

**Domanda**  
**For Margaret Rosabel Mezzabotta**

Untimely, premature your exit  
to an unknown region.  
The soul, I remember this morning,  
needs the slow maturation of wine.  
If hastily uncorked or poured  
wine suffers bottle shock.  
You would have been able to verify  
this for me: it is a reference  
to the Egyptian Book of the Dead.  
But to comprehend your death  
is a hieroglyphic undecodable  
in a dark impassable alley way.  
Death reverses the order of words,  
it makes us look back, remember, even  
seize small moments of chance—  
like me cleaning your glasses once,  
discussing dark symbols with you.  
For this funeral oration, rather, declamation,  
as a poet I am completely unprepared,  
no, undeclared, undeserved...  
The so-called consolatio or comfort  
of a medium (Look, she sends you a rose)  
or the flickering of a candle,  
undoes nothing. What does “passing away”  
mean? That you had to leave – in my book  
anyway – far too rapidly  
for heaven? That your soul was forced out  
seemingly without warning? That roses fade,  
candles cease to flicker...  
Still I wanted to ask:  
“Who scratched out Nefertiti’s one eye  
so that she was blinded on the other side?”

Joan Hambidge (*University of Cape Town*)