

**DECLARATION REGARDING PLAGIARISM**

NAME: ..... NIRESHA SINGH .....  
STUDENT NUMBER: ..... 39579808 .....  
ASSIGNMENT TOPIC: ..... 'THE SLAVE DEALER' by THOMAS PRINGLE .....  
ASSIGNMENT NUMBER ..... 1 .....  
UNIQUE ASSIGNMENT NUMBER ..... 881709 .....

I declare that this assignment is my own original work. Where secondary material has been used (either from a printed source or from the internet), this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the department's policy in this regard. I have not allowed anyone else to borrow or copy my work

Signature

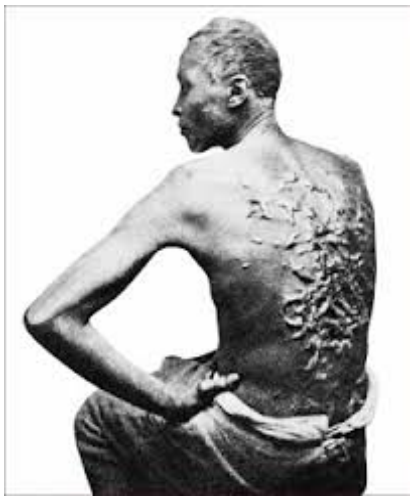


Date:

..... 09 MARCH 2017 .....

# 2017

Name : Niresha Singh  
Assignment 1  
Unique No.: 881709  
Student No.: 39579808



**[“THE SLAVE DEALER –  
THOMAS PRINGLE]**

## The Slave Dealer by Thomas Pringle

This essay will look at the poem, “*The Slave Dealer*”, by Thomas Pringle. In this poem Pringle, shows us the point of view from *The Slave Dealer*. It will first give a brief description of the poet and his life and thereafter analyze the poem.

Thomas Pringle was born in Scotland, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1789. Pringle immigrated to South Africa with his family in 1820. He was a Scottish writer, poet and abolitionist. He was known as the ‘Father of South African Poetry’, and his poems and narratives describe South African landscapes, native people and social conditions (Wikipedia. 2017). Thomas Pringle was the man who fought for ‘free press in South Africa’, in other words, the freedom to receive or impart information and ideas. He lived here for 6 years and due to him not being able to make a living as a writer, he moved to London where he worked for the abolition of slavery. He died at the age of 45 of tuberculosis on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1834 in London (SA History. 2017).

Pringle’s poem highlights slavery and the slave holder who is actually ‘*The Slave Dealer*’. When reading the title, which has a straight forward meaning, The Slave Dealer is a person who dealt in the sale of people from poverty stricken backgrounds to people of higher standings ‘upper-class’. Slavery was something that happened all around the world and the slave dealers are the ones who transported the slaves forcibly away from their families to other countries and continents. They were also responsible for the deaths of many slaves. Pringle is described as ‘colonial’, because in his case he wrote at the turn of the 20th century during the British reign which over time became known as the Republic of South Africa (Dr. S. Dambe et. al.2013).

The poem has 8 stanzas of 6 lines each. Each stanza begins with six lines arranged in the following rhyming pattern ABABAB;CDCDCD;EFEFEF;....etc. The layout of the poem and rhyme form an important part of what *the slave dealer* goes through emotionally (Dr. S. Dambe et. al.2013). The first stanza line 1-2, “*From oceans wave a Wanderer came, with visage tanned and dun*”, the speaker is calling the slave dealer a ‘wonderer’ in other words a traveller has come from sailing the oceans. His appearance is tanned and his features are plagued with years of harshness by the weather, by his job and by his many travels. “*His mother when he told his name, Scarce knew her long lost son*”, Tells us that his mother did

not recognise him, he probably had left at a very young age and only when he mentioned his name did she remember him. He is no longer a boy, he is now a man. It also shows by the words, 'Long lost son' that he never returned or visited. "*So altered was his face and frame, by the ill course he had run*". The two lines 5-6 show that his journey's were harsh, and through the pain he had seen, it took effect on his outer appearance. The 'ill course' can reflect not only what he endured but also what he made others endure (M. Chapman, 2002).

Second stanza lines 1 and 2, "*There was hot fever in his blood, and dark thoughts in his brain,*". These lines express that the slave dealer is angry 'hot fever', and 'dark thoughts' meaning he was thinking of bad things or images he cannot get rid of. "*And oh! To turn his heart to good, that mother strove in vain*", this shows that the mother tried to help him to forgive himself, but she could not because what he had done was beyond forgiveness. "*For fierce and fearful was his mood, Racked by remorse and pain*", 'Fierce and fearful', shows that he was angry and scared of the things he had done, he was also remorseful for what he had done and he felt pain. He felt so many emotions that one could say that his soul was a tortured one (M. Chapman, 2002).

In the third stanza, "*And if, at time a gleam more mild, would over his features stray*", states that perhaps for a fleeting moment he would feel better. He is at home and he is safe. He feels that he can move forward and nothing bad can happen to him, and he won't be able to hurt anybody else. "*When knelt the widow near her Child, And he tried with her to pray*", 'the widow', is the mother and it is also showing that she has lost her husband. Her son 'her Child' is all she has left now. The speaker makes the slave dealer seem small and fragile and pathetic by calling him a 'Child'. Even though he tries to pray with his mother by his side it is difficult. The last two lines in this stanza, "*It lasted not-for visions wild, still scared good thoughts away*". Here we see that his thoughts of maybe making peace one day are lost in the words 'It lasted not'. He cannot close his eyes, the visions of what he has done haunts and taunts him. All of his good thoughts of a new beginning dissipate (M. Chapman, 2002).

Fourth stanza states, "*There's blood upon my hands!*" he said, which water cannot wash", the 'blood upon my hands!' this is an idiom, to be responsible for someone's death. The slave dealer is being dramatic by saying the blood on his hand cannot be washed off by water. He is saying that he has spilt so much of blood literally by killing and hurting people that even though he washes his hands he cannot wash away what he has done. "*It was not shed where*

*warriors bled- It dropped from the gory lash,*” The third line in this stanza says that he didn’t fight bravely or heroically or spilt blood for his country, he instead was a coward, and he was a bully, someone who took advantage of those he saw as beneath him. The blood he spilt is of innocent souls. Each swing of his whip, blood would drip from their wounds ‘gory lash’. Lines 5-6, “*As I whirled it o’er and o’er my head, and with each stroke left a gash*”. ‘o’er’ and ‘o’er’, may come across as colloquial language, in actual fact it means ‘over and over’. The words are also written in this way to bring the sentence to its point or to the end faster (M. Chapman, 2002).

Fifth stanza says, “*With every stroke I left a gash, while Negro blood sprang high,*” with every stroke he would open a new gash and every gash would bleed. ‘Negro’, was a term used for dark-skinned people, who were inhabitants of Africa, south of the Sahara. It is not a term used in polite conversation; it is more offensive in nature. ‘Sprang high’, means that he drew blood each time he swung and the blood would swing off the whip each time he lifted it above his head. “*And now all ocean cannot wash my soul from murder’s dye,*” The slave dealer is being even more dramatic from the first and second line in stanza four, he now describes the largest body of water on earth, the ocean, as not being able to wash his soul of all the dreadful and gruesome things he has done to another human being. ‘Murder’s dye’ this would be to have blood on ones hand as stated in stanza 4, line 1. Murder is described as a ‘dye’ this is a metaphor and just like dye would colour or stain the hair so to, the lives he has taken has tarnished his soul. “*Nor e’en thy prayer, dear Mother squash, That Woman’s wild death – Cry!*”. Again we notice colloquial language being used ‘e’en’ which is ‘even’, this is also a means of getting to a point by shortening the word. The slave dealer says to his mother that not even her prayers can help him suppress the sound of the woman’s final moments. ‘Death-cry’, is hyphenated to show the bringing together of two separate words explaining that the woman must have cried out her final words before death came (M. Chapman, 2002).

Sixth Stanza, “*Her cry is ever in my ear, And it will not let me pray*”, meaning that the sound of her cry, keeps playing over and over again. The slave dealer says ‘it will not let me pray’, he is speaking of the woman’s voice. He has committed a sin, why should he be given the chance to ask for forgiveness? Line 3-4 says, “*Her look I see – Her voice I hear – As when in death she lay*”. Her facial features, the sound of her cry and each time he swung the whip and the agony this woman must have endured before death took her. His pain and grief is shown by the hyphenated short sentences. The slave dealer seems to be going insane; this woman’s

last moments haunt him. *“And said, ‘With me thou must appear. On God’s great Judgement – day!’”*, these last two lines of stanza 6 explains it all in regards to why he has a change of heart. She tells him that he would have to meet his maker someday, that is stated by the words; ‘Judgement day’ and that God would be the one to deal out his punishment (M. Chapman, 2002).

Seventh stanza, *“Now, Christ from frenzy keep my son! The woeful widow cried”*, the mother calls out to Christ telling him to protect her son. She uses the word ‘frenzy’ which means extreme mental agitation. The word ‘woeful widow’, means she has possibly lost her husband not long ago and she is still in mourning for him, but she is crying for her son’s mercy as well. *“‘Such murder foul thou ne’er hast done. Some fiend they soul belied!’-”* The widow pleads that he could never commit this crime or evil deed. The word ‘fiend’ refers to an evil spirit/devil. She blames what her son has done on him being influenced or possessed by an evil spirit. *“-Nay, Mother! The Avenging One was witness when she died!”* The slave dealer says no to his mother, upon hearing his mother’s prayer. He tells her that the Avenging Angel had bared witness to his crimes (M. Chapman, 2002).

The eighth and final stanza, *“The writhing wretch with furious heel, I crushed – no mortal nigh; the ‘writhing wretch’, speaks about the woman as he whipped her, she probably tried to kick out at him, as she must have twisted and squirmed with anguishing pain as he whipped her. The words, ‘Mortal’, meaning subject of death and ‘nigh’, meaning near, this tells us her end is near. “But that same hour her dread appeal, was registered on high”, this tells us that the slave dealer was being watched by a higher power at the time the woman was being tortured by him. Her ‘dread appeal’, is her final words to the slave dealer. “And now with God I have to deal, And dare not meet His eyes!”*, and now after doing what he had done, he realises that he cannot be forgiven. He has to meet God one day and repent for all his sins. But ‘dare not meet His eyes’, the ‘His’ speaks of God, how will he face him, knowing what he has done. He has committed a mortal sin by taking this woman’s life (M. Chapman, 2002).

In conclusion the speaker seems to have realised the repercussions of his actions, when he murders this woman. Her last words, ‘With me thou must appear, On God’s great Judgement – day’ (M. Chapman, 2002), keeps playing on his mind, the realisation that what he has done cannot be undone. He has realised that he has taken the lives of so many innocent souls and this has sealed his fate when he stands before his creator.

## **Reference**

- (1) M. Chapman, 2002. *New Century of SA Poetry*. Edition. Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- (2) Thomas Pringle, journalist and editor of Cape newspaper Commercial Advertiser, dies in London | South African History Online. 2017. *Thomas Pringle, journalist and editor of Cape newspaper Commercial Advertiser, dies in London | South African History Online*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/thomas-pringle-journalist-and-editor-cape-newspaper-commercial-advertiser-dies-london>. [Accessed 21 March 2017].
- (3) Dr. S. Dambe; Ms.B. Janari; Dr. S. Maithufi; Prof. K. Masemola; Prof. J. Murray; Dr. A. Musvoto; Prof. S Radithalo; Prof. M. Vambe, ., 2013. *Colonial and Postcolonial - African Literature*. 1st ed. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- (4) Wikipedia. 2017. *Thomas Pringle - Wikipedia*. [ONLINE] Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Pringle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Pringle). [Accessed 26 March 2017].