

Nelson Mandela – Madiba, ‘Infirmmary: Another prison... another island’

Lying in a white room - stark and sterile
 reflecting on chance, phenomena, existence...
 you drift between a world of delirium and clarity,
 it's a shifting collage of contrasting images -
 a warden's footfall, the metallic sound of keys in locks,
 the small window in the prison wall -
 a dark blot that blacks out the beyond.

Your past drifts like a bubble before you
 where a goat balances on remains of a wall,
 rain-blown wattles droop like drenched birds
 and a vagrant chime from a ruined bell tower
 sounds across the valley.

Kaleidoscopic figures rise through the fog, and then fade...
 boys dawdling alongside goats and donkeys,
 Nguni hounds yelping and snapping on the verges,
 crows digging into road kill,
 men in ochre blankets and brass bangles stirring languorously
 as maidens clad in *isishweshwe*, lower bundles of wood from their heads,
 and tread lightly into a store...

There chickens peck from holes in grain bags,
 the heavy smell of sugar, tobacco, rawhide and calico
 settles into pinafores, cotton sheeting and scarves;
 outside the anti-meridian silver and lilac light
 escalades into the hot haze of a gold midday.

Where the *ikhamanga* like tattered plumes
 line the *Lusikisiki* road and wild hollyhocks grow,
 a bare-back horseman
 in a tattered trench coat, with a whip in hand
 heaves past smoky huts startling maidens
 in beaded skirts that flash white, aqua, indigo
 as fast beat their naked feet dancing through the dust.

Always in your dreams...the lifting mist, the sounding sea,
 and the echoing laughter of Xhosa women
 who smoke long pipes, and gaze at the cattle standing
 still as stone at the ocean's edge...

Back in the insensate world, bleak and sanitary,
 you sink deeper into darkness...
 the soft storm of a Transkei morn
 has left its imprint upon your soul...
 its fallen sleet lies thick upon your lids,
 folding them closed...
 Your spirit ascends.

The rain in Aliwal North begins a three-day fall
 your benedictions descend upon the living...
 Forever they'll pay homage to *Dalibhunga*.



Source: This photo is used with the permission of the author and photographer, Patricia G. Maritz

FIGURE 1: 'Infirmmary: Another prison... another island'

Read online:



Scan this QR
 code with your
 smart phone or
 mobile device
 to read online.

Author: Patricia G. Maritz¹

Affiliation: ¹Department of Philosophy, University of Zululand, South Africa

Correspondence to: Patricia Maritz

Email: patricia.maritz@gmail.com

Postal address: Private Bag X1001, KwaDlangezwa 3886, South Africa

How to cite this article: Maritz, P., 2015, 'Nelson Mandela – Madiba, 'Infirmmary: Another prison... another island', *Literator* 36(1), Art. #1133, 1 page. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/lit.v36i1.1133>

Copyright: © 2015. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS OpenJournals. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.