

## [Eveline Pye: Four Poems](#) [1]

February 5, 2014 [Featured Poetry](#) [2]

### **Welcome**

She delivers a welcome basket:  
reconstituted milk, cassava bread,  
sweet mangos packed in tissue,  
bitter lemons, dire warnings.

"Don't talk, and stand still  
for the National Anthem  
or you'll be PI'd  
on the next plane out.

Don't intervene  
if an instant justice mob  
beats up a thief or  
they'll batter you senseless.

Don't turn into Kaunda Square  
after six at night or  
soldiers on the post office roof  
will gun you down.

This was a lovely place,  
but my dear,  
be very careful or Zambia  
will be the death of you."

[PI'd: declared a "Prohibited Immigrant"]

### **Mbikusita**

The Royal Prince  
of the Lozi tribe  
was asked  
what surprised him  
most  
about London.

He sipped his tea,  
considered carefully,  
and said,

*I saw a white man drive a taxi.*



[3]

## Steppe Eagle

In the shadow of the volcano,  
fresh from the dark sands of Siberia,  
the brown steppe eagle circles and waits,  
watching for weakness, searching  
for carrion, leg feathers bristling,  
shoulders hunched like a hunting wolf.

Exultant, it swoops down  
on a yellow wagtail,  
barks like a crow as it revels  
in the taste of blood. I see  
the bright buttery feathers  
sticking to its wet tongue.

## Mosi-oa-Tunya

The last place for a waterfall, no mountains or valleys,  
horizons flat as summer seas, then from thirty miles,  
a white tower of spray punctures the blue sky.

Closer, you hear thunder, though there is no storm,  
see double rainbows, bright bridges across air,  
feel a welcome drizzle in searing, blistering heat.

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Published on Talking Writing (<https://talkingwriting.com>)

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Closer, you part a bush, stand on the edge of a chasm;  
the wide Zambesi glides forward, then plunges deep  
into a wound in the earth's crust, a break in basalt.

The ground trembles with shock, you shout but hear  
nothing except a raging roar as solid water  
explodes up in your face, blinds you, engulfs you.

Down in the Devil's Cataract, the river cuts frantic  
zigzags through deep gorges until it pours into a pool  
where a dead hippo bounces up like a rubber ball.

[*Mosi-oa-Tunya*: the Victoria Falls, translated as "Smoke that Thunders"]



[4]

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Eveline Pye lectured in statistics at Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland for more than twenty years. Before that, she worked as an operational research analyst in the Zambian copper industry. Her poems about Africa and mathematics have been widely published in literary magazines, newspapers, and anthologies in the U.K.

Her statistical poetry was featured in *Significance*, the joint magazine of the British Royal Statistical Society and the American Statistical Association, in September 2011 as part of its *Life in Statistics* series. A selection of her statistical poems appears in the [Bridges \(Enschede\) Anthology](#) [5], edited by Sarah Glaz (Tessellations Publishing, 2013).

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[5] [http://www.math.uconn.edu/~glaz/Bridges\\_2013\\_Poetry\\_Anthology/index.html](http://www.math.uconn.edu/~glaz/Bridges_2013_Poetry_Anthology/index.html)