Nothing (Margaret Atwood)

Nothing like love to put blood
back in the language,
the difference between the beach and its
discrete rocks and shards, a hard
cuneiform, and the tender cursive
of waves; bone and liquid fishegg, desert
and saltmarsh, a green push
out of death. The vowels plump
again like lips or soaked fingers, and the fingers
themselves move around these
softening pebbles as around skin. The sky's
not vacant and over there but close
against your eyes, molten, so near
you can taste it. It tastes of
salt. What touches you is what you touch.
‘From Not Him’ by Wopko Jensma

1. he forbids us to dance
2. he always leads the church service
3. he has a stable job
4. he is always on time for work
5. he never gets drunk
6. he has respects for most people
7. everybody respects him
8. we love our daddy
9. but sometimes i notice
10. when a kwela blasts from the radio
11. he wiggles his toes

1. From whose perspective is this poem written? Who is the poem about?

The poem is written from the speaker’s point of view, first person. The speaker is observing his “father figure”. The father figure can be presented as a priest or as a mentor. Or the speaker refers to this father as he says “we” in line 8 (his different personalities) “love our daddy”. The title of the poem signifies that the poem was written by the one personality that respects his father and not the other personality.

2. Explain what the statements in lines 1-7 suggest about this person.

In line one “he forbids us to dance” this shows that the father position of power as he forbids the child or speaker to dance or in the position to want to tell them what to do. The speaker tries hard to give positive qualities of his father as the tone lacking in emotion. The child or speaker portrays the father as an exemplary person who everyone respects. In line two it can suggest that the father is high or important in the church environment.

3. Lines 9-11 introduce a contrasting view about the poem. How is this achieved?

In line eight the speaker uses “but” which indicates a turning point in the direction in the tone and/or description of his father. In line 1-7 the speaker is more specific and writes in short sentences, but in line 8-11 the speaker uses three lines to get his ideas across. In line 8-11 the speaker uses more descriptive words than in line 1-7, changing the tone and giving more emotional context in the last lines.

4. This poem was written and published during apartheid, when people in South Africa were strictly segregated based on their race. If we read ‘From Not Him’ as a kind of protest poem, what comment do you think the poem is making about South Africa? Your answer should be informed by your analysis of the poem.
Due to the lack of emotion in the first seven lines the speaker does not respect the country and/or government. As the last few lines of the poem are filled with more emotion as the speaker describes something almost contradicting to the first lines it shows his anger, bitterness or negativity towards the country and/or government. The government and/or country is not portrayed as perfect as they would like to be and can be seen a hypocritical.

**Quiet Place (Mxolisi Nyezwa)**

and it seems that i live in a quiet place
at the end of time
with a blowing universe behind me.

i remain aware of the long-suffering of things
i remain aware with a simple truth
of how the planet eventually crumbles.

to me there is always the spaza shop* at the end of the street,
the vague colour of the moon
and of the southern sky.

sea

the sea is so heavy inside us
and i won't sleep tonight.
i have buckets of memory in a jar
that i keep for days and nights like these.

Spaza' shops are informal stores, often found in townships, offering basic foodstuffs and supplies to local communities,

**Analysis**

Stanza 1 – Tone – inner turmoil, sadness, restlessness
Stanza 2 tone – acceptance of the hardships, sorrow
Stanza 3 – Tone – hope,
Stanza 4 – Rage,

**The poem starts abruptly with the word ‘and’ (line 1). What could be the reasons for this abrupt beginning?**

And is a conjunction which is used to join 2 sentences together, so by using and it is suggested that the poet must have had a previous thought about his troubled passed perhaps which he chose to leave out. The word ‘seems’ in line 1 suggests that the speaker is doubtful or uncertain of whether or not he is infact in a quiet place and at peace.
Do you think the speaker refers to a literal place in lines 1-3? Why, or why not?

No it is not a literal place, it is a figurative place. The speaker is referring to a quiet place post-apartheid, where everyone enjoys freedom, democracy and equality. However his memories keep him in the Apartheid state because he continues to dwell on his memories of hardship and suffering under the Apartheid regime. The word ‘seems’ emphasizes his uncertainty of where he is.

What is the effect of repeating the phrase ‘I remain aware’ in lines 4 and 5?

The effect of repetition ‘I remain aware’ in lines 4 and 5 is to emphasize the speaker’s unwillingness to let go of the past. The past occupies so many memories and thoughts that the speaker remains cautious, yet accepts that the truth cannot be altered.

Identify a recurring sound device in the poem, and explain its effect.

‘blowing universe’ signify that although the memories are from the past, they remain alive in the speakers mind and by repeating ‘I remain aware’ reinforces the speakers memory of apartheid and the hardships experienced. Southern sky refers to the Southern part of Africa which is the heart of where Apartheid begun. Southern sky also makes reference to the beginning and end of the speakers life and where everything has happened.

"Re-invoking the turmoil of the wider world through the image of a blowing universe, Nyezwa finds quiet re-assurance in the township’s familiar surrounds, emphasised by the fact “there is always the spaza shop at the end of the street”. Suffering and hardship exits in the world and there is a common destiny that will see “the planet eventually crumble”, but this is overshadowed by the connotations of comfort and peace. Home provides a sense of balance where he is able to accept, reflect, and have no desire to fight this simple truth."

My thoughts on the poem: The quiet place is the figurative place of peace his home brings him. In spite of all the suffering in the world. He is still aware of it but his home is a refuge. When he is there, he is transported away from the troubles.

He begins mid sentence as though continuing a thought out loud.

The effect of the repetition of the phrase "I remain aware" is emphasis. Speaker wants you to understand and remember he is aware of the world's pain. He is not ignorant. Nor is he ignoring it. He is at peace with our destiny to eventually crumble.

Recurring sound device is alliteration with "southern sky." The consonant S is repeated. The effect of a sound device is to evoke images and reinforce meaning to create an emotional response. I would say the tone is reflective and contemplative.