Lavender Brown

Miss Lampman

English 1 Period 5

20 February 2017

Family Traditions and Healing Practices

"Under the Lemon Tree" by Marsha De La O was published in 2015. The poem describes a scene in which the narrator goes to a lemon tree to remember her mother who has been dead for six years. Although the narrator is often mournful when she visits her late mother's lemon tree, she continues to uphold her mother's routine of caring for the tree. Ultimately, this practice provides a sense of comfort for the narrator and allows her to grieve for her mother while letting go at the same time. De La O uses simile and personification to establish and develop the idea that the continuation of family traditions can aid in healing after the loss of a loved one.

Through her use of simile, De La O not only introduces the idea of a loved one's death, but also emphasizes the healing powers of the lemon tree for the narrator. In the second stanza, the narrator is contemplating her mother's death under the shade of the lemon tree, where the dew is "light as the footsteps of the dead" (2.5). The "footsteps of the dead" imply that the narrator is haunted by her mother's memory whenever she visits the lemon tree. However, because the steps are "light," the memories aren't overwhelming or traumatic, but possibly comforting. Later in the poem, De La O again uses simile, but this time the narrator confesses that she comes to the lemon tree "as a salve against heat, / come to languish" (4.3-4). The "salve" represents the healing properties of continuing her mother's care of the lemon tree, but she is still languishing, or growing weak, while she's there. De La O uses the similes to show the release of the narrator when she gives herself up to the lemon tree and allows herself to grieve while she continues the family tradition.