

COMPARE HOW CHARACTERS IN THE TWO TEXTS ARE USED TO ILLUSTRATE THE IDEA OF BELONGING.

Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman's play 'The 7 Stages of Grieving' explores how indigenous history since European settlement has been fraught with loss and destruction, and how contemporary life for Indigenous Australians is not free from this pain. Comparable to this is Fred D'Aguiar's *The Longest Memory*, a novella embedded in the pre-Abolition era. Ensnaring many in the respective texts is the reign of a white, patriarchal society, one wherein those marginalized are thus unable to surpass the force of their oppression. It is this, which inhibits an egalitarian society, alongside a sense of belonging for those disempowered.

The significance of belonging is underscored by the anguish which stems from individuals' inability to locate such. Within D'Aguiar's text is "Cook", whose name derives from her domestic responsibilities. It is through her absence of identity – as opposed to the explicit names of the plantation masters – that one may discern the irrefutably discriminative nature of 1800s America, one wherein dehumanization is neither abnormal nor queried. With her value being reduced to her physical capabilities at the hands of the patriarchy, D'Aguiar exhibits the objectification of women during this era, alongside their being perceived as a way through which those potent can reap the profit-oriented benefits. This objectification is bolstered by the bodily violation foisted upon her by Sanders, whose doing so acted as a means of "relie[f]". Whilst of relatively negligible impact on the "overseer", it is such an act which underpins Cook's wanting to "die", for his actions have marred her "pur[ity]". It is the juxtaposition of this, which enables D'Aguiar to highlight the propensity of such white males to trivialize – or, contrarily, disregard - the effect of their actions on those afflicted. Thus, the author postulates that such blatant inequality renders those marginalized women and "slave girls" unable to belong. Similarly, Aunt Grace from '7 Stages of Grieving' is also the subject of marginalization leading to her subsequent inability to locate her sense of belonging in her home country. However, unlike Cook whose lack of belonging is caused by the violent actions of Sanders Senior, Aunt Grace voluntarily contributes to her sense of displacement within her family by moving to London. Consequently, she is labelled as 'stuck up' one who 'wasn't really family'. Despite her inescapable psychological and biological connection to her family through her 'skinny ankles, the lines of her shoulders and that nose', Aunt Grace is unable to develop a sense of belonging to her family who sees her as a deserter.

Both texts propound that it is the force of institutionalized racial discrimination which inhibits the ability of many to belong. In the 'The Longest Memory', whilst irrefutably more privileged than those entrapped by the "plantation", Lydia, too, is seemingly incapable of finding common ground, for her personal convictions are largely misaligned with those of Virginian society. Her communication within the editorials – under the guise of anonymity – enables the juxtaposition of her more liberal views with those of masters and overseers alike, of which underpin oppressive policies such as "no...correspondence from slaves" alongside proclamations regarding the "heinous" nature of interracial relationships. With her words an attempt to combat the ignorance of a society inherently bigoted, it is the Virginian's rescinding of their former extolling of her "intelligence" which conveys the extent to which such opinions are entrenched, a notion fortified by the non-linearity of the articles. It is this, which ultimately appears to inhibit the character's finding of genuine belonging. In contrast to Lydia who does not directly face discrimination for her background, the woman in 'The Seven Stages of Grieving' tries to navigate her way through a social environment riddled with the constant reminders of a land and culture she has lost thereby inhibiting her ability to belong in her society. The photographs also present the idea that that one's sense of belonging can be eroded from the subjugation by the whites of Indigenous Australians. The photographs depict Indigenous Australian's having their picture taken in 'white' clothing. White institutions in Australia have attempted to cover up the culture and identity of these

Indigenous Australian's by indoctrinating them to adopt a white lifestyle. It is through the generational trauma evident in these photographs that Indigenous Australian's have been subject to that have lead to the destruction of their identity and sense of belonging.

However, whilst Enoch and Mailman postulate that belonging – however fleeting - can arise from the solidarity stemming from collective trauma, D'Aguiar exhibits the vexation which burdens those refuse to advocate for change and choose to live with the burden of not having a sense of belonging in their life. Through Whitechapel, D'Aguiar presents the burden those who lack a sense of belonging must carry. D'Aguiar's text opens with the chapter entitled "Remembering", and concludes with "Forgetting". Peppered throughout both are Whitechapel's expressions of the anguish that "takes over a body so", of which largely stems from the lingering presence of the past, of which is likened to "bones [that] ache" and a "nose [that] bleed[s]" - thus unveiling the magnitude of his despair for the loss of his son and subsequent marginalisation from the slave community at the plantation. It is the realisation of his being only "half the master of [his] destiny" which eventuates in his fatal subservience and ultimately underlies the burden of his lack of belonging within his community. Ultimately, Whitechapel's beliefs and actions lead only to sorrow as the novel's epigraphs foreshadow, through his beloved son's death, his loss of belonging in regards to the slave community at the plantation and ultimately his own death. In contrast, Enoch and Mailman demonstrate that through the power of the Indigenous Australian community who have collectively experienced the similar trauma, they can find their sense of belonging by standing in solidarity with one another and resisting the oppression they face. The emphasis on "how ... many people there are ... walking across bridge[s]" as well as the "red, black and yellow" "flag flying on the bridge" works to position the audience to comprehend the magnitude of this resistance as being heart-wrenching, especially given the brutality they have witnessed in previous scenes. Enoch and Mailman attempt to show the audience that despite the collective trauma Indigenous Australians have faced, it is through the community that they can find their own sense of belonging.

Both D'Aguiar and Wright postulate that a sense of belonging can derive from unexpected places. With Chapel, alongside other slaves, being deemed "half the master of [their] own destiny" and the "notion of freedom" proclaimed to be "foolish", it is intolerance and the subsequent implication of those "inferior" which precipitates a life filled with "injustice". Despite the "loveless arm of the overseer" enforcing compliance on the "plantation", it is the character's tendency for "insubordination" which drives his bond with Lydia. Though the "wicked secret meetings" are met with a warning, it may be deduced that the "light on his face" is the product of not only his love but the prospect of "sound[ing]...like the master". It is this - a relationship forged without regard of the constraining societal norms, alongside a newfound literacy – which ultimately establishes his subsequent "rebellion", for he has felt a mere morsel of inclusion and belonging. This idea is also put forward in 'The 7 Stages of Grieving' through the anonymous woman sitting 'front and centre' at a funeral she had no personal connection to. The ramifications of the Stolen Generation on Indigenous are evident. This woman 'could never meet [her] real family' and as a result, she aimlessly attends funerals with the hope that she can find her own sense of belonging within her community that she had been stripped away from by white institutions.

Both texts demonstrate that the erosion of one's sense of belonging due to the oppression and subjugation by the whites of the African Slaves and Indigenous Australians. Through the voice and stories of characters and individuals, Enoch and Mailman and D'Aguiar reveal the impact of not belonging but equally how crucial maintaining one's connection to their culture, community and family is to find that sense of belonging.