

MONGANEWALLYSEROTE

National Poet Laureate Hub

PODCAST EPISODE 3

THEME: **Storytelling in Poetry**
GUESTS: **Lethokuhle Msimang & Solly “Soetry” Ramatswi**

LETHOKUHLE MSIMANG

Death & Dying

I am trying to make sense of dying. The death of my mother's oldest friend, his death from pancreatic cancer. Now the death of a mother of two, ill prepared for her passing. They sit in a garage clouded in smoke, surrounded by smoke, drinking, reeking. And I'm summoning all the parts that compose my sobriety. Sometimes dealing with death feels like dying.

I want to illustrate the dark continent with a thousand hands pulling on a dwindling thread, trying to get out, trying to remember: This land belongs to the ones who saved it, the rest of us dream of being elsewhere.

But it is a kind of sickness, isn't it? To be more at ease outside of one's home. I see the symptoms in those that have gone - something in their voice, a slight fixture in their accents. But there is, for those of us who've remained, a certain zeal, a sudden tilt towards the heavens: The churches, the prayer groups, the woman in blue robes perched beneath the trees. Heaven is the promise of relocation. It is a scholarship abroad. They are all praying to be elsewhere, and they will worship those with the means to go.

But perhaps they pray because the soul and the psyche are the same. Because we are as vulnerable to ourselves as we are to malevolent spirits in the air. What took my mind, I wonder. Was it in dealing with death and dying. Was it in trying to love at the cost of my body, or was it a whisper that pronounced itself in the space between my prayers.

I don't belong here, as if my skin were not black. How I cannot find a job here, how I'd hate to live and work here. And the unrelenting sun burns on the skin of my forehead, my leather worn, my face no longer what it was.

You can feel when your hope hangs on your beauty and you're struggling under the raze of the sun. When you no longer want a wand but a savior. And you turn to the one true God and every love falls short. And you no longer touch yourself, or make room for your lust, for your endless want. Then you wonder to yourself, in your loneliness, when you cannot hide what you've become, did I kill a son or daughter? Is there any way to undo what is done?

But I'm no longer beside myself. I've stopped believing there is a way out of my body, out of my country. Occasionally, there is the shame that comes with having knowt says to thee, coming to terms with your undoing, even the earth has its end and there is a heaven.

SCORE

- Relevance to the theme 5/5
- Creativity (imagination & innovation) 5/5
- Style 5/5
- Originality (unique interpretation of the theme) 5/5
- The coherence of form and structure (harmony of words, presentation) 5/5
- Clarity of imagery 5/5
- Creative use of language 5/5
- Creative storytelling 5/5
- Overall impact/ Power 5/5
- Edutainment value 5/5

TOTAL50/50

SOLLY "SOETRY" RAMATSWI

Rumours

There is a rumour roaming around our country,
A rumour that Covid is another word for war.
Soldiers are deployed to their own countries
To fight the virus and not the people...
Not the people.

The rumour said a countryman was in possession of a lethal weapon:

A mug!

The rumour said a man committed suicide

With a mug.

The rumour said the soldiers said the mug had a trigger and cross hairs.

The rumour said he threatened his own safety with it.

The rumour said it is the reason the metro spilled his bullets;

It was to save him.

The rumour said the soldiers where by the gate

When he opened his mouth

And fired...

Twice?!... no... thrice??

(ohh now I remember...)

They said they couldn't count the shots.

The rumour said the mug was loaded with alcohol...

(no, bullets... they said bullets)

The post mortem said he drank bullets,
So it's suicide and not what the family claims.

The rumour said the soldiers said
He was unconscious when the metro police arrived,
And collapsed when the soldiers touched him.

The rumour also whispered:

“some soldiers don't know that the war zone is their own home.”

SCORE

- Relevance to the theme 5/5
- Creativity (imagination & innovation) 5/3
- Style 5/5
- Originality (unique interpretation of the theme) 5/5
- The coherence of form and structure (harmony of words, presentation) 5/3
- Clarity of imagery 5/3
- Creative use of language 5/5
- Creative storytelling 5/5
- Overall impact/ Power 5/5
- Edutainment value 5/4

TOTAL50/43

WINNER & REMARKS

Lethokuhle Msimang

Has been innovative about what a poem form is, the depth of the rendition is poetic and each of the criteria for assessment in my view hits the 5 mark.