

'Visiting Hour'
by Norman McCaig

The hospital smell
combs my nostrils
as they go bobbing along
green and yellow corridors.

What seems a corpse
is trundled into a lift and vanishes
heavenward.

I will not feel, I will not
feel, until
I have to.

Nurses walk lightly, swiftly,
here and up and down and there,
their slender waists miraculously
carrying their burden
of so much pain, so
many deaths, their eyes
still clear after
so many farewells.

Ward 7. She lies
in a white cave of forgetfulness.
A withered hand
trembles on its stalk. Eyes move
behind eyelids too heavy
to raise. Into an arm wasted
of colour a glass fang is fixed,
not guzzling but giving.

And between her and me
distance shrinks till there is none left
but the distance of pain that neither she nor I
can cross.

She smiles a little at this
black figure in her white cave
who clumsily rises
in the round swimming waves of a bell
and dizzily goes off, growing fainter,
not smaller, leaving behind only
books that will not be read
and fruitless fruits.

Word choice

Metaphor

Syntax

Synecdoche

Contrast

Repetition

Caesura

Oxymoron

Paradox

Alliteration

Enjambment

Norman MacCaig

“All I write about is what's happened to me and to people I know, and the better I know them, the more likely they are to be written about.”

Summary:

MacCaig is one of Scotland's most celebrated and critically acclaimed poets. He was born in Edinburgh on 1910 and died in 1996. He believes that despite terrible suffering, the **human spirit can somehow rise above the terrible things that happen to it**. He is very aware of a world in which beauty and horror can exist side by side. He has a great ability to make us see **things/people/places/ideas from a different perspective** through his poetry and he often gets us to

ask questions that challenge our accepted ideas/viewpoint.