

ARTHUR NORTJE: WAITING

1 The isolation of exile is a gutted
 2 warehouse at the back of pleasure streets:
 3 the waterfront of limbo stretches panoramically – metaphor of his mind (waterfront)
 4 night the beautifier lets the lights
 5 dance across the wharf.
 6 I peer through the skull's black windows
 7 wondering what credibly can save me.
 8 The poem trails across the ruined wall
 9 a solitary snail, or phosphorescently
 10 swims into vision like a fish
 11 through a hole in the mind's foundation, acute
 12 as a glittering nerve.

Personification –slow pace
 sibilance “s” –slow down pace
 Alliteration – sh simile

13 Origins trouble the voyager much, those roots
 14 that have sipped the waters of another continent.
 15 Africa is gigantic, one cannot begin
 16 to know even the strange behaviour furthest
 17 south in my xenophobic department.
 18 Come back, come back mayibuye
 19 cried the breakers of stone and cried the crowds
 20 cried Mr Kumalo before the withering fire
 21 mayibuye Afrika

22 Now there is the loneliness of lost
 23 beauties at Cabo de Esperancia, Table Mountain: alliteration
 Portuguese: Cape of Good Hope,
 24 all the dead poets who sang of spring's
 25 miraculous recrudescence in the sandscapes of Karoo
 26 sang of thoughts that pierced like arrows, spoke
 27 through the strangled throat of multi-humanity
 28 bruised like a python in the maggot-fattening sun.

29 You with your face of pain, your touch of gaiety,
 30 with eyes that could distil me any instant
 31 have passed into some diary, some dead journal
 32 now that the computer, the mechanical notion
 33 obliterates sincerities.
 34 The amplitude of sentiment has brought me no nearer
 35 to anything affectionate,
 36 new magnitude of thought has but betrayed
 37 the lustre of your eyes.

38 You yourself have vacated the violent arena
 39 for a northern life of semi-snow
 40 under the Distant Early Warning System:
 41 I suffer the radiation burns of silence.
 42 It is not cosmic immensity or catastrophe
 43 that is terrifies me:
 44 it is solitude that mutilates,
 45 the night bulb that reveals ash on my sleeve.

Subject:

- experiences in exile, and reference to Table Mountain, Cabo de Esperancia (Cape of Good Hope), Karoo would suggest the speaker is referring to the apartheid struggle where many were forced into exile for their stand against apartheid.

Theme of

uncertainty, loneliness, isolation bitterness

Structure:

5 stanzas

Free verse

- express loss of solid structure in life
- lack of punctuation sense of being adrift – uncertainty “in limbo” (l.3)
- Enjambment - affects rhythm – slow and heavy = mournful tone ??

Title: Waiting

- postponed action?
- Expectation – hope?... for change
- hesitation ?
- holding back ?
- In a state of limbo- uncertainty

Theme of uncertainty, loneliness, isolation bitterness

- Metaphor (l. 1-3) – “The isolation of exile is a gutted warehouse at the back of pleasure streets:” feelings toward exile are compared to a gutted warehouse. Gutted = image of emptiness, destruction (destroyed by fire), decay.
- Warehouse = metaphor of his mind, inner-being
- Image of “pleasure streets” - considered unsavoury parts of town – prostitution, drugs---connotation of corrupt morals, promiscuity. Extent of his mind= corrupt, low, isolated he’s feeling
- Colon: expands on purpose
- “waterfront of limbo stretches panoramically” - suggests that the uncertainty “limbo” in his mind or inner-consciousness is vast and never ending.