

This document consists of two (2) parts:

Part A: Thesis

Part B: Portfolio

Part A: Thesis

**[iLahleko- Loss]**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts in Creative Writing**

of

Rhodes University

by

**Itumeleng Qhali**

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## *Intshayelelo*

My thesis is a collection of poems and prose that explores the disjunction of losses for women and children across the two languages I inhabit, isiXhosa and English. Ukulahlekelwa lithemba, ukudukelwa yingqondo, ukholo, ubuwena, umzimba nothando. For me, isiXhosa captures the innate musicality and deep emotions within a word or a sound that are not available in English. On the other hand, English readily produces visceral images that are more difficult for me to access in isiXhosa. Kolu phononongo ndikwasebenzisa namagama emboleko ukuze ndikhulise isigama. Ndisebenzisa amagama azibeka zinjalo iimvakalelo, angqalileyo kuncwadi lwesiXhosa. Ndisebenzisa zombini ilyric form kunye neprozi ngenxa yesingqi esiphuhliswa yilyric, nangenxa yenkululeko umbali ayifumanayo kwiprozi. As a bilingual writer ndifuthelwe sisingqi nobunzulu bentlungu obufumaneka in the translated and bilingual works of Isabella Motadinyane, noMarina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva, imibongo yeDaikwan eguqulwe nguStephen Watson ethi *Song of the Broken String*; iimbongi zespanish ezinjengo Antonia Machado; ngendlela abasebenzisa ngayo ulwimi lwabo ukunabisa nokugqithisa umyalezo ngeentlungu abadibana nazo, bakwanaso nesingqi somculo othuthuzelayo kwimibongo yabo. The structure of my thesis is inspired by the innovative mixed genre layout of Sindiswa Busuku-Mathese's *Loud and Yellow Laughter*, and the new formats of isiXhosa writing presented in Mthunzikazi Mbugwana's poetry. My work has also been shaped by the visceral imagery and briefly captured moments of loss in imisebenzi ka S.S Mema, Nontsizi Mgqwetho, noPascale Petit, novangile gantsho. Imisebenzi yabo ikuzobela umfanekiso ngqondweni ophilayo. Bonke abababhali bahambe indlela endinika umdla nendifuna ukuyihamba nam njengombhali omtsha obhala ngeelwimi ezimbini.

## **Abstract**

My thesis is a collection of poems and prose that explores the disjunction of losses for women and children across the two languages I inhabit, isiXhosa and English. For me, isiXhosa captures the innate musicality and deep emotions within a word or a sound that are not available to me in English. On the other hand, English readily produces visceral images that are more difficult for me to find in isiXhosa. My poems use the music and introspection of the lyric form, as well as the emotional outpouring that prose poetry allows. As a bilingual writer, I am influenced by the transference of musicality and gravity of loss conveyed in the translated and bilingual work of Isabella Motadinyane, the Russian Marina Tsvetaeva, Stephen Watson's *Song of the Broken String*, as well as the Spanish poets Antonio Machado. The structure of my thesis is inspired by the innovative mixed genre layout of Sindiswa Busuku-Mathese's *Loud and Yellow Laughter*, and the new formats of isiXhosa writing presented in Mthunzikazi Mbugwana's poetry. My work has also been shaped by the visceral imagery and briefly captured moments of loss in the work of South African poets vangile gantsho, S.S. Mema, and Nontsizi Mgqwetho, as well as the English poet, Pascale Petit.

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*Ulwimi: a tongue*  
*Ulwimi: a language*  
*Ulwimi: a lie*

\*\*\*

*I have had many tongues inside my mouth*

*Many tongues dying in my mouth*  
*Many tongues growing in my mouth*

**October 28, 2019 (a.s)** - Dear S, there is a well

You built me a house there. Our first home

I can't see its face. like my name. it is an echo.

There is a well inside me without water. It hurts  
when I listen.

There are voices but I cannot hear yours in them.

I only know that it is there too

and there I know your face is soil.

I don't need to hold it.

At night I feel you hold me in our bed.

I think you stay overnight to keep me here.

**January 17, 1994 - The Pregnant Tree in Our Village**

Kwilali yaseTsolobeng phesheya kweTina river  
there is an empty house built upon the bones of a queen  
- Mamorena – they called her  
She birthed six kings - one died on her back  
three months old - and where he died  
a pregnant tree pushed out  
right from the centre of her back  
Hunched like this she walked  
a tall Sesotho creature - Mamorena -  
Covered in yellow snake's skin  
with a towering brown tree on her back  
Since her mate disappeared into the ground  
they say the men in her village dare not look into her blue  
eyes  
They all heard of the one who drowned in her  
But I did - I grew up going into her  
never wanting to come out

Sun  
above  
allows the dogs  
beyond the gate  
She allows them to feast  
on bones to break  
through skin  
to tear

Qamata  
has mercy they say  
that is when She cuts bodies open  
to let you out

Le yinceba ka Qamata

**July 14, 2011 - A Dying**

Sssssh            he says.

His green tongue licks the cold off my face.

You fucking make a sound and this knife will fuck you before I do

I do as he says.

Not because of the knife walking my throat

my daughter is sleeping in her bedroom            Less than 6 steps.

I can hear her breathing.

I plead silently    God    deafen this monster, so he doesn't hear my girl.

I hear her.

Her chest moving up and down.

My eyes shut.

Her breath dancing in and out.

I focus on this.

I focus on her.

For a moment I can forget the face on top of me.

For a moment I am not in this moment.

He licks my eyes open.            He whispers

God is quiet.

The man is pushing me into my bed.

I don't fight him.

I cannot fight him.    My daughter.

I want to sink.

I want to drown            but the mattress            it's fighting him.

A small cry slips out            I have been crying for a while.

Saliva down my mouth            this is real.

He is real.

This is fear.

I want to fight back            my daughter's face tells me not to.

She is inside my eyes.

He bends            his heavy long upper body            over my small frame.

He comes back up with a red brick.

My eyes open.            I recognise the brick:

I have a pile of bricks outside –

I was going to finish building the wall.

It's my fault. This nightmare is my fault.

How did he get inside my house without me hearing?

He had to break something.

Did I not lock the sliding door?

No! I did. I did?

Does he have a key?

Does this person know me?

The brick. Why is he holding a brick above my face?

Is he going to kill me?

If he wants to kill me he has a knife.

Why is he not stabbing me?

Why is he holding a brick above me?

He answers

a kettle boiling in my ears.

Loud.

Hot.

This is pain.

Its dark

he comes back at me again with the brick.

I'm out. I'm in. I'm out.

Blood is lava in my mouth.

A thick ooze in between my teeth.

I am choking on my blood.

I can't cough. But I do. A little.

I will wake her up.

So I swallow.

Blood is running down my face.

Blood is pouring.

I want to cough.

This is panic.

He puts the brick down on the empty side of the bed. Gently.

He is delicate with it.

Settles it down beside me, a lover for later.

I am out. I am in.

God please save me.

The man on top of me, grunting, pulls his penis out of his pants.

A breathing snake falls onto my stomach.

God is quiet.

He hits me with it. His penis.

I want to ask him to take everything.

Everything I no longer care about.

But I don't move.

I don't speak.  
God is quiet.

This is helplessness.

He picks up the knife from beside the brick.  
He slides the blade down from my neck                      his legs  
straddled across me.  
I didn't realize how close it was.  
I could have killed him. Maybe.

The snake is getting stronger.  
Has been waiting  
on my stomach.  
The snake is moving on top of me.  
A hard snake is on top of me.

The knife moves up and down my ribs.  
I think the knife cums. I'm not sure.  
The knife smiles. Tries to cut my gown.  
My gown fights back.

God

My stupid gown makes him mad.  
I beg my gown not to provoke him.  
Please.                      I'm sorry.  
He thinks I am talking to him.  
This makes him hard on top of my stomach again.

This is darkness.

I am not afraid of the knife.  
I am not afraid of dying.  
I am afraid of waking my daughter.  
I am afraid she will know I am in the danger  
the way she knows when I need a hug.  
I am afraid of leaving my child                      in this place.  
I need to lie still now.

This is fear.

He is maggots worming his tongue inside my mouth.  
Soiling my bed.  
My stink mixed with his stink.  
Shit and urine mix move                      slowly under me,  
move slowly towards him.  
He feels it all.

I am angry at myself.

I know what is coming  
a thousand bricks on my head.  
Crashing bricks inside my head.  
I don't move.

A burning ocean inside me.

I don't move.

This is fire.

This man wants me dead.  
An angry brick against my head.  
My daughter. A brick breaks against me.  
God, where are you? I am all she has.

My daughter. I can hear her voice.  
I can hear her.  
What is she doing?  
Wake up mama!  
She is not here.  
I am alone. No one will save me.

I am sorry bhuti

He smiles with his yellow teeth.  
I can smell the plaque and blood and death in his mouth.  
My eyes are crying  
crying will not save us.  
He stretches my legs as far apart as they will allow.  
I concede.  
He pushes inside me.  
Penis, in my lungs,  
Penis, in my fingertips.

This is dying.

Cima isibane  
hamba nemela  
xhaxha  
nokuba yintoni eshukumayo ebumnyameni  
ingakumbi umntana  
nomfazi umbulala kanje ke umama.

**June 16, 1994** - Witnesses zomfazi omnyama

Tata's hands are too small to hold umama  
so, he slices her up  
to try make her fit  
he cannot have   umfazi  
bigger than him  
living in his house

Every night  
tata dilutes his blood nomchamo wabelungu  
it tastes better than his own  
trying to quieten the dead ones living inside him  
but the smell of death will not leave his bones  
and her scent makes him stink  
in his own home

Mama's bones cry  
to try put utata to sleep  
only her blood       dripping  
lulls him

I am not allowed  
to swim in mama's blood    anymore  
but I am allowed to watch her clean it up  
I am allowed to help her pull him up too  
I am also allowed to wash ibhakethi  
after she offers her blood to the soil

The moon and I became friends  
as the only witnesses  
of how umama plays dead  
then trades her blood for more time

**September 18, 1996** - Intloko ekhaya

Kuxhwithwana ngomoya  
kuphefumlwa unxunguphalo  
kuphithana izibilini  
kumbhakraza iintliziyo  
kubhidlika iindonga  
kubila iinyembezi  
kunxakama imfuyo  
ufikile utata.

**December 22, 2004 - Sula**

Ukhule kwilokishi ezele iimela  
kwindlu egcweleyo  
ekhonkothwa ngoomalume noomakazi  
besogquma ingxolo yezithunzi zabo

Ukhule evuswa ziinyembezi zikamama  
zilephuza kumthombo wentlungu

Ukhule kusithiwa sula!  
sula ezo nyembezi  
zixhonywe nguyihlo  
wena sula unyoko!

Ukhule ethuthuzelwa yimela emini noTupac ebusuku  
ephupha elahleka elandlwe  
avuke ediniwe           ibhedi imanzi athukwe!

Ukhule ezondwa ngumhlaba umzondela izono zikayise

wanyuka intaba

Ubhut'Sula  
kusithiwa uya kubuya eyindoda  
sitsho silibale ngotata

**August 30, 1998 - Isiporho**

Kuthwayiza isiporho kumzimba kamama

Siphiliswa ngamazwi katata

Sifika siwakhangele

Sakuwabhaqa siliqika izinkewe

Siwabimbilize Siwaginye

Sinambithe

Setyise

Sibhodle

Sityityimbe

Sityekeze!

**July 22, 1990 - Phantsi komzimba womenyi**

Under your body I went in with hope  
I was greeted by your fears   ndizikhangelwa  
I threw away umbilini       ndakuthuthuzela  
ngomonde                    I became your garden  
ndakwanga                   ndaphelelwa yincindi  
I closed my eyes            watsho waqhama  
wachuma                    watyityimba  
ngesibindi                  you ate away my dignity  
ngobukhali                  wanqunqa ithemba lam  
you stole all light         wahlohla ubusuku kwesisiqu  
wandingwaba phantsi kwamathambo akho

**August 30, 2016** - Ityhefu endala

Black snake                   planted by ngkono  
wahlohla umzimba wakho ityhefu  
phuma phants' kwebhedi  
kudala uzisongile  
when will your bones ache?  
Poqa amehlo  
yolula umqolo  
shed your skin  
vutha  
qhuma  
tsicela  
le ndoda  
ephez' kwamathambo am.

**October 11, 2005 – Amahlathi**

uMama never talked to me about the forest  
of how nobody should enter it when it is dry  
of how I was allowed to go into it alone  
The women in my family never spoke about the forest  
nor did their mothers before them  
They all tip-toed around it  
ikhekhe                    igwinya  
ikuku                      isheleni  
inkomo                    unontombi  
unosisi                    unodese  
ingqadi                    ibhuzinana  
inyo                        ibhentse  
They called it every name but mine  
itshophi                   iduntsuntsu  
igrodzodzo                igwava  
ipunani                    isinene  
iphum-phum                ingquza  
inkomo yekhaya          iqhayiya lelali  
Now that I am older, I understand  
Women in my country bangamahlathi

**August 16, 2006 - Izilwanyana**

Sonke sizizilwanyana  
Ndaphuma ndimncinci ekhaya  
Ndihamba ndikhangela  
Ndade ndabhaqwa  
Zandiqwenga isizwe sibukele.

- Ndiphikise!
- Ndingunokhontoni.
- Ubuso bam.
- Zizinja.

**August 17, 2006 -**

Umlomo wam ubomvu okwegazi

Ubuso bucwengile okomlambo waseTsolobeng

Amehlo am antsokothile

Imisebe ihleli ijonge ilanga

Isinqe sincinci okonodoli

Iimpundu zijuliwe okwembovane

Abafana balelali bhuuu        emveni kwam

Ndisis'khebereshe

inja yomoya

isilonda sobusuku

Bhuti ndiyintoni kuwe?

**February, 2011 (b.s) - Dear P, Your tongue**

I want you in my mouth  
I want your face inside my mouth  
I want to shove you down my throat  
to meet you with my tongue  
I don't want you to speak outside me  
I want to swallow you  
Ndilandele ulwimi lwakho

**Okthoba 22, 2013 (b.s)** - P, Ukulala nawe

Xa undikhwela

ndirhaxwa ngumphefumlo

Ugqobhoza ngentsimbi ebomvu

kungcangcazele isibeleko

Xa ugrumba lomhlaba

kwanda isilonda

Ndililahle elivuthayo

elibhijele isinqe sakho

Umphefumlo uyabhadula phants' komzimba wakho

isilonda siyabhidla

Siyavakala

simnandi?

**Februari 12, 2012 (b.s) - P, Ijezi yakho**

Ndikhumbula ukudibana kwethu kwaxoka ijezi yakho.  
Wawunxibe ijezi enoboya enombala obomvu naluhlaza ihonjiswe ngeziqhamo esifubeni.  
Ndatsalwa ngumbono wendoda emnyama enxibe igadi ngoLwesihlanu!

Lo jezi yandikhumbuza isitiya sikamakhulu esasivala isikhewu.  
Ndagxotha iinkwenkwezi ezazindikhusela ndakulandela ndayokungena kweyakho igadi.

Wena wawunale minyaka endandiyileqa, unobuso bakhe – utata.  
Wawundinyumbaza ngobuxoki, undikhuthaza ngamehlo ajonge mna kuphele, njengaye.  
Mna ndandinomzimba omhle. Imilenze iyigolide ebunjiweyo.  
Amabele eziziqhamo ezivuthiweyo. Umlomo uyipesika evuthiweyo.

Ingqondo ziqhunyiwe, imizimba inxilile, zabaleka izibane.  
Omnye nomye ekhangela into eyalahleka nobusuku.  
Wandikhulala ngobunono  
uncendiswa nguNina Simone kula vayinili yakho.

Wandilenca umqala kwavuka iinwele emqolo.  
Walenca icici lesibhono kwafudumala inkwali ezinyaweni.  
Lwathi ulwimi lwakho xa lusiya emazantsi, ndaxhuma, ndema ngenyawo, ndanqanda.

Ndandisoyika izinto owawuza kuzibhaqa.  
wandihlangabeza ngeminwe eyayithuthuzela imilebe,  
yangena.  
kwaqhuma igazi ndavuzwa.

Wandifundisa ukuvuza ndingafuni, wandifundisa ukubamba ubusuku esifubeni.  
ndathi ndakujongana nomnyango, isandla sibumbe ig-string emnyama  
kwathi qatha laa... jezi.

*Daughter*

*your eyes have resurrected dead soldiers in my spine*

*your breath has loosened bitter chains around my lungs*

*You have eaten a heaviness in me  
that I pray you will never taste*

\*\*\*

**2 April, 2013 (b.s)** - Dear P, don't wake me up

You wake me up at night in your bed,  
sweating. Annoyed that I am pouring water.  
You do not know the damage you do: I am a  
whale, swimming alone. Inside the waters I  
hear a song. Faint. But I know it. I swim  
towards the song. When I reach the faces of  
the song, I hear a child crying on the shore. I  
know it is my child. I am swimming towards  
the child in my belly. When I reach the shore  
and lift my head  
you wake me up.

**September 16, 2013** - Ndiyinga elangeni

Qho ngentseni  
ndivuka ndiyinga elangeni  
ezinzulwini zobusuku ndibizwa ngumlambo.

Ndilandela ingoma  
eculwa yinyanga  
phezu kwesiziba esiphilayo.

Imithi ilephuza umoya woxolo  
ingca ifumile  
iintaka zilele  
kuvakala iphunga elizolileyo.

Iinyawo zam zindikhokhelela phambili  
ndiya nditshona emanzini  
ndizifumana ndikwilizwe loomama abahamba emoyeni  
phezu komhlaba obomvu  
iingwevukazi zicula ingoma enyangayo:  
Lephuting  
Lekholokoe  
Lekotsoana.

Umlilo uxhentsa kuvuthe isibhakabhaka  
umoya wanga impepho ephilisayo  
ephulula umphefumlo  
inkabi yenkomo ezolileyo ihleli phantsi komthi  
indilindile.

Qho ngentseni  
ndivuka ndiyinga elangeni.

**August 21, 2014 - Isandla soMprofetikazi**

Umqolo ebhedini

kunyuka isandla

sikrazula uphahla

sigqobhozela kwisibhakabhaka

sibumba iqela leenkwenkwezi

Sihla okwenkosazana encinci

ezithoba kwiinkosi ezindala

zithule zibukele

Isandla soMprofetikazi

sifika sigwalise iinkwenkwezi

emlonyeni wentombi

Ndiyaginya

ekuseni ndizala

intombazana

**August 22, 2014 -ikhaya**

Abanye abantu ngamakhaya  
ashiywa ngumntu engathandi  
bephuma kuwo bengazi

To leave mothers' body is to die  
there are many ways to die outside her body  
To return to mothers' body is to be born

**August 22, 2014** - Isibeleko sizala iinkwenkwezi

Ntombi yam  
amehlo akho  
ngumfuziselo welanga  
ikhakha lam  
ingcibi yentliziyo yam  
ikhwezi lomso

ndakujonga amehlo akho  
kuvaleka amanxeba neentanda zomphefumlo  
kwiindawo endaxhaxhwa kuzo.

December 20, 2009, Emonti

Fizza

The last time I was here, tata, bhuti and I were dropping mama off for the Intercape to Cape Town. It was always a busy place. People leaving and visiting. Now I was back for the first time in twenty years. I never asked mama why she had to go work so far, I was just always happy to have her back, every time. I felt home in her.

Mama only came back every three months, but the year I turned 13 she didn't come back. So, I left too. We both never came back – until now. I was back now to say goodbye to her bones.

This place never felt like home without umama. I meant to come back that year I went away, but I landed up in Johannesburg with an older friend. She was sixteen years old. We went to see umntu wakhe, he looked like my uncle. Johannesburg was bright and loud, so I stayed.

I suddenly wanted to get back onto the train. But I wanted to see mama's hair and hands one more time. I knew her face would not be her face and that was okay. My brother told me he would collect me from the station with his taxi – his famous yellow taxi. I kept looking out for it but as usual he was late. He was so proud of his taxi and so excited I would finally see it live with him in it – his car – his pride.

*Ndilinde nje wena ne Taxi yam' uzobona why lamamcheri walapha endifuna onke.*

My brother lives in a world that allows him to sleep with both eyes shut. I love talking to him. He has nothing against the world. He has been my only connection to this place since ndahamba. He was round and black the last time I saw him. That's why I call him Tyre. He looked like the one tata used to put against the door to keep it from banging at night. As I wait for him, I see the fizzers from the spaza window.

\*\*\*

We lived eGompo location which was not far away from the train station. We would walk mama to the station, me, and tata and bhuti. As we walked her, I would imagine we were walking backwards, and I would look up at her thick black hair. Mama's hair had many voices in it. Each time she came home I heard a different one with a different story from Cape Town. Mama worked for Mista and Misiz Smith since after bhuti was born, then I came after, then mama went to the doctor and said:

*No more! Mista Smith didn't raise my pay.*

She sent money ku tata, but tata also got money every month from us being alive. After tata lost his job, we became his new job. Tata split the money he got for us between food, school and the casino. He tried to make like he could walk straight after the casino, but he would fall over when he came home, and never even say sorry. His bones were heavy and hurt but I knew to pretend to be sleeping. Mama used to do the same before she got a job away, even when he moved on top of the bed.

I used to cry all the way to the station walking mama. I would spend the one-hour walk asking mama to stay.

*Please mama. Just stay for another day.*

*Busi, you know I can't nana. Uza kulila apha xa ndingakuthengeli impahla entsha. Another day will become another day, then another.*

This is how our walk went. I wanted her to raise us instead of her-sarah and her-james. But she would say I should stop crying or I would make tata sad when he tries so hard with us. As we would walk hand in hand, I would fold myself into her hand – see my whole body fit into her hand, go inside and listen to her hair.

Bhuti and tata always walked in front – quiet. Carrying mama's bag. Bhuti, short and dark. Tata, short too, but with a big ball in his stomach.

*Yazi Busi, you are a lucky girl to have utata okhoyo. I didn't have utata uyayazi mos? Other fathers don't care about abantwana babo. But owakho ukhona. Uyambona uSamora nosisi wakhe stay alone. Do you want that to happen to you? .... Sulila ke mntanam, uzokhathaza utatakho.*

No matter how many times she told me how much tata loved me, I wanted to go back inside her. I never understood how she could not see that. A few blocks before the station was the Vilakazi-corner house. Mama would turn my head to the house as we walked past:

*That's why I leave ke mntanam. One day that will be our home.*

She would tell me if she stopped working for the Mista and Misiz Smith we would never leave our house and get the house we liked so much on Vilakazi Street. But she liked it more than all of us.

It was a yellow brick house circled with purple and green flowers buried in the ground. They always looked bigger than the last time when we would walk past. The house had grass leading to the front door. Two little girls in purple and pink dresses. The flowers in the ground looked like the girls above it. The house had two tall trees always watching over the girls and ujingi wetyre where the girls would swing all day. Our house was zinc and wood. And no flowers. And no grass. And no trees. And no swing. And no rooms. And no air. Just a box where everything happened.

Inside was one bed for tata, a white two plate stove that had turned yellow. A tiny useless heater that looked beaten on the sides. One small bulb connected with many wires that flew all across the location connecting us all. A yellow steel cabinet that mama said she got from makhulu and an old fridge that farted the whole night.

We also had one mattress that my bhuti and I shared on the floor and there was one stick under the bed. It was tata's stick. He did a lot of things with it. It was long, thick, then skinny, light brown and yellow and black – with a lot of broken off parts. It looked like me.

At night when bhuti and I slept on the floor I would talk to it. Sometimes when it got really cold, and I would be facing tata's bed, I would look at his stick and talk until I slept. I would whisper things to it. It was always there, listening, watching me.

Sometimes I would cry as I walked past the Vilakazi house wishing for a room where only me and Mama slept on the bed. Just before Mama would have to get on the train, I would squeeze my arms around her neck until she couldn't breathe anymore then she would never leave me. She would let me.

But tata would pull me away. He would hold me tight and I would scream until I could not see mama's hand waving or the train – or smell her. Just the railway and the distance following. Tata would tell me she will be back before I know it. Just blink. And I would. Then, he would say – Open! – and ask if I want the pink fizzers. That stopped the tears. Every time. The fizzers stopped the tears. He would always buy three. I never said no to the fizzers. My bhuti never got a fizzer. My bhuti never cried for mama also. He lived outside her. He did not like to sit with me and tata at home also. He would sit with me alone sometimes but not very much when tata got home. But we spent time when he took me to school and fetched me. Most he liked his friends and as soon as we would get back from dropping mama off, he would run off to find one, leaving me. Tata would not let me play outside like bhuti.

*The streets of Gompo are not for girls Busi.*

But at school he was not there. When we got inside the house, he would tell me to sit on the bed. He would boil water. Fill it up in ibhakethi and let it cool. I thought I was going to get to finally sleep on the bed the first time. But we did not sleep. Tata did something. I cried. Tata did not stop. Then he did stop. When he was finished, he quickly gave me the fizzer and I stopped crying.

*Don't move neh nana stay.*

He would pull out the vaskom underneath the bed and pour all thefrom ibhakethi??. Then he would dip my towel in it. I would sit on the bed eating my fizzer. Then he'd come to wipe me in-between with my warm towel. He would tell me to close my eyes. I did, I never looked to see what he wiped inside me.

After that, he'd wash me. After that, he'd dress me. Then he'd reach under the pillow and pull out the last fizzer. Number three.

Tata told me if I ever told mama she would not understand and would never come back. It was the same whenever my bhuti was away. I always knew it was going to happen when tata came home with fizzers. Sometimes I did not see them until he said,

*Hlal'ebhedini.*

Then he would say – Open.

*Ey wena Fizza!*

Shouted a man from a yellow taxi.

**April 30, 2020 - Amangcwaba**

Abanye abafazi ngamangcwaba  
agrunjwa ngoyise abangabaziyo  
abanye ootata bagrumba nzulu  
kumhlaba ongadalelwangwa bona

other women are graves  
dug by fathers they have never met  
others by fathers who dug too deep  
into places they should never go

**1 July, 1996** - Isilo ebhedini

Sichwechwa umama elele  
inyanga ijongile.

Sindikhulula ngobunono  
amehlo am ezimele.

Sisebeza igrogro endlebeni  
sindikhotha sincwiniza.

Ndiyaphuma kulo mzimba   sisanambitha  
ndivuka sigqibile.

**May 20, 2001** - Isaprayizi sikamalume

Ndishiywe nomalume endimthandayo  
ndikhule endithengela iimpahla zekrisimesi  
oonopopi neelelese  
uyandithanda

Umalume uthi  
*mtshana, ndiyolanda isaprayizi sakho*  
ndimlindile ngovuyo  
ndikama iinwele zonopopi wam

Ngaphandle umoya uthule ilanga liyokuzifihla

Ndiva umkhenkce emaqatheni... amathanga ayangcangcazela  
... umalume uyawanqanda... *sukushukuma bhabha*  
... unyusa itawuli eshushu... unditshisa ngaphakathi

**April 14, 2009 -**

I am a glass  
I don't break  
I don't burn  
I am fighting flames off my skin  
Ulwimi lwam luyatsha  
ilizwi liyatsha  
Aniboni? Ndiyatsha!  
Things that once lived in me  
are dead  
things I licked off isibeleko sikamama  
and there is a lump  
growing inside me  
    beating  
it is made of her blood,  
    so it grows  
it should not be growing  
    but it is her

This black body  
holding it  
is burning  
I am black  
I am burning  
I am red  
I am burning  
I am a scab

Ingono black monstrous chunks now  
Intliziyo isemaqatheni  
All stuck in this bottle with me  
We are all charred pieces of flesh for the animals

and I am stuck in this bottle  
and he is out there

smiling

to have gotten away with it

to have gotten away with it

**May 16, 2009 -**

Ntombazana...

ubhinqe ilahle elivuthayo  
ungumthombo wegazi elibilayo  
amehlo akho ngamalangatya  
iindlebe ziphuma umphutshu  
uvula umlomokutak' umlilo  
utshisa osendleleni yakho  
okuphikisayo  
nokuthandayo  
uyatsha  
ntombazana uyafa.

**January 16, 2019** - Ubusuku

Ndisemcinci ndandibulwa ubuthongondisoyika izithunzela  
ngoku ndiphilela ukuphuma qho xa ndingene ebuthongweni

ndibhabha kwilifu eliluhlaza elintushuntushu okwesibeleko sikamama  
ndifikela kumakhulu eTsolobeng

kwistup' ndimbhaqa eguqe ngamadolo okosana  
usihlamba asombathise udaka olubomvu

Kgotso nkgonu  
Ee ngwanangwanaka  
Orobetse jwang' nkgonu?  
Ke robetse hantle kgosantsana  
ke robetse  
ke robeste kgosantsana

ndivuka utata esithi umakhulu ugodukile  
phants' kwebhedi ndiyamkhangela  
kwidressa yakhe ndiyamkhangela  
phakathi kweengubo ndiyamkhangela  
ndiligeza

**June 12, 2020** – What it felt like Coming back to it

Undressing..... in front of wood.....  
something that won't say anything back.  
Trees.....that won't cry.....when I cut into them.....  
naked..... like me.  
They did not say a word..... so I cut deeper.

Remembering..... felt like..... wounding something so alive but so much stronger than me  
.....something that looked like me before  
.....so, I cut.....

With each clear memory.....forgotten bones shifted.....naked.....unashamed...this time.  
I began to cry..... to something that did not cringe when it saw me .....in-between my  
thighs.  
.....It began to feel warm  
then it felt wet  
then it smelt bloody  
.....I cut.

It hurt.....doing that to something so harmless.....but wood does not bleed  
It allowed me to cut.....

I shut my legs too late!  
A fist pushed its way in and clenched ...It pulled tight at the skin covering the bones and  
.....the place I do not touch anymore.

I stopped for a moment.....I felt his spirit was here.....I had summoned him.

Then I continued.....with his fist  
in between my legs  
.....shoving.....shovelling.

with the thick skin in-between my legs  
throbbing.....

I saw myself.....in the centre of that room.....and I was a lifeless animal  
powerless beneath.

Slowly my eyelids lifted.....tired.....the more I carved  
the more my eyelids lifted.....seeing his frame appear whole.....the shape of his face.....  
seeing his body appear from the edges and fill in

Back there.....inside that day  
all the dead animals and dead people inside me.....they all came to life  
.....wounding as they put themselves back together  
.....to watch.

Chewed up fat and pieces of broken bones  
found each other to make new beasts  
and the dead people and the beasts  
they woke up all of us woke up  
to see how we died.

*Xelela umakhulu ndide ndaba ngumfazi womntu  
Ndikuzalele unyana ofana nawe  
Simphe intombi efana naye  
Mxelele S, amaphupha awaqoboshele emehlweni afezekile  
Nitsho nidi bhaleleni nobabini.*

\*\*\*

**3 January, 2018**

Ndihlise  
ifestile  
emotweni  
ubuso bunikezele emoyeni.

-Ukuthezwa

Ndibuyele  
kwela hlathi  
wandingcwaba kulo.  
Ndifike  
Ndakhulula  
impahla  
ndahamba ze,  
laa ndlela  
wandishiya ngayo.

Ndifuna  
ukukhumbula  
owandenza kona.

-Bambo Lwam

*Undifumane  
ehlathini  
ndize,  
ndiqhaq hazela  
ndisisilwanyana  
esonzankeleyo,  
ndingazani  
nekhaya,  
ndigxiza  
igazi  
limpompoza  
kwintliziyo ebandayo.  
Wakhulula  
isikhumba  
sakho  
wasinika  
umhlaba  
wasondela  
ecaleni kwam  
mlilo wam  
ndivuk'ulele.*

**2 October, 2019** - Dear S, I watch you sleeping

i watch you traversing between these worlds. on the edge of the ocean.  
on a rock made for our children's children. i stand watching  
i who hold you, watch you leave me, here. i want to follow you.  
i tried.

when you wake up tired you ask me, why aren't you sleeping?  
how can i? this time that is ending inside you keeps me up ticking as you breathe  
but i don't tell you that. i don't tell you of the fear in my chest.  
that fear sleeps only when you wake up. that i know the limits of being human  
that i know where i begin and end.

i don't tell you that i am trapped. that i want to come into your body.  
that i want to eat the tumour growing inside you. i want to tear out of my body.  
I want to hold you. keep you here.  
i am not ready. i know that you are.  
    though you think you are not.  
you keep going there already .  
i watch you sleeping when you finally go.

**October 27, 2019 (a.s)** - Dear S, you will never leave me

Ours is an ancient love. Born by more light than universe.

Of spells.

Of whispered answers.

Of all questions.

Of truth

and breath.

And air

Of wholeness seen only by those willing to see.

Ours was bound by the purple string. Each one on their end

To pull the other. To this point. This beginning. This end.

Where it all starts. Where it ends.

Where you return into me.

Kiss me.

Surrender your last breath. For my first.

i will live my days carrying you – breathing you in and catching you.

And each minute passing in envy will carry the story of us.

And each star will walk showing me the promise we made before we came.

Together. Crashing. Splitting into two – reaching out

separated by the blue that stood as witness to our first birth. The same air

will walk with me as i search for you. It brought me here, now.

To each mountain that holds your face.

And when i listen to hear you, my eyes draw me to a river

where two rocks sit listening to you. And i offer my face into the wind.

i ask you not to leave me. As we knew i would. And you won't.

**8 November, 2019 (a.s)** - Dear S, I am trying not to follow you

I see everything now  
all the lonely chairs in the house  
with sunken seats  
ashy mahogany hardwood floors  
with black footprints  
naked walls with dry cracked lips  
the quiet shelf cradling your torn blue jersey  
i meant to give it back to your mother  
but first i had to sew it  
just before you left  
and on it there is the purple pin  
i chose to hold it with  
and a purple string  
running through it  
and you are not in all of them

and on the news  
i see children staring at me  
outside their mother's mouths  
around them is a village on fire  
*thousands presumed dead*  
i see all the living ones and  
the dead ones staring  
dark clouds born grow big above them  
this is the place you left me in  
the place you meant to build me in  
despite all my tragedy  
and despite all their tragedy  
the fires and the loss in other women's worlds  
my tragedy is bigger to me than all of theirs  
I am a terrible human  
a damned soul  
who might not make it to you  
my pain is not lightened  
by the ending of other people's worlds  
I am a terrible human

I look for fathers when i see children  
and I run to my car and cry when i find them  
I am a terrible human  
But I stay away from everyone  
so I don't pretend to be better  
and to be alone is to know this  
I am a terrible human  
without you

to be alone  
is to hear the true state of my mind  
its thoughts that pour  
to plead with myself to be better  
to beg myself to open the windows  
to switch back on the lights  
i am rotting inside this body  
and to be alone is to smell  
what I have become  
to feel the emptiness trying to escape  
to see me without you  
to see my fate decided without me  
to see our children     without you  
to see them look for you             and know  
they will never find you  
to close my eyes  
and try  
to crawl back into my mother's womb  
and remember:  
who i was before this place  
what i wanted to be  
before this place  
before you  
to hopelessly try to see my face  
to know my name  
to hear my first heartbeat  
to try find why it came out  
and what it beat for  
       before you

**7 December, 2019 (a.s)** – Dear S, I am coming to you

My last night on your chest, your thin black hairs folded as I came down. They made a fire for my bones. Your ribs softened just enough for my neck to feel sheltered. And I did. I did. And then the morning came.

Tearing            stretching  
determined    and unsoftened, by a life  
that would not tear.

You reasoned for another ending  
Pleading            to an unrelenting Hand.

Now. I hear you calling me everywhere.  
In the sea. I hear my name. It is not this one  
but I know it is mine. I want to go in.  
I hear you calling me in crowds. I want to answer.  
Driving on the N2 back home, I hear you.  
In the rocks along the road, I want to stop the car and come.  
But I am not alone. The trees behind them move.  
I am not alone. I hear you. I want to call back to you.

Collect me on the edge where they took you.  
Bring me stories of Kgono and Nokuthula and everyone.  
You can tell them to me in your new language, on our way back.  
I have so much to teach you too.

**February 16, 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S, who survives Inimba?

I don't know how to unteach our children

all the tricks I teach them sleeping.

There are many ways to die inside your body

I watch myself teach them I want to jump

but I am screaming inside my eyes: *do not do as I do*

but they are chained to me so close.so tight

If I push them off the mountain

will they survive me?

**April 15, 2020 (a.s) - Ndiyaxhwilwa**

Ndinyuquzwa zimpethu ebuchotsheni  
ulusu ngumkhence  
ndizikrwempa ngeenzipho ezimdaka.

Ndikhwela iindonga ezithethayo  
ndibaleka abantu abangenabuso  
bayandixhwiphula.  
isibane sengqondo sicimile.

**2 July, 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S, I lost our son's star

To calm him I placed him in his sister's arms this is when she starts  
I turned our home into the mess inside me to find our son's star

---whispering blankets and chipped chairs  
empty sheets broken glass forgotten shoes  
your socks and my pink night gown  
we all tried to find it  
this star that keeps this home warm  
because I cannot. this star that fills the holes in my head  
because I do not. this star that covers me whilst filling his mouth

---do you remember how they played hide and seek  
the first time our eyes met?  
fire jumped from my knees to yours  
this skeleton kept my knees from kissing the ground  
even then I wanted to cry

I need to find this star  
This star that understands him  
and you

**August 9, 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S, I remember how I came

My first father was        Sotho  
My last husband was        Suthu  
They once were one  
I lost my first father before I came here  
I left him with my 7th fathers' seed  
This is how to make love. to make me  
Suthu I see  
It is heavy to cross over. but this is how

In the darkness your hand always found mine  
To keep me from going too deep into the water  
You knew better how to walk under water  
What to take and what to bring them  
to let you come back to me  
They took you long before your body stopped  
And we were only granted enough time  
to help me return to you        one day

**August 16, 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S, I have all the senses

There I can still come to you  
you are not far from my skin  
in me out of me to hold me  
There I have all the answers  
sewn onto my palm like you

I taste you in the air  
I carry you in me

There— here— your body is always dying  
at a place  
a distant place and  
I am coming  
I am not afraid  
I am waiting

death is alright there

I have no echo calling me  
I know my first name  
you say it and I am born

**August 18, 2020 (a.s)** – Dear S, I found the road to the tree

They stole it and hid it  
and left it here  
to a family who ran to another patch of land  
perhaps beyond this life they don't steal  
or run and I never lose it  
I found imbokodo yam Camsholo  
I found imbokodo yam  
Ndizakuphahla ngoku Camsholo  
will you show me the face that waits for me  
and the tree I am to use

**August 20, 2020 (a.s) - Emanzini**

Ndiyaphutshuluka ndiyisanti

efuna

ulwandle

Kudala ndisiza apha

ndijika qho

ekuqaleni kwamanzi

ndingene?

**August 22, 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S, I choose the children

If I fall into the echo, I may be whole  
perhaps  
but insane here. i know how it will go:  
They will cut my breasts from me, but I  
wont die  
I won't. I have always taken longer to die.

The echo will be that and I will stay here  
listening for you  
holding them.

**August 25, 2020 (a.s) - To my children**

You were made of blue ocean waves  
of sea salt  
and grain  
of wheat  
and flower petals  
of sharp sun rays  
of purples kisses  
You are made  
of magic

You are a new universe  
born  
out of tragedy  
and rain  
and mist  
planted by uQamata  
Lightning has struck the earth  
for each of your scars  
You were brought here by  
black voices  
black bones  
African praises

A black woman's waist held on for you  
But that is not why you came here  
why you broke through every breath  
how you still stand, outside of me  
You grew inside scars for your own names

Bantwana bam  
ndinicelela igqabi leyeza  
nomsebenzi walo

**Septemba, 2020 (a.s)- Umhlokokazi**

Andizukucheba nwele nokuba batsho  
andizukuhamba emva kwezindlu

Andiziyokuchola mihlakulo emasimi  
ndiyolanda iinkomo ezalahlwa ngotata

Ndikhulisa inkosazana ndibumba inkosi  
phantsi kwelihlo lakho kutyeba iimfuyo belele  
nobabangathi ndiligqwirha

Ndiligqwirha.

**October 26, 2020 (a.s) - Dear S, Purple**

It takes one loss to cross the edge between the land and water  
I know now why I chose umama and why I chose utata  
and what was lost to make me  
Pain tastes different  
now that my body is soil  
and my breath is water  
I know how much loss I can take // now

After you left your body, I didn't understand why I came  
But I know now why I stay  
You are me  
We have never been without  
And here, there are whole universes  
bigger than us, that came out of me,  
that still need me  
And I know you will pour water into the well

We met at the end of our string //and we knew,  
swimming naked in every minute of purple light  
In these bodies// we hold to let go

Part B: Portfolio

**Portfolio**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts in Creative Writing**

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By

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## 1. AN INTRODUCTION - UKUKHANGELA ILAHLEKO YAKHO IN TWO TONGUES

Ndikhule sihlala kufuph' noomakhulu bam, lo unentetho yesiXhosa kunye nalo weseSotho. Ngo1996 kwafika ixesha lokuba siyohlala edolophini enkulu, kulapho ndaphuncukana nolwimi lwam khona. My parents moved apart to live in separate provinces. For several years after that, mna nosisi wam omncinci grew up sithetha isiXhosa nomama qha, sayeka iseSotho. Kodwa uMama also had to grapple with being a single mother in a big city, having to ensure that abantwana bakhe bafunda esisilungu sithethwayo ezikolweni, nasemsebenzini - so her choice was made for her, and we began to speak less Xhosa too.

The new South Africa did not seem to have a place for our mother tongue except behind closed doors. And losing language goes with losing culture, something umama could not have foreseen. We not only lost our mother tongue, isiXhosa, we lost our father tongue too, seSotho, and with the loss of both these languages, I lost a great sense of identity. I felt particularly lost, not being able to speak Sotho because traditionally, I am a Sesotho woman since my father is seSotho and in my culture, the child takes on the culture of the father. We spoke less isiXhosa after we moved cities, and almost no Sotho at all unless we were visiting my grandmother, I was, however, fortunate to be able to study isiXhosa later in high school. I had to choose to study isiXhosa or Afrikaans as these were the only languages offered, in addition to English eyayinyanzelekile, and so I chose isiXhosa. SeSotho was not an option otherwise I would have studied it over isiXhosa as I could at least speak isiXhosa occasionally with my mother since we lived with her. Namhlanje, 24 years later, ndisebenzisa olu lwimi luxubeneyo, one-minute ndiqubha esiNgesini, the next I am reaching for abantu basekhaya in my tongue.

But, language is only one of my great losses in life. This thesis explores the many layers of loss I have encountered, as a daughter, a lover, a mother, a wife, and a widow. It was a challenging task to create a full thesis that would carry my losses in a creative and academic portfolio. How do you separate yourself from your own pain to serve the poetry? How much loss do you write without being too personal and expositive?

I knew that one loss that I had to try reclaim was my mother tongue, eyalahleka kolulwandle lwesiLungu. I wanted to get a greater grasp of the one language that I did manage to keep. It is my hope that ngenye imini ndizofumana ithubayokulanda iseSotho sam njengokuba ndilande isiXhosa. IseSotho sona ndisithetha only xa ndigoduka, okanye ndithetha nabantu basekhaya, nalapho ndibambe just enough to be able to carry a conversation kwaye ndi-undastende ukuba umntu uthini. I do not speak isiXhosa and seSotho as regularly as I do English and so it is rewarding to reclaim and preserve something through this collection, that I hope izakongeza kuncwadi lwesiXhosa. As a bilingual writer trying to reclaim and preserve her mother tongue, I felt it important to write the full thesis as a bilingual body of work and not just the poetry. I want to explore what it would mean to carve a space in language that is safe enough to hold my expression, and my multicultural identity, despite my limited access to a wide vocabulary, and to perhaps grow within that expression. Free from fear. It is this fear of wanting to speak the best possible version of our indigenous languages that will lead to the extinction of them - just as we lost the great musical language of the /Xam people - the first people to influence isiXhosa and a great deal of my poetry.

At times it feels natural to write my loss in English – due to the years of comfort and the freedom to play and disrupt in English, whereas in isiXhosa there is such a fear of being wrong – out of respect for my culture. This makes writing about certain topics in my mother tongue, much more difficult. However, I am writing in isiXhosa, despite the pressure of perfection, because I am desperately trying to reclaim myself somehow, as someone who grew up feeling a sense of loss through not being able to widely speak their mother and fathers’ languages as freely as they could a foreign language taught at school. But I have to constantly remember to be kind to myself koluhambo. It is not easy reaching for a language that I felt I once grasped well and reaching for a culture that I was born into yet feel isolated from, within myself and within my disseminated family. Poetry is a medium I have chosen to explore to help me relearn and preserve something dear to me, however it is also an art form, and not just a tool to gather vocabulary or archive information. There is pressure to use deep and rich Xhosa language among current writers, including myself, because there is so little of it in the South African literary market. But this pressure must be balanced with art. There should be a respect for the language, and this must be seen in the overall work if we are to preserve it, but that respect should not prevent the artist from writing in their indigenous language.

In choosing which language to write a poem in, I try to allow umbongo to choose the language it wants to come out in. To listen to the poem. I have therefore produced a bilingual thesis, in what I call *Qenglish*, a self-coined term, just as I wrote my collection of poems in English and Xhosa with some seSotho. This term allows me to traverse between the oceans inside my mind and my mouth. It is a fitting term to represent my Southern Sotho ancestral name “Qhali”, the clicks of isiXhosa language and the English ocean that predominantly occupies my tongue. It is my hope that whatever loss I have managed to write out of me in this creative thesis has formed something tangible for a fellow writer to explore, just as it has helped me find indlela yokuzilanda. I have written this part of the thesis in a diary form, also termed a reflective journal (RJ), to map out my journey in collating my thesis. The following pages are the backdrop, environment, and community within which I found myself searching for myself and searching in others’ words; for ways to carry my losses, as a poet, as a bilingual writer and as an artist.

Kwimuvi yase America inspired by African culture and history, *The Black Panther*, utat’ uJohn Kani, udlala the first Black Panther, kwaye uyi king endala of Wakanda ekuthwa nguT’Chaka . When asked about the language in the film utat’ uKani says, “there are words used to indicate that those people’s indigenous language is not English. But you know this is an American major blockbuster, therefore it will be 99.9% English” (EWN, 2020). Growing up as a black South African child it was strange watching a black African speak English to another black African in a film, whether African or African American it was confusing. But with age I became desensitised to this madness, until one day it drove me mad too. Utat’ uKani says whilst rehearsing he had an epiphany. I can imagine kunvuka idlozi elingumama ngaphakathi kuye lisithi: *Yeyi xhego, vuka!* uTat’ uKani says he suddenly felt the urge to ask the directors why an African would say, “*I miss you my son, I haven’t seen you in a long time*”, to his black son as opposed to speaking in his native tongue. And it was this question that introduced isiXhosa to the film which would become the official language of Wakanda. Below is the isiXhosa line that I believe added to the success of and transformed the film into something meaningful for Africans, spoken by utat’ uKani:

*“Bendikukhumbula nyana, asikazithethi iingxaki zexhego”*

## 2. LITERARY CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE POETICS

### YELAHLEKO

9 February 2020 - RJ 1

The first task in my exploration was to begin researching various writers and the techniques that were part of my writing family; those whom I identify with for their subject matters, styles, techniques and those who would aid my journey of writing ilahleko lam. Secondly, I had to find those techniques of writing that I believed would best contribute to the objectives of my research; and those I was most intrigued by and wished to use in my collection of loss. Below are descriptions of ii-techniques that I have chosen to use for the purpose of writing ilahleko and accompanying the techniques are some of the writers that I admire for their use of these techniques.

#### 2.1 *i-Symbolism*

Nditsalwe kakhulu yi-symbolism kaSadegh Hedayat kwincwadi yakhe ethi *The Blind Owl*. I-symbolism yi-technique esebenzisa into okanye igama to represent an abstract idea – isilwanyane, umntu, umbala, isenzo, imozulu, into engaphiliyo, zonke zingaveza uphawu oluthile. Ababhali basebenzisa i-symbolism ukuveza imvakalelo okanye imeko yento. Umzekelo, umbala omnyama ukrobisa ukufa okuzayo; umbala omhlophe umele into emsulwa okanye ubunyulu. Le ncwadi kaHedayat iphumelele kakhulu ngenxa yendlela asebenzisa olu phawu kakhulu kunye *nesurrealism*. Kulemigca elandelayo uHedayat usebenzisa oluphawu

“The weather turned cloudy again and a light rain had started. I left my room so that I might find somebody to help me carry the suitcase”

“In the distance, and behind the fog I saw a hunched-over old man sitting underneath a cypress tree”

Hedayat, 2011, p. 18

Le mozulu icaciswa apha ikrobisa into ezayo ngoba lo tata that uHedayat athetha ngaye apha kulemigca ukwangulo uza kumncendisa ukwenza into engamelani nomthetho, bangcwabe lo mzimba okule sutkheysi ephethwe ngulomfo. Lo mfo oyi main character kulencwadi finds himself in complete darkness after the loss of a lover. Njengomntu obhala ngezinto

ezikhathazayo ndingumbhali oyithandayo i-symbolism ngoba iza nenye indlela yokuveza intlungu.

## 2.2 *i-Surrealism*

Incwadi kaVan Khi Nao ethi *Fish in Exile* inefuthe kakhulu kum, ngokusebenzisa i-surrealism, iphinde isebenzise i-symbolism ngeyona ndlela engalindelekanga. UVan Khi Nao ubhale ngabazali abaswelekelwe ngumntana wabo. Kweli bali utata walo mntwana oswelekileyo akakwazi ukuqhubeka nobomi bakhe, ubona izinto ngendlela engaqhelekanga, nje ngenyanga ayibona ingena endlini yakhe, le nyanga uphinda athi uzibona eyitya.

I-Surrealism yavela kwigroup ekuthwa yiDada ngexesha leWorld War I. iDada (/ˈdɑːdɑː/) okanye iDadaism ivela eYurophu, isukela kwintshukumo yabagcisa benkulungwane yamashumi amabini besilwa i-capitalism, bona beyibona iyinto ezokutyebisa abantu abambalwa qha (Tratchman, 2006).

Ndibathande kakhulu ababantu abaza neDadaism. I like le idea of a group of artists who created a lasting technique in resistance of something that troubled them in society. Ukwenza into eyothusayo, ehlukeezayo, e-radical, e-nonsensical, irrational and new, in order to take a non-violent stand for something terrible, perhaps something violent, something that bothers you as a writer - is something to be admired. Artists have the power to change society and there are so many ways that artists can do this including ukophula imithetho, i-status quo, and offering something never heard of or seen before in their art forms, in response to social ills, inequalities, injustice, kunye nezinye ii-present realities.

## 2.3 *Aphorism*

*The Book of Disquiet* by Fernando Pessoa is filled with aphoristic paragraphs which come from his multi-layered mind of a writer who accepted the different voices within him. Pessoa was a writer owayebhala ngee-personalities ezohlukeneyo. Pessoa's work encourages that we offer the unpredictable ngoba ilahleko is not linear. The idea of different voices inside us fascinates me as umntu onokholo olubanzi than i-religion enye. The book also includes imibongo ebhalwe ngeprozi kodwa egcine i-poetic nature. Pessoa also uses vivid imagery, and parataxis which all add an emotive approach to writing what is ngaphakathi komntu without saying too much.

AmaXhosa have been guided by idioms for years, we still are. Sometimes umzali ukugibisela ngeqhalo xa efuna ukufundisa into ngenye indlela, indlela ezokuhlala nawe. IsiXhosa idioms are simple and complex truths that linger for generations to learn from and pass on. Similarly, the term *ye-aphorism* in isiXhosa ndingathi sisondele kumaqhalo kwaye intsingiselo yawo can have more than one meaning. Pessoa's (2001) is fuelled with unforgettable apriorisms such as, "When I gingerly remove the noose, it's with my own hands that I nearly strangle myself"

This book drew me in for several reasons, some being:

1. It is the "autobiography" kaBernardo Soares who was one of many selves' zika Pessoa. In writing an autobiography it is worthwhile to find how one can introduce their different experiences and voices, ndikhangela ii-poets eziza neendlela ezintsha zokubhala i-autobiography with all the different voices inside us.
2. It is a combination of diary, prose poetry and descriptive narrative forms. Ndithanda ababhali abaxuba i-forms zokubhala as it can reflect ukulandela umbongo; that is to say they give birth to indlela umbongo ofuna ukuphuma ngayo.
3. The book is a translated work, iguqulwe ngu Richard Zenith. I have an interest kubantu ababhala in their home language okanye another language ngaphandle kwesiLungu ngoba there is always something to learn about enye ikhaltsha through i-language.

#### **2.4 Parataxis**

This is another technique which uses short, simple sentences, without conjunctions. It usually has two images or notions that are glaringly different but are put together with no clear connection in order for umfundi azakhele eyakhe i-connection to the work. i-Parataxis yenza umfundi acinge, iphinde yenze lula ukuthungela isandi kumbongo. In almost all art forms umculo and musicality makes something serious or perhaps violent more accessible. This is one way of approaching writing violence, by drawing the reader into the musicality of the poem.

## 2.5 *Stream of consciousness style*

In *Black Sunlight*, Dambuzo Marechera uses the stream of consciousness which I am particularly fond of as a means of outpouring one's inner conflicts and emotions about a particular matter okanye izinto ezinintsi. This technique allows one to write without hesitation, to free fall, and it is very therapeutic and liberating in writing out ilahleko and violence. Ndiyasithanda esi sitayil' ingakumbi xa nditolika amaphupho am into a poem, as dreams are a medium of communication with ourselves, and writing them through this style allows for uninterrupted penning of the dream – the message. The term was first attributed to Alexander Bain in 1855 in the first edition of *The Senses and The Intellect*, but it is more famously credited to psychologist William James who used it in 1890 in his *The Principles of Psychology*. It is fitting that this style is related to isayikholoji, ne-senses zomntu and i-intellect yomntu which is related to ones ability to think critically and reason. According to uJames there is a clear link between this technique, writing, psychology, our senses, and our mental states.

Another appropriate term for this device is “interior monologue”. A famous example of this technique can be found ku “Ulysses”, umbongo omde owabhalwa nguJames Joyce, okanye u*Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. Kwincwadi kaWoolf umlinganiswa oyintloko, uphokoza iimvakalelo zakhe ngezinto axakene nazo ngaphakathi. Kanje ke uWoolf uncenda umfundi akwazi ukubona iingcinga zesi-sterring ngendlela eqoqekileyo. Kodwe kubalulekile ukucacisa ukuba although i-interior monologue isebenziswa synonymously with stream of consciousness ukhona umahluko apha. I-interior monologue yona ijongene nokuba umbhali makabhale yonke into that has been unspoken, aphakoze zonke iicinga zakhe.

## 2.6 *A phantasmagorical story*

*The Palm-Wine Drinkard* by Amos Tutuola is described as a book that tells a phantasmagorical story and this could not be a better suited description. Inditsale kakhulu lena incwadi as anything phantasmagorical gives the feeling of that which is unreal or a dream and most of our traumatic experiences seem so unreal. I am fond of this technique for two reasons, firstly I often write from a dream state using the stream of consciousness and secondly it is comforting to deal with traumatic experiences from a surreal position.

The latter allows the writer abhale engazithandabuzi ngoba sometimes our pain seems unreal – like an unbelievable story unfolding – and by using this technique one is able to deal with the trauma by writing it from a magical and objective viewpoint. A phantasmagorical work is closely likened to surrealism, in that it includes the strange as opposed to literal realities. Incwadi ka Amos Tutuola was influenced greatly by amabali waseAfrika which can seem quite unreal. Ndiyabathanda ababhali that draw from African culture and folktale. I believe there is so much content and inspiration in African folktales for new African writers. In summary the writers that I had the greatest interest in exploring for my research on writing and expressing loss were foreign writers who write on trauma and loss and whose works have been translated; those writers who are inclined to i-surrealism in their narration of loss; isiXhosa writers; African writers whose stories and poetry are inspired by inkcubeko yabo neyabanye abantu; and generally writers whose core themes are loss and trauma.

In addition to other books, for the purposes yale thesis I elected to explore the following writers and works: The translated works of Russian poet, Marina Tsvetaeva in *The Bride of Ice: New Selected poems*; the translated transcendent and universal works of Asian writers including Yasunari Kawabata in *Palm of the Hand*; the phantasmagorical and haunting works of D.O Fatjumva in *Forest of a thousand demons*; the surreal and culturally centred work of Nongenile Zenani in *The World and the Word*; by the fierce and culturally rich book titled *Freshwater* by Akwaeke Emezi, *Umnxeba wobomi* ka S.S.M. Mema, and *A Nations Bounty* ka mama uNontsizi Mgqwetho edited by Jeff Opland. It is these above-mentioned writers who have had the greatest impact on me and my research, amongst other black South African female writers, whose work I believe to be ground-breaking in their approach to autobiographical storytelling through poetry including the works of vangile gantsho, Mthuzikazi Mbungwana, Isabella Motadinyana and Sindiswa Busuku-Mathese.

### 3 UKUBHALA ILAHLEKO FIERCELY FOR BILINGUAL WRITERS

February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – RJ 2

It is much easier for me to be “fierce” when writing in English than in my own language. The simple truth is that I find it much simpler ukubhala umbongo wesiLungu ojongene nokudlwengulwa and other sexual traumas, than owesixhosa – this has created much internal conflict for me as a black woman, a mother and a survivor. However, the idea of fierce writing in isixhosa has me hungry to achieve this despite ukundoyikisa, and the reasons for this desire, I shall explore further.

UKerry Hammerton kwisifundo sakhe esithi *Fierce Writing* ufundisa ngokubhala ngobukhalipha. Apha ke uHammerton uthetha ngokubhala izinto ekungathethwayo ngazo - izinto ezihlupha umphefumlo. Ndiye ndazibuza ukuba ungabanjani umbongo obhalwe ngenkalipho esixhoseni. Ukuziphendula, the poems I wrote for isifundo sakhe narrated two different rapes, one was ezilalini, in a forest, which was that of my cousin Nokuthula, who ultimately passed on from the virus the rapist had left her body with. The experience of losing Nonkuthula, how her case was handled, and being with her ngeemini zakhe zokugqibela esibhedlele plagued the rest of my life with a fear and anxiety that I carried into my adulthood, until I too found myself kwihlathi elinye. The next poem I wrote for isifundo sika Hammerton was my experience of rape, only it was in the city. I wrote “uNokuthula” as intsomi being told by uMakhulu to children; and this story is an example of a phantasmagorical story or poem. This poem went on to inspire me to 'write more poems using this style and i-surrealism including umbongo wam othi, “**1 July, 1996 - Isilo Ebhedini**”. Kulo mbongo the character is being molested by someone living in the house who she introduces as the beast of the house. The beast or perpetrator kulo mbongo is seemingly tender with the victim as described by the victim but the victim is clearly aware that something is not right about what is done on her body at night, as the beast tip-toes ekamereni yakhe and comes only at night. Okwesibini lo mntana, whom we are aware is a child because of the reference to her sleeping mother, also finds a way to escape her body just as the beast begins feasting on her body. The child magically leaves umzimba wakhe, waking only when the beast has finished eating from her.

It is somehow comforting to write about rape and embodied violence from a surreal state. In isiXhosa in particular, for me, as one who has been distant from the language. There is a comfort in distancing oneself from a traumatic experience, by writing it as phantasmagorical tale or through the use of surreal imagery, as this allows the writer to somehow be an observer of the events taking place, and thereby allows them to remember details from an objective viewpoint, in order to pen the event undisturbed by the emotions – ultimately to then face the event.

As a black South African woman, a mother and imbongi, I want to write of izinto ezisixakileyo, nezitshabalalisa ilizwe. Izinto ekungathethwa ngazo ngabantu abamnyama, ekuhlaleni. And I have a desire to write of these in isiXhosa as much as I write them in English. Literature on trauma and violence ixhaphakile kwisiLungu and maybe that is part of le ngxaki sinayo. Perhaps if we read more Xhosa literature on sexual violence, literature in our own mother tongues, singaza namacebo okulwa lento in our communities instead of ukulinda abanye abantu bangaphandle. A Xhosa or seSotho black child from the rural areas odlwengulwe ngumalume wakhe, for whom English is not a first language, would most probably narrate the event in their indigenous language as opposed to isiLungu. But the books that are availed to them, the content they consume on such violences and their rights; are in a foreign language. There is a harmful distance between violence, trauma and language that needs to be closed, and ndikholwa ukuba i-creative writing and literature is part of the solution towards inkululeko and equality le efunwa lilizwe lonke.

The lack of awareness, lack of conversations, and lack of confronting our violent reality in languages and stories that we can identify have helped perpetuate the status quo. Abantwana should be aware of ukudlwengulwa, nee-basic human rights, at an early age. Due to early stage of development, I offer that creative writing is a critical tool that can be used to educate abantwana about such matters. .

From a young age I watched and read so many stories of trauma ngesiLungu from abantu baphesheya, most of whom offered stories within urban environments and with different cultural backgrounds from eyam. I wonder how differently I, Nonkuthula, and many other girls, would have dealt with the violence that awaited us had we seen and read about more black girls, written by black women, or translated works from characters that better represented our

socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. What if we had from a young age read and been encouraged to write and speak of real stories as black little girls, as though our stories mattered.

I want to read works that explore the various ways we die – not the death of the body alone – works that abantwana nomama, can look to and perhaps be saved by. Ndikhuliswe by the typical hard working black mother from the rural villages and from very humble beginnings, who desperately wanted ukukhulisa intombazana emodlulayo. And so, when I was faced with the most violating life-changing experience ebomini bam, instinct was to move on, to do better, to work harder, to not fail, and to tell no one, including umama wam. Ukulinyazwa ingqondo nomphefumlo ngumtu oyindoda, ukulahlekelwa yinqondo, ukudlwengulwa, ukulahlekelwa bubuni bakho, ukungaboni ubuso bakho, ukukhula nomzali olimazekileyo, ukulahlekelwa ngumzimba, ukuhamba ungaziva – ukuphila despite all of this – this is what I write – I write what I am in search of.

Sikhule kusithiwa umzimba ngowomyeni and ngokuye ndikhula I dreaded the uncomfortable moment of the day that I would be given away to umyeni. As a child I heard that omama abadala xa beyala a new bride they instruct umtshakazi omtsha on how to serve a man, how to take a beating from indoda yakho, when to come home only to go back, how to sleep without ipenti in order to always be ready for umyeni – because ultimately, they and the community believe that these bodies belong to abayeni. In the poem “**October 11, 2005 – Amahlathi**”, my intention was to lean into Hammerton’s Fierce writing style ndilande amagama wesiXhosa that have been passed down which ironically represent the violations of black women’s vaginas as those which belong to everyone but the host of the vagina. In isiXhosa these words are also taboo to say out loud, unlike vagina, and this further represents the lack of ownership and the lack of freedom for black women and girls to own lamalunga, lamahlathi.

We grew up kusithiwa there was no such thing as being raped by your own husband. As a result, ithathe iminyaka to get here, where I can dare to write about these subject matters. I have looked and am yet to find le ntlungu yabafazi kwimibongo namabali wesiXhosa with fierceness nje ngasesiLungwini - ukudlwengulwa ngumntu ohlala naye – umyeni, umalume, ubhuti okanye utata wakho. Kodwa ke most of ababhali abapapashiweyo esiXhoseni ngo tata and so how could they write of these traumas? The most recent statistics from the UNDP (2020) are that 1 in 3 women and girls have experienced sexual abuse.

And though sexual abuse is inflicted on both genders it is much higher on females. Of all the goals zelizwe for i-sustainable development, I do not understand how we are still grappling with the killing ne-violation of the very source that bears isintu and is more likely to stay the course until a child becomes an economic contributor.

Still today, apha emZantsi kwamanye amakhaya ukuba indoda ibhaqiwe ukuba idlwengule intombi yelinye ikhaya kuye kuthwe all he must do is to pay the family of the victim with livestock or money - axolise ngemfuyo. What does this lead to? In some cases, the same perpetrator who raped the girl will return to repeat the crime only now he is confident it is not one because he paid for his victim.

### **3.1 Ababhali abatsha ababhala fiercely, eSouth Africa**

Incwadi ka vangile gantsho ethi *red cotton*, written using the stream of consciousness narrative style, nangona iyeyesiLungu iveza ubomi nohambo lomfazi omnyama eMzantsi ngamanye amehlo. Drawing from African spirituality and the realities of being a black female, gantsho paints a new South African woman that I had not found kwiincwadi that I have read. Bursting with the blurred lines of culture, religion, spirituality, sexuality, and parenting – ugantsho offers ilizwe a chilling and vulnerable book for the mother, the child and the community to sit with. It is this kind of fierce, frank, honest and vulnerable writing that I aspire to in my writing and in dealing with ezam iinkathazo zobomi.

Kumbongo othi “schizophrenia, some definitions” which can be found in her collection, *red cotton*, ugantsho ubhala ngokuphazamiseka engqondweni which is not only completely underestimated in black families but is also another connection to African spirituality and historical health practices yet to be adequality researched. And this is the nature of the indigenous language, many words in isiXhosa have more than one meaning attached to them – One word in an indigenous language can be an entire undiscovered school of thought and actual practice that could benefit all of humanity.

Umbongo ka gantsho is layered with the inequalities of being a woman in South Africa, with what it is to hold a life in a black body, with the connection and separation of black people from nature. I appreciate imibongo emifitshane kodwa with layers. In writing a poem of loss, one has an opportunity, consciously or subconsciously, to place all the issues they are grappling with ephepheni, as no one loss goes alone. This is an attribute that one can find kumsebenzi ka gantsho. In some poems ilahleko lakhe lixhuma ephepheni, whilst in others it moves slowly iyofikelela xa umfundi ade wa-connecter nayo This layered, moving loss, written through a stream of consciousness is what I set to achieve in “**9 August 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S, I remember how I came”; and in “**August 18, 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S. I found the road to the tree.” Kule mibongo ephezulu ndijongene nezihloko zelahleko bobuni bomntu; fatherlessness; death; colonialism and loss of land. Through this approach of short poems the intention is for some statements or truths to sit with the reader for a while and for the reader to unpack these themselves.

Writing loss using this technique brings forth its own hidden truths that may or may not make sense instantly, but it is an outpouring that is needed for both the one writing the loss and the one looking for themselves in it. Nalapha kum, imibongo yam endiyibhalayo do not always make sense to me, gamanye amaxesha andazi ukuba umbongo othile uzama ukundixelela ntoni until time has passed.

Another poem endiyithandayo ka gantsho ilapha ezantsi and again ugantsho usebenzisa ulwimi olulula which seamlessly tackles multiple topics, ranging from the heaviness of parenting, of being the daughter and being the mother, sexuality, gender identity, black families and their issues with sexuality – and she does it all in three sentences.

\*

I'm standing in the middle of the road trying to drown out my mothers' voice. She tells me I'll go to hell for all the men who come in and out of my bed. She doesn't know about the women. I wonder if there is a worse kind of hell for people like me.

gantsho, 2018, p. 2

ugantsho ujongene ne-subject matter esanqabileyo esiXhoseni: izimvo zomama towards iintombi ezikhula kwi-21<sup>st</sup> century where women sleep with other women and are becoming more liberated in their sexuality. But the reality is, this is not new.

There have been gay and lesbian Xhosa men and women; and gender non-confirming persons, for years, we are just beginning to talk about it and ukuyibhala. After I read lo mbongo ndiye ndawufundisa usisi endihlala naye endlini and she told me ngoomama ababini elalini yakhe, abathandenyayo, after they discovered amadoda wabo were cheating. The two women are now madly in love kwaye nabo bayeni babo they are still married to them.

Black mothers and their views of sexuality or lack there-of, identity, kunye nokuthandana komfazi nomnye umfazi is new terrain in Xhosa literature and fairly new terrain for black women in South Africa and this is the kind of ground-breaking poetry I want to read and for abantwana bam to read. I am drawn to writers who are bold enough to write ezi-issues that our families do not want to talk about; and this free honest style of writing ka gantsho feels so bare that one is drawn to read more with the comfort of safety in her vulnerability. Some black families claim to be more liberal than others when it comes to their children's sexuality, and this is what that black liberty sounds like: "You can do what you do, as long as we don't talk about it, or ever have to see it." It is writers such as oogantsho that will not allow black communities to silence their children anymore – until we are kinder, more inclusive, and better.

### **3.2 Indima Yesihloko in Writing Ilahleko**

uBulelwa Jele unombongo othi "Ukuba", endiwuthandela for three things:

1. Simple language
2. Musicality,
3. A present and relevant title.

I think when writing heavy and uncomfortable topics such as Gender-Based-Violence, the title can make all the difference for the reader, inviting them to read further either because there is a question they want answered or they are unaware of where the poem is leading them to. Isihloko must be part of umbongo, this can be in a literal and non-literal sense, because each word and number matter in a poem. Some of my poems take the approach of incorporating the title into the poem for example through having the title as an actual line in the poem. Umbongo wam othi "umbulala kanje ke umama" makes use of isihloko as the final line of the poem.

Ndisithandile esisihloko sika Jele kunye nolwimi lwakhe olulula as my poetry makes use of this conversational language too, to allow the reader to engage with the heavy content. Isihloko sakhe is as simple as umbongo wakhe kodwa sinzulu, kunye nombongo unzulu. Siveze ukuba isihloko siyakwazi ukucingisa umntu, nje ngombongo.

On the same note, the title of umbongo can also detract from a poem leaving the reader lost on how the poem connects to the title. I am interested in ukuphonononga indlela ezihlukileyo that a title can be written. Being creative with our titles, their positions, their layered meanings, their unique combinations, can only add to the layers of imibongo ekhaliphileyo. If there are to be bold writers set on contributing to social justice, then every line counts. We must be bold even in our titles to call the reader to the page. Isihloko sodwa siyakwazi ukushwankathela umbongo wonke. Sometimes all you have to remember is isihloko sombongo to remember how it made you feel, and what it represents kumbongo. That is the power of a title, umbongo within a title, umbongo before umbongo. But sometimes ndiyasokola ukufumana isihloko and as a result kufuneka ndisiyeke ngamanye amaxesha ndibuyele kuso exesheni. Kumbongo othi “*Ukuba*”, kwi*Singqi sesihobe*, F. Dyubhele (2012) ndifumanise ezizinto ndizixabisileyo kumbongo:

1. *Isihloko sibalulekile, masingaphazamisi umbongo*
2. *Umbongo endiwuthandayo unomculo*
3. *Umbongo endiwuthandayo uveza inyani nentliziyo yombhali*
4. *Umbongo endiwuthandayo uthungwe ngesigama esilula esinobunzulu.*

Lo mbongo unethemba kunye nentlungu, izinto endivuka ndilala nazo. Nangona lo mbongo unomoya omhle opholileyo, ubhalwe ngobuchule and unomona ngamagama, kodwa uthetha yonke into that the poem wants to address. Uyaphilisa, uphinde usinde. Just as the title is both heavy and light. It is important to me for a title to be a part of umbongo; for the title to add meaning to the poem.

### **3. 3 Indima yamabali kwiimbhongi ezibhala ngelahleko**

Amabali played a big role in my childhood and in my growth as a writer. Kwimibongo yam ebalisayo okanye i-narrative poetry, I try to ukuzoba umbono of what happened as though it were happening ngoku, the place and the characters’ actions and emotions.

This I learnt from the structure of ibali to provide an experience, a place, umntu njalo-njalo. Children and adults assimilate many life lessons from ibali which is why I am also interested in studying the works of the great Nongenile Zenani as one of the foremost South African story tellers who happens to also be female. Umbongo othi “20 May 2001 - Isaprayizi sikaMalume” usebenzisa le ndlela yokuzoba imini, i-actions, nengcinga zomntu during a violent scene or period

Most of imibongo yam i-reflective, nangona ndibhala nge-present tense ngamanye amaxesha. I use writing to try find answers about izinto that I cannot yet grasp. My work therefore relies on my own aphorisms much like Pessoa found his truths through the writing; such as the many truths that one can find in *The Book of Disquiet*. Writing imibongo can trigger an image, a sensation, a sound, a scent which all may trigger a truth. Umbongo wam othi “**May 16, 2009-** Ntombazana uyafa” is a poem where umbongo wonke ndiwakhe nge-images that I saw. Ezi-images ziphele zindinika imphendulo okanye umbono of what was happening kum during a time in my life where I pushed away many people; and it is through writing that, that I faced my volatile behaviour during a particular period which was preceded by a traumatic rape experience.

Fairy-tales okanye iintsomi, have had an influence kum as a writer and how I approach writing ngoba ndikhule ndizibaliselwa ngoomakhulu bam, kwaye bendikhuthaza ukuba ndizibhalele amabali. As a teacher my Xhosa grandmother immersed me into the world of books whenever I would go visit her eMaclear not far from umakhulu wam eTsolobeng, therefore it is embedded in me that I use poetry as my form of telling a story, real stories and my truth.

Incwadi kaHlumela Mothlabane (1994) ethi *Iinkunzi Ezimbini* libali eliveza ukutshintsha kwamaxesha apho indoda nomntu ongumfazi benza umsebenzi omnye wokondla ikhaya. It is clear in this isiXhosa story that gender equality yinto la madoda angiyifuniyo. Ndithanda amabali angatsali ngokubalisa, unless it is a build up to something, amabali that go straight to the matter. The subject matter yeli bali is clear from ekuqaleni. Incwadi ka Onne Vegter (2004) eguqulwe ngu S.Z. Zotwana, *Uphuziwe uWhitney*, uVegter ubhale ngolutsha oluthandanayo nezifo ezifumaneka ngokwabelana ngesondo olungakhuselekanga. Iincwadi ezinje not only encourage me to write about sexuality and the sexual violence’s, for ulutsha and women, but they also help me access new words. Ndikhule sifunda ngeromensi esiLungwini. I never saw my parents kiss, cuddle, or embrace like white people did in the movies.

Black people simply did not kiss in front of children, and I certainly did not see black people having i-sex. So how could I write izinto that I never saw? For a long time, I could not write of romance and sex in my mother tongue. So, how could I write of the violence of sex if I could not write of sex to begin with, in my language? It was even strange to eventually see umntu omnyama encamisa umntu ethivini. I would want to close amehlo, like I am seeing something that I should not be seeing. And utata keyena wayesithi kuMama xa efuna ukumbamba njengabantu abathandanayo, “Hayi, zizinto zabelungu ezo!” This became a saying in my childhood but as I grew, I realized, it was not true or at least did not have to be that way. It is therefore always a treat when isiXhosa writers delve into izihloko that are not available in present literature. Ababhali bakudala babexakeke nomzabalazo. Kwakungekho xesha lakubhala ngokulalana, nokuphuzana and certainly no room or time to talk about it with their children. Ababhali abaninzi babhale ngecawe, ngoThixo, indalo, intlupheko, njalo-njalo. Ndibala ababhali abafana noMqhayi, ooMema, ooJolobe, nabanye. Siyayazi ke i-influence yemissionaries kuncwadi lwesiXhosa. At this point ndicela ukungangeni kuyo. I do not find myself in the work of some writers endizibale apha phezulu at all, though I appreciate their poetry.

One of the features that I appreciate about amabali is the ability to see the effect of a particular technique, such as stream of consciousness, in a longer form. Ibali elithi *Isiphoro Sase Vayineki*, libhalwe nguD.M. Jongilanga, kwinqokelela yamabali uApha Naphaya (1973), umbhali usizobele ngesibaxo elibali kwabalula ke ukuqonda ukuba ubalisa ngantoni. Ngamanye amaxesha kubalulekile into yokucacisa, or ukubaxa, because ufuna umfundi to truly get umyalezo. Ndisemncinci ndandithanda ukumamela oomakhulu bam bendibalisela ngokukhula kwabo, namabali awayedluliswe kubo ngoomakhulu babo such as stories of human-like monsters that lived in mountains and came out to attempt to eat abantwana by imitating the voice of the mother. Apha we were being taught how to never trust something that sounds or appears familiar. Sasibaliselwa iintsomi ebusuku. Therefore, night-time for me was a time of magic but I was never told about the dangers that can be brought upon our bodies as women and on children. Everything my grandmothers told me came to life as they spoke – literally - inside my mind, nasemaphupheni am. It was only later after much trauma, that could I relate their folktales to the dangers outside and inside our homes, the real dangers of real men, not igrogo. Through stories, our grandmothers were trying to warn us. And ababhali have the opportunity to continue fulfilling that role, as we are living in the era of ukuphela kweentsomi ezibaliswa ngoomakhulu.

#### 4. THE TRAUMA'S EMZIMBENI - A SOURCE YOKUBHALA ILAHLEKO

February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 – RJ 3

One of my favourite seminar's is by uStacy Hardy who teaches on drawing from the body in her creative writing lectures. She encourages that we write the body, literally, by drawing umzimba wakho nezigulo ezikhoyo kuwo. Uthi uHardy we must write, "its pain, joys and fear, its carnality, its flesh, its health, its sickness, its fat and its muscles" (MACW Lecture, 2020). I found myself drawing izilonda that cannot be touched but are there. I began to think about how the very painful or compromised body that I inhabit can produce art. Whether that work be beautiful or ugly, it is art. Umzimba wam kulonyaka has been compromised, physically and mentally, and I wonder if our compromised bodies can be reflected in imibongo yethu. Whether through fragmented language, nonsensical sentence structure okanye juxtaposed images ezihlukumeza umfundi and so much more, can our pain manifest itself into imibongo.

I have been battling with this thought. As a mom with a new baby, one month to be exact, I am sleep deprived, isiqu sam is constantly in pain and most of iingcinga zam centre on the baby and keeping him alive. I am living off various pills to deal with restoring my body's balance and my mental wellness. All he does is to eat from my very painful body and demand my alertness even when umzimba ukhalela ukulala. Inyani is, I want my body back as much as I want my sanity. I have indinga to regain umzimba wam which I realize will not happen as quickly as I want. We lose our bodies in so many ways. How do we reflect that in a poem? I have been asking myself if the current state of my body, the pills, the pain, and mindset, affect my writing in a creative way or in a messy way; and if it does is that alright too? Does our writing reflect what our bodies are enduring?

I want to use my compromised mental state to write my current fragile state - which is a state of being desperate for sanity, of not knowing, of reaching and of yearning. uHardy (2020) also explores the concept of the *poetics of viscerality* as she proposes that asikwazi ukubhala umzimba without being visceral. She describes this as a form of writing that captures the present vulnerability which we can use to convey the different forms of violence committed emzimbeni womntu.

What I really want to achieve in all my poetry is to pour out the pain emzimbeni wam – the confusion – helplessness – the longing. At this point my thought is not what impact this will have on the reader except perhaps for them to find their own pain there too and be comforted to know that they are not alone, in their pain. But I know that these cannot honestly go alone. Other things live emzimbeni wam besides pain. I carry love, this I am certain of. I write so I must carry some hope. And if we open ourselves up to pour our pain, perhaps the light we are no longer certain is still inside follows. I have lost much and have since struggled with mental health that ngamanye amaxesha has me ndizogqume ebumnyameni. But I write and though I draw from painful memories, I also know we reside in bodies full of all kinds of memories, and somewhere in there ilanga lilindile.

Kwibhodi map yam ndiye ndazoba zonke izigulo zam, izilonda zam, ezapholayo, ezintsha, the wounds of my mind, the wounds zentliziyo, scars zomphefumlo, amaxeba that trigger childhood memories, izilonda hidden in my sexual organs and in places I have never touched. This form of writing is not only intriguing, but it begged me to ask myself:

- can writing out i-trauma help the mind and the body heal?
- can remembering and writing from memory give answers only the writer has, to heal?

Consider that our bodies are not just physical and therefore they do not only bare scars that can be seen or touched. And with each new scar that finds us, hidden creatures grow within us, with us, wound us, over and over, breathe into our dreams, invade our relationships and ziyakhula ngaphakathi. Kumbongo othi “22 Okthoba 2013 (a.s) *P, Ukulala Nawe*” I am writing of the sexual wounds that enter new relationships with us. The scars that grow bigger with each touch from a lover. With creative writing we can locate these hidden scars and tell them to leave us – whether or not they will immediately - confronting them is the beginning of healing. In drawing your body map uHardy (2020) uthi there are a few categories to consider, and I have written imibongo from several of these categories:

- Scars and Traces: Izilonda nemizila
- Body as a pharmacy: Umzimba njengendlu yamayeza
- Illness and communities: Izigulo nasekuhlaleni
- The body’s porosities: Imigxuma yomzimba
- Embodied histories: Iimbali eziqulethweyo
- individual and societal suffering: Iintlungu ezidlulileyo zomntu nabantu emzimbeni

From this seminar I was also inspired ukuba ndingene nzulu kwi-relationship yam with mental health. I began to write about my journey with feeling like kumka ingqondo, in several poems, including “Ukuzibamba” no “**April 15, 2020 (a.s) - Ndiyaxhwilwa**” I am writing out my daily feelings of isolation, of desire, of losing one’s mind after a loss, of distance from everyone, of how we see others differently after a loss. Generally, the feeling of and the experience of losing my mind does come, and so I write it too.

In isiXhosa the word – Ukuzibamba- means more than one thing.

Ukuzibamba – to hold yourself.

Ukuzibamba – to hold yourself back.

In isiXhosa there are words that do not have direct translations to English and sometime there are no descriptions of these words at all. As a result, I think there is so much power kwigama elinye in isiXhosa. In my Xhosa poetry ndikhangela lamagama that have multiple meanings.

#### **4.1                    *Visceral Writers Who Draw from Umzimba***

In “Hot Mess: Break the Skin” by Rebecca Norton (2014) the poem deals with a simple and innocent reflection of Norton’s youth, the speaker reflects on how intombazana would speak and feel about umzimba wakhe at that time. Norton’s perspective inspired me ukuba ndibhale in the voice of my younger self kumbongo othi “A Girls List”. As I began to write lombongo I remembered my body’s entire journey with sexuality. The ones I treasured and the ones I chose to forget for years. I remembered the various porosities that reacted to a boy’s presence – my lips-my lips – imilebe yam. I have for long loved and followed the great visceral writer, umam’ Morrison.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison (1993) writes of a horrific almost unbelievable scene where a daughter is raped by utata wakhe and her writing makes me feel physically uncomfortable to the point where I want to throw up when reading this particular part. Morrison is a master of brief lines ezikuzobela into njengokuba injalo, her visceral descriptions place me in a violent world of child molestation and her writing has influenced my approach to writing violence greatly. Since ndibhala ngezinto ezihlukomezayo, izinto ezithathwa emzimbeni womntu, then I believe that if my choice of words and images can make umntu uncomfortable, then umbongo

wam has achieved something. Umbongo othi “**April 30, 2010 -Amangcwaba**” deals with fatherlessness in two ways including otata abadukayo; owesibini yi child molestation by one’s own father. Umbongo wona is brief kodwa i-structure sawo, namagama have been carefully chosen to clearly illustrate the violation, displacement and havoc that domestic abuse and child molestation causes.

Morrison’s description of a father hungry for his own daughter left me haunted, mentally, nasemzimbeni. And in the narration Morrison builds up to the violating scene which I appreciate ngoba so many things happen around these violent acts, normal ordinary things leading up to ezi-events. Below are a few lines which reflect the build-up, the brewing lust and hatred that the father has for his own daughter but the rest I will leave for the reader ayozifundela lenewadi eyanditshintshayo: “She was washing dishes... Her small back hunched over the sink... His hatred of her slided in his stomach” (Morrison, 1993, pp. 162-163). These are the kind of scenes I want to paint. Scenes that should not stay behind closed doors and in our minds – they must come out of ebumnyameni and invade imizimba yethu. Morrison has an ability to write scenes of disturbing violence whilst inviting you into a whole world where there is more than just violence and lento inspires me as umntu we-non-fiction, to write out real-life characters, and the events that happen all around le trauma that we are expected to live through, daily. One poet whom I found used this tool well from a more romantic perspective ngu Joyce Mansour kumbongo wakhe othi “I Want to Sleep With You” as cited by the Literary Hub (2016)

I want to sleep with you side by side  
Our hair intertwined  
Our sexes joined  
With your mouth for a pillow.  
I want to sleep with you back to back  
With no breath to part us  
No words to distract us  
No eyes to lie to us  
With no clothes on.  
To sleep with you breast to breast  
Tense and sweating...

Mansour, 1995.

I am intrigued the visceral image of something stuck or displaced in someone's mouth this is how I feel about my language, and about all that is inside me.

In “**February 18, 2011 (b.s)** - Dear P, Your tongue” I write of an ex-seSotho lover whom I wanted in my mouth as stated kulombongo, and though the poem flirts with sexuality, it is a cry for my Sotho tongue. During that particular love affair, I wanted to learn about a lot of my culture through that new relationship it felt as though I could swallow the man whole, just to keep his knowledge in me.

#### **4.2 Conversational language ethwale izinto ezisindayo**

The depth of my subject matter and how an idea is presented is more important to me in poetry. But I am constantly learning new words which I am grateful for to poetry. In the poem “Instructions on How to Cry” by Julio Cortazar which I came across in a group reading, Cortazar uses conversational language almost kumbongo wonke. Cortazar begins the poem very understatedly almost as though he has nothing new to offer and only in the second stanza does he bring in literary phrases using tactile images and ii-descriptions ezingaqhelekanga that make one think about the poem long after its read. Ndikholelwa ukuba i-simple writing iyakwazi ukubamba uhambo olunzima - like the language found in one of my favourite poems, "The Song of The Broken String" a poem by Steven Watson, translated from /Xam language. Everything kulombongo is very deliberate and equally effortless. The poem deals with ilahleko of things as they were for the /Xam people. The structure or form of the poem presents ilahleko, flowing, breathing, repeating, until the reader feels their own brokenness. Le simple language allows imvakalelo to permeate from the page, igama ngalinye holding heavy loss, carried over time through this poem.

The repetition of the word “because” makes me feel the heaviness of the loss and yongeza to umculo of the poem. Le migca below, kwincwadi ka Mema (1985) ethi *Umnxeba Wobomi*, highlight the creativity of expressing intlungu through ulwimi olulula - from *hot eyes and trapped stones in the throat*, we can see and feel and taste le ntlungu.

Inlungu  
Kushushu amehlo kuntlontla iimpulo;  
Kugunya ingwiqi ebindi' emqaleni;  
Sisingqala emva kwesingqala;  
Kugelez' umthobo oshushu ezidleleni,  
Yintlungu umphefumlo ulikhala.

S.S.M Mema, 1985, Pp. 5-6

What I also appreciate in this poem, and kwimibongo kaMema, and isiXhosa poetry in general is the use of words and sentences that cannot cross over to isilungu. I don't know one word that describes isingqala, a word used in stanza one. In English I can only describe it as that *foreign warm trapped spasm in ones' upper chest and throat after crying for a long time*, in Xhosa this is *isingqala*. These words that I cannot cross over to isiLungu can be found kwimibongo yam ethi, “**August 21, 2014** - Isandla soMprofetikazi”; “**Okthoba 22, 2013 (b.s)** - P, Ukulala nawe” and “**August 17, 2006** - Bhuti ndiyintoni kuwe.”

Words such as *ukukrazula*; *ukugqobhoza* when simply translated means to tear and to break-through, respectively, but when used in isiXhosa these words not only imitate the phonetics of the action but also provide bold images for what is happening when something ekrazulwayo. These words almost carry with them the pain and the intensity of the action. Similarly, amagama afana no *ukubhadula* and *ukubhidla* can only be explained. For example, the explanation for the word, *ukubhadula*, would appear as *rummaging about widely and unsettled*.

“Umphefumlo uyabhadula phants' komzimba wakho” (p. 19)

Explanation

“Umphefumlo is rummaging about widely and unsettled beneath your body”

### 4.3 Uqhawulo lwamagama - nelahleko yolwimi

Zimbini izinto endinomdla kuzo ekuqhawulweni kwamagama. Okokuqala amagama aqhawulwa ekugqibeleni, apho umbhali aqonde ukushiya unobumba ekugqibeleni kwegama, ukuze akhe isandi esithile kulomgca. Okwesibini uGqr. Kunju (2020) uthi amagama aqhawulwa xa kufuneke kujongwe okulandelayo:

1. Izalathiso zihamba zodwa, azidibani negama: ezi zikolo xa uziquka izikolo uthi: ezizikolo
2. Intsiza senzi zibhekisele kwixesha elizayo, zihamba zodwa: ndiza kuzikhumbuza
3. Kwixesha elimiyo intsiza-senzi u-ya ihamba nelo gama ikulo: ndiyambona

Le nto yokuqhawula amagama ibalulekile esiXhoseni ngokuba ingahlisa umgangatho womsebenzi ukuba kukho imigca ethetha into engavakaliyo ngalendlela umbhali ebezama ukuza nayo. However, in English, because of the growth of the language, it seems there is more freedom to break rules, to rewrite words and to create new ones, as long as there is a consistency in the innovation. This freedom that one finds in English, makes it easier to write for someone writing about loss, trauma, or violence - as they do not have the same pressure to write within the rules whereas something within themselves has been broken.

Kwincwadi ka Mema (1985) ethi *Umnxeba wobomi* ndiqwalasela indlela uMema aqhawula ngayo amagama so that kuphume umculo ohambisana nombongo wakhe:

Funzela Enzulwini

Lishushu idabi kumathaf’ obu bomi;

Kuqhum’ amaqulo kuchachamb’ umchiza;

Uxhob’ ufohlel’ umlisela nomthinjana,

Usilwa noSathana, usilwa nobumnyama.

Mema, 1985, pp. 1-2

Kweminye imigca uyawaqhawula ukuze ahluze lomculo afuna uvele. In others uyaliyeka igama liphelele. Ihamba njalo imibongo ka Mema in this book. uMema ubhala ngelahleko, identity, love, ubomi obunzima, ubuKrestu, nezinye izihloko kwincwadi yakhe and I appreciate the vast subject matters he writes on. uMema uthanda uphindaphindo kwimibongo yakhe, ukugxininisa uluvo lombongo wakhe, lento ndiyisebenzisile kumbongo othi “**July 14, 2011**” in order to enforce what is happening to the character in the readers’ minds.

Banqabile omama abazimbhongi abapapashiweyo and those are the writer’s I am truly interested in finding more of in the future of South Africa. I would have liked to read more poetry from Xhosa women historically, which is why I consider Mgqwetho – a mentor.

Mgqwetho is one of the first and only women to have written and published a substantial volume of imibongo in the past and she is yet to be truly recognised for her works. For me she is the epitome of fierce writing by umfazi omnyama especially when you consider the time, she wrote in. Her topics were bold and defiant for ixesha lakhe. Kumbongo wakhe othi “SIYAYIBINZA!—I AFRIKA!!” Mgqwetho writes,

*Elonxeba e Afrika libuhlungu  
Sesicenga ngamawetu kubelungu  
Xa ndilapo, andinazintlon' ukutsho  
Kwanemisebenzi nantso nayo itsho.*

*Mawo! Mawo! Mawo! Mawotshe—  
Satshabalala ngokuswela u Gqirashe  
Yeyela! Ngelemkono i—Afrika  
Ngokuyibinza yonke le Minyaka.*

Mgqwetho, 2018.

As one journalist put it, “Nontsizi Mgqwetho was a renegade and in many ways far ahead of her time. As a poet, Imbhongi (praise singer) and political commentator Mgqwetho shattered all the moulds confining black women in South Africa in the 1920s.” (The Journalist, 2014).

Her poetry concerned itself with real challenges for abantu noomama, including the rights of abantu abamnyama, education, morality amongst ulutsha namantombaza, kunye nophuncuko ye-culture and customs zama Xhosa. Mgqwetho was a defiant woman nyani, daring ukubhala about real topics that women were not speaking out on publicly or writing about. Where male poets shied away from writing about unfavourable political matters, Mgqwetho dove right into them.

INDULI KA XAKEKA!—ENYUKWA NGU NTU!!

Bona ke! Namhlanje ndifun' uqondile  
Mfondini wakuti nantso intlekele  
Make uzibuze wozu undingqinele

Make kaloku nje sitwax' ukuteta

Nduli ayinyukeki! Iyatshitiza  
Andizikukwekwa ndirola umxelo  
Yiyipi okwangoku ebhadlileyo  
Into eseyimile kwezabantsundu

Nantso ke ne African National Congress  
Esasiyibonga kwapuke nembambo.  
Sebehamba ke beyibuza kwakuti  
Besiti kanene kodwa yatshonapi

Akunakupikwa ndilusizi ukutsho  
Ziko inyaniso kulo mbuzo wabo  
Mna ke ngokwam andikunqweneli  
'Kutyafisa imigudu eseyenziwe

Kodwa eyona tyefu endiyibonayo  
Ityafiswa kukutanda amawonga  
Azinasidima into zomntu ontsundu  
Zipetwe ngabantu abanamakwele

Mgqwetho, 2018

From writing about how she will never marry to being critical of the African National Congress, confronting sexism and patriarchy, tackling black complacency, criticism of the whites and their inhumanity, poverty and the tragic implications of loss of culture and land. Mgqwetho boldly writes of how Africans traded in their cultural and spiritual practices for Western practices which is a reality that is still prevalent today. But strangely Mgqwetho was also i-supporter ye Christian union known as *Manyano*, which she was a member of, but not without suspicion. I note this as strange and intriguing to me as she was, through imibongo yakhe, an advocate of *African religious and cultural practices of amagqirha* and spirituality.

Which leads to me asking the question of what she truly believe in? I asked myself if writer can advocate for one thing in their written work but practice another in their lives? Did Mgqwetho simply draw from culture to inspire her work or did she perhaps straddle these multiple worlds.

On reading Mgqwetho I am of the view that writing demands that we paint our inner conflicts. During i-period ka 1920 uyotsho ku 1929, *Umteteli waBantu* published 103 poems by this legendary activist and poet. Her works were published in *The Nations Bounty*, edited by Jeff Opland (2007). In an article by SA History Online (n.d) the lack of appreciation for this icon in Xhosa literature is highlighted,

“her work is accordingly entirely overlooked by almost all the scholars who have written on isiXhosa literature. Mgqwetho's output ranks her among the most prolific of Xhosa poets, but the measure of her significance is not the quantity of her work... Fearless, outspoken, committed, pious, confused, anguished and often despairing...”

I want to write such poetry – the real stuff – with the kind of passion that Mgqwetho had. I believe amadoda see ubomi ngelinye iliso and very few will use the opportunity to write of the plight of women and the inequalities of gender in their countries because men generally benefit from these inequalities thus it is mostly up to women to write about themselves. Aside from ii-topics that interest me in Mgqwetho’s work, I also note that imibongo ka Mgqwetho in Opland’s book uses isiXhosa ngendlela endingayiqhelanga. Emagameni wakhe ushiya onombumba u ‘h’. Lento intsha kum, kodwa uMgqwetho wabhala imibongo kudala nge 1920’s. Andazi ukuba this is an error in Opland’s collection of her work or if it is how she wrote isiXhosa. However, I eventually became used to this, and it was not as jarring as I continued to study umsebenzi wakhe because it is consistent in the book.

Ingaba lento idibane nokuba uMgqwetho wayefundile and wahlala edolophini and found herself ebhala ngefuthe le missionaries? Perhaps for bilingual writers, for isiXhosa writers too who have mixed with too much English lento yokuxuba nolunye ulwimi lutshintsha indlela olithetha ngalo olwakho ulwimi. But in Opland’s (2007) book I am not sure if this is Mgqwetho’s intention or not.

Iziko le Nyembezi

(Ngompoposho ka Mr. Twebu)

Yadlulana? Iminyaka umi ndaweninye?

1. Udlule unyuka sowusishiyile

Nango amabali ati awuseko

Nembandezelo zokubuka omtsha

Ofikileyo.

I admire uMgqwetho for several reasons one being her playfulness. She was a playful poet odlala ngazo zonke izangotshe zolwimi lwesiXhosa, ifonetiki, isimntwiso, izifanekiso-zwi, njalo. In each poem you never know what structure or punctuation to expect which was rare for a Xhosa poet of her time. uMgqwetho wayesele eqalile kwakudala nokudlala ngendlela yokubhala umbongo in terms of structure. Her innovation in isiXhosa influenced work of mine such as umbongo othi, “**July 22, 1990** - Phantsi komzimba womyeni.”

5 Taru! Nto ka Rubusana

Eyasela ungxeko njengamanzi

Hamba! – 1920

Nemisebenzi yako.

Mgqwetho in Opland, 2007. P. 30

## 5. INSPIRATIONS FOR WRITING LOSS- LOST WATERS, IIMITHI, AMAPHUPHO AND THE AFRICAN SONG

February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 - RJ 4

As a poet who writes from the loss of things, nditsalwa yimibongo kaMxolisi Nyezwa's, who is both an English and isiXhosa teacher at Rhodes University. In his classes Nyezwa shares that nje ngam he writes from the inspiration of amanzi, imithi, nomculo. I find that I have an urgency to write once ndidibane namanzi, okanye imithi and nature in general. Even a rock across a stream, will flood me with emotion and umbongo will emerge. However, aside from these shared sources of inspiration I admire Nyezwa for isibindi sokubhala from a personal space and public space as Penfold (2016) described, "Nyezwa's poetry is intensely personal and private, but it cannot be divorced from socio-political commentary." Because I am searching kwimibongo yam I feel comfortable with poets such as Nyezwa who do not offer an answer in their poems but rather paint their plight, confusion, longing, discomfort, anger and uncertainty. Nyezwa's abstract poetry has a femininity and softness to it that I can recognise in each of imibongo yakhe such as his poems found in *Song Trials published in 2000*. Le nto ndiyakholwa idibene necomfort ka Nyezwa to not offer solutions but to simply lament and paint his personal and shared afflictions. Nyezwa (2020) says to write imibongo yakhe he listens to the "oscillations in each sentence, the peaks, the lows, the emotional inflictions and disturbances that they cause," which he says he finds these just as he finds them in water and in trees.

My poetry on death and lost loved ones has been liberated by Nyezwa's work which does not seek for understanding either from the reader or from the writer. The poem, "27 October 2019 Dear S, You will never leave me," I wrote from a stream of consciousness. In writing this poem I was influenced by the rhythms of water and nature which I immersed myself in prior to writing the poem.

And when I listen to hear you, my eyes draw me to a river  
Where two rocks sit listening to you. And I offer my face into the wind.  
I ask you not to leave me. As we knew I would. And you won't.

### *Water, Forests, Spirituality, Nemibongo*

Water and trees have a special place in my life for their role in connecting me with my ancestors. In a research paper on the cultural practices and values zamaXhosa, conducted at Rhodes University, titled, *God is my forest*, Cocks, Dold and Vetter (2012) propose how ilahleko of amaXhosa beliefs and practices have contributed to environmental degradation, and that understanding them could possibly provide opportunities for conservation. In their paper the writers state the following:

In South Africa conservation is still largely framed in terms of Western scientific values, with a focus on material benefits to local communities, whilst little is known about the intangible values local people attach to nature and biodiversity.

Dold and Vetter, 2012.

Furthermore, the paper reveals the relationship between *ukutheza* - the work of collecting firewood in the forest - and going to be with the ancestors. The researchers interviewed 15 village women who said they looked forward to the hard chore and leaving izindlu zabo as they would have a chance to spend time in the forest in the presence of abantu abadala. This belief of other realms that ancestors reside in, and the cultural practice of going to them, is one of my great sources of inspiration for my writing and this thesis. To write I have to immerse myself in natural elements such as water, song and sometimes dreams are a great source of inspiration - as I awake from a dream state with the urge to write about what woke me up. It is from these places, nature, music and dreams where the poem comes to find me. Ufuthe lamanzi, music, amaphupho and nature can be found in almost all of my poems including “**January 17, 1994** - The Pregnant Tree in Our Village,” “**October 11, 2005** - Amahlathi,” “**2 April, 2013 (b.s)** - Dear P, don’t wake me up” and “**September 16, 2013** - Ndjinga elangeni.”

I believe we have lost much more than we can ever touch, when we traded in long existing beliefs that sustained black communities for ubuKrestu. Though there were noteworthy gains including gains for women, there were many losses too and gender inequality still prevails. As Nontsizi Mgqwetho puts it kumbongo wakhe:

Upi yena lo Tixo simtandazayo  
Nalo simtandazayo asingowetu  
Sakwenzela intlants' eziq' uq' umbayo  
Ziq' uq' umbela Intaba yase Yuropu.

Nabo ke ubulumko bo Tixo wabo—  
Ntu bhinqela Indyebo yase Zulwini  
Tina zesibhinqele eye Afrika  
Zezakwa Faro ke ezo Izilumko.

Mgqwetho, 2008.

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I often refer to *Qamata* in my speech and in my writing, which is the Xhosa term for God though it came from the /Xam people who have also influenced my work but this is also a term I related to God when I was a child. Such childhood memories inspire my writing today. I also grew up fascinated by ubugqirha, the traditional calling, and even of those people whom communities call amagqwirha. As a child I was intrigued by the idea of igqwirha – a witch – which some women are called when they are successful in black communities. Andikholwa in listening to yonke into ethathwa ngabanye abantu about a person. My great-grandmother was rumoured to be one too – far too successful for a black widow in a rural village – she must be a witch. How many women have suffered this accusation in one way or another? She did things that a widow is not expected and allowed to do such as collecting the livestock outside the yard and taking care of the livestock, walking about in front of the house instead of walking behind the house; and so, they called her a witch because she was moving on and seemingly thriving despite her loss.

In my poem titled, “**Septemba 1, 2020 (a.s) -Umhlokokazi**”, the poem illuminates this grasp of what a witch can be in African culture. The poem explores the activities that a widow is expected to not perform because they are a widow, and by defying these rules, they are easily believed to be witches who may have even contributed to the deaths of their husbands. Furthermore, a widow is not expected to go on to be independently successful, unless they are igqwirha. The memories of my childhood are endless and can be found in most of imibongo yam. As a child my grandmother told me to stay away from amanzi – she feared they would take me, just as my aunt had to stay away.

For my aunt, they had to slaughter an animal and ask abantu abadala for her to not answer the calling, as the belief was that she had a traditional calling to be *igqirha*, a healer. uMakhulu says my aunt told them ukuba she would find enye indlela to do good and so she became a teacher.

So, now as an adult I stand at the edge of the ocean, andisangeni elwandle, just like uRarhadi wam. But often I have to get into water even in a bath or basin to truly feel and to write, as amanzi somehow have an effect on me. The same goes for trees. When I am driving and I see a tree alone or in a forest, or if I am in the garden – the trees talk. Nature talks to us all the time. I listen to the silence, and in it I hear the voices. I write in response to them and the silence. Kulombongo osezantsi kulapho kubonakala ifuthe ye silence and nature kwimibongo yam, “**December 7, 2019 (a.s)** - Dear S, I am coming to you.”

Now I hear you call me everywhere  
In the sea. I hear my name. it is not this one.  
But I know it is mine. I want to go in.

I hear you calling me in the crowd. I want to answer.  
Driving on the N2 back home. I hear you.

In the rock along the road. I want to stop the car and come.  
But I am not alone. The trees behind them move.  
I am not alone. I hear you.

Xhosa people historically relied on their own abilities to extract medicine and magic from plants and trees, so how can we underestimate the power of these as sources for imibongo, emotional and mental healing. Though the reader may take the poem to be just a creative output, for the writer it can be a very real output. That is to say, in my case, in the poem above where I write about a voice in nature, I do hear the voice in the seas, in the trees, in the rocks and I do feel the spirits within them. I write in response to these, and I offer that there is a therapeutic process in responding to these personal experiences through writing.

## *Dreams, Spirituality, Nemibongo*

Historically many prophets gave guidance to communities from a dream they had. Prophets and prophetesses were prominent figures in the Xhosa culture and Kings relied on them for guidance and advice. uPhuthumi Ntabeni (2014) explains how abapropheti gained prominence in the socio-political spheres of communities:

The period of extreme dislocation from the Cape Frontier Wars... from 1779 to 1879, created new problems that Xhosa chiefs could not solve for their tribes, and the nation at large. As a result, in the years immediately following 1812, Xhosa political leadership passed from the hands of chiefs to prophet figures. These prophet-diviner figures abounded, vied for attention of the nation that was fast losing its moorings and confidence in its traditional ways.

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UNtsikana waye ngomnye wabo baphrofeti, kwaye yena wayehambela phambili. Nontsizi Mgqwetho references Ntsikane's prophecies kwimibongo yakhe

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Camagu! Sinungunungu Esingcwele  
Nantso ke into eyatshiwo ngu Ntsikana  
Yobomvana abarola ngamadolo  
Beza nobugqi bela ngela Mampondo.

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Lalinywa zinqwelo zomlilo elobawo  
Abe u Ntu engenandawo yokulima  
Canaguni! Mazulu! Camagu Mhlabha  
Camagu! Ke Langa! Camagu! Nawe Nyanga.

---

Mgqwetho, 2018.

I believe his later-found beliefs in ubuKrestu introduced a new era for abantu abamnyama eyantshintsha ubomi babo forever and even the type of poetry we read namhlanje has been impacted by this shift.

There is something transcendent, emotional, and unique about a poem that draws from indigenous beliefs – something that I think can be felt cross-culturally and I am drawn to imibongo enje. As Mnkwanana (2017) asserts, “Ntsikana, incorporated a relationship to a “God”

rather than the ancestors, without it being clear how much this was “God” as understood in the Xhosa tradition, and how much the concept at this stage was owed to Christianity.” This fusion of religions by Ntsikana contributed greatly to the Westernisation of the documented identity of amaXhosa, ingakumbi our own spirituality, indlela zethu of healing, psychology, medicine and art. Ndiyayiqonda ukuba my writing clearly reflects many cultures though I am desperate for my lost culture.

The traditional healer was not just a woman with bones, she was a doctor, a psychologist, a teacher, a mystic, a philosopher, a leader and more. But we were told she was a fool, iqaba. But our angels and *God/Qamata* had faces that looked like us once. Our angels were black – they once lived as one with us and watched over us. Xhosa people – and black people at large – had no confusion about who they were or what they believed in, though some scholarly works have succeeded in persuading this idea of a *Godless people*.

For amaXhosa, and many other black African cultures, their healing approaches entailed the use of various methods such as extracting medicine from plants to cure people from illnesses including mental, emotional, and physical. This healing was done using an anointed rock – *imbokodo* - to *ukhanda* - which is to extract medicine from plants to create a cure. To connect to ancestors, umntu kwakufuneka aphahle. These are the words and practices I want to see on pages because they represent me, my community, my heritage, my world, my lost culture and how I have been healing. I want to see my great-grandmothers face on the page – so I must write it.

### ***Nature, Spirituality and Writers of Loss***

In a poem titled, “**August 18, 2020 (a.s)** - Dear S, I found the road to the tree” the connection to trees, healing, rocks, land and ancestors can be found. Lo mbongo is one of the more multi-layered poems where I have also used amagama that have dual meanings in isiXhosa including words such as *imbokodo*. Other words in the poem though written in English also have deeper value and meaning to them such as trees – umthi and a face – ubuso. In African cultures, trees represent spiritual entities and *imbokodo* which is used to *ukukhanda* umthi will produce iyeza that needed no experiments or lab to confirm its power. The trees are believed to be spirits ezizonyanga lo nto ingaphakathi kumntu. This is why the practice of ukutheza is also ixesha to communicate with the spirits.

Nyezwa (2020) best captures this unseen experience when he writes, “ I have been shaped by things that have been there, not there, things that should have been said but not said, the empty spaces, the silence, the missing links, the bewilderment”

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I am also inspired by writer’s ezifana no Seithlamo Motsapi, who write from intangible spaces within us. In his paper Penfold (2016) describes Motsapi alongside Nyezwa, “*New Coin* quickly established a refreshing and innovative ensemble of poetry that included Jeremy Cronin, Lesego Rampolokeng, Seithlamo Motsapi, Joan Metelerkamp, and Mxolisi Nyezwa.” Penfold (2016) also cites Vonani Bila who wrote that the editor of *New Coin*, Robert Berold, was intentional in his assemble of poets who were, “Unintimidated poets, poets who come to terms with the human condition through celebrating its resilience, whether in love, inner turmoil, or as witnesses to history....” In the poem “river robert”, Seitlamo Motsapi remarkably uses simple language to convey heavy longing, anguish and inner turmoil.

river robert  
we are at peace here  
even while our lungs are full  
of secret wars...

Motsapi, 2003.

After I wrote my first English poems which were personal stories of ukudlwengulwa, one of my teachers, Kerry Hammerton, encouraged that I read the American book, *Mama Amazonica* by Pascale Petit. Ndikhawuleze nda-understanda ukuba kutheni ebesithi mandiyifunde. Incwadi le deals with mental illness and i-consequences ze-abuse with inspirations from nature and rainforests which Hammerton said she sees these as matters that I want to write about. Petit writes in such a playful, mystical and colourful way, esebenzisa i-surrealism and ii-images zakhe paint the horrific realities that I want to paint. Pascal draws from the vividly bold images that nature offers. In one of the poems entitled “Jaguar girl” Petite writes, “[h]er claws are crescent moons sharpened on lightning./ Her own tongue is a hive that stings” (Petit, 2017).

Much like Petit, some of S.E.K Mqhayi's poetry reveals a great appreciation for nature too, though it also places emphasis on western religion such as umbongo othi "Aa! Ngangegunya! (Izibongo zikaBishop James Limba)."

I do not easily relate to and understand imibongo kaMqhayi, as I do other isiXhosa poets. I do fully appreciate Mqhayi and his rich images, rich language and great talent that influenced the history of isiXhosa, but he wrote of matters that I cannot find myself in. uGoodwell Soya Mama yena, an older poet too, who was greatly influenced by uMqhayi and possibly his school master too u J.J.R. Jolobe, is a poet I feel closer to. With regards to his techniques ndimthandela ukusebenzisa ukukhabana kwemifanekiso – iparataxis. Born in 1919 after uMqhayi, uMama is recognised as one of iimbhongi ezihambela phambili in isiXhosa literature as can be seen in Godfrey Mona's (2014) paper which is a study of a century of isiXhosa written poetry and the ideological contest in South Africa. Mona also praises uMama for dispelling the idea that imibongo yesiXhosa is all sexist and patriarchal. Mona (2014) references Mama's poem in which Mama praises a white woman, Mrs Jones, ambiza uNozizwe. Kwi-analysis yakhe uMona (2014: 155) uthi, "the pen of Mama transcends ethnic and racial boundaries. His figures of praise are not amaXhosa only but people who belong to other ethnic and racial groups."

Similarly, uMqhayi (2009) in Jeff Opland's, *Abantu Besizwe: Historical and biographical writing, 1902-1944*, also presents the very, very few female figures that uMqhayi praised in contrast to the ocean of male heroes. These figures that Mqhayi wrote of include uQueen Suthu, Umfikazi uHessie Lythian Botha, Umfikazi uCharlotte Manyi Maxeke, Umfikazi u-Antyi Kota, Umfikazi uDeena Rubusana and of course the prophetess who bears the cross for bringing down the entire Xhosa nation, uNongqawuse. What I do admire about Mqhayi's analysis of the role of uNongqawuse is his questioning of the entire story, but his questioning also reveals the pitiful archaic inequality between women namadoda in our communities. This is seen in the following lines:

U Nongqawuse

Sigwetywa ngovuka lwabafileyo.

...Imbangi yokuba eligama lalomntan' ompakati lipateke kakubi kangaka kungenxa yokuba umzi wakowabo unenkolo yokuba wawulukuhla, wahlisela intlekele, - okunene kunjalo, kuba zininzi inkomo ezafayo ngeso siyikili, yaye imiphefumlo yabantu eyafayo itandatyuzelwa kumashumi omahlanu\* amawaka (5000).

Elinye Icala

Indawo engavumiyo kum ukucaca yile yokuba:

1. Yayiwafumene pi na amandla le ntwazana okuma pakati kwe zihanqa zamadoda iteta into engekoyo; kuba nokuba ibiteta inyaniso, intombazana asinto ibinamteto nalizwi e Maxoseni, ingena mandla kanjalo.

Mqhayi in Opland, 2009, p. 75

In this book Opland also provides English translations and on page 74 he summarises the deep gender inequalities in South Africa at the time, according to Mqhayi, who clearly states that he is doubtful of the story of Nongqawuse because he cannot understand where a female would find the courage to speak amongst Xhosa men even if she were telling the truth because a young woman had no power, right and voice among Xhosa men. Kule ncwadi futhi uOpland leaves out the *h*'s which are typically there in isiXhosa words, in very significant places that change the pronunciation of a word. This seems to be consistent in Opland's collections of Mqhayi's and Mgqwetho's work. I feel it is something worth researching further. There is however a discrepancy with the use of *h* in isiXhosa even amongst communities today though widely lo nomumba akashiywa. I personally use lo nomumba as this is how I was taught isiXhosa.

Abona babhali endiqonda ukuba ndisondele kubo kwi-writing family yam in terms of ulwimi, endibhala ngalo esiXhoseni ngamadoda, including uVikilahle, L.T Manyase, Chuma Sogiba, Mangaliso Buzani, Simphiwe Nolutshungu noMzwandile Matiwane. Sadly, these are all male poets who would be categorised as contemporary male Xhosa poets and this is sad for me because I am searching for women's views and works more than male writers. However, the reality is that female Xhosa writers with fully published works are still a rarity in South Africa.

In my search, most female Xhosa writers exploring loss are mostly found in Anthologies hayi incwadi ephелеleyo yaloombhali yedwa. This may be the case for most of the other eleven official South African languages too; that the men are leading there too.

Umbongo ongezantsi ubonisa ulwimi lukaVikilahle endisondele kulo.

Zanele

Eyam Intliziyo likhalane kuwe

Mvula zobusika azinakoyisusa

Neendudumo kanti azinakuyothusa

Vikilahle, in Nyezwa, M. MACW lecture, 2020.

I was also inspired by uNolutshungu (2015) kwincwadi yakhe ethi *Iingcango Zentliziyo*, as the isiXhosa poet offers new structures of Xhosa poems which are still rare in Xhosa books. He places words all over the page, even letters of a single word are separated and this is new in isiXhosa.

## 6. ILAHLEKO NGAPHAKATHI KWELAHLEKO – REWRITING - THE LOSS WITHIN

March 8<sup>TH</sup>, 2020 – RJ 5

A line will take us hours maybe;  
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,  
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

-W.B YEATS

The only writing is rewriting --- this is the principle that Kaaps writer and teacher, Nathan Trantaal writes by, and swears by. Trantaal has a profound appreciation for i-rewriting and *uthi ukuba most of umsebenzi wakhe is inspired by rewritten work.*

### 6.1 Finding the hidden loss

It seemed quite unbearable at first to imagine cutting up ones poem or extracting only *imigca ethile* but this process *yokubuyela kumbongo* allows *umntu* to see what *umbongo* is constantly trying to reveal to them and cutting it down is too part of a healing process for one writing towards healing. I found that by returning to a poem a couple of times provides new insight every time because each return is more of an observation and learning process than the original writing process which was an outpouring. The greatest benefit of rewriting one's work is that you get to discover a new story that you did not know existed – *umbongo ngaphakathi kombongo*. u-Ezra Pound wayejongene ne-*Imagism* kunye ne *Le Mot Juste* which harnesses the importance of painting vivid images with the briefest of lines and returning to rewrite our own work can help one to capture the most important lines in the work.

uTrantaal focuses kule *imagism kakhulu kwimibhalo yakhe nesifundiso sakhe*, “the imagists sought to recreate images with words, using clear, precise language” (MACW Lecture, 2020). Sometimes the only way to paint *lombono* clearly is to go back and relook and see and re-write. The thing *endiyithandileyo* with the teachings zika Trantaal is the importance of *ukuhluz*

umbongo which I find is subconsciously a part of healing oneself. I wrote umbongo about a girl on fire and I edited lombongo to the bone. Just when I thought bendigqibile nalombongo I went back, and I was able to write another poem that took only a few lines from lo wokuqala. The poem that was born out of the original “girl on fire”, which was umbongo wesiLungu, is “**May 16, 2009** - ntombazana uyafa.”

My earliest poems were influenced by the Asian haiku and much of umsebenzi ka Rumi’s – both parties go straight to the subject matter in the briefest of lines. But when writing ilahleko lakho things cannot stay the same. If you can have the patience to go back to umbongo wakho in writing things that have troubled you, you will find something new, another loss that wants out, an answer, and it too will take a different shape on the page. I found that some of the best isiXhosa poems such as the work ka Mbungwana can make a poem unforgettable with a single image. IsiXhosa also has fewer words required to construct i-sentence kwaye ke igama ngalinye libalulekile.

## **6.2) Translated/Bilingual Writers and Reading –**

Through the reading groups, I have been introduced to great new impassioned Spanish writers, nje ngo Antonia Machado who writes of ilahleko and sorrow so simply and creatively that one wishes they knew the language.

### **6.2.1) Spanish Writers**

Spanish poets have a command of personifying ii-objects in their poetry whether babhala nge kawus’ okanye some fruit, they have taught me ukuba anything can represent a being and a life experience. The language also shares the musicality of isiXhosa. I admire iimbhongi ezifana noPablo Neruda, Antonio Machado, no Federico Garcia Lorca zaseSpain for these features kwimibongo yabo.

DESGARRAD LA NUBE

Desgarrada la nube; el arco iris

Brillando yae n el cielo,

Y en un fanal de Lluvia

Y sol el campo envuelto.

Machando in Hardie St. Martin (ed), 1976.

Amagama and rhythm dance on Spanish poems and ndithanda nokuyifunda nge-Spanish poetry yabo which is why the poem has been quoted in Spanish and when one tries to read it out-loud they can hear and feel the music kulombongo. When translated into English, umculo we Spanish writers is still partially retained. In *Roots and Wings: Poetry from Spain 1900-1975*, music and passion overflows in the collection in Spanish with translated poems.

### **6.2.2) Coagulations and New Selected Poems - Bold Poetry edlala nolwimi**

I find the collection by female African American writer and activist Jayne Cortez, *Coagulations and New Selected Poems (1984)*, to be dealing fiercely with a variety of topics many of which tackle ilahleko that I search for in each poem. Umsebenzi wakhe is political, lyrically innovative, laced with surrealistic images and she is described as one of the great visceral writers of ixesha lakhe. uCortez ubhala nge brutality of i-rape so poetically, and with a dark humour, that she alters indlela yokubhala ngezinto ezihlukumezayo.

What was Inez supposed to do for  
the man who declared war on her body  
the man who carved a combat zone between her breasts,  
Was she supposed to lick crabs from his hairy ass,  
kiss every pimple on his butt  
blow hot breath on his big toe  
draw back the corners of her vagina

Cortez, 1984.

Cortez encourages that you give i-character yakho a name – Inez! She encourages that we carve out a context for imibogo yethu. She also writes so frankly with lines such as, “draw back the corners of her vagina”. These are bold lines are strengthened and more easily digested because of the context that the writer has given to make the reader feel close to the narrative.

In her *Firespitters* collection she plays with the idea of umlilo in us, the fire of rape, fire within our bodies as amantombazana and abafazi. In the poem “For the Poets (Christopher Okigbo & Henry Dumas)”, Cortez inspires a weaving of music and dance of native tongues with English. In the poem below Cortez ends each line with ‘ah’ alongside unfamiliar words for an English reader and lento ithungela lo mculo that I appreciate kumbongo.

I need kai ah  
a glass of akpetesie ah  
from torn arm of Bessie Smith ah  
I need the smell of Nsukka ah  
the body sweat of a durbar ah  
five tap dancers ah

Jayne Cortez, 1984.

## 7. UKOPHULA i-NARRATIVE

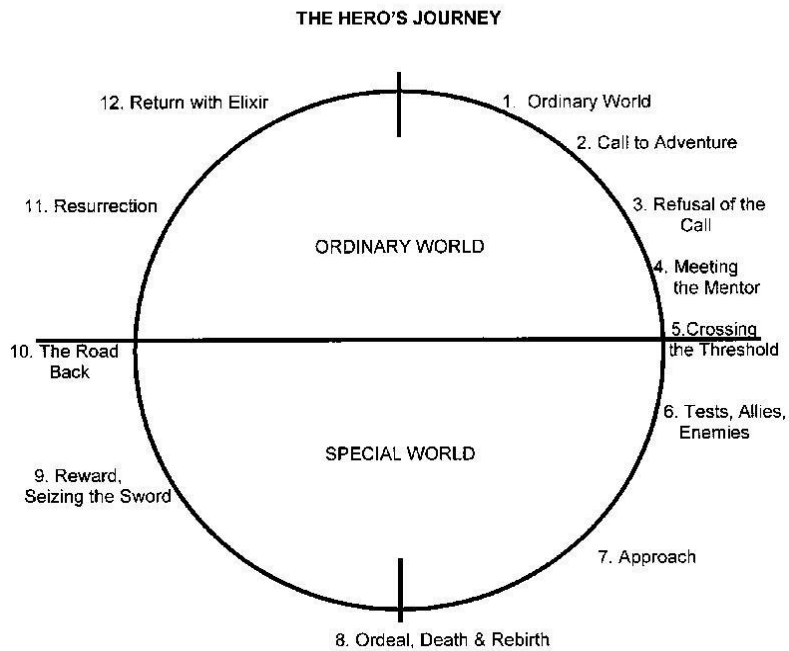
March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – RJ 6

uPaul Mason is a teacher and writer that greatly encouraged me to write i-prose and he encourages that we write amabali wethu in unique ways. In quite an interesting prompt uMason asked that we choose four random unrelated words from umnqwazi. These words would then represent the protagonist, the place, the plot kwaye ne theme. My words were *death, a prostitute, train-station* and *a betrayal*.

Ukusukela apha I wrote the list below to help me write the story of Fizza

Protagonist	- Prostitute	- a girl who sells her body out of circumstance
Theme	- Betrayal	- the worst kind of betrayal - a father who molests his child
Plot/Event	- Death	- the deaths within our bodies, the death of loved ones and returning home
Place	- Train-station	- places we resent and love, places where we lost places we return to, to remind ourselves

Kwisifundo sakhe uMason required we use the Hero's Journey which is a pattern of narrative that was first identified by the American scholar Joseph Campbell, it is now used in i-drama, storytelling, religious rituals ne psychological development. In 1990 Chris Vogler summarised the stages from Campbells 17 stages down to 12 stages (Miyamoto, 2018).



Note. From *How Screenwriters Can Use Dan Harmon's "Circle Theory of Story"*

Screenwriters, 2018.

Lomntu leaves ikhaya lakhe eyokhangela okanye eyokwenza into enkulu, okanye entle eyenzela abanye abantu. uDan Harmon simplified this even further kweyakhe idigram and he began a blog apho he also explains le journey ye Hero. Kwi blog yakhe uHarmon simplifies lento kulemigca ingezantsi and alongside these I have written the story sika “**December 20, 2020, Emonti - Fizza**”

. A character is in a zone of comfort

The only comfort ka Fizza was in her mothers’ womb – her first and last home

. But they want something.

Fizza wants what she cannot have – her mother

. They enter an unfamiliar situation,

Fizza becomes victim of molestation by her father

. Adapt to it,

Fizza learns to live with it until she cannot

. Get what they wanted,

Fizza never gets what she wants, mother never returns, alive.

. Pay a heavy price for it,

Though, not clearly stated Fizza becomes a prostitute in search for a better life

. Then return to their familiar situation,

Fizza returns at the station where she last saw umama wakhe

. Having changed.

Fizza older now still wants the same things she wanted as a child – her mother - and older now she is more aware of the evil done by utata wakhe which has her wanting to get back on the train.

In writing ibali lika Fizza the story wrote itself in a stream of consciousness. I had the basic four ingredients that Mason gave me from a hat. Only emva kokuba ndibhale elibali where I was able to fill the gaps. Our narratives are never linear. Amabali wethu are never chronological. We find ourselves at the end – at the beginning – we find magical and strange things that talk to us on our journey – such as our mothers’ hair or a stick that is always watching- these small things help us through – we find answers – we find no answers – and in the end sonke we will return to our mothers’ bodies.

Umbhali endimthandileyo ondothusileyo kwibali lakhe which I feel is a good example of broken narratives ngu Oyinkan Braithwaite kwibali elithi *My Sister, The Serial Killer*.

#### WORDS

Ayoola summons me with these words- Korede, I killed him.

I had hoped I would never hear those words again.

\*\*\*

#### BLEACH

I bet you didn’t know that bleach masks the smells of blood. Most people use bleach indiscriminately assuming it is a catch-all product, never taking the time to read the list of ingredients on the back, never taking the time to return to the recently wiped surface to take a closer look....

Braithwaite, 2018, p. 1-2

I admire the stitching of elibali which is different and innovative in the way it fragments the story into short simple poetic prose stanzas – often, each stanza reads like its own creative piece. One of the themes in the story is murder which is not a funny topic but in this layered story of sisterhood, of mental health, of sexuality, love, and bonds, uBraithwaite upeyinta different women with such captivating humour. The women who kill and the women who cover up the murders – these are serious and heavy topics that most people abafuni ukufunda ngazo, but Braithwaite encourages that nje sibhala we can find humour in our stories. With headings appearing almost as titles for poems that form a part of the larger narrative, each part of le ncwadi is carefully sewn – fragmented – but all connected.

Ibali elithi *Amadikazi (Thsararaville)*, by Mpumelelo Cilibe, is set in present-day South Africa looking at socio-economic realities faced by South Africans today. It is set in a township, filled with immorality nentlupheko. The characters reflect present day South African communities which are abantu abalinde uRhulumente for iizindlu, inkamkam, and answers from abaprofeti abatya imali yabantu. All of the turmoil in my country is what I want to see alongside the beauty and magic kwimibongo namabali. From ibali lika Cilibe one is encouraged to use the language that our real-life characters use. This story by Cilibe and ibali lika Morrison also inspired “Fizza” which deals with the violation of children in impoverished townships and parents who depend kwimali yenkamkam.

## 8. ORIGINS OF A BILINGUAL VOICE

March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – RJ 7

I write as Qhali. I know it is a convenience for those around me who cannot speak my languages for me to use my nickname, Tumi, as opposed to igama lam elipheleleyo and worst of all not my surname - and for a long time I entertained this. But through my writing I try to preserve my ancestry with something as simple as my surname, even as I write ndiyazikhumbuza ukuba ndingu Qhali, ngwana wa Mamorena Qhali, khosatsana ea Tsolobeng, mosali oa Thabo Qhali, Mpeli, Lekgolokwe.

I grew up being told that surnames are the names of family members who passed on – abantu abadala, as historically there were no surnames. When I was younger it was easier to be Tumi Qhali, than Qhali, ngoba uTumi didn't get mad about issues, Tumi accepted. And Tumi was convenient. Growing up if I got mad, I reminded myself that I at least did not live in the times of apartheid, so I should not be as angry as abanye abantu. That I should appreciate what I have - the country we have – that I should not scream at people who still see my colour and see inferiority – that I should not be mad at white people or black men and at myself for doing nothing. But hayi, it is not okay. There is no moving on from some things. Ndicaphukile. Imibongo yam idikiwe. Ndifuna ukukhala in public all the time when I think of the violence on children nabafazi, but I do not. I read iphepha and I want to cry. I watch indaba and I want to cry. How can I raise abantwana filled with trapped tears? Kwimibongo yam ndikhupha lento ingaphakathi that has been building up for years, possibly even before I was born.

I went to an urban *Model C* school where we were reminded constantly of how privileged we were to go to isikolo esinjeya – where we were told to tuck in our tongues and swim in white waters that drowned us every Thursday. As I grew older, I started saying igama lam nefani yam, Qhali, with pride. I knew that writing with this name meant I had to write something important to me, to others. I took on igama le-family yam because it placed me in a position of responsibility as a writer. My writing name and surname, Qhali, always has to go with a slow-paced explanation, where I must first slowly say the click sound otherwise it is as though u 'Q' akekho then I am Hali. NO! I also often have to explain that is pronounced with a "d" though written with an "l" because its Southern Sotho. Using ifani yam gives me fire to tackle izinto.

Using my surname comes with a deep archaic emotion ngaphakathi kum. I write the things that trouble me and lento ifuna ukuba ndibe-blunt nge-emotions zam nezinto endibhala ngazo xa ndibhala as Qhali, so I do not run around the forest. I can only do this as Qhali. uQhali doesn't try ukundikhusela from izinto. uQhali is mad about izinto and ungqala kuyo ngqo into. uQhali – ublaythent, and Qhali remembers things I have tried to forget.

I found myself filled with anger at ilahleko around me. Ilahleko ye innocence, abantu, safety nomzimba wam. Kwisifundo sika Beyers I found i-confidence yokubhala as Qhali and I wrote umbongo othi “Black Brother”. Umbongo wona ujongene ne inequality, the results of colonialism, the result of things being stolen from abantu abamnyama. I allowed myself to feel angry in order to write lombongo and I began to also play with breaking language in this poem. There is a place where language ends and art begins. Kulombongo I was reminded of lento. Ixesha lifikile lokuba sidale ezinye iindlela zokubhala that represent our true state as we are now – how we express ourselves now – as we relate with each other ngoku - that allow all of us to partake in the recording of ihistory yethu – ways that honour all of us. Kudala sikhula isilungu, nesiXhosa but at a much slower pace. Sometimes to go forward funeke sibuyele umva and to go back kufuneka siyephambili.

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## NDISABHALA IMIBONGO

*Ngokubhalwa ngu Mangaliso Welcome Buzani* | Ndisabhala Imibongo | yi-Imbizo Art Publishing ngo-2014

Imibongo ka Mangaliso Buzani ekwincwadi yakhe ethi *Ndisabhala Imibongo* ishicilelwe yi-Imbizo Art Publishing ngo-2014, ibonisa umbhali okwazi ukubhala ngezinto ezohlukileyo. Le ncwadi ijongene neenkumbulo, nothando oludlulileyo, ukufa, nezigulo esidibana nazo apha phandle njengolutsha. Lo mbhali ukhulele eNew Brighton ePort Elizabeth, ilokishi efamous kakhulu eMzansi Afrika, ngoba ikhulise iistuggle heros ezinintsi. Umfundi udibana nentlalo yaseNew Brighton kulencwadi. Kwincwadi yakhe uBuzani uyizobe kakuhle imvelaphi yakhe yase New Brighton which also gave context and an environment kwimibongo yakhe. uBomi base New Brighton ngoku abusafani. Ulutsha lunezinye ingxaki. Inkululeko yafika kodwa akukho misebenzi. Ulutsha luhleli, lutyhafile, abafana bayagebenga. Kodwa nangona kukubi kweminye imizi kukhona ubuhle bempilo for abahlali base New Brighton – nje ngokuba abantwana besakwazi ukudlala esitratweni; abantu abathandanayo ungababhaqa kwikona zabo ezitalatweni kwaye nasebusuku.

Imibongo ka Buzani iveza iziganeko zobomi bomfana waselokishini. Iveza imixholo efana nothando, ubuhlobo, ukufa, neendidi zabantu abafana noo “*Singantsontso*” ongadibana nabo elokishini.

*USigantsontso*

*Usigantsontso wayeyindoda elikroti*

*wayesithi akunyathela luphakame uthuli*

*ngoba yena wayengahambi nje wayenyathela...*

Buzani, 2014, p 10

Le ncwadi ineziqendu ezintathu. Esokuqala sijongene nobomi bendoda jikelele. Esesibini sibhekise kwindalo kaThixo ingakumbi abantu abangomama, ilanga, umhlaba, ulwandle, umoya njalo-njalo. Esokugqibela sijonge iingxwelerha zobomi, nentlungu. Kwesisiqendu sesibini uBuzani ubonga ubunganga belanga, intlonti yomoya, ubungangamsha bomhlaba ukuquka nobuhle namandla wabantu ababhinqileyo njengombongo wakhe othi “Utishala” okanye nomnye “*Notumato*”. Kwimibongo emininzi njengo “Notumato”, “Izihlangu”, “Naliti mthungi wamanxeba am” kunye neminye uBuzani undikhumbuza iimbhongi zaseSpain abathanda ukwamntwiso izinto.

Notumato

Ntombi yakwasityalo

Yakwamfuno ngesiduko

Qhayiya lesitiya

Mntwana kamama

Owatyalwa ngutata ngentlonipho...

Buzani, 2014, p. 32

Incwadi kaBuzani iveze umbhali omtsha obhala ngolwimi lolutsha, imibongo elula, ehlekisayo, kunye nemibongo esindayo. Ulwimi alusebenzisayo luveza umbhali oye wabanefuthe lolwimi lwasedolophini. Omnye umbongo othi “*uNdonda*” uthetha ngabantu abangomama abanconywa yindoda. Nangona umbongo unemigca ehlekisayo uBuzani ukrobise into esisaphila nayo yokuba ixabiso lebhinqa lijongwa ngomzimba nangobuso balo. Omnye umbongo kule ncwadi othi “Ukuwa kwendoda enobuntu ebantwini”, uBuzani ubhale ngendoda eyayihloniphekile, indoda eyazakhela ubomi nonkosikazi wayo, baphila ngecawe nebhayibhile, kwathi gqi idikazi, londoda yalahla unkosikazi wayo. Ezizinto zimeko zanamhlanje ezinqabileyo kuncwadi lwesiXhosa. Kucacile yona incwadi ibhalwe ngamehlo endoda njengemibongo efana no “Yabhideka embhareni indoda enkulu”, “UNdoda”, “Umfazi oze ngaphandle kwelobola”, “Dlala moya dlala” kunye no “Intombi endiyifunayo”. Lemibongo iveza imvakalelo nemibono yendoda. Eminye imibongo ithetha ngemizimba yabantu ababhinqileyo iphinde ithethe ngomthwalo wabantu besifazane into ekhabanayo kodwa iveza inyani yobomi esiphila kuwo.

Nangona uBuzani emtsha, kwaye ebhala imibongo yalemihla ngolwimi olufikelelekayo, kweminye imibongo uyacaca ukuba ufuthelwe ngababhali bakudala besiXhosa. Umbongo othi “Intombi endiyifunayo” iveza ifuthe lika Mqhayi ngokuba lombongo usondele kumbongo othi

“Umntu endimthandayo”. uMqhayi ke ukhulise abantu abaninzi esiXhoseni. Umbhali lo yena uthetha ngamabhinqa kulo umbongo abe uMqhayi yena wayethetha ngabantu gabalala. Umbongo wokuqala kulencwadi uveza ubuchule bukaBuzani wokuzoba umntu nezinto - eyona nto ihamba phambili ngale ncwadi. Umbongo wona uthetha ngendoda eyabhaqa intombi entle eklabhini.

Yabhideka embhareni indoda enkulu

Yambhaqa ngaphantsi kwezibane ezibhanya-bhanya

emhle ngaphantsi kwelo litha esisimoyoywana

yachwechwa indoda icebuka kweloo hlanga lakwandoda

Buzani, 2019, p. 8

Apha lo mbhali uzoba umfanekiso ngqodweni kwaye wenza into endiyithandayo esiXhoseni yokusebenzisa igama elinye lokuveza umntu okanye imeko - xa ethetha “ngesimoyoywana” wenza lento uBuzani. Umntu osisimoyoywana apha ngumntu omhle, ozibumbileyo, ozicuthileyo waze wabonwa yindoda eyabhideka yatsaleka bobobuhle. Nomnye umbongo othi “Ndisuke ndaziva ndingumfi” ubonisa ubuchule bukaBuzani bokubhala ngesakhono sokubhala imvakalelo, kwaye nentalente kaBuzani yokuchukumisa intliziyo ingakumbi intliziyo ekhathazekileyo:

Ndisuke ndaziva ndingumfi

1

Ndiyalila

ndimanzisa umhlaba

nalu ulwandle

nanga amaza

ayandigubungela

ndiyakhala

ndiyangxola

andivelwa ntweni

ndisuke ndaziva ndingumfi

bonke bayahleka

bathi usizi alutyiwa

Buzani, 2014, p. 40

Kulo mbongo neminye uBuzani (2019, 40-43) uveza ubuchule bokuzoba intlungu kwimigca emifutshane kodwa kule migca uzoba umfanekiso nqondweni; nje ngemigca ethi “nanga amaza ayandigubungela” okanye omnye othi, “ndiyazika ndiyinqanawa...entlitheka ematyeni”, nomnye umgca, “kuvuthuza umoya...kuncothuka iinwele”

Kumbongo othi “Ubomi” uBuzani kulapho agqama khona kwitalente yokubhala nge-symbolism. Lombongo omfutshane uzoba imini yokuzalwa aphinde azobe ubuhle nobunzima bokukhulelwa usisifazana. Kule mibongo kukho uvelwano nabantu besifazana.

Ngumthombo

umpompoza amanzi abandayo

kwinyanga yoMnga

kucula amaza

aculela iimbewu kulwandlekazi

Buzani, 2014

Incwadi yona inezipho umfundi angadibana nazo njengalombongo osentla obhalwe ngento eqhelekileyo ngendlela ehlukelelyo. Omnye othi “Dlala moya dlala” naye ubonga intlonti yomoya ngendlela engaqhelekanga, ude uBuzani anike umoya izandla eziphakamisa iilokhe.

Kodwa iphinde kwayona le ncwadi ibenemibongo elula engatsokothanga, imibongo efana no “UNdoda”, okanye “Noluvuyo” no “Cikizwa”. Kusanqabile ukuba ulutsha olubhala imibongo, kwaye ulutsha olu-bilingual, lufumane amathuba okushicilelwa incwadi epheleleyo yesiXhosa. Okukunqaba kwenza ukuba ulutsha lungabinamdlala wokufunda imibongo yesiXhosa, ngoba

azixhaphakanga iincwadi zesiXhosa ezifikelekayo kulutsha. Yilonto le ncwadi ibalulekile ngoba uBuzani uze nolwimi olutsha, nemibongo efikelekayo ngamagama awakhethayo, izihloko, kunye nobude bemibongo yakhe.

*Return to Tsolobeng - Multicultural beings in search of Inkenqe*

In many African cultures, including the isiXhosa culture, it is believed that each family is said to have one or more members who will suffer with *ilengulo yeKenqe*. It is believed that this person, is called to be the mediator between two worlds, endowed with the responsibility to heal generational and present illnesses in the bloodlines. In African cultures, most children will grow up to learn of *inkenqe*, but sadly some will not but they will be called nonetheless, and there, unknowingly, a turbulent journey will unfold. *Ikengqe* is the isiXhosa name given to a living spirit that is a portal into another – perhaps, parallel world. The source. This source is believed to be the source from which the writer draws inspiration from, from which the scientist finds answers from. It is what drives them despite the relentless internal and external turmoil.

In his paper Mxolisi Nyezwa (2015) explores the concepts of the *duende* and *inkenqe*. Nyezwa references Simphiwe Nolushungu who describes *inkenqe* as follows:

...a power that lives in a person in a form of a spirit that is reflected through a person's actions and communication. If you do not have *inkenqe* you cannot make it as a musician or a poet, and *duende* or *inkenqe* cannot be avoided or ignored, it must be embraced by the artists, who must let it take charge of his or her creative life.

Much of Xhosa customs and beliefs have not been recorded and much has been passed down through oral history. As a result, the full understanding of such historical, cultural and spiritual concepts is lost and what was caught is misunderstood. Nolushungu's views paint the connection of *inkenqe* to spirituality, to how we communicate, to what we do. In isiXhosa the word spirit is never used as lightly as it is used in English, and this is to say that there are words in one language that have different values in another.

It must be noted that Xhosa beliefs in spirituality include the ability for a person to cross over into another place where ancestors reside. Some have explained that crossing over, in the African context, includes having ones' body being taken over by a spirit or ancestor who crosses over and enters the human body into this world to connect with the living, to bring

uxolo neempendulo. Furthermore, in isiXhosa for one to have inkenqe it means they are called to the spiritual path of ubugqirha, of healing others, and translated to English this means to have “the calling” or to be a traditional healer. Other words synonymous with inkenqe are *intwaso*, *umsholugu*, *inkathazo* or *ukugula ngesintu*; the latter term directly translated means to be sick with humanity. Again, to have a sickness in this context, in isiXhosa, does not mean the same thing it means in English.

The word *sickness* here refers to *a calling* that which is a hereditary gift and burden, that will cause one to be unwell, until they accept the responsibility to heal. The latter explanation still does much injustice to the one word, *ingulo*, which truly cannot just be translated into English as “a sickness,” in this context. Though in some cases people with inkenqe have been classified as suffering from mental health illness, in African culture this sickness is not merely mental health sickness but rather a spiritual illness that is a connection to the source, and there is much research that has been done and is still being done in exploring the source. Nduduzo Makhathini, an award winning South African musician and traditional healer summarised the closeness of the other world to us in the following manner,

... it’s not a scale but a code to an ancient time, that if you go too deep, you might not come back. It might be the last thing you sing in your life, kuthiwe wavele wathula. Akaphindanga wakhuluma, akaphindanga wakwazi ukukhipha i-voice....  
What if that world eventually opens, will there be a need to sing? Will there be a need to play?

Makhathini, 2020

Raymond Federman (1993) writes, “Whether or not I speak French and English well, that is another question. And is not for me to answer. But the fact remains that I am a bilingual being, a double-headed mumbler, one could say, and as such also a bicultural being.” Bilingual or multilingual beings and writers are multi-layered and multi-cultural beings. But what does it mean to be multicultural for the being? Mentally, spiritually, socially and economically. What does it mean for one to be multicultural? I can answer from the perspective of a writer, being a multicultural being and bi or multilingual writer, offers both the writer and the reader different voices from one being, different views, different experiences and different worlds. It is both heavy and enlightening to be borne of this time as a spirit.

Is it also possible that this bilingualism breeds internal conflict for the bilingual writer who constantly has to choose? Yes. But if the writer can establish a source, a constant, one which they draw from, then this conflict is lessened and the writer understands that they are merely part of the process of creation inextricable from pain and healing, just as a mother must carry and birth a child without ever being able to return the child themselves to where they were first created, unless they both cross over. The child chooses the parent, to live here, long before the parts that carry the spirit into the body. This is the same with written work. Words and worlds want to come through us, here. In Namibia, the Himba tribe practice the tradition of the *Birth song*. And Stephen Liddle (2019) explains this tradition beautifully as he writes,

When a Himba woman decides to have a child, she goes off and sits under a tree, by herself, and she listens until she can hear the song of the child who wants to come. And after she's heard the song of this child, she comes back to the man who will be the child's father and teaches him the song. When the child is conceived, they sing the song of the child as a way of inviting the child. When she becomes pregnant, the mother teaches that child's song to the midwives and the old women of the village, so that when the child is born, the old women and the people gather around him/her and sing the child's song to welcome him/her. As the child grows up, the other villagers are taught the child's song. If the child falls, or gets hurt, someone picks him/her up and sings to him/her his/her song. When the child does something wonderful, or goes through the rites of puberty, then as a way of honouring this person, the people of the village sing his or her song.

Mak Manaka (2017), references Yang Wan Li who put it best when he said: "a man doesn't go in search of a poem; the poem comes in search of him." And similarly, Barbara Guest (2015) explores this idea, "when the identity of the poem is so fixed the poem is willing to trust itself to the poet." Creativity chooses us. It comes for you and stands at the edge of your tangible self, and yours is to open and enter the other world, as its creation will enter this one. In the African practice of *intwaso*, when one resists the calling, they often start to physically manifest illnesses, and tragic events may follow them until they somehow appease the other world. My favourite Russian poet, Tsvetaeva (2010) writes, "Things always chose me by the mark of my power, and often I wrote them almost against my will." Though perhaps *intwaso* may not find every soul to be a host, creativity does, and what is creativity but a spirit? And what happens when the human being does not allow it, out?

Of her Russian works, Tsvetaeva, explains that particular things of Russia chose her as their narrator and persuaded her to write the things she wrote. Tsvetaeva believed that she was a messenger of an entire land, and had to engage both present urgent matters, and past voices. Tsvetaeva also highlights that, “the poem is created by the poet in his unconscious state - in his natural state.” For Tsvetaeva the unconscious state is the natural state which is a sentiment shared by many African cultures. Tsvetaeva (2010) further elaborates that, “the condition of creation is a condition of dreaming, when suddenly obeying an unknown necessity, you set fire to a house/push your friend off a mountain.” From Tsvetaevas’ sentiments we can draw two things. Firstly, the writer or artist may be chosen to address the things of his or her land, willingly or unwillingly, there are things that the land wants to speak of through the being, the creator.

Secondly, the unconscious self is the natural self which uses this tangible present body to bring across words and creations from the other world – the natural world. As a writer and creative I have admired Tsvetaeva’s unashamed passion and how it comes through in her poetry and her essays, a passion which the Spanish refer to as the *duende*. Lorca in Kline’s translations (2007) suggests that poems without *duende* are void of emotion and Tsvetaeva carried this *duende* which Lorca in Kline described,

The magic power of a poem consists in it always being filled with *duende*, in its baptising all who gaze at it with dark water, since with *duende* it is easier to love, to understand, and be certain of being loved, and being understood, and this struggle for expression and the communication of that expression in poetry sometimes acquires a fatal character.

Lorca elaborates that the *duende* comes to release the thing to be released when he writes,

...the *duende* delights in struggling freely with the creator on the edge of the pit. Angel and Muse flee, with violin and compasses, and the *duende* wounds, and in trying to heal that wound that never heals, lies the strangeness, the inventiveness of a man’s work.

But is that enough? To know that something that came out of you comes from some unknown place. Some force, from somewhere? What of the origins of this force? Where does this thing come from?

This is the question of “the source.” Understanding “the source” and finding answers to satisfy oneself on any matter of this question of origin, is as important as breathing. Writing and literature encourages continuous thinking, questioning, and finding. Which is why writing and literature, for one who has experienced trauma is a tool towards healing from that trauma, as it allows for the questioning, the reflection, and the finding, in a safe place belonging only to the writer and the reader. Santoz Perez (2015) writes,

When I think about accessibility, I think about growing up surrounded by fences. I think about what my people no longer have, access. I think about who controls the armed point of access. I think about how I have been given access to the English language and the American poetry traditions, yet I do not have full access to my own native language and literature.

There is also much trauma that comes with the absence of access to ones’ own culture and origins. As a child I looked forward to each visit to my grandparents, ezilalini. I wanted to learn more about my isiXhosa and seSotho cultures - to hear more stories of my parents growing up, to learn more songs. Every day I wanted to hear stories of our family and then the day finally came. A day that has lived with me since – and has given me the greatest sense of identity that I have held on to throughout my life.

My parents decided to take us to a great grandmother whom we had never met, I was less than ten years old. My great grandmother, aunt to my later grandfather, and her daughter, lived at the top of a mountain in a rural village in the Eastern Cape. We drove for hours, uphill. It was the scariest and most exciting drive of my life. We were brimming with excitement to meet the oldest living member of our family. Further and further away from the smaller villages below, away from the tar roads, and the people, at the top of that mountain my great grandmother, who was well over a hundred years old, was waiting for us outside a green round house made of cow-dung and straw.

Sitting beside her, was her daughter, an elderly woman too, with whom she lived. The daughter was just over eighty years old. Two old women, hidden from all the world on the top of a mountain overlooking a river and entire worlds. Up there, two black rocks, held our entire family’s heritage. Alone. Alive. And with them were two horses and a sprawl of chickens roaming freely, I was home. I had found a tangible source. That day gave me a glimpse into

what was lost to make me. I found a large piece of myself up on that mountain. Up there, there was no English allowed. After that day I wanted desperately to never lose my language and my culture. But growing up in South Africa, on the edge of apartheid and into freedom, one thing I have seen is that black children are not raised to hold on to themselves but are raised to hold themselves back - ukuzibamba.

Later in life I started to write poetry in my mother tongue as a way of returning home. It was a very long journey to feeling free and comfortable to write in my mother tongue. In his interview with Robert Berold (2003), Ike Mboneni Muila was asked to elaborate on his experience on keeping with one's roots, he answered: "*When you go back to your roots and feel the real stuff, it's then that the real artist in you develops.*" There is something healing, magical and spiritual about creative writing, and about writing in your indigenous language, about accessing yourself and coming out with something that only art can create - just imagine feeling free and whole in your body. Without our languages, some things cannot find a way out of the body and back into the body. Huidobro (2020) theorises that a poet is solely responsible for his own creations. That our poetry comes from nowhere else but us. In 1912, Huidobro offered the theory – *Creationism*, which is quite similar to *Surrealism*. Creationism is a school of thought whereby a poem is created by the poet in the poet's mind and could have only come to life because the poet wrote it to life.

This is perhaps quite different from the preceding thoughts. Huidobro (2020) describes this thought as "a poem in which each constituent part, and the whole, present a new fact independent of the world, detached from any reality other than itself, because it takes place in the world as particular phenomenon, apart from and different from other phenomena." This theory is quite similar to *surrealism*. From a young age I was introduced to *surrealism* through the fairy-tale, *intsomi zoomakhulu*. Fairy-tales encouraged us to see life with endless sight, despite the horrors in-front of us. And this is what my mother tongues offered me growing up. There are stories we only know of in our mother tongues that carry with them lessons from our ancestors and translation is not the same as returning. Because literature in indigenous languages is still new and growing in comparison to English, our literature lives in *iintsomi* and song, which can be great inspirations for a writer especially one who tackles complex issues. Much of these for Africans, have been forgotten and unwritten. Most fairy tales for children, across the world, do not reflect their own identities. Kate Bernheimer (2010) writes of the fairy-tale and the different features of it, that show that the form is not a form without

thought and layers. Through iintsomi and song, black people have preserved much of their selves and of their history, but these must be written, the black being must write, remember, heal. This is the task of the writer. As Acker (2004) puts it “...why bother being so simplistic? Why bother with the lie of realism? Why bother with being so miserable, so reductive, when one could play?”

I propose that Creative Writing requires us to offer the reader a different way to consume reality including the realities of violence and injustice that pervades all societies, with over one in five women who will be violated at some point in their lives, whilst 1 in 71 men will be violated (National Sexual Violence Resource Centre, 2013). In her paper Sybil Baker (2007) writes of Anna Kavan who encourages that writers should delve into exploring unconventional techniques and that they must stray from realistic writing. Similarly, Camilla Roy (2004) on mainstream fiction, says she is inclined to, “assume separate and coherent individuals, each with a single body and character which are built rather than destroyed by conflict.” Here, Roy is writing in relation to Experimentalism. She says that mainstream fiction is a system intent on repressing social conflict and that the purpose of experimental work is to expose this system, to take people apart, to terrify and seduce.

On experimental work, anyone who has ever experienced a trauma is free to write, just write, free of the rules, free of the school of thought, free of the walls. Not every person will have the opportunity for formal counselling, but everyone is free to write. This is not to say that writing alone is the answer, but it provides relief, escape, and reality. Creative writing and Bi-or Multilingualism enables experimental writing to breathe and is a tool to deal with trauma. The writer is able to break language rules and thereby change realities or reframe narratives. Writers are able to bring forth new or old information that communities may not be ready to deal with until they see it differently, through art. .

In her essay, “Use This Word in a Sentence: ‘Experimental’”, Anne Lauterbach (2005) highlights the importance and challenges of experimentalism noting that not everyone wants to read experimental work. Like Roy, Lauterbach (2005) has had bad experiences with the “Experimental tag” because those who experiment are said to be opposed to form as opposed to not wanting to “conform”. Despite the above, the world is sporadic, it is violent and gruesome, and the land and its children are angry. We have to find creative ways to respond to the land and our bodies. We can no longer afford to overlook alternative medicine, healing and

means to achieve sustainable wellness. The ability to write is the invitation to explore ourselves, imvelaphi yethu, our pains and our joys. Raymond Federman (1993) suggests that everything – from the words, paragraphs, positions and spacing – it must all be reinvented. All these must be done to accompany the new writing. Each writer must be free to write the story in a way that will best convey it, and their innermost imperceptible breath, to set themselves free.

In his interview with Alan Finaly, Philip Zhuwao (1996) was asked how he felt about writing about the traumatising experience of being thrown into a cattle kraal by his grandfather as a way of punishing him for being afraid of the dark. This traumatising experience inflicted by ones' own grandfather resulted in Zhuwao being plagued by a life of nightmares. He said that though he wrote about this sometimes, he wanted to write more about it, but he was scared of how people would take it. The poet must write the poem that wants to be birthed, if the poet is to heal. The body must answer the call that has been heard, if ithwasa is to heal. But not all who have ikenqe and go on to ukuthwasa will go out to heal or fulfil their roles the same way; just as not poems, and stories will be the same. But the hosts must serve the source despite the fear. Fear will never fully leave a writer but pushing through the fear will drive you to walk into the water and come out of it, alive. And in your hand, you will hold the answer, iyeza for yourself and those around you.

## 10. i-SENSES ZIYAKHUMBULA THAT WHICH WE HAVE FORGOTTEN

April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - RJ 8-10

Enye indlela that can help umbhali articulate what they want creatively is to explore the senses. One writer who I have found has a good grasp of sight ngu Tina May Hall in her books, *Mercy and Jake Fight in the Kitchen*

.....A little sadness makes the water boil faster. Another forest fire, a mudslide, an earthquake. A suicide bomber in a hotel pool. An air strike on a wedding party.

When the flour tips off the counter onto the linoleum, their footprints materialize like magic, ghost steps, a diagram for dancing

Hall, 2010, p. 65

Tina May Hall makes use of various senses kwincwadi yakhe, particularly what she has observed. She describes indlela ayibona ngayo into and the spaces left. Her description of what can be seen by amehlo is what conveys the emotions she wants to convey. After my first class with uStacy Hardy I began to write much from the senses. Previously I found it difficult to remember the taste of things, ukutya, indoda. But as I wrote more, it was during one poem where I found that I remembered the taste of the man who violated me in university. Senses have a strange way yokugcina i-history whether you want it or not.

Some Xhosa poets make use of onomatopoeia very well such as intsomi kaNompucuko Zakaza from incwadi ethi *Zenithi Tsiyo-o*, apha udlala ngalomculo.

Umhlobo Wenene

Okwenene ke uyibonile ichwecwaha isingise kulo mana yase mandi-zonka:

Cwayi, cwayi, cwayi...

Zakaza, 2015.

By referencing the senses each poem creates a unique world where one can feel, abone, ave, smell and be closer to the actual experience.

## 11. VOICES OF LOSS

19 April 2020 – RJ 11

Raymond Federman (1993), a bilingual writer, speaks of “a voice within a voice” – “Ilizwi ngaphakathi kwilizwi” where he is speaking on the life of a bilingual writer. I was intrigued by this essay because of my beliefs of other ancestral voices, and furthermore the different voices I have from the different environments, cultures and religions that have shaped me.

In *The Nation's Bounty: The Xhosa Poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho*, Mgqwetho's poetry of lost culture of black people in South Africa and the harsh life for a black woman in the country at the time is found in each poem. Mgqwetho, I propose, was a bicultural being. In her poem “Umfula Wosizi!!” translated to “The stream of despair” and in ““Ub'inqo”!! We-Afrika!!” which is also translated in “Africa's petticoat” Mgqwetho in contrast to her male peers criticizes the betrayal of inkcubeko yabantu abamnyama. Apha uMgqwetho ukhabana nentshumayelo zeembhongi ezifana noMema.

Umfula! Wosizi!!

Senze sikumbule imihla yobawo ababe'inqa inc'a ngokuswela Izwi

Kodwa ubanyusa e matambekeni

Njengayo imihlambi yase Giliyadi.

The stream of despair

Bring to mind the days of our fathers;

before the word came they wore grass skirts,

but tended them on the slopes

like flock on Mount Gilead.

Mgqwetho in Opland, 2007, pp. 212-213

Kwincwadi ethi *Customs and Beliefs of /Xam Bushmen* ebihlolwa ngu Jeremy C. Hollman isukela kwirikhodings zikaBleek no Lucy Loyd bezibaliselwa zi people, oDaikwain no Hankkass'o; kubhalwa ngenkolo yebantu bokuqala eMzantsi, mhlawumbi, nasebomini. Ababantu, oo /Xam, babekholelwa kwamandla wamanzi nelanga, ingakumbi ilanga ababelidibanisa noQamata okanye u Cam.

The rains bolts do this; when a girl does not want us to talk to other, if we speak to her she curses our mouth with which we have spoken to her. Things like these enter us; or if they not enter us, things like this fall (from the clouds) together with the rain water because the rain is angry with us.....

The rain behaves just as the girl does. Therefore, the rain does not like us, because it feels that the girl does not want us to talk.

Hollman, 2004. p. 133

Writing enables us to recall that which we left behind, that which we lost, and to truly see what we have been holding onto that we might have to let go. Sertima (1991) in her essay references Hooks who said that "...it is not just the minds of blacks that have been colonized but the imaginations too." The lines above could not be more significant for a country such as SA with i-history ye-apartheid and in light of the above one has to contend with the reality that our writers come from this history which has yielded a population of people reeling to reclaim imaginations. I believe that drawing from our eroding cultures practices and beliefs, we can enrich our poetry, our work and society. Umbongo wam othi "**September 16, 2013 (a.s) - Ndijinga elangeni**" takes a surreal, mystical and *phantasmagorical approach*; laced with African beliefs and practices of the African traditional calling and African spirituality. And this poem too was written from a stream of consciousness state coming from a dream state. There is a calming effect that this style of writing has for one dealing with loss and writing out one's dreams can allow them to return to them to find subconscious messages that we are communicating with our inner healers.

The poem below comes from Stephen Watson's (1991) book, *Song of the Broken String, Return of the Moon: Versions of the /Xam*, which is based off inguquleko ye-narratives in the Bleek and Lloyd Collection of the 19th-century. The /Xam people's views and beliefs are worth remembering and preserving in our creative writing just as any culture and personal history is:

Because  
Of a people,  
Because of others.  
Other people,  
Who came  
Breaking  
The string for me,  
The earth  
Is not earth

“Song of the Broken String”, *Return of the Moon: Versions of the /Xam*, Stephen  
Watson, 1991

## 11.2 Translated/Bilingual Writers and Reading

I have always been drawn to abantu base-China, nase-Japan, especially kwinkcubeko yabo which is intricately linked to nature. Through i-reading classes I was fascinated by iTao te Ching, with its historical and spiritual prevalence to Chinese culture, which I was introduced to by Robert Berold. Le mibongo ithetha nge eternity, transcendence and nature which I believe to be therapeutic subjects to write about, and channel when writing.

### 11.2.1 Asian Writers, Spirituality, nemibongo

It is proposed that this collection of the Tao te Ching, yinqokelelo of ancient Chinese wisdom, rather than just the writing of Loa Tzu. Kum ifana namaqhalo passed down through generations. Han Shans’ *Cold Mountain* poems from the 8th century, are written by someone ekuthwa wayeligeza elabalekela entabeni and wrote imibongo kwamatye, kwiimithi, iindonga, neentaba, much like Africans have done and the /Xam people of South Africa have with art to preserve our stories.

But in isiXhosa it is most likely that this man who is believed to have written the original Cold Mountain poems had *inkenqe*. Ndinomdla kwi-understanding yama-China of i-nature and their own appreciation of their spirituality and the power of nature which is present in their writing. The first time I read about the philosophy of the string, which I write much about in my work, was through my early exposure to Chinese culture and their beliefs one being intangible connections (through the red string) to people we are walking towards in this life, to eternity, to transcendence. Le string yintambo engabonakaliyo ngaphakathi komntu linking us to each other. Asinokwazi cam ukuyicacisa kodwa poetry encourages us to imagine this string and other transcendent beings as though we could touch them within places that cannot be touched.

One

The Toa that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

The names that can be named is not the eternal name.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.

The name is the mother of ten thousand things.

Every desireless one can see the mystery.

*Loa Tzu Toa te Ching*, translated by Gia Feng and  
English, 5th century BC

Another Asian writer whom I have explored for his writings on ilahleko, ngu Kawabata. I was first drawn to Yasunari Kawabata through the *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories* which is a collection of amabali amafutshane which are strange, abstract, some simple but some shocking. Many have described Kawabata as a writer ahead of his time. And for short stories Kawabata had indlela yakhe e-unique of narrating short stories that stay with you. He also wrote in the style of stream of consciousness too, making it also clear kwamanye amabali ukuba ubhala iphupho. I found imibongo yakhe filled with great images and little truths that I seek for kwimibongo. Kuthwa uKawabata was influenced by i-surrealism, i-cubism, ne-dadaism. Kwimibongo which are about uthando for abantwana bam nomyeni wam I find that the influence of Asian philosophy and culture permeates imibongo yam such as in “**August 16, 2020 (a.s)** – Dear S, I have all the senses”; “**October 26, 2020 (a.s)** – Dear S, Purple.”

## 12. A BOOK REVIEW OF AN INNOVATIVE COLLECTION OF LOSS

Sindiswa Busuku-Mathese | Loud and Yellow Laughter | Botsotso | 2016.

*“The silence between the ticking, the darkness between the blinking. This was the measure of our separation.”*

Sindiswa Busuku-Mathese

Loud and Yellow Laughter is the poet's debut collection, an autobiography with a creative twist infusing images, personal documentation, poetry and prose. Busuku-Mathese dares to encourage the reader to create their own poems and extract their own truths from what she has put forward. The book is a collection of poems, photographs and other images of family artefacts, piecing together the writer's broken history and non-typical relationships with her adoptive father and her mother. Unlike conventional autobiographies the story is told through different forms from quotes to pictures to poetry. One piece is an application form that a family member filled in when enlisting for war - all clues to the broader story. This collaboration of forms is relevant for the South African writer of the 21st century who must offer the reader something different amidst a wide offering of literature inundated with western influence. The South African writer of the 21st century must find new ways to tell their story, be innovative in order to stand out – and this book stands out. Busuku-Mathese plays with structure, positioning, spacing and syntax on the page; making her book a voyage worth going on.

From the beginning Busuku-Mathese immediately draws the reader into the colourful and intriguing story of her life by first segmenting the book into three scenes, not chapters, scenes. Already this cinematic approach to a poetry book thrills the reader with the prospect of watching a story unfold onto a page. The story told is one filled with vivid imagery and some splendid surreal images that you won't find anywhere else like, "...those whose eyes shed their skin are the only ones who carry the light." The story starts by outlining the characters as would a film. The introduction of the characters makes for an easy start but immediately the reader

will learn that they will need to pay full attention to keep up with the events that moulded the writer's life right from the introduction of *The Girl Child* which is one of the main characters who goes unnamed in the collection. Why does *The Girl Child* fear *Uncle Bob*? Such questions linger as the reader begins to uncover new questions. Busuku-Mathese does not give answers in her searching. Rather, she asks that the reader search with her. Though this may seem evasive for one reading an autobiography, perhaps it is a better reflection of real life.

The characters are broken up into major characters and minor characters with the majors being *The Girl Child*, *The Mother* and *The Father*. This non-naming of the characters makes it clear that the book is a creative piece of literature, and a fine line will perhaps be seen between fiction and non-fiction. The non-naming is also the first sign of the distance that Busuku-Mathese creates with the story – never fully allowing the reader to know her – just as the narrator perhaps is still searching for herself. But this reservation and flirting with secrets makes for an intriguing read – as you page through the book hoping that the answer will come. After the description of the characters the book begins with *Scene I* which starts in “1931” and takes you on a tumultuous ride up to 1944. Busuku-Mathese's approach is to place the reader right in the middle of someone's life, right in the middle of a scene.

In the poem titled “1931”, the writer sets the scene of the chaotic life of *The Father*. A life which probably resulted in the similar life he offered his daughter. But the reader will not realise where they are or where they started, because Busuku-Mathese effortlessly, perhaps deliberately keeps the reader feeling lost until they are in the middle or the end. *Scene I* focuses on *The Father*. I appreciate “1931” as it is not just the beginning, it is also the title of a poem, it is the place – the year – that puts the reader where the writer wants them to be. Busuku-Mathese introduces one of the most intriguing styles of storytelling to come out of South African poetry in the 21st century. *Scene I* clearly sets the creative tone for the scenes that follow and bring us all the way to present day South Africa. Like all the other scenes, *Scene I* is an independent story but part of a bigger story, as it tells the story of *The Father*, selfishly sharing images he witnessed, and words planted in his memory. Images such as children being flung through burning windows by screaming mothers and a father telling his dogs and children that he married the “stupidest bitch alive.”

With each scene the book gets more layered, the story gets more intricate and slowly the reader begins to piece the writer's life together, moving from *The Father* to *The Mother* who was a

domestic helper – with a story of her own. As a result, though the book is a collection of 39 pieces, one has to read the story chronologically to fully appreciate each piece and grasp the soul of the book. The book requires the reader to listen, to work, to absorb and reflect. For a patient person in search of answers it is a worthwhile read. For one wanting easy reading with clear cut answers this will be a frustrating read. The story is told in a seemingly non-chronological order which I appreciate in books, allowing one to move back and forth across time. *Loud Yellow Laughter* is a gallery – one artist’s exhibition of life through words and little collectables that are their own poems. Perhaps this could be a new voice for South African autobiographies. Western writers have flooded the literary market in Africa and most readers buy based on writers they know of and what is widely available. Perhaps being innovative and offering the reader something unique can make the South African writers stand out in an overcrowded space.

This story is a sincere offering by a black South African woman, who allows others to perhaps find themselves in her searching – urging us to question who we are and who our parents are. The use of images as part of the poetic language steers away from your traditional poetry collection and draws in another kind of reader who wants a multi-faceted poetry experience. And just like any debut exhibition each piece of art can either be for you or not for you, but is it a piece of art? Yes. Some pieces in the book are straight forward and easy to chew on such as “Nude # 2”. While most pieces are more abstract, and full of splendid imagery that will stay with the reader long after the scenes have passed. Busuku-Mathese intricately weaves together a sense of “things missing”, from a missing father to a missing brother, a missing mother, a missing truth, a missing story - something many readers can relate to. Whether it was the intention or not, there is a sense of emptiness and love in each page. No answer is given only a life full of possibility, rummaging through an open-ended question. The collection leaves the reader wondering if the questions were never answered for the narrator or if the writer deliberately wanted to hold back parts of the story. This too is the strength of the book as much as it may frustrate a curious mind.

### 13. THE CATHARTIC STREAM ye-PROZI, NEMIBONGO EMIDE

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – RJ 12

The first time I had a keen interest in *i-prose poetry* was when I read *The Invitation* by Oriah Mountain Dreamer ndi na-12 and yatshintsha ubomi bam. I knew I wanted into efana nayo, poetic but simple and conversational like a letter.

“It doesn't interest me  
what you do for a living.  
I want to know  
what you ache for  
and if you dare to dream  
of meeting your heart's longing.”

Dreamer, 1999

Similar to *i-prose* poem is a *long poem* though inde ukodlula *i-prose*. ULynn Keller (2007) explores ubutyebi bombongo omde for the feminist writer allowing the feminist writer to delve into her social, religious, cultural and economic concerns. In my own work the long poem is the most liberating form for me, allowing me to explore and write on many concerns that I have. Umbongo wam othi, “**8 November 2019 (a.s)** - Dear S, I am trying not to follow you” is one such poem which allowed me to deal with my personal concerns and socio-economic concerns that wonder about in my mind,

and on the news  
i see children starting at me  
outside their mother's mouths  
and around them is a village on fire  
*thousands presumed dead*  
i see all the living ones and  
the dead one staring  
dark clouds born grow big above them  
this the place you left me in

uHazel Biana (2020) explores the feminist in her paper which is an extension of feminism by Bell Hooks. uBiana (2020), references Bell Hooks, a leader in the development of feminism, who said that feminism is “the movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” In her analysis uKeller is of the opinion that abhali besifazana, and feminists, have a great advantage with the long poem kwaye ne-society ine-advantage as it allows us to come closer to comprehending the role of the woman in history and culture, due to the freedom for umbhali to go back and forth in time in a long poem. Furthermore Keller (2007) suggests that umbongo omde allows many forms to live within i-space sakhona such as, “...narrative poems, sonnet sequences, extended dramatic monologues, prose long poems, serial poems...” In writing about trauma in the form a prose or a longer poem, one is allowed to delve into their own emotions, their unconscious. The long poem has helped me deal with my loss greatly with my poetry combing narrative poems, monologues and prose long poems.

Keller also posits that women took on this form much later than amadoda. Nyani ke nam owona mbongo omde endimthandayo endidibene nawo ngoka Aimé Césaire kwaye most long poems that I have come across have been written by men. Césaire’s (1969) long poem, “*Return to My Native Land*” is layered and does not address into enye qha. He also coined the termed *Negritude* which acknowledges that umntu omnyama, unenkubeko yakhe, ne-contribution yakhe. The poem is abounding with rich and rare images that depict the inner turmoil of the poet and of the desolation, nomzabalazo wabantu abamnyama, and himself in the most magical expressions. Eyona nto ndiyithandileyo, kulombongo is the way in which uCésaire used writing poetry as a form of protest and I have found poetry to be a great tool to protest. Prose and long poems lend themselves to stream of consciousness writing which is a cathartic experience. Writing without restraint, ngaphakathi kweengcinga zakho, ngaphandle kwazo, ukuzikhumbula, ukuzilibala, to fall freely ephapheni without the fear of being wrong or exposed because you somehow feel safe with words on a page. Yinto entle ukukhululeka ephapheni. Ukuvulela izilonda ezixinene ngaphakathi. Kwincwadi kaSadegh Hedayat, *The Blind Owl*, I felt more at home in his loss than in this world and that is what writing our loss can do for abanye abantu.

I will make an effort at squeezing this bunch but whether or not there is the least bit of truth in it- this I no longer know- I don’t know where I am and whether this patch of sky above my head or this small piece of ground which I am seated, ...

Hedayat, 2011, p. 29

Hedayat invites us into his stream of consciousness in this works. Uvumela imvakalelo yakhe and madness to pour out which all lead to the creative masterpiece that is this book, which was also my sanity.

## 14. IGAMA NGALINYE IS MORE

May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 – RJ 13

Surely one leaves elilizwe and goes to another when they write. It is this other world that I long to live in more than the supposedly real one I find myself writing in ngoku. But my only inclination to this world is the sight, sound, smell, and touch of abantwana bam. And so, I transverse back and forth between these two unbearably different worlds. I write of happenings in both worlds I live in including my travels of izinto endizibonayo pha kwelacala. Writers are both cursed and fortunate to be able to capture both these worlds and paint something of them, something that we can go to, remember, and find strength from. This painting of the world is what short poems are able to capture really well and sometimes it is a single word that captures the unknown.

In a seminar with Gqr. Kunju (2020) we had to recreate these moments that say everything we want to. As a writer tends to write more than less, this was one of those seminars that also greatly shaped my approach yokubhala imibongo emfitshane. It is much harder to write shorter poems than ezinde but there is so much enlightenment one can get ngokukhangela amagama that hold yonke into abafuna ukuyithetha. Drawing from esisifundo sika Gqr. Kunju I was encouraged to bring forth the taste, smells, sounds, appearance of the other worlds I go to, and the different times in our lives too. I admire imibongo that bring forward a time that has passed from here and other people's worlds with the briefest of lines such as vangile gantsho's poetry found in *red cotton*

A girl    a spoon    a large plate  
Seven children    each with spoons  
Only    she    is    left    hungry

gantsho, 2018

As though she were painting, gantsho captures a moment yentlupheko and sorrow that is abundant in Africa. I am drawn to le mbhongi ne-ability yakhe to capture reality in its most poetic form. But furthermore, gantsho's work holds the brokenness and beauty of South Africa. Umsebenzi wakhe is conscious – yet tender, abstract – yet tangible, distressing, and delicate. There is a sincerity, vulnerability and softness to her hand that one cannot mistake.

## 15. POETICS OF ILAHLEKO, SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE WRITING

May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – RJ 14

uMbungwana (2020) kwisifundo sakhe sokuzoba ngamagama, ukhuthaza ukuba ukuze ndibhale lento endifuna ukuyibhala kufuneka ndiyizobe. Ukuzoba ilahleko kodlula ukuyichaza.

uMbungwana asks that as writers we should try write poems that can achieve three things:

- to write something that people can relate to,
- something that paints the world,
- to try make use of alliterations

Ezi objectives zibalulekile kum. I want to write poetry that African women and girls can relate to. Furthermore, I want to write of present circumstances of the losses of women and children, using images and sounds in poetry to convey our losses but not necessarily sound through alliterations but the musicality of the poem too ngezinye iindlela such as indlela obhalwe ngawo ephepheni. IsiXhosa kodwa kesona not only comes with umculo kwindlela umbongo obhalwe ngayo but also in the words zesiXhosa - kukho umculo. By virtue of writing ngesiXhosa, one is that much closer to musicality, it's up to the writer to take it further and truly allow the images and sounds to dance off iphepha.

Marian Nader (2010) analyses the works of Sylvia Plath and Elizabeth Bishop, particularly the visual power of imisebenzi yabo. Nader refers to how Plath was shaped by Bishop particularly how Bishop was able ukubhala objectively, while Plath was more subjective in her approach. "Plath admired Bishop's poetry for being real, that is intimate, but not self-obsessed, concerned with aestheticism and pleasure-giving". This was the type of poetry she aspired to write." Many credited Bishop for her ability to intimately frame izinto ezaziqhubekayo around her, the objects, the minor details, and the environments of others and her own. But to do this kakuhle one must really put a reader there, in that moment. Both, ezimbhongi drew from their very deep personal experiences to inspire imibongo yabo.

Kodwa bohluke nge objectivity versus subjectivity which can be seen in Bishop's poem "Sestina" and in Plath's confessional poem, "Daddy". Marie Dickie (1994) has also written widely about Elizabeth Bishop and kwi phepha lakhe she referenced Marianne Moore who famously said that "Elizabeth Bishop is spectacular about being unspectacular". But what Bishop did really well was to frame izinto ezincinci, acts/actions/happenings, by always finding a way to name the things she is writing about.

### 15.1 The Body Yentlungu

After trauma, I stay with the pain elandelayo. To be away from abanye. And after the world moves on from feeling sorry for me, I pretend to move on nabo. I act like a normal member of society despite the trauma in the body. Eat, sleep, wake up. This is what I do. I go to work – I work harder. I meet with friends, and I play with abantwana. The only difference between mna and abantu around me is that I have a new companion that lives with me, walks with me, sleeps with me, wakes me up in the middle of the night and breathes through me. Though I hide this new friend it finds a way to come out. Intlungu ayifuni ukuhlala ngaphakathi. It is not natural. Pain is not who we are.

One of the first poems I wrote for this collection was a poem titled, "July 14, 2001 - A dying". After I wrote the poem I fell ill, ndagaba. For the rest of the week, I experienced an unbearable discomfort emzimbeni. To write lo mbongo, I made use of stream of consciousness, never stopping to think, or edit. It was also written in the first person which made the experience yokuyibhala very intimate and clearly subjective, something that uElizabeth Bishop may have done differently, but I am certain Plath would have taken the same approach I did. Lo mbongo made me so sick, and emotional and when ixesha came khange ndikwazi ukuyifunda to my peers. When we then began working on my thesis as a collection, it took over six hours to edit this one poem with my English supervisor. What became evident is that this particular story had been trapped in my body, and writing it out of my body, brought to the surface the sickness of it.

In a paper on pain and emotion according to Lumley et al (2011), in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, pain is categorised into acute and chronic. Kuthwa intlungu is an alarm to the body, an alarm that something valuable has been damaged ngaphakathi:

an indicator of potential tissue damage... an acute pain can be viewed as an adaptive alarm, alerting the person to attend to the cause of the pain and motivating action to prevent tissue damage, protect the affected body part, and avoid similar future encounters.

Lumely et al, 2011.

Chronic pain isukela from psychological states and yona it serves no biologic purpose kwaye ayina endpoint. What does one do then when they realise that intlungu abadibene nayo ingaphinda ibuye? I choose to write. The same journal ithi, “Emotions are integral to the conceptualization, assessment, and treatment of persistent pain. Research should clarify when to eliminate or attenuate negative emotions, and when to access, experience, and express them” (Lumely et al, 2011).

For me poetry and writing in my mother tongue is a form of expressing and ukwehlisa amandla wentlungu in me, it helps eliminate, attenuate, access, experience, and express my pain. And when I write of umakhulu wam, and when I write in seSotho, it is my way of touching my grandmother, my culture, my father. Le migca below are part of Ike Muila’s tribute to Motandinyane, found in *Complete poems: Isabella Motadinyane*, one of my great bilingual influences in South African poetry.

she told me she won’t live long because of her stomach ulcer complication. she told me her mother took her to a family planning clinic for sterilization and birth control while she was a young school kid for fear of unwanted pregnancy, she told me her tubes got blocked and that led to her life threatening situation...stomach sore pains which would finally take her life

Muila in Motandinyane, 2016

uMotadinyane wrote in the face of her suffering body. Umbonogo wakhe omnye gave name to an entire publishing house. Her poetry is filled with rhythm and energy and love for ubomi. I have wondered ukuba waye ngubani lomfazi? Wayenjani? How did she carry intlungu yakhe ngapakhathi when around other people? Did yonke lentlungu engaphakathi affect and or inspire her writing? I believe xa sibhala sisezintlungwini, nakanjani, ikhona into eqala ukuphola.

## 15.2 Izinto ezinqabileyo esixhoseni

I am inspired by the new structures of writing that isiXhosa poets are introducing to literature such as the new work of Mbungwana which is rare not just for its new structures but also the topics she deals with including sexuality, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Kwelibali lika Toki uMbungwana uses interesting line breaks to direct the reading of the story. Isanqabile lendlela yokubhala imibongo esiXhoseni. Imigca yakhe inemifanekiso etyebileyo. Imibongo kaMbungwana indinika isibindi sokubhala ngendlela engaqhelekanga esiXhoseni.

...UToki wamithisa zonke iinjakazi zengingqi/ UToki uhloma ashiye/ Agqithele kumhlaba ochumileyo.

UToki wawaxhapha onke amaqanda enkukhu zalapha/ Wabuya enomgada elalini/ Iimbongi ezichongelwe isizwe zambonga uToki/ Zimncoma ukukhalipha/ UMamise wabizwa ngenjakazi emabele made kukondla amatshotsho kaToki/ UToki nguGc'numzi / UMLondolozisi/ UGcin' usapho/ UMamise lintshontsho likaToki.

UToki ulala evundwini/ UMamise phandle yinja/ UMamise yinjakazi ekhusela yonke le mibundlwana...\*\*

Mbungwana, 2019.

The story above is innovative in his structure. Also in this poem Mbungwana uses the lives of dogs to paint the parallel lives of being a woman in a man's world. This story is innovative and layered and so unique in its approach of the harsh inequalities faced by women.

In "Imilebe Yethu" uMbungwana ubhala ngezinto ezi taboo kwisiXhoseni, sexual body parts endingathethi ngazo ngesiXhosa; the climaxing of the body part; the remembering; and the longing, in the most visceral images that awaken the body and send the Xhosa mind on a wild journey of cultural explosion. The freedom to play with structure can be seen in kumbongo wam othi "July 22, 1990 -Phantsi komzimba womnyeni."

Le mifanekiso ebhalwe kulombongo iveza izinto ezithethwa kwigumbi elinabantu ababini. Kodwa kwisilungu into yokwabelana ngesondo sikhule siyibukela kwayesiyifunda. Yiyo nalonto kulula ukubhala ngesondo kwisilungu, hayi esiXhoseni. Her rich images in this poem are a lesson on carving a passing lasting moment, a scene of expression of uthando and feeling through the senses. Ndiyavuya ukubona imibongo efana nale kaMbungwana, ebhalwe ngumntu ongumama. Mbungwana offers the rareness that I am in search of in isiXhosa books. Lombongo uthethelela abantu abakhangela ithemba lokuba ngenye emini sizophila kwilizwe elamkela bonke abantu to be free in our bodies in all our fullness and identity.

## 16. PERSONAL POLITICS AS INSPIRATION FOR WRITING ILAHLEKO

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – RJ 15

If we are to understand that everything is political, the body, the spirit... everything is somehow shaped by the political environments we live in then wouldn't all poetry be political?

gantsho, MACW Lecture, 2020.

Politics starts inside us – imvelaphi yam, ilahleko lam, ilahleko labanye omama nabantwana, my circumstance – these are my politics. gantsho encourages ukuba ndibhale my personal politics in a non-political way, in both the languages ezingaphakathi kum. The point in creating such poetry is to free the political matter that wants to be freed. gantsho's seminar on this topic is important to me because of my subject matter. Umama uToni Morrison yena uthi (as quoted in gantsho's seminar): "It has to be both: beautiful & political at the same time. I'm not interested in art that is not in the world. And it's not just the narrative, it's not just the story; it's the language & the structure & what's going on behind it."

If one can fuse the art of politics and ukubhala, they can yield eremarkable results. Something that speaks to so much more than our own matter. In her book titled *The Use of the Creative Therapies with Chemical Dependency Issues*, uStephanie Brooks uthi in order to avoid being too autobiographical umntu kufuneke aqonde izinto ezimbini ngombongo, as cited by uRichard Hugo xa wayesithi:

1. The prompting subject that inspires the individual;
2. There is a poem that is discovered along the way.

The first part is merely a way of finding your way into the true nature of the poem. Below I briefly look at ababhali abhala i-personal politics zabo, which have inspired me.

i know now how tata felt  
trapped under unflinching expectation  
a butterfly with broken limbs in a jar  
here there are blooming weeds blossoming lava  
Excerpt from an “old bride who paid her own lobola”

gantsho, 2018.

The poem’s likening of a man to a butterfly with broken limbs – goodness – so tender and rare - a short poem where gantsho also tackles the politics of her father’s life and her own.

Did our mothers invent loneliness or did it make them our mothers were we  
fathered by silence or just looking to explain away this quiet is it wasteful to pray  
for our brothers in a language they never learned

Elhillo, 2017

In this poem lo mbhali uzanenye indlela yokubhala i-loss yomntu. Akana punctuation which gives me umdla of figuring things out on my own as I read. I also appreciate how lombhali infuses izihloko ezohlukileyo kumbongo omnye in a few short lines including the lonely islands abafazi find themselves in, the question of fathering and missing fathers, and the topic of lost tongues. The style the author plays with is new and presents the realities in a unique way for the reader to consume, the use of small letters to hold big issues is also relevant and brilliant and of course the slipping away of one’s mother tongue is present in the poem too. Lo mbongo has managed to deal with so many losses in one poem.

Tell me it was for the hunger  
& nothing less. For hunger is to give  
the body what it knows  
it cannot keep.

Vuong, 2019

Vuong is delicate, intuitive, accessible, and open to sharing i-personal truths. “Say surrender. Say alabaster. Switchblade.” In this line Voung explores another way of weaving in musicality with vocabulary. I find that poetry that deals with personal politics can be a beautiful mess that invites a reader to have their own internal dialogues through the multi-layered patched up poetic road offered by the poem. This approach to poetry, reflecting on one’s personal politics, affected how I approached ukubhala going forward. Understanding that our personal experiences and realities are political, and that I can write of this politics just as urgently, pushed me ukubandibhale with conviction on my personal matters which now seemed so much more important, to me.

And though there is an element of selfishness that I felt with accepting this new sentiment, I also feel free to be selfish. The first poem ephume kule seminar that best represents this conviction ngu “**8 November, 2019 (a.s)** - Dear S, I am trying not to follow you.” For the first time it was during the writing of this poem that I faced the external politics that were happening around me and where they met my internal politics. In this poem it became clear to me that andikwazi ukohlukisa the politics zalomhlaba from my own; that I cannot hurt less because others are hurting more; that the world is mess, but so am I. It was during the writing of lo mbongo that I somehow felt I could write about the state of my mind, in all its mess, and feel no shame, moving between indlu yam emdaka, ingubo zam ezingondlulwanga, the desire for isibeleko sika mama despite the plight of other women who have no homes.

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare,”

*Audry Lorde, A Burst of Light and Other Essays, 1988.*

## 17. UMCULO WEMIBONGO OHAMBO NELAHLEKO

May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 – RJ 16

In an article titled “Poems are a Complex” by Robert Creeley (1965), Creeley states that poems come into existence as a result of many variables, enye yazo is sound and rhythm. I try to write the music of the poem. The pace, the urgency, i-lows kunye ne-highs. There is a melody in how the poem is written kunye nendlela efundwa ngayo. Ndithanda i-rhythms in the Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva’s work. Imibongo yakhe is incrusted with different forms of love and pain, never just dealing with one:

### **Poems for Blok**

Your name is a – bird in my hand,

A piece of ice on my tongue.

The lips’ quick opening.

Your name – four letters.

A ball caught in flight,

A silver bell in my mouth.

(Excerpt from the poem “Poems for Blok” by Marina Tsvetaeva in *The Russian*,  
Ilya Kaminsky and Jean Vaelintine, nd.)

In the seminar titled, *Wording the Unworded*, uBeyers (2020) uthi masijongane ne-innate nature yemibongo. Poems are the sisters and brothers of ingoma, perhaps more beautiful, perhaps uglier – the decision is left to the beholder. Imibongo yam is the sister of blues, imbongo yam is the sister of folk and at times of jazz. Imibongo yam is a broken song. Imibongo yam is a melody I am trying to remember – a harmony I am yearning for. Sometimes imibongo yam is a song I am trying to forget. In her seminar, Beyers (2020) looks at the poets’ attempt ekubhaleni what is on the edge of their comprehension and what they think they saw and from this seminar I am inspired to use unique ways to put umbongo ephetheni that is close to how it feels inside you as possible, and as close to the rhythm of the poem to help better narrate the poem. Ukudlala nge-structure kuyancenda ukukwakha isandi.

Kulapho ndibhala izinto kwi-columns, macala omabini. In those poems I am guiding the reader in the musicality of the poem.

Beyers also encourages that we go in-between languages, to translate or rewrite umbongo in English or use the other language to inspire a poem. I am particularly inspired by isiXhosa idioms as a poet. They are almost impossible ukuziguqula directly into English. Umbongo “**April 30, 2020 - Amangcwaba**” is one of the few poems I was able to translate from ilanguage enye into another. It was important for me that I offer this translation as I saw an opportunity yokubonisa our experiences of Gender-Based-Violence nentlungu yokukhula without utata in both languages that I write in, kumbongo omnye. Ndifunde kabuhlungu ukuba fathering is not an automatic role that umntu will fulfil by virtue of being a part of the conception. Fathering is a choice, and not all men who have abantwana will live to father. I also chose to turn the translated poem upside down, as part of the structure of the overall poem as a means to foster the image of graves as girls, and the turmoil that is caused by GBV. The structure further emphasized the ulwahluko lwama lwimi that held the trauma. I really struggled ukufumana the best translation for the word, ukugrumba, which is to dig, and still, I feel that dig offers less than ukugrumba.

I also wrote umbongo othi “Our brothers”. I imagined a woman as a chicken that men slaughter and eat and drink this chicken’s blood, under the watchful moon and in the morning the brothers wake up with umvandewa because they know they were not allowed to slaughter the chicken they slaughtered and may be in trouble not only with the living but with the dead too, they must quickly hide the bloody mess of their actions. The poem is inspired by a popular isiXhosa song we sang sikhula which xa iguqulwa simply says:

Brother, Brother, are you sleeping?

Are you sleeping?

The bell is ring.

Ding dong ding.

Ding dong ding.

## 18. INCWADI IBHODLISA ISINGQALA

June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - RJ 17

Mbungwana believes that by naming things, we release that uncomfortable thing trapped in our chests or throat. This in isiXhosa has a name – *isingqala*. I love the idea of ukubhodla *isingqala* and it is one of the most poetic terms. In my exploration, ndizama *ukubhodlisa isingqala* ngezizinto ndibhala ngazo. Ezinye andinazo amagama azo. As a whole i-creative writing isivumela ukuba sibhodle, sikhumbule, siyithethe into ngalendlela efuna ukuphuma ngayo. uMbungwana (2020) yena uthi, ukunika igama kwizinto ezingenamagama kukubhodlisa isingqala. I interestingly experienced a seminar by uStacy Hardy (2020, ii) about the use of letters as liberating mediums shortly after Mbungwana’s seminar. I am so privileged to have found a meeting between Mbungwana’s and Hardy’s seminars in that, for me letter’s zibhodlisa isingqala. uHardy ukholwa ukuba umntu uyakhululeka kakhulu xa ebhala incwadi encane, naye apha uHardy ujongene nokukhulula umntu nje ngo Mbungwana. *Isingqala* is related to a painful feeling within, stemming from an event. uHardy ubonise lento ngeyakhe incwadi ayibhalele utshomi wakhe uEdwin

23 April 2020

Dear Edwin

In today’s news: Up to 45,000 South Africans are expected to die from Covid-19 over the next two to three years, says one of the eminent doctors advising President Cyril Ramaphosa.

These statistics are of course shocking. But last year 70 000 South African died of TB. No panic. No lockdown. No state of emergency. Barely even a mention in the media.

(Excerpt from “Dear Edwin”, Stacy Hardy, Lecture 2020, ii)

iLeta zika Hardy ultimately have influenced how I have chosen to present the greatest part of le thesis. Zindikhuthaze kakhulu ukubhalela umyeni wam iincwadi, nabanye abantu endifuna ukubaxelela izinto endingakwazi ukuzithetha ngomlomo. iLeta iyakukhulula, nje ngedayari.

KwisiXhosa akekho u “Dear” as a direct translation. Incwadi yesiXhosa iqalwa ngobulisa okanye ubize lomntu umbhalelayo.

Nanku umzekelo:

Incwadi yesilungu

(English letter greeting):

Dear P

Incwadi yesiXhosa

(Xhosa letter greeting):

P endimkhumbulayo

Ukubhala ileta kwenza lula ukuthetha izinto endingakwazi ukuzithetha phambi komntu ngenxa yoloyiko, okanye ubude bexesha elidlulileyo, nokuba loo mntu akasekho. uRainer Maria Rilke wabhala ileta ezilushumi ebhalela enye imbhongi eyikhuthaza ukuba izithembe njengembhongi enolwazi lwayo. Enye into uHardy ajongene nayo yimibhalo nemibongo ehlukekile “ipersonal space” yomntu. uHardy uthetha ngemibongo ethetha ngezinto ezihlukekile umphefumlo okanye izinto ezimanyukunyezi. KwisiXhosa inqabile imibongo eyenza lento. Yilonto ababhali nembhongi ezintsha nje ngo Mthunzikazi Mbungwana zibalulekile ngoba baza nalembongo ethetha ngezinto ebesingathethi ngazo. Incwadi encane okanye ileta ingakhulula umbhali wesiXhosa ukubhala ngezinto oyika ukuzibhala na?

iLeta indicendile mna ndibhale ngokwabelwana ngosondo, ne-rape. Bekungalulanga ukubhala ngokwabelana ngesondo ukuqala kwam. Even the term, ukwabelana ngosondo, I did not know it until I undertook this research. I had to ask umama, “Mama what is sex in isiXhosa?” You can imagine a married woman with children in her 30’s asking her mother that question. For the first time ndibone umama wam eneentloni, nosisi ndimbhaq’ ehleka, eneentloni ekhitshini. Bekunzima ukuthetha ngezinto ekhaya kodwa ndithetha ngazo qho ngesilungu. Black mothers do not freely talk to their daughters about sex and even the direct translation has to do with stealing something. There are so many names the vagina has in my language, endless, yet we do not talk about it and the violations on it. I know it to be called a cake, ikuku, igwinya, a fat koek, inkomo katata (fathers’ cows), a home’s riches (ubutyebi bekhaya), the pride of a village (iqhayiya lekhaya), ingquza, a girl's face (ubuso bentombi) or ubuni (which means both sexuality and identity). But it is a taboo to speak of these names with some names being labelled as being very offensive to even say with your mouth, yet they exist. Reading them may also be alarming for a Xhosa reader but we grew up hearing them.

## 19. UKUBHALA ILAHLEKO TO HEAL

June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 – RJ 18

uMmatshilo Motsei, writer, activist, traditional healer and nurse, uses writing as a tool for healing. Motsei's theories are also supported by the work of other professionals such as James W Pennebaker, a Professor of Psychology coming from the University of Texas in Austin. Motsei's seminar on writing to heal has given me the encouragement that I needed on my journey as a writer, an activist, a researcher, and as one who aspires to help children and young women to heal. Experiencing iclass ka Motsei's, I feel found, and at home. I finally believe there is an academic place for umsebenzi wam, outside the current study. Ndifumane nesibindi to take my research further and to use what I have learnt and my experience with community development to continue my work, in particular with abantwana. My work with abantwana now relies on tools that I have explored and language as medium to help abantwana deal with itrauma ne personal development. I can say that "Ukubhala ilahleko to heal" is the sum of this thesis.

Aside from our individual trauma's, South Africa is a traumatised nation. The whole country is crying and is unravelling. The persistent rapes, killing of children and women, and the violence is indicative of ilizwe elophayo. Ukubhala is a sacred and safe act to try to heal. The communities I have worked with are deeply wounded, angry, disheartened, fragile, broken children and older people who have lost a great deal and have not healed. I do not believe we can develop any community, sustainably, if they are not well within the intangible spaces. I know now that through language and ukubhala we can reach those intangible spaces. Motsei highlights four rules that one must be cognisant of when writing with the intention of healing:

1. Flip out rule: If you flip out about writing about a certain event, do not write about it. You are not yet ready to write about it. Pennebaker argues that you need to have a significant distance (in terms of time) from an upheaval before you can write about it, and as a result, heal from it.
2. Do not over-analyse.
3. Do not let others read it. This is a secret between you and The Healer Within.
4. Do not expect your life to stay the same.

Motsei (2020) sites uPennebaker othi there needs to be a substantial time between the trauma and the act of writing the trauma in an attempt to heal. I found these rules to be quite correct for myself nolwam uhambo of writing to heal.

One of the books which I read as one writer's journey of healing and discovery is *Freshwater* by Akwaeke Emezi's which is her tribute to her African culture by centring the story on a girl and one of Nigeria's ethnicities, Igbo. The book is filled with bold and visceral imagery and also has all the characteristics endizithandayo of surrealism, African mysticism, African culture and clear texts where the author is just on a stream of unconsciousness. One of iinkolo ze Igbo religion is the idea of the *ogbanje* which is umamlambo womoya, a spirit that attaches itself to a female child and plagues the hosts life with turmoil and conflicting identities, ending in an early death. Emezi's debut fiction is inspired by her own experience of grappling with being a transgender Nigerian, into engaxhaphakanga esiXhoseni kwiincwadi zethu. Though the book focuses on a cultural belief of one thing that can plague someone's life, it also offers the reader the chance to question that which has plagued their life too.

We came from somewhere—everything does. When the transition is made from spirit to flesh, the gates are meant to be closed. It's a kindness. It would be cruel not to. Perhaps the gods forgot; they can be absent minded like that. Not maliciously—at least, not usually. But these are gods, after all, and they don't care about what happens to flesh, mostly because it is so slow and boring, unfamiliar and coarse. They don't pay much attention to it, except when it is collected, organized and souled.

Emezi, 2018, p. 7

## 20. COLLATING A BILINGUAL COLLECTION - READING AND TRANSLATIONS

September 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2020 – RJ 19

*Through sounds turned into letters on a page something beautiful something painful can be tasted, from one tongue to another. Language, you alone can boldly cross the river in exploration of your own pain, in search of your joy, created by someone of another place another time, and somehow, when we need you, you alone return to hold our pains and this is the beauty and magic of you*

In line with Beyers seminar, translations of our work can be a helpful exercise in the creation of a new poem. In collating the thesis, I thoroughly enjoyed ukufumana i-opportunities to write certain lines in one language as opposed to ukuzibhala ngenye because there simply was no translation for that sentiment. But I equally enjoyed ukuguqula umgca okanye umbongo into another language. To produce this bilingual collection, I was very fortunate to have two supervisors, one in English and the other in isiXhosa. Both supervisors encouraged me to write and read as much as possible, and most importantly to read those writer's I was most interested in with regards to collecting my story. Aside from the writers who have been explored in the preceding chapters ngoku ndizothetha ngabanye abaye baba nofuthe kakhulu kwi-exploration yokubhala ilahleko lam.

It was during my first task that I knew I wanted to explore translated work, bilingual writers, and African writers because their poetry is generally written originally from a different language which I believe has something new to offer us. One of the first books I read was the *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories* by Yasunari Kawabata translated from Japanese ngu Jane Dunlop no J. Martin Holman, Dunlop highlights the beauty of Japanese writing in "The Girl Who Approached the Fire"

When I saw the girl walking directly toward the sea of fire,

I could not bear it.

Then, without words, I actually conversed with her feelings.

"Why are you going down the hill alone? Is it to die by fire?"

Kawabata, 1988, p. 22

Another writer I was drawn to was Pessoa. What I was most intrigued by in Pessoa writing are the little personal truths that Pessoa seems to discover in each poem and kwimibongo yam I found that kukho iinyani that I discovered for myself and thereby one builds their own little epiphanies through their poetry. These truths that I discovered can be seen in the poem written below which was inspired by i-experience yam nendoda endathindana nayo; and the experiences of women in my family.

**July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1990** - Phantsi komzimba womenyi

Under your body I went in with hope	
I was greeted by your fears	ndizikhangela
I threw away umbilini	ndakuthuthuzela
ngomonde	I became your garden
ndakwanga	ndaphelelwa yincindi
I closed my eyes	watsho waqhama
wachuma	watyityimba
ngesibindi	you ate away my dignity
ngobukhali	wanqunqa ithemba lam
you stole all light	wahlohla ubusuku kwesisiqu
wandingcwaba phantsi kwamathambo akho	

I was drawn to umama Nongenile Zenani (1992), in the *World and the Word* for its variety of topics about African culture, beliefs, history and the stages of womanhood. Mama Zenani's tales are descriptive, colourful, surreal and full of excitement as is the way of a traditional African folktale though the surrealism in her narration of African history is describing something that may have happened exactly ngalondlela. In one story umama uZenani narrates the story of a girl who is repeatedly molested by utata wakhe and how historically the punishment for this act was a punishment of humiliation for both the father and girl who were both to blame for the child molestation, which was not called that, but simply, incest.

But I found it difficult to go through the book with interruptions from the analysis of each story. I found the essays in between the tales distracting to the stories. I skipped over much of the analysis and went straight to amabali in search of something. You don't want to be disturbed when you are listening or hearing intsoni, you simply hope to find some answer or yourself, in the words. I drew much from amabali that seemed so unreal and I leaned on that to enable me to write from an objective place nangona I write from a first-person experience. I wish to explore umam' Zenani's work much further for academic interrogation. I have also learnt from her performative approach to poetry which I now use in my community development work with abantwana.

In *The Bride of Ice*, a translated collection of Tsvetaeva's, I found that the uses of punctuation planted a different musicality in the Russian poet's poetry than in her other books. Using dashes and so forth to break the reading and direct the reader is something endithanda ukuyenza. This writer has inspired much of my freedom to use varied punctuation and spacing in each poem, no space or full stop or dash is void of meaning. I was also interested in the use of dates to place each of her poems in a particular time and I want to explore lento in imibongo yam.

In *Forest of A thousand Demons* by Fatjumva, a translation from Yoruba of *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* by Wole Soyinka, I was firstly fascinated by the glossary of Yoruba and unfamiliar words which immediately inspired me ukuba ndikhangele amagama that in isiXhosa have dual meanings such as imbokodo. Ndithanda ababhali be-fictional writing emistikhal and in this phantasmagorical approach to a story inspired by myth and loss I found much mysticism that I want to explore in my writing. Kwimigca elandelayo the author paints the most magical world for me as a writer and this is the kind of writing that offers reality in an alternative way:

My father touched her; she was dead and had begun to rot. Indeed, she was the antelope steal- ing out at night to feast in the field of okro. And so did my mother die, and hardly was a month over when my father also followed her. From that day was I orphaned, fatherless and motherless. And thus, ends the story of my parents and comes the turn of my own. I greet your labour my friend.

Fatjumva, 2013, p.13

There are many more books and African writer' which have shaped le thesisi, many of which approached the subject matter of trauma in unique ways such as drawing from culture and folktales, innovative structures, surrealism, and playfulness with words and grammar, music and language. The writers and books that I have mentioned in the preceding texts and diary inserts have each played a great role in ukubhala imibongo yam. In further research I look forward to exploring the harmful distance between languages, violence and trauma and how closing this gap would contribute to better understanding of mental health, gender-based-violence and thereby contribute to sustainable development.

How creative writing and literature can close the distances caused by violence and the trauma birthed by the violence, including the trauma of being distanced from one's language, as a tool for healing. With the reclaiming, recollection and preservation of indigenous languages through creative writing and literature, as a multicultural global village, we perhaps can address an epidemic that seems to have evaded humanity for decades, parallel with the erosion of diversity.

After completing my first thesis draft, I submitted it to a reader. The reader was someone that did not know me, had not been a part of my journey of the thesis, and would thus be completely objective in my review. I waited anxiously and excitedly, for the first reader's report. I was particularly anxious because I was the only and first student to create a bilingual collection therefore, I did not have a reference of what I was creating. I wondered how the fusion of two languages would impact the reader's experience. When I received the readers review, I felt seen as a black woman, as a multi-layered being, and someone who has anxiously walked with the memories and experiences of her rural and urban upbringing into a multicultural world. Over and above the welcome and positive embrace of my work the reader also gave constructive critical advice. This advice helped me greatly ukuba ndibuyele kulombongo and communicate the double layered context I found in my mind when this poem came. The reader also helped with highlighting the need to create more clear connections in the story and this helped greatly with stitching the story together. The latter feedback encouraged me to weave the story with the letter and diary entries that now hold the collection. The reader also showed an appreciation of more the simple isiXhosa language, which came as a great relief for me as not only a Xhosa writer but also a bilingual writer. I love the Xhosa language and I want to honour it kwimibongo yam and still represent the present-day young Xhosa writer.

I was humbled by the readers' feedback of the overall thesis, which is a collection of my life and the final section being imibongo ngomyeni wam nabantwana bam. But I was able to step outside myself and imagine writing for any widow or woman or girl, so this thesis is not a collection of my life but that of a woman in South Africa. I was able to write about things I did not go into this year thinking I would write about. And as the reader correctly identified, I had hoped that my collected sense of absence, violence and trauma would reflect my urban life with the brief moments I had with my grandmothers in the rural villages, and it did. This work holds me.

## 21. WORKING WITH BILINGUAL SUPERVISION

October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Bekunzima ukungena kule theme yelahleko. Kodwa abaxhasi bam bandikhuthazile bendiqhuba. uMbungwana uye wayikhuthaza into yokubhala ngolwimi, nangendlela endithetha ngayo ukuze ndityebise le lahleko ndibhala ngayo. I wrote so much throughout the year and some poems that I refer to; I did not include in the final thesis, but they were all important for the journey including: “uNokuthula”, “Black brother”, “Our Brothers” and so many more. Ndincendwe kukufunda abanye ababhali ukuze ndibhale nge-violence, eyehlela abantu abangomama nam. Akululanga kwaye andikabafumani ababhali abatsha esiXhoseni abajongene nezi zinto, ingakumbi udlwengulo, ukudlakazeliwa, ukugula, nobunzima bokuba ngumntu ongumfazi kulo mhlaba. Ababhali abafana noOyinkan Braithwaite ku*My sister, The Serial Killer*, uAkwaeke Emezi ku *Fresh Water*, uvangile gantsho ku *red cotton*, uBusisiwe Mahlangu kwincwadi ethi *Surviving Loss*; nabanye abadala njengoMaya Angelou ku*I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, uToni Morrison ku *Bluest Eye* ndijonge kubo in search of incwadi nemibongo ye-sexual trauma in different forms.

My supervisors have taught me the art of listening to a poem. I have become confident to create whatever forms that the poems want to take even if I have not done it before or seen it before, from anywhere such as umbongo othi “How it Felt Writing About It” nezinye ii-poems that I wrote where if you read the poem going down one column alone it is one poem and the other column alone it is another poem and when jointly reading the columns then it is another poem therefore one poem carries three poems in it.

Ukubhala ngelahleko kuyamvula umntu, kuyamkrazula, kuvusa izilonda kodwa xa unabaphathi abakhuthazayo and understand the objective and i-support system estrong, exesheni amagama akho heal you. I would not have come close to producing the final poems that I have without the delicate and patient guidance of my supervisors who went over and above the call for me, over endless hours, over Google Meets, over Zoom, over Video calls, over WhatsApp voice notes, over emails, over telephone calls and in-between spaces and moments that I will cherish forever.

Ekubhaleni ngolahleko lwakho kufuneka womelele ukohlukana neenkukacha oqonda ukuba zibalulekile kuwe kodwa xa uhlolela umbongo wakho okanye ibali lakho kufuneka ujonge ukuba lo mbongo uyaphila ngaphandle kwezo nkukacha. I trusted myself as much as I trusted my supervisors, knowing their experience in creative writing and their interests made feel I that I would be seen and heard. Once I had written a substantial amount of work my supervisors and I met jointly, to see how my poems spoke to each other. After that the work and supervision truly became bilingual. I-Supervisor yam yesiXhosa indicende ndifumane indawo yam esiXhoseni; to be comfortable in my voice as an isiXhosa writer, a seSotho woman and a city raised girl, bringing forth sexual violence into isiXhosa literature – in my own tongue and my own way. Her encouragement for me to learn as much as possible but retain my voice helped me grow as a writer and helped to produce this collection of work. She encouraged me to be very intentional with my descriptions and always focus on the knot, not just the emotion but the concrete images.

My English supervisor encouraged me to be free with language, to reach deep in my imagination and find alternative words to describe what I want: What does being trapped in a body look like? What other parts of the body represent femininity other than breasts? what does something old and bitter look like? What else do we lose that seems insignificant to others but is everything to us? I was so fortunate to have a supervisor who understood the effects of writing about personal violence, often reeling me back from the traumas in my body and those in my mind to come back and focus on umbongo as much as the healing of writing. gantsho's understanding of my English upbringing whilst I was also in search of my language as an isiXhosa writer helped me explore all that I could in the English language with respect for my isiXhosa language too – this helped honour the two environments and cultures that shape me as a writer. She encouraged me to bring isiXhosa wherever it wanted to come in and felt right. She exposed me to international English opportunities such as the *Women of Words Poetry Festival* which unbelievably dealt with my theme of loss in such different ways.

In one workshop we worked on creating a choreopoem which was one of the highlights of my year. I felt the whole exercise to be symbolic of my journey and creation of the thesis, and also to be eye-opening for me and helped me see my work as one. During my supervision with gantsho I was reintroduced to *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf* which is Ntozake Shange's most acclaimed theatre piece released in 1976.

The choreopoem ignited my understanding of how our different stories as different women, at different times and places, are individually pertinent and collectively alive for one woman. It could not be more fitting for me to watch this work again. However now I was watching it in preparation for the final editing of my thesis, as I have ultimately sought to weave a single story of women, girls, wives, lovers and daughters' stories, of another place, of this terrible place, of this wonderful place-of a prophetess listening to a distant song, reaching to love, to a creator—  
the sun— Qamata— to birth a star— to die through birth — to lose —  
to love and be loved to be reborn- to return.

To weave further the story together, I chose to use relevant dates for almost all the poems, to give context to each story, to place the reader there and to travel back there myself to that day. The dates are part of the title and should be read as such, they are a part of the poem. These days that we are required to live through stay with us and so they are important. I wanted to create a weaving of the story which is one story representing the woman and girl child. I wanted to create a surreal creative body of text that would hold all the losses that I have tasted as a woman who is traversing between spiritual realms while deciphering a calling to Traditional African Spirituality. In our individual losses, I believe as women we go out and come back to one body, an innate body, holding our traumas and our joy, one in each hand, each time returning to begin again, to play our part, through uQamata, through uthando.

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