

ENGLISH FLAMINGO POETRY

AUNT JENNIFER'S TIGER - ADRIENNE RICH

"Aunt Jennifer's Tiger" is a poignant and thought-provoking poem written by Adrienne Rich. Published in 1951, the poem explores the themes of gender roles, oppression, and the struggle for individuality within the context of a patriarchal society. It tells the story of Aunt Jennifer, a woman who expresses her inner strength and desires through her art while feeling confined and oppressed in her real-life marriage.

The poem begins with a vivid description of Aunt Jennifer's creation: a tapestry featuring a majestic tiger. The tiger symbolizes strength, power, and freedom - characteristics that Aunt Jennifer likely desires but feels unable to embody in her own life due to societal expectations and the constraints of her marriage.

Aunt Jennifer's situation becomes evident as the poem progresses. The phrase "massive weight of Uncle's wedding band" implies the burden of her marriage and the domination of her husband. The imagery of the "fearful symmetry" of the tiger's creation contrasts with the lack of symmetry and freedom in Aunt Jennifer's own life, emphasizing the stark contrast between her artistic expression and her constrained reality.

The poet uses the symbolism of the "topaz denizens of a world of green" to portray Aunt Jennifer's longing for a world that contrasts with the oppressive reality she faces. The "bright topaz" suggests a desire for brilliance and vibrancy, something she wishes to experience but feels confined from achieving.

The contrast between Aunt Jennifer's "terrified hands" and the "proud and unafraid" tiger further underscores the theme of female oppression. Her fear and vulnerability represent the lack of agency and power that many women experienced in patriarchal societies, while the tiger embodies the spirit of independence and assertiveness that society often denies them.

In the final stanza, the poet reflects on the mortality of Aunt Jennifer and the permanence of her creation. The phrase "still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by" highlights the enduring impact of societal pressures and the constraints she endured throughout her life. Despite her

AN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM IN A SLUM- STEPHEN SPENDER

"An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum" is a powerful and socially conscious poem written by Stephen Spender that sheds light on the harsh realities of poverty and its impact on the education of children in slum areas. The poem, published in 1964, paints a vivid picture of the stark contrast between the dreary environment of the slum and the hopeful innocence of the young children striving to learn.

The poem begins with a vivid description of the slum classroom, where the "dull air" and "damp" walls create a somber atmosphere. The physical setting reflects the impoverished conditions in which the children are forced to learn, highlighting the lack of basic amenities and the challenges they face in pursuing education.

Spender portrays the children as both physically and emotionally deprived. Their "eyes live in a dream" suggests a sense of detachment from their grim reality, perhaps as a coping mechanism to escape the harshness of their surroundings. The "moon" that they imagine is a symbol of hope and aspiration, showing that despite their circumstances, the children yearn for a better life and a brighter future.

The poem also addresses the role of the teacher, who is depicted as weary and exhausted, perhaps burdened by the weight of the students' difficult circumstances. The phrase "to the waste of daylight" implies a sense of resignation, as if the teacher feels that their efforts are in vain due to the limitations imposed by poverty and societal neglect.

Throughout the poem, Spender critiques the indifference of the society towards the plight of these underprivileged children. The use of the word "waste" to describe the children's potential and their lives suggests a sense of society squandering their opportunities and potential by neglecting their education and well-being.

The poem ends on a poignant note, with the repetition of the phrase "A chalky stick angel" that the children have drawn on the "black board." The angel, a symbol of purity and hope, juxtaposed with the chalky and blackboard environment, highlights the resilience and creativity of the children even in the most adverse conditions. It serves as a powerful reminder of the untapped potential and innocence of these young minds, despite the neglect and deprivation they face.