Olu xwebhu luqulathe amacandelo amabini:

ICANDELO A: Isiqingatha seThisisi (umsebenzi wobugcisa)

ICANDELO B: Ipotifoliyo ebhalwe ngeelwimi ezimbini
(*Dual Language Portfolio*)

Esi sisiqingatha seThisisi ebhalwe ngeelwimi ezimbini
(IsiXhosa nesiNgesi)

This is a half thesis of a dual language thesis
(IsiXhosa & English).

ICANDELO A: ITHISISI YESIXHOSA

Ingqumbo Yomthondo Kukuzika Kohlanga

Lo msebenzi ungeniswa ngenjongo yokuhlangabezana neemfuno

Zesidanga se:

Master of Arts

KubuGcisa bokuBhala

Zodwa Mtirara

FAKHALTHI YEZONCWADI-MBALI-FILOSOFI

E-YUNIVESITHI I-RHODES

EyoKwindla 2020

IZIQULATHO

ICANDELO A: Isiqingatha seThisisi (umsebenzi wobugcisa)....0
ICANDELO A: ITHISISI YESIXHOSA....1
Intshayelelo 4
1....5
Konakele....6
Zimke Zayaphi na Ezimkileyo? 7
Ivumba Lakhe…lenza amadoda alile 8
Ingqumbo Yomthondo 9
Uyinene 10
Ukuzika Kohlanga 11
Cimiyani....12
Ndinikezele....13
Ubhidwe Lulwimi....14
Mandihlanjululwe 15
2....16
Nto kaBawo 17
UThando....18
Kusibekele 20
Ndonakele 21
Imibuzo....22
Amadangatye 23
Ulangalibalele....24
Amandl' othando 25
3....26
Isingqala 27
Kufa 28
Bizo Lwam 29
ICANDELO B:.... 30
IPOTIFOLIYO YESIXHOOSA NESINGESI 30
Coursework 31
Thesis Development....38
The Thesis....44
Reflective Journal 1 44
Reflective Journal 2 47
Reflective Journal 3 50
Reflective Journal 4 52
Reflective Journal 5 55
Reflective Journal 1 (IsiXhosa) 57
Reflective Journal 2 (IsiXhosa) 59
Reflective Journal 3 (IsiXhosa) 60
Book Review 1....64
Book Review 2....67
Book Review 3....69
Book Review 4....71

References 79
WRITING BLACK WOMANHOOD 82
READING IN COMMUNITY 84
Conclusion 86

Intshayelelo

Le yingqokelela yemibongo ebhentsisa ukutyeshelwa kobuntu nobuchule bamanina yinkolo yobuKrestu, kunye nenkolo yemveli okanye inkolo yesiNtu. Ikwenza oku ngokwaphula imithetho nemigaqo siseko yenkolo yobuKrestu nesiNtu sakwaXhosa malunga nokufanelekileyo ukuba owasetyhini akuthethe okanye akwenze. Ikwabhentsisa nokuhlukunyezwa kwabasetyhini, ibuza nemibuzo ngesimo esizifumana sikuso mva-nje. Ichukunyiswe bubomi bam kanye nobamanye amanina endiphila nawo ekuhlaleni. Ikubhentsisa ke oku ngokungenalusini njengoko imbongi uLesego Rampolokeng esenza. Izeka mzekweni ezibhalweni zooNtozakhe Shange, Diane Di Prima, Lidia Yuknavitch, noWame Molefhe. Iphikisa indlela ekubhalwe ngayo ngamanina ngooMema nooJolobe, isenza oko uNontsizi Mgqwetho angazange ade afikelele ukukwenza njengombhali wasetyhini.

1

Konakele

Kukuthini ukuvuthwa kwentombazanana
Ingakhange iphekwe ibhadle
Ukuba nguNokhontoni ukufuna ulwazi
Uzokhawuleza amithe lo, kutsho oonina nooninakazi
Nzame ziphi na abazenzayo ukuyigoba iselula?

Kudliwa ngayiphi na indebe kuleminyaka
yeselula Beyibona yonke kumabonakude
Nakumakhasi onxibelelwano?
Lwimi luni ukuhlonipha kanti kufihlwa inyaniso
Mayithiwe pa-haa ukuze kuqaqambe ingomso

Mzi ontsundu konakele

Inguqu ngundoqo masiyamkele

Zimke Zayaphi na Ezimkileyo?

Zibhubhile?

Zibhacile?

Zitshabalele?

…

Zizilelwa ngubani?

Bayaphi na ubuntombi bam?
Benza umnqophiso wothando ngegazi?
Ubuntombi bam bawel' imida.
Luphi lona olo thando?

luphi na uthando lukatata?

Kukuthini na ukuba ondle inzala yabanye asingele eyakhe?

Siphi na isidima sikamama

~~Ukuginya kukrakra sele ekrokra~~

~~Ukubhangiselwa endle ngabomthetho~~

Ukukhangelwa ngumakhulu emaphupheni

Nale iza kudlula.

Zidlula ziye phi na ezo zidlulileyo?

Ivumba Lakhe…lenza amadoda alile

Sidalwa sini na esi?

Sibumila bufazi ngomzimba

Sibumila budoda ngengqiqo

Emagxeni uthwele iintsapho

Ngothando uzigcine zifudumele

Ngobugorha ulwa oyise emfazweni

Ngentobeko uthoba anobuzaza amaduma

Ibukele iyafunda inzala yakhe ukumfuza

Zivakala ekungqisheni kwayo izingqi zakhe

Seyilombethe ivumba lakhe ukunuka Achasele
amadoda ayakhonyuluka.

Ingqumbo Yomthondo

Sisigrogriso sokohlwaya.
Linqindi phakathi kwamehlo
ukuzingomba isifuba ngobudoda
bawo ukuze ogolozayo agobe
uphondo.

Kukuqhuma kwerhuluwa
kulowo ufuna ukuwushiya.
Ngumlilo ogqubayo
ukuntumeka emzimbeni walowo
uphikisana nawo.

Ingqumbo yomthondo
Ihlaba yahlule inyama nomphefumlo.
Itshabalalis’ amanina nabantwana
Itsho kuzik’ uhlanga kub’ ihlasela namahlumela!

Uyinene

Zelithi lakundiphuncula ithemba

Ndisesecicini lokuba sisinyanya

Ndiswele ulwimi ndintywizisa iinyembezi

Umtyholi eze ngepasile eposini

Uze undakhe kutsha, undange

Undiphefumlele ngomonde

Undifukame oku kweyuku

Ngothando undikhulule

Ndamkelwe ngamafu

Ndiginywe lizulu

Ukuzika Kohlanga

Amaphupha ohlanga aqhotyoshelwe esinqeni sakho

Uwaphalaza okweentsipho zevanya

Inkungu ilele umbethe emisebeni yakho

Yehla iinyembezi wakuqhwanyaza

Ihashe liphala lincame lunxano emqaleni

Alinamkhokeli linokumlandela ukufika emlanjeni

Iigusha zigcwele ithafa ziswele umalusi

Ikhonye yatshothoza inkwenkwe ingenakwaluswa

Umz' ontsundu uswele inkokheli

Kunqab' amadoda amandla bawashiye koonina esizalweni

Esifubeni samanina ziinduli zobulumko

Bancanc' amasi odwa lingekaqini ifokotho bawatyekeza

Cimiyani

<u>iindlela zokuthomba</u>

1. **ginya** amagama wakho ilungu libe linye ngexesha.
2. **khulula** lawo owathethileyo uwabukele ephephetheka nomoya.
3. enkundleni kugcwele, **thokombisa** intloko kungavakali nokuphefumla kwakho.
4. **wothe** ngamehlo umlilo ufunde ukwenza umlingo ngawo.
5. **thiya** idangatye ngalinye ukwakha ubudlelwane.
6. **wabize** de akuve, ukusabela kwawo uzowava ngevumba.
7. **hombisa** izihlahla zakho ngesikhali, **zoba** iqhinga lenkululeko.
8. **ungayeki** lingekaphumi libomvu, liqhuma, licula inkululeko.
9. zila emini.
10. ebusuku **danisa** **uziyobe** de ukubone ukuzinza kwemizwa yakho.
11. **phinda** u-1 ukuya ku-7
12. sele uyincutshe, **<u>yalela</u>** umlilo uyeke ukuvutha.
13. cimiyani ukumka kwakho nomsi. *ungumsizi. akukho sizi.*

Ndinikezele

Ndim ngentla kulo umjikelo
Jik’ ujong’ entla ndikuphakele
Ukufa kukuphila naphakade
Ukuphilela intiyo kukufa

Ndiza ndisisibhene kuwe
Ndizijula ijacu
Ndiwele amathafa ndikhubeka
Ezindulini nasezicithini
Unxano alunani
Bopha la manxeba

Ndikhubekile ndawa
Ndabetheka ndagruzuka
Ndavuka ndazivuthulula
Kuba uhambo luselude
Andiseva nokuthunakala

Bathi umfazi ufa esazi
Ukuba bendazile bendakukhetha ukuphila
Uze undithembise uthando
Wandinika lona ulufumbethe ngamanqindi

Ubhidwe Lulwimi

Umzala ubhidwe yinto

Kuthiwa utyiwa ngumshologu

Ebusuku akalali

Uthi ubizwa lixhego liyamkhweba

Uthi ugqirha uphethwe ngumvandedwa

Makayithethe inyani izakumkhulula

Uthi ngeba uyathetha

Ntonje ubhidwe lulwimi

Aduk’ emqaleni

Mandihlanjululwe

ndicola ameva ngamazinyo
ndibhodle ndivungule inzolo
nditshiswa ngumlilo ophenjwe ndim
ndinembala ndiwothela enkanini

ndinguNozesazi andiva kunqandwa
ewe no-hayi kum yintw’ enye kuyafana
izigrogriso zolohlwayo ndizibetha ngoyaba
ingqina lam nguMdali entliziyweni ndimsulwa

ubulungisa kumakholwa abukho
inyaniso kuRhulumente ayilolutho
abavukeli mbuso ikwangabo
ohlohl’ esakhe ubutyebi babutyela kubo

vuk’ uzenzele vuk’ uzisole
vul’ ingqondo kwabona bakusole
ukutyhileka komkhusane yintsokolo
Inkenkqe ayisosipho ngumnqa
bubukhoboka

ndivume ubizo ngentliziyo ndasabela
ubunzima balo emagxeni ndabuthwala
ukuvuma ukufa kukwamkela ukuphila
ukuphilela ukufa kusisa kusihlwa

mandenziwe ke ndibe msulwa
Icocwe imbilini yam ndihlanjwe
zosulwe iinyembezi zam ndangiwe
phezulu kwaleminqweno yam
kuhlume intlaka yentlahla

ndinombilini ndibindekile

ikhaya ndiyalibona mfiliba
andide ndifike apho intliziyo yam
yokwamkeleka khona uthando
lwam lubuyekezwe lonke

2

Nto kaBawo

Nto kabawo *ndiyazifela* ngawe
Ndizamile ukuzibamba ndoyisakele
Bendinokukhethisa phakathi kwelitsha nelidala
Intliziyo yam yiyo yodwa endinokuyandlala

Vuma nto kabawo naku ndizibika
Nantoni na oyifunayo ndakukunika
Ngokuthanda kwakho ndophulukana nesidima
Makube njalo koko ndiyidlalile eyam indima

Ndiyazi nawe ukholiwe ndim
Ezingcingeni nasemaphupheni u-*560* ndim
Ebuhleni nasebubini wokwangiwa ndim
Sukoyika nto kabawo sowuvunyiwe ndim

Ndithande ebushushwini bobunzulu bam
Ezinzulwini zobusuku uxhathise ngam
Vuma nto kabawo ube ngowam
Neenkwenkwezi zivumile inene ungowam

UThando

Ungumthubi emasini
Uliselwa lunobusi
UThando

Uyindoda emadodeni
Ntomb' zonke ziyamkhalela
Nkondekazi ziyamtefela
UThando

Amahlwempu ayamzingela
Izityebi zona ziyamthenga
Nkalo zonke zehlabathi
UThando

Iintsana zinkcenkceshelwa nguye
Ulutsha luguliswa nguye
Iingwevu zombethe yena (*zimklokhile*)
UThando

Ubuhle bendoda ziinkomo zayo
Obakhe nguye ubuqu
Ububuhle bendalo nenzaliseko yayo
UThando

Undazi ukusuka nokuhlala
Uzikhathaza ngeenkathazo zam
Uyakhathala
UThando

Ucwengile

Ungamaza ephutha-phutha unxweme
Uli litha lenyanga ukundi thuthuzela
UThando

Akanamkhethe
Akananzondo
Usulungekile
UThando

Kusibekele

Imvula iyachaphaza
Ixela amehlo am echiphiza
Ndihleli kufuphi nefestile
ndibala amaqabaza emvula,
yanga imbilini yam
ndingayiphalaza

Undithembise inyanga neenkwenkwezi
Neenkomo, kodwa azikezi
Uthe mandikulinde khange uze
Waduka nelizwe wandishiya ndize

Uthando lwakho lundonzakalisile
Uyaphule intliziyo yam, ndinyanisile
Usithobile isidima sam, undanyelisile
Ndingavuya ukuva ukuba uNomvula ukunyisile

Umphefumlo wam udandathekile
Andinenzondo koko ndikhathazekile
Isithonga sokumka kwakho sivakele
Litshone lingekaphumi ilanga,
kusibekele

Ndonakele

Xa ukhangela olwam uthando

Ndijonge ezikhondweni zamehlo

Apho uza kulufumana

Ulwimi lwam luqhotyoshwe ngesipeliti

Ndidwanguza okwesithunzela

Ndikhangela ukwaneliseka

Kuthiwa kukwantliziyo ndise

Umkhombandlela awufumaneki mntwini

Inyathi indibetha ngoyaba

Isuka ixhuzul' amagxa

Intliziyo iluthuthu

Ndiyaneke ligqutha
Ingumgquba!

Imibuzo

Ithotywa ngantoni na intliziyo eqaqambayo?
Ingcitywa ngantoni na eyaphukileyo?
uThabo undigqebhe iduma entloko
uMonwabisi undibinde ndenyela

Oku kwenja ndiwakhothile amanxeba wam
Ndibhenela ebhekileni awapholi
Ndiqhumisile ndayoba andixoli
Ndiwonekile awarhawuki

Ithiwani na intliziyo esele ibethela ukugoduka?
Encanywe nangumongi ukuyiphulula?

Amadangatye

Kusekuzeni kusa

Ndivuswa yifowuni ityityimba phantsi komqamelo

Ndisabele nditshothoza *molo*
nguZodw’ othethayo?
Ewe

Ujola no*Baby*?

Ewe. Utsh’ uba?

Nam ngowam

Hayi bo! Kanjani?

Ndim ndedwa kuBaby

Utshilo ngokwakhe

Uthe mandimthembe

Elakhe liyinyani

Sokuze andiphoxe

Sakufa singcwabane

Siporhe sithandane

Okwakhe kokwam

Nokwam ngokunjalo

Iqhawukil’ imithambo yentliziyo

Uphalel’ umphefumlo

Zichithekil’ iinyembezi
sivakel’ isijwili
Amadangatye ndiwazi ngamagama

Nangokushiyana kobushushu bawo.

Ulangalibalele

ukuba bendinakho ukuchaza isimo sesakhiwo asiso bendiya kumfanisa nokuthi tha kwelanga kusasa phakathi kweentaba. ukucwenga komlambo ngokuhlwa. bendiya kuthi ufana nelanga lidlala, ungamaza olwandle ebhudla elunxwemeni. ungamadlelo aluhlaza, ithafa elizele ziintyatyambo. eneneni bendiya kubhidwa kuba akukho nto esezingeni lobuhle benkangeleko nokuziphatha kwakhe. ukumfanisa nezi zinto akufikeleli. ukuba ngaba ndingathi andilwazi uthando lwakhe ingaba ndimdlela indlala. into enoncumo olugoso. Ilizwi lakhe bubusi.

kube ngathi liphupha ukuguquka kwakhe. intliziyo yam yaphuke kaliqela eluthandweni lwakhe. ndikuzile esaphila ukufa kwakhe. ingaba yintuthuzelo eluhlobo luni na eyakundanga ndiphile, xa ingekuko ukubanjwa zizandla zakhe? ingekuko ukuthandwa nguye?

Amandl’ othando

Ndingcambazela nganeno kweenkanuko zemizwa yam

Indlala yam ndiyambethe emehlweni am

Uyinuke ngoko-nangoko ngemilebe yakhe owakwam

Sazimanya ngeqhina lomnqophiso wothando mna naye

Phinda ke usive isikhalo sam sithandwa

Thumela imincili yothando lwakho ekufumeni kwam

Luqunusele kweli cala liza umoya utshaba lwam

Iminqweno yalo ngamampunge kwinyaniso yam

3

Isingqala

Nangona ndiyingxwelerha

Amanxeba engabotshwa naluthando

Ndakusiginya esam isingqala

Ndibhodle ucwangco

Esofelweyo andinakho ukusitsho

Ukuphila kukhona enkosini

Nangon’ ingumfanekiso ngqondweni,

Ongumfuziselo wethemba
Ndakubambelela ezingcingeni zam
Hlez’ umonwabisi ndimakhe ngokwam.

Kufa

Ndiqweqwediswa nguwe mihla-le

Undibamba ngesixhanti undoyamanisa nothango

Ngelinge lokundidibanisa nookhokho

Undigibisela ngamanqindi

Ndindlongondlongo nje kukukatswa nguwe

Ndiphakuphaku jne zizivubeko zakho

Ndibokoboko nje ligqudu lakho nomnqayi

Mandiphumle mhla kutheni na?

Ndithuthuzeleke xa kunjani na?

Ndizile mfondini ukhangele kwezinye iinkalo

Uxhaphaze kweminye imiphefumlo kuba lo wam uwukrunile

Ndidandathekile ndidada phezulu kweenyembezi

Mqamelo wam osulungekileyo ndimbambazele ndilale

Bizo Lwam

Iyure mayibe nye

Minazana ithile

Ndibuyele kolwa suku

Ndadibana nawe ebusuku.

Wandijonga ezikhondweni zamehlo

Ndabudideka ezingcingeni zengqondo

Kwe qwatha emakhamandeleni omphefumlo

Kwakho inguqu ezicwangcisweni ze-ntliziyo

Wandibiza ndasabela

Wazibika ndakholwa

Wandicela ndavuma

Ndavuma ukubizwa ngawe

Ndathobela ukuthunywa nguwe

Ndenza okuthandwa nguwe

Ndatyeshela okutyeshelwa nguwe

Ndibuyise thongo lam

Ndibize bizo lwam!

ICANDELO B:

IPOTIFOLIYO YESIXHOOSA NESINGESI

Lo msebenzi ungeniswa ngenjongo yokuhlangabezana neemfuno

Zesidanga se**Master of Arts**

KubuGcisa bokuBhala

Ngu:

Zodwa Mtirara

Kwi:

FAKHALTHI YEZONCWADI-MBALI-FILOSOFI

E-YUNIVESITHI I-RHODES

EyoKwindla 2020

Coursework

One would have expected that contact week would have been for getting acquainted with fellow students, the lecturers, and the university, but MA Creative Writing *ayiphozisi*. The course began that very first day. I had thought the week would be all fun and games, but the teaching and learning had begun. The freewriting exercises yanked me out of my comfort zone. It was quite the rude awakening, as a writer who had always believed that my writing, for both my music and poetry, came from a force outside of myself.

Not much music or poetry comes out of the freewriting, but it sure does give the writing muscle a necessary stretch and strengthening.

Growing up under strict conservative rule, to call me conservative would be an understatement. Though I resonated and was challenged by all the lecturers when they spoke about themselves and their writing, Nathan Trantraal stood out. I cringed a lot when he spoke because his speech was punctuated by "fuck" at every other syllable. But when he alluded to the fact that conservative ideology is a writer's enemy and that writers need no such inhibitions, I pocketed that sentiment and have since made it my mantra.

I considered myself a learner writer. It had always been a dream of mine to be in a writer's head. To navigate the streets of their consciousness. Wrestle with the monsters of their intellect. Catch the flying bullets of their thoughts. Stacy Hardy slapped me out of that dream when she told me *I* was the writer whose mind I needed to explore. She made me realise the magnitude of the responsibility bestowed to me as a writer.

Because of the mentality that my writing came from a force outside myself, I had never questioned the text. Not its form nor its rhythm. I wrote as it came. To me it was the ultimate truth. Cast on stone. Because of this, the feedback was hard to take. I have come to value it as it has elevated my thinking and attitude towards my craft and has therefore humbled me as the vessel. Critique builds and opens me up to other possibilities. I have learned to look beyond my truth, to the truth of the universe. In this way, my writing is no longer rigid and a prisoner in the filter of my personal collective memory.

Another stumbling block that this mentality caused is a serious case of writers' block which resulted in a lot of discarded unfished work. The seminar of *Writing with and against Narrative Conventions* broke this arrogance. I learned from it to be deliberate about where the story is going, which is something I never had to think about. Intentionality. It gets one thinking.

Philosophically. Which results in a deeper level of writing.

Having opened up to these possibilities, with the lessons from the first seminars, the impact that punctuation has on a piece, my poetry goes through a series of manipulation of form through different punctuation to test out what works best - when time allows of course…which is a scarce commodity in these MA in Creative Writing streets.
Finston Mwanza Mujila's *Tram 83* served as the best example for this lesson. I could not only visualise the chaos but feel it too. The very long sentences which leave you fighting for breath clearly depict how claustrophobic Tram 83 was. Further hammering the vitality of punctuation (or lack thereof) in depicting a piece's urgency, girth, punch, violence etc. making it come alive.

The biggest challenge by far was to create on cue about topics I would never attempt to write about. The freewriting has helped me lose myself of self-imposed prohibitions. An endless stream of consciousness. Take the world in. Process. Then pen my views and feelings down. My *inkenkqe* is still undisciplined. Untamed. A wild horse. A hungry beast that comes out to feed with no regard for me as host. Often at midnight or the early hours of the morning just before dawn. In as much as I have learned what techniques to implement to subdue and master it, I remain a slave to its unruly nature. And it is ok.

All American by Tina May Hall made me realise the kind of writer I have always wanted to be. Relatable. Despite the title of the poem, it is a universal story. Women from all over the world can relate to loving a man that doesn't belong to them. They can all relate to forcing themselves to love those that are "appropriate" and forcing themselves on those that don't love them. We (women) can all relate to the blurred line that is consent. Writing things that have dual or multiple meanings is of interest to me. To have a single piece of work mean all kinds of things to different people. Though critics have said that I hide behind words, and that the word-play gets excessive at times, it is good to let a piece of writing do to an individual as it should, and not necessarily be about me.

Klebnikov has much to say about this "hiding behind words", which to me is lyricism. He says that "the speech of higher intelligence, even when it is not understandable, falls like seed into the fertile soil of the soul and only much later, in mysterious ways, does it bring forth its shoots" (Klebnikov 1990,p.153).

This gave me much comfort after a poem, which hasn't made it into the thesis got the worst feedback because it was "incomprehensible".

Ripe
my calloused soul, ashy water-thwarted by
angry seasons of our existence breathing
spring of embrace and servitude summer of
threading with honour autumn of the
shunning winter, barren silence of anger no
love to moisten the grey of its shins

Klebnikov does however not condone bad writing. He does not maintain that every incomprehensible piece of writing is beautiful but that it cannot be rejected just because it is incomprehensible to a particular group of readers (Klebnikov 1990, p.153). What I learned from the seminar *Poems of Negritude,* which resulted in this poem is that a single writer can write about a wide range of topics, but he cannot excel in them all. I learned how powerful the influence of the writer's background has in the way she writes and what she writes about. I learned that because anger doesn't have a language in my family, I do not know how to articulate it.

Despite the feedback for the poem, I think it is a decent piece. My world turned upside down as I started questioning and doubting what poetry is. Klebnikov attempts to answer this, "a poem is related to flight, in the shortest time possible its language must cover the greatest distance in images and thoughts" (Klebnikov 1990, p.153). I get what he is saying, and I agree. But from time to time, the question arises again, "what is poetry?" and sometimes this answer does not suffice.

The writing of Tina May Hall captivates in that it is truthful even in undesirable ways. Ways that people would rather hide and keep for only their conscience. To evade the critical stares and murmurs of people. *This is a Love Story Too* depicts pain in an unusual, yet familiar way in that it makes it tangible. In the piece, she is ruthless yet tender. She equates physical pain to emotional pain (the loss of her two children with stepping on a nail. How she planted peonies on their graves and cuts their heads in spring). It is both endearing and chilling. The influence of these two pieces, in particular, has seen me through a number of poems.

Since accepting the challenge to shun conservative ideology, I was never ready for what reading *Fist of the Spider Woman* had in store for me. As a lover of romance novels, I was familiar with love scenes that leave one wanting a romance of their own. But this! Not what I had signed up for. The horror! I was most horrified that even though I was scared, and even scarred for life by the images in the stories, my body betrayed me. It responded to some of the scenes. That made me mad. Part of me loved the explicit use of language as I aspired to do the same…or not. But I loved the possibility. I particularly liked *In Your Arms Forever.* The pain and the longing drew me in. I cannot relate to the story but the text kept me engrossed and I could feel all the pain. Loss is a loss. Nothing is sugarcoated in all the pieces in this anthology.
"I want my innocence back" is what I said after reading it. Reading it opened me up to watch *Fifty Shades of Gray* for the first time. With my conservative nature dead and buried, I have since written some explicit pieces of my own. With the gentleness that I cannot shake off, of course.

Tina's influence and *Fist of The Spider Woman* enthused me towards *dark* content. Surrealism taking centre stage in the creation of such content. From Sizakele Phohleli's poem, *You Make Drowning Seem Like a Gift* (which I adapted into a choreography script), to the work of João da Cruz e Souza's *Black Rose*

…and I, eye-witness of your anguish

And the ruthless torment of your heart

Delirious flower steeped in blood

Erupting flood like wave after wave

Such voluptuousness makes me dizzy

Black rose of night, flower of oblivion (Black, Brown and Beige, 2009)

This interest in surrealism and writing pain tangibly made more sense during the Desire seminar. Exploring the invisible line between love and lust, and, love and obsession. The beauty of it and its "icy depths" when it is unrequited. The dangers surrounding it…once acquired or even rejected. It became a significant challenge to go into personal depths of these truths and to yet remain creative in the expressions of it. Souza' Black Rose continued to fuel me as inspiration…

"trammeled, I try to escape

vexed by your soul's icy depths"

" …offer me your acrid, incendiary kiss which I shall
cherish vastly more than any endearment from pallid
lips" (Black, Brown and Beige, 2009)

I write a lot about love and the pain that results in it going wrong. And because it is a universal thing, it is easy to sound cliché. Which has been my biggest challenge from day one, according to the feedback. The imagery in Souza's work is influential in my new-found original expression of universal topics.

Writing about self

To look at oneself in depth, and to language and articulate one's findings is always a gruelling task for me. Depressing even. I don't enjoy it because all my writing is centred around self, and with that comes a lot of introspection and the discovery of harsh truths. The pieces may not necessarily be about me sometimes, but they are inspired by and come from a place of self. Body, on the other hand, has never been an interest to me, except for its reception of love, joy and pain, and how, sometimes, it reciprocates these. The beauty in being challenged in this way is that one develops a muscle they may not have been aware that they had. As it turns out, my thesis has become cantered around self and body, and it is no longer such a hustle to allow myself to bleed.

A poet does not ask to escape, but to be permitted to know life fully, even when suffering.
_Women in Praise, Kayda Molodowsky

Transition is an integral part of life. It is inevitable. To have been challenged to write about it saw my thesis through. And my personal life in general. I had never thought of or explored it before. It had me off my comfort zone and I liked that...and detested it all at once. It came at a time when I was reading *One Hundred Days of Rain* by Carellin Brooks, whose main theme is a transition. I didn't necessarily like the book, but I appreciated that I got a sense of how to tackle the task from it. And from then on, many poems after that.

Perception/perspective have become very interesting. It is amazing how the writer writes what they write, how they write it for a specific purpose, only for it to be received differently. Not in the slightest way of how it was intended. This begs the question, where does a non-fiction writer draw the line between fact and fiction? Where does she strike the balance between truth and

creativity? The balance between staying true to her voice and giving the reader what they want to hear? Is the writer writing for herself or for the reader?

What inspired these questions is because, from the feedback, in not so many words sometimes suggested to change the narrative, therefore making the piece what it was not so as to be received in a certain way by the reader.

Languaging the Unlanguaged

This calls for deep searching of self. To find and harvest from places that left feelings untouched, unchallenged, and unresolved due to the lack of words for them. Places in my past that have laid dormant for a very long time. That has now been yanked open. Let to spill out all over me. Leaving me drained of blood flow. I felt my heart barely beating most of the time. Having to deliberately cheer it on, to remind it that is has a lot of work to do still.

Writing takes a toll on me at times. My emotions receiving beatings without end. The beatings look good once they are on paper, but I am left to nurse the blue and black of my scars all alone.

So when Rustum Kozain in his workshop, referred to the art of writing as "just markings on paper" it was beyond disrespectful. Not only to artists but to the art itself. It made sense how his work left me feeling nothing when he revealed that he assumes different characters for him to be able to write. He is so far removed from it. I find it concerning that he has to project himself into his characters for him to be able to express himself.

Writing about the past and how it has influenced the Present.

The assignment was a tough one. I had to dig deep into my past to find the bad and ugly. It is interesting how the mind blocks out some of the traumatic experiences that we go through. A lot of things I had forgotten resurfaced while working on this assignment. I wasn't sure if others were just my wild imagination, or if they were true. I really struggled mentally and emotionally. The mind surely is an incredible thing. It was only natural that I would gravitate towards Lidia Yuknavitch. The manner with which she writes pain is riveting. It made sense to read *The Chronology of Water*. The plan was to write about pain plainly. To let it all out and leave it all on the page. But also be as poetic about it as I possibly can, given that Lidia writes prose. It was difficult to find the balance, though. I took the lesson from this seminar well into the production of my thesis.

Less is More…Sweet and Short. It goes back to being deliberate about my writing. It still is a tough thing to do as my poetry comes to me when and how it wants to. So, to put a measure to it proved to be a challenge. I write predominantly short poems…so, one would have expected that this task would be easy. But there is never thought about length when I write. But it worked out well. I am now conscious about length…line length as well as the length of the poem itself.

Thesis Development

As the challenges kept coming, things started getting clearer. I could visualise how my thesis would look like. Feministic views started making more sense than they had previously, given my background. I had always been about the equality of the genders and their fluidity thereof. But I wasn't aware how deep my need was to contribute positively to the awareness of how nonsensical patriarchal views are.

Having read *Fist of the Spider Woman*, *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women,* an anthology by Angela Carter fell short where explicit content is concerned, especially given the title. I sought writing by women and made a realization that propelled me further into what my thesis eventually became.

How to Suppress Women's Writing by Joanna Russ provided much insight into the realization I had made.

Re-imagining (Re-imaging) a Sinful and Blasphemous Womanhood

We live in a highly patriarchal society. Everything feminine is rendered subordinate. This sentiment manifests in more ways than one. In Christianity, the man is the head. The woman is his helper because she came from him. In the church, and in the home the man is the authority and the woman must remain quiet and obedient as a servant to her master.

IsiXhosa culture is not so different from the principles of Christianity. Their ideologies often clash but they agree that the man is the head and he is, therefore, sole authority. This sentiment remains rigid to date

This mentality put in place gender roles that became stereotypes. Historically, because of this sentiment women were assigned domestic duties. Everything intellectual (education) and things that require physical agility were for the man. This meant that certain careers were inaccessible for women.

Humanity has evolved, allowing women to participate in things that are stereotypically for men, but patriarchal views remain though constantly challenged and proven null and void. The literary world seems to not want to open the space for the participation of women. *The World Split Open*, an anthology of female writers dating back as early as the 1600s proves how closed the literary doors have and remain to be.

If certain people are not supposed to have the ability to produce great literature, and if this supposition is one of the means used to keep such people in their place, the ideal situation (socially speaking) is one in which such people are prevented from producing any literature at all. But a formal prohibition tends to give the game away. (Russ, 1983)

Women have been and continue to challenge the status quo regardless. This unsettles the powers that be to the point of discomfort. Instead of facing their adversaries, which will deem them monsters, "the trick thus becomes to make the freedom as nominal a freedom as possible and develop various strategies for ignoring, condemning, or belittling the artistic works that result. If properly done, these strategies result in a social situation in which the 'wrong' people are (supposedly) free to commit literature, art, or whatever, but very few do, and those who do (it seems) do it badly." (Russ, 1983)

The same "freedoms" apply where Christianity is concerned. Christians often quote their favourite cliché, saying "Whom the Son sets free is free indeed". This freedom, however, applies only to a select few…men. Women being the ones whose freedom is nominal because they are subordinate to men.

These findings have given me more reason to write for and about womanhood. These challenges fuelled the fire in me. *red cotton* by Vangile Gantsho, who is a MACW alumnus writes womanhood in its most authentic. She bore her heart and soul into the pages. I'm pretty sure she bled onto them too. Nothing is censored. I was so engrossed I read it all in one sitting. Her work was reminiscent of a quote I came across during my research. "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open" _ Muriel Rukeyser, "Käthe Kollowitz" from *The Speed of Darkness.*

I not only saw myself in some of the pieces, but I saw my very writing in hers. She had me in my feels the entire time. Challenged me to face my own demons. Broke me even. Such honesty about womanhood, from a woman, is essential for a time such as this.

With my thesis leaning towards the emancipation of women, mostly from mental and physical dictatorship, among other things, Gantsho's poem a *smallgirl guide for wayward* women became the point of departure.

be a witch

a temptress

be free

in love
and sex
have lots of
sex

smear yourself
all over their bibles
stain their linen
with your cum

be wild

speak out of turn
throw your head back in laughter
sit with your legs open
let the wind kiss
your lady
wink
she's no lady

flirt with the first person you see
reek of sex
smell your fingers
taste them
let her scent sit
on your upper lip
enjoy the throbbing
of his pumping
in a queue at the bank
make the teller envy you

let out an "Ah"
throw your head back in
laughter *(Gantsho,2018)*

It atoned for the disappointment that was the anthology edited by Angela Carter, *Wayward Women and Wicked Girls.* And it also plays into Makhosazana Xaba's *Opening up like that*

It is risky to open up like that!
What if something comes,
lodges inside the base of your petals
and irritates you?

It is dangerous to open up like that
What if something heavy lands
on the tips of your petal
and breaks you off?

It is admirable to open up like that
When something finally arrives
to touch sides with your gentle petals
it will be one with you.

It is delightful to open up like that
Every eye that catches
the vibrant colours of your petal
instantly grasps the depth of your beauty.
(Xaba, 2019)

Both these poems have a compelling rebellion and are taking back ownership of the female body from the rule of religion and the culture that dictates what a woman should do with her body, how, and when.

It became important to me to "write the body and language back into relationship with each other*"(*Yuknavitch, 2015) as does Lidia Yuknavitch in *The Small Backs of Children*. I felt every emotion, saw every image. The form is very new to me. She really does write it all weird…and it works. Because my thesis is about the female form and everything in and around it, I attempt to write body in ways as convincing as she does.

Delving into writing sex, with the kind of background I have, I had to consume a lot of sexual content in order to be able to produce it. *Erotique Noire Black Erotica* edited by Miriam

Decosta-Willis, Reginald Martin, and Roseann P Bell became a necessary read for me to be in a sensual mind frame to be able to write sex. This anthology is a beautiful selection of Black writers dipping into their sensual selves to create this beauty. *Midnight Licorice Nights* by P.J.

Gibson stood out and from it *Haiku for Bad Bitches* and other poems in the Thorn in Flesh section were birthed.

Midnight Licorice Nights

I want midnight licorice nights to find us
Sucking on the juice of our evening sup
Savouring the full course of the midday feast
Arms, legs, breasts, chests wet in the waves of love's spicy sauces
I want the sautéed makings of morning's rise to seduce our nostrils
And beckon us to dine again
Swallowing rounds of bursting orange on the sheets of the universe
I want to forever unfold the menu of you
Open the dish of chance
Sip the ambrosia of erotic litchi
Pithing and sweatshop juice
I want to banquet eternally in you and you in me
Marinating in the liquids of our joys
Simmering in the heat of
Cool blue flames of midnight licorice nights
Midnight licorice nights of you

Louella Sullivan, also MACW alumnus was also influential in my writing about the indulgence in forbidden fruit. *Frontier,* published in the 2019 autumn issue of New *Contrast* is an exceptional piece in its sensuality.

The dream of you
Is still firm between my legs
As I make coffee and warm
Hot cross buns soft
Under a fierce slice of butter

I can still feel my hands at
The boarder of your jeans and torso
A delineated space
Cloth – belt – skin You lift me and
wrap my legs around the map of your
body

you beg something I cannot hear what was
that you ask again this time I understand
you are the dream and I can give in
(Sullivan, 2019)

The Thesis

Reflective Journal 1

The craziest thing about creating literature for and about women is being challenged by a very woman issue on womanhood and motherhood when I, in fact, am not a mother.

My housemate has her children over for the holidays, which means that I will be doing very little reading, forget about writing, because of the noise levels. Children will be children. The children are cute and well behaved until the parents are around. They know for a fact that they can get away with any and everything. Especially when their father is around. So much that I didn't sleep last night. It is literally 05:38 as I write this.

The six-year-old watched television all night. I am a light sleeper, so with my room just next to the lounge, I could hear everything and therefore couldn't sleep. I asked the boy to turn down the volume at around 3 am and he refused, citing that "daddy said it is ok". By 05:15 the boy started kicking his ball against the wall. I nearly lost it. But if the parents say nothing, after I have been told to my face, by the boy, that the only authority he recognises is theirs, I knew I had to grin and bear it.

Motherhood comes on at this point. Having "raised" several nieces and nephews, having babysat people who now have babies of their own, I have been playing parent for a while now, even if at small intervals. And because I wanted to have eight children at some point, I am well researched on parenting. I made sure I was prepared.

To have a conversation with a mother about their parenting is a sure way to start a fight. And, for the sake of my thesis, I feel it is a conversation worth having (even if it is just with my notepad) …with the hope that it feeds into my work. Positively so. Hopefully.

While having conversations with my female friends, some mothers some not, some aspire to be, and some are repulsed at the thought (conversations I would not dare have with the mother who inspired this, I am taken back to my own motherly instincts. How I aspired to bear children. How overtime, the excitement has dwindled. My pregnancy scare. The void it left. How I am now not opposed to the idea of never having children.

Joan Metelerkamp's poem *Daybreak* from her collection of poems titled Into The Day Breaking sets a sombre mood

"Child, whom I call up with the sun

who comes gold with dew,

I shall not have you, shall not give you

life…"

(Metelerkamp, 2000)

Not only does it trigger a sadness I felt when, after hoping and praying for years, there finally was a promise to have children by a man I had loved for years, but the dream was snatched from my grip. It also triggered a wave of anger I feel about how women who decide to not conceive are treated as the scum of the earth, and their womanhood is questioned. And some who are biologically unable to conceive are treated like trash.

These triggers have birthed several poems. We sure do go through the most.

Blood Child takes after Joan's excerpt of the aforementioned poem. It is a summary of my pregnancy scare and the situation around it. Though fictionalized, it captures most of what transpired. And to stick true to the womanhood I am trying to reimagine, it does leave a bad taste in my own mouth. I hope it does the same to the reader.

Conception is an almost delusional citation of my yearning to be a mother. It also captures the man with whom I would have had the children with. His indiscretion is also put on blast. This poem too is fictionalised but is very non-fictional. It toys with surrealism as is my tendency to hint at it.

It is always interesting how the truth can be unbelievable. Even in its plainest. How *Conception* is read as too farfetched because there is no way a man with seven children can promise somebody five children". I plead the fifth.

It also inspired by Ros Barber's poem *What Happens to Women*, from the anthology titled Women's Work edited by Eva Salzman and Amy Wack.

> "It's what happens to women, no matter who you are.
> Divine inside? They'll only see the face.
> It's coming, despite your warmth, your grit, your heart –
> the sudden shift from beauty to disgrace….
> On a morning like any other, she wakes to find
> Her lover moved out…
> half-penned love note stutters towards the sea,
> embarrassed, undoing its 'love', and 'dear', and 'we'. "

(Barber, 2009)

Shame: a keepsake is inspired by my current living situation. How in one of the noisy mornings, I decided I needed a break and was invited into a classmate's space to cool off. Walking to the taxi the next morning, wearing the same clothes I wore the day before felt quite like the infamous walk of shame. I can only assume because culture and religion have not afforded me the chance to experience it. I was very intrigued by the thought of shame. It only made sense to write about the perception of it. And the lust that leads to it. I posted "walk of shame" on my WhatsApp status and my friends called my bullshit. I was kind of mad that not only had I not had the experience, but I still couldn't own it even when I had "created" it.

The poem is a collection of my thoughts around that kind of shame…and they are quite incoherent because I wasn't really trying to have a stance on the matter except for the question at the end. I really wonder if a woman truly *can have her shame and keep it too*…if she so wishes. Maybe it isn't even shame but *pride* to her. And who dictates what is shameful and for whom? Because it is never regarded as shame for the other gender in the same position. Or at least not on the same scale.

Reimagining a womanhood in all its sinful and blasphemous glory, I said, and hell burst open, spitting tongues of fire that flicked and licked at the very hairs of my face. I am feeling the heat and it scares me.

Reflective Journal 2

Reimagining a sinful and blasphemous womanhood is a deliberate insubordination to;

1. CULTURE: as a child of the Tembu Royal clan
2. CHRISTIANITY: as a former worship leader, and as a PK.

I have always found myself caught in between the two as some of their ideologies clash. This has, in many ways delayed my development into womanhood. So much that in my late twenties, I am struggling with things I should have dealt with as a teenager or even in my early twenties.

From these struggles have risen an urge to explore the "evil" side of me, as everybody has in themselves both good and evil. I found it interesting, as a former devout Christian to delve into and document the very woman I was taught to NOT be. Not only in imagination but in action as well. To live the life of the character I am writing about, though my Christian upbringing still has its clutches strongly on me. Every day is an intentional decision to lay aside the mental conflict that comes with this pursuit and to race to the finish line. Hopefully with my mind still intact.

My distaste for men, both in cultural settings and in religion, who deem themselves the epitome of truth and moral campus, who boldly tell women how to be women drives me, daily, to stay strong and keep fighting. Laying aside the fear of the judgement that the publishing of this work will potentially subject me to. I have always found it odd and distasteful that from the surface knowledge and experience of womanhood, these men felt they had the liberty to have their opinion be the gospel on what a good woman is, how she acts and reacts, how she dresses etc.

Edwidge Danticat's *Women Like Us* talks about women and their struggles, and the struggle of women writers. It is beautiful how she says, "They slip phrases into their stew and wrap meaning around their pork before frying it. They make narrative dumplings and stuff them in their daughters' mouths, so they say nothing more"(Danticat, 1993). The imagery is vivid and so is the metaphor, and it is the reality of the silence that we are taught. "A good woman is meek and mild". I can almost see the phrases going into the stew as would spices, how *good* meaning would taste on pork chops (because the place of a woman is in the kitchen, cooking). It is, however, a terrible twist that the dumplings silence the daughter. It makes me mad. It alludes to how, as young girls, we were taught to be meek and submissive. To not challenge anything or anybody. Similar content to Yehuda's poem. It is also beautiful how she says, "you used to

dream that you were lying among the dead and all the spirits were begging you to scream*"* *(*Yehuda,A.n.d*).* I take interest in the fact that those who lived before us are routing for us to bring change. I can imagine that her ancestors were writers too but were fed the narrative dumpling that silenced them.

Ancestry, genealogy, lineage... that's a point of interest to me. We owe it to our foremothers to be the change that they hoped for. We also owe it to our daughters to create an environment where they don't have to suffer the same ills that we have suffered. Talking about the women who came before us *The World Split Open* edited by Louise Bernikow blew my mind. From her introduction. How she seeks to have the scale balanced, where female poets are considered equal to male poets. And how with this anthology, she has put to the forefront, female poets from as early as the 1600s (foremothers). It has and continues to validate what I'm trying to do and why. There is no way that female poets are inferior to male poets. There is no way that women are inferior to men, period! Patriarchy persists with its notion to diminish everything feminine. Different does not mean unequal.

The biggest tool used by culture and religion to keep women at bay is sexuality. It was important for me to have a section that deals with sex. Mostly by writing the issues we are silent about and those that are only spoken about behind closed doors.

Cunning Con is about as wayward and as wicked as I hope the rest of the work gets. It draws inspiration from the aforementioned poem by Vangile Gantso, *a smallgirl guide to wayward women.* Even as a victim, the *I* in the poem takes the stance of a victor somehow in her crime. Purges herself of guilt. *Never yours* brings in the savagery while *Crucifix* is a response to the expected backlash.

It challenged me to face my sexual history and present. The good, the bad, the dysfunctional, and the ways in which it has damaged and healed me. From it, *Solace, Hoarder, Rejection, Haiku for Bad Bitches, Touched, These Walls Weep* (which is rather about the lack of action*), Severed vein whole heart, and Hollow heart* were birthed.

Sexing the Cherry by Jeanette Winterson. Hilarious. Violent. It caught me completely off guard. The humour surrounding religion is a killer! Jesus! And that from a person who grew up in the church is inspirational. I thoroughly enjoyed travelling to all the places this book took me. My rebellion against the church is not done with malicious intent, but rather to right some wrongs and expose important truths. It is, I feel, a necessary evil. And she does that beautifully.

PS…I am deconstructing a womanhood built on/by patriarchal scheming, reconstructing a womanhood built on and by women. Doing all of this by the most extreme means possible to foster a hasty shift of mentality.

Reflective Journal 3

Where does a non-fiction writer draw the line between fact and fiction? Where does she strike a balance between truth and creativity? The balance between staying true to her voice and giving the reader what they want to hear? Is the writer writing for herself or for the reader? And, whatever the hell is poetry?

These questions arise when the going gets tough. With the constant picking at scabs, digging out tombs, pulling our neatly packed dirt from underneath the carpet and making it speak comes tedious amounts of emotional labour. The harvesting of self for the sake of the art remains a cruel job. Necessary nonetheless.

Angel on a Bicycle by Kimentha Govender. This one tugged at my heart and worried me at the same time. It worried me that the angel *had no wish to use his wings to go back home*. We are forever trying to escape our realities, often fantasizing about heaven as an escape. But if the angel would rather stay here, then heaven clearly is no place for us to escape to. Where do we escape to then?

Boozing it up and getting high does, in no way heal but masks the pain, if only for a while. Rest (even though bolts of creative energy come flooding at dawn when sleep is at its sweetest) and debriefing are a necessity.

This piece also spoke to *Woman Scorned,* how she tries to bargain saying, *ever to you I give praises.* As if that should be the answer to her woes. Which it should, as we are taught from the bible.

We all come from somewhere. So does our art. But the lines are seldom clear. To try and articulate the inner workings of one's mind and soul and how that gets translated into text becomes an almost impossible task.

I spend a lot of time fighting against censorship. This is because I am a very expressive person. I cherish the freedom to voice out my thoughts, emotions, and concerns. To express love, anger, disappointment and joy. Verbally. Never mind the fact that I am terrible at it. That I find it difficult to string a few words together to form a coherent sentence. Finding out that one is censored in places where they should be at liberty to speak their truth without fear of judgement is the worst. At home with family or with close friends. How much more fight will one have to put with the world.

Wame Molefhe's *I'm sure* is too short a piece for such a conversation starter. I jokingly referred to sex as a "meeting of loins session" the other day, a "conversation of loins". How a friend reacted to my statement was rather disappointing. Nobody, especially not at the age of twentysix should be calling sex *izimanga.* Not a mother to a 6-year-old. Especially not when talking to me, her close friend.

Wame starts this conversation from the perfect angle. Home. The sooner we call things with their rightful names, name things that have no manes, the better. Many social ills are perpetuated by silence. Silence caused by the fact that things aren't named. Crazy thing is that I also struggle with naming things. And for the longest time, I was a prude. I still am actually. Except that now I am deliberate about saying the exact thing I find uncomfortable.

Sex has to be the biggest taboo in our Black homes. Our Christian homes. Whenever it is mentioned, it is always as something vulgar. To young girls it is talked about as a warning against unwanted pregnancy and defecation to their virtue. While to boys it is praised. This again is according to me a means to control women. Because they are but things to be used and disposed of by men. The vulgar that is a woman who openly expresses their sexuality and questions patriarchal practices society has not learned how to handle except to ostracise and call them derogatory names. This has often led to the abuse of such women. At times as punishment and as correction.

To write about this takes more from me than I would like to give. But I find comfort in what Molebatsi says, that:

…we are the indelible words we write and our stories are open
wide spreading like the song we are leaping from behind history's
curtain to become tomorrow's gifts given to
enlighten…(Molebatsi, 2009,p.41)

Explicit expression of sexuality by a woman is frowned upon. Especially an unmarried woman. Even married women should pretend that they don't like it. But conversations need to be had. And with this thesis, I hope that they are not only had, but that the stigma around them is lifted. Solace challenges this view in that the "I" in the poem not only likes sex, but it is also her salvation.

Reflective Journal 4

I often say that my being in the literary world is accidental, but the truth is that I owe my writing to my mother. I owe her a lot of things. She says I owe her my life because she gave birth to me…but we'll see. I started writing for her. To her. She had started a new job when I was nine. It was more demanding than her previous odd jobs. At around the same time, she started studying. We would go for weeks without seeing her even though she slept and woke up at home.

I was a very emotional child. I needed a lot of alone time with her. But with her new job, it was impossible. She said to write her letters whenever I had something troubling me or if I needed to talk. I would put them under her pillow. She would read them and address whatever needed to be addressed. I eventually started writing for myself. Some sort of diary. It made sense to do so as I was very inarticulate. Listening to me required patience. Only she had mastered it. In her absence, I had to find somebody else. That was my diary. This I am reminded by a poem in New Daughters of Africa, an anthology by Margaret Busby, *Saartjies cry*

> Oh mother, I am not me,
> My soul has been lost in this journey.
> …
> Oh mother, it is not just my soul they've torn apart—
> It is oh mother my very heart (Glinton-Meicholos, 2019)

It is a tribute to Sarah Baartman. This poem is indicative of how important mothers are in their daughters' lives that in their deepest despair, their mothers are the only people they can cry to. In the anthology are other mother-daughter poems about even dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships. Fathers even. Phillippa Yaa De Villiers' Heritage

> The first time I saw my father it was like the whole continent was walking towards me, it was like his skin unzipped, opened up to let me in, and for the first time, I was able to see my black skin as a bag of courage. (De Villiers,2019)

Julie Nxadi, *Iinyawo zinodaka* (Mud on her Feet) published in the South African Literary Journal is a typical Xhosa mother-daughter relationship. In her prose poem she asks questions we can all relate that go unanswered. "*kukuthuni ukuthandana, kukuthini uthunakala*, and *kukuthini ukumoshakala*?" A response poem in IsiXhosa was birthed in the other half of my thesis. It also seeks to start necessary conversations.

The “I” in my work is sometimes hypothetical as I write from not only my personal experiences but from the experiences of the women in and around my life, and imagined experiences, letting my mind delve into unchartered territory…places I may not physically go because of religiously and culturally preinstalled inhibitions. I bypass them sometimes, but most times I fail. Even though this is about me, and the internalization of other people’s experiences, I hope it has a *universal address* as the reader then becomes the *I*.

As Laynie Brown introduces Bernadette *Mayer’s The Desire of Mothers to Please Others in Letters*, I seek *to* “proclaim, to celebrate, to rant and lament, yet never to romanticize” or make a spectacle of Black womanhood in its entirety (Brown, 1994). The title of it also reminded me of the letters mom and I would exchange. Very fond memories of my childhood. I wish I had kept them and all my diaries.

I am in a perpetual state of internal conflict as I write this thesis. Mostly because my life has never been my own. I have always lived and continue to live under the shadow of my parents and the church community. I have always had to be mindful of how what I say and do reflects on them and on the church. They are excited about this project, but I shudder at the thought of them reading it. I can almost imagine the prayer item that I will be, to exorcize the Jezebel spirit that so inhabits me.

There is a lot of good that the church does. Culture too. My insubordination to them as I write this project is not to denounce the good that they do. To have been twenty, turning twenty-one, doing my third year at NMMU, over a thousand kilometres away from home, in a foreign city wherein I had no family and nobody to be accountable to, yet remained a virgin only speaks of how good their teachings are. To have lost my virginity because I wanted to remain a treasure to me. But the guilt that came with having made that decision, the secrecy, the judgement. Judgement from myself too as a worship leader whose chastity determines how spiritual one is and the rank at which “God will use them”. There began the “mess” that I eventually became.

Women in Praise of the Sacred edited by Jane Hirshfield comes in as the perfect read for somebody of my background. Forty-three centuries of Spiritual poetry by women.
Christianity depicts sex as a sacred act for a married heterosexual couple to partake in, as ordained by God. It also says that women are subordinate to men. That they are the source of original sin. So, with all these in mind, and the no-sex-before-marriage rule, a female transgressor takes the fall. As if she had the sex alone. Man’s sin is her fault. She should have

said no. she should have dressed in a way that is not provocative so the man will not fall into lust. All that bull shit keeps women enslaved, and the mental and emotional consequences of it are dire.
It says in the introduction that these women "are a class of women who refused to be kept from the lives they mostly desired". I am that woman. My writing is that woman.

My project is, among other things, a documentation of my struggle with the body. How I live in it yet do not own it. How it is a temple of the Lord. How it moves from His ownership to the ownership of a man. This thesis seeks to take back ownership.
To have this book of women associating the sacred and spiritual with Eros is beautiful. That their ownership of their bodies does not mean separation with the divine but rather that they are the divine within themselves. And the fact that they are vocal about this despite the odds is not only a marvel, but I find solace in the fact that what I am doing is not new. As there is nothing new under the sun. The foremothers have paved a way and we shall journey in it with strength and with poise.

Makhosaza Xaba says in The Alkalinity of Bottled Water, "…the beautiful ones have arrived…" (Xaba, 2019). We sure have and we have a lot to say.

Reflective Journal 5

Ama Biney's essay, *creating the New Man in Africa* in The New Daughters of Africa Anthology is not only well written, it beautifully articulates my sentiments. How culture and religion has not only oppressed women but messed with psyche of men is incredible. In the conversations I have been having with people in my circle, I have mentioned, countless times how in as much as we are doing the most to empower women, a lot needs to be done to prepare men for this new wave of women rising and taking on the world. This has given me a bad name among feminists. But, I am not bothered. I have never claimed to be a feminist.

Ama quotes Thomas Sankara, *who was committed to socio-economic and political change in his country*, citing that "the revolution cannot triumph without the genuine emancipation of women". As our emancipation is underway, I continue to hope that men get emancipation of their own. Be freed from the clutches of religion and culture that bind them to being macho, aggressive, and competitive.

I always narrow it down to Xhosa men and isiXhosa culture, not with malicious intent, but because I am most familiar with its ways than those of other cultures. What makes me sad the most is that there are men, Xhosa men, who behind closed doors, take the mask off, at sparse intervals, but quickly put them back on to not be seen and labelled as weak by society. They themselves question and oppose some of these cultural practices.

My father is one of these men. He is a very patriarchal man, there's no doubt about that. He raised us, however, with no specific boundaries on gender roles. He would make his own meals, except for when he wanted something he couldn't make. He relished his time in the kitchen. If anything, he taught us independence and wished that we would get educated and be our own women, even though he hated that mother was so independent and hungered for education. He tried to stall my brother from going to initiation school. Urging him to study first but at twenty, my brother became forceful about it as his friends were going in that year while some had gone in the previous year, so father gave in. A couple of days after brother came back from the school, very casually one morning, in the kitchen, sipping on his tea, father asked him, *"ubonile ke ukuba ayikho yonke le nto? Ayikho le nto ubuyingxamele?"*, and brother agreed. I wanted to jump in on their conversation and probe, but I knew better. They protect mountain secrets with their lives.

My maternal grandfather was one of such men. It is a pity that I never got to experience him. He suffered a stroke when I was seven years old and was incapacitated until he passed away

when I was twenty-four. I hear he was a very wise, noble man. He would urge mother to never get married but to study and make something of her life. Abductions and forced marriages were prevalent at the time, so he would constantly tell mother to escape and never spend the night if she ever found herself in that situation, or else he couldn't save her. He believed in the emancipation of women but would negotiate damages for an abducted girl.

A dear friend of mine is also this kind of Xhosa man. He was indeed a beautiful surprise. He, unlike the others is very articulate about his stance. He does not speak in codes and riddles. At least not to me. I wonder if he holds these views because he is a father to three daughters. It is he that taught me to unlearn some of the patriarchal inhibitions I grew up with. He taught me that I could be myself and be my own person. And not to be afraid to express my thoughts, emotions, and sexuality. His daughters are in good hands.

I order to create new African men, a process of consciousness-raising, or the journey of men increasing their self-awareness of patriarchy or male domination. It must operate on a social level…in the media, the church, mosque, trade unions etc. In the family mostly. *The family needs to socialise girls and boys differently. This extends to the wider extended family and peer group who are also very influential in legitimating negative and positive behaviour, norms and values.* _Ama Biney, Creating the New Man in Africa

It will be a relief to find that the fight we are on now, which is the same fight women have been fighting for centuries on end, will have been won in ten or twenty years to come. It begins with the change in the male psyche. I will that they would listen.

#NotYetUhuru

Reflective Journal 1 (IsiXhosa)

Xa ubani ephulukana nolwimi lweenkobe, zingaphi izinto ezikulo aphulukana nazo?

Lo mbuzo ubuzwe nguNjingalwazi uthile kumakhasi onxibelelwano. Ndiwufunde kaliqela ndanomvandedwa. Ndithe ndakuhlala ndawetyisa ndafumanisa ubunyani bawo kobam ubomi. Utata wafudukela eGoli elityendyana ngonyaka we 1977 esiya kuxelenga ezimayini. Emana ukugoduka aye eTyalarha kanye ngonyaka. Wathi wakubona umama, wambhinqisa waya kuhlala kunye naye eGoli.

Sikhulele apho nodadethu nomnakwethu. Sikhulela kwindawo ekuthethwa kuyo ulwimi lwesiSotho. Nangona isiXhosa besisithetha ekhaya, ubuye ufumanise ukuba singxengiwe. Nasesikolweni sithetha ulwimi loondlebe zikhany' ilanga. Kwibanga lesine, ndaphuma esikolweni sesiNgesi ndaya kufunda kwisikolo sikawonkewonke. Ndafike kufundiswa ulwimi lwesiSotho nesiZulu njengolwimi lwasekhaya. Ndaze ndakhetha ukufunda isiZulu kuba sizalana nesiXhosa. Nokuba nje ndakhawuleza ndabona ukuba asizalani kuyaphi. Umahluko mkhulu. Ndifunde eso siZulu ndade ndaya kuphumela kwibanga leshumi elinambini. Ndawongwa ngabakwa-PanSALB *njengomfundi ovelele olwimini lwesiZulu* kwsithili endandifunda kuso.

Le nkcaza ibonisa ukuba ndiphulukene nokukhulu ngenxa yokukhula ndithetha isiZulu, isiSotho, kunye nesiNgesi (endaweni yokufunda ulwimi lweenkobe). Nangona kunjalo zange ndilahle mbeleko ngakufelwa. Ngenxa yokzingca ngobuXosa bam, ndandisoloko ndithe ngqolo ukufunda iincwadi zesiXhosa, ngakumbi iinoveli ezifana noKwazidenge kaPateni, ndifunda ngendlela uZuziwe aphethwe ngayo kwilali yakhe kwakunye nothando lwakhe noBhuqa, iincwadi ezifana noUkuba Ndandazile kaW.K Tamsanqa, Ingqumbo Yeminyanya kaA.C Jordan, Ityala Lamawele kaS.E.K Mqhayi, njalo-njalo. Ngalo ndlela, ndibe nako ukuhamba ndichola-chola izinto ebesele ndilahlekene nazo kulwimi olu lwam.

Kuphando endilwenzayo kuncwadi lwesiXhosa ndifumanise ukuba akukho nto indikhuthaza njengokubona umbhali wasetyhini osemtsha. Kuyabonakala ukuba ukubhala oku yayingumsebenzi wamadoda. La madoda awebhala ngokweembono zawo, ebhalela oobhululu awo. Kuthe kwakufunda namanina, akwabikho zinguqu zingako kuncwadi lwesiXhosa, koko suka kwangathi la madoda enze umthetho othi yonke into ebhalwayo mayiqale ngentshayelelo ekumila kunje, isiqu, kunye nesiphelo, zonke ezo zinto zikhatshwe yintshumayelo ethile.

Kolu ncwadi, ndifumanise ukuba kukho ukucinezelwa kwabasetyhini. Njengokuba abasetyhini nabo befunda le mibhalo, bafunda ukuba bangamakhoboka. Bayithathe loo nto bayikholelwe. IsiNtu kunye nenkolo zikwenza oko ngokwaneleyo. Uncwadi malwenze umahluko, lukhulule abasetyhini. Kudingeka ababhali basetyhini abaza kubhala ngezinto ezayamane nabantu basetyhini. Izinto eziza kuthi zibakhulise, zibakhulule.

Uthi uW. SOB. Mkhuhlu kwincwadi yakhe *Imvaba* kumbongo V.Ingcwaba …

> *"*Ndithi mn' indoda kakade sisilwanyana
> Ndithi mn' indoda kakade yingonyama
> Ukub' ibingunfazi ngesitshw' esofelweyo…"

Ndinokungoneliseki yimibhalo elolu hlobo. Ewe wona umbongo uncoma ubugokra bendoda. Mhlawumbi ngela xesha wabhalwa ngawo lo mbongo wawungenako ukudala ingxaki. Kodwa kule mihla siphila kuyo, ndifumanisa ukuba intetha enje ingadala umonakalo omkhulu. Ubulwanyana bamadoda siyabazi. Abuyonto yakunconywa. Ukufundwa nokufundiswa ngezibhalo ezinje kundishiya ndixhalabile. Imfundiso elolu hlobo ayakhi iyatshabalalisa. Ingakumbi xa ukunconywa kwesini esithile ikukwanyelisa esinye.

Umdiliya Wesihobe ngokuhlelwe nguMhlobo Jadezweni, iliqela imibongo ebhalwe ngamadoda ebhala ngamanina nobugorha bawo. Le ncwadi ibonisa ukuba noko likho ithemba lokuba inkululeko kwabasetyhini sele isodele.

Reflective Journal 2 (IsiXhosa)

Ukufumana amabali okanye imibongo yesiXhosa ebalisa ngeembono okanye ngeemvakalelo sabasetyhini kunqabe kakhulu. Ingakumbi ezibhalwe kwa-ngabasethyini. Le nto yenza ukuba kubenzima ukuvakalisa iingcinga zethu ngolwimi lweenkobe, sibhenele kweloondlebe zikhanya ilanga. Nto leyo ephinda ibe ngumqobo ekukhuleni nasekuphuhlisweni kolwimi lwethu.

Ulwimi Oluhloniphayo

UWame Molefhe, ebalini lakhe elifutshane u-*I'm Sure* elishicilelwe kwingqokelela ka Margaret Basby i-*New Daughters of Africa* ubhala ngokucacileyo ngalo mba wokungabizwa kwezinto ngamagama. Ubhale ngendlela oku kuhlonipha kuphembelela ukuhlukunyezwa kwabantwana abaselula. Nendlela ekuye kukhuselwe aba bantu benza oku kukhohlakala. Le nkohlakalo yenziwanangumntu othembekileyo olilungu losapho okanye umntu omkhulu, ohloniphekileyo ekuhlaleni. Uthi xa eliqukumbela eli bali, inguqu iqala ekhaya. Inyaniso mayithethwe ngobunjalo bayo, kungasetyenziswa olu lwimi luhloniphayo kuba luvula inyoba yokuhlukunyezwa kwabantwana.

Umbongo kaJulie Ngxadi u-*Mud on her Feet* (Inyawo Zinodaka) epapashwe kwiJenali i-*New Contrast* uzoba umfanekiso ngqondweni wohlobo esinxibelelana ngalo noomama bethu ngezinto ezimalunga nokufikisa, ezesondo, ezothando, kunye nendlela ulowo aye amelane nale miba, ingakumbi xa ingahambi ngendlela ekulindeleke ukuba ihambe ngayo.

Ubhentsisa ngakumbi ukufihlwa kwenyaniso ngelithi "asizontanga". Iyaxhalabisa ke le nto kuba ayikho into ephathekayo nelungileyo enokufundwa ngumntwana koontanga bakhe. Inyathi ibuzwa kwaba phambili kodwa abaphambili balugusha kubo ulwazi kunokuba babonise ulutsha indlela eya empumelelweni.

Ndichukumiseke kakhulu leli bali kunye nombongo endiwukhankanye ngasentla, ndaza ndabhala imibongo eliqela ukuvakalisa iimbono zam malunga noku kunye nemvakalelo yam malunga nezinto endithe ndagagana nazo apha ekukhuleni ngokwasekhayeni, ekuhlaleni, nakwezothando. Ndiphendula imibuzo ebuzwe ngababhali, nam ndibuza eyam imibuzo. Le mibuzo, nam ndiyibuza kuba ndisakhangela iimpendulo zayo.

Reflective Journal 3 (IsiXhosa)

Intsindiso kunye nenkolelo kwezemveli, nangona zohlukile, inye into ezivumelana ngayo, kukuba amanina angaphantsi kunamadoda. Le nto iye ibonakaliswe ngakumbi ezintweni eziphathelene nezikhundla zobunkokheli kunye na kwimithetho yendlela yokuziphatha ngokwesini. Kukho iindawo apho amanina angavumelekanga ukuba angene okanye athethe kuzo ngaphandleni kokuba kwenziwe siko lithile. Umfazi makayazi indawo yakhe. Umfazi makangathethi kuthethwa. Umfazi uyanyamezela. Ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini. Indoda imele ukutya naphi na, kodwa umfazi yena makahlale enyulu. Zonke ezi zinto zimele ukugcina amanina engamakhoboka.

Umbongo kaS.E.K. Mqhayi, *Ukwenziwa Komkhonzi* ndiye ndiwufuzisele kwindlela amanina aphethwe ngayo yinkolo, ingakumbi kule mihlathi ilandelayo:

Irhintyelwe ngeentambo zayidla ebuntloko, Yangxoliswa
yakhatywa, kwaphathwa kulelezwa,
Injongo yona inye mayithwale idyokhwe.
Lolwezulu uqeqesho olujong' umqeqeshwa
Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe

Iqodo lokuphela, ubekiwe loo mqobo
Yajikela nentambo entanyeni bukhanywa
Kwathiwa igqityiwe yo yofakwa emkhondweni,
Ukufunda intando yomlawuli umniniyo
Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
Kwinkatyana yedyokwe

Ukubhala kwam kuzama ukulwa nobu bukhoboka ngethemba lokuba kuza kukhululula namanye amanina emakhamandeleni enkolelo ethi imizimba yethu akusiyiyo eyethu, koko yitempile kaThixo kwaye masingayibandezi kumadoda (ngaphandle kokuba kukho isizathu esbambekayo).

Uninzi lwemibongo ngamanina ayanelisi kwaphela, nkqu nemibongo ebhalwe ngababhlali abaphume izandla. U-P.T. Mtuze (Vingcan' Amazibuko), nongona kubonakala ukuba kusetyenziswe iindlela ezintsha ukukhulisa ukubhalwa kwesiXhosa ngokwesimo sombongo, nohlobo olwahlukileyo lwesonethi, ukwabhala ngendlela engaginyisi mathe ngabasetyhini. Kumbongo wakhe *Ububi* ubhala ngoNtombembi Jezile. Kuwo ukhankanya indlela ambi ngayo.

Umbiza unongayindoda. Inkangeleko yakhe imbalekisela ngamasoka noba esondla iimbedlenge. Ubuhle bentliziyo yakhe abuthethi nto. Zezinye zezinto ezixhalabisayo ezi kuba intombi ithi ize ibe yintombi ibukeke ngokwenkangeleko emadodeni. Kungenjalo akahlonitshwa, kwaye akathandeki eluntwini. Ezi zezinye zezinto eziphembelela ukhuphiswano kumanina befuna ukwamkeleka emadodeni nasekuhlaleni. Baze bayithiye imfundo nokwenza ubulungisa ngoba azihloniphekanga ezo zinto. Okubalulekileyo kukuzihombisa ngaphandle ngokulungisa iinwele, ukuqhunqa, nokunxiba iimpahla zikanokutsho neziveza iindawo ezintle ezinokubangela umtsalane emadodeni.

Lolu khuphiswano oludala ukuba amaninina ahlale ecinezelekile kuba ludala iyantlukwano kumanina. Ngaphandle kwamathandabuzo, amanina xa enokumanyana abe yimbumba, angandisa amathuba okuphumelela idabi lokulwa nobungangamsha bamadoda acinezela amanina.

Masiqwalasele mibongo kaS.E.K. Mqhayi. Kubabhali besiXhosa singatsho sithi noko imisebenzi kaMqhayi yiyo esahamba phambili kwimisebenzi yakudala ebhalwe ngamadoda. Lo kaMqhayi ubhala ngamanina ngendlela engaqhelekanga, ingakumbi xa siqwalasela nexesha le mibongo eyayibhalwe ngalo, (iminyaka yowe 1932 ukuya phambili). Singatsho sthi ibhalwe ngendlela eyolisayo. Imibongo yakhe ngabasethyini iyomeleza kwaye iyandichukumisa njengombhali wasetyhini, kwaye eminye yayo isisiseko sale thisisi. Liyinene elithi imbongi ikwanguye nomprofeti kuba lo mbongo wakudala ka Mqhayi ndiwufumanisa ungqale ngqo kwixesha esiphila kulo namhlanje, kanye kwelixesha lobundlobongela nokutshatyalaliswa kwesizwe samanina ngokuphathwa gadalala, ukudlwengulwa nokubulawa ngokungenalusini.

Yiva le mbongi yesizwe xa isithi (1932):

Bafazi fakani iinkciyo ngambini
Liyeza idabi elimanyumnyezi
Ngqishea ngesikhakha neqhiya
Izwe lonakele zizigegemba
Safa isizwe, safa sijongile
Thethani zintaba, thethani milambo
Khalimani mazulu, gqumani nani zilwandle

[loose translation]

You women, double up your protection apparatus
Blood chilling battle is on its way

Fortify your defences with every means you have
The world is shameful because of vagrants
The nation is ruined, we are impoverished
Say your say you mountains
Protest you heavens, rumble too you seas (Mqhayi, 1932)

I can only imagine what must have been going on in his head when he wrote this. I wonder if he was alive today, would he link this poem to the current affairs.

It is a regular occurrence for me to write a poem innocently, driven by the notorious *duende*, usually just after midnight or before dawn, only for it to manifest in real life. Scary stuff if you ask me.

Komnye umbongo ubhala ngobugorha babafazi. This may contradict a statement I have made previously about how one cannot praise one gender and, in this process, diminish the other. But are there ever absolutes?

I like it, particularly because it is written by a man. The ability to look at one's flaws and be secure enough the articulate them without prejudice is a quality that I admire in a writer. I do this a lot in my own writing. It is not self-deprecating more than it is a truthful reflection of self. And to articulate that truthfully takes a considerable amount of strength.

Mqhayi alludes to the disparity of male rule to the rule/leadership of women. He advocates for not only the emancipation of women but that they should assume more significant roles in the community as men have failed.

Amaqobokazana angalal' endlini yazini kunyembelekile
Amadoda oyisiwe, makuphathe abafazi
Siwanike iliZwi, alishunqula
Siwanike imfundo, ayishunqula
Siwanika ukongamela, akushunqula
Sibangawanika umhlaba, awushunqula
Sibangawanika ubukhosi, abushunqushunqula

[Loose translation]

An exhortation that, young women entrusted with a task, difficult as
it may be, will stop at nothing to see it through successfully.
Men are captured, let women take over

We give them the Word, they cause chaos
We give them education, they flounder
We give them authority, they corrupt it
We give them the land, they sell it
We give them kingship, they dispute (Mqhayi, 1932)

The above-mentioned poems (by S.E.K Mqhayi) have inspired me and given me the confidence to continue to write what I write, and to write how I write, odd as it is. *Ukuzika Kohlanga* is of a similar sentiment and I anticipate backlash. But if the legendary Mqhayi has done it, so can I, right?

Molebatsi says: …we are the indelible words we write
and our stories are open wide spreading like the song we
are leaping from behind history's curtain to become
tomorrow's gifts given to
enlighten…(Molebatsi,2009,p.41)

This is the least burdensome burden ever. To carry and to deliver words, and to open myself up and to allow my woundedness and my failures to be a mirror for others is but a beautiful gift.

Book Review 1
Editor: Margaret Busby

Title: New Daughters of Africa

Publisher: Jonathan Ball Publishers

Year: 2019

Margaret Busby is a Ghanaian writer, editor and broadcaster now based in the UK. Co-founder of Allison and Busby. She was the first and youngest Black female book publisher in Britain in the 1960s. *New Daughters of Africa*, an international anthology of writing by women of African descent is a sequel to *Daughters of Africa* published in 1992. She was awarded the inaugural Africa Writes Lifetime Achievement Award On 6 July 2019, presented to her at the British Library during the Royal African Society's annual literary weekend by Ade Solanke and R.T. Hon Diane Abbott MP as part of the festival headline event celebrating Busby's anthology *New Daughters of Africa*.

It is a ground breaking, breath-taking collection of short stories (or excerpts thereof), essays, poems, letters and stories of 200 living Black women writers navigating the streets of their Black existence, their womanhood and geographical inhibitions to their freedom as human beings. The anthology features work by women that date back from as early as the 1800's to as recently as the 21st century. It is compiled in a chronological order by their decade of birth to give context to generational links (foremothers…the matriarch of feminism in Africa). She anthologises as such to "show how continuous our existence is in the continent" *(Minna Salami).* Reading this book, I recall the introduction to a similar anthology where the editor narrates how a male publisher asked why there needs to be a book of poems by women? He continues to say "…if they are any good, they can stand up in an anthology with men".

New daughters of Africa owes its template to the previous collection, Daughters of Africa, but it is in no way a duplicate. As a respected and multi-award-winning editor, writer and broadcaster, putting this anthology together was not difficult as writers enthusiastically came on board, also pointing her to work by other women they admired that she may not have known. The contributors write from and about personal experiences of Blackness and Womanhood, love and loss, tribulations and triumphs, making links to generational woundedness and the *impact of national and international politics.* Diana Ferrus writes a tribute to Sarah Baarman with her poem *I've come to take you home*

I have come to take you home –
home! Remember the veld,
the lush green grass beneath the big oak tree?
The air is cool there and the sun does not burn.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white…

In this poem she paints a geographical image of Africa and also tackles the politics of her capture into slavery, also empathising with her pain as a woman and as a human being.

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers writes about the displacement into a foreign land and the reunion of her and not only her father, but her roots in her poem *Heritage*. One could say that *uyazilanda:*

The first time I saw my father it was like the whole continent was
walking towards me, it was like his skin unzipped, opened up to let me
in, and for the first time,
I was able to see my black skin as a bag of courage. (De Villiers, 2019)

In the book the validity of Christianity and idolization of people of white skin colour, the hierarchies therein, and their charity is questioned in the writings of Julie Okot Bitek's list fiction piece:

7 who knew that we would have to witness whiteness as stratified categorised classed
8 hitherto as white people who loved us so much that they gave up all the thrilling possibilities of the good lives we would read about what it was to be European to teach generations and generations of us African girls until the end of time about how to be decent educated good Christian women

In it is also the politics of superiority and inferiority as European is written with capital "E", and African with the small letter "a".

Makhosazana Xaba and Vangile Gantso also feature in the anthology.

Because the "imagination respects no hierarchy", she pays homage to upcoming writers in this anthology saying, " my ambition was and is to shine a light on as many as possible of deserving, whether or not they are acknowledged or lauded by the gatekeepers, who traditionally single out a privileged few, seemingly never too many to rock the boat. But the boat is going nowhere if it is content to drift in stagnant water."

Angela Cobbinah of Cornish villages recollects “I felt an unfamiliar emotion. Call it connection or kinship, or the bubbling of a youthful rebelliousness”. I had goosebumps and right then I knew that this anthology would be a great read. And buoy was that an understatement!

I echo her parting words in her introduction, “May all who find their way to this anthology, regardless of gender, class or race, feast well on its banquet of words.”

Book Review 2
Author: Akwaeke Emezi

Title: Freshwater

Publisher: Grove Press New York

Year: 2018

Akwaeke Emezi was born in Umuahia and raised in Aba, Nigeria. She is a writer and video artist based in liminal spaces. Emezi's debut autobiographical novel FRESHWATER is a New York Times Notable Book and also a finalist for the Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize, the PEN/Hemingway Award, the NYPL Young Lions Fiction Award, the Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction, and a Lambda Literary Award (Currently longlisted for a National Book Award). Emezi was recently featured in Kirkus Reviews and profiled in The New York Times. Freshwater is translated into ten languages.

"For those of us with one foot on the other side", reads the dedication. Freshwater is a memoir told from the perspectives of her multiple selves, the Ogbanje. This book demystifies and undoes the taboo in African Spirituality. It shines the light on how most things African cannot be explained away and treated in Western ways. "Ọgbanje are as liminal as is possible—spirit and human, both and neither. I am here and not here, real and not real, energy pushed into skin and bone. I am my others; we are one and we are many", she writes, tearing down the rigid borders of the Western classifications of mental illness and Spirituality.

The book also skates on thin ice as it can be borderline offensive to the conservative hypoChristian readership, equating Yshwa (Jesus) with the gods that are her other-selves. "We knew him; we knew his name was Yshwa", narrates Ashugara, one of her selves. "…we knew that he looked like everyone, all at once, at any time. His face could shift like a ghost…Yshwa too was born with spread gates…And while he loved humans, what they forget is that he loves them as a god does, with a taste of suffering."

They also delve into the politics of hair, sexuality, international politics and stereotyping. Emezi is also the author of PET (Make Me a World/Random House Children's Books) which is also an *Indie Next selection and debuted with five starred reviews from* Kirkus, Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, Book page, and Bulletin. A multi-award winner. They have an extensive publication record in Magazines, online platforms and anthologies between the years 2015 – 2019.

The novel is set in both Nigeria and America, also delving into the liminal spaces that they occupy. With her style of writing and her voice, the reader is taken into all these spaces with much clarity and sentiment as the imagery is quite vivid. Their struggles with identity (due to the fact that that they are both human and a god), are relatable as identity uncertainty is a universal phenomenon, especially with the coming of age. Much can be taken from her experience with transition, her struggle thereof and how she overcomes them. Their voice, though the Ogbanje are centuries old, is of this generation in that it is hip and young in their use of language. It is an interactive and compelling read.

Freshwater is in early development as a TV series at FX, with Emezi writing and executive producing with Tamara P. Carter. They are currently making video art and working on their fifth novel.

Having finally found and made peace with who they are, they write, *"My mother draws closer now. I can see a red road opening before me; the forest is green on either side of it and the sky is blue above it. The sun is hot on the back of my neck. The river is full of my scales. With each step, I am less afraid. I am the brother-sister who remained. I am a village full of faces and a compound full of bones, translucent thousands. Why should I be afraid? I am the source of the spring.*

All freshwater comes out of my mouth."

Book Review 3
Author: Kenneth Koch

Title: Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?

Publisher: Vintage Books

Year: 1990

Kenneth Koch was born in 1925. He was an American poet, playwright, and professor. A towering figure of the New York School of poetry and the literary community in general until his passing in 2002 at age seventy-seven. Writing began early for him, discovering the work of Shelley and Keats as a teenager. He graduated from Harvard and Columbia University. He contributed immensely in the creation of literature and the teaching of it for over forty years.

Koch taught poetry at Columbia University where his classes were incredibly popular. His *wild humour and intense teaching style, often punctuated by unusual physicality (standing on a table to shout lines by Walt Whitman) and outbursts of vocal performance often drawn from Italian opera, drew non-English majors and alumni.* Travelling all over Europe giving lessons in poetry writing. A multi-award-winning poet, playwright and professor, he has had his poetry translated to other languages.

Rose, Where Did You Get This Red is a guide the art of *teaching great poetry to children*. The book captures lessons he did with Children in America, Europe and Asia, where he has had to work with translators to translate the lessons to the children, and to have the children's response to the lessons translated to him. He decodes adult poetry in a manner that makes it accessible and enjoyable to the children. In his introduction, he writes, "I found a way to do it, in conjunction with my students' own writing, which enabled the children to get close to the adult poems and to understand and enjoy them."

In the book he gives details about ten lessons that deal with adult poems and the ways in which he explained them to the learners, making it easy for teachers to better tackle giving lessons of their own on adult poetry to their learners. He also includes the children's reactions to the lessons. This gives the teacher a sense of what to expect from the class…but children are different and therefore unpredictable. In the book are also poems by the children in response to the lessons. It is an insightful book from a person who has spent decades of his life writing poetry and teaching it. It is an easy read and easy to put to practice.

Rose, Where Did You Get This Red, the title of this book, is a line in one of the response poems by the children to a lesson on William Blake's poem, *The Tyger*.

Dog, where did you get that bark?
Dragon, where did you get that flame?
Kitten, where did you get that meow?
Rose, where did you get that red?
Bird, where did you get those wings?

_Desiree Lynne Collier

He corresponded with other poetry teachers to test out his ideas and the results were similar to his own findings. This proves that these methods work. Included in the book are poems by learners in Swaziland, whose teacher also took up the challenge to use the Koch method of teaching poems by adults to children.

In his poem *Fresh Air* (1956) he asked why poets were writing about *dull subjects with dull forms. He attacked the idea that poetry should be in any way stale* saying;

The Waste Land gave the time's most accurate data,
It seemed, and Eliot was the Great Dictator
Of literature. One hardly dared to wink
Or fool around in any way in poems,
And critics poured out awful jereboams
To irony, ambiguity, and tension –
And other things I do not wish to mention.

(Excerpt from ''Seasons on Earth',' 1987)

He strongly believed that *children have a natural talent for writing poetry and anyone who teaches them should know that.* And with the creation of this book he devised a way that would bring out the poets in the children by equipping their teachers with the necessary knowledge and approach.

Book Review 4

Umbhali: P.T Mtuze

Igama le ncwadi: Vingcan' Amazibuko

Umshicileli: Maskew Miller Longman

Unyaka: 1990

U-Njingalwazi uPeter Tshobisa Mtuze yimbongi/ umbhali, inkcubabuchopho, ekwanguye nomfundisi wakwalizwi. Wazalelwa kwi-fama eseMiddelburg, eMpuma Koloni ngonyaka we1941. Ukhulele apho eMiddelburg nase Kaladokwe apho waphumelela amabanga aphantsi khona. Uqale ukuxelenga njenge toliki kwiinkundla zamatyala zeedolophu eziliqela, waze wanguye nomsasazi kunye nomvelisi nkqubo kwiziko iSABC. Ukwasebenze njengo mthengisi kwinkampani yoshicilelo lweencwadi, waba ngumhlelii oyintloko kwisichazi magama i*Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* kwiYunivesithi yaseFort Hare, de waya kuxelenga njengo njingalwazi wokuqala ontsundu, ekwayiyo intloko yesebe lezesiXhosa kwiYunivesithi yaseRhodes, eMakhanda.

UMtuze lo waaqala ukubhala kwiminyaka yowe-1960, ebhala iinoveli, amabali amafutshane, imibingo, idrama, ekwatolika nemibhalo yabanye abantu. Zingaphaya kwamashumi amathathu iincwadi azibhalileyo. Ezinye ezibhala ngokuncedisana nabanye ababhali, abaselula kunye nasele bephume izandla.

Incwadi yakhe u*Vingcan' Amazibuko* ingumnikelo wakhe ekuphuhliseni ulwimi lweenkobe, isiXhosa. Uthi xa eyitshayelela, "…lifikile ixesha lokuba sithathe unyawo lokubheka phambili. Lifikile ixesha lokuba imbongi nganye yandlale oko kusembilinini yayo ingabekelwanga miqathango. Ukuba siyenzile loo nto iyakukhululeka ingqambbu kwiilwimi zeembongi zethu." Ulinga ukufaka isonethi ekubhalweni kwemibongo yesiXhosa kuba olu hlobo lwesihobe lunqabile esiXhoseni, enethemba lokuba kuyakuveliswa eyesiXhosa njengoko kukho eyesiNgesi neyesiTaliyane.

Elo linge lakhe lokufaka isonethi esiXhoseni, ubhale zasixhenxe kuwo lomnikelo. *Umphengululi-ncwadi, Ixoki laseBholo, Umbombela, Intyatyambo, Uxolo nothando, Umnqweno wabantwana,* nombongo *Igosa lemboleko*. Njengoko kulindelekile kuba

enguMfundisi, uninzi lwemibongo yakhe ikholise ukwayamacemthandazweni, ikwathetha ngemiba yasekuhlaleni. Uthi kwiphephale-19, *Indumiso:*

Ndiyavuma Nkosi yam,

Ndiyinqanawa ebuthathaka,

Ndicel' usizo lwesandla sakho

Isihloko salo mbongo sithanda ukukhabana nomxholo wawo kuba isisicelo okanye sona isisikhalo.

Kukho nemibongo engezopolitiko ekhankanya ukufika koondlebe zikhany' ilanga befika needompasi kunye noomabonakude kumbongo *Isijwili sesiXhosa;*

Ndidiniwe kukuhota sendilixhegwazana

Kanti bendinawo kade umzi ufudumele

Uyingqili enye

Uwuqukumbela oluhlobo lo mbongo esithi umzi ontsundu ubuhleli kamnandi phambi kokuba bafike abamhlophe. Ilinge lakhe liphumelele ngokokutsho kwakhe kwintshayelelo yakho. Yincwadi efundisayo neluphuhlisayo uluncwadi lwesiXhosa.

Poetics Assignment
Inkenkqe Yegqobhoka

It was in 1977 when father left his home village seeking hope and to buy bread. Ten years before he would meet and marry mother. The conditions of the time, the state of racial affairs in South Africa, the colour borders, the black and white and never grey, insisted on the displacement of the rural *Bantu* people. That they leave their home, their culture, their language, their pride, and their land. Be displaced. If one didn't have a master, they sought one – which father found in the coal mine now known as *Seriti*, which ironically means, loosely translated, dignity.

Fast forward to when I came into the picture. Three years after mother and father had been married.

1. I was born via c-section in Mtata General Hospital, even though they had created a home in Sharpeville, a few weeks after the clock struck the nine-month mark. Overdue yet looking like a premature.
2. I wasn't very fond of tits, so breast milk was not for me.
3. I would cry at midnight. And only u*dabawo* could put me to sleep. She would put me on her back, walk out of the house, make a few rounds around the kraal and I would fall dead asleep, only to wake up at sunrise. This would be our daily routine for a good three months.

Fast forward a couple of years later.

As a toddler, I seldom smiled or laughed, except with a select few. I would look at people, mostly elders, in the eyes without flinching, and wouldn't crack a smile even *xa benditeketisa.* Ring the alarm! Weird child alert!

A man doesn't go in search of a poem – The poem comes in search of him. The poem comes in search of the poet. As inspiration. As a vision. A line. A revelation. A release. Relief. Healing.

The poet or the revolutionary is there to articulate the necessity, but until the people themselves apprehend it, nothing can happen…perhaps it can be done without the poet, but it certainly can't be done without the people. The poet and the people get on generally very badly, and yet they need each other. The poet knows it sooner than the people do. The people usually know it after the poet is dead, but that is all right. The point is to get your own work done, and your work is to change the world. - James Baldwin, The Yolo Pages

The gift/burden to change the world in this manner is given to a select few. As tragic as it can get, those that are burdened with this are given provisions for this kind of assignment. The most important of these provisions being *inkenkqe*. Simphiwe Nolutshungu describes it as a power that lives in a person in a form of spirit that is reflected through a person's actions and communication. He further states that if an artist doesn't have it, she can't make it. It requires that the artist accepts and embraces it, let it take charge of her creative life.

Ikenkqe is often mistaken as *Intwaso* by people who are not accustomed to the temperament of artists. Understandably so. This misconception has troubled me a great deal for the longest time. I was aware of my *ikenkqe* from a very young age, and even though I never really understood what it was, I was comfortable with the fact that I was an odd child. That I heard things – felt things. That I preferred to sit in with a book or a magazine, listen to music or just sit alone in silence instead of going outside to play with other kids.

The elders had thought it to be a passing phase. But as I grew older and became even more odd, starting to articulate the reasons why I would rather read or listen to music, how it made me feel, what it did to my spirit – to be around people and to be alone, the urge to express it in song or on paper, the kinds of things that spoke to my spirit and the kinds of things they spoke to my spirit, my temperament, my reasoning, things I valued, the rebellion, the dreadlocks – which was cute at some point, it all began to raise alarms when they realised that it wasn't cute any longer but rather concerning. *Intwaso* was what made sense to them.

I have found that I write about things I cannot verbalise, for one reason or another, mostly from a place of heartache and wondering, even wandering, trying to tame my thoughts and emotions, even to liberate them at times. To figure out who am. What I am. To express things I don't have the language for, verbally. Things that even if I could verbalize would have me labelled as mental or weak. Expressing that which, in the black community and its patriarchal culture deems as vulgar. Especially for a woman to express. To break social conventions. Like Brian Evanson, *I believe that the world and everything in it is a lot more discontinuous, random, and vexed than many of us would like to believe.*

Where identity is concerned, does one ever really come to know self? Grow into self? Is self static in that sense or is self on a continuous evolution? That even when one gets to a point where they can boldly say that they know self, it is more on an intuitive level, and never on the rational. Who then is self if she requires understanding by *I*. Are we not the same? This then

further informs the notion that it is all spiritual. Self being the higher consciousness, and *I* the physical and lesser. Self comes into being before *I* becomes aware. That is why I can trace back to things in my past. Moments, though meaningless and thoughtless at the time, all were a collection of necessary preparatory incidents mapping out the path of the here and now.

I have often wondered about my blackness. What it means to me. To every black person in South Africa. And the whole world. To be woman. To be Xhosa. To be *all* this woman and to express it truthfully. Beyond what is deemed acceptable. To speak about body. My body. My experience in it. The good. The bad. The ugly. All without flinching at its reflection on paper. *To bring language and the body back into a relationship with one another. (Yuknavitch, 2015)*

Like Craig Santos Perez*, I think about how we have been given access to the English language and poetic tradition, yet do not have full access to my own native language and literature. How access is power.* That deep in our colonised minds and literature that we don't really relate to, we struggle to relate to the little of or native literature that we have access to. Growing up in Gauteng, where father had found a master, away from the kraal that lulled me to sleep, I was taught some of my people's values. They were never enforced as we lived in a predominantly seSotho area, which also had other South African tribes in it.

We only spoke isiXhosa at home. Even then, not in its purest form. At some point, I spoke seSotho and isiZulu far better than I could speak the mother tongue. I could speak seSotho because it was the dominant language in the area, isiZulu, because I studied it as a home language in school. As I grew up and began to be aware of who I was, as I began to love the Xhosa person that I am, I sought to at least speak the language as well as I could possibly manage given the circumstance. So I would grab a Xhosa novel from time to time, and help mother with her isiXhosa paper III marking. From that, I gradually saw an improvement in my vocabulary.

Blackness. The usage of Blackness is nothing new. Dhlomo and Bessie Head in the 1960s had already been articulating it beautifully. Black womanhood, however, is still to be documented. It is an African culture to silence women. But what manner of women are we raising? What manner of women are we, who in this westernised society, find ourselves floating about without identity because we are not represented anywhere, therefore unable to be ourselves because we do not know how it looks and sounds like to be black and woman. My writing, my wandering

seeks to find, to language, to embody, not just blackness but black womanhood. Xhosa womanhood.

But where does one even begin, in the Xhosa context, to articulate being woman? To be woman and Xhosa. To exist in this westernized and liberal world. To simultaneously remain grounded in the norms and moral code of this tribe is living a double life. One can fully embody their woman-ness and express it fluently in English, but their Xhosa womanhood remains suppressed and unwitnessed because there isn't, even in isiXhosa, a language to articulate the woman experience in this westernized isiXhosa world. Rendering the woman experience unimaginable and elusive. To write it is to find it, to be it, to bear witness to it. To validate that I am here, and I am alive. To give it, in its displacement, a home in these *all-knowing folios* – if nowhere else.

With all this chaos, fragmentation, brokenness, incoherence, strange, twisted, torn apart, demented, confusion of being woman and Xhosa in a not only westernized society, but being surrounded by other Black tribes and their cultures and traditions, even though being woman, and grappling with identity is a universal phenomenon, being woman and Xhosa has its own profound challenges. To navigate this then becomes an enigma all on its own. Resulting in chaotic forms even in the written expressions of it.

Do we not see that we are inarticulate? That is what defeats us. It is our inability to communicate to another how we are locked within ourselves, unable to say the simplest thing of importance to one another…

- William Carlos Williams, Projective Verse and The Practice

Poetry (and music), in more cases than not, come to me. Sometimes in its entirety, sometimes a line or a theme. And as I begin to scribble and read (sing) it out loud, it then starts to take form. As William Carlos Williams writes in Projective Verse and The Practice, *A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it…by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to the reader.* I have found that poetry (music) that comes to me through energy, is received, and touches people more profoundly than those that I have "made up". Even the works of others that I connect with the most, comes from (was created through) such an energy field. *Then the poem itself must, at all points, be a high energy-construct and, at all points, be a high energy discharge.* To find clarity, comfort and healing through articulating these, and in turn giving clarity, comfort and healing to others. Helping others make sense of their own madness. Which, when you take a closer look at it, isn't madness at all. Just displacement. To place feelings, emotions, thoughts that are otherwise hovering about. To situate them. To give them a home.

To make sense of them. My writing *wants to talk to me.*

Sometimes sadness comes
Like a sadist of sleep
Dressed in nothingness
From a place of nothing happened
Resembling my reflection
Wanting an identity of its own
Seeking a place to call home
On my wrists
Thin slender slashes

And after it has spoken, everything then starts to make sense. Starts to be bearable. As Amina Cain so beautifully puts it, 'A kind of atmosphere has made itself known to me. It will take time before I see it clearly, but this ''trying to see it'' is why I am writing in the first place.

…sometimes words come hard – they resist me
Till I pluck them from deep water like hooked fish

Lu Ji [3rd century}

It does not always come. And usually, when it does not come, there is a heaviness, a void, an emptiness, a burden that can only be lifted by the coming of the poem (song). This requires solitude. Time apart from the world. To allow oneself to be undone and to be taken apart. Only to be mended by the coming of it. The becoming. As Cesaire so eloquently puts it, *the duende loves the edge, the wound, and draws close to places where forms fuse in a yearning beyond visible expression.*

Inkenkqe fills the places of our quietude with creation. As it was in the beginning. When all there was, was the Word. All creativity is birthed from a place of genesis. From a place of Word. It takes a Knowing person to be sensitive to Word, and that person has to have been sent. To have been penetrated. Sensitized through the gifting. Through *inkenkqe.*

The duality of energy and flesh, and the experiences therein lead to a knowing of both the physical and spiritual. Their complexities and their conflicts. And with it *marvellous discoveries occur at the equally marvellous contact of inner and outer totality perceived imaginatively and conjointly by, or more precisely within the poet.*

The poet is that ancient yet new being, at once very complex and very simple, who at the limit of dream and reality, of day and night, between absence and presence, searches and receives

in the sudden triggering in the inner cataclysms the password of connivance and power. – Aime Cesaire

> Charles Bandelaire [1821 – 1867]
>
> You must get drunk. That's it: your sole imperative. To avoid the backbreaking, body burdens of time you must get drunk and stay that way.
>
> But on what? On wine, on poetry, on virtue, your choice. But stay drunk.

As energy charged beings, it is vital that we remain on a constant energy charge. On a high. On creativity. To constantly and consistently create. To heal. Ourselves and others. That is our burden and sole imperative.

As a princess of the Thembu tribe, it is my duty to uphold its statutes. But I have taken it upon myself to challenge its biases.

In my quest to find *my* identity, I paid uncle Jonginyaniso a visit. As chief of our village, he is the patriarch, the scroll in which our history is documented. He recited my genealogy up to twenty-three generations back. It saddened me that most of this history is not documented.

"Our history and indigenous knowledge systems are passed down orally", he said with a smile, taking pride in OUR way of life. This sat heavily on my heart as I looked at his old frail body. Soon, all this knowledge will be buried deep in the grave with him. *Isizwe sethu simele ukuzuza lutho kule nkenkqe,* I thought.

My burden is not just to change the world. I have a duty to my people. In all the places that they have found refuge due to the system that has displaced us all, may they, when they seek, find themselves in literature. Their history, their identity, their humanity, their pride, their dignity. A place to call home.

Inkenkqe, which overtakes me at the most inconvenient of times, which has me sleeping with a notepad and pen under my pillow, is the master. My master. She has sought me and has found me. The whispered lullaby of the kraal sought me till it found me. And because of it, which has tied me to my people, I write.

PS…Learning to control the urge to burst out in song at a mall, or to leave a meeting to record a melody that just popped into my head, or to whip out a notepad to write, mid-conversation with a friend…still a work in progress.

References

Cain, Amina. “Slowness” in *The Force of what’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015

Evenson, Brian. “The crazy party guy, or, A disruption of smooth surfaces” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Garza, Christine Rivera. “The unusual: a manifesto”. Accessed online: https://pentransmissions.com/2018/05/17/cristina-rivera-garza/

Lorca, Federico García. “Theory and Function of the Duende”. Accessed online: https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Spanish/LorcaDuende.php

Machado, Antonio. “Excerpt from ‘Notes on poetry’” in *The Poet’s Work: 29 Poets on the Origins and Practice of their Art.* Reginald Gibbons, ed. University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Nyezwa, Mxolisi. Extract from *I Heard Rhythms* – Unpublished MACW dissertation, 2015.

Perez, Craig Santos. “excerpt from ‘Unincorporated poetic territories’” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Williams, William Carlos. “Projective Verse + The practice” in *The Poet’s Work: 29 Poets on the Origins and Practice of their Art.* Reginald Gibbons, ed. University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Yuknavitch, Lidia. “Why do you write it all weird?” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Evenson, Brian. “The crazy party guy, or, A disruption of smooth surfaces” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Hooks, Bell. “Narratives of Struggle” in *Critical Fictions: The Politics of Imaginative Writing.* Philomena Mariani, ed. Bay Press, 1991.

Hall, Tina May.”All American” + “This is a Love Story Too” in *The Physics of Imaginary Objects*. University of Pittsburg Press, 2010.

Mtelerkamp, Joan. “Day break” in *Into the Day Breaking*. Gecko Poetry, 2000.

Barber, Ros. “What Happens to Women” in *Women’s Work*. Eva Salzman and Amy Wack, eds. Seren, 2009.

Danticat, Edwidge. “Awomen like Us” in *Krik Krak*. Soho Press Inc, 1993.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Sexing the Cherry*. Grove Press, 1998

Klebnikov, Velimir. “On Poetry” in *The King of Time*: Selected Writings of the Russian Futurist. Charlotte Douglas, ed. Harvard University Press, 1985

Souza, Joao Cruz. “Black Rose” in *Black, Brown and Beige*: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora. Franklin Rosemont, ed. University of Texas Press, 20101.

Kunavitch, Lidia. *The hronology of Water*. A&U Canongate, 2017.

Russ, Joana. *How to Supress Women’s Writing*. University of Texas Press, 1983.

Gantsho, Vangile. *red cotton*. Impepho Press, 2018

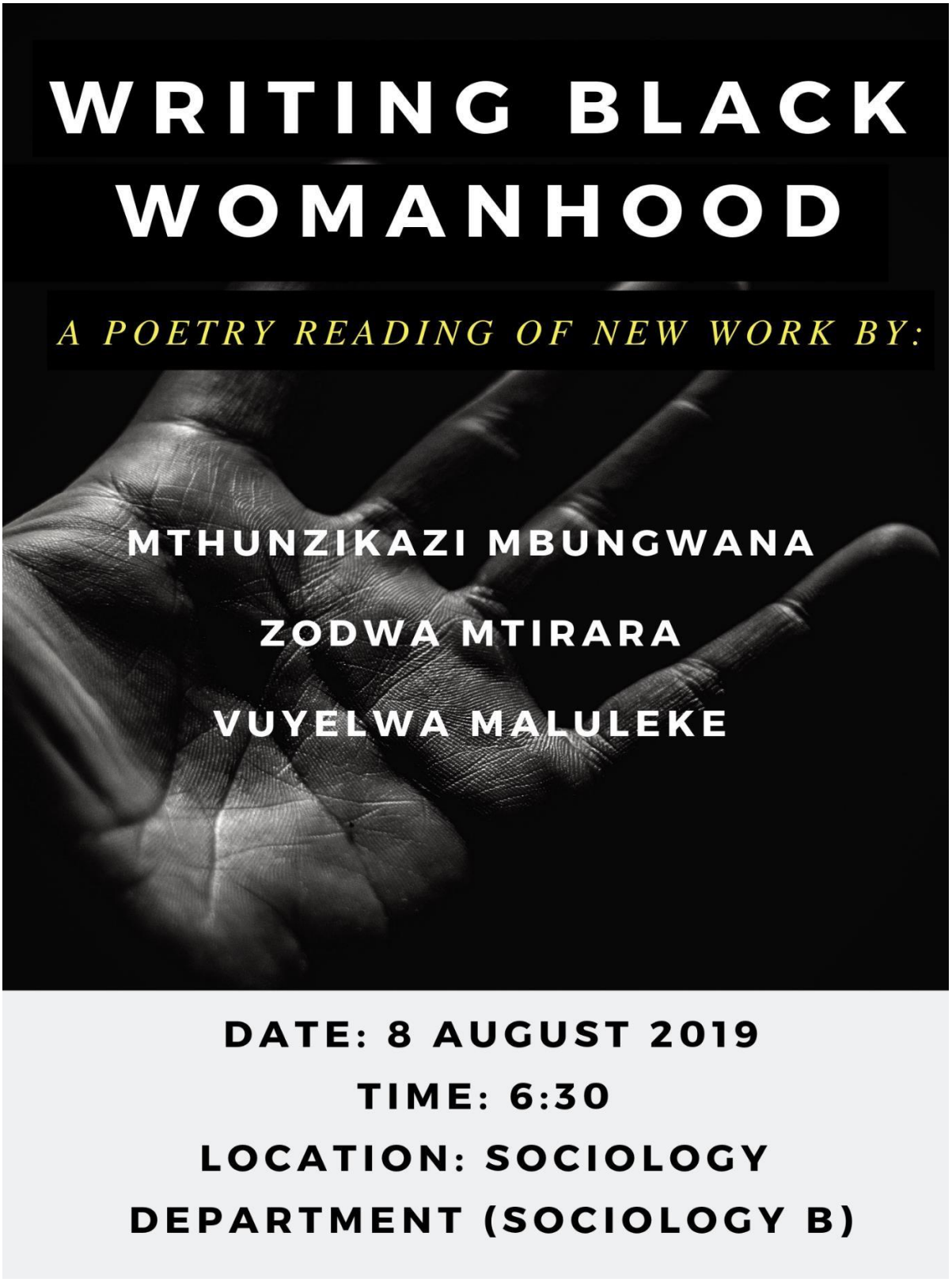
Xaba, Makhosazana. *The Alkalinity of Bottled Water*. Botsotso Publishing, 2019.
Gibson, P.J. “Midnight Licorice Nights” in *Erotique Noire: Black Erotica*. de Costa, Miiam et al. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010.

Molefhe, Wame. “I’m Sure” in *New Daughters of Africa.* Margaret Busby, ed. Jonathan Ball Publishing, 2019.

Ngxadi, Julie. “Iinyawo Zinodaka (Mud on Her Feet)” in *New Contrast:187 Vol 47*. South African Literary Journal, 2019.

Mtuze, P.T. “Ububi” in *Vingcan’ Amazibuko.* Masker Miller Longman, 1990.

Emezi, Akwaeke. *Freshwater.* Grove Press New York, 2018.



What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.

_ Muriel Rukeyser, “Käthe Kollwitz” from

WRITING BLACK WOMANHOOD

Putting this event together was a hustle, especially with the date as there were other events scheduled for the dates that all three of us were available on. We had decided to work together as we felt that our work spoke about the same themes. Everything pertaining to Black Womanhood, even though we each focus on a different aspect of it as per our experiences or the things we strongly feel need to be addressed.

This is what we each had to say about our writing on the invitation:

Mthunzikazi Mbungwana – As a Black Queer Xhosa woman writer, I am trying to document my life experiences into the gaps that exist in isiXhosa literature.
Zodwa Mtirara – I am a Xhosa woman raised within the confines of Cristian values. I am reimagining womanhood in all its sinful and blasphemous glory.
Vuyelwa Maluleke – I am interested in archiving, using English and Poetry, the fractures of the body – its disfigured memory text, and the fragmented lineage that repeats woundedness.

We each had a fifteen minutes slot to read through the selected work. Taking to the podium in the order of the poster. After we had all read, we then had a panel discussion coordinated by Mathabo Tlali. It was heart-warming that the audience received the content of our work with such enthusiasm and awe. The audience applauded the bravery with which we shared and shed light on topics that are usually kept hush and are taboo.

The questions that arose were about how I got the strength to open up like the way I have in my poetry, how it felt to go against the societal norm of hiding and sugar-coating truths, how we dealt with the emotions that come with putting our lives, and the lives of others on blast, etc. What we would do when we would receive backlash. How the strike the balance between sharing our truths and protecting the other people involved as our stories are intertwined with the lives of others…friends, families, ex-lovers, and community members.

We each answered in accordance with our individual views on these matters, taking turns. Except for when a question was directed to a specific individual.

The night ended with one-on-one interaction with the audience. All hammering the sentiment that more of such writing and public reading needs to be done to start important, overdue conversations as they are a necessity.

The night went as planned, except for time management. We had the desired number of audience, but I will definitely market reading of this nature better and well in advance to attract a.larger audience as such conversations are important.

READING IN COMMUNITY
Tantyi Primary School: Grade 6 class

I had initially planned to work with older children. Teenagers. The nature of my work and the things I am interested in required that I work with people who have formulated opinions of their own regarding gender violence, gender stereotypes and gender profiling. We would have then looked at creating new metaphors as clichés have been a struggle of mine during the course of the year, according to feedback. Alas, the hand I had been dealt was not only fruitful but fulfilling as well.

I was nervous working with youngsters but Kenneth Koch's *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* Came in handy as a guide to teaching great poetry to children. Giving me lessons and ways to conduct them, examples of leading questions to ask and inspire their responses to the poems.

The lesson began with introductions as an ice breaker followed by questions about the kind of stories, rhymes, and poems they liked. And since I am writing a bilingual thesis, both isiXhosa and English were used in conducting the workshop and I encouraged the children to respond to the prompts in a language they were most comfortable in.

After the ice breakers, we got into a couple of freewriting exercises which began with me explaining what it means and setting the timer. Those that were comfortable reading their work out loud did so, which encouraged others to do the same with the next prompt, which was also lengthier as more minutes were added to the timer. I also took part in the free writing and read my work out loud.

<u>The Lesson</u>

I first read *The Tyger* by William Blake, then explained the lesson and gave them prompts as some didn't quite get what was expected of them. I also read the responses from Koch's class. They enjoyed those better and were then able to write their own poems. A few were willing to read their poems while some preferred to not.
We did a couple more exercises which they responded well to as they started feeling free and enjoying themselves. I did not participate in the writing of the poems but they that I read some of my work. I found a couple of age-appropriate poems of my own in isiXhosa, which they enjoyed and gave feedback to.

I left them with a task to write a piece wherein they are not pressed for time. They are allowed to write in either prose or poetry. I left word that I would collect them indefinitely but asked their teacher to collect to check for herself if the workshop helped or not. And on the grounds that it had not, I would return and work some more with the children.

The lesson went well. I had a challenge with one learner who was not very keen on participating but he eventually came around. I have also been working with learners from Mahareng Secondary School to fulfil my contractual obligations to the National Arts Council and I have found that I work better with the older kids. The Relationship I have formed with the school is so good that I will continue to tutor their learners on their prescribed literature in English and isiXhosa in 2020.

Conclusion

Though not all the poems are from my personal experiences, I have personalised the experiences of the women around me (hence I seem self-indulgent) and write predominantly from the *I* perspective. This is because I am writing not only about womanhood but for women. My hope is that they would read the poems as expressions of their own as they are mine. Address it to whomever they feel it is addressed to in their own story. The aim is to be universal, and to place the reader at the forefront of these experiences is an attempt to get them closer to these experiences even though they may not relate or even agree. I feel that this will make them understand and empathise with the women whose experiences I have written about. That they empathise with me. But above all, that they emancipate themselves from society's moral clutches.

There are words that seem too big for some poems, like kryptonite, but anybody who has watched Superman will easily catch the sentiment of the poem. For the ones who may struggle with its meaning, they get a chance to learn something new. Learning the meaning of a new word is always exciting for me. Tendrils…as a flower attaches itself to a supporting structure, in the poem *Sheets of Solitude* I attach myself to people by means of love…and the burning hive is the sweetness and sting of the passion that burns and causes destruction, thus the solitude in my sheets where I get to brood over my afflictions and find healing. There is no harm in looking up a word or two. If my writing, as simple as it is, does that, then I am happy.

Because I am inarticulate in speech, I have more questions than answers, and I sometimes write from a place of wondering and even wandering, it is evident in the poetry. I am opposed to the sentiment that seeks to erase me from my own writing. My personality and character should leave traces in my words whether as décor or even a stain. This addresses my issues with being cheesy as well.

The poem *Haiku for Bad Bitches* was titled Haiku for its length and not its form. To avoid the disappointment that can be caused by the expectation of a 5-7-5 traditional Haiku form, the title changed to *For Bad Bitches*. Though the graphic language used in a number of my poems may be disturbing, I count it all joy because I seek to disturb and challenge stagnant school of thought.

This document is a collection and a reflection of my findings through research, through experience and experimenting, and through introspection during the course of the year. In it, I

challenge not only religion and culture but myself as well. It is an attempt to start conversations that have only been held behind closed doors and only among close friends. Conversations that could never be had outside of a supposedly safe space.

This document consists of two (2) parts:

Part A: Half Thesis (Creative Work)

Part B: Portfolio (Dual Language thesis)

Part A: Thesis

Thorn of the Rose: A Sinful and Blasphemous Womanhood

(Half Thesis: English)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Creative Writing

of

Rhodes University

by

Zodwa Mtirara

March 2020

Contents

Part A: Thesis 1
Introduction 4
Blasphemy 5
loving con 6
blood child 7
conception 8
Shame: a keepsake 9
woman scorned 10
your heart in him 11
He said, she sang 12
never yours 13
thighs Never Lie 14
crucifix 15
Thorn in Flesh 16
sweet nectar 17
solace 18
5 screws 19
severed vein, whole heart 20
for bad bitches 21
hoarder 22
Love Me Not 23
demented 24
rejection 25
hollow heart 26
boomerang 27
away from me 28
the antidote 29
tatters 30
sheets of solitude 31
too late 32
(DUAL LANGUAGE THESIS PORTFOLIO) 33
Coursework 34
Thesis Development 41
The Thesis 46
Reflective Journal 1 46

Reflective Journal 2 49
Reflective Journal 3 52
Reflective Journal 4 54
Reflective Journal 5 57
Reflective Journal 1 (IsiXhosa) 59
Reflective Journal 2 (IsiXhosa) 61
Reflective Journal 3 (IsiXhosa) 62
Book Review 1 66
Book Review 2 69
Book Review 3 71
Book Review 4 73
Poetics Assignment 75
References 81
WRITING BLACK WOMANHOOD 84
READING IN COMMUNITY 86
Conclusion 88

Introduction

Re-imagining (Re-imaging) a Sinful and Blasphemous Womanhood

My poetry collection deals with the erasure of Black female bodies by religion, and culture – forever rendering everything feminine weak. Reimagining sinful and blasphemous womanhood is a deliberate insubordination to CULTURE (as a child of the Tembu Royal clan) and CHRISTIANITY (as a former worship leader, and a PK).

Tired of being a perfect flower, I glorify the thorn as an essential contributor in the overall beauty of the rose. I articulate all of this by peering into my life, and the lives of the women that surround me. I do this by being as frank and uncensored as Lesego Rampolokeng so beautifully articulates his truth. Writing pain as tangibly as does Lidia Yuknavitch in *The Chronology of Water*. Being *world-weary, weary of all* I have *seen of society's failures, but never without the gentleness often absent and much needed in broken societies, and never without the hope and redemption that can be found in love and the imagination,* like Wame Molefhe. It strives to write Blackness as beautifully as does Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah...*shake awake,* and emancipate the Black feminine in an almost surrealistic manner. I seek *to proclaim, to celebrate, to rant and lament, yet never to romanticize* or make a spectacle of Black womanhood in its entirety.

This project is, among other things a documentation of my struggle with body. How I live in it yet do not own it. How it is a temple of the Lord. How it moves from His ownership to the ownership of a man.

Blasphemy

loving con

We had our loins in deep conversation
Wearing our innermost beings bare without fear.
Even then, there was no mention of you in his eyes.
He sang to you the melody of your heart
The same to me as harmony to mine.
How was I to be immune to his charm?
Spare me your anger,
Let it befall your beloved.
That ring on his finger
Does not make
His tongue any less slicker.

blood child

I knew a child once
Forming in my uterus, unwanted
Is it mine? he had said.
Am I a hoe? I had replied,
Two missed periods,
anger protruding in my abdomen.
Nausea, cramps,
rage boiling up into a volcano of vomit.
A mass in my womb, a huge blood clot,
I will give you pills to flush it out, the doctor had said
I had looked at the screen with a sly smile
Wise move baby, I had said in silence.

conception

a promise of five off-spring to a girl who's dreamt of being a mother since she was a teenager. From a man who has already fathered seven. To hear that he has impregnated another.

a promise of love for a girl in her twenties, yet to live her life outside her head. From a man past his prime with a heart-count triple the number of the mothers of his children.

I hear my children call
Each with their name.
They want to meet me.
But who will father you, I say.

Shame: a keepsake

I love you most, shipwrecked. Unanchored.

Loosed at the hinges of rationale. The ghost of moral.

Held together by the stench of want. For me.

Tongue wagging. Salivating. Lust dripping as drool.

Lubricating your lies so they slide on my skin, moist.

I *know* what time it is. Hourglass with some extra minutes.

An extra loving. Time spent on sheets with no names.

Faces forgotten. Only the imprint of their hand on your

buttocks remembered. Almost like a blur. Hazy.

A hunger *must* be filled. Stuffed. Even if for a moment.

That moment, your doubts are starved. Chocked dead.

Faint? Because then they are back again. Resurrected.

You walk home in the morning with last night's clothes on.

Wearing shame for a crown. A befitting honour.

You know you should have tamed that hoe. At least tried to.

But you let her have her joy. And, you liked it too. Shamelessly.

But, can a girl have her shame and keep it too?

woman scorned

i lay bareback
barren
at your feet.
spent and sullen.
no talk of the hunger
in my pelvis.

ever to you
i give praises.
dawn of my sunken truth
light of my haze.

i mould you in my hands,
tangible.
hands as rubble
down below my softness.
mute screams,
loud yawns
that summon thunder.

you spend my dreams
as recklessly
as I spend hearts.

your heart in him

I am deaf to your affections. Blind to your devotion. You pursue me endlessly as would a dog, panting after its master even when shoed away. Kneeling at my feet, arms around my knees in a tight, clingy embrace. Your eyes singing that song of longing you never get tired of singing.

I sing that song too. I kneel at feet with my arms around knees tight and clingy. Get shoed away yet I pursue endlessly, with blind devotion. My affections falling on deaf ears.

With my back turned to you

cuddling every night

I make my supplications known

That I want your heart in him

He said, she sang

He said you are woman
from the rib of a man
created for him
a little less than he is

He said keep chaste
for while you await him
you belong to Him
a temple

He said you are not your own
never will you ever be
sin not in your body,
do not desecrate His house

He said when man comes to find you
He will sign the title deed out to him
then he shall be your master
a little lower than Him

He said you shall worship him
give yourself fully to him
to not do so would be sin
punishable by death.

She sang a song of sin
To the God of chastity
Purge me of you
Strike me down
Make a goddess of me

never yours

I want to feel your groin
pressed against my abdomen
strong and hard.
I want to feel the warmth of your panting
caress the hairs of my neck
as your eyes narrow down to a slit
red and watery
I want their lust to be audible
speak pressure in my gushing wetlands

I will brand the names of my loves
inside the velveteen of my vagina
there, nobody will see them
they will not be spoken of
then, my heart will be cleansed
clear of your punctures,
and the stampede of the knights
that mended it.

thighs Never Lie

are you mad that my thighs speak of honey and everything nice
that those who have tasted it cease not to sing their praise
it is where they meet that joy sings wet melodies
songs of love and of life
of how they give life life
how life takes from them what it will
never with the sense to give back from what it took.

are you mad that these thighs speak of pain and everything sharp
prickly pears and sour lime
slime
how they've seen heaven yet know hell just as well
how they give motion even when they stand still
they give direction.

are you mad that these thighs speak of freedom and everything else
they seek to escape yet remain home
how they have been in bars and in clubs
yet remain chained behinds these bars
how they want to be free even of me
my complaints about how sensual they are attracting
all kinds of unwanted attention
these thighs tell of all kinds of things with every motion they make
even as I lay.

crucifix

scorch me with the furnace of your words
annihilate me with the kryptonite of your disdain

crucify me with your eyes
drive the nails of your judgement into my palms

forget not my psalms
remember every time I gave alms

Thorn in Flesh

sweet nectar

lips still moist from the touch of yours
my fingers reach for my mouth in longing.
your name has since been too sweet for my prudish mouth to pronounce

solace

at the tip
of where he makes his magic
there I have found solace
locked between muscle and skin
mounting to a surge of:
it is all okay

5 screws

I am falling for you in all the ways that unhinge me

1. I want to know the texture of all the hairs of your body. I want to fondle you. Finger and tongue.
2. I want to hold your heart in my hand. To know the weight of everything and everybody it carries. To carry them too.
3. Say loins speak. Mine are most chatty in your presence.
4. I restrain my hands. Lock them between my thighs when you are next to me in public. They wander towards yours.
5. I hold my breath for five counts when I think of you. This I do in remembrance of how I forget to breathe when I see your face. To feel the urge to live. I am awestruck by you.

I have mastered all the ways to let you in. It is all the ways I never have. Ways I never will to anybody else.

severed vein, whole heart

I knew love once.
But never as intense
as when I severed
the vein
that tied my pussy
to my heart.

for bad bitches

love is that soul-locking/fill the air pungent/with sex/
slippery-slide wet/with sweat/saliva/fluids/
claw you/fist you/choke you/gag on you/
slow/deliberate/Eye-locking/eat me out/fuck me raw/
cum into/onto me/into my mouth/kind of shit

hoarder

just like scent stays behind long after the owner is gone,
vaginas are hoarders like that
they hold on to a soul long after the owner has left.

Love Me Not

demented

i do not wash you off of me, so i can trace the places
where your scent still lingers on my skin
where your fingers ran, lips fondled, where your penis grazed
then,

i shower 7 times a day to erase you
scrub down to undo even the memory of you
then,

the aftertaste of truth
the bitter truth that I am
whole with the holes.

rejection

There is something about a current rejection that makes you set sail,
off to your previous rejection, seeking comfort, because somehow,
your previous rejection was kinder.

hollow heart

i have not learned to fight
not for justice
not for bread
not for love.

nothing is handed to me.
i bump into things.
into furniture
into people.

I bump into hearts
they hold me.
when their grip loosens
i run
never to look back.

I run to hearts like mine
that hold nothing
there I spend sleepless nights
wishing to be held.

boomerang

like mercury
your heart plays dodge with me
at every turn
it ducks and dives, resisting me.
like magnets, it repels
pulls away when I push
pushes when I pull.
always at the other end
scoffing at me,
snickers when I retreat,
summons me back
to send me away.

away from me

my heart withers
ever so constantly
with every step
you take
your back turned
away from me

the antidote

even if under the gaze of Other
she looked like a marvel
a thing to be framed and displayed
their prize for onlookers' envy.
to Other a darling dear
in Other's arms to caress
shield against evils
her shadow,
her own shadow who makes her skin crawl
how shadow clings to her in the light
but never when she needs her the most,
in the dark
when her hands need holding.
Other's gaze steers her path clear
sends her doubts home
sprinting
in him she is secure
safe from her insecurities
in full bloom of Other's love
splayed for their lust.
even then she's still but a little girl
in the frame of a grown woman
Needy
though she will not let her eyes leak for affection
will not let it slip even in deep penetration
that she needs attention.
but Other's whispers,
confessions in ecstasy
lull small needy girl to sleep
resuscitate grown girl back to life
mending her wounds
sweet nothings the antidote

tatters

groaning with a sorrow
of all the women you broke before.
me, who you left in tatters
too damaged to ever mend.
for the women you continue to wound,
I belt out your name
hunched,
belching.

I am the ugly sister of the love I fail to receive.
the little I gave,
you spat back in my face.
I am but a mute mule who makes her noises on paper
on things that won't talk back,
on the pleasure of open thighs,
on men who pillow on my breasts.

nut. and. sleep.
I do not know how to
receive love without
spit forming in my mouth.

sheets of solitude

I sit and sew tendrils of love
that build up into a burning hive

My afflictions have found a home
on these sheets of solitude

too late

we love awareness
when it is dressed as rallies
and demonstrations,
placards of slogans,
chanting phrases.
but,
when she cried out awareness
alerting us of lurking danger
nobody came

Part B: PORTFOLIO

(DUAL LANGUAGE THESIS PORTFOLIO)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for degree of

Master of Arts in Creative Writing

By

Zodwa Mtirara

FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURES

RHODES UNIVERSITY

MARCH 2020

Coursework

One would have expected that contact week would have been for getting acquainted with fellow students, the lecturers, and the university, but MA Creative Writing *ayiphozisi*. The course began that very first day. I had thought the week would be all fun and games, but the teaching and learning had begun. The freewriting exercises yanked me out of my comfort zone. It was quite the rude awakening, as a writer who had always believed that my writing, for both my music and poetry, came from a force outside of myself.

Not much music or poetry comes out of the freewriting, but it sure does give the writing muscle a necessary stretch and strengthening.

Growing up under strict conservative rule, to call me conservative would be an understatement. Though I resonated and was challenged by all the lecturers when they spoke about themselves and their writing, Nathan Trantraal stood out. I cringed a lot when he spoke because his speech was punctuated by "fuck" at every other syllable. But when he alluded to the fact that conservative ideology is a writer's enemy and that writers need no such inhibitions, I pocketed that sentiment and have since made it my mantra.

I considered myself a learner writer. It had always been a dream of mine to be in a writer's head. To navigate the streets of their consciousness. Wrestle with the monsters of their intellect. Catch the flying bullets of their thoughts. Stacy Hardy slapped me out of that dream when she told me *I* was the writer whose mind I needed to explore. She made me realise the magnitude of the responsibility bestowed to me as a writer.

Because of the mentality that my writing came from a force outside myself, I had never questioned the text. Not its form nor its rhythm. I wrote as it came. To me it was the ultimate truth. Cast on stone. Because of this, the feedback was hard to take. I have come to value it as it has elevated my thinking and attitude towards my craft and has therefore humbled me as the vessel. Critique builds and opens me up to other possibilities. I have learned to look beyond my truth, to the truth of the universe. In this way, my writing is no longer rigid and a prisoner in the filter of my personal collective memory.

Another stumbling block that this mentality caused is a serious case of writers' block which resulted in a lot of discarded unfished work. The seminar of *Writing with and against Narrative Conventions* broke this arrogance. I learned from it to be deliberate about where the story is going, which is something I never had to think about. Intentionality. It gets one thinking. Philosophically. Which results in a deeper level of writing.

Having opened up to these possibilities, with the lessons from the first seminars, the impact that punctuation has on a piece, my poetry goes through a series of manipulation of form through different punctuation to test out what works best - when time allows of course…which is a scarce commodity in these MA in Creative Writing streets.
Finston Mwanza Mujila's *Tram 83* served as the best example for this lesson. I could not only visualise the chaos but feel it too. The very long sentences which leave you fighting for breath clearly depict how claustrophobic Tram 83 was. Further hammering the vitality of punctuation (or lack thereof) in depicting a piece's urgency, girth, punch, violence etc. making it come alive.

The biggest challenge by far was to create on cue about topics I would never attempt to write about. The freewriting has helped me lose myself of self-imposed prohibitions. An endless stream of consciousness. Take the world in. Process. Then pen my views and feelings down. My *inkenkqe* is still undisciplined. Untamed. A wild horse. A hungry beast that comes out to feed with no regard for me as host. Often at midnight or the early hours of the morning just before dawn. In as much as I have learned what techniques to implement to subdue and master it, I remain a slave to its unruly nature. And it is ok.

All American by Tina May Hall made me realise the kind of writer I have always wanted to be. Relatable. Despite the title of the poem, it is a universal story. Women from all over the world can relate to loving a man that doesn't belong to them. They can all relate to forcing themselves to love those that are "appropriate" and forcing themselves on those that don't love them. We (women) can all relate to the blurred line that is consent. Writing things that have dual or multiple meanings is of interest to me. To have a single piece of work mean all kinds of things to different people. Though critics have said that I hide behind words, and that the word-play gets excessive at times, it is good to let a piece of writing do to an individual as it should, and not necessarily be about me.

Klebnikov has much to say about this "hiding behind words", which to me is lyricism. He says that *"*the speech of higher intelligence, even when it is not understandable, falls like seed into the fertile soil of the soul and only much later, in mysterious ways, does it bring forth its shoots" (Klebnikov 1990,p.153).
This gave me much comfort after a poem, which hasn't made it into the thesis got the worst feedback because it was "incomprehensible".

Ripe

my calloused soul, ashy water-thwarted by
angry seasons of our existence breathing
spring of embrace and servitude summer of
threading with honour autumn of the
shunning winter, barren silence of anger no
love to moisten the grey of its shins

Klebnikov does however not condone bad writing. He does not maintain that every incomprehensible piece of writing is beautiful but that it cannot be rejected just because it is incomprehensible to a particular group of readers (Klebnikov 1990, p.153). What I learned from the seminar *Poems of Negritude,* which resulted in this poem is that a single writer can write about a wide range of topics, but he cannot excel in them all. I learned how powerful the influence of the writer's background has in the way she writes and what she writes about. I learned that because anger doesn't have a language in my family, I do not know how to articulate it.

Despite the feedback for the poem, I think it is a decent piece. My world turned upside down as I started questioning and doubting what poetry is. Klebnikov attempts to answer this, "a poem is related to flight, in the shortest time possible its language must cover the greatest distance in images and thoughts" (Klebnikov 1990, p.153). I get what he is saying, and I agree. But from time to time, the question arises again, "what is poetry?" and sometimes this answer does not suffice.

The writing of Tina May Hall captivates in that it is truthful even in undesirable ways. Ways that people would rather hide and keep for only their conscience. To evade the critical stares and murmurs of people. *This is a Love Story Too* depicts pain in an unusual, yet familiar way in that it makes it tangible. In the piece, she is ruthless yet tender. She equates physical pain to emotional pain (the loss of her two children with stepping on a nail. How she planted peonies on their graves and cuts their heads in spring). It is both endearing and chilling. The influence of these two pieces, in particular, has seen me through a number of poems.

Since accepting the challenge to shun conservative ideology, I was never ready for what reading *Fist of the Spider Woman* had in store for me. As a lover of romance novels, I was familiar with love scenes that leave one wanting a romance of their own. But this! Not what I had signed up for. The horror! I was most horrified that even though I was scared, and even

scarred for life by the images in the stories, my body betrayed me. It responded to some of the scenes. That made me mad. Part of me loved the explicit use of language as I aspired to do the same…or not. But I loved the possibility. I particularly liked *In Your Arms Forever.* The pain and the longing drew me in. I cannot relate to the story but the text kept me engrossed and I could feel all the pain. Loss is a loss. Nothing is sugarcoated in all the pieces in this anthology. "I want my innocence back" is what I said after reading it. Reading it opened me up to watch *Fifty Shades of Gray* for the first time. With my conservative nature dead and buried, I have since written some explicit pieces of my own. With the gentleness that I cannot shake off, of course.

Tina's influence and *Fist of The Spider Woman* enthused me towards *dark* content. Surrealism taking centre stage in the creation of such content. From Sizakele Phohleli's poem, *You Make Drowning Seem Like a Gift* (which I adapted into a choreography script), to the work of João da Cruz e Souza's *Black Rose*

…and I, eye-witness of your anguish

And the ruthless torment of your heart

Delirious flower steeped in blood

Erupting flood like wave after wave

Such voluptuousness makes me dizzy

Black rose of night, flower of oblivion (Black, Brown and Beige, 2009)

This interest in surrealism and writing pain tangibly made more sense during the Desire seminar. Exploring the invisible line between love and lust, and, love and obsession. The beauty of it and its "icy depths" when it is unrequited. The dangers surrounding it…once acquired or even rejected. It became a significant challenge to go into personal depths of these truths and to yet remain creative in the expressions of it. Souza' Black Rose continued to fuel me as inspiration…

"trammeled, I try to escape

vexed by your soul's icy depths"

" …offer me your acrid, incendiary kiss which I shall cherish vastly more than any endearment from pallid lips" (Black, Brown and Beige, 2009)

I write a lot about love and the pain that results in it going wrong. And because it is a universal thing, it is easy to sound cliché. Which has been my biggest challenge from day one, according to the feedback. The imagery in Souza's work is influential in my new-found original expression of universal topics.

Writing about self

To look at oneself in depth, and to language and articulate one's findings is always a gruelling task for me. Depressing even. I don't enjoy it because all my writing is centred around self, and with that comes a lot of introspection and the discovery of harsh truths. The pieces may not necessarily be about me sometimes, but they are inspired by and come from a place of self. Body, on the other hand, has never been an interest to me, except for its reception of love, joy and pain, and how, sometimes, it reciprocates these. The beauty in being challenged in this way is that one develops a muscle they may not have been aware that they had. As it turns out, my thesis has become cantered around self and body, and it is no longer such a hustle to allow myself to bleed.

A poet does not ask to escape, but to be permitted to know life fully, even when suffering.
_Women in Praise, Kayda Molodowsky

Transition is an integral part of life. It is inevitable. To have been challenged to write about it saw my thesis through. And my personal life in general. I had never thought of or explored it before. It had me off my comfort zone and I liked that...and detested it all at once. It came at a time when I was reading *One Hundred Days of Rain* by Carellin Brooks, whose main theme is a transition. I didn't necessarily like the book, but I appreciated that I got a sense of how to tackle the task from it. And from then on, many poems after that.

Perception/perspective have become very interesting. It is amazing how the writer writes what they write, how they write it for a specific purpose, only for it to be received differently. Not in the slightest way of how it was intended. This begs the question, where does a non-fiction writer draw the line between fact and fiction? Where does she strike the balance between truth

and creativity? The balance between staying true to her voice and giving the reader what they want to hear? Is the writer writing for herself or for the reader?

What inspired these questions is because, from the feedback, in not so many words sometimes suggested to change the narrative, therefore making the piece what it was not so as to be received in a certain way by the reader.

Languaging the Unlanguaged

This calls for deep searching of self. To find and harvest from places that left feelings untouched, unchallenged, and unresolved due to the lack of words for them. Places in my past that have laid dormant for a very long time. That has now been yanked open. Let to spill out all over me. Leaving me drained of blood flow. I felt my heart barely beating most of the time. Having to deliberately cheer it on, to remind it that is has a lot of work to do still.

Writing takes a toll on me at times. My emotions receiving beatings without end. The beatings look good once they are on paper, but I am left to nurse the blue and black of my scars all alone.

So when Rustum Kozain in his workshop, referred to the art of writing as "just markings on paper" it was beyond disrespectful. Not only to artists but to the art itself. It made sense how his work left me feeling nothing when he revealed that he assumes different characters for him to be able to write. He is so far removed from it. I find it concerning that he has to project himself into his characters for him to be able to express himself.

Writing about the past and how it has influenced the Present.

The assignment was a tough one. I had to dig deep into my past to find the bad and ugly. It is interesting how the mind blocks out some of the traumatic experiences that we go through. A lot of things I had forgotten resurfaced while working on this assignment. I wasn't sure if others were just my wild imagination, or if they were true. I really struggled mentally and emotionally. The mind surely is an incredible thing. It was only natural that I would gravitate towards Lidia Yuknavitch. The manner with which she writes pain is riveting. It made sense to read *The Chronology of Water*. The plan was to write about pain plainly. To let it all out and leave it all on the page. But also be as poetic about it as I possibly can, given that Lidia writes prose. It was difficult to find the balance, though. I took the lesson from this seminar well into the production of my thesis.

Less is More…Sweet and Short. It goes back to being deliberate about my writing. It still is a tough thing to do as my poetry comes to me when and how it wants to. So, to put a measure to it proved to be a challenge. I write predominantly short poems…so, one would have expected that this task would be easy. But there is never thought about length when I write. But it worked out well. I am now conscious about length…line length as well as the length of the poem itself.

Thesis Development

As the challenges kept coming, things started getting clearer. I could visualise how my thesis would look like. Feministic views started making more sense than they had previously, given my background. I had always been about the equality of the genders and their fluidity thereof. But I wasn't aware how deep my need was to contribute positively to the awareness of how nonsensical patriarchal views are.

Having read *Fist of the Spider Woman, Wayward Girls and Wicked Women,* an anthology by Angela Carter fell short where explicit content is concerned, especially given the title. I sought writing by women and made a realization that propelled me further into what my thesis eventually became.

How to Suppress Women's Writing by Joanna Russ provided much insight into the realization I had made.

Re-imagining (Re-imaging) a Sinful and Blasphemous Womanhood

We live in a highly patriarchal society. Everything feminine is rendered subordinate. This sentiment manifests in more ways than one. In Christianity, the man is the head. The woman is his helper because she came from him. In the church, and in the home the man is the authority and the woman must remain quiet and obedient as a servant to her master.

IsiXhosa culture is not so different from the principles of Christianity. Their ideologies often clash but they agree that the man is the head and he is, therefore, sole authority. This sentiment remains rigid to date

This mentality put in place gender roles that became stereotypes. Historically, because of this sentiment women were assigned domestic duties. Everything intellectual (education) and things that require physical agility were for the man. This meant that certain careers were inaccessible for women.

Humanity has evolved, allowing women to participate in things that are stereotypically for men, but patriarchal views remain though constantly challenged and proven null and void. The literary world seems to not want to open the space for the participation of women. *The World Split Open,* an anthology of female writers dating back as early as the 1600s proves how closed the literary doors have and remain to be.

If certain people are not supposed to have the ability to produce great literature, and if this supposition is one of the means used to keep such people in their place, the ideal situation (socially speaking) is one in which such

people are prevented from producing any literature at all. But a formal prohibition tends to give the game away. (Russ, 1983)

Women have been and continue to challenge the status quo regardless. This unsettles the powers that be to the point of discomfort. Instead of facing their adversaries, which will deem them monsters, "the trick thus becomes to make the freedom as nominal a freedom as possible and develop various strategies for ignoring, condemning, or belittling the artistic works that result. If properly done, these strategies result in a social situation in which the 'wrong' people are (supposedly) free to commit literature, art, or whatever, but very few do, and those who do (it seems) do it badly." (Russ, 1983)

The same "freedoms" apply where Christianity is concerned. Christians often quote their favourite cliché, saying "Whom the Son sets free is free indeed". This freedom, however, applies only to a select few…men. Women being the ones whose freedom is nominal because they are subordinate to men.

These findings have given me more reason to write for and about womanhood. These challenges fuelled the fire in me. *red cotton* by Vangile Gantsho, who is a MACW alumnus writes womanhood in its most authentic. She bore her heart and soul into the pages. I'm pretty sure she bled onto them too. Nothing is censored. I was so engrossed I read it all in one sitting. Her work was reminiscent of a quote I came across during my research. "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open" _ Muriel Rukeyser, "Käthe Kollowitz" from *The Speed of Darkness.*

I not only saw myself in some of the pieces, but I saw my very writing in hers. She had me in my feels the entire time. Challenged me to face my own demons. Broke me even. Such honesty about womanhood, from a woman, is essential for a time such as this.

With my thesis leaning towards the emancipation of women, mostly from mental and physical dictatorship, among other things, Gantsho's poem a *smallgirl guide for wayward* women became the point of departure.

be a witch

a temptress
be free
in love
and sex

have lots of
sex

smear yourself
all over their bibles
stain their linen
with your cum

be wild

speak out of turn
throw your head back in laughter
sit with your legs open
let the wind kiss
your lady
wink
she's no lady

flirt with the first person you see
reek of sex
smell your fingers
taste them
let her scent sit
on your upper lip
enjoy the throbbing
of his pumping
in a queue at the bank
make the teller envy you

let out an "Ah"
throw your head back in
laughter *(Gantsho,2018)*

It atoned for the disappointment that was the anthology edited by Angela Carter, *Wayward Women and Wicked Girls.* And it also plays into Makhosazana Xaba's *Opening up like that*

It is risky to open up like that!
What if something comes,
lodges inside the base of your petals
and irritates you?

It is dangerous to open up like that
What if something heavy lands
on the tips of your petal
and breaks you off?

It is admirable to open up like that
When something finally arrives
to touch sides with your gentle petals
it will be one with you.

It is delightful to open up like that
Every eye that catches
the vibrant colours of your petal
instantly grasps the depth of your beauty.
(Xaba, 2019)

Both these poems have a compelling rebellion and are taking back ownership of the female body from the rule of religion and the culture that dictates what a woman should do with her body, how, and when.

It became important to me to "write the body and language back into relationship with each other*"(*Yuknavitch, 2015) as does Lidia Yuknavitch in *The Small Backs of Children*. I felt every emotion, saw every image. The form is very new to me. She really does write it all weird…and it works. Because my thesis is about the female form and everything in and around it, I attempt to write body in ways as convincing as she does.

Delving into writing sex, with the kind of background I have, I had to consume a lot of sexual content in order to be able to produce it. *Erotique Noire Black Erotica* edited by Miriam

Decosta-Willis, Reginald Martin, and Roseann P Bell became a necessary read for me to be in a sensual mind frame to be able to write sex. This anthology is a beautiful selection of Black writers dipping into their sensual selves to create this beauty. *Midnight Licorice Nights* by P.J. Gibson stood out and from it *Haiku for Bad Bitches* and other poems in the Thorn in Flesh section were birthed.

Midnight Licorice Nights

I want midnight licorice nights to find us
Sucking on the juice of our evening sup
Savouring the full course of the midday feast
Arms, legs, breasts, chests wet in the waves of love's spicy sauces
I want the sautéed makings of morning's rise to seduce our nostrils
And beckon us to dine again
Swallowing rounds of bursting orange on the sheets of the universe
I want to forever unfold the menu of you
Open the dish of chance
Sip the ambrosia of erotic litchi
Pithing and sweatshop juice
I want to banquet eternally in you and you in me
Marinating in the liquids of our joys
Simmering in the heat of
Cool blue flames of midnight licorice nights
Midnight licorice nights of you

Louella Sullivan, also MACW alumnus was also influential in my writing about the indulgence in forbidden fruit. *Frontier,* published in the 2019 autumn issue of New *Contrast* is an exceptional piece in its sensuality.

The dream of you
Is still firm between my legs
As I make coffee and warm
Hot cross buns soft
Under a fierce slice of butter

I can still feel my hands at
The boarder of your jeans and torso
A delineated space
Cloth – belt – skin You lift me and
wrap my legs around the map of
your body

you beg something I cannot hear what
was that you ask again this time I
understand you are the dream and I can
give in (Sullivan, 2019)

The Thesis

Reflective Journal 1

The craziest thing about creating literature for and about women is being challenged by a very woman issue on womanhood and motherhood when I, in fact, am not a mother.

My housemate has her children over for the holidays, which means that I will be doing very little reading, forget about writing, because of the noise levels. Children will be children. The children are cute and well behaved until the parents are around. They know for a fact that they can get away with any and everything. Especially when their father is around. So much that I didn't sleep last night. It is literally 05:38 as I write this.

The six-year-old watched television all night. I am a light sleeper, so with my room just next to the lounge, I could hear everything and therefore couldn't sleep. I asked the boy to turn down the volume at around 3 am and he refused, citing that "daddy said it is ok". By 05:15 the boy started kicking his ball against the wall. I nearly lost it. But if the parents say nothing, after I have been told to my face, by the boy, that the only authority he recognises is theirs, I knew I had to grin and bear it.

Motherhood comes on at this point. Having "raised" several nieces and nephews, having babysat people who now have babies of their own, I have been playing parent for a while now, even if at small intervals. And because I wanted to have eight children at some point, I am well researched on parenting. I made sure I was prepared.

To have a conversation with a mother about their parenting is a sure way to start a fight. And, for the sake of my thesis, I feel it is a conversation worth having (even if it is just with my notepad) …with the hope that it feeds into my work. Positively so. Hopefully.

While having conversations with my female friends, some mothers some not, some aspire to be, and some are repulsed at the thought (conversations I would not dare have with the mother who inspired this, I am taken back to my own motherly instincts. How I aspired to bear children. How overtime, the excitement has dwindled. My pregnancy scare. The void it left. How I am now not opposed to the idea of never having children.

Joan Metelerkamp's poem *Daybreak* from her collection of poems titled Into The Day Breaking sets a sombre mood

"Child, whom I call up with the sun

who comes gold with dew,

I shall not have you, shall not give you

life…"

(Metelerkamp, 2000)

Not only does it trigger a sadness I felt when, after hoping and praying for years, there finally was a promise to have children by a man I had loved for years, but the dream was snatched from my grip. It also triggered a wave of anger I feel about how women who decide to not conceive are treated as the scum of the earth, and their womanhood is questioned. And some who are biologically unable to conceive are treated like trash.

These triggers have birthed several poems. We sure do go through the most.

Blood Child takes after Joan's excerpt of the aforementioned poem. It is a summary of my pregnancy scare and the situation around it. Though fictionalized, it captures most of what transpired. And to stick true to the womanhood I am trying to reimagine, it does leave a bad taste in my own mouth. I hope it does the same to the reader.

Conception is an almost delusional citation of my yearning to be a mother. It also captures the man with whom I would have had the children with. His indiscretion is also put on blast. This poem too is fictionalised but is very non-fictional. It toys with surrealism as is my tendency to hint at it.

It is always interesting how the truth can be unbelievable. Even in its plainest. How *Conception* is read as too farfetched because there is no way a man with seven children can promise somebody five children". I plead the fifth.

It also inspired by Ros Barber's poem *What Happens to Women*, from the anthology titled Women's Work edited by Eva Salzman and Amy Wack.

> "It's what happens to women, no matter who you are.
> Divine inside? They'll only see the face.
> It's coming, despite your warmth, your grit, your heart –
> the sudden shift from beauty to disgrace….
> On a morning like any other, she wakes to find
> Her lover moved out…
> half-penned love note stutters towards the sea,
> embarrassed, undoing its 'love', and 'dear', and 'we'. "
> (Barber, 2009)

Shame: a keepsake is inspired by my current living situation. How in one of the noisy mornings, I decided I needed a break and was invited into a classmate's space to cool off. Walking to the taxi the next morning, wearing the same clothes I wore the day before felt quite like the infamous walk of shame. I can only assume because culture and religion have not afforded me the chance to experience it. I was very intrigued by the thought of shame. It only made sense to write about the perception of it. And the lust that leads to it. I posted "walk of shame" on my WhatsApp status and my friends called my bullshit. I was kind of mad that not only had I not had the experience, but I still couldn't own it even when I had "created" it.
The poem is a collection of my thoughts around that kind of shame…and they are quite incoherent because I wasn't really trying to have a stance on the matter except for the question at the end. I really wonder if a woman truly *can have her shame and keep it too*…if she so wishes. Maybe it isn't even shame but *pride* to her. And who dictates what is shameful and for whom? Because it is never regarded as shame for the other gender in the same position. Or at least not on the same scale.

Reimagining a womanhood in all its sinful and blasphemous glory, I said, and hell burst open, spitting tongues of fire that flicked and licked at the very hairs of my face. I am feeling the heat and it scares me.

Reflective Journal 2
Reimagining a sinful and blasphemous womanhood is a deliberate insubordination to;

1. CULTURE: as a child of the Tembu Royal clan

2. CHRISTIANITY: as a former worship leader, and as a PK.

I have always found myself caught in between the two as some of their ideologies clash. This has, in many ways delayed my development into womanhood. So much that in my late twenties, I am struggling with things I should have dealt with as a teenager or even in my early twenties.

From these struggles have risen an urge to explore the "evil" side of me, as everybody has in themselves both good and evil. I found it interesting, as a former devout Christian to delve into and document the very woman I was taught to NOT be. Not only in imagination but in action as well. To live the life of the character I am writing about, though my Christian upbringing still has its clutches strongly on me. Every day is an intentional decision to lay aside the mental conflict that comes with this pursuit and to race to the finish line. Hopefully with my mind still intact.

My distaste for men, both in cultural settings and in religion, who deem themselves the epitome of truth and moral campus, who boldly tell women how to be women drives me, daily, to stay strong and keep fighting. Laying aside the fear of the judgement that the publishing of this work will potentially subject me to. I have always found it odd and distasteful that from the surface knowledge and experience of womanhood, these men felt they had the liberty to have their opinion be the gospel on what a good woman is, how she acts and reacts, how she dresses etc.

Edwidge Danticat's *Women Like Us* talks about women and their struggles, and the struggle of women writers. It is beautiful how she says, "They slip phrases into their stew and wrap meaning around their pork before frying it. They make narrative dumplings and stuff them in their daughters' mouths, so they say nothing more"(Danticat, 1993). The imagery is vivid and so is the metaphor, and it is the reality of the silence that we are taught. "A good woman is meek and mild". I can almost see the phrases going into the stew as would spices, how *good* meaning would taste on pork chops (because the place of a woman is in the kitchen, cooking). It is, however, a terrible twist that the dumplings silence the daughter. It makes me mad. It

alludes to how, as young girls, we were taught to be meek and submissive. To not challenge anything or anybody. Similar content to Yehuda's poem. It is also beautiful how she says, "you used to dream that you were lying among the dead and all the spirits were begging you to scream*" (*Yehuda,A.n.d*).* I take interest in the fact that those who lived before us are routing for us to bring change. I can imagine that her ancestors were writers too but were fed the narrative dumpling that silenced them.

Ancestry, genealogy, lineage... that's a point of interest to me. We owe it to our foremothers to be the change that they hoped for. We also owe it to our daughters to create an environment where they don't have to suffer the same ills that we have suffered. Talking about the women who came before us *The World Split Open* edited by Louise Bernikow blew my mind. From her introduction. How she seeks to have the scale balanced, where female poets are considered equal to male poets. And how with this anthology, she has put to the forefront, female poets from as early as the 1600s (foremothers). It has and continues to validate what I'm trying to do and why. There is no way that female poets are inferior to male poets. There is no way that women are inferior to men, period! Patriarchy persists with its notion to diminish everything feminine. Different does not mean unequal.

The biggest tool used by culture and religion to keep women at bay is sexuality. It was important for me to have a section that deals with sex. Mostly by writing the issues we are silent about and those that are only spoken about behind closed doors.

Cunning Con is about as wayward and as wicked as I hope the rest of the work gets. It draws inspiration from the aforementioned poem by Vangile Gantso, *a smallgirl guide to wayward women.* Even as a victim, the *I* in the poem takes the stance of a victor somehow in her crime. Purges herself of guilt. *Never yours* brings in the savagery while *Crucifix* is a response to the expected backlash.

It challenged me to face my sexual history and present. The good, the bad, the dysfunctional, and the ways in which it has damaged and healed me. From it, *Solace, Hoarder, Rejection, Haiku for Bad Bitches, Touched, These Walls Weep* (which is rather about the lack of action*), Severed vein whole heart, and Hollow heart* were birthed.

Sexing the Cherry by Jeanette Winterson. Hilarious. Violent. It caught me completely off guard. The humour surrounding religion is a killer! Jesus! And that from a person who grew up in the church is inspirational. I thoroughly enjoyed travelling to all the places this book took

me. My rebellion against the church is not done with malicious intent, but rather to right some wrongs and expose important truths. It is, I feel, a necessary evil. And she does that beautifully.

PS…I am deconstructing a womanhood built on/by patriarchal scheming, reconstructing a womanhood built on and by women. Doing all of this by the most extreme means possible to foster a hasty shift of mentality.

Reflective Journal 3

Where does a non-fiction writer draw the line between fact and fiction? Where does she strike a balance between truth and creativity? The balance between staying true to her voice and giving the reader what they want to hear? Is the writer writing for herself or for the reader? And, whatever the hell is poetry?

These questions arise when the going gets tough. With the constant picking at scabs, digging out tombs, pulling our neatly packed dirt from underneath the carpet and making it speak comes tedious amounts of emotional labour. The harvesting of self for the sake of the art remains a cruel job. Necessary nonetheless.

Angel on a Bicycle by Kimentha Govender. This one tugged at my heart and worried me at the same time. It worried me that the angel *had no wish to use his wings to go back home*. We are forever trying to escape our realities, often fantasizing about heaven as an escape. But if the angel would rather stay here, then heaven clearly is no place for us to escape to. Where do we escape to then?

Boozing it up and getting high does, in no way heal but masks the pain, if only for a while. Rest (even though bolts of creative energy come flooding at dawn when sleep is at its sweetest) and debriefing are a necessity.

This piece also spoke to *Woman Scorned*, how she tries to bargain saying, *ever to you I give praises.* As if that should be the answer to her woes. Which it should, as we are taught from the bible.

We all come from somewhere. So does our art. But the lines are seldom clear. To try and articulate the inner workings of one's mind and soul and how that gets translated into text becomes an almost impossible task.

I spend a lot of time fighting against censorship. This is because I am a very expressive person. I cherish the freedom to voice out my thoughts, emotions, and concerns. To express love, anger, disappointment and joy. Verbally. Never mind the fact that I am terrible at it. That I find it difficult to string a few words together to form a coherent sentence. Finding out that one is censored in places where they should be at liberty to speak their truth without fear of judgement is the worst. At home with family or with close friends. How much more fight will one have to put with the world.

Wame Molefhe's *I'm sure* is too short a piece for such a conversation starter. I jokingly referred to sex as a "meeting of loins session" the other day, a "conversation of loins". How a friend reacted to my statement was rather disappointing. Nobody, especially not at the age of twentysix should be calling sex *izimanga.* Not a mother to a 6-year-old. Especially not when talking to me, her close friend.

Wame starts this conversation from the perfect angle. Home. The sooner we call things with their rightful names, name things that have no manes, the better. Many social ills are perpetuated by silence. Silence caused by the fact that things aren't named. Crazy thing is that I also struggle with naming things. And for the longest time, I was a prude. I still am actually. Except that now I am deliberate about saying the exact thing I find uncomfortable.

Sex has to be the biggest taboo in our Black homes. Our Christian homes. Whenever it is mentioned, it is always as something vulgar. To young girls it is talked about as a warning against unwanted pregnancy and defecation to their virtue. While to boys it is praised. This again is according to me a means to control women. Because they are but things to be used and disposed of by men. The vulgar that is a woman who openly expresses their sexuality and questions patriarchal practices society has not learned how to handle except to ostracise and call them derogatory names. This has often led to the abuse of such women. At times as punishment and as correction.

To write about this takes more from me than I would like to give. But I find comfort in what Molebatsi says, that:

…we are the indelible words we write and our stories are open
wide spreading like the song we are leaping from behind
history's curtain to become tomorrow's gifts given to
enlighten…(Molebatsi, 2009,p.41)

Explicit expression of sexuality by a woman is frowned upon. Especially an unmarried woman. Even married women should pretend that they don't like it. But conversations need to be had. And with this thesis, I hope that they are not only had, but that the stigma around them is lifted. Solace challenges this view in that the "I" in the poem not only likes sex, but it is also her salvation.

Reflective Journal 4

I often say that my being in the literary world is accidental, but the truth is that I owe my writing to my mother. I owe her a lot of things. She says I owe her my life because she gave birth to me…but we'll see. I started writing for her. To her. She had started a new job when I was nine. It was more demanding than her previous odd jobs. At around the same time, she started studying. We would go for weeks without seeing her even though she slept and woke up at home.

I was a very emotional child. I needed a lot of alone time with her. But with her new job, it was impossible. She said to write her letters whenever I had something troubling me or if I needed to talk. I would put them under her pillow. She would read them and address whatever needed to be addressed. I eventually started writing for myself. Some sort of diary. It made sense to do so as I was very inarticulate. Listening to me required patience. Only she had mastered it. In her absence, I had to find somebody else. That was my diary. This I am reminded by a poem in New Daughters of Africa, an anthology by Margaret Busby, *Saartjies cry*

> Oh mother, I am not me,
> My soul has been lost in this journey.
> …
> Oh mother, it is not just my soul they've torn apart—
> It is oh mother my very heart (Glinton-Meicholos, 2019)

It is a tribute to Sarah Baartman. This poem is indicative of how important mothers are in their daughters' lives that in their deepest despair, their mothers are the only people they can cry to. In the anthology are other mother-daughter poems about even dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships. Fathers even. Phillippa Yaa De Villiers' Heritage

> The first time I saw my father it was like the whole continent was walking towards me, it was like his skin unzipped, opened up to let me in, and for the first time, I was able to see my black skin as a bag of courage. (De Villiers,2019)

Julie Nxadi, *Iinyawo zinodaka* (Mud on her Feet) published in the South African Literary Journal is a typical Xhosa mother-daughter relationship. In her prose poem she asks questions we can all relate that go unanswered. "*kukuthuni ukuthandana, kukuthini uthunakala,* and *kukuthini ukumoshakala*?" A response poem in IsiXhosa was birthed in the other half of my thesis. It also seeks to start necessary conversations.

The "I" in my work is sometimes hypothetical as I write from not only my personal experiences but from the experiences of the women in and around my life, and imagined experiences, letting my mind delve into unchartered territory…places I may not physically go because of religiously and culturally preinstalled inhibitions. I bypass them sometimes, but most times I fail. Even though this is about me, and the internalization of other people's experiences, I hope it has a *universal address* as the reader then becomes the *I*.

As Laynie Brown introduces Bernadette *Mayer's The Desire of Mothers to Please Others in Letters*, I seek *to* "proclaim, to celebrate, to rant and lament, yet never to romanticize" or make a spectacle of Black womanhood in its entirety (Brown, 1994). The title of it also reminded me of the letters mom and I would exchange. Very fond memories of my childhood. I wish I had kept them and all my diaries.

I am in a perpetual state of internal conflict as I write this thesis. Mostly because my life has never been my own. I have always lived and continue to live under the shadow of my parents and the church community. I have always had to be mindful of how what I say and do reflects on them and on the church. They are excited about this project, but I shudder at the thought of them reading it. I can almost imagine the prayer item that I will be, to exorcize the Jezebel spirit that so inhabits me.

There is a lot of good that the church does. Culture too. My insubordination to them as I write this project is not to denounce the good that they do. To have been twenty, turning twenty-one, doing my third year at NMMU, over a thousand kilometres away from home, in a foreign city wherein I had no family and nobody to be accountable to, yet remained a virgin only speaks of how good their teachings are. To have lost my virginity because I wanted to remain a treasure to me. But the guilt that came with having made that decision, the secrecy, the judgement. Judgement from myself too as a worship leader whose chastity determines how spiritual one is and the rank at which "God will use them". There began the "mess" that I eventually became.

Women in Praise of the Sacred edited by Jane Hirshfield comes in as the perfect read for somebody of my background. Forty-three centuries of Spiritual poetry by women.
Christianity depicts sex as a sacred act for a married heterosexual couple to partake in, as ordained by God. It also says that women are subordinate to men. That they are the source of original sin. So, with all these in mind, and the no-sex-before-marriage rule, a female transgressor takes the fall. As if she had the sex alone. Man's sin is her fault. She should have

said no. she should have dressed in a way that is not provocative so the man will not fall into lust. All that bull shit keeps women enslaved, and the mental and emotional consequences of it are dire.
It says in the introduction that these women "are a class of women who refused to be kept from the lives they mostly desired*".* I am that woman. My writing is that woman.

My project is, among other things, a documentation of my struggle with the body. How I live in it yet do not own it. How it is a temple of the Lord. How it moves from His ownership to the ownership of a man. This thesis seeks to take back ownership.
To have this book of women associating the sacred and spiritual with Eros is beautiful. That their ownership of their bodies does not mean separation with the divine but rather that they are the divine within themselves. And the fact that they are vocal about this despite the odds is not only a marvel, but I find solace in the fact that what I am doing is not new. As there is nothing new under the sun. The foremothers have paved a way and we shall journey in it with strength and with poise.

Makhosaza Xaba says in The Alkalinity of Bottled Water, "…the beautiful ones have arrived…" (Xaba, 2019). We sure have and we have a lot to say.

Reflective Journal 5

Ama Biney's essay, *creating the New Man in Africa* in The New Daughters of Africa Anthology is not only well written, it beautifully articulates my sentiments. How culture and religion has not only oppressed women but messed with psyche of men is incredible. In the conversations I have been having with people in my circle, I have mentioned, countless times how in as much as we are doing the most to empower women, a lot needs to be done to prepare men for this new wave of women rising and taking on the world. This has given me a bad name among feminists. But, I am not bothered. I have never claimed to be a feminist.

Ama quotes Thomas Sankara*, who was committed to socio-economic and political change in his country*, citing that "the revolution cannot triumph without the genuine emancipation of women". As our emancipation is underway, I continue to hope that men get emancipation of their own. Be freed from the clutches of religion and culture that bind them to being macho, aggressive, and competitive.

I always narrow it down to Xhosa men and isiXhosa culture, not with malicious intent, but because I am most familiar with its ways than those of other cultures. What makes me sad the most is that there are men, Xhosa men, who behind closed doors, take the mask off, at sparse intervals, but quickly put them back on to not be seen and labelled as weak by society. They themselves question and oppose some of these cultural practices.

My father is one of these men. He is a very patriarchal man, there's no doubt about that. He raised us, however, with no specific boundaries on gender roles. He would make his own meals, except for when he wanted something he couldn't make. He relished his time in the kitchen. If anything, he taught us independence and wished that we would get educated and be our own women, even though he hated that mother was so independent and hungered for education. He tried to stall my brother from going to initiation school. Urging him to study first but at twenty, my brother became forceful about it as his friends were going in that year while some had gone in the previous year, so father gave in. A couple of days after brother came back from the school, very casually one morning, in the kitchen, sipping on his tea, father asked him*, "ubonile ke ukuba ayikho yonke le nto? Ayikho le nto ubuyingxamele?"*, and brother agreed. I wanted to jump in on their conversation and probe, but I knew better. They protect mountain secrets with their lives.

My maternal grandfather was one of such men. It is a pity that I never got to experience him. He suffered a stroke when I was seven years old and was incapacitated until he passed away when I was twenty-four. I hear he was a very wise, noble man. He would urge mother to never

get married but to study and make something of her life. Abductions and forced marriages were prevalent at the time, so he would constantly tell mother to escape and never spend the night if she ever found herself in that situation, or else he couldn't save her. He believed in the emancipation of women but would negotiate damages for an abducted girl.

A dear friend of mine is also this kind of Xhosa man. He was indeed a beautiful surprise. He, unlike the others is very articulate about his stance. He does not speak in codes and riddles. At least not to me. I wonder if he holds these views because he is a father to three daughters. It is he that taught me to unlearn some of the patriarchal inhibitions I grew up with. He taught me that I could be myself and be my own person. And not to be afraid to express my thoughts, emotions, and sexuality. His daughters are in good hands.

I order to create new African men, a process of consciousness-raising, or the journey of men increasing their self-awareness of patriarchy or male domination. It must operate on a social level…in the media, the church, mosque, trade unions etc. In the family mostly. *The family needs to socialise girls and boys differently. This extends to the wider extended family and peer group who are also very influential in legitimating negative and positive behaviour, norms and values.* _Ama Biney, Creating the New Man in Africa

It will be a relief to find that the fight we are on now, which is the same fight women have been fighting for centuries on end, will have been won in ten or twenty years to come. It begins with the change in the male psyche. I will that they would listen.

#NotYetUhuru

Reflective Journal 1 (IsiXhosa)

Xa ubani ephulukana nolwimi lweenkobe, zingaphi izinto ezikulo aphulukana nazo?

Lo mbuzo ubuzwe nguNjingalwazi uthile kumakhasi onxibelelwano. Ndiwufunde kaliqela ndanomvandedwa. Ndithe ndakuhlala ndawetyisa ndafumanisa ubunyani bawo kobam ubomi. Utata wafudukela eGoli elityendyana ngonyaka we 1977 esiya kuxelenga ezimayini. Emana ukugoduka aye eTyalarha kanye ngonyaka. Wathi wakubona umama, wambhinqisa waya kuhlala kunye naye eGoli.

Sikhulele apho nodadethu nomnakwethu. Sikhulela kwindawo ekuthethwa kuyo ulwimi lwesiSotho. Nangona isiXhosa besisithetha ekhaya, ubuye ufumanise ukuba singxengiwe. Nasesikolweni sithetha ulwimi loondlebe zikhany' ilanga. Kwibanga lesine, ndaphuma esikolweni sesiNgesi ndaya kufunda kwisikolo sikawonkewonke. Ndafike kufundiswa ulwimi lwesiSotho nesiZulu njengolwimi lwasekhaya. Ndaze ndakhetha ukufunda isiZulu kuba sizalana nesiXhosa. Nokuba nje ndakhawuleza ndabona ukuba asizalani kuyaphi. Umahluko mkhulu. Ndifunde eso siZulu ndade ndaya kuphumela kwibanga leshumi elinambini. Ndawongwa ngabakwa-PanSALB *njengomfundi ovelele olwimini lwesiZulu* kwsithili endandifunda kuso.

Le nkcaza ibonisa ukuba ndiphulukene nokukhulu ngenxa yokukhula ndithetha isiZulu, isiSotho, kunye nesiNgesi (endaweni yokufunda ulwimi lweenkobe). Nangona kunjalo zange ndilahle mbeleko ngakufelwa. Ngenxa yokzingca ngobuXosa bam, ndandisoloko ndithe ngqolo ukufunda iincwadi zesiXhosa, ngakumbi iinoveli ezifana noKwazidenge kaPateni, ndifunda ngendlela uZuziwe aphethwe ngayo kwilali yakhe kwakunye nothando lwakhe noBhuqa, iincwadi ezifana noUkuba Ndandazile kaW.K Tamsanqa, Ingqumbo Yeminyanya kaA.C Jordan, Ityala Lamawele kaS.E.K Mqhayi, njalo-njalo. Ngalo ndlela, ndibe nako ukuhamba ndichola-chola izinto ebesele ndilahlekene nazo kulwimi olu lwam.

Kuphando endilwenzayo kuncwadi lwesiXhosa ndifumanise ukuba akukho nto indikhuthaza njengokubona umbhali wasetyhini osemtsha. Kuyabonakala ukuba ukubhala oku yayingumsebenzi wamadoda. La madoda awebhala ngokweembono zawo, ebhalela oobhululu awo. Kuthe kwakufunda namanina, akwabikho zinguqu zingako kuncwadi lwesiXhosa, koko suka kwangathi la madoda enze umthetho othi yonke into ebhalwayo mayiqale ngentshayelelo ekumila kunje, isiqu, kunye nesiphelo, zonke ezo zinto zikhatshwe yintshumayelo ethile.

Kolu ncwadi, ndifumanise ukuba kukho ukucinezelwa kwabasetyhini. Njengokuba abasetyhini nabo befunda le mibhalo, bafunda ukuba bangamakhoboka. Bayithathe loo nto

bayikholelwe. IsiNtu kunye nenkolo zikwenza oko ngokwaneleyo. Uncwadi malwenze umahluko, lukhulule abasetyhini. Kudingeka ababhali basetyhini abaza kubhala ngezinto ezayamane nabantu basetyhini. Izinto eziza kuthi zibakhulise, zibakhulule.

Uthi uW. SOB. Mkhuhlu kwincwadi yakhe *Imvaba* kumbongo V.Ingcwaba …

> *"*Ndithi mn' indoda kakade sisilwanyana
> Ndithi mn' indoda kakade yingonyama
> Ukub' ibingunfazi ngesitshw' esofelweyo…"

Ndinokungoneliseki yimibhalo elolu hlobo. Ewe wona umbongo uncoma ubugokra bendoda. Mhlawumbi ngela xesha wabhalwa ngawo lo mbongo wawungenako ukudala ingxaki. Kodwa kule mihla siphila kuyo, ndifumanisa ukuba intetha enje ingadala umonakalo omkhulu. Ubulwanyana bamadoda siyabazi. Abuyonto yakunconywa. Ukufundwa nokufundiswa ngezibhalo ezinje kundishiya ndixhalabile. Imfundiso elolu hlobo ayakhi iyatshabalalisa. Ingakumbi xa ukunconywa kwesini esithile ikukwanyelisa esinye.

Umdiliya Wesihobe ngokuhlelwe nguMhlobo Jadezweni, iliqela imibongo ebhalwe ngamadoda ebhala ngamanina nobugorha bawo. Le ncwadi ibonisa ukuba noko likho ithemba lokuba inkululeko kwabasetyhini sele isodele.

Reflective Journal 2 (IsiXhosa)

Ukufumana amabali okanye imibongo yesiXhosa ebalisa ngeembono okanye ngeemvakalelo sabasetyhini kunqabe kakhulu. Ingakumbi ezibhalwe kwa-ngabasethyini. Le nto yenza ukuba kubenzima ukuvakalisa iingcinga zethu ngolwimi lweenkobe, sibhenele kweloondlebe zikhanya ilanga. Nto leyo ephinda ibe ngumqobo ekukhuleni nasekuphuhlisweni kolwimi lwethu.

Ulwimi Oluhloniphayo

UWame Molefhe, ebalini lakhe elifutshane u-*I'm Sure* elishicilelwe kwingqokelela ka Margaret Basby i-*New Daughters of Africa* ubhala ngokucacileyo ngalo mba wokungabizwa kwezinto ngamagama. Ubhale ngendlela oku kuhlonipha kuphembelela ukuhlukunyezwa kwabantwana abaselula. Nendlela ekuye kukhuselwe aba bantu benza oku kukhohlakala. Le nkohlakalo yenziwanangumntu othembekileyo olilungu losapho okanye umntu omkhulu, ohloniphekileyo ekuhlaleni. Uthi xa eliqukumbela eli bali, inguqu iqala ekhaya. Inyaniso mayithethwe ngobunjalo bayo, kungasetyenziswa olu lwimi luhloniphayo kuba luvula inyoba yokuhlukunyezwa kwabantwana.

Umbongo kaJulie Ngxadi u-*Mud on her Feet* (Inyawo Zinodaka) epapashwe kwiJenali i-*New Contrast* uzoba umfanekiso ngqondweni wohlobo esinxibelelana ngalo noomama bethu ngezinto ezimalunga nokufikisa, ezesondo, ezothando, kunye nendlela ulowo aye amelane nale miba, ingakumbi xa ingahambi ngendlela ekulindeleke ukuba ihambe ngayo.

Ubhentsisa ngakumbi ukufihlwa kwenyaniso ngelithi "asizontanga". Iyaxhalabisa ke le nto kuba ayikho into ephathekayo nelungileyo enokufundwa ngumntwana koontanga bakhe. Inyathi ibuzwa kwaba phambili kodwa abaphambili balugusha kubo ulwazi kunokuba babonise ulutsha indlela eya empumelelweni.

Ndichukumiseke kakhulu leli bali kunye nombongo endiwukhankanye ngasentla, ndaza ndabhala imibongo eliqela ukuvakalisa iimbono zam malunga noku kunye nemvakalelo yam malunga nezinto endithe ndagagana nazo apha ekukhuleni ngokwasekhayeni, ekuhlaleni, nakwezothando. Ndiphendula imibuzo ebuzwe ngababhali, nam ndibuza eyam imibuzo. Le mibuzo, nam ndiyibuza kuba ndisakhangela iimpendulo zayo.

Reflective Journal 3 (IsiXhosa)

Intsindiso kunye nenkolelo kwezemveli, nangona zohlukile, inye into ezivumelana ngayo, kukuba amanina angaphantsi kunamadoda. Le nto iye ibonakaliswe ngakumbi ezintweni eziphathelene nezikhundla zobunkokheli kunye na kwimithetho yendlela yokuziphatha ngokwesini. Kukho iindawo apho amanina angavumelekanga ukuba angene okanye athethe kuzo ngaphandleni kokuba kwenziwe siko lithile. Umfazi makayazi indawo yakhe. Umfazi makangathethi kuthethwa. Umfazi uyanyamezela. Ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini. Indoda imele ukutya naphi na, kodwa umfazi yena makahlale enyulu. Zonke ezi zinto zimele ukugcina amanina engamakhoboka.

Umbongo kaS.E.K. Mqhayi, *Ukwenziwa Komkhonzi* ndiye ndiwufuzisele kwindlela amanina aphethwe ngayo yinkolo, ingakumbi kule mihlathi ilandelayo:

> Irhintyelwe ngeentambo zayidla ebuntloko, Yangxoliswa
> yakhatywa, kwaphathwa kulelezwa,
> Injongo yona inye mayithwale idyokhwe.
> Lolwezulu uqeqesho olujong' umqeqeshwa
> Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
> Kwinkatyana yedyokhwe
>
> Iqodo lokuphela, ubekiwe loo mqobo
> Yajikela nentambo entanyeni bukhanywa
> Kwathiwa igqityiwe yo yofakwa emkhondweni,
> Ukufunda intando yomlawuli umniniyo
> Kuba ndikubonile ukwenziwa komkhonzi
> Kwinkatyana yedyokwe

Ukubhala kwam kuzama ukulwa nobu bukhoboka ngethemba lokuba kuza kukhululula namanye amanina emakhamandeleni enkolelo ethi imizimba yethu akusiyiyo eyethu, koko yitempile kaThixo kwaye masingayibandezi kumadoda (ngaphandle kokuba kukho isizathu esbambekayo).

Uninzi lwemibongo ngamanina ayanelisi kwaphela, nkqu nemibongo ebhalwe ngababhlali abaphume izandla. U-P.T. Mtuze (Vingcan' Amazibuko), nongona kubonakala ukuba kusetyenziswe iindlela ezintsha ukukhulisa ukubhalwa kwesiXhosa ngokwesimo sombongo, nohlobo olwahlukileyo lwesonethi, ukwabhala ngendlela engaginyisi mathe ngabasetyhini. Kumbongo wakhe *Ububi* ubhala ngoNtombembi Jezile. Kuwo ukhankanya indlela ambi ngayo. Umbiza unongayindoda. Inkangeleko yakhe imbalekisela ngamasoka noba esondla

iimbedlenge. Ubuhle bentliziyo yakhe abuthethi nto. Zezinye zezinto ezixhalabisayo ezi kuba intombi ithi ize ibe yintombi ibukeke ngokwenkangeleko emadodeni. Kungenjalo akahlonitshwa, kwaye akathandeki eluntwini. Ezi zezinye zezinto eziphembelela ukhuphiswano kumanina befuna ukwamkeleka emadodeni nasekuhlaleni. Baze bayithiye imfundo nokwenza ubulungisa ngoba azihloniphekanga ezo zinto. Okubalulekileyo kukuzihombisa ngaphandle ngokulungisa iinwele, ukuqhunqa, nokunxiba iimpahla zikanokutsho neziveza iindawo ezintle ezinokubangela umtsalane emadodeni.

Lolu khuphiswano oludala ukuba amaninina ahlale ecinezelekile kuba ludala iyantlukwano kumanina. Ngaphandle kwamathandabuzo, amanina xa enokumanyana abe yimbumba, angandisa amathuba okuphumelela idabi lokulwa nobungangamsha bamadoda acinezela amanina.

Masiqwalasele mibongo kaS.E.K. Mqhayi. Kubabhali besiXhosa singatsho sithi noko imisebenzi kaMqhayi yiyo esahamba phambili kwimisebenzi yakudala ebhalwe ngamadoda. Lo kaMqhayi ubhala ngamanina ngendlela engaqhelekanga, ingakumbi xa siqwalasela nexesha le mibongo eyayibhalwe ngalo, (iminyaka yowe 1932 ukuya phambili). Singatsho sthi ibhalwe ngendlela eyolisayo. Imibongo yakhe ngabasethyini iyomeleza kwaye iyandichukumisa njengombhali wasetyhini, kwaye eminye yayo isisiseko sale thisisi. Liyinene elithi imbongi ikwanguye nomprofeti kuba lo mbongo wakudala ka Mqhayi ndiwufumanisa ungqale ngqo kwixesha esiphila kulo namhlanje, kanye kwelixesha lobundlobongela nokutshatyalaliswa kwesizwe samanina ngokuphathwa gadalala, ukudlwengulwa nokubulawa ngokungenalusini.

Yiva le mbongi yesizwe xa isithi (1932):

Bafazi fakani iinkciyo ngambini
Liyeza idabi elimanyumnyezi
Ngqishea ngesikhakha neqhiya
Izwe lonakele zizigegemba
Safa isizwe, safa sijongile
Thethani zintaba, thethani milambo
Khalimani mazulu, gqumani nani zilwandle

[loose translation]

You women, double up your protection apparatus
Blood chilling battle is on its way
Fortify your defences with every means you have

The world is shameful because of vagrants
The nation is ruined, we are impoverished
Say your say you mountains
Protest you heavens, rumble too you seas (Mqhayi, 1932)

I can only imagine what must have been going on in his head when he wrote this. I wonder if he was alive today, would he link this poem to the current affairs.

It is a regular occurrence for me to write a poem innocently, driven by the notorious *duende*, usually just after midnight or before dawn, only for it to manifest in real life. Scary stuff if you ask me.

Komnye umbongo ubhala ngobugorha babafazi. This may contradict a statement I have made previously about how one cannot praise one gender and, in this process, diminish the other. But are there ever absolutes?

I like it, particularly because it is written by a man. The ability to look at one's flaws and be secure enough the articulate them without prejudice is a quality that I admire in a writer. I do this a lot in my own writing. It is not self-deprecating more than it is a truthful reflection of self. And to articulate that truthfully takes a considerable amount of strength.

Mqhayi alludes to the disparity of male rule to the rule/leadership of women. He advocates for not only the emancipation of women but that they should assume more significant roles in the community as men have failed.

Amaqobokazana angalal' endlini yazini kunyembelekile
Amadoda oyisiwe, makuphathe abafazi
Siwanike iliZwi, alishunqula
Siwanike imfundo, ayishunqula
Siwanika ukongamela, akushunqula
Sibangawanika umhlaba, awushunqula
Sibangawanika ubukhosi, abushunqushunqula

[Loose translation]

An exhortation that, young women entrusted with a task, difficult
as it may be, will stop at nothing to see it through successfully.
Men are captured, let women take over
We give them the Word, they cause chaos
We give them education, they flounder
We give them authority, they corrupt it

> We give them the land, they sell it
> We give them kingship, they dispute (Mqhayi, 1932)

The above-mentioned poems (by S.E.K Mqhayi) have inspired me and given me the confidence to continue to write what I write, and to write how I write, odd as it is. *Ukuzika Kohlanga* is of a similar sentiment and I anticipate backlash. But if the legendary Mqhayi has done it, so can I, right?

> Molebatsi says: …we are the indelible words we
> write and our stories are open wide spreading like the
> song we are leaping from behind history's curtain to
> become tomorrow's gifts given to
> enlighten…(Molebatsi,2009,p.41)

This is the least burdensome burden ever. To carry and to deliver words, and to open myself up and to allow my woundedness and my failures to be a mirror for others is but a beautiful gift.

Book Review 1
Editor: Margaret Busby

Title: New Daughters of Africa

Publisher: Jonathan Ball Publishers

Year: 2019

Margaret Busby is a Ghanaian writer, editor and broadcaster now based in the UK. Co-founder of Allison and Busby. She was the first and youngest Black female book publisher in Britain in the 1960s. *New Daughters of Africa*, an international anthology of writing by women of African descent is a sequel to *Daughters of Africa* published in 1992. She was awarded the inaugural Africa Writes Lifetime Achievement Award On 6 July 2019, presented to her at the British Library during the Royal African Society's annual literary weekend by Ade Solanke and R.T. Hon Diane Abbott MP as part of the festival headline event celebrating Busby's anthology *New Daughters of Africa*.

It is a ground breaking, breath-taking collection of short stories (or excerpts thereof), essays, poems, letters and stories of 200 living Black women writers navigating the streets of their Black existence, their womanhood and geographical inhibitions to their freedom as human beings. The anthology features work by women that date back from as early as the 1800's to as recently as the 21st century. It is compiled in a chronological order by their decade of birth to give context to generational links (foremothers…the matriarch of feminism in Africa). She anthologises as such to "show how continuous our existence is in the continent" *(Minna Salami).* Reading this book, I recall the introduction to a similar anthology where the editor narrates how a male publisher asked why there needs to be a book of poems by women? He continues to say "…if they are any good, they can stand up in an anthology with men".

New daughters of Africa owes its template to the previous collection, Daughters of Africa, but it is in no way a duplicate. As a respected and multi-award-winning editor, writer and broadcaster, putting this anthology together was not difficult as writers enthusiastically came on board, also pointing her to work by other women they admired that she may not have known. The contributors write from and about personal experiences of Blackness and Womanhood, love and loss, tribulations and triumphs, making links to generational woundedness and the *impact of national and international politics.* Diana Ferrus writes a tribute to Sarah Baarman with her poem *I've come to take you home*

I have come to take you home –
home! Remember the veld,
the lush green grass beneath the big oak tree?
The air is cool there and the sun does not burn.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white…

In this poem she paints a geographical image of Africa and also tackles the politics of her capture into slavery, also empathising with her pain as a woman and as a human being.

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers writes about the displacement into a foreign land and the reunion of her and not only her father, but her roots in her poem *Heritage*. One could say that *uyazilanda:*

The first time I saw my father it was like the whole continent was
walking towards me, it was like his skin unzipped, opened up to let me
in, and for the first time,
I was able to see my black skin as a bag of courage. (De Villiers, 2019)

In the book the validity of Christianity and idolization of people of white skin colour, the hierarchies therein, and their charity is questioned in the writings of Julie Okot Bitek's list fiction piece:

7 who knew that we would have to witness whiteness as stratified categorised classed
8 hitherto as white people who loved us so much that they gave up all the thrilling possibilities of the good lives we would read about what it was to be European to teach generations and generations of us African girls until the end of time about how to be decent educated good Christian women

In it is also the politics of superiority and inferiority as European is written with capital "E", and African with the small letter "a".

Makhosazana Xaba and Vangile Gantso also feature in the anthology.

Because the "imagination respects no hierarchy", she pays homage to upcoming writers in this anthology saying, " my ambition was and is to shine a light on as many as possible of deserving, whether or not they are acknowledged or lauded by the gatekeepers, who traditionally single out a privileged few, seemingly never too many to rock the boat. But the boat is going nowhere if it is content to drift in stagnant water."

Angela Cobbinah of Cornish villages recollects “I felt an unfamiliar emotion. Call it connection or kinship, or the bubbling of a youthful rebelliousness”. I had goosebumps and right then I knew that this anthology would be a great read. And buoy was that an understatement!

I echo her parting words in her introduction, “May all who find their way to this anthology, regardless of gender, class or race, feast well on its banquet of words.”

Book Review 2
Author: Akwaeke Emezi

Title: Freshwater

Publisher: Grove Press New York

Year: 2018

Akwaeke Emezi was born in Umuahia and raised in Aba, Nigeria. She is a writer and video artist based in liminal spaces. Emezi's debut autobiographical novel FRESHWATER is a New York Times Notable Book and also a finalist for the Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize, the PEN/Hemingway Award, the NYPL Young Lions Fiction Award, the Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction, and a Lambda Literary Award (Currently longlisted for a National Book Award). Emezi was recently featured in Kirkus Reviews and profiled in The New York Times. Freshwater is translated into ten languages.

"For those of us with one foot on the other side", reads the dedication. Freshwater is a memoir told from the perspectives of her multiple selves, the Ogbanje. This book demystifies and undoes the taboo in African Spirituality. It shines the light on how most things African cannot be explained away and treated in Western ways. "Ọgbanje are as liminal as is possible—spirit and human, both and neither. I am here and not here, real and not real, energy pushed into skin and bone. I am my others; we are one and we are many", she writes, tearing down the rigid borders of the Western classifications of mental illness and Spirituality.

The book also skates on thin ice as it can be borderline offensive to the conservative hypoChristian readership, equating Yshwa (Jesus) with the gods that are her other-selves. "We knew him; we knew his name was Yshwa", narrates Ashugara, one of her selves. "…we knew that he looked like everyone, all at once, at any time. His face could shift like a ghost…Yshwa too was born with spread gates…And while he loved humans, what they forget is that he loves them as a god does, with a taste of suffering."

They also delve into the politics of hair, sexuality, international politics and stereotyping. Emezi is also the author of PET (Make Me a World/Random House Children's Books) which is also an *Indie Next selection and debuted with five starred reviews from* Kirkus, Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, Book page, and Bulletin. A multi-award winner. They have an extensive publication record in Magazines, online platforms and anthologies between the years 2015 – 2019.

The novel is set in both Nigeria and America, also delving into the liminal spaces that they occupy. With her style of writing and her voice, the reader is taken into all these spaces with much clarity and sentiment as the imagery is quite vivid. Their struggles with identity (due to the fact that that they are both human and a god), are relatable as identity uncertainty is a universal phenomenon, especially with the coming of age. Much can be taken from her experience with transition, her struggle thereof and how she overcomes them. Their voice, though the Ogbanje are centuries old, is of this generation in that it is hip and young in their use of language. It is an interactive and compelling read.

Freshwater is in early development as a TV series at FX, with Emezi writing and executive producing with Tamara P. Carter. They are currently making video art and working on their fifth novel.

Having finally found and made peace with who they are, they write, *"My mother draws closer now. I can see a red road opening before me; the forest is green on either side of it and the sky is blue above it. The sun is hot on the back of my neck. The river is full of my scales. With each step, I am less afraid. I am the brother-sister who remained. I am a village full of faces and a compound full of bones, translucent thousands. Why should I be afraid? I am the source of the spring.*

All freshwater comes out of my mouth."

Book Review 3
Author: Kenneth Koch

Title: Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?

Publisher: Vintage Books

Year: 1990

Kenneth Koch was born in 1925. He was an American poet, playwright, and professor. A towering figure of the New York School of poetry and the literary community in general until his passing in 2002 at age seventy-seven. Writing began early for him, discovering the work of Shelley and Keats as a teenager. He graduated from Harvard and Columbia University. He contributed immensely in the creation of literature and the teaching of it for over forty years.

Koch taught poetry at Columbia University where his classes were incredibly popular. His *wild humour and intense teaching style, often punctuated by unusual physicality (standing on a table to shout lines by Walt Whitman) and outbursts of vocal performance often drawn from Italian opera, drew non-English majors and alumni.* Travelling all over Europe giving lessons in poetry writing. A multi-award-winning poet, playwright and professor, he has had his poetry translated to other languages.

Rose, Where Did You Get This Red is a guide the art of *teaching great poetry to children*. The book captures lessons he did with Children in America, Europe and Asia, where he has had to work with translators to translate the lessons to the children, and to have the children's response to the lessons translated to him. He decodes adult poetry in a manner that makes it accessible and enjoyable to the children. In his introduction, he writes, "I found a way to do it, in conjunction with my students' own writing, which enabled the children to get close to the adult poems and to understand and enjoy them."

In the book he gives details about ten lessons that deal with adult poems and the ways in which he explained them to the learners, making it easy for teachers to better tackle giving lessons of their own on adult poetry to their learners. He also includes the children's reactions to the lessons. This gives the teacher a sense of what to expect from the class…but children are different and therefore unpredictable. In the book are also poems by the children in response to the lessons. It is an insightful book from a person who has spent decades of his life writing poetry and teaching it. It is an easy read and easy to put to practice.

Rose, Where Did You Get This Red, the title of this book, is a line in one of the response poems by the children to a lesson on William Blake's poem, *The Tyger.*

Dog, where did you get that bark?
Dragon, where did you get that flame?
Kitten, where did you get that meow?
Rose, where did you get that red?
Bird, where did you get those wings?

_Desiree Lynne Collier

He corresponded with other poetry teachers to test out his ideas and the results were similar to his own findings. This proves that these methods work. Included in the book are poems by learners in Swaziland, whose teacher also took up the challenge to use the Koch method of teaching poems by adults to children.

In his poem *Fresh Air* (1956) he asked why poets were writing about *dull subjects with dull forms. He attacked the idea that poetry should be in any way stale* saying;

The Waste Land gave the time's most accurate data,
It seemed, and Eliot was the Great Dictator
Of literature. One hardly dared to wink
Or fool around in any way in poems,
And critics poured out awful jereboams
To irony, ambiguity, and tension –
And other things I do not wish to mention.

(Excerpt from ''Seasons on Earth',' 1987)

He strongly believed that *children have a natural talent for writing poetry and anyone who teaches them should know that.* And with the creation of this book he devised a way that would bring out the poets in the children by equipping their teachers with the necessary knowledge and approach.

Book Review 4
Umbhali: P.T Mtuze
Igama le ncwadi: Vingcan' Amazibuko
Umshicileli: Maskew Miller Longman
Unyaka: 1990

U-Njingalwazi uPeter Tshobisa Mtuze yimbongi/ umbhali, inkcubabuchopho, ekwanguye nomfundisi wakwalizwi. Wazalelwa kwi-fama eseMiddelburg, eMpuma Koloni ngonyaka we1941. Ukhulele apho eMiddelburg nase Kaladokwe apho waphumelela amabanga aphantsi khona. Uqale ukuxelenga njenge toliki kwiinkundla zamatyala zeedolophu eziliqela, waze wanguye nomsasazi kunye nomvelisi nkqubo kwiziko iSABC. Ukwasebenze njengo mthengisi kwinkampani yoshicilelo lweencwadi, waba ngumhlelii oyintloko kwisichazi magama i*Greater Dictionary of isiXhosa* kwiYunivesithi yaseFort Hare, de waya kuxelenga njengo njingalwazi wokuqala ontsundu, ekwayiyo intloko yesebe lezesiXhosa kwiYunivesithi yaseRhodes, eMakhanda.

UMtuze lo waaqala ukubhala kwiminyaka yowe-1960, ebhala iinoveli, amabali amafutshane, imibingo, idrama, ekwatolika nemibhalo yabanye abantu. Zingaphaya kwamashumi amathathu iincwadi azibhalileyo. Ezinye ezibhala ngokuncedisana nabanye ababhali, abaselula kunye nasele bephume izandla.

Incwadi yakhe u*Vingcan' Amazibuko* ingumnikelo wakhe ekuphuhliseni ulwimi lweenkobe, isiXhosa. Uthi xa eyitshayelela, "…lifikile ixesha lokuba sithathe unyawo lokubheka phambili. Lifikile ixesha lokuba imbongi nganye yandlale oko kusembilinini yayo ingabekelwanga miqathango. Ukuba siyenzile loo nto iyakukhululeka ingqambbu kwiilwimi zeembongi zethu." Ulinga ukufaka isonethi ekubhalweni kwemibongo yesiXhosa kuba olu hlobo lwesihobe lunqabile esiXhoseni, enethemba lokuba kuyakuveliswa eyesiXhosa njengoko kukho eyesiNgesi neyesiTaliyane.

Elo linge lakhe lokufaka isonethi esiXhoseni, ubhale zasixhenxe kuwo lomnikelo. *Umphengululi-ncwadi, Ixoki laseBholo, Umbombela, Intyatyambo, Uxolo nothando, Umnqweno wabantwana,* nombongo *Igosa lemboleko*. Njengoko kulindelekile kuba enguMfundisi, uninzi lwemibongo yakhe ikholise ukwayamacemthandazweni, ikwathetha ngemiba yasekuhlaleni. Uthi kwiphephale-19, *Indumiso:*

Ndiyavuma Nkosi yam,

Ndiyinqanawa ebuthathaka,

Ndicel’ usizo lwesandla sakho

Isihloko salo mbongo sithanda ukukhabana nomxholo wawo kuba isisicelo okanye sona isisikhalo.

Kukho nemibongo engezopolitiko ekhankanya ukufika koondlebe zikhany’ ilanga befika needompasi kunye noomabonakude kumbongo *Isijwili sesiXhosa;*

Ndidiniwe kukuhota sendilixhegwazana

Kanti bendinawo kade umzi ufudumele

Uyingqili enye

Uwuqukumbela oluhlobo lo mbongo esithi umzi ontsundu ubuhleli kamnandi phambi kokuba bafike abamhlophe. Ilinge lakhe liphumelele ngokokutsho kwakhe kwintshayelelo yakho. Yincwadi efundisayo neluphuhlisayo uluncwadi lwesiXhosa.

Poetics Assignment
Inkenkqe Yegqobhoka

It was in 1977 when father left his home village seeking hope and to buy bread. Ten years before he would meet and marry mother. The conditions of the time, the state of racial affairs in South Africa, the colour borders, the black and white and never grey, insisted on the displacement of the rural *Bantu* people. That they leave their home, their culture, their language, their pride, and their land. Be displaced. If one didn't have a master, they sought one – which father found in the coal mine now known as *Seriti*, which ironically means, loosely translated, dignity.

Fast forward to when I came into the picture. Three years after mother and father had been married.

1. I was born via c-section in Mtata General Hospital, even though they had created a home in Sharpeville, a few weeks after the clock struck the nine-month mark. Overdue yet looking like a premature.
2. I wasn't very fond of tits, so breast milk was not for me.
3. I would cry at midnight. And only u*dabawo* could put me to sleep. She would put me on her back, walk out of the house, make a few rounds around the kraal and I would fall dead asleep, only to wake up at sunrise. This would be our daily routine for a good three months.

Fast forward a couple of years later.

As a toddler, I seldom smiled or laughed, except with a select few. I would look at people, mostly elders, in the eyes without flinching, and wouldn't crack a smile even *xa benditeketisa*. Ring the alarm! Weird child alert!

A man doesn't go in search of a poem – The poem comes in search of him. The poem comes in search of the poet. As inspiration. As a vision. A line. A revelation. A release. Relief. Healing.

The poet or the revolutionary is there to articulate the necessity, but until the people themselves apprehend it, nothing can happen…perhaps it can be done without the poet, but it certainly can't be done without the people. The poet and the people get on generally very badly, and yet they need each other. The poet knows it sooner than the people do. The people usually know it after the poet is dead, but that is all right. The point is to get your own work done, and your work is to change the world. - James Baldwin, The Yolo Pages

The gift/burden to change the world in this manner is given to a select few. As tragic as it can get, those that are burdened with this are given provisions for this kind of assignment. The most important of these provisions being *inkenkqe*. Simphiwe Nolutshungu describes it as a power that lives in a person in a form of spirit that is reflected through a person's actions and communication. He further states that if an artist doesn't have it, she can't make it. It requires that the artist accepts and embraces it, let it take charge of her creative life.

Ikenkqe is often mistaken as *Intwaso* by people who are not accustomed to the temperament of artists. Understandably so. This misconception has troubled me a great deal for the longest time. I was aware of my *ikenkqe* from a very young age, and even though I never really understood what it was, I was comfortable with the fact that I was an odd child. That I heard things – felt things. That I preferred to sit in with a book or a magazine, listen to music or just sit alone in silence instead of going outside to play with other kids.

The elders had thought it to be a passing phase. But as I grew older and became even more odd, starting to articulate the reasons why I would rather read or listen to music, how it made me feel, what it did to my spirit – to be around people and to be alone, the urge to express it in song or on paper, the kinds of things that spoke to my spirit and the kinds of things they spoke to my spirit, my temperament, my reasoning, things I valued, the rebellion, the dreadlocks – which was cute at some point, it all began to raise alarms when they realised that it wasn't cute any longer but rather concerning. *Intwaso* was what made sense to them.

I have found that I write about things I cannot verbalise, for one reason or another, mostly from a place of heartache and wondering, even wandering, trying to tame my thoughts and emotions, even to liberate them at times. To figure out who am. What I am. To express things I don't have the language for, verbally. Things that even if I could verbalize would have me labelled as mental or weak. Expressing that which, in the black community and its patriarchal culture deems as vulgar. Especially for a woman to express. To break social conventions. Like Brian Evanson, *I believe that the world and everything in it is a lot more discontinuous, random, and vexed than many of us would like to believe.*

Where identity is concerned, does one ever really come to know self? Grow into self? Is self static in that sense or is self on a continuous evolution? That even when one gets to a point where they can boldly say that they know self, it is more on an intuitive level, and never on the rational. Who then is self if she requires understanding by *I*. Are we not the same? This

then further informs the notion that it is all spiritual. Self being the higher consciousness, and *I* the physical and lesser. Self comes into being before *I* becomes aware. That is why I can trace back to things in my past. Moments, though meaningless and thoughtless at the time, all were a collection of necessary preparatory incidents mapping out the path of the here and now.

I have often wondered about my blackness. What it means to me. To every black person in South Africa. And the whole world. To be woman. To be Xhosa. To be *all* this woman and to express it truthfully. Beyond what is deemed acceptable. To speak about body. My body. My experience in it. The good. The bad. The ugly. All without flinching at its reflection on paper. *To bring language and the body back into a relationship with one another. (Yuknavitch, 2015)*

Like Craig Santos Perez*, I think about how we have been given access to the English language and poetic tradition, yet do not have full access to my own native language and literature. How access is power.* That deep in our colonised minds and literature that we don't really relate to, we struggle to relate to the little of or native literature that we have access to. Growing up in Gauteng, where father had found a master, away from the kraal that lulled me to sleep, I was taught some of my people's values. They were never enforced as we lived in a predominantly seSotho area, which also had other South African tribes in it.

We only spoke isiXhosa at home. Even then, not in its purest form. At some point, I spoke seSotho and isiZulu far better than I could speak the mother tongue. I could speak seSotho because it was the dominant language in the area, isiZulu, because I studied it as a home language in school. As I grew up and began to be aware of who I was, as I began to love the Xhosa person that I am, I sought to at least speak the language as well as I could possibly manage given the circumstance. So I would grab a Xhosa novel from time to time, and help mother with her isiXhosa paper III marking. From that, I gradually saw an improvement in my vocabulary.

Blackness. The usage of Blackness is nothing new. Dhlomo and Bessie Head in the 1960s had already been articulating it beautifully. Black womanhood, however, is still to be documented. It is an African culture to silence women. But what manner of women are we raising? What manner of women are we, who in this westernised society, find ourselves floating about without identity because we are not represented anywhere, therefore unable to be ourselves because we do not know how it looks and sounds like to be black and woman. My writing, my

wandering seeks to find, to language, to embody, not just blackness but black womanhood. Xhosa womanhood.

But where does one even begin, in the Xhosa context, to articulate being woman? To be woman and Xhosa. To exist in this westernized and liberal world. To simultaneously remain grounded in the norms and moral code of this tribe is living a double life. One can fully embody their woman-ness and express it fluently in English, but their Xhosa womanhood remains suppressed and unwitnessed because there isn't, even in isiXhosa, a language to articulate the woman experience in this westernized isiXhosa world. Rendering the woman experience unimaginable and elusive. To write it is to find it, to be it, to bear witness to it. To validate that I am here, and I am alive. To give it, in its displacement, a home in these *all-knowing folios* – if nowhere else.

With all this chaos, fragmentation, brokenness, incoherence, strange, twisted, torn apart, demented, confusion of being woman and Xhosa in a not only westernized society, but being surrounded by other Black tribes and their cultures and traditions, even though being woman, and grappling with identity is a universal phenomenon, being woman and Xhosa has its own profound challenges. To navigate this then becomes an enigma all on its own. Resulting in chaotic forms even in the written expressions of it.

Do we not see that we are inarticulate? That is what defeats us. It is our inability to communicate to another how we are locked within ourselves, unable to say the simplest thing of importance to one another…

- William Carlos Williams, Projective Verse and The Practice

Poetry (and music), in more cases than not, come to me. Sometimes in its entirety, sometimes a line or a theme. And as I begin to scribble and read (sing) it out loud, it then starts to take form. As William Carlos Williams writes in Projective Verse and The Practice, *A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it…by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to the reader.* I have found that poetry (music) that comes to me through energy, is received, and touches people more profoundly than those that I have "made up". Even the works of others that I connect with the most, comes from (was created through) such an energy field. *Then the poem itself must, at all points, be a high energy-construct and, at all points, be a high energy discharge.* To find clarity, comfort and healing through articulating these, and in turn giving clarity, comfort and healing to others. Helping others make sense of their own madness. Which, when you take a closer look at it, isn't madness at all. Just displacement. To place

feelings, emotions, thoughts that are otherwise hovering about. To situate them. To give them a home.

To make sense of them. My writing *wants to talk to me.*

Sometimes sadness comes
Like a sadist of sleep
Dressed in nothingness
From a place of nothing happened
Resembling my reflection
Wanting an identity of its own
Seeking a place to call home
On my wrists
Thin slender slashes

And after it has spoken, everything then starts to make sense. Starts to be bearable. As Amina Cain so beautifully puts it, 'A kind of atmosphere has made itself known to me. It will take time before I see it clearly, but this ''trying to see it'' is why I am writing in the first place.

…sometimes words come hard – they resist me
Till I pluck them from deep water like hooked fish

Lu Ji [3rd century}

It does not always come. And usually, when it does not come, there is a heaviness, a void, an emptiness, a burden that can only be lifted by the coming of the poem (song). This requires solitude. Time apart from the world. To allow oneself to be undone and to be taken apart. Only to be mended by the coming of it. The becoming. As Cesaire so eloquently puts it, *the duende loves the edge, the wound, and draws close to places where forms fuse in a yearning beyond visible expression*.

Inkenkqe fills the places of our quietude with creation. As it was in the beginning. When all there was, was the Word. All creativity is birthed from a place of genesis. From a place of Word. It takes a Knowing person to be sensitive to Word, and that person has to have been sent. To have been penetrated. Sensitized through the gifting. Through *inkenkqe.*

The duality of energy and flesh, and the experiences therein lead to a knowing of both the physical and spiritual. Their complexities and their conflicts. And with it *marvellous discoveries occur at the equally marvellous contact of inner and outer totality perceived imaginatively and conjointly by, or more precisely within the poet.*

The poet is that ancient yet new being, at once very complex and very simple, who at the limit of dream and reality, of day and night, between absence and presence, searches and receives in the sudden triggering in the inner cataclysms the password of connivance and power. – Aime Cesaire

> **Charles Bandelaire** [1821 – 1867]
>
> You must get drunk. That's it: your sole imperative. To avoid the backbreaking, body burdens of time you must get drunk and stay that way.
>
> But on what? On wine, on poetry, on virtue, your choice. But stay drunk.

As energy charged beings, it is vital that we remain on a constant energy charge. On a high. On creativity. To constantly and consistently create. To heal. Ourselves and others. That is our burden and sole imperative.

As a princess of the Thembu tribe, it is my duty to uphold its statutes. But I have taken it upon myself to challenge its biases.

In my quest to find *my* identity, I paid uncle Jonginyaniso a visit. As chief of our village, he is the patriarch, the scroll in which our history is documented. He recited my genealogy up to twenty-three generations back. It saddened me that most of this history is not documented.

"Our history and indigenous knowledge systems are passed down orally", he said with a smile, taking pride in OUR way of life. This sat heavily on my heart as I looked at his old frail body. Soon, all this knowledge will be buried deep in the grave with him. *Isizwe sethu simele ukuzuza lutho kule nkenkqe*, I thought.

My burden is not just to change the world. I have a duty to my people. In all the places that they have found refuge due to the system that has displaced us all, may they, when they seek, find themselves in literature. Their history, their identity, their humanity, their pride, their dignity. A place to call home.

Inkenkqe, which overtakes me at the most inconvenient of times, which has me sleeping with a notepad and pen under my pillow, is the master. My master. She has sought me and has found me. The whispered lullaby of the kraal sought me till it found me. And because of it, which has tied me to my people, I write.

PS…Learning to control the urge to burst out in song at a mall, or to leave a meeting to record a melody that just popped into my head, or to whip out a notepad to write, mid-conversation with a friend…still a work in progress.

References

Cain, Amina. “Slowness” in *The Force of what’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015

Evenson, Brian. “The crazy party guy, or, A disruption of smooth surfaces” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Garza, Christine Rivera. “The unusual: a manifesto”. Accessed online: https://pentransmissions.com/2018/05/17/cristina-rivera-garza/

Lorca, Federico García. “Theory and Function of the Duende”. Accessed online: https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Spanish/LorcaDuende.php

Machado, Antonio. “Excerpt from ‘Notes on poetry’” in *The Poet’s Work: 29 Poets on the Origins and Practice of their Art.* Reginald Gibbons, ed. University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Nyezwa, Mxolisi. Extract from *I Heard Rhythms* – Unpublished MACW dissertation, 2015.

Perez, Craig Santos. “excerpt from ‘Unincorporated poetic territories’” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Williams, William Carlos. “Projective Verse + The practice” in *The Poet’s Work: 29 Poets on the Origins and Practice of their Art.* Reginald Gibbons, ed. University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Yuknavitch, Lidia. “Why do you write it all weird?” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Evenson, Brian. “The crazy party guy, or, A disruption of smooth surfaces” in *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility & the Avant-Garde*. Lily Hoang and Joshua Marie Wilkinson, eds. Nightboat Books, 2015.

Hooks, Bell. “Narratives of Struggle” in *Critical Fictions: The Politics of Imaginative Writing.* Philomena Mariani, ed. Bay Press, 1991.

Hall, Tina May.”All American” + “This is a Love Story Too” in *The Physics of Imaginary Objects*. University of Pittsburg Press, 2010.

Mtelerkamp, Joan. “Day break” in *Into the Day Breaking*. Gecko Poetry, 2000.

Barber, Ros. “What Happens to Women” in *Women’s Work*. Eva Salzman and Amy Wack, eds. Seren, 2009.

Danticat, Edwidge. “Awomen like Us” in *Krik Krak*. Soho Press Inc, 1993.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Sexing the Cherry*. Grove Press, 1998

Klebnikov, Velimir. “On Poetry” in *The King of Time*: Selected Writings of the Russian Futurist. Charlotte Douglas, ed. Harvard University Press, 1985

Souza, Joao Cruz. “Black Rose” in *Black, Brown and Beige*: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora. Franklin Rosemont, ed. University of Texas Press, 20101.

Kunavitch, Lidia. *The hronology of Water*. A&U Canongate, 2017.

Russ, Joana. *How to Supress Women’s Writing*. University of Texas Press, 1983.

Gantsho, Vangile. *red cotton*. Impepho Press, 2018

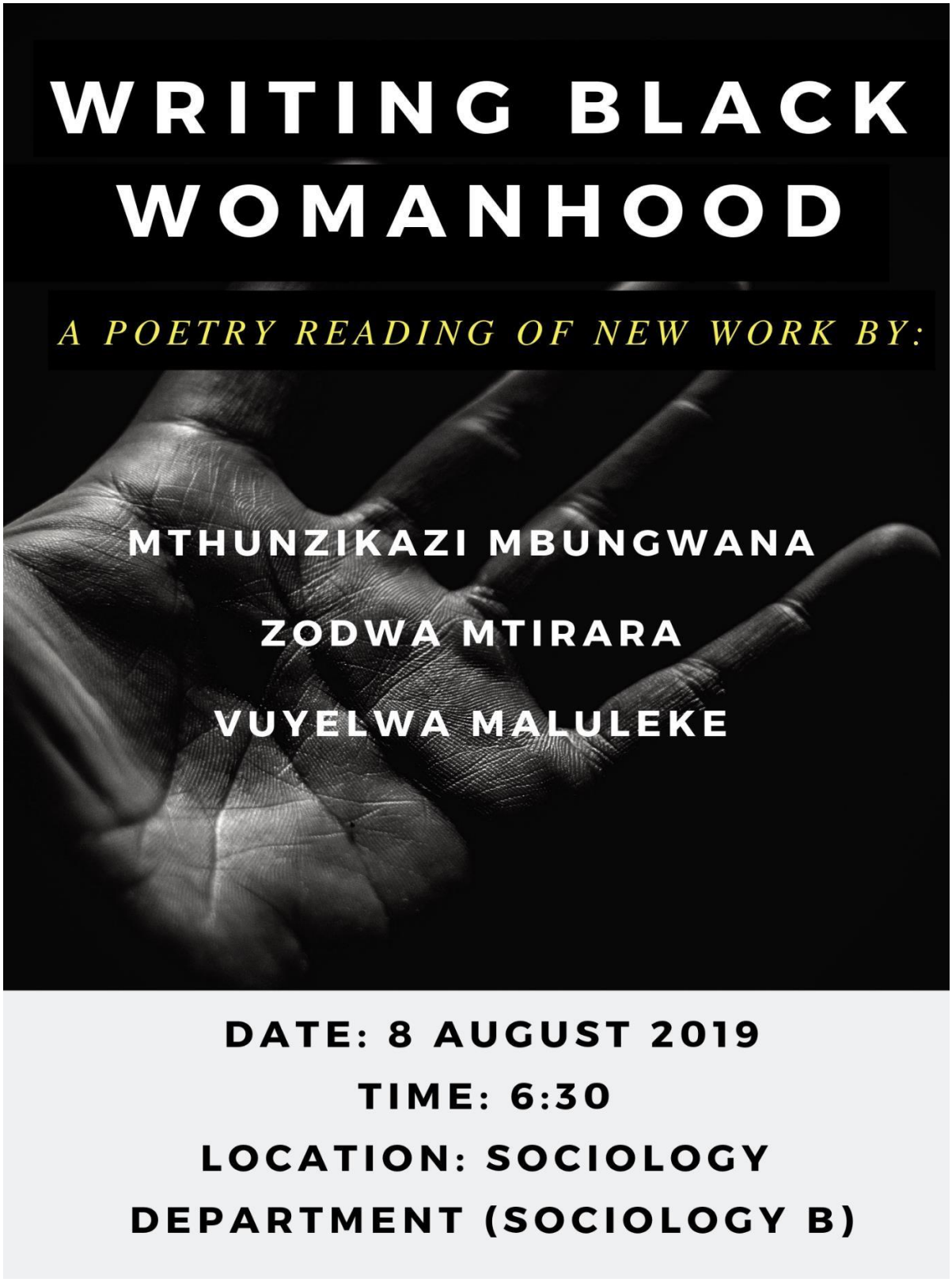
Xaba, Makhosazana. *The Alkalinity of Bottled Water*. Botsotso Publishing, 2019.
Gibson, P.J. “Midnight Licorice Nights” in *Erotique Noire: Black Erotica*. de Costa, Miiam et al. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010.

Molefhe, Wame. “I’m Sure” in *New Daughters of Africa.* Margaret Busby, ed. Jonathan Ball Publishing, 2019.

Ngxadi, Julie. “Iinyawo Zinodaka (Mud on Her Feet)” in *New Contrast:187 Vol 47*. South African Literary Journal, 2019.

Mtuze, P.T. “Ububi” in *Vingcan’ Amazibuko.* Masker Miller Longman, 1990.

Emezi, Akwaeke. *Freshwater.* Grove Press New York, 2018.



What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.

_ Muriel Rukeyser, “Käthe Kollwitz” from

WRITING BLACK WOMANHOOD

Putting this event together was a hustle, especially with the date as there were other events scheduled for the dates that all three of us were available on. We had decided to work together as we felt that our work spoke about the same themes. Everything pertaining to Black Womanhood, even though we each focus on a different aspect of it as per our experiences or the things we strongly feel need to be addressed.

This is what we each had to say about our writing on the invitation:

Mthunzikazi Mbungwana – As a Black Queer Xhosa woman writer, I am trying to document my life experiences into the gaps that exist in isiXhosa literature.
Zodwa Mtirara – I am a Xhosa woman raised within the confines of Cristian values. I am reimagining womanhood in all its sinful and blasphemous glory.
Vuyelwa Maluleke – I am interested in archiving, using English and Poetry, the fractures of the body – its disfigured memory text, and the fragmented lineage that repeats woundedness.

We each had a fifteen minutes slot to read through the selected work. Taking to the podium in the order of the poster. After we had all read, we then had a panel discussion coordinated by Mathabo Tlali. It was heart-warming that the audience received the content of our work with such enthusiasm and awe. The audience applauded the bravery with which we shared and shed light on topics that are usually kept hush and are taboo.

The questions that arose were about how I got the strength to open up like the way I have in my poetry, how it felt to go against the societal norm of hiding and sugar-coating truths, how we dealt with the emotions that come with putting our lives, and the lives of others on blast, etc. What we would do when we would receive backlash. How the strike the balance between sharing our truths and protecting the other people involved as our stories are intertwined with the lives of others…friends, families, ex-lovers, and community members.

We each answered in accordance with our individual views on these matters, taking turns. Except for when a question was directed to a specific individual.

The night ended with one-on-one interaction with the audience. All hammering the sentiment that more of such writing and public reading needs to be done to start important, overdue conversations as they are a necessity.

The night went as planned, except for time management. We had the desired number of audience, but I will definitely market reading of this nature better and well in advance to attract a..larger audience as such conversations are important.

READING IN COMMUNITY
Tantyi Primary School: Grade 6 class

I had initially planned to work with older children. Teenagers. The nature of my work and the things I am interested in required that I work with people who have formulated opinions of their own regarding gender violence, gender stereotypes and gender profiling. We would have then looked at creating new metaphors as clichés have been a struggle of mine during the course of the year, according to feedback. Alas, the hand I had been dealt was not only fruitful but fulfilling as well.

I was nervous working with youngsters but Kenneth Koch's *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* Came in handy as a guide to teaching great poetry to children. Giving me lessons and ways to conduct them, examples of leading questions to ask and inspire their responses to the poems.

The lesson began with introductions as an ice breaker followed by questions about the kind of stories, rhymes, and poems they liked. And since I am writing a bilingual thesis, both isiXhosa and English were used in conducting the workshop and I encouraged the children to respond to the prompts in a language they were most comfortable in.

After the ice breakers, we got into a couple of freewriting exercises which began with me explaining what it means and setting the timer. Those that were comfortable reading their work out loud did so, which encouraged others to do the same with the next prompt, which was also lengthier as more minutes were added to the timer. I also took part in the free writing and read my work out loud.

<u>The Lesson</u>

I first read *The Tyger* by William Blake, then explained the lesson and gave them prompts as some didn't quite get what was expected of them. I also read the responses from Koch's class. They enjoyed those better and were then able to write their own poems. A few were willing to read their poems while some preferred to not.
We did a couple more exercises which they responded well to as they started feeling free and enjoying themselves. I did not participate in the writing of the poems but they that I read some of my work. I found a couple of age-appropriate poems of my own in isiXhosa, which they enjoyed and gave feedback to.

I left them with a task to write a piece wherein they are not pressed for time. They are allowed to write in either prose or poetry. I left word that I would collect them indefinitely but asked their teacher to collect to check for herself if the workshop helped or not. And on the grounds that it had not, I would return and work some more with the children.

The lesson went well. I had a challenge with one learner who was not very keen on participating but he eventually came around. I have also been working with learners from Mahareng Secondary School to fulfil my contractual obligations to the National Arts Council and I have found that I work better with the older kids. The Relationship I have formed with the school is so good that I will continue to tutor their learners on their prescribed literature in English and isiXhosa in 2020.

Conclusion

Though not all the poems are from my personal experiences, I have personalised the experiences of the women around me (hence I seem self-indulgent) and write predominantly from the *I* perspective. This is because I am writing not only about womanhood but for women. My hope is that they would read the poems as expressions of their own as they are mine. Address it to whomever they feel it is addressed to in their own story. The aim is to be universal, and to place the reader at the forefront of these experiences is an attempt to get them closer to these experiences even though they may not relate or even agree. I feel that this will make them understand and empathise with the women whose experiences I have written about. That they empathise with me. But above all, that they emancipate themselves from society's moral clutches.

There are words that seem too big for some poems, like kryptonite, but anybody who has watched Superman will easily catch the sentiment of the poem. For the ones who may struggle with its meaning, they get a chance to learn something new. Learning the meaning of a new word is always exciting for me. Tendrils…as a flower attaches itself to a supporting structure, in the poem *Sheets of Solitude* I attach myself to people by means of love…and the burning hive is the sweetness and sting of the passion that burns and causes destruction, thus the solitude in my sheets where I get to brood over my afflictions and find healing. There is no harm in looking up a word or two. If my writing, as simple as it is, does that, then I am happy.

Because I am inarticulate in speech, I have more questions than answers, and I sometimes write from a place of wondering and even wandering, it is evident in the poetry. I am opposed to the sentiment that seeks to erase me from my own writing. My personality and character should leave traces in my words whether as décor or even a stain. This addresses my issues with being cheesy as well.

The poem *Haiku for Bad Bitches* was titled Haiku for its length and not its form. To avoid the disappointment that can be caused by the expectation of a 5-7-5 traditional Haiku form, the title changed to *For Bad Bitches*. Though the graphic language used in a number of my poems may be disturbing, I count it all joy because I seek to disturb and challenge stagnant school of thought.

This document is a collection and a reflection of my findings through research, through experience and experimenting, and through introspection during the course of the year. In it, I challenge not only religion and culture but myself as well. It is an attempt to start conversations

that have only been held behind closed doors and only among close friends. Conversations that could never be had outside of a supposedly safe space.