

## 1. REMEMBER

The poem was written at a time when males dominated society. Whilst the poem is regarded as a love poem; it very cleverly introduces the idea of a patriarchal society “our future you planned”

There is an appeal, to the speaker’s lover/partner, in the octave, to remember her after death. The repetition of ‘remember’ in the poems reinforces the idea that she may be forgotten. Words such as ‘silent land’, ‘I am gone’, ‘gone far away’ are indicative of the speaker’s death. Note line 3 is a reminder of the physical separation at death, in love and life, physical contact is important. This physical contact ceases to exist at the time of death, but the memories linger on. The speaker will physical leave the realms of earth, yet ‘turning stay’, in the memory of the lover, or at least that is what she appeals for.

Lines 5 -6, is a reminder of life as dictated to, by her lover. ‘You tell me’ – instructs her about plans he has for ‘our future’. Note the use of ‘day by day’ is a reminder that everything was done every time as decided by him. The speaker in asking of him to recall those days when he did so.

The colon at the end of line 6 indicates that an explanation follows. There is nothing that may be done to change anything after her death. It will be too late to advise (counsel) or appeal for divine intervention. Therefore all her lover may do is recall time spent with the speaker. It is also very likely that women were easily forgotten after death at the time. Thus the appeal to be remembered is understandable.

The octave is an appeal to remember, however the sestet bring about a change in idea, there is now an appeal to forget.

‘Yet’ begins the sestet, which immediately introduces a change of idea. The speaker reveal that if remembering her brings pain (grief) she says ‘do not grieve’. Note the importance of the verb ‘grieve’. The colon after ‘grieve’ is important, what follows is an explanation of why the lover should not grieve. ‘Darkness and corruption’ introduces the image of intense mourning. With the death of a loved one, one experiences darkness (a sense of deep loss) and corruption introduces the idea of emotional turmoil that is experienced.

The speaker qualifies the idea that even a little (vestige) thought/memory of her brings pain, then that should be forgotten. The implication is that the speaker should be forgotten. The speaker wants what is best for her lover, after her death; she wants her lover to be happy (smile), thus the use of ‘better by far you should forget’. Note the use of smile (line 13) and sad (line 14) – these words introduces conflicting emotions (happiness and sadness). The speaker seems to send contradictory messages too; (remember her – octave, and forget her – sestet). Nevertheless it makes great sense, as the speaker wants her lover to be happy, thus the last two lines are very effective, though it may reveal conflicting emotions.

Although death is part of the poem, it does not leave the reader feeling morose. It is important that this poem is an insight into the future, which ‘seems’ to reflect on the past. Although the lover (man) planned everything, it shows that the speaker (woman) too was very thoughtful and was perfectly capable of planning. Thus this is a comment on patriarchal society.

## 2. Somewhere I never travelled

In the first two lines we are made aware of the speaker undertaking a journey, a journey which he enjoys (gladly). Note the placement of gladly travelled, this reveals the intense pleasure of his travels. The run-on line (enjambment) is deliberately used here to show his movement to a new place (beyond any experience). However we soon realise that this journey is in the eyes of another person (lover). The eyes are the gateway to the soul, it is silent but gives lots of messages. The first indication that this is a love poem. The next line shows us how mesmerised the speaker is in the presence of his lover. Even a weak (frail) gesture on her part 'enclose me' – he is under her spell (control). Though being enclosed by her, he cannot touch her (paradox). Perhaps the speaker feels that they are one, physically a unit. Perhaps he is expressing the mystery/power of love, feelings which sometimes cannot be expressed in words.

The image of the eyes is sustained at the beginning of st. 2. A mere glance (of those silent eyes) at him, has a major impact on him; it 'unclose me'. One gets the sense that the speaker is disarmed and defenceless as he emotionally gives in to his lover. However, note that the speaker has made an attempt to close himself to his lover 'closed myself as fingers'. The impact of this simile clearly shows the determination of the speaker, (clenched fist). Nevertheless he is no match for his lover, as he involuntarily but slowly opens up as 'rose petals' do in spring. Another simile. Spring is also personified – as a Goddess, with immense powers over the speaker, the power that mere humans do not possess, thus the implication that his lover has similar powers. Note also the sexual connotations of the petals opening, but it somewhat shocks the reader into realising that the speaker is referring to 'myself'. The sexual image, bordering on erotic, is once again brought to our attention in the refrain.

The third stanza reinforces the almost mystical power of his lover, - a mere wish on her part will close him (just as easily as she unclosed him), but this gives him great joy (beautifully), though it may be in an instant (suddenly). We return to the image of the flower (mentioned in ll. 7-8) as it closes, in the cold season (winter) alluded to by the falling of the snow. 'Heart' – symbolically is the seat of all emotions, most commonly used to express love, as roses do. Note 'the heart of the flower' is the first to identify the approach of winter. The heart too, is first to sense emotions. The reference to seasons again, is a reminder that just as seasons have a 'will' of their own and cannot be stopped, so too is his lover.

In lines 13 -14, the speaker once again reminds us of the power of his lover, but this time, it is exaggerated as he knows nothing which is as powerful. However her power stems, not from strength or brute force but from 'intense fragility', this of course brings out the irony, one associates fragility with weakness, but this is what draws the speaker to his lover. The fragility is also personified (immediately following is 'whose'). Again the enjambment is used to great effect, the feel (texture) of the fragility compels (forces) the speaker to conjure images of exotic (may even be romantic) lands of beauty (colour). Think of the travel mentioned at the beginning. The power of the lover is once again accentuated, in the last line of the stanza. In death one surrenders completely to the divine. Though the speaker is breathing (alive) he has totally surrendered to his lover who has supreme (divine) control over him.

In the refrain (ll. 17 – 19) the speaker returns to the images of the eyes and flowers, but acknowledges that he is aware of the power his lover has but admits that he will never know or understand how she has such complete control over him.

Line 20: nobody,not even the rain,has such small hands.

This line personifies rain. The lovers hands even smaller than the hands of rain, yet more powerful. Rain too reminds us of nature, thus the implication that the lover is more powerful than nature. The double negative 'nobody,not, emphasises 'rain,has' (does not have) as small hands as his lover.

Images:

Touch: various examples: fingers, hands, texture

Eyes: window to the soul, common image to express love. Here the lovers eyes is mysterious. The eyes are also powerful: enclose and unclose the speaker. Voice of your eyes

Rose: symbol of love. Opening and closing of the petals – opening and closing the speaker. Voice of Lovers eyes deeper than rose. She is more mysterious and powerful than whatever makes the rose respond to seasons.

D. RAMSAMOORTHY

### 3. FIRST DAY AFTER THE WAR.

Note that poetry was viewed as a liberation tool. This poem focuses on the country after liberation.

Line 1 introduces the image of a wedding; this is a new beginning, especially for the bride. The bride is metaphorically the country; experiencing things never experienced before. Thus a new and fresh beginning.

Note the feeling of optimism in 'saw a soft light', after the war there is hope for a brighter future. This feeling of hope penetrated all over, including the 'young grass' – the new generation or the newly born. There is hope in the new life. The 'coiling' reminds us of embracing or spreading of optimism.

The hesitation (l.4) a moment to ponder the impact of the new bride, and the subsequent realisation of the lasting impact she has.

The emergence of the face; something that is regarded as important, esp. for a new bride (country). But a closer look reveals the eyes – crucial it shows a sense of freedom from the struggles of the past (apartheid).

The smile in l. 6 is the expression of joy at the liberation, note the ambiguity, did the bride awake with a smile, or did she bring a smile to the people who awoke?

Both are justifiable. However this serves to spread the optimism of l.2. 'woke' too is important – the realisation that people have reached a realisation, removed from darkness and are seeing the 'soft light', which is full of promise.

The question in l. 7, is a reminder that this day of freedom was long awaited, thus when it did come, it seemed to have made a sudden appearance. The response to the question is telling, a day of expressing the joys of freedom, overthrow of apartheid (war).

The next three lines are the real expression of these joys. 'We' implies the unity of the nation; open spaces meaning freedom to be anywhere and everywhere. This joy was expressed not only to people all over (all circles of the earth), but they called and sang to the mountains as well.

l. 12 shows the disbelief of the older generation, that the country is liberated. Thus he had to be 'shook' awoken or jolted into reality. The people then asked for the celebration (festival). Note the use of 'demanding' and 'asking' is a reflection of the impulsive reaction of the people to the liberation. 'First fruits' – alliteration, the benefits of the struggle, the soft 'F' - sound shows the peace joys of the time.

This impulsivity is enhanced in the next line 'holding hands of strangers' – a reminder that there is now unity in the country.

The return to nature 'waterfall' (l. 15) signifies the celebration in and with nature, 'shouting across' to be heard above the sound of falling water, so that people from all over the country (all lands) may rejoice in the new beginning and share the peace that was brought to the country. Lastly is the acknowledgement of ancestors (ancestral worship, part of Black African culture), they too seem to revel and rejoice in the celebrations after the war. These ancestors may well be those who gave up their lives in the liberation.

There is an overwhelming feeling of joy that pervades the entire poem, despite the references to the struggle, thus complementing the excitement of a charged atmosphere.

#### 4. A HARD FROST

In line 1 there is a personification of winter, as a thief, the thief appeared at night, presumably when the speaker was asleep. 'Stole my world' indicates that it took everything. But just as suddenly as the frost/snow appeared and took over the world of the speaker, it seemed to leave. Winter is a season associated with death, but the emergence of snow or frost brings beauty and life to winter. Precocious is significant – winter matures (seems to end early, spring arrives with the end of winter). The melting of the snow means the arrival of spring. 'Too brilliant' (l. 3) emphasises the beauty of winter. The lifelessness of winter is reversed, with the falling of the snow, the dead trees (elms) have come alive (blossomers in crystal) l.7. Even the blades of grass are compared to flowers from a willow, and the hedges loaded with snow (l. 5), brings more beauty. The formless (amorphous) mist in the valley, is associated with the formation of creation (Garden of Eden). Once again there is reference to a season of death being brought to life. Besides the spring being the season of new life, the reference to 'creation' (l. 9) also confirms life. In this stanza, besides the allusion to winter (death and dreariness), the rest of the stanza, really concentrates on projecting the immense beauty of the season.

In the second stanza, the image of warmth (sun, blaze), immediately, brings to mind the end of winter, emergence of spring (may be somewhat early). The personification of the sun is effective in making the reader aware of the warmth that is brought. The sun shining on the leaves, laden with frost and snow, creates the sparkling effects of diamonds (metaphorically) effective. Note the use of 'Mockery spring' – the snow covered scenery a 'bridal gear' (l. 11) for a 'raw country maid' (l.12). This image should be explored further: a raw country maid is not associated with intense beauty, but decked in bridal wear, there is definitely a glamorous feel to her. The brides beauty, makes the beauty of spring appear, pale. The implication of this is that the snow decked surrounding is more beautiful than spring.

'Few hours' reminds us of the temporary nature of this beauty, and the temporariness of winter. The removal of the bridal gear, leaves the country maid as her old self, with disappointment (disconsolate). This disappointment is the speaker's disappointment with the temporary nature of this beauty ushered by the snowfall, reinforced by 'aconite' (poisonous plants). In ll. 14 -15, there is an image of leaving in anger (flounce). Is the snow (winter) leaving in anger? Despite the death, there is still a beauty as suggested in filigree. The speaker now realises that there is a change (transformation). The transition is of crucial importance: the snow/frost upon melting releases the seeds trapped beneath the ground. 'Unclench' l. 18 – gives the image of winter holding the seeds and then releasing with the approach spring. 'Future breathe' – is a reminder of new life.

On the literal level, this poem deals with the winter (death) and spring (life). However a closer inspection of the poem, reflects the changes (transformation) of human life, difficulties and joys are of a temporary nature. Just as there is promise of new life (spring) after winter (death), there is promise of pleasure over pain.

## 5. VULTURES

ll. 1 – 2 sets a very miserable scene and a depressing atmosphere. The dull day and fine rain (drizzle) emphasises this misery. This depression and dreariness is sustained in the next line, (accentuated through the alliteration) “despondent dawn”. Dawn is the time of sunrise, but there is no indication that the sun would appear. “Harbinger” – messenger or announcer. The dawn is ‘unstirred’ not disturbed by the appearance of the sun. The absence of the sun adds to the miserable feelings mentioned in ll. 1 – 2. This depressive mood is sustained by (Vulture) a scavenger which feeds of dead carcasses.

The vulture is seen to be perched on the ‘broken bone of a dead tree’ (ll. 5 – 6). This line contains the “B” – alliteration and metaphor. The tree branch is regarded as a bone of the dead tree. The use of bone and dead, is a ghastly reminder of the vultures’ diet (carcasses). The alliteration shows the bleakness of the situation. Amidst this miserable scene the vultures is added.

Though the male seems to be fond of his partner, the vultures do nothing to change the atmosphere. In fact the description of the male paints an ugly picture. The head is described as “bashed-in” and as a “pebble”; the head is indeed flattened and appears small in comparison to the body. The head seems to be placed on a stem (neck). There is certainly nothing attractive about this. ‘Dump’ and ‘gross’ shows the ugliness of the vulture. Despite the description of the vulture, there is an attraction between the pair.

ll. 13 – 17 gives a disgusting description of the activities that this pair engaged in. The pair the eyes of a ‘swollen corpse’. This was a dead human; perhaps drowned (water-logged trench). What impact does ‘corpse’ have on the reader? After consuming the eyes, the vultures proceeded to consume the intestines and its contents.

It is only after this (full gorged) that they were satisfied. They chose to roost on the dead tree, but its eyes rested on the gorged corpse (hollow remnant). ‘Cold telescopic eyes’ – reminds one of the watchful nature of these merciless creatures. ‘Cold’ is a reminder of the ruthless nature of the vultures as well as its diet (the dead). Note the dreariness at the beginning turns to disgust at the end of the stanza.

The second st. begins with ‘Strange’ to describe love. Note that love is personified in this stanza. Love is usually associated with good appearances. However here he is referring to a ‘charnel house’ (remains of the dead are stored). There is still an allusion to the vultures but note the subtle shift to the house. The speaker says that love may tidy up a corner of the house, face the wall and fall asleep. Does this mean that love has an aversion to the things in the charnel house? ‘Coil up” (l. 27) also creates the idea of distancing itself from the contents of this house.

The shift of the previous stanza is completed in stanza 3 – the readers’ attention moves to the German concentration camps of (WWII); this was the scene of people being gassed to death. The Commandant at the end of a day’s work, returns home. The fumes (gas) which killed (human roast) – reminds the reader of the killings at Belsen. Note how the smell of corpses cling to the commandant. ‘Rebelliously’ (l. 34) tells the reader that the smell of burning flesh, refuses to go away. Note too that ‘roast’ (l. 33) reminds us of food for human consumption. Up to this point in this stanza, a very horrible image of the camp and the

commandant is created. In l. 35 'stop' ends the line – his work for the day has ended. The next line, reveals another side of the commandant, the family man, father and husband, who has to take care of his family. He buys treats for his young children (tender offspring). Here he is shown as a loving father to his loving family. Is this a reminder, those killed in Belsen, have children who await their return? Will their wait be an endless and futile exercise? Note the ellipsis at the end of the stanza. Compare the Commandant to the Vulture in stanza 1.

In the final stanza the speaker presents the reader with contrasting views: the ogre (evil) has some good qualities (a tiny glow-worm). This is bounteous (plentiful) gift (providence). The use of 'if you will' suggest that the reader should decide. Note the metaphorical comparison in this stanza – (icy caverns of a cruel heart) – the heart of the commandant is cold/cruel in the execution of his duties at Belsen. Compare to the 'cold telescopic eyes' of the vultures in stanza 1.

'Or' in l. 47 presents an alternative – and that is the desperation caused by the fact that evil coexists and even outweighs the love (tiny glow-worm). The poem ends with (perpetuity of evil). Is this the speaker's way of telling the reader that evil will have the final say forever (perpetuity)?

What should the reader of the poem focus on: the cruelty and cold heartedness, the good and loving nature or perhaps both? Can they coexist? Which eventually dominates? These are some of the critical issues raised in the poem. The speaker very deftly was able to raise these contrasting views within the sentences of the poem. The enjambment also enlightens the reader on the coexistence of love and evil in life. The PAST (commandant at Belsen) and the PRESENT (vulture) are compared and by doing so we are made aware the evil and good will grow alongside each other eternally.

## 6. The Garden of Love

The poem is a metaphorical criticism of religion. He believes that love is the most powerful force on earth, and religion does not sanctify this. Allusion to the Garden of Eden, and subsequent events, of Adam and Eve being cast out.

Note also the criticism of the Church of England. England was the Garden of Love, the chapel, the Church of England.

The garden (once a playground for the speaker) is now, sterile and lacks joy. His disappointment is echoed in l. 2, (saw what he had never seen): a chapel (Church of England) was built on the playground (garden). The people on this playground was controlled by the laws as set out by the church; these laws took away the joys and freedom which existed. The church has brought about control and the joys of life and the harmony between man and nature was destroyed. His presence at this garden earlier, is different to the present. One should note that the chapel represents authority and control as well as religion. The speaker is not in favour of this kind of control.

In the second stanza the speaker finds the door of the chapel shut. Hence he turns his attention to the flowers. The chapel is an intrusion in this place of ideal beauty. But he discovered that the flowers are now missing. The negative "thou shalt not" is ambiguous: could refer to instruction (commandments) of it could mean not enter or open the door of the chapel. It also indicates that the church is private property; introducing the idea of inequality (source) of unhappiness in society.

The final stanza depicts misery and uneasiness not previously experienced. This discovery is made by the speaker when he tries to see and experience what was there before. Graves and tomb-stones have replaced the blooms; both representing images of death. This image is compounded by the priests in "black gowns" – sign of ill-omen and mourning. The Priests here represents official who simply exercise control. They are thus devoid of any compassion. Now that the Priests are in control there are restrictions placed on people. Just as the joys and desires of the speaker are bound; so too are those of society.

Images: Garden of Eden sexual pleasure was regarded as sinful. Related to this is the garden (metaphorical sexual enjoyment and eroticism). Both found in the Old Testament.

Green: associated with: innocence, growth and fertility; season of spring.

Common playground for villagers; expression of joys.

This was not owned by anyone; therefore it symbolised freedom

Prison: the church is seen as a prison (gates . . . shut); priests as warders desires are bound (lack of freedom. "graves" associated with death; loss of lives.

This poem cannot be studied from a literal perspective – one has to focus on the allegorical representations of the church (religion).

The denial in Christianity (religion) of sexuality and its associations with guilt and fear are criticised. This is also done by society, family and other institutions. The physical pleasures of the body and its denial are key issues in this poem.



## 7. An African Elegy

An Elegy is a lament for the dead, however in this poem the speaker is lamenting the death of a part of himself. There is no actual death in this poem; rather an appeal to accept death.

In l. 1 there is reference to 'miracle' act of God that is a mystery. Here the speaker says their (we) creation is a mystery (miracle). We refers to people of African descent. The line continues into line 2. Why did God create? The speaker says to experience difficulties (bitter fruit of time). When one thinks of fruits, one thinks of it as appetising. But (bitter) tells that it is not palatable. Thus one understands that no matter what the circumstances, and whatever Time brings to them they endure. This idea is reinforced through (precious) invaluable, special in l. 3. Despite the negatives (suffering) there are three positives in stanza 1: miracle, precious, wonders. This implies that the speaker is still optimistic about the future. The speaker may be upset/angry about the difficulties they endure but the feeling of hope overrides this. Thus he says the suffering will become mysteriously beautiful, not only in Africa, but the rest of the world (earth). The pains and miseries of l.4 turn into beauties and pleasures of the world. Just as one cannot explain a miracle (though we try to rationalise it) we cannot understand the wonders.

Stanza 2 begins with a negative idea (burn) destroy, but it also has positive connotations – fire is also seen as a purifying agent. Thus the speaker feels that his miseries change to Gold (precious l. 3) and this brings happiness. Thus l. 7 has a positive connotation. The rhetoric in l. 8 implies that the rest of the world (you) are unable to understand (mystery) of African experiences/existence. The next line give the reader the idea of being burdened by poverty. Despite the burdens there is still joy (able to sing) in their lives, and they are still able to dream of pleasures. Note the use of the contradictions really serves to emphasise the idea of optimism. Perhaps we should ask: why is this an elegy? Is this an act of mourning? Will this remain a MYSTERY?

"Curse" l. 11 is a word with a negative meaning, but 'never' precedes it thus giving it a positive meaning. Cursing the air; weather conditions (would be cursing God). They simply accept the good and the bad. The speaker implies that there are no complaints when "fruits" are "good", so why should we complain when in difficulty. Fruits here metaphorically refer to results of one's actions. The 'lights' l. 13 is perhaps the reflections (bounce) off the water at sunrise or sunset. Both create a sense of beauty. 'Gently' reminds the reader that this is not the harshness of the African sun. The repetition of 'bless' (ll. 14 & 15) is significant. Even when in difficulty, the speaker finds time to time to bestow the benevolence of God, though it may be done silently. A reminder to the reader, that God is always in their thoughts; through pain and pleasure.

As a result of the blessings they give, God blesses them with (sweet music) harmony. Though the experience problems, they are capable of coming to terms with it. The personification of air; whose memory resonates with sweet sounds subtly reminds us of God's blessings. Once again 'miracles' are mentioned, but now the speaker says it is a secret. No one knows about, no one understands it. This is the work of God (beyond human comprehension). Time is also personified as the agent that will reveal the

miracles at work. The oxymoron in l. 20 is a reminder that there is joy in death. Communication with the ancestors reveals messages to the speaker. Though death is a mystery and something that is feared, it brings happiness. The personification of Time is also a reminder that man cannot interfere in God's plans, therefore he says at the time of death, the plans of God and joys of death shall be realised.

Upon hearing the songs of the dead, he realises that life should be lived and regarded as 'good' not a curse. The message of the ancestors also reveal how life should be lived (without violence) gently; with (zest and vigour) fire; with optimism (hope). The communication with the ancestors in the spiritual world reminds him of the 'wonder here'. This is ambiguous here (the world of the dead/ the life on earth). Both are plausible. Nevertheless it brings with it the feeling of hope.

The final stanza emphasises the feeling of hope. There is a feeling of shock (surprise) that everything changes (moves). The changes are brought about by 'unseen' forces. Is this unseen force the power of God? This also implies the temporal nature of things on earth. Note the references to 'ocean' and 'sky' (ll.28 &29), both are seen as expressions of love, and both are given positive connotations, 'songs' of the ocean refers to the abundance of joys; and the sky is 'not an enemy' must not be seen as a destructive force. African skies are seen as destructive (harsh heat and violent storms). But the speaker here, is referring to the positives. The last line personifies Destiny – the agent of death must be regarded as a friend – promise of a better after life.

Despite the negatives mentioned in the poem; the speaker appeals that one should not view it as a threat. There is an appeal to the people that despite all the struggles, they should have faith and be hopeful.

One should consider the impact of the repetitions of various words in the poem; miracles (l. 1 & 18), gently (l. 13 & 23), burn; fire (l. 6 & 24). These words are all used to emphasise the positives. Thus implying that there is more optimism than pessimism in the poem. Note too that as the poem progresses there are fewer negatives; culminating in an absolute sense of positivity.

There are also various references to nature in the poem; earth, ocean, air, water, fire and light. These are all the creations of God; a reminder of the power of God; thus the reader is not be in shock when the speaker aligns himself with the miracles and mysteries of God, though we may not fully understand it.

What or who does this poem honour in mourning?

Is it the speaker's death of hatred?

Is it the death of his forefathers (ancestors) who continue to inspire?

Is it the death of all the negatives (more visible at the beginning, non-existent at the end).

## 8. Funeral Blues

The first four lines of the poem, does not introduce us to the grief and mourning that one would associate with a funeral. This leads one to the question: "Why does the speaker give out a series of instruction in stanza 1. Traditionally, these were things done at a funeral, for various reasons. Clocks were stopped, as it was considered an ill-omen for the clock to continue to run (time passing) while the dead was still present in the house. Perhaps the issue of the telephone (ringing) presented a distraction to the mourners (esp. the loved ones). A barking dog with a bone – certainly reflects the joy of the dog. However it was believed that in the dog continued to bark, while deceased was not disposed of, then more people would die. Silencing the piano and soft (muffle) the drum, is perhaps taken from military funerals, where drums are played softly in honour of the dead. One may also consider the use of music at funerals. The coffin being brought out is a reminder that coffins are normally placed in the deceased's abode. It is brought out for the other mourners (public) to pay their last respects. The coffin placed in the house of the deceased is considered a time of private mourning for close relatives. However all these actions prove that the speaker, wants the funeral to have a sense of dignity and formality that goes with arranging a funeral. But crucial aspect of this stanza, is the understanding that the people arranging the funeral (usually close members of the family) want to ensure that everything is done with dignity, but deep down they have a desire to mourn the loss. Thus implying that they hide the feelings of grief to ensure that everything is "normal".

The use of hyperboles in this stanza: could be effective for various reasons: these actions (aeroplane scribbling "he is dead") may represent the kind of grief the speaker feels; does the speaker believe that the deceased, really does not deserve to be mourned (is this a mockery of the mourning; are these acts insufficient to express the grief experienced by the speaker; are these acts a celebration of the deceased's life. There seems to be an absence of any real sense of grief in this stanza as well. Perhaps the only sign of mourning (this being part of the formal arrangement) comes from the policemen (wearing black gloves).

Line 9 (reference to points of a compass) tells the reader that the speaker has lost all sense of direction in her life. It also emphasises how important the deceased was to the speaker. The deceased occupied the speaker's life totally (working week and rest days), showing the closeness of the dead to the speaker. From week to day, then times of the day further emphasise this point. Now however, time seems immaterial to the speaker. The dead occupied a significant part of the speaker's life. The first three lines of this stanza really shows the reader that the dead shared an intimate relationship with the lover. It seems the speaker's life revolved around the deceased. Waking and sleeping hours, chats (talk) and songs, all centered around the dead. One gets the sense that there was a deep sense of love between the speaker and the dead. Line 11, reveals that all these things (communication, singing, and time have no significance to the speaker as the "lover" is dead. The last line of the stanza confirms the dead was truly loved by the speaker. But does this love end with death? It should not be the case. However the speaker's belief that the love is eternal seemed to have been proven wrong. Although love for somebody should not end with death – it certainly feels the loss that is experienced with the death, makes the speaker feel that love is non-existent. This line really brings out the intense sense of grief

that is felt. This lines helps us understand the preparations and reasons for such preparations in the preceding stanzas. The pent-up emotions most certainly “explodes” in the final line of this stanza. In the first two stanzas and to an extent the preceding lines of this stanza really show the control and restraint of the speaker. But one must understand that eventually she has to grieve; and it all comes to the fore in l. 12.

The speaker’s mourning after the “explosion” in the last stanza is now evident. One cannot literally put out the stars, but here the stars is a metaphor for their aspirations, very likely the plans they jointly had cannot be realised now. Therefore there is no need for the stars. The images of the moon and the sun represent the deep sense of love they (speaker and dead) had for each other. The references to these heavenly images exemplifies the deep (even spirituality) of the love. One can then understand the sense of grief that she experiences. The ocean metaphorically refers to the depth of their love. The woods represents the close physical relationship. Note the reference to heavenly images (cannot be reached by the speaker) then the depths of the ocean (closer but still inaccessible) and lastly woods most accessible – really do not matter to her anymore. The more the speaker denies that the love does not exist anymore; the clearer it becomes that she is deeply in love. The last line tells the reader that the grief experienced in really intense (though one should pray and hope for a better place for the deceased), she cannot help but feel the pain.

The mood and tone of the poem, is certainly one of grief and sorrow, one the part of the lover. The rhythm of the lines in general show the deep sense of mourning as there is a lack of smooth flowing movement from line to line as well as within the lines. This certainly shows the frantic feelings and emotional outbursts at a funeral.

Although there appears to be a tone of mockery in the first two stanzas: the subsequent stanzas make the reader realise that the intimate relationship shared with the speaker, warranted the kind of arrangements mentioned in those stanzas. These arrangements also makes one understand the emotional outburst and mourning at the end.

## 9. THE ZULU GIRL

The title suggests that our focus is on the girl, a Zulu (tribe) girl. Upon closer inspection – the girl (female) is the bearer of children. Does this have any significance in the poem? Consider also the patriarchal nature of the tribe – mothers bear and take care of children; fathers providers! Note too that reference to “Zulu girl” is suggestive of her not being a married woman; but someone who has succumbed to the modern influences of society.

Line 1 creates an image of intense heat of the African soil. ‘Hot red’ describes the land (acres), which begins to smoulder (ready to burn) metaphor when the sun strikes it. Could smoulder metaphorically refer to the anger of the people? Whichever it may be, there is most certainly an idea of discomfort (emotional or physical). On this very land is a girl working (part of a gang). The heat and the physical nature of the work results in the gang ‘sweating’. The work and the heat makes the conditions almost unbearable. The connotations of gang is important: all members are classified as same; they do not have a personal identity. Note how the rhyme places emphasis on the effort on the part of the girl. This effort is complemented by the rhythm of the first stanza. The discomfort is not only experienced by the adults (gang) but also the child (next generation) expressed in ‘tormented by flies’. Eventually the girl out of frustration ‘flings’ the hoe (abandons work) to tend to the child. The child was physically “tied” to the mother. The act of unslinging reminds the reader of removing the child from the discomfort.

The second stanza shows the mother’s caring nature. She seeks the little shade provided by a thorn-tree to make her child comfortable. The thorn-tree, hardly provides comfort by its very nature and the suggestion that while they are in the shade, it is barely comfortable. Ticks are parasites, they are preying on the child. This introduces the image of poverty and unhealthy living conditions. The mother’s act of caring (caressing) the child is deliberate (slow). This soothes the child. This contrasts with the next line: metaphorically the mother is a hunter (prowl), as she seeks out the prey (ticks) from the child’s hair. Compare ‘slow caresses’ (l. 7) to ‘sharp electric clicks’. The ferocity and agility of a hunter in l. 7 contrasts with the tenderness of a mother in l.8. Her nails ‘purpled by the blood of ticks’ is proof of the hunted (ticks) being overpowered by the hunter. Allusions to animals in the wild. Note the onomatopoeia in clicks and ticks! Why is it effective?

In stanza three our attention moves to the feeding child. The unpleasantness of this stanza is created by the vowel sounds in words such as ‘plugged’, ‘tugs’ and ‘grunted’. The suggestion is that despite the child being sleepy, the child feeds greedily. This idea is further intensified through the simile in l.10 ‘like a puppy’. Note here the same vowel sound is repeated. In imbibing the mother’s milk, the languors (strong feelings) of the mother is passed from mother to child. The use of ‘frail’ (tender) reminds the reader how easily the child absorbs the feelings of the mother. This idea is intensified through the simile (l. 12). As the reeds cannot escape the waters of the river, the milk flowing from mother to child implies that the child cannot escape the influence of the mother. Is the word ‘sighing’ (l. 12) important? Consider the use of ‘plugged’ (l. 9) with ‘electric’ (l. 8). The sparks of electricity present in the mother is transferred to the child once plugged in.

The pen-ultimate stanza brings an almost sudden change of thought. Though it is literally the feeding of the child, ‘unquenched, unmotherable’ ferocity of the tribe is transferred

from the mother to the child. There is an element of aggression in this stanza. Though the viciousness (ferocity) of the tribe is 'curbed' (restrained or in control) it is unsatisfied (unquenched) and cannot be killed (unsmotherable). The heat refers to the life of the people. Despite the tribe being 'beaten' (l. 15) and they appear dignified in defeat, they are 'sullen' unhappy about it. The stanza thus suggest that the vigour and spirit of the African people is not defeated. It is merely transferred to the child. The "b" and "d" sounds in ll. 15 – 16 reminds us of the power of the tribe.

The final stanza begins with a simile (the girl is compared to a hill). She is no longer a girl just being part of a gang working the fields. She becomes the epitome of the tribe synonymous with suffering, surviving and eventually triumphing. Her body looms (towers) over the child in a protective manner. In its shade (note the lack of it in Stanza 1) the village (people) are in comfort. Just as the girl was destructive (prowl) in stanza 2, the clouds (l. 19) can bring violent storms which may be destructive. However these African storms brings with it the promise of a good harvest (growing of food). Compare the breast of the girl which feeds the child to breast in the last line. The clouds brings with it the promise of food. It also suggests the power of women even in the last line of the poem. The last line leaves the reader with hope and promise of a better future.

This poem is more than a helpless Zulu girl working the fields and feeding her child. The speaker by paying attention to the minute details, brings to the readers' attention the importance of women. Though the girl finds herself in an almost hopeless situation, she finds her value in herself in caring for the child.

## 10. Felix Randal

This poem is an Italian sonnet: identified by the abba and ccd rhyme schemes. This poem should be looked at from a Catholic perspective to arrive at a full understanding of the theme. Religion is certainly the central idea in the poem, but materialism (the work of Randal is not discredited). The three sacraments (Catholicism): Penance (repentance for sins/ confession of sins); Eucharist (the last Sacrament); Unction (anointing with oil) are critical in bringing about holy friendship. On closer inspection there is a definite development of friendship between the speaker and the subject.

Felix Randal was a black smith (shoe horses), we learn, has died (l. 1). The speaker has just received news of the death. The question in line 1, really questions if his duty to Felix, as a priest had ended. "Duty all ended" – the speaker (Priest) had been tending to the spiritual needs of Felix, who, due to his illness approached death, indicates that his duty to the dead is over. However the farrier was also a friend of the speaker, thus the speaker was also obligated to serve him as a friend as well. In l. 2 we learn of the subject's physical attributes (huge and strong) also handsome. He is also described as a 'mould of man' – built to perfection especially for the job he does. The alliterations in l. 2 places emphasis on the subjects physical attributes. However due to his illness (he could not accept his situation he became insane (reason rambled) l. 3. The contrast between ll. 2 – 3, really emphasises the changes which were forced upon Felix by his illness. The illness weakened him till the 'Fatal four disorders' (complications) consumed his body. "Contended" refers to the disorders struggling with one another, but ultimately shows the reader how he was weakened (pining, pining) l. 3. One should bear in mind that the farrier was closely watched by the speaker therefore he was witness to his deterioration. Perhaps the speaker even felt a sense of pity for the subject.

The three word sentence (sickness broke him) at the beginning of the second stanza, has a great impact. It brings about a sense of finality, the end of life. It also shows the devastating effect of his illness. His strength, power and hugeness was no match for the illness. Initially we learn that the subject could not accept his illness, (he cursed) he was impatient and agitated, later after being anointed he became calm and resigned. Anoint – a Catholic rite performed on a person, by applying oil on the forehead. Extreme unction – performing that rite when the person is close to death. The "heavenlier heart" (acceptance of God and his situation) began long before his death (months earlier). The reason for this acceptance of spirituality seems to be the 'sweet reprieve and ransom' (the Eucharist) that was given to him by the speaker. This is the bread which is believed to change into the body of Jesus. The last statement in this stanza ends with an exclamation! The speaker realises that all which could have been done for the farrier has been done. This line seems to be an appeal (prayer) to God; to give the farrier peace (rest), despite the sins he may have committed (all road he ever offended. It could also imply that God must keep (rest) rest him; to keep the farrier eternally. This line also hints at a sense of nostalgia and pity for the farrier.

The next stanza continues with a nostalgic tone as the speaker seems to reminisce about the times he spent with the ailing Felix. Note the use of “endears” (l.9) – visiting the sick brings us closer to them, but seeing and understanding their suffering, also makes us more compassionate as people. These are the feelings which developed in the speaker. The speaker continues to recall the ways in which he tried to comfort Felix, this shows that Felix had become dear/close to him. Words of encouragements/compassion were spoken (tongue) to the subject. The speaker’s touch (perhaps touching his forehead in prayer) brought him some peace and acceptance (quenched thy tears). However the actions of the speaker also benefitted him (touched my heart) – made him more compassionate and caring. The closing words of the stanza though simple, reinforces the lament of the speaker. He calls him a child; then Felix; poor Felix Randal, clearly showing the depth of his feelings for the subject.

The speaker recalls how different Felix was his last days, from his prior years. He quickly recalls the power of the farrier before illness (boisterous years). “random”(great or violent force) and “grim” (fierce) are used to describe the forge, Felix working the horseshoe on the anvil and of course Felix himself. Remember that farriers by nature of the jobs were powerful, well-built and strong. But amongst other farriers (peers) Felix was outstanding. The speaker now imagines Felix standing in front of the forge and using great force in beating (battering) the metal into shape. Please bear in mind that drayhorses were the most powerful and largest horses, which were used in heavy work. Thus the shoes had to be strong and well made. Felix was noted for being the best in his field. He was so powerful, that even when he stood among these powerful horses, he still appeared strong. The sandal here is a direct reference to the horse shoe, which becomes shiny (bright) as the horses start walking/running (battering) on the stones. “fettle” (l.14) refers to the making the horses/horseshoe ready anticipation of work to be done. But in these days of immense strength and power he had no idea (forethought l. 12) that his fatal weakness that would result in his death. The last stanza paints a picture of a powerful Felix (a far cry from his state of illness), but it also shows the speaker’s great admiration of Felix. The exclamation certainly emphasises the awe and admiration of the speaker for Felix and his abilities to shoe drayhorses.

Although there is a sense of pity and nostalgia in the poem, the poem ends with a tone of admiration for the subject and his abilities.



## 11. AN AFRICAN THUNDERSTORM

The storm in the poem, metaphorically refers to the colonisers. The image of the African storm, is appropriately used to emphasise the chaos and destruction wrought by the colonists.

In line 1 (west) indicates that the speaker is referring to colonists who descended upon Africa. We know that African storms come with great force (wind and rain) and leave behind a trail of destruction. Similarly the western powers left behind a trail of devastation.

The rhythm of ll. 1 - 5 effectively shows the violent activities of the storm. They reach all places (leaving nothing intact) "here and there". African storms are unpredictable and come on suddenly and this is reinforced through the short/one word lines. The simile (l.6) reminds one of the destruction that is left in the wake of the storm; just as the locusts ravage crops (fear of farmers), the storm too destroys everything and is feared by all. Locusts arrive through the air (whirling) as the clouds do. The clouds bring rain, to the thirsty earth, but it also destroys.

L. 8 reminds one of the mayhem left behind. This idea is further reinforced by the simile (l. 9). A madman does nothing logical and rational, but instills fear and causes havoc for the people. The storm has a similar effect on the people. Words such as whirling, tossing and twirling, describes the movement of the storm, which implies that it is violent. The length of the lines also mimics the sudden bursts we associate with storms.

Stanza 2 changes the rhythm of the poem, there appears to be a sense of calm before the approaching storm (coming from the west). The approaching storm is compared to a pregnant woman). There is certainly a change in the erratic movement from the previous stanza, as the heavy (pregnant) clouds are carried by the west wind.

Note the image of the bird in ll. 11 – 12. The pregnant clouds settle (perch) on the hills. Gathering – a mass or large number of clouds (birds) settle on the hills to unleash rain. The use of sinister is crucial – implying that the pregnant cloud would give birth to something evil – the clouds would unleash destruction.

In the next two lines, emphasises the power of western forces and the weakness and ignorance of the indigenous people. The trees represent the indigenous while the storm (wind whistles) represents the western forces. The trees allow the wind to pass as they bend, showing that they allow the west to gain entry. The onomatopoeia shows the power of the west.

Stanza 3 – the changes once again (a complete contrast) to the previous stanza. The children seem to be excited by the impending storm, while adults seem to understand that with the storm would come destruction, therefore the anxiety. The women seem to seek refuge from the storm, their frantic movements suggest this. The short lines indicate panic-stricken and hurried movement of the women. Compare the attitude of the women and children to the storm. This stanza could be divided into 3 parts: attitude of children; attitude of women; the approaching storm. The storm approaches "madly"

forcing the trees, go give way. Again the storm seems unpredictable and violent, reminding the reader of its power and force.

In the final stanza the effect of the storm is evident, women's clothing are torn (like flags) which are exposed to the storm. Flags are indicative of the pride of a nation, it being ripped away, indicates the destruction of the nation. The storm exposes the women (expose dangling breasts).

This is followed by blinding flashes (lightning) or is it the firing of ammunition? Rumble, tremble and crack – clearly describes the force and thunder which accompanies African storms. Could this again refer to the sounds ammunition?

"Smell of fired smoke" reveals the smell of the ammunition of the west which is "pelting" heavy down pour (showered by gunfire). Note the violence of the storm in the final stanza, metaphorically the violence of the western force.

D. RAMSAMOCHI

**12. Motho ke Motho ka Batho Babang**  
(a person is a person because of other people)

This poem is a narrative – tells of an encounter between two prisoners; who seem to know and understand each other well. The prisoner in the cell (possibly in solitary confinement) is communicating with another prisoner who is cleaning the prison. The prisoner in the cell is actually using a mirror to communicate with the other, using sign language. The use of sign language is important here; prisoners in solitary confinement were not supposed to communicate with anyone, and the prison warden (present) must not know of the communication. Thus the communication was secretive. The mirror becomes an important tool of communication (no sound is used in this communication)

The mirror (l.1) metaphorically highlights the lack of contact with another person (communication was allowed through another person). The mirror (held outside the window) give the prisoner a view of the passage. The window is also a reminder of the isolation of the prisoner in the cell. The use of clear (l.2) is important (there may be obstructions in the passage) but for the purpose of the communication the prisoner in the cell gets the message from the one outside clearly. In l.3 the individual outside is referred to as a person (human). It is only in the next line is he said to be a prisoner. The “p” – alliteration is important. We are reminded that the prisoners are people (humans) – but it emphasise the dehumanising of these people. That also tells the reader that the prisoner within the cell, had to be certain that the person out there was one of his kind (a prisoner). This person is not given a name but is identified as person, then a prisoner.

Lines 5 – 6 highlights the lack of face to face communication (not allowed). They see one another through their reflections in the mirror. The rest of the lines in this stanza describes the “conversation” communicated through the mirror. The message received by the prisoner in the cell – there is a warder who is watching the prisoner on the outside.

This stanza “clearly” shows how the prisoners defies their situation and continue to maintain ‘human contact’ (they were denied) very secretly. The sign language was crucial to maintain some contact under the watchful eyes of warders. This also reveals the innovative and clever means devised by prisoners out of desperation.

The next two lines continue the monologue: the prisoner outside gives information to the one in the cell. The movement of the fingers informs the prisoner in the cell they the other is being closely observed. This indicates that the prisoners were always being closely monitored.

Despite being watched, the prisoner working on the outside, is still able to pass information to the other. Note that he also takes precaution not to be caught out. Therefore the polishing-hand, continues its ‘slow-slow’ rhythm. The use of ‘slow-slow’ indicates that this is a time wasting task (prisoners were simply given tasks to keep them occupied), but it also means that the prisoner was also deliberately working slowly (perhaps to give information to the other prisoner). The free hand passes information – possibility of speaking to the other later. There is a great chance that this would not be a verbal communication – perhaps similar to the one at the moment.

Up to this point, there is no verbal communication. The first verbal question is from the warder (in Afrikaans). What are you doing there? Note the speaker (warder) cannot be seen by the prisoner in the cell – he just hears the words. The voice also represents the voice of authority (those in power have a voice)

His response to the question is a lie – but note how he addresses the warder (baas) showing that he acknowledges his power. Then he proceeds to turn his back to the prisoner in the cell (this act would normally be an act of ignoring someone). However here it is an act to keep the monologue going but in secret. ‘now watch’ seems to be out of place in the poem: but this is an appeal to the reader, but also that the prisoner in the cell is perhaps aware of what is to follow. The free hand is described as ‘talkative’ (it conveys the information) to the prisoner in the cell. This is contrasted with ‘quietly’ in the next line. The contrast is effective in that it emphasises that despite the restrictions information is transferred although it is done secretly. Quietly also means secretly. The use of talkative is ironical – prisoners in solitary confinement had no human contact; thus they could not talk.

Now the prisoner in the cell sees a fist in the mirror – a black fist. Note in the previous ‘communication’ the actions were described, then the meanings were provided. Here the meaning “strength brother” is given before the description. Another indication that the prisoner in the cell was anticipating this. This fist is a sign of hope and support that is given to the prisoner in the cell. It implies that he should not lose hope. The black fist symbolically represents power and opposition to oppression.

If one looks at the title and the narrative that follows, one would understand that the prisoners were forced to behave in the manner they did because of “**other people**” – the people in power.

Note that this poem makes use of three languages; reinforcing the idea that people are part of society, and that society does have an influence on people. The fourth language sign language is also crucial – it is the language that give encouragement and strength to the prisoner in the cell.