

## **AN ABANDONED BUNDLE (by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali)**

The morning mist  
and chimney smoke  
of White City Jabavu  
flowed thick yellow  
as pus oozing  
from a gigantic sore.

It smothered our little houses  
like fish caught in a net.

Scavenging dogs  
draped in red bandanas of blood  
fought fiercely  
for a squirming bundle.

I threw a brick;  
they bared fangs  
licked velvet tongues of scarlet  
and scurried away,  
leaving a mutilated corpse—  
an infant dumped on a rubbish heap—  
'Oh! Baby in the Manger  
sleep well  
on human dung.'

Its mother  
had melted into the rays of the rising sun,  
her face glittering with innocence  
her heart pure as untrampled dew.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This poem was written by Oswald M Mtshali, a South African poet born in 1940, and it criticises a morally decayed society living at the White City Jabavu – a black suburb of Johannesburg. The poet shows a mother who gives birth but drapes the infant in red bandanas (neckerchiefs/scarves) and throws it in the rubbish heap (an abandoned bundle). Taking advantage of the morning mist and smoke the mother leaves the scene feeling innocent. The dogs start eating the baby as the persona finds them and feeling sorry for the baby he throws a stone to scare the dogs.



### **THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

#### **MORAL DECAY**

The poet pictures a society in which there is no sense of humanity. The mother in the poem has lost her sense of humanity and she dares drape her own baby inside the bandanas making a bundle that she throws in the rubbish heap. The moral decay is shown by the irony that the poet postpones until the last stanza so that it may come as a surprise to us. It is insensible to think that a woman who has thrown her baby to be eaten by the scavenging dogs would leave the spot with:

*her face glittering with innocence  
her heart pure as untrampled dew*

This shows how rotten the society is and perhaps she is used of doing this that is why it comes as no surprise to her. While the readers and the persona feel sympathetic of the whole issue it is surprising to note that the mother has no that feeling.

#### **IRRESPONSIBILITY**

# Abandoned Bundle Poem Notes

**Robin Malan**



## **Abandoned Bundle Poem Notes:**

**New Poetry Works** Robin Malan, 2007      **Notes and Queries: a Medium of Inter-communication for Literary Men, Artists, Antiquaries, Genealogists, Etc**, 1889      **Soweto Poetry** Michael J. F. Chapman, 1982      **South Africa in Question** John Lonsdale, 1988 Each Grade includes a colourful Workbook Grades 1 to 3 or Pupils Book Grade 4 to 6 using familiar examples from daily Jamaican life Each book is supported by a Teacher's Guide      Chicorel Index to Poetry in Anthologies and Collections in Print Marietta Chicorel, 1974      Notes and Queries, 1882      **Chicorel Index to Poetry in Anthologies and Collections in Print: A-Ex** Marietta Chicorel, 1974      **Notes and Queries** William John Thoms, 1881  
A Vision of Order Ursula A. Barnett, 1983      *Ekiadolor Journal of Education*, 2002      *Poems of Robert Browning from the Author's Rev. Text of 1889* Robert Browning, 1896      Poems of Robert Browning Robert Browning, 1896      **The Magazine of Poetry and Literary Review**, 1892      **The Lion on the Freeway** Theodore F. Sheckels, 1996

**Contemporary Poets** Tracy Chevalier, 1991 Contains biographical entries a list of separately published books and an essay on each poet      **Unisa English Studies** University of South Africa. Department of English, 1978      **The History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church** John Lingard, 1845      **The History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church, Containing an Account of Its Origin, Government, Doctrines, Worship, Revenues, and Clerical and Monastic Institutions. [Third Edition.]** John LINGARD (D.D.), 1845      *The Rienner Anthology of African Literature* Anthonia C. Kalu, 2007 This excellent anthology is to be welcomed both for the excellence of its material and for the fact that it will fill a growing need I congratulate Anthonia Kalu and all whose work is in the volume for their contributions Dennis Brutus University of Pittsburgh and University of KwaZulu Natal Dr Kalu has assembled the best of the oral and written traditions of African literature into an anthology comprehensive in scope The Rienner Anthology is great news for African literature and a boon to literature lovers Tanure Ojaide University of North Carolina at Charlotte Hongera to Professor Kalu and the publisher for accomplishing the important task of making African literature more accessible to more people This very good and wide ranging collection brings together a valuable sampling of classic African works It occupies a uniquely definitive position in the field Simon Lewis College of Charleston Ranging from ancient cultures to the present century from Africa's rich oral traditions to its contemporary fiction poetry and drama this long awaited comprehensive anthology reflects the enduring themes of African literature The selections drawn from the length and breadth of the continent reveal the richness of African creativity Readers will find myths and epics works by such well known figures as Chinua Achebe Miriama Ba Bessie Head Tayeb Salih Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o and fiction and poetry by myriad new writers The pieces are organized chronologically within geographic region and enhanced by both introductory material and biographical notes on each writer An author title index and suggestions for further reading are also included Anthonia C Kalu is professor of black studies at the University of Northern Colorado Her numerous publications on African literature include Women

Literature and Development in Africa and she is also author of a collection of short stories Broken Lives and Other Stories and a novel in progress      **Nayi Kavita** Ludmila L. Rosenstein, 2004 A book that showcases experimentalism in modern Hindi poetry

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