

Poems from different cultures

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Several of the poems from different cultures seem to be encouraging people to discover their true selves and their place in society. Love after Love, Hurricane hits England and Search for my Tongue are among those poems. These poems written by different poets encourage people to discover their true selves and their place in society by using many techniques such as interesting word and phrase selection (language), thoughtful imagery to convey messages, using descriptions focussing on sounds and using structure to create an effect.

Also, the poets use their own cultural experiences to convey their message especially Hurricane hits England and Search for my Tongue. The three poems are all from different cultures and traditions therefore it is important to look at the cultural context of the poems. Love after Love is a poem wrote by Derek Walcott, much of Walcott's work has explored issues of Caribbean cultural identity. He has remarked, 'The process of poetry is one of excavation and self- discovery'. Hurricane hits England is a poem written by the Caribbean born writer Grace Nichols, who moved to England in the 1970s and now lives in the coast of Sussex.

In 1987, the southern coast of England was hit by hurricane winds, these hurricane winds were rarely experienced in England, in the Caribbean, on the other hand, hurricanes are a regular occurrence and had been part of Grace Nichols' childhood. Concerning the 1987 English hurricane, the poet felt that the voices of the old gods were in the wind, specifically within the Sussex, in fact, for the first time she sensed a closeness to the English landscape like never before, and felt that the Caribbean had come to England.

She now feels at home both in Guyana and in England. Search for my Tongue is a poem written by Sujata Bhatt. The poet was born in Gujarat, India, where her 'mother tongue' or native language was Gujarati. Later, her family lived for some years in the United States, where she learnt English although she now lives in Germany. She wrote Search for my Tongue at a time when she was beginning to worry that she might lose her original language. She has always thought of herself as being an Indian who is outside India.

Her mother tongue is, for her, an important link to her family and to her childhood. It is the deepest layer of her identity, she has claimed. The poets use language in their poems to encourage people to discover their true selves and their place in society. Love after love is a poem written in the second person, as if the poet is addressing the reader directly. Writing to 'you' rather than talking about 'me' gives the impression that the poet is offering advice to everyone.

The poem is full of imperative verbs or commands: 'sit' (lines 6 and 15), 'Eat' (line 6), 'give' (line 8), 'Take' (line 12), 'Peel' (line 14) and 'Feast' (line 15). Derek Walcott is encouraging every reader to go through this process of self discovery, to 'feast' on the opportunities that one's real self can enjoy, and to 'sit' and feel comfortable with it. Hurricane Hits England varies its style of language, the first stanza is in the third person whereas the second stanza is in the first person when we 'hear' the woman's voice.

There are some contradictions in the poem. For example, the woman says that the wind is both 'fearful and reassuring' (line 7), and, at first sight, these two words do not seem to make sense together in what could be called a

paradox. This contradiction may be demonstrating that the woman, too, is unsure what her feelings are towards the hurricane, her thoughts are also contradictory. The woman asks many questions between lines 13 and 27, in each of these four questions, the poet is trying to make sense of what is happening.

The exclamations towards the end help us to understand how the woman is feeling and contribute to the tone of the poem. She becomes excited, even ecstatic, at the power of the storm and the thoughts it arouses within her, 'O why is my heart unchained? ', (line 27). Questions asked in lines 13 to 27 are answered in the final lines, 'Come to let me know. That the earth is the earth is the earth'. The poet means that she finally feels at home in England, and that wherever you may find yourself on this planet, you will eventually find peace with your place in society.

Search for my tongue uses the word 'tongue' for many different meanings. The poet, Sujata Bhatt, plays with these different meanings. For example, she imagines that knowing two languages is like having 'two tongues in your mouth' (line 4) and speaks of her original language as being her 'mother tongue' (line 5). The poem begins colloquially, using everyday language, but then develops to employing striking imagery and language. The poem begins by appearing to answer a question- 'You ask me what I mean... ' (line 1). If you are replying to a question someone has posed, you would use natural speech.

However, if you really want to get your message across, you should turn the question back on the questioner- 'I ask you, what would you do... ' (line 3).

The poet uses 'shock tactics' or such striking images to do that. It could be said that if the poem says more or less the same thing twice in two languages, then it might just as well be written in only one language. However, the whole point of the poem would then be lost. The same thing being said in two languages is the key, the poet has 'two tongues' and she doesn't want to lose one of them.

Imaginative imagery is used in all three of the poems to encourage people to discover their true selves and their place in society. In *Love after Love* the poet uses images of feasting throughout the poem. This is because a meal, especially an intimate one between two people, is an important form of social interaction in which people can get to know each other. Therefore it is natural that the dining room scenario is used for getting to know your true self. This is a very happy poem and presents a particularly positive image of the later years in life, portraying them not as a time of loss, but one of fulfilment and recovery.

In *Search for my tongue* the poet uses the imagery of comparing her tongue with a plant as she develops her ideas. She compares it by using an extended metaphor. You can almost imagine the 'plant', first in decline, then growing again. This image of the plant is successful because it includes contrasts. Some of the imagery is quite startling, for instance, when she imagines that the 'mother tongue' might 'rot and die in her mouth' (lines 12 and 13) as the second foreign language takes over.

The lost tongue grows back at night when she dreams in Gujarati, like a plant that appears to have died, but then starts to bud and grow strong again,

producing beautiful blossoms. Hurricane Hits England is full of natural imagery, mainly because it is about the effect of the wind on the landscape. For example, 'trees/ falling heavy as whales' (line 23-24) is effective because the huge trees become like floating sea creatures when the torrential rain that accompanies the hurricane makes the land become almost like sea.

There is also a lot of symbolism wrapped up in the imagery, 'Come to break the frozen lake in me' (line 33). This may indicate that the poet has been 'frozen' by being away from her own country, so that the arrival of the hurricane can help to 'break the ice' and allow her to live more comfortably in her new home country. The poets use descriptions focussing on sounds to encourage people to discover their true selves and their place in society. In Love after Love repetition is the device used by the poet in this poem as a sound effect.

He repeats some words, or variations of them- 'mirror' (lines 4 and 14), 'stranger' (line 7 and 9). 'love'/ 'loved'/ 'love-letters' (lines 7/9/12) and 'life' (lines 10 and 15). This is the poet's way of emphasising the main stages of the self-discovery process. Hurricane Hits England varies the way it sounds, the first stanza is in the third person whereas the second stanza is in the first person when we 'hear' the woman's voice. All three poems have their own specific structure, the structures of the poems are organised in orders of ideas in the poem and how they develop.

In Love after Love the stanza form is irregular, but most lines are loosely iambic. This means that there is one short unstressed syllable followed by one long stressed syllable. Some of the lines are also quite regular

tetrameter- for example, lines 8 and 13. The poem is split into four small sized stanzas whereas Search for my tongue is split into three large stanzas. In the first stanza she tells us how hard it is for her to know two languages and how she has neglected the one she feels most belongs to her. In the second stanza she explains these ideas in Gujarati.

In the final stanza she then translates her thoughts for us into English, lines 31-39 meaning something similar to lines 17-30, showing that although her 'mother tongue' (line 38) dies during the day, it 'grows back' (line 31) in her dreams at night, becoming strong and producing 'blossoms' (line 39). Of all these three poems Hurricane Hits England is the largest. The poem is written in eight stanzas of varying lengths. The lines themselves are also of varying lengths. This irregularity helps us to see how unpredictable the hurricane is, and how unpredictable the woman's thoughts are.

The first stanza of the poem is in the third person, as the reader is introduced to the woman, but the majority of it is written in the 1st person. Love after Love, Search for my tongue and Hurricane Hits England are three poems from Different Cultures which encourage people to discover their true selves and their place in society. The poets who wrote the poems do this by, the poetic devices they use, significant use of language and imagery and significant use of style and structure. All of these ideas and style are influenced by the poets' cultural backgrounds.