**Giuseppe- Roderick Ford**

Giuseppe is a poem about what makes us human, the desperation of war and a story of collective guilt. It blends historical realism with a fairy tale element to explore the darkest corners of human behaviour.

**Roderick Ford**

Ford was born in Wales, and throughout his life has been a traveller having grown up in Australia and England, and lived in many cities across the world including in Holland, Italy and Sweden, and has lived in Ireland for the last fifteen years. He is on the autistic spectrum, and this has had a large influence on the subjects he has written on due to his personal experiences of feeling like an outsider. Some readers may interpret the inclusion of the mermaid in ‘Giuseppe’ as linking to this due to the similarities and differences between her and the people.  
  
**Structure:**

The poem is written in free verse, which is fitting to it’s story-like qualities and fairy-tale subject. There is no specific rhythm or rhyme which makes the poem sound more like something that would be naturally spoken aloud in conversation, much like the narrators uncle tells him the story of the mermaid. This reinforces the idea of shame and secrecy, as if the narrator is telling you something not to be repeated. Ford also uses caesura to break up lines by pausing, making it seem as if the narrator is reluctant and worried to continue sharing his story. This is particularly notable for “She, it, had never” at the beginning of the second stanza, as this is when the darker elements of the story begin to unfold.

**Tone:**

The poem has a confessional tone that expresses it’s dark ideas. Lines like: “but couldn’t look me in the eye, for which I thank God” imply that the narrators uncle told him the story not to entertain, but to unburden himself from guilt. The use of coordinating conjunction “But” at the start of some lines hint that their reasoning for murder of the mermaid are excuses, and the community feels the collective guilt of her death.

**Themes:**

With dark ideas and suggestions running throughout, which transgress typical human boundaries as a result of the setting and situation of the time, transgressions of humans is a key theme. The murder of the mermaid embodies this.

Another theme is conflict. The way in which the war forces these inhuman acts is quite striking, emphasising the brutality of warfare.

The mermaid could also be symbolic of power. The men have power over the mermaid, which could symbolise traditional male power over women and also the way society maintains power over those who are different, imparting guilt and shame onto them, much like Ford’s autism which secluded him from society.