**Contributor: Tony Voss**

**Entry: Nortje, Arthur Kenneth (1942-1970)**

From the University of the Western Cape, Arthur Nortje left for Jesus College, Oxford, to which he returned after teaching for two years in Canada. Nortje died older than Keats, younger than Shelley.

Nortje has copiousness: all generated from the obsessive observation of self, his poetry shows great formal and thematic variety.Love and loneliness are powerfully and paradoxically intertwined. Exile is a central metaphor, both phenomenal and ontological. In apartheid South Africa ‘lack of belonging was the root of hurt’. The political ambiguity of his exile was sometimes unsettling: on departure from South Africa he was to become one ‘who belongs nowhere, is to nothing/deeply attached’.

Nortje writes of love, travel, the seasons, people in landscapes, history, world politics, popular culture. He offers a sharp critique of global capital, as in ‘The Organization’, and a number of poems suggest that his work should be included in any anthology of poems of the ‘American War’ (in Viet Nam). Perhaps the greatest claim for Nortje’s poetry can be made on the basis of the depth of its engagement with *poesis* itself, a commitment that began early and falteringly: but was life-long and obsessive.

**References and further reading**

Nortje, Arthur K. (2000) *Anatomy of Dark: Collected Poems of Arthur Nortje,* edited by Dirk Klopper, Pretoria: University of South Africa Press.