” and “the hot, still valley of Soufrière” reveals a “black, baking asphalt” (Walcott 2004: 73-74).

Looking up the hills in the valley of Santa Cruz, the speaker creates a vivid juxtaposition as the white flowers that “lay siege to the mountains” are compared to the Alps in Switzerland: “they are as white as arrested avalanches, / angry and Alpine, their petals blur into a white gust from the Matterhorn or the streets of Zermatt” (Walcott 2004: 71). Such a comparison in the second half of the poem is quite surprising since in the first half, the white snow of the Alps was seen with a distrust: “white and without thought, my fear was white / and my belief obliterated /.../ everything was white, white was the colour of nothing” (Walcott 2004: 9). The speaker remembers the stories he read of snow as a child and recalls “the pitch of temperature and terror, / polar rigidities that magnetized a child / these rocks bearded with icicles, crevasses / from Andersen’s ‘Ice Maiden,’ Whittier’s ‘Snow-Bound.’ / this empire, this infernity of ice” (Walcott 2004: 14). That day of reading the stories has not left the speaker, “his heart / was iced with terror,” even though the stories were read on the warm island, where it is “all spring, all summer” (Walcott 2004: 14, 11; see pages 46-47 above).

It is quite interesting that despite the frightening experiences of his childhood, the speaker still compares the whiteness of the snowy Alps with hills in the tropical Caribbean.

It is also interesting that here colors and weather relate to the experience of time. The experience of time in these lines is rather complicated, the stories of snowy mountains were read in the speaker's childhood in a tropical climate and as the speaker returns to the tropical climate in old age, he connects his real experiences of cold and snow with the blooming of flowers in the spring as eventually "[b]oth worlds are welded, /... / seamed by delight" (Walcott 2004: 71).

### 2.3 EXPERIENCING PLACES THROUGH TIME

The narrative in *The Prodigal* is not chronological. The speaker constantly moves between the present and the past, reminiscing about his childhood and previous travels, until by the end of the book, it is rather hard to make sense of the timeline. Compared to the third part of the poem, the first two parts are more straightforward when it comes to temporal arrangement. In the first two parts, the speaker is mostly recounting his travels and temporal disarrangement only happens occasionally. However, in part III of the poem, it is hard to distinguish which time the speaker inhabits. Part III is about the homecoming of the Prodigal Son; yet, the speaker also often returns to Europe in his narrative to make comparisons between St. Lucia and other places. In addition, throughout the book, the speaker makes comments about his age and worries about getting older.

The nature of the present is rather complicated in *The Prodigal*. It is hard to determine when the present is taking place, or if it is taking place at all (see page 29 above). In the first poem of the book, after the speaker establishes his location and the season, he says that "he placed his book face-down on the sunlit seat / and [the train] began to move" (Walcott 2004: 3). The verbs in these lines are in the simple past tense, yet as the speaker continues to talk about the train ride, it seems that the events are taking place in the speaker's present: "And now the cars began to fill with pilgrims" (Walcott 2004: 3). It is hard to

establish whether his travels are taking place in his present or whether they are pictures from his memory.

Looking at the tenses of the verbs is not much help in the case of *The Prodigal*. However, there are some cases which indicate that the actions are taking place in the speaker's present. For example, there is a short dialogue between a waiter and the speaker towards the end of Part I, which starts as such: "Breakfast 9:00 a.m. The whole terrace cool from the sea" (Walcott 2004: 39). The speaker also points out the exact time when staying in Guadalajara: "March 22. 8:35 a.m. Guadalajara. Saturday. / Roddy. Toronto. Cremated today" (Walcott 2004: 50). The whole first poem in Chapter 9, which deals with the death of the speaker's brother, actually seems to be in the speaker's present. As the speaker wonders where his brother has gone after death "on this bright afternoon," he mentions that he himself is currently "watching a soccer match listlessly / on TV" (Walcott 2004: 50-51). There are some other cases that could be considered to be in the speaker's present (for example, Walcott 2004: 54, 71, 72) but overall it is quite hard to establish what is the present for the speaker as even the examples pointed out could be read as not having anything to do with the present.

The link between the present and the past is manifested in the form of memories. Most of the speaker's experiences with places seem to be based on his recollections. For example, the speaker recalls an experience taking place in Switzerland, when he wondered whether to step into a store, and another example being the memory of a walk during a sunrise in Rome (Walcott 2004: 10-11, 27-28). Such memories abound in the first two parts of the poem. In these, the locations are mostly separated with only some interruptions occurring concerning timelines (for example, when the speaker compares one location with another); in the third part, however, all the memories are interconnected, compared to one another and presented in a disorganized manner. For example, a frequently mentioned

memory is that of the drizzle in Pescara, Italy. The memory of rainy Pescara makes an appearance throughout the third part and is once recalled in the second part, in the chapter about Cartagena (Walcott 2004: 47, 59, 76, 95). The speaker's memories are firmly connected to the experience of places and the most important memories are that of St. Lucia.

Images of St. Lucia are evoked throughout the book. In the first two parts of the poem, St. Lucia is mostly remembered through childhood memories. While in the United States, the speaker recalls that, "[t]here were no stations / or receding platforms in the maps of childhood, / nor blizzards of dogwood, no piercing steeples / from buttressed cathedrals, nor statues whose base / held dolphins" nor any trains (Walcott 2004: 4-5). In addition, when the speaker's reading experiences are recalled, images of warm St. Lucia from his childhood manifest (Walcott 2004: 14). A childhood spent in St. Lucia is also recalled in connection with the death of the speaker's brother:

When we were boys coming home from the beach,  
it used to be such a thing! The body would be singing  
with salt, the sunlight hummed through the skin  
and a fierce thirst made iced water  
a gasping benediction, and in the plated heat,  
stones scorched the soles, and the cored dove hid  
in the heat-limp leaves, and we left the sand  
to its mutterings, and the long, cool canoes. (Walcott 2004: 53).

Additionally, memories of St. Lucia are evoked when making comparisons with other places. However, as these comparisons are also connected to the topic of home, they will be further analyzed in the next subchapter.

Mentions of childhood, however, are not as numerous as comments on aging. Throughout the book the speaker keeps drawing attention to his old age, describing himself as an old man (Walcott 2004: 6, 8, 32, 86, 87). He also complains about the different symptoms that bother him about old age: white hair, bad eyesight, kidney stones, drooping skin, and dentures (Walcott 2004: 7-8, 53). While looking at himself in the mirror, he sees a "disassembled man" (Walcott 2004: 53). The speaker is surprised when he suddenly sees himself in the door glass, so he asks who is this old man and the answer is quite serious:

I am you. Learn to acknowledge me,  
 the cottony white hair, the heron-shanks,  
 and, when you and your reflection bend,  
 the leaf-green eyes under the dented forehead,  
 do you think Time makes exceptions, do you think  
 Death mutters, "Maybe I'll skip this one"? (Walcott 2004: 86).

Yet despite the burdens of old age, the speaker instructs himself to be happy, as he still has the opportunity to exercise his mind and to do things he loves (Walcott 2004: 99). In addition, his age does not stop him from lusting after women, as he often notices beautiful women around him and recalls the images of women he has known throughout his life (Walcott 2004: 6, 13-14, 21, 22, 31-32, 43, 45, 49, 64, 89-90). The descriptions of beautiful young women on streets and in cafes prompt the speaker to refer to himself as "a dirty old man leering at young things" (Walcott 2004: 32). When a young waitress in Rimini, Italy, reminds the speaker his first love, he realizes how quickly time passes, half a century has passed since he was with his first love (Walcott 2004: 89). The experience of that day in the café seems to last a long time for the speaker, as he expresses that "[i]t was forever morning on the harbor / and there was only one subject – Time" (Walcott 2004: 90).

Time itself is mentioned quite a number of times in *The Prodigal*. Throughout the poem, the speaker keeps mentioning the passing of time or the lack of time. The amount of time affects interactions with places as there is a limit to how much time can be spent on one place. At the end of the poem, time is even perceived as something that has a will of its own and which is capable of carrying out actions. When time is discussed, the speaker seems to step out of the narrative to comment on the role of time. For example, already on the second page of the poem, as the speaker contemplates what is around him on the train, he realizes that he does not have much time: "There was no time / to fall in love with Florence, to completely understand / Wilmington or the rusty stanchions / that flashed past with their cables," for the speaker, time seems to glide by, adding to "his growing loss" (Walcott 2004: 4). On the following pages, the speaker's contemplations on time continue, as he travels



back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in his mind and imagines that back then time passed at a different pace (Walcott 2004: 5-6). Chapter 14, at the end of the book, contains a similar occurrence. While reflecting on history, the speaker once again becomes aware of the different pace of history: his feet “keep another time” and come “with a different metre” (Walcott 2004: 81).

In Chapter 5, where the speaker visits Spain, time is again on his mind as he makes a metalevel comment concerning time and writing: “Narrative originates in the heart, time’s / pendulum and apostrophe, until the heart’s scales / are swung to a standstill, to a breathing balance” (Walcott 2004: 36). In these lines, time (or time’s pendulum) is something that triggers an action, in this case, producing a narrative. The active role of time is even more stressed in the second half of the book:

I wake at sunrise to angelic screams.  
And time is measuring my grandchildren's cries  
and time outpaces the sepia water  
of the racing creek, time takes its leisure, cunning  
in the blocked hollows of the pool, the elephantine stones  
in the leaf-marked lagoon, time sails  
with the soundless buzzard over the smoking hills  
and the clouds that fray and change  
and time waits very quiet between the mountains (Walcott 2004: 72)

Here it seems that places are some kind of containers of time. Time is positioned into places and time is directly linked with the experience of places. Time also seems to have the ability to instigate actions as if the abstract concept had the capacity to act on volition. At the very end of the book, such an ability of time is again pronounced as time initiates a series of negative actions that bother the speaker: “Time, that gnaws at bronze lions and dolphins / that shrivels fountains, had exhausted him” (Walcott 2004: 102). This series of actions is continued by places, which also gain the ability to act on volition, exhausting and devouring the speaker.

Another important topic that is related to time is history (and History). In *The Prodigal*, History is “the muse of shutters and cabinets” (Walcott 2004: 25). Historical events and history itself comes to the speaker’s mind throughout the book. Already in the

beginning of the book, while still on the train, the speaker enters a different era:

In the middle of the nineteenth century,  
somewhere between Balzac and Lautréamont,  
a little farther on than Baudelaire Station  
where bead-eyed Verlaine sat, my train broke down,  
and has been stuck there since. When I got off  
I found that I had missed the Twentieth Century. (Walcott 2004: 5).

The speaker finds himself in “another country whose time had passed, / with pastoral willows and a belief in drawing” (Walcott 2004: 5). Here, the 19<sup>th</sup> century is experienced as another country, as a place. Later in the poem, artists of another century are again mused upon as a large part of chapter 5, which takes place in Spain, is spent on contemplating about European artists (Walcott 2004: 34-36). This History is one of literature and art and especially concerns European artists.

Another kind of History mentioned in the poem concerns the political history of Europe. In the chapter that takes place in Germany, the speaker focuses on the aftermath of World War II in Germany, as he finds that despite its horrors, “History is healing” (Walcott 2004: 37). When visiting Cartagena, the viewpoint of European history is represented, as the speaker calls Cartagena “New World Spain” (Walcott 2004: 48). Since the speaker’s travels have taken him all over the world, he feels that while he is in Columbia, the “old world,” or the Historical world, feels more familiar (Walcott 2004: 48).

The speaker feels envious of History and its achievements. While in Italy, the speaker sees a statue of a general, who must have died in a battle, this prompts the speaker to admit that he feels envious of statues, fountains, columns and bells (Walcott 2004: 25). However, later in the poem, in Chapter 13, the speaker decides that he as a St. Lucian ought not to be envious of the history of Europe, of its magnificent feats, praised cities and wonderful arts. While History might be considered immortal, the speaker realizes that for him, there is another history that is far more important. In St. Lucia, as he looks “across to the abandoned fort; / no History left, just natural history” (Walcott 2004: 68-69).

The speaker draws a line of contrast between the great History of European art and politics and the natural history of the Caribbean. The seemingly unimportant Caribbean places, which are dominated by nature alone have “no literature, no history,” as it has not yet been recorded (Walcott 2004: 28, 78). Literature, dates and facts are important for History, yet for the speaker, natural history needs no facts nor any dates:

1492. 1833. 1930.

Dates. The one thing about which there is no discourse.  
 Dates multiplied by events, by consequences,  
 are what add up to History. We have a few coins  
 struck for a mere handful of events,  
 as amateur numismatists, regal profiles,  
 none worthy in the traditional way of memory,  
 slavery being an infinity of endeavour  
 without pause or payment, without commemoration,  
 only the long division of day into dark,  
 of drought into rainburst, equinoxes glide  
 over their own shadows, and all our dates,  
 our calendars, hymns and anniversaries,  
 were bequeathed to us. Left to itself  
 the brain would be mantled like coral in the cool  
 shade of a reef's outcrop and turret, swayed  
 like reeds in meditation, dateless. (Walcott 2004: 83).

Even though the green streets, “vermilion roofs, / and gates that creak open into banana yards / and doors that groan on the evocation of ginger” and hills with “five cresting palms / whose fingers are stirring tropical almanacs / darkened with rain” are insignificant to other people, the speaker made a promise to the place with no History (Walcott 2004: 85, 94). He promised “[t]o save the salt light of the island / to protect and exalt its small people” (Walcott 2004: 51). Even if it is just a “bedraggled backyard,” an “unfulfilled lot,” a field of brittle leaves, it is the speaker's center (Walcott 2004: 84). The speaker's goal is to make the history of St. Lucia significant, not to make it into a History, but to record the unimportant beauty of the “village houses, the streets untainted / by any history, by any thought or shadow / on the blank canvas except from the sky” (Walcott 2004: 99). Such a history is “enclosed / in bush, devoured by green,” it is “sworn to ancestral silence,” yet it calls out to the speaker and his words about this history will “overrun these ruins and sprout with the fecundity of bougainvillea,” as this is the history of his home (Walcott 2004: 99-100).

## 2.4 HOME AS A PLACE

According to Relph, existential insideness is what “most people experience when they are at home and in their own town or region, when they know the place and its people and are known and accepted there” (Relph 1976: 55). In the end, a Prodigal Son always returns home and for the speaker in the poem, St. Lucia seems to be the place of return. St. Lucia is the place that the speaker thinks about when abroad and St. Lucia is the place, where he returns after his travels. St. Lucia is the Prodigal’s home. However, other places may also reveal aspects that are home-like and so comparisons between St. Lucia and other places abound in *The Prodigal*.

Throughout the poem, the speaker speaks of *his own* island, the island “of his young manhood,” “his warm island,” “our traffic island,” and “the precipices of my island” (Walcott 2004: 5, 14, 26, 93). The manner of speech that expresses a possession of some sort seems to indicate that he is one with the island, and as Relph (1976: 55) would say, it suggests the speaker’s “deep and complete identity” with the island. He has always carried the island with him during his travels because that is where his roots are, “In the lush chasm and fissures of Choiseul / an ogre bred my grandam, whelped my father, / erected my tall aunts,” and the island is where he goes “in search of his own shire” (Walcott 2004: 82). St. Lucia is the place where he spent his childhood and it is the place to which he made a vow, “a life-long fealty”

to the horizontal sunrise, acolyte  
to the shallows' imprecations, to the odour  
of earth turned by the rain, to the censer of mist,  
to the pennons of cocoa, though I hated its darkness,  
to the wrist of a cold spring between black rocks,  
and any road that lost its mind in the mountains,  
to the freight train of the millipede, to  
the dragonfly's biplane, and the eel's submarine,  
as the natural powers I knew, swearing not to leave them  
for real principalities in Berlin or Milan (Walcott 2004: 94).

Though he did leave the island and traveled the world, while in the United States, the speaker mentions to his neighbor that his island is calling him (Walcott 2004: 39). The calling is why

he returns; the island is what he wants to see and returning is what he longs for (Walcott 2004: 40, 88)

The location of part III of *The Prodigal* is mostly in St. Lucia. The speaker first creates a picture of someone returning home, someone, who “had the smell of cities in his clothes” returning to “this scorched, barren acre” (Walcott 2004: 59). There is now an element of the alien associated with the speaker as he has been absent from home for a long time. Because of the smell of strange cities and strange beaches, the speaker is scared that “what he loved and knew once as a boy / would panic and forget him from the change / of character that the grunting swine could smell” (Walcott 2004: 60). Upon arriving home, the speaker notices “a change of climate,” the change confusing him at first as it differs from the places where he had been before (Walcott 2004: 60). Here the implication is that the place has changed or another possibility is that the perspective of the perceiver has changed (see pages 22-24 above). However, eventually the speaker becomes comfortable with what he has always known as he notices the familiarity of the nature’s behavior in drought: “Song of the wireless harp of the frangipani / that still makes a tangled music out of silence” (Walcott 2004: 61). Since he has been away from home for a long time, the speaker asks himself, “Prodigal, what were your wanderings about?” and goes on to wonder whether, upon returning, he still longs “for battles and castles / from the books of his beginning,” that were written in an adopted language, adding that because of his wanderings “his whole life a language awaiting translation” (Walcott 2004: 70).

The home that awaits the speaker is one that is described as “the country of the ochre afternoon,” where “it is always still and hot, the dry leaves stirring / infrequently sometimes with the rattling pods of what they call ‘women’s tongues,’ in / the afternoon country the far hills are very quiet / and heat-hazed” (Walcott 2004: 64). The speaker gives St. Lucia a color, that of the ochre afternoon. He also says that it is always still and hot there, which is

something that is often repeated in the poem (Walcott 2004: 61, 73, 74, 94). In the dry season, “Things burn for days / without translation, with the heat / of the scorched pastures and their skeletal cows” (Walcott 2004: 65), and when the wet season comes, “the crusted drought / broken in half like bread, the quiet trumpet mouth / of a rainbow and the wiry drizzle fighting de cease, half the year blowing out to sea / in hale, refreshing gusts, the withered lilies / drink with grateful mouths” (Walcott 2004: 65). The speaker continues talking about the changes in nature in St. Lucia during the dry and the wet seasons throughout the first chapters of part III. He does not describe St. Lucia to the readers, but instead mentions places in St. Lucia, such as Le Feuillée, Monchy, Satlibus, D’ennery, Soufrière, Gros Piton, as if the reader ought to already know about these places and as if the mention would already trigger some kind of an image of these places. The speaker does not describe towns or specific landmarks, instead, he talks about the effects of the weather on nature and about the feelings that St. Lucia evokes in him. For the speaker, “the Atlantic’s drone, the Caribbean hum / of chaos in an ochre afternoon” is “the enclosing harmony that we call home” (Walcott 2004: 82).

There are, however, other places that resemble home. In the first pages, it was established that the speaker has a dwelling in the United States. As was the case with St. Lucia, the speaker uses phrases that indicate some kind of a possession when talking about his dwelling in the States. Yet, in the case of the United States, the scope of his possessions is individual and focused: “There is a continent outside my window,” “the bells on a bright Sunday from my bed,” “my neighbor grinned” (Walcott 2004: 6, 7, 39). When talking about St. Lucia, he claims to possess the whole island. In addition, similarly to St. Lucia, the speaker does not focus on describing the landmarks, though there is some mention of his location (for example, his constant mention of the Hudson River). While in the United States, the speaker does not really compare it overtly to St. Lucia, yet he does make a mention of

one aspect: as the first few pages of the poem are spent on focusing on the train ride, he mentions that his childhood island had no trains or train stations (Walcott 2004: 4-5).

While in Colombia, references to it being similar to home are numerous. Since the weather in Colombia is quite similar to what can be experienced in St. Lucia, and since the distance between Colombia and St. Lucia is not as great as between other places mentioned in the poem, the speaker mentions several similarities between the two places. He describes the road to Cartagena as “desolate because of the drought, the khaki grass, / thorn scrub and dusty bush, and dull olive trees, /... / the hillocks parched and dry / as a donkey’s hide, some signs promising the sea” (Walcott 2004: 44). Drought in St. Lucia is described in a very similar manner: “the leaves fading, yellow, / burnt grass and the tigerish shadows on the hillside, /... / parched shortcuts and rust” (Walcott 2004: 61). A sudden view of the sea after hours of driving by the Colombian coast that is devastated by drought elicits a pleased response from the speaker:

and then a bright gap, an outburst and there it was  
the white combers running and beaches through the trees –  
the Caribbean, owned and exultant grinning and comforting  
between sea-grape and sea-almonds and spindly palms  
unguarded by soldiers. Not a new coast, but home. (Walcott 2004: 45)

He also mentions that Cartagena is “Our sea’s first city” (Walcott 2004: 46). However, for a couple of lines, the speaker goes back to Europe in his thoughts and mentions that the “old world / felt more familiar” (Walcott 2004: 48). Yet, he also quickly comes back to his reality and continues paying attention to what’s around him in Cartagena: “slums, shacks, a clogged river, El Dorados of garbage /... / the walled city that was our Rome” and again he mentions that this is not “a strange coast, but home” (Walcott 2004: 48). Here the mythical El Dorado is instead more familiar than a real place – Rome. From the speaker’s descriptions of Colombia, it can be concluded that due to its shared sea, its landscape, and its weather, Colombia is quite similar to home.

The sea in Italy also reminds the speaker of home: “down the serrated summer coast from Nice / to Genoa, the sea’s tinfoil striations / are close to home” (Walcott 2004: 23). And in a similar manner, heat and plants also give reasons for comparison between the two places: “the sky grew Caribbean” in Italy, “[t]he cedar’s agitation / repeats the rustling of reversible almonds, / the cheek warmed by a freshly ironed sky; / scent of scorched grass” (Walcott 2004: 18, 23-24). While this description does not match the heat that can be experienced in St. Lucia, the warm weather enables to compare the two places. However, the speaker notices that the architecture in Italian cities is quite different from what he remembers from St. Lucia. For example, in Milan, there are many statues, fountains and columns of which the speaker feels envious, as there were “no such memorials on the island. / Our only cavalry were the charging waves, / pluming with spume, and tossing plunging necks,” this being connected to the contrasts created between natural history and History (Walcott 2004: 25; see pages 58-59 above).

The speaker enjoys his stay in Italy and even grows to love Milan, as it is his “city of annual invitations / predictably in spring or the sweat-beads of summer” (Walcott 2004: 88). While he tries to refrain from loving Italy, the speaker feels his “widening love of Italy growing stronger / against [his] will with sunlight in Milan” (Walcott 2004: 26). In the summer, the warm weather reminds the speaker of St. Lucia’s tropical weather and thus he proclaims that Milan is his adopted city, as his gestures have started to “echo those of its citizens” (Walcott 2004: 88). In the final picture of Italy in part I of the poem, the speaker describes the sunrise on Via Veneto in Rome and finds that the light and stillness of how the sun hits the street is “exactly like Gros Ilet’s,” only “what was missing was the smell of the sea / in the early morning on the small embankment” (Walcott 2004: 27-28). As the description of the sunrise is over, the speaker even admits that this sunrise defines where he is from:



I lived in two villages: Greenwich and Gros Ilet,  
 and loved both almost equally. One had the sea,  
 grey morning light along the waking water,  
 the other a great river, and if they asked  
 what country I was from I'd say "The light  
 of that tree-lined sunrise down the Via Veneto." (Walcott 2004: 29).

Despite his love for Italy, by the end of the book the speaker realizes that he is “not made subtly Italian, there is no betrayal, / there is no contradiction in this surrender” (Walcott 2004: 93). No matter how beautiful other places such as Italy may be, they are still places to which he “can never say home” (Walcott 2004: 89). Despite his travels and despite his ability to adapt to circumstances and his ability to love what surrounds him, there is a home that is calling him, and as he sees an “invisible drizzle on the sea / almost hazing the headland,” he starts feeling “that humming that goes on in the tired heart / once you are home; between distance and time / it had to come” (Walcott 2004: 92).

Regardless of his previously stated envy for Italy and its architecture, the speaker resolves not to be envious of snowy mountains, olive trees, “redoubtable oaks” or anything else that his own island does not have (Walcott 2004: 75-76). Against the backdrop of his island, the great cities will recede and when it comes to making a choice between other places and St. Lucia, the speaker will choose St. Lucia, as for him, his village is “unimportantly beautiful” (Walcott 2004: 75, 77, 28):

Do not diminish in my memory  
 villages of absolutely no importance,  
 the rattling bridge over the stone-bright river,  
 un-ornate churches, chapels in the provinces  
 of light-exhausted Europe. Hoard, cherish  
 your negligible existence, your unrecorded history  
 of unambitious syntax, your clean pools  
 of unpolluted light over close stones. (Walcott 2004: 78)

The unimportant villages are enough for the speaker, he does not wish to trade them for anything, not Paris, not Rome, not for the Alps (Walcott 2004: 77-80). When asked whether St. Lucia is enough for him, the speaker answers that it is and “[a]nyway, I can see Martinique from here” (Walcott 2004: 78-79). The speaker says that he has been to many beautiful places but no matter what other places may hold or how other places might

compare, “on the sloping pastures behind Gros Piton, / in the monumental shadow of that lilac mountain, / I have seen the terrestrial paradise” (Walcott 2004: 95). The speaker’s experience is not that of a tourist wanting to escape to a fantasy island (see pages 32-33 above). Instead, the speaker associates the idea of an island paradise with the experience of his own home, as his home is his paradise.

## 2.5 EXPERIENCING PARADISE

The paradise that the speaker frequently talks about may be seen as an earthly one or a heavenly one. The speaker’s fondness for St. Lucia and his descriptions of the nature of St. Lucia imply that the island may be for him an Eden. Ryken et al (1998: 316) suggest that the “very simplicity of life in the garden is part of its difference from the complexities of civilization”. This is just what the speaker appreciates about St. Lucia, it is separated from History, and has its own natural history (see pages 58-59 above). The history that the speaker has promised to record for St. Lucia mostly concerns its landscape. In the third part of the poem, the nature in St. Lucia has been vividly described by the speaker, he pays close attention to the scenery as well as the lifecycle of trees and flowers. However, the poem includes a considerable amount of talk about death, thus there are references to a paradise beyond earth as well. What separates the two different paradises is color. While heavenly paradise is associated with whiteness (see page 34 above), St Lucia is often described in terms of the striking colors that dominate the landscape and the skies: blue, ochre, lilac, gray, cobalt, emerald, lime, ultramarine, pink, violet, green (Walcott 2004: 9, 16, 50, 69, 73, 79, 92, 95).

Chapter 2 of Genesis gives a description of Eden, which contains a mention of trees that are “pleasant to the sight, and good for food,” and includes “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2: 9, KJV). In the Bible in general, trees are used as symbols to

portray nature and abundance, the salvation story, God's providence and blessings, as well as God's judgement (Ryken et al 1998: 890-892). There is frequent mention of trees in *The Prodigal* as well. Different named and unnamed trees are present at every location. However, it is the trees of St. Lucia that can be compared to the trees of Eden. Frangipani and sea-almond are most frequently mentioned in descriptions of St. Lucia's landscape. While sea-almond is mostly associated the proximity of the sea, frangipani is said to make music out of silence (Walcott 2004: 24, 45-47, 61, 63, 87). Another important tree is the breadfruit tree, which "issues miraculous bread" and offers shade (Walcott 2004: 83). Nevertheless, unlike the abundant trees of Eden, the trees of St. Lucia are subject to the whims of the weather and so are depicted as barren and brittle in the dry season (Walcott 2004: 63-64, 68). It is the manchineel tree, however, which is most explicitly associated with Eden:

the manchineels,  
bitter, poisonous yellow berries, treacherous apples  
that look like Eden's on the tree of knowledge  
when the first noun was picked and named and eaten  
and the shadow of knowledge defined every edge  
originating language and then difference,  
and subtlety, the snake and contradiction  
and the sudden Babel of the manchineel. (Walcott 2004: 62)

Previously the speaker has been speaking about the languages of St. Lucia and has realized that even though the words he uses are in English, it is not the natural language of the country (Walcott 2004: 61-62). His Eden is a blend of languages, yet there exists an "original language, / an orchestrating lexicon, veined manuscripts / going far back in time and deep in roots" (Walcott 2004: 62). These lines exhibit strong connections between the idea of St. Lucian paradise and time and rootedness. While St. Lucia is not perfect even in the eyes of the speaker, he still considers it his paradise (Walcott 2004: 94-95). It is where his roots are planted and it is the place that calls him to depicts its history, so that "the seeded word would overrun these ruins and / sprout with the fecundity of bougainvillea" (Walcott 2004: 100).

Another kind of paradise exists on the pages of *The Prodigal*, one that is connected to death. When the speaker speaks of someone he has lost, he also makes references to some

kind of a place that his lost acquaintances may inhabit. Even though the speaker mentions that the dead are buried “in the ochre earth,” he still speaks of the dead as if they are somewhere else (Walcott 2004: 54). The place that the dead inhabit may even change in a couple of lines. While the speaker is thinking of how he himself may one day lie in the ground “where the sea-almonds / blaze in drought,” his thoughts quickly change into a contemplation about a “heaven for old men / where those who have left await him, / cities of clouds and ghosts and whatever they mean” (Walcott 2004: 87). In addition, in Italy, the speaker sees “phantoms serenely hurrying / to the same exit the arched doorways of a sunlight / almost celestial” (Walcott 2004: 26). This place is somewhere, where the speaker himself will eventually inhabit when he “join[s] them following the pale tonsure / of a moon that fades into the glare of the dawn” (Walcott 2004: 26-27). This is a place where everyone is eventually headed, it is “the Province of Mercy,” which is “Nowhere” (Walcott 2004: 20).

This ‘Nowhere’ remains ambiguous until after the death of his brother, the speaker asks: “Roddy. / Where are you this bright afternoon?” (Walcott 2004: 50). The answer comes on the next page:

I carry a small white city in my head,  
 one with its avenues of withered flowers,  
 with no sound of traffic but the surf,  
 no lights at dusk on the short street  
 where my brother and our mother live now  
 at the one address, so many are their neighbours! (Walcott 2004: 51)

A white city was already mentioned at the end of the first part of the poem, where it is “gliding between buildings, / leaving the river for the Caribbean” from Jersey (Walcott 2004: 40). According to the book of Revelation, heaven is seen as a city, “replete with walls, gates and streets, an emblem of believers in community unified in the worship of God” (Ryken et al 1998: 371). It seems that the description of the speaker is directly influenced by Biblical images of heaven. It is also quite interesting that the city is white. In the Bible, white “suggests a supernatural brilliance beyond the earthly,” which is connected to the holiness

of God (Ryken et al 1998: 944; see page 34 above). In addition, in the book of Isaiah, God offers to replace “the scarlet of sins” with “the whiteness of snow and wool” (Ryken et al 1998: 944). Perhaps the speaker’s fear of white as manifested during his stay in Zermatt is also connected to a fear of death. At the end of the poem, the speaker connects the whiteness of Zermatt with Biblical images, the white alps are “the delight of skiers and of angels / over riven crevices where the old snow was packed / and the new snow almost blinded. Not different, / the one, celestial, real geography” (Walcott 2004: 95-96).

There is another place that is associated with those who are lost – the other shore. Mentions of shores appear in the beginning of the poem and at the end of the poem. In the beginning, “the far shore scumbled by the fog” does not seem to be significant (Walcott 2004: 7). However, when the speaker makes a comment about the shore on Lake Geneva, it seems that there might be another meaning behind it as the lake is “so wide that you could not see the other shore, / nor if souls walked along it, arms outstretched. / So many of them now on the other bank!” (Walcott 2004: 15). When the shore of Lake Geneva is again mentioned at the end of the book, it is called a “banal metaphor” (Walcott 2004: 97). The speaker again sees an apparition of someone he has lost, yet he “still cannot subtract a single dishevelled digit from the mass, from the sight / of you, with a cigarette and your raincoat and tonsure / obeying, like them, the changing of the light / crossing with me, so calmly, to the other shore” (Walcott 2004: 97-98). The vague ‘the other shore’ also ends the poem. As the speaker is on the sea, dolphin-watching, he sees the “bright rim / of the world, getting no nearer or nearer, the more / the bow’s wedge shuddered towards it, prodigal, / that line of light that shines from the other shore” (Walcott 2004: 105). The ending of the speaker’s journey is described as a reassuring hope of reuniting with those who are already on the other shore.

“In what will be your last book make each place / as if it had just been made, already old, / but new again from naming it” says the speaker of Derek Walcott’s *The Prodigal* (Walcott 2004: 99). Through examining the places mentioned in the poem, this chapter deals with the experience of places. The different places that are experienced include actual places, imagined places as well as mythical places. In the poem, the experience of places is filtered through weather, colors and memories that create ties between time and space. While the experience of places is manifested in different ways in different places, each experience is significant and meaningful.

## CONCLUSION

In his journey through places and times, the speaker of the poem visits and revisits places that are significant for him. Each place is carefully considered and examined to work out its meaning and relevance. The speaker's journey takes him to Northeast United States, Western Europe, South America, as well as his home in the Caribbean. The readers participate in the journey by following the speaker's path.

This thesis is about the experiences of places encountered by the speaker in his journey. To set up a theoretical framework for the experiences of the places encountered by the persona on his journey, the works of human geographers Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph, along with other scholars, have been employed. The first important task was to define place and there were several takes on this issue. Place can be viewed as a discernible location that is also significant in one way or another. Place is dependent on the human element and can only have meaning through human interaction. The experience of place can be physically sensed but it can also be experienced mentally when an individual who has a relationship with this place exercises their imagination. The significance ascribed to a place varies since each individual determines the meaning of a place from their own perspective. Forming a relationship with a place is as important as having relationships with other people. The depth of these relationships again depends on the individual and their own attitude towards a place.

A very important place in every individual's life is home. As was the case with defining place, the definitions of home are many in number. Every individual's experience of home is slightly different so ways of defining home also vary greatly. Home can either be a physical place or a symbol of place. As the physical home may not exist at all times during one's lifetime, a symbolic home takes the place of a physical one. Home is not just a house, but something much more significant. It is an intimate place that is important to one's identity and which offers a shelter from the outside. Home is connected to being rooted in a

place, a state, which is again necessary for a healthy identity. Rootedness occurs naturally along with a knowledge of home. If this state does not occur, one may experience non-belonging, which is connected to placelessness and uprootedness. In this case, the experience of places may turn out to be inauthentic and shallow.

The experience of places is closely connected to the passage of time. As places have a spatial location, there also exists a temporal location for a place. Places are affected by time and the passage of time can be seen through the changes a place experiences. Since the present is a very short moment, experiencing places in the present is impossible. Thus, places are often experienced through memory. The quality of the memory determines whether negative or positive attitudes arise in connection with places. Closely associated with the passage of time is the passage of seasons and the weather patterns that result from it. Places can be experienced through their climate and the resulting weather. In turn, weather influences the quality assigned to place experiences.

People can also come across mythical geographies, places that are unreal or which cannot be directly experienced. Even though there may be no physical experience with such a place involved, there still exists an image of the place that is usually created by one's imagination. In the case of mythological geographies, the actual and precise knowledge of a place is missing, which in turn triggers the need for an imagined image.

The second chapter uses Edward Relph's concepts of insideness and outsideness in place experience to characterize the relationship between the speaker and the places he visits in the poem. While there are a couple of places that are experienced as an incidental outsider, and remain backdrops for the persona who is preoccupied with other thoughts, most of the places are experienced as existential, behavioural, empathetic or vicarious insider. The intensity of such place experiences makes it possible for the reader to have an insider's experience of the places mentioned in the poem, as according to Relph's definition of these



terms, vicarious insideness is experienced when an artist portrays a place in a manner that allows the reader to sense the significance of the place depicted.

In Walcott's poem, the experience of several of the places is characterized through the weather. Different weather phenomena are associated with particular feelings and emotions so the experience of weather influences the experience of places. What is especially important is the contrast between cold weather and warm weather, the former being associated with something foreign and terrifying, while the latter, as well as the corresponding tropical climate is familiar for the speaker and is associated with home.

The location of the speaker's home is clearly defined, and it is in St. Lucia. Throughout the speaker's life, this island has remained as the most significant place for him. All descriptions of other places derive from comparisons with St. Lucia as the speaker's roots are planted in the island. Despite the allure of other places, e.g. Italy, St. Lucia is always home for the speaker, as he even made a promise of life-long faithfulness to the island as a young man. As the poem's title refers to a story of a homecoming, the topic of homecoming naturally arises in the poem. However, the speaker seems to be rather anxious of homecoming as he feels that home may not recognize him after such a long absence.

The structure of the narrative does not follow a chronological order. Instead, the narrative moves back and forth in time as the speaker creates connections between places and describes his experiences from childhood to old age. As the speaker is troubled by aging, he recounts the experiences of his youth and tries to draw some conclusions concerning his choices in life. Naturally, with the issue of aging, comes the topic of death.

Mythical geographies are realized in the form of paradise in the poem. First of all, St. Lucia itself may be seen as an earthly paradise because of the praises the speaker bestows upon the nature of the island. However, more importantly, the speaker speaks of the dwelling of the dead and imagines it as a white city. This image is closely connected to Biblical images

of heaven. Thoughts about paradise, and the speaker's hope of seeing again his lost loved ones end the poem.

While Derek Walcott himself may have thought that *The Prodigal* might be his last collection of poetry, it certainly was not, as the poet published his final collection, *White Egrets*, in 2010, which in some ways continues the journey of the poet's self-reflection but focuses less on the meaning of places. *The Prodigal*, however, stands as a significant work that gives a retrospective overview of different locations through the eye of speaker who focuses his attention on landscapes and describes them through illustrious and poetic language.

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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Susanna Soosaar**

**The Experience of Places in Derek Walcott's *The Prodigal*.**

**Kohakogemused Derek Walcott'i luuletuses *The Prodigal* ("Kadunud Poeg")**

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Annotatsioon:

Magistritöö eesmärgiks on uurida kohakogemusi Derek Walcott'i narratiivses luuletuses *The Prodigal*. Töö käsitleb minajutustaja poolt läbitud füüsiliselt ning mõtteliselt külastatud kohti, et uurida milline on kohtade tähendus. Sissejuhatuses on välja toodud töö eesmärgid, ülevaade autori eluloost ning autori teostega seotud varasemad uurimisküsimused. Sellele lisaks tutvustatakse sissejuhatuses Walcott'i teoste kultuurikonteksti.

Teoreetiline peatükk on üles ehitatud humanistliku geograafia esindajate Yi-Fu Tuani ning Edward Relphi teostele. Selles peatükis esitan kõigepealt millised on erinevad 'koha' mõiste definitsioonid ning mis tähendus on kohtadel inimese elus. Uurin ka kuidas kodu ja kohajuurdumus mõjutavad inimese identiteeti. Kohakogemusega on seotud ka ajaline mõõde, sest minevikus ja mälestustes on koha tähendus tihti erinev oleviku kogemustest. Aja möödumine on seotud ilma ja aastaegade vaheldumisega, millel on samuti suur roll kohtade kogemises. Füüsilistele kohtadele lisaks on olemas ka mütoloolilised geograafiad, ehk kohad, kus ei saa otseselt viibida, kuid mida on võimalik kujutlusvõime kaudu kogeda.

Empiirilises peatükis kasutan teoreetilises peatükis esitatud argumente, et lähilugemise kaudu uurida milline on kohtade ning jutustaja vaheline suhe. Kliimal ja ilmal on väga tähtis roll koha ja jutustaja vahelises suhtes. Luuletuses tuleb välja, et mida soojem on koha kliima, seda rohkem seostab jutustaja kohta oma koduga. Uurin ka kodukoha tähtsust jutustajale ning seda, kuidas jutustaja võrdleb kodu teiste paikadega. Luuletuses on väga tähtsal kohal jutustaja mälestused, sest luuletuses on kohakogemused seotud nii lapsepõlvega kui ka vanaduspõlvega. Vanadusest ning surmast mõtisklemine toob luuletusse sisse ka paradiisiga seotud mõttepildid. Paradiisi on luuletuses seostatud nii jutustaja kodukoha, St. Luciaga, kui ka piibelliku teispoilsusmõistega. Minajutustaja tunneb ennast kadunud pojana, kelle eesmärk on lõpuks jõuda koju. Lugeja saab jutustaja teekonda jälgida läbi erinevate kohakirjelduste, millest igal on tähtis roll ja tähendus.

Märksõnad: inglisekeelne nüüdiskirjandus, luule, Derek Walcott, kohakogemus, kodu, Kariibi saared, humanistlik geograafia

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