



**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

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ATLANTA REVIEW

at the Georgia Institute of Technology

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Welcome

Winter has been tempestuous for many of our writers and subscribers this year. Even in Atlanta, we had a January snowstorm that shut down the city for a couple of days. We hope you were able to channel your cabin-fever into new poems! As Spring begins, ever so slowly, to creep in, I am delighted to offer you this issue—full of fire and light.

As many of you know, one of the most important things I do as editor of *Atlanta Review*, is find our amazing guest editors for the annual international focus issue. Not long after taking on the work of editor, I was driving and listening to BBC World Service on the car radio. The show was focused on women writers, and one of the guests immediately grabbed my attention. By the time I arrived home, all I knew was that she was from South Africa. Thanks to the Internet, I was able to find her name, Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, and a way to email her.

I am fairly certain that Phillippa thought I was a crazy woman when she received my first email inviting her to guest edit for *Atlanta Review*. Fortunately (with some investigations of her own about me, I'm sure!), she agreed to take on the project. And, what a project it has been! Phillippa and I have negotiated our work together entirely by email. The final product is a stunning collection of work by women poets in South Africa. Someday I hope to meet the incredible women who are featured in this issue—especially Phillippa!

Along with Managing Editor, JC Reilly, I am keenly aware of the privilege we have—being two women leading an international journal is no small responsibility. Both JC and I are committed to giving voice to as many poets as we can, so being able to bring you this collection of poems from South African Women has been particularly poignant for us. There are so many examples of the ties that bind women across the globe, but these poems also highlight differences about how our various cultures can make our experiences—our lives and even our survival—different. These poems help us navigate and embrace these ties and differences. Yes, poetry does matter!

As I mentioned in our last issue, next year we begin the celebration of an important milestone: 25 years of publishing some of the world's best poetry! We are already making plans for a celebration, which we hope will include a conference of writers here at Georgia Tech and a special 25th anniversary issue. To help us realize those goals, we launched a 25 for 25 fundraising effort. We are looking for 25 people (or groups of people) who will support our anniversary with a \$1000 gift. We are fortunate to have already received five of these gifts. Even if you can't support us at that level, please consider us for your annual charitable giving. Small gifts matter—just like poetry matters!

We are indebted to every writer, every subscriber, and every donor for all of your support. Thank you for supporting our writers and our journal, and, as I always say, "If you love what we do, please tell a friend!"

Karen Head



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Artifacts

In the end, so little is left
behind: a tin filled with every button
that ever came into the house,
a hydrangea bush blooming blue
in someone else's back yard.

I sew a button onto one seam
of each garment in my own closet, a hidden
token to remind me of you.

Some might keep ashes,
but I dig from your compost patch,
the place where you buried
the scraps left from every meal you ever ate.

Under the light of the full moon
I blend your Carolina dirt
with the sandy soil that roots
my mango tree.

I keep the rest in a jar
that once held Duke's mayonnaise.
I place it on the mantel
of the fireplace I rarely use,
to keep watch with a half burned
candle and a shell
from a distant vacation

Kristin Berkey-Abbott

Son Salutation

Jesus goes to yoga class.
Gabriel tells him that he needs a practice
to reduce his stress, and Michael sings
the praises of flexibility.

Jesus watches a class first,
humans stretching themselves into unnatural
shapes. He senses their pain
and wonders if there's a more efficient
way to dispatch that discomfort.

He could heal them with a single
word if they had faith.
He unrolls his yoga mat
to join them as they arch
into dog shapes and fish curves.

He's been crucified on a cross.
He thought he understood the limits
of human pain. But on this hard, wood
floor, he senses yet another threshold.

After several weeks, he admits
to feeling better. That persistent flare
of pain in his lower spine
has faded. The kink of muscles
in his right bicep has ungnarled.

His classmates, too, notice
improvement. They sleep
through the night to rise
with renewed energy. They feel
new hope. The ones
who have touched
the sweat of Jesus report
the easing of every chronic condition.

Kristin Berkey-Abbott

What We Do

There I was Lord, on my haunches in my garden,
claw-tined trowel in hand, impaling
fat, green slugs like they were Amalekites.
Who doesn't have blood on their hands?

Me in the dirt raking around the moon faces
of the nasturtium leaves, the curly antenna
of the ruby beets, the tiny banners
of the newly unfurled rainbow chard,

lost in my fiefdom when a doe
nosed her wobbly fawn across the yard.
She paused and we nodded to each other
before they disappeared into the ferns.

Minutes later, the air cracked through the woods,
a neighbor's firework, and I startled,
jumped to my feet. There she was, alone, no fawn,
behind the hydrangea, staring at me, rapt.

I held her gaze as long as I could.
Lord forgive me. She was a mother,
intent to send out her scent, her child missing.
She did not blink. *Gone* said her expression.

Like mothers everywhere, she wanted a witness.
I waited but I tired. Like turning off the news.
Changing the channel. I went inside,
closed the door. I washed my hands.

Michele Bombardier

Taps

I find my fingers drumming the table,
kind of blue, kind of Ella, thinking of you,
of how finches and warblers
celebrate a gnat hatch, dandelion seeds,
how a light shower adds to April.

My fingers count as well, how
many taps to number those I've lost—
mother, father, Tommy, Ship, John...
on and on. Yet, near the back porch
Carolina wrens build a new nest.

Two mock oranges fill mornings
with white bowl-shaped blossoms.
I used to give sorrow away instead
of owning it, as if loss is not a gift,
a depth of feeling, dreaming, that

begs the importance of one's hands,
eyes, feet—how kneeling in dirt
to renew a garden, a maker's form
of prayer. Many stars that brighten
our sky might be dead, but their

energy still lights our darkness.
I remember my mother saying,
a world away and time, I'm
beginning to fathom what she felt.
This living in the moment important

if only you hold a life inside.
Don't live in a place where
longings are swapped for things.
Let loss mellow like a maple table
patinaed with use.

Bill Brown

My Mother

On the little street of my birth,
my mother traced children's
handprints pressed in dirt,
named them Barbara, Linda Jo
or Donny.

She spied a feather,
named it mocking bird,
waxwing or finch,
folded it in a tissue
and placed it in her pocket
to disappear.

The sky often found
her staring at trees
as if their murmur in wind
was other than leaves,
and the way she lingered
to listen, followed
a sorrow of air.

She smoothed tables,
collars, sleeves, with hands,
caressing, blessing the clothes
we wore, surfaces we shared
at breakfast.

As long as she lived there
were candle sticks, morning
windows, and late night
creaks on the stairs.

Feathers began to appear
in hats, in windows
open to breeze, in gardens
beside her favorite roses.

Doctors cracked her chest,
spread her ribs, cleared
her heart.
She lived two years,
and when she died,
a sorrow of air,
murmur of trees,
of birds.

Bill Brown

Living on the Light

for Ed Rempel

The wax-wings have begun to go south
and each morning more jars line his porch stairs,
gold beacons cooling in the dark,
peaches held in glass,
pears floating pale sugar baths.
There is a comfort in this alchemy,
saving what the light tempts from the branches.
Red, blue and the deep navy of blackberries
line his shelves, shades of green,
beans and asparagus all in an order
set by each ripening.
She left him years ago,
left to live in town, gone to where,
there are more voices to fill the silence.
He stayed, doing what he has always done,
scalding the jars and lids,
saving what he's grown, the gifts of light
a cure for the months of snow.
What we learn to make from the world
brings a kind of solace.
The only lamp shining in the dark woods,
miles up the Nickelmine road,
he performs the old sacraments.
Nights in the kitchen, he talks to the dogs by the fire,
tart-sweet scent of plums
riding the wood-fire smells.
He works, ladling the compotes into jars,
steaming out the moist air
so the weight of the world
will press the lids tight for years.

In the cold wet of early morning,
after the cucumbers are stacked
in jars of dill-tinged brine,
he walks to the barn favoring his right knee,
labors up the loft stairs
and pushes a bale down for the sheep,
doing what must be done.

Mark Burke

Birding in Belize

On Christmas Eve, our guide stops for directions
in a Mayan village. A boy gets in, face dripping,
hair wet. He sits nervous and poor
on the bench seat. He points the way.

On the mountain road we meet a man
with china blue eyes wearing simple clothes.
He drives a low wooden cart pulled by a horse. In back, a pig for
slaughter twitches in a tight wooden cage.

Our truck gets mired in the upper valley,
sinks to the axles. The air feels warm in the sun.
Mud everywhere. We haven't seen anyone in hours.
Plants and trees and quiet hold us,

and the world becomes very old.

But a man with quick brown eyes appears
on a bicycle, carrying a machete. He cuts bamboo,
braces our wheels, pushes. Tires spray him with mud,
and we spin free, give him a generous tip.

We wade a river to a Mennonite clearing.
The men building a school stop to talk,
they lean on their shovels, hatted, bearded,
in gray or green or blue cotton overalls.

Yes, they saw the scarlet macaws this morning.
They point the way there. Christmas red, the birds fly
without bobbing, as if on rails, squawk,
their long tails trail behind like flat cars,

a world born in each of their yellow eyes.

Edward Derby

Half-Moon by Daylight

I almost didn't recognize the moon
disguised like she was, as a pale white cloud
floating huddled with a dozen others
slowly gliding slantwise along the sky.

Her diameter was ragged, blurry,
whether by some trick of the sun's warm light
or willful camouflage, I couldn't tell.
It was her outer rim that gave away
the game. No cloud could be that round, or still.

I was alone, but if I hadn't been,
I'm sure I would have kept her confidence.
I understand the pull of vanity,
the wish to be perceived as something else,
the opposite of what we really are;
in this case, airy and ephemeral
instead of solid rock, unchanging, dense.

John S. Eustis

Truck-Stop, Jukebox, Jailhouse Rock

*To Vegas came the ladies with pink rinses
agog to watch their dreamboat sail again
—Clive James*

Wyoming. August 16th, 1977. Heading west
on Interstate 80 as quick as I can
or maybe nowhere in every direction at the same time.
Behind me the amnesia of all those
sad little towns I've just passed through,
way off in the distance the Wind River Range
and not much else around
except a whole lot of breathing room.
Big sky country until dusk shuts it down,
heaven and earth blend together
in the darkness out there
and I tag along behind a pair of red taillights,
my headlight's glare
and the glowing altar of my dashboard.

Bugs in the air. Bored almost to sleep by the tedium
of watching their splattered silhouettes
measle my windshield, I switch on the radio
and have its static crackling in my ears
when a disc jockey announces that Elvis is dead,
discovered unresponsive on his bathroom floor.
Let's go down, death said—and he did,
stripped like a convict of his glitter,
and just like that he's instant history
mythic as an Arabian night. After a moment
of silence the DJ plays *Heartbreak Hotel*
and what a strange feeling I have
when his voice comes back without him,
for goodness sake, from the netherworld
just beneath this one or wherever he's gone.

Big nerves and too many pills, I figure,
a boom gone bust—bankrupt. They'll open him up
because this had to be an inside job.
Then Colonel Tom Parker's will call in
his merchandising men and bereavement specialists
will set up their stalls at his funeral.
My thoughts blink at the glare,
remember instead a night in Vegas six months ago
when I watched the genuine article
stumble around on stage
like a bloated Liberace imitator,
spending and spending himself for his fans
as if there never would be a reckoning.

"Miss it!" I tell myself as a coyote
dashes across the road—but I catch it flush,
feel it clutch my bumper and, clinging,
hitch a ride with me for a second or two
before we part company.
After which I need companionship fast
because what a fever it is making do
with a few scraggly shrubs
by the side of the road
and a scattering of bullet-blasted
Burma Shave signs.
*If honey shuns your fond embrace
don't shoot the milkman feel your face.*

Bless you, Wyoming—bright lights ahead:
an all-night truck-stop filled with big rigs
idling in its parking lot tidy in parallel rows.
Beneath a haze of tired cigarette smoke
I order coffee, a burger, bucket of fries,
slab of blueberry pie a la mode.
Then strike up a conversation
with the fellow sitting next to me.
"Did you hear the news?" I ask. He makes
a Sabbath of his face and nods his head.

In the corner a jukebox holds its silence
until my dime bails Elvis out of his cell.
Then it gets very excited
as it dips its tiny steel prick
into the lyrics of Jailhouse Rock
and begins spinning the king's voice
round and round on its haunted merry-go-round
like a Wurlitzer god making love to a ghost
while we sit at the counter, smoke Luckies
and laugh at each other's jokes
to help us forget why we mourn.

John Field

The Hill

It rises above our house like a sentinel,
growing sapling trees and it occurs to me
we could cut and stack some, let them dry
in the barn we don't yet have
for the animals we don't own yet,
but I imagine the hill is willing to host
fantasy or reality, chickens for sure,
because of the eggs, goats
because she loves them, maybe a lamb
for the same reason.
We'll burn the wood in fires I'll build
in our fireplace,
as we toast with hot chocolate—
the hill protecting us
from winter's coldest winds.
She'll wear a helmet and leg protectors,
cut the thinner maples and birch,
as together we clear a gradual,
rocky path, up the greatest slope.
We'll get married this summer on the lawn—
not hers, but ours, our farm
with chickens, goats, a barn—
the steep path rising above the house,
allowing a heavenly view hidden from us,
as we go about the business of living,
but revealed each time we climb
to the summit, for the perspective
of someone watching over us.

Laura Foley

For My Teenage Daughter

You were not meant to be happy
or unhappy—no more than the bear
or the crow, or the frog.

If you can find
safe shelter, and gather or hunt enough
to keep the shine in your eyes,
you are lucky.

You are made of hungers
that can turn you to canine and claw,
and of the iridescent light in a dragonfly's wings.

You are not the only one.

This earth has always been full of lives
pushing through shadow, drought, stone.

No one is born to be happy—
only to be,
though happiness may come, singing
in its native tongue.

You may meet it unexpectedly
in a parking lot, or a back street. Look at it
sniffing the air, licking its wild, delicate feet.

Jennifer L. Freed

Defining Iron

*The infinite which is in man
is at the mercy of a little piece of iron.*
—Simone Weil

1) metallic element used to bind: shackles, chains from hand to waist. Broadly, knots that link body and limb 2) igneous rock possessing properties that attract, bring

close; yoke. No. Closer 3) and 4) metal honed into a weapon: a harpoon for hunting, something barbed or speared; a thing to pierce like the arrow of Eros or the bowed cords

of desperation stalling in the throat, a swallowed why or 5) a fire heated tool used to mark flesh, its flame consuming skin, diffusing light that leaves a name

Sophia Galifianakis

A Father's Day Card for the Elephant of the Bastille

"It was an elephant, forty feet high, constructed of timber and masonry, bearing on its back a tower which resembled a house, formerly painted green by some dauber, and now painted black by heaven, the wind, and time."

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

The Elephant of the Bastille
carried you on his back.
He threw the baseball with you even
when his shoulder was bothering
him. He gave you extra attention.
Your first pocket knife.
The loose change from the cracks of his belly.

For many years you walked away from
his mouldering tusks. You called on Sundays.
You didn't want to acknowledge the holes
in his plaster. The rats picking away
his weakening insides. The street urchin
taking up residence inside one of his legs.

Your mother tried keeping him together
for as long as she could. Picking up
the crumbling pieces & pasting them back together.
No passer-by offered to help.
No longer was he the roaring symbol
of strength lifting you up with his trunk
toward the sky.

He moved
through the end of his life
slow as a stone passing along the bottom
of the Seine. A still life with chair.

A shrine whose bronze cast simply
never arrived.

 Too soon,
he belonged to the night.

But this is just a note to say
you're thinking of him today,
from your seat inside the bistro
 next to the mouth
of the canal.

Your view slightly obscured
by the June rain tossing itself against the window—
a boundless sky,

 such heavy rain.

Adam J. Gellings

Pho,
Questions for My Father

—“If we hadn’t moved to America, what then?”

In Saigon, a *bà nội* cooks the best pho.
Every morning, *người Mỹ* come on scooters.
Their hair trailing behind them
on the wind like satin slips into the sunset,
gliding down the body.
Their hair glazed with coconut oil
like the candied coconut wafers
my *mẹ* brought home from *Miền Tây*.

In my dreams,
I am the tiger,
a tiger swimming underwater;
its breath rising into hot petals
melting, breaking like branches overhead
the water stemming from water lilies
and orchids hanging like chimes in the eaves.

“What do you remember about Vietnam?”

I remember where the sun rushes
through a narrow slit in the wall, and spills
into a deep green room. The cat sits by
the window. Your *mẹ* ladled bean sprouts, cilantro,
soft fresh slices of jalapeno, and we taste them
beneath the Jak Fruit trees, crack open river shrimp,
redder than pepper flakes, taste coconut meat, soft
as white tiger paws, over the burning bamboo.
Our sweat dried in the sand, while we sat beside
homes of mud raked leaves.

My *mẹ* remembers my father,
standing in the doorway in his souvenir jacket.
The golden embroidery on the back honors years
of service with wild roses and tigers
beneath violent waterfalls, and nights
commemorated in song.

My world is small. Within it, nobody really knows
what the soul is, though my mother has asked. Asked: “Why
does she have love bites on her collarbone,” orchids, purple
on white flowering into a necklace? My father stiffened
like a black cat in trouble in the jungle, or an unripe fig
plucked too early from the tree. My mother’s lips went pale gold,
and I no longer spent cool evenings with my father lying
on the beach, though the moon shone bright silver
with a slightly greenish tint.

Lying with his hands dipping into the cool
brown water of the Mekong, my father kept a gun
slung at his side, I wish I could say I resemble
as much of a tiger as he did. Ready to strike
or run at a moment’s notice.

“Who would you want to come back to?”

Someone I am not afraid to remember me,
comforted when they do.

Megan Gieske

Guardian of the Night

An asteroid plowed
into Earth, belly-fire
and debris mingled,
coalesced into a sphere,
finding its orbit nearby.

The moon shines silver
or breathes sunlit gold,
peeks through the darkness
into windows. Its glow
fills the hollows in my heart,
lights wings of imagination.

Guardian of my night,
continue your journey
an inch plus a year
oward the sun.

Pamela Hammond

Above and Below

Downtown towers rise like cairns
from the city rubble, and I marvel
at the October geese
flitting across the steel horizon,
one movement, one dotted line of music
playing forever westward.
Evenings like this, the full moon
sails into its cornflower sky
and I no longer question
the existence of any god or believe
in the fallaciousness of time.

Just now
the lights are coming on
and the bridges of Bridgetown
are lighting up the dirty river waters.
Above them, the cars flashing red,
queueing staccato end to end,
office workers making their way home,
and below, beneath the tires
passing over metal grates, sidewalks
clogged with blue tarps and tents,
the homeless, huddled in folding chairs
around the blue flames
of propane lamps.

But tonight, I don't want to think
about those people — the coming of winter,
the bitter morning frost that leaves
all of us wanting.
I'd rather sing about the moon.
I suck into my lungs the clean autumn air.
Close my eyes. Open my mouth.

AE Hines

Garter Snake

She must have slipped through the open door
 on that cool September morning.
Her skin supple, sheeny
 shades of old-world aubergine.
She was kneeling on a platter of silver sun—
 a supplicant on my dining room rug.
Head raised, eyes keen, mouth open
 as if to ask a sensible question.
I was alone, on my own.

Leaning in I grasped her gently—
 a flower singled out for picking.
Her body all lightness and agility
 wrapped itself around my arm.
With her blind foot she tested my skin—
 a gardener tamping seeds in a pot of soil.
Outside I released her by the fence
 closed the door and scrubbed my hands.

Judith Hoyer

The Long Song

The Long Song of the Khalkhas mirrors the steppe's untiring winds,
fingers darting over holes in the limbe's wood,
breath flowing in unbroken melody.

Round like the woolen ger of home, circular breathing is felt—
in through the nose and out from the cheeks,
whirling in synchronous migration.
With practice, a continuous note
twins the hour as a birth renews the nomadic herd.

From the winter's darkness, a child draws
out the music, blows gently on a candle,
never so strong as to extinguish the flame
yet slowly, steadily keeping it dancing.

The wind's constancy numbers even the days of the mountains.
Only Khüiten Peak, the cold one, remains three miles high,
with eighteen others eroded to two.
At last count, fourteen limbe players remain.

Backs to the wall of blankets draping the khana lattice,
the musicians sit cross-legged around the fire,
the strings of the morin khuur bowed in rhythmic support.
The limbe's unbroken notes circle and twirl
like a finger of smoke dancing
through the hole in the crown and into the frozen night.

It must be magic to rise forever,
never needing to stop and breathe at line's end,
to create, even once in a life, a luminous song
traversing the night like a satellite.

Rob Jackson

Aphantasia

The clue came in a game of Pictionary.
She drew a card and sketched a perfect horse,
lined like Picasso. I asked her, “How did you do that?”
She looked at me askance.
“I picture a horse in my mind
and I draw it.”

You are with me
at the racetrack, air rich with whinnying.
Just beyond eye’s edge, the sun sparks
moist chestnut on a horse’s flank.
I know this to be true, but wherever I turn,
the horse fades.

Stare at a dim star and it vanishes.
Look away, and you glimpse it,
like the ghosts of loved ones.
The rods of your eye circle your retina’s rim,
sensing light and dark in peripheral vision.
Pegasus circles, too, just below the horizon,
his wingtips slicing the surface as distant sails.

Closing my eyes is darkness.
I cannot see my father without a photo,
and photos are all that remain.

Once, I had my briefcase stolen in the train station
after sightseeing England and Wales.
Pictures disappeared with my computer
and thumb-drive, pinched, as back-up.
Memory is stripped of the bluebells of Swansea,
tips curled demurely to the ground,
and the greens of a Gloucester field,
raindrops dribbling down grass blades.

Blindness is terrifying.
Could I learn to see in my mind
what I cannot see in mind's eye now?
Deafness is less unnerving.
I can hear thousands of songs
by opening imaginary drawers
to find a snippet, just a few notes,
or the starting line of a track.

A few times a year, I dream
in shocking clarity. Once was a bridle,
its leather twined like a river,
coursing over my father's work glove.

The boutonnière at my wedding
was a single white rose,
a knight mounted on baby's breath.
I know this only from the photo.

Rob Jackson

First Date

You had that instinct we'd complete
one another. You phoned me
within depths
of A Tale of Two Cities:
How about Friday night? I said no
to Friday because you were a stranger
and I
always faced away from the new.
Then you came back: How about Saturday?
Saturday! was entirely different!
to ease into movement,
a space.

My guitar calmed the waiting.
Unused to dates, to anyone
getting too close,
I was determined
to learn
all I'd failed to learn
through reading,

Saturday arrived, I thrummed my
tight strings overheard
you greet my father at the backdoor.
We hurried down the three flights together.

Then you stopped just beyond the grape arbor
in the declining sun.
You had found the small cats
looking out from the long hedge
along the driveway edge. Miraculous:

how you managed to be aware of everything,
how calmly you knelt, reached in, calling
to woo the fugitives gently to your hands.

Marilyn E. Johnston

Whore

What kind of mother calls her daughter “whore”
when she finds out her daughter’s fiancé
is moving in a couple months before

the wedding? Small-town priggish to her core,
smug priest who slams shut the confessional grate:
that kind of mother calls her daughter “whore.”

Yet, when that husband battered down a door,
came crashing through a bookshelf barricade,
the daughter phoned her mother just before,

instead of the police, or friends. What for?
The mother snapped, “Oh, don’t exaggerate.”
The phone line crackled with the unsaid “whore.”

The daughter crumbled after the divorce.
She slept around as if each drunken lay
could blot out all the ugliness before:

so many men that she could not keep score.
They cradled her, if only till they came.
Once you have heard your mother call you “whore,”
you might as well be, if you weren’t before.

Julie Kane

Remembering my last conversation with my mother

So, we meet the last day of this journal, but the journeys continue on. What a fulfilling summer. These past few months have been a rebirth for me... I have learned more about how to run alone together.

—From the last entry of my mother's college diary,
August 8th, 1979.

When I fell down the stairs of the Metro on our first date that May, the steps' concrete became my marrow, filled the bones of my shins.

Now, they ache anytime I shave, or whenever I think of my mother, and how she flew back from Guatemala with her femur fractured in three places.

That was what killed her, you know, not the cancer. The last time we spoke I was on another continent in a fishbowl of a room: black edges and floor-to-ceiling panes.

I said "I love you" as many times as my lungs would let me, which is why I can't stop saying it to you now.

"I love you" in the morning, "I love you" when you're brushing your teeth, "I love you" when you're reading, "I love you" from the other side

of the shower curtain. Because one day there will be no curtain, only remnants of spent breath, and the endsheet of my diary, empty.

Kelsey Ann Kerr

Clarity

There's a lake I can never find
although I loved it when I was young
and dream of it often. I search in the darkness
surrounding the lake, in the spring-fed forest
of maples, whose great swaying shadows
cool my skin; among clouds of willows
brushing over me, fretful, feathery.

The path I follow in my dream
leads out of these shadows, always downhill,
into a region of shoals and hollows, where the air
weighs like a carpet upon my shoulders,
through thickets of leaves and needles,
scrub jungles. I hold up my hands
to shelter my face from the slap of green branches.

Then the undergrowth disappears
and a cool breeze stirs. My bare feet discover
coarse sand, a few pebbles. I hear the waves,
small and ceaseless, as they radiate
in circles around the shoreline. I kneel,
dip my hand in the lake and hold
the ice-cold water in my mind.

David Salner

Carnival

Shut down, abandoned and half-dismantled
high on the beach between coastal towns,
the great wheel creaks and moans, spokes
poking through the fog, it stands, sand-swept
and tide-rusted, gutted by gray, and below,
in the thin grasses, lay the gears and wires
and bulbs, the half-buried bones of some god's
bicycle, pedaled ashore and long outgrown.

Christopher Warner

What If Lot's Two Married Daughters Had Escaped: Forty Years Later

At times when we see black trees at evening,
almost silent in the heat, the low sun
no longer a stain of rage and grief,
we remember the early apples,

bees by the bee boxes,
times we prayed for pinpricks of rain
on our faces. Our mother's unwept salt,
we are still her daughters.

Richard Widerkehr





International Feature Section

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN



Edited by
Phillippa Yaa de Villiers

Introduction

Change

is inexorable, massive, unyielding; grinding on like a juggernaut. Terror is built into change as much as jubilation as much as awe at the newness of a stranger, at the shock of a political process that delivers unpopular results. South Africa is on the cusp between an ancient order and a pragmatic, technology-driven platform. Poems grow organically, on billboards in tweets, in conversation with the hit parade, earth-moving equipment, the harsh song of the modem. Connecting.

Poetry is humanity's oldest, primarily oral, language. In his introduction to the seminal *Tales of Southern Africa*, Pallo Jordan paraphrases his father, the pioneering author and scholar of African literature and culture. AC Jordan noted that traditionally the best storytellers and poets were women; females recorded events, the community looked to us to make meaning of life. The women whose poems populate the pages of this provisional anthology are contemporary practitioners of the ancient craft, inflected with the idioms of the various languages from which they originate.

Poems celebrate, enunciate and protest, in this way marking and making change. Diana Ferrus' protest poem "I've come to take you home" is the only South African poem to be written into French law. The poem is a response to the life of Sara Baartman, an iconic indigenous figure who was captured by European opportunists, displayed for profit and later for the benefit of science. Posthumously her body parts were displayed in the *Musee de l'Homme* in Paris, alongside the remains of thousands of other people from around the world. Baartman, "The Hottentot Venus" is an icon of a particular stage of human history and a potent symbol of the ravages of European civilisation. Her genitals were displayed until such exhibitions were no longer considered acceptable, but languished in the vaults of the esteemed museum until Ferrus's poem found its way into the hands of a French politician, who petitioned the French government to release the body. Baartman's remains were brought back to South Africa in 2002, and interred near the Gamtoos Valley. A small cast from the United States performed Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus* at the event, adding the diaspora's voice to the honour of Baartman's sacrifice.

Speaking for herself, and her ancestor, the poet speaks for her community and for the world.

The poet stands at the centre of the democratic project, discovering the language to contain and describe the material of lives, always progressing to emancipation. The current protests against the global neoliberal economic system, which due to our colonial history has a particularly racial character, find their way into poems like Mandi Vundla's "Burn," which references Ferrus's elegy. Makhosazana Xaba notes the inexorable tightenings in our young democracy in "Before all of this started" and "In your silence," Sarah Godsell's "fire-flood" describes the student protests which echo and amplify the society's malaise. Karin Schimke explores the silencing in "Taped Beak": an injury to one is an injury to all.

We are living in a state of war and the frontline of this war is women's bodies. It is from our bodies that women articulate their protest and lament. As Siphokazi Jonas moans in "Bone Rhapsody," "Do your bones know how/you wear your skin like a flag?"

The textural traditions of poetry and its social significance resurface in response to contemporary African life. Beyond the rigour of rhythm and rhyme, the astringent economy of verse, poets reflected on all aspects of life, especially power. The poet was the one who was allowed to criticize the chief, and did so openly. Poets articulate anxieties: anyone wondering what having a sexual predator as a president does to the minds of women will find an answer in Vangile Gantsho's lines "On these streets/I am a vagina,/ for walking in and out of." South Africa's recently impeached president Jacob Zuma has a troubling past: in 2005 he faced charges of rape, a crime which is frighteningly prevalent in South Africa. The woman who laid the charges, Fezeka Kuzwayo had to assume a different identity to avoid the violence from both men and women - she was given the name of Khwezi in order to protect her. When she died in 2016, Lebogang Mashile responded with "The woman who gave her name," which pays tribute to Kwezilomso Madazayo who gave her name to Fezeka, whose courageous speaking of truth to power named her violation and revealed the extreme danger with which women live in South Africa.

Mashile distinguishes herself further by having been one quarter of the Feela Sistah Spoken Word collective, established by Myesha Jenkins, Mashile, Napo Masheane and Ntsiki Mazwai. As a public figure she

deploys her visibility to contribute feminist content to the mainstream. As a traditional poet, she and others like her, hold genealogies of names as well as styles; poets like Thandokuhle Mngqibisa, Sarah Godsell, Vangile Gantsho and Busisiwe Mahlangu are, in a sense, the heirs of Feela Sistah and a new generation ensuring that women's voices will always be heard.

Women's bodies are mutable, our minds complex. Frequently silenced, we grow in the dark, whispering. We watch from the margins the nakedness of emperors, we are present at birth, the emerging of new worlds, we wash the bodies of deceased dreams. Honouring.

Change calibrated at the level of the individual is a feature of Arja Salafranca's "This is another poem about your face," itemising the loss of a lover, Thandokuhle Mngqibisa's "Blue" catalogues the torture of a claustrophobic obsession. Jolyn Phillips meditates on the effects of the enslaving "Dop System" (a colonial practice of paying farmworkers in wine) and Ronelda Kamfer's portrait of her aunt, a housemaid in "Katie had children." Shameelah Khan's "The process of Wuthu: the purification of the body before prayer" proceeds as an act of devotion, a ritual object.

Other poems chart how we live with the alterations imposed on us. Za Mabaso's poems birthed through her experience of adoption, embody the personal as political, as do African-American poet Myesha Jenkins' adoption of South Africa as her new home. Karen Lazar's poems about the experience of recovering from a stroke, discovering a body which is no longer as able as before, open this anthology of South African women to the vital theme of resilience. Survivors.

In this of course material society feeding your family, or supporting the lives that you create, is not the work of women alone and Jackie Mondri and Jolyn Philips paint the pain of fathers in the privations of the free market, global economy.

Democracy is also a process of discovering languages, ways to talk about who we are, our aspirations and values. The current iteration is preoccupied with visibility, as physical threats against anyone considered 'other' – LGBT+ community, refugees, and of course, the majority of victims are women. In "Yellow Dress," Mthunzikazi Mbungwana lyrically explores sexuality while mourning the loss of her brother. In "Needles,"

Busisiwe Mahlangu eloquently contains patriarchy in an image of a man “with shovel hands.” Yet the mysterious terrain of the female body is celebrated in Karin Schimke’s “First flush” and Selome Wellington’s “Keeping abreast of things” – a crisp capturing of moments in our bodies, our lives. Love is always there to rescue as Genna Gardini’s “Dressage,” Francine Simon’s “Nanni-ma” ; the love of family in Siphokazi Jonas and Mthunzikazi Mbungwana, Napo Masheane’s paeans to the land. The will to speak, to be heard, erupts in all these poems, naming the world, making it whole. In oral cultures, names become maps become historical accounts. How we got here.

African languages automatically bestow motherhood on women when they reach middle age, whether or not they have given birth. The mixed blessing of this moniker places women at the centre of life as the origin. The women gathered on these pages are young, old, black, brown, white, queer, hetero, injured, activists, apolitical, whole, mothers; humans collected in these poems describe a world beyond binaries, exhaustive, dimensional.

According to Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, it is not the most intellectual of the species that survives nor the fittest but the one that is able best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment. In articulating the problem, the solution sometimes arrives. This is a chameleon crossed with a kaleidoscope, dancing haltingly over a camouflage hill.

The late bourgeois life is at times overwhelming and intimidating. Besieged, estranged, perhaps the human is the only locus of change. Reading through the other we sometimes find ourselves. Read these poems aloud for greater enjoyment. The glossary at the back will guide you into some of the inflections of our languages. This is a tumultuous voice, with distinct elements that retain their integrity. Urgent like yesterday. Because this world, it needs to change.

Thandi Jane Alcock Amamoo aka Phillippa Yaa de Villiers

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At Sea

The lighthouse has gone out
Our small boats afloat in the darkness
Confusing manatees with mermaids
Pulled out by the song of the sirens
But there is only silence
We have forgotten to look to the heavens
No longer able to read the stars
We have forgotten our way home
Searching for the brightness of the shore
Slowly we find each other
Bobbing up and down
Cold and wet
Finding our direction and
Gaining our freedom once again
As the brightness glows
From our many radiant souls
Turning the boats around
We start to row.

For Nelson Mandela
13/12/13

Myesha Jenkins

To my fractured language

My tongue changes somewhere between
taking flight and yanked back but yanked
by the chain that is tied around the cavity
in my mouth every yank a shut action
my words mouse trapped between dentures

my mouth inherited a freedom of speech
but has not yet acquired the vocabulary
to be free I want to taste my own words
allow the words to tastebud other blossoms
of meaning but there are a lot words
seeping out of my body I am digging up
my old syllable graves clicking
Sounding

Figuring out what the next time signature
to the sonata of my words will orchestrate
next

Jolyn Phillips

Continuities

First we lived on land
Then in a country
Later on designated areas

First we were people
Then different tribes
Later the disenfranchised

First he was a comrade
Then a com-tsosti
Later an askari

First she was a revolutionary
Then a sell-out
Later a suicide survivor

First he was a police man
Then an MK cadre
Later an academic

First she was an activist
Then a rape survivor
Later an HIV positive mother

Makhosazana Xaba

Reincarnation

The wrinkled city will not die without reviving its people;
Marabastad, Pretoria, greasy with holding onto life.

The old pile of clothes sits after crawling out of a grave,
the street will not let penniless hangers go cold.

We come here in rags
to inherit a jacket, a skirt or jeans,
something someone has danced in for years
before owning something better.

You are taught to move quickly,
to hold the coins in your hands tightly
to buy any jersey that fits you even when you don't like the colour.
Every time when we come back from
the thrill of shifting our bodies past the crowds
I fight to wash the damp faces of vendors from my eyes.
The memory wails down my cheeks
with a deep wanting to feel newness electrifying my skin
so every morning I wash my heart with hope,
I let the sun burn me until I feel polished for empty pockets cannot
dictate my worth
and I always remember that someone
once loved these rags.

Busisiwe Veronica Mahlangu

QwaQwa Sun

It's not your girly sun
Shining with its bright muddy teeth
Over a sweeping expanse
Of proud shallow hills
Dotted with fat dancing trees

It's not your clouds outside
In their smoky thickets
Drifting by
Looking fragile and shy

It's not your clay soil
Beautiful like a baby's giggle
Clothed in pink, mauve and yellow flowers
Or your red caved mountainous view
Green in their clean new sunlight

It's the beauty in the eye
That makes you so lovable
Not that soft line of brownness
Which sometimes strikes across
Your people's dimpled faces
It's the splendor of your ample sky
Which turns your drabness into gold

It's your barely unfinished homes
Lit by paraffin lamps
It's your dirty olive walls that flake away
To show the plaster underneath
It's the decoration
Of a crude four colour calendar of dreams
The murky picture
Of a stern pious grandmother
In a heavy oval frame
The wobbly wardrobe
Or human shadows mirrored against the wall
Or boxes of life
That lifts me up... making my soul dance

Napo Masheane

Katie had children

Katie, Katie, you weren't just a servant girl, you were a mother to me'
Katie–Koos Kombuis

My aunt Katie was sixteen when she went
into service she only had standard 5
my granny auntie Katie's mother was also a domestic
my aunt Katie was a very glamorous woman her
hair always had blonde streaks she wore only
gold jewellery and never went anywhere without
her musky perfume and rouge lipstick
except
to work one must always do one's work with pride
my granny told her but she could not she replied
she wanted to look like
she felt she said like a servant girl

From *Grond/Santekraam, Kwela Boeke, 2011,*
Translated by *Charl JF Cilliers*

Ronelda Kamfer

untitled

an old woman whispers into a smallgirl's navel
then wraps her neck with red and white beads
the old woman smears calamine on the smallgirl's forehead
under her left breast, between her shoulder blades
when the smallgirl wakes up, her eyes are glued together with tears
she learns to see in the dark
the smallgirl can smell the rain coming
she knows a storm is brewing

a woman tries to rescue her daughter from a burning shack
all the shacks around her are on fire
she hunches herself over her daughter, carries all of her inside
by the time she reaches the tar road, the woman's dress has been burnt
to her skin
her daughter survives unharmed
pulls a bottle of calamine out of her pocket
uses a piece of her own dress to dress her mother's wounds.
she wraps a string of red and white beads around her mother's waist
whispers into her navel, a secret about a match

Vangile Gantsho

Betel-nut

I am dark but
they say I'm bluffing.
I snack on tamarind seeds

sucking while Mom makes brinjal.
Black tongue mangrove mud between my toes.
She's not like us but.

This is why I am not like them.
I wouldn't say *that*,
but I would say that

when she tells me all about climbing
jackfruit trees at auntie's house, she calls me
girl, losing my name.

Lately, I try out their voice: oiyoh, but it's so hard eh!
She, she don't fright for nothing.
She don't know nothing too.

It's ayyo when I check
my brand new dictionary
a book to mark bed-made words.

The Indians, they put eyes on me except
when I go to Chatsworth
then my sentences end but.

What happened to my English degree?
That's what I wonder anyway,
spitting betel-nuts, white husk.

Francine Simon

Yellow Dress

we were playing outside
when you were called-in

i was left alone

the rain came
poured hard
blinded my eyes

i lost my favourite toy

a small
faded
yellow plastic car
searched for it in the puddle
kneeled down
put my hands- in
searching for it
with no luck
my right hand came out scratched
in my palm a gaping hole from a rusted rod

i planted my upper teeth on my lower lips
to suppress the pain
blood sprung out

i put the hurt hand under my armpit
could feel my heart sedating the pain
i continued searching in the dark with my left hand
the puddle had grown
deeper and wider
i slipped and dived in on my face

i stood up and went back to the house
shattered
mother gave me a few hard lashes
for being silly

on the day they told us you had succumbed to TB
i did not cry
worked hard to ensure that your send-off was beautiful
dignified

growing up i was smacked for carrying myself like a boy

at your funeral i wore a yellow dress in rebellion
and instead of pouring the prepared soil
into your grave
like all obedient women are expected to

i dug mine with a spade
doing men's work

perhaps i was still searching for my favourite toy

if you find it there in the belly of the earth
please let me know

Mthunzikazi Mbungwana

Wick

A Newden candle disrobing wax softly
in the dark mouth
of the room,
the current of my exhalation
and unsteady
whistle
of
asthma in her lungs
volleys a rippling flame between us,
inducing a moth of silence to hover
just outside the circumference of light. and
the only thing braver in the room
is a soft mint
dissolving, without attention,
like beeswax,
inside the toothless night.

Somber dentures (older than me),
baptised in a chipped glass,
a saucerful of black Teaspoon Tips tea,
the R1 promise to buy Nik Naks tomorrow,
cocooned in the maroon and and grey of grandfather's church-fancy
handkerchief.

All is forgotten,

but the self-immolating candle.
Only, umakhulu says nothing of
the anxiety of her shadow – shrinking away from
the bedroom's palate and walls
faster than the flinching flame.

Siphokazi Jonas

Check the Oven and the Stove

I saw her lying there on cushions placed upon two chairs
there was no room for her feet that angled out above the floor.

her aged feet, her fragile head so awkward on the chair
next to her upon the couch my brother snored, oblivious of his tiny guard.

like my mother's feet, his nerve ends dangle, sending muddled messages
that send his body into fits, make him laugh or rage or sleep upon the floor.

her head worn with motherhood and age and care
urges her always to be there; even if sleeping upon two chairs.

I know that she will justify her sleeping place
I do not want to see the shame upon my mother's waking face

so check the oven and the stove, turn off the midnight radio and
the light to tiptoe out into demented night.

Mavis Smallberg

Staying Abreast of Things

They were never really round:
Some sort of melon-shaped.
I've only ever known them as huge.
There were no tiny mounds and
Perky browns pitching miniature tents
Inside my shirts – always just been
BREASTS!
They've been the object of self-loathing;
Two sacks I wished I could amputate.
They've served as eye candy to
Gawking teenage boys and old pervs alike –
Boobs, Tits, Nana's!
Then they became toys to play with:
Fond things to fondle in affection, passion;
To misuse, abuse –
Tatta's, Jugs, Hooters!
Girly... womanly... now motherly:
Swollen, tight; no suitable bra to contain them.
Itchy, cracked; I'm supposed to feed a person with these?
Brown, then red, then black as hell...
Black?!
Breast is best, they keep telling me,
So I sit up all night with a little mouth
Sucking profusely at black nipples,
Cracked nipples where milk only trickles –
Suck, suck! Drink, eat!
No nourishment for a helpless little mouth.
Bigger, rounder, heavier;
Stretch marks covering stretched marks: emptier.
But breast is best, they keep telling me
As crying eyes beg with an open mouth
For Boobs, Titties, Breasts
That will eventually go back to being
Two, sort of melon-shaped bags to be
Gawked at, fondled, and perhaps again
Try to be food.

Selome Wellington

First flush

You bake in your sleep.

You throw off the fleece.

You throw off the blanket.

You pull off your t-shirt.

You pull off your panties.

Your socks you rub off against the sheets.

Still, this heat rides you.

You put a leg out into the cold night.

An arm. Then you throw off the duvet—

You dive now with lunatic limbs
into the frigid black mid-winter night,
a dam that the high-hot summer mountain
holds in the burning cup of its hands.

Karin Schimke

Rain drips from our bodies

We are the granddaughters
Of *Baloyi*—the witches
You were not able to burn
We are as numberless as ants in the soil
We are vultures and crows
That feed on other birds' meat
Hills on whose slopes cattle graze and sing

We are the granddaughters
Of the blanketed ones, *Basotho*
We dance to untangle the clouds
Make rain drip from our bodies
As our feet kiss the soil

From the roots of our hips
Trees grow
We are brave and strong
And child-like

We are granddaughters of things to come
Rumours of things gone by
River full with slippery stones
We are carriers of stories
Holders of memories
Tellers of our own history

We are fire
Behind us a wake of smoke unfurls
Our wings split the sky
Our grassy hair swayed by gusts of wind
We are the smell of the cow-dung
 Crowned with moonlight
Re-Baloyi...Re ya loya

Napo Masheane

Love letter to the woman who sucked my boyfriend's dick

Keep it in your mouth
Taste my life
Let my love slide
across your tongue
Reminding you
That I am what feeds
This fleeting moment
Before he says
Goodbye
Before I say
Keep all of him

Lebogang Mashile

Dressage

The day I knew I could love you,
you sat side and over me like I was
your pony, an animal to buck ridden
under. Not broken in the way shoes are
forced to forget their first form, convinced
they've always been bone and flesh by the constant
press of weight, but clicked the way a latch has to stay
hinged from the bar to make a gate. You drove me
through. Time was our vehicle, packed to carry us
alone. Then bare-backed but pastured, when stable
now home.

The day I knew you could love me,
I took down the dress which had clung
from my door like paint should, for years,
fixed by memory: the shopkeeper holding to halve
her fears and my fist which she found too thematically thick
with rands to risk. Who could measure such a waist? She hissed,
“Sweetie, be serious. You can't really think it will fit?”
But I did and I do, because it fit you.
You pulled it on like you would me, carefully.
Your hands finding and pushing past each space,
understanding that needles use gaps to make lace,
the material close and separate. Near as your skin,
as far.

Genna Gardini

Nanni-ma

I think of sex and only
sex since he
became my neighbour

in the flat next door.
And you, in the garden outside,
a goat named Ma.

He adores you,
milks you in the early hours
for his morning porridge.

I watch in my nightie,
confused by hands
on your soft, uddery skin.

It reminds me of nights
he touched me,
not an old skinned goat.

My lips turning half pages,
exposing pink marrow
bones for him to lick.

But you I would never wear
for a thick waistcoat.
I'd miss your fat eyes

in my doorway at night
asking to eat from
my chilli tree.

Francine Simon

untitled

I am the back of these street palms lines drawn from thirst
wrapped in a chitenga.
I have no reason. No excuse. Nothing wounded.
Just a woman who walks freely into men.
And women.
I walk into cars and arms and legs.
I walk into motels on some nights.
Or back alleys.
My body knows walking.
Feet hands penises.
Knows people less.
My body is nothing worth remembering.
Nothing worth keeping. Or taking home.
On the streets
I am a vagina, for walking in and out of.

Vangile Gantsho

Needles

The needles are floating in the air,
I hope they sew the heavy stench of agony away
before they land to stitch my lips into a silent prayer.
Each breath taken feels like a failed attempt to tack the open closed.
All the tread I owned, left with a man with shovel hands
who dug a grave inside my mouth;
there is a tombstone in my eyes, an old graveyard in my bones.
On the hospital bed I set to break,
to die
to forget
but the needles sing out loud.
I cannot hear their song as they cut past my waist.
The doctor says I have a son,
I want to tell her to kill him before he grows shovel hands
to knock a woman down,
but his smile asks for apologies,
an apology, to be conceived at a crime scene,
His eyes,
barely open at birth,
fought not to look like an evidence of rape
I fought not to look.
My insides were opened twice
that night and today
by people who never asked me if I want a son

Busiswe Veronica Mahlangu

The woman who gave her name
for Kwezilomso Mbandazayo

With nothing else to give
No fortunes
No fortress nor arms
No just judges nor equitable courtrooms
No pens of absolute absolution to retell history
And no towers from which to shout its truth
You gave your name

The grace and intuition with which your ancestors chose
 “Kwezilomso”
this particular audio frequency
Morning star
Light of dawn
The never ending promise of rebirth
For the worldly wicked wise wonderful and weary alike
Is not wasted

We have cried for this name
In another realm that bears witness
We have washed you with our waters
May they carry you to shelter
May you rest upon their shores
May they protect you with their salts
And soften your skin like salve
Your life has stretched way beyond itself

We enter the world with nothing more than the small skin of our
mother's

If we are lucky we leave a name behind

You are twice born in this world

You have died once already

If you die in a dream, the ancients say,

It means you will live forever

You are the dream of everlasting mornings

You are the death of the long painful night

You are the golden fabric around the waist of the new day

And your name

Beaten

Broken

Battered

Bruised

Grows new skin with each tear

What magic are you who dies and still lives

What magic are you who shares more than what you have

What magic are you in a place where we love the dead more than the
living

You give

She dies

You live

We love

Your name

We know

Her name

We love

You

Both

#Khwezi

Lebogang Mashile

Memorial to a comrade sister friend

It was not what it seemed
the memorial for the fallen comrade
who gave her best years to exile
and the movement. Theirs was
faint praise turning the bad to good, shame to pride
Speaker after speaker chronicled
her life on the margins of respectability
the aging poet ranted as in days gone by
one person even gave an election pitch
(at a funeral nogal.)
Everyone remembered how they had fought
and no one spoke of why she died alone,
sick and poor in the public hospital.

The missing truth filled the hall
rained down on the phuza-faced men and women
hobbled by arthritis and fat and swollen ankles
these old people once were leaders. Revolutionaries
now caught up in pomp and protocol, loyal subjects
pretending this was the dream they fought for
that they too are doing well
and no one is sick at all

There is no peace as the shadow of who she was
darts and swirls behind the podium, runs screaming through the hall
her spirit hiding amongst the twenty-eight floral arrangements
on the stage.

She could have lived for six more months on those damn
flowers.

Myesha Jenkins

The process of Wuthu: the purification of the body before prayer

(these are selections from a much longer poem, shortened due to space constraints)

1. Make your niyyah (intention)
2. Wash your hands, from right to left, three times, up to the wrist
3. Gargle the mouth, three times
4. Clean the nose, by placing water into it with the right hand, then clean it three times using the baby finger and thumb of the left hand
5. Wash the face, pour water over the face three times. Ensuring that the forehead to the chin is wet
6. Wipe the arms, right to left, from wrist to elbow, three times
7. Wet the hands, and slide it over the head, once.
8. Finally, wash the feet, right to left, three times, ensuring that water reaches the ankle.

Shameelah Khan

Part two: The mouth

I speak in tongues of grand gesture
I understand that there is a life of language
 A spoken one
 An unspoken one
I know that I am what humanity constructs
 Lips that shake
 A mind that meditates
Some women have no voice
Some men have no words
 Like a dog
 Like the fear of a dog
 It speaks
 When it is afraid
 Of silence

Shameelah Khan

Part three: the nose

My mama's food knows nothing else but home
Nothing taints the way the kitchen smells
The way it lingered
Once she had left
I stayed behind with my dad
There were no smells
But that of hunger
Did you know that it was possible?
To smell nothing
Once someone dies
You smell their bones rotting
You smell their once lived lives
Once someone dies
You forget what they smell like
But my house is scented
With memories
And a smell
Of food
We no longer eat

Shameelah Khan

Part 6: The feet

My mother asked me
How is it that I find the time to walk away
From all that I have loved?
I tell her that what I have loved has
Made me walk away
I tell her that before I pray
My hands tell me to un-touch a man that needs
My mouth tells me to silence my speech
and hold my truth all in
my nose tells me to forget the smell
of perfume that lingers inside of an Arabic book cover
my face tells me to look away
my past is but a passing lover
my arms, they feel the wounds of war
each time they grip the warmth of nothing
they touch and hold up my world
but still
it's a world that feels like something foreign
and then there is my mind
it tells me how to live
it is the thing that beats
my feet
my feet
have stories to tell
they often stand in one place and long to be in another
they long to walk besides yours
under your umbrella

Shameelah Khan

Loss laboratory

We line up
To have our blood taken
Roll up our sleeves too early
As if readiness
Helps the burn

Some avert their eyes
Best not see it leave you.
So much else
Already has.

A line of wraiths
Sent over from oncology
A one-stop clinic
Diagnose, treat
Prick, dispatch.

Which one have you got?
My neighbour's
skin
papers over the bone.

No,
I've had a stroke.

You are
A lucky woman
Yes,
I know.

The silence pulses.

Karen Lazar

In war

Soldiers come home from war
with their last breath jumping from finger to finger;
counting whose son died on the front and was left behind like litter.
Their palms exuding expectations
ready to celebrate a second-hand freedom
but their limbs are cut out by chains;
gunshots confining mind from believing in a tangible reality.
They vowed
before the nose of a breathless pistol
that they will live to see roses blooming out of concrete.
they throw their eyes to the distance of burnt houses they call home.
No one told them that soldiers are useless;
only meant to breathe on the battlefield,
after war; the fighting never stops.
They are found hanging outside
on a branch of tree behind their burnt homes.

Soldiers come home to war.

Busisiwe Veronica Mahlangu

Shaun 1

*“I can taste the fear, lift me up and take me out of here”
The Arcade Fire, intervention*

you were small you said
you could seriously not
remember the details
various people remember
various versions
of the same stories
your dad came walking in
somewhere
grabbed your mom by the arm
pressed her up against the wall and
slapped her with the back
of his hand
you aren't sure which hand
it was
each time you remember from
a different angle
you remember the slap because
Shaun was also your dad's
name
and it was Shaun your mother
shouted
you wanted to jump up
to help
but
you weren't sure which Shaun
she was referring to

From *Grond/Santekraam*, Kwela Boeke, 2011,
Translated by *Charl JF Cilliers*

Ronelda Kamfer

Dop system

My father comes home to midnight the dop system vex his veins
black

A haunted wine stock Drunk in a ditch Six foot six
He is the comely cursive of every name on every bottle every end
of week

Licking the liquor of his labour lingering on the vineyard's kiss

This is the story of the unrequited papsak and my fermented pater

I am his crop chasing and racing running relentless
From the methylated phantoms that robe me in his rotten grape
season strutting like a sot
Planting the dormant, bare-foot grape in the early spring bearing a
grey rot
pressing the crush the harvest crush of a bloodline pressed

Pa and I parallel carry the rotten grapevine crown
Our father hallowed in Golgota's grape Churn and turn around
merry-go-round
That is the dop system's dole
Oh the merry-go-round goes round and round

the perpetuating papsak and my star-crossed pater

Jolyn Phillips

A Hungry Stomach Has No Ears

Charred bodies hanging off power lines,
Making news headlines.
Izinyoka have struck once more
The electricity struck back this time
Tomorrow another one will try
A hungry stomach has no ears

Power to the people is a lie of the people of where power lies

Decomposing corpses trapped in mines
Searching for the golden windfall
Zama-zamas on a quest
A rock fall sealed their fortune
Another will take a dig at the hidden treasure
A hungry stomach has no ears

Licit mining is a façade masquerading illicit fortunes above lives

Pubescent nipples pierce her paltry top
Filling in for her mother who is sick
Truck drivers lick their lips
She takes a loaf of bread home
And the affliction that grounded her mother
A hungry stomach has no ears

Top priority the wellness of truckers they must roll the wheels

A hungry stomach has no ears
But,
A greedy stomach has no conscience.

Jackie Mondri

half-life

you forgot me
so hard that
my cells forgot to hold on to each other
bloodfleshbeing
a t o m i s e d
into a warm red mist
you absent-mindedly wipe away
as you walk through me
calling my name
annoyed
'cause you don't receive
a reply

i am in the landfill of your memory
like the jolly mess of persistent plastic
like radioactive waste
exuding its s l o w p o i s o n

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers

Burn

Does the fire know that we are burning?
Will the ash collect what's left of our bones to make new buildings?
Do the buildings know, there aren't enough bones to make new
 windows with?
That our faces no longer melt into bricks
we are refusing that gates be made from our ribs.
This country is already built on our backs.

We are pulling our skin off the walls of museums
picking our families out of art collections and galleries
we have come to take us home
even if we must burn

Mandi Vundla

Fire-flood

Fire
In our land
Our hearts and hair

We need a flood
I am afraid of the flames
If we drown
We go down
Silently

We burn, there are screams
Flames licking
It takes time, to burn a body
People witness
Hold the floods of pain
Of rage poured into the fires by
Students, by workers, by parents,
By prophets of a new world

If we burn there is ash
Hopes for a phoenix

If we drown there are only
Floating bodies
Silent
Easy to ignore

Sarah Godsell

Before all of this started

Before all of this started
We knew that hi(her)story repeats itself
But this came sooner than we ever imagined

Before all of this started
We were aware that our tongues had begun curling
Uncomfortably around the word “comrade”
But we assumed it was a temporary disability

Before all of this started
We understood that feminisms can live
With calm in a large communal space
But we probably should have agreed on where to draw the line

Before all of this started
We held hope close against our chests
Synchronized hope’s rhythm with that of our hearts
But we forgot to monitor the growth of our wings

When all of this started with Marikana
We believed our shock would be short lived
Today we continue to reel as each day delivers its shock-dose
But we pine for the impossible: a return to that time before all of this started

Makhhosazana Xaba

I've come to take you home

I've come to take you home—
home, remember the veld?
the lush green grass beneath the big oak trees
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
and the water in the stream chuckle sing-songs
as it hobbles along over little stones.

I have come to wrench you away—
away from the poking eyes
of the man-made monster
who lives in the dark
with his clutches of imperialism
who dissects your body bit by bit
who likens your soul to that of Satan
and declares himself the ultimate god!

I have come to soothe your heavy heart
I offer my bosom to your weary soul
I will cover your face with the palms of my hands
I will run my lips over lines in your neck
I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you
and I will sing for you
for I have come to bring you peace.

I have come to take you home
where the ancient mountains shout your name.
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—
I have come to take you home
where I will sing for you
for you have brought me peace.

Diana Ferrus

in chains

in chains, we dream of flight.
we spread out our wings
testing our reaches.
every thought enlivening freedom,
we imagine the breeze kissing
our furrowed faces where
every lost combat is carved.
troubling visions of a freedom
blaze somewhere in the distance
even in chains, we imagine
the breeze carrying us to freedom

dudzile zamantungwa mabaso

Nongqawuse and the New People

What do I wear on Heritage day?

A map of stolen land
A veil of screams

Dark red lipstick:
Caked centuries of
Rape

High heeled shoes
Made of bones
Of slaves

Rings of border wars,
Indentured labour

Arm ornaments
Beaded delicately
In languages lost

Necklaces
Of bullets
Collected from bodies

My hair tied with rainbows
That double as nooses?

I will wear nothing.
Not even words.
I will sit, naked, in the
Mountains in the Eastern cape,
Wait for Nongqawuse
And the New People
To rise from the soil

Sarah Godsell

In response to seeing an African woman
abba a dog on Facebook

Black woman
your back rented out
to carry pups, babies
while yours cry at home.

Black woman
a blanket around
ancient bones,
symbol of care.

In its folds you fail
to hide your shame
as the camera greets you.

Black woman
wrought to pain
picturesque
unyielding.

No one sees you
or know your born name.

Black woman
Will they finally see you
when your back is broken?

Connie Fick

Taped beak

seven songs of self-censorship

i.

seven songs
five and two
for the voiceless
listen now:

seven
songs
seven
strong
times
like
doh
ray
me
fa

Oh.
There's nil.
This song's
chords chime
me wrong.
i'm tuning
all along
broken
staves.

ii.

write what you know

i only know words

i know only nothing

iii.

over and over
christ this chorus bores me
i'm doing whatever the verb is for litany
and grass grows over my feet
i'm that woman:
that white (shut up) woman
shut up
(white) wash

i am my own thick black
censor lines my hushing
terrorist up-shutter
it's okay—i'm
irrelevant
anyway

iv.

if there are no seeds in the pod
and no water in the bath
and no hope in the apple
if the notes are flat
and i clap hamfisted
if i'm mediocre
and count not a single
original thought
in the lines on my palm
and lack the courage of the sun
to rage on and on
why do i want to burn
paper under the whitewash of ink

v.

i dreamt my cover was blown
soon everyone would know
that i was young, gay, black -
and a man

my alter ego's twitter handle
was @hilaryvent

i taped her beak shut.
her eyes bulge with rage

vi.

all i remember now
is the tune of forgetting
the ghostly notation
between fading staves
where volume pitch and tone
have narrowed to the
ennui of a middle-c hum
but it's a start

vii.

the start
is the hardest part
and your breath
will catch you out
will catch you
your breath
could close you
you voice could
cloud into the
spaces between
your tongue and
the idea you had of
god

so don't start with
god
he's the hardest
part

i begin again
a is for art
b is for beauty
middle c is for mediocrity

i must
invoke
god
from
the midpoint.

(and what is it
if it is not avarice
to expect holiness
from alphabetical order?
leave the letters as they are bedded
a to zed—alert and perfect
my sequences are
often out of tune
and what is it
if it is not
greed
to want more
than
one striving song)

Karin Schimke

In your silence

The world has taken my words
Yet my story with you remains
So I recite it in silence, in punctuation marks
in my mind, so I can keep it alive.

Here is my story, summarised:
It begins with a few question marks
Continues through obvious exclamation marks
A colon, followed by a comma, after comma
Innumerable dizzying commas, so I breathe.
Later, a dash ushering unreadable words;
I know these world-renowned words
But now they are unreadable, unutterable.
Another dash follows, in a river-like flow
then a question mark returns, a bigger one
And then the space, a yawning space
And the bellowing exclamation mark
followed by a full stop.

I end here, at this full stop.
On this 16th day of December 2013
The day we now call Reconciliation Day
I stand in the poetry of your silence.

Makhosazana Xaba

Phantom

I'm the limb that is and isn't there.

My person hearkens after me, pats her trouser thoughtfully or cups the hollow wrinkle on the sheet. I take on the colour of wherever she puts me. Interesting being spectre and chameleon in one manoeuvre.

I used to be black and now I'm translucent.

When she needs me, I show up, I play along. Her doctor chats in our presence about perceptual delusion, as if we weren't there. The medical students gathered around us nod and condescend. My person looks at me for reassurance. And company. Nobody but me gives it.

Sometimes she heaves the weighty valency of me around from side to side, but shatters into surprise when she tries to stand up on a vacuum and buckles, desolate, into a chair.

Will she ever be ready to let me go?

The white woman in the bed next to us has had a stroke. Her left side has shut down but she's aware of it, a useless weight that still looks more or less like a symmetry, unlike us. She watches us, gamely tries to share the new world of a flesh and blood altered beyond the owning of it.

White woman offers us a mirror, a small round thing she uses to comb her hair in this dishevelled labyrinth of sick heads. My woman is instantly suspicious. Why would anything need to be reflected back to her? She's whole, isn't she? I watch the empty history of my inhabitation below her belly apprehensively Avoid the mirror, slip away. But not too far.

Who needs this neural nostalgia more: my homebody or myself?

Karen Lazar

This is another poem about your face

This is another poem about your face.
But it is now later.
There is nothing of what was,
this is another poem entirely.

We are sitting in the garden
on the porch chairs
as another sunset happens.
The colour's getting dim.
The moon will rise.
Night will come.
These are our certainties.

We talk, we talk so much,
as we always have,
trying to figure it all out.
Then there is a moment of silence.
Your face looking to the sun,
the shadows of the trees,
and your face is softened again,
by time, and by all that's happened between us.
When you turn to look at me
I try to hold it all,
to remember the angles of your face,
the way your nose looks against your cheek,
the parenthesis around your mouth,
the curve between nostril, cheek;
your eyes, hooded by this distance.
Trying to hold it, failing,
knowing I'll have to rely on photos in the end.
But I try,
for a few moments,
at the end of this long dry winter,
I do try.

Arja Salafranca

Blue

There's a pool at the bottom of your face,
A mirror I could dive into.
To swim in the cracks of your mouth,
The creases of your lips.
To rest my face on the curve of your smile.
To drink what comes out of it.
There's a flood in the chambers of my want.
It is spilling over my blouse,
Over my trousers and socks.

I want to taste your teeth,
Feel you twist to accommodate my clumsy.
Desperate, I look for myself inside you.
Inside your palate,
Underneath your cheeks,
Next to your wisdom teeth.

I am scared to touch you.
Afraid you might peel yourself off of the air
like smoke,
when my fingerprints try to mark you.
I am worried you might be a warm fantasy.
A place to rest my sorrow,
Like God.
Worried you might notice that I come empty.
That under my tongue is only veins,
And the ball of my piercing
That you deserve bibles spoken of your name.
That there are entire books written about you on breasts.
Hidden there by virtue,
Not want
But that my tongue couldn't carry you even with crutches.

I am desolate.
A desert so without green, it needs to be reminded to breathe
And you are water;
You are tree;
I want,
But I am not even sure you are real.

Thandokuhle Mngqibisa

these tears

these tears
will flow wash my body
of the strife
drip down
quench my hunger
quell the heat
buried in my core
clear my sight
my vision repair
nurture my muse
my spirit replenish

these tears
will not cleanse
or purify they
will wash down
my body pool
at my feet and
drown you

duduzile zamantungwa mabaso

#Taglines

We must preserve our women
beyond PR against violence
Taglines keep us alive for a month.
When campaigns start to run out of breath
billboards come down
pink ribbons fall to their knees
safety pins grow teeth.
I pray to God for ad-space to keep my children safe
but it will be heritage month by then
the hashtag would have changed

Mandi Vundla

Recycling

My death came for me when I turned twenty-eight.
It said, “Look, I read all your poems,”
then it apologized for being late.

One decade before,
I’d pressed and poured my parents’ pills
down the utility hose of my throat,
like I was striking a fence or clearing a moat
between my writing and my limbs.
One seemed minded as a mansion
and I wanted to move in,
while the other was base,
a leaking and ledge-less space
where even paper couldn’t get past
that fecund first fact of the tree.
Re-rotting and vast, it was a wilderness
with no verse to me
and I schemed, through rhyme,
to escape it.

And sooner—really, maybe ten years prior—
I’d snuck indoors, away
from the chirruping choir of my cousins,
who clawed and contested the bark they were climbing,
broaching branches my own arms refused to bear.
They told me to put down the book, to come get some air.
So, loosed, I learnt what happens
when you break the build-up of narrative:
you fall out the bottom of structure.
There I wasn’t safe or placed
like insulation below the boards,
but buried, a pip
flattened the way dirt in a vegetable patch is:
just a brief layer beneath all the shit.
Words didn’t collapse
into the soft fontanelle of that ditch,
so I thought: no body can avoid this.

Now, the TV chimes, “In today’s challenge,
we imagine what we’ll eat in 2030!”
and I wonder if I’ll still be around to see.
And I understand that it was always
the pallid province of privilege
that afforded me room to feign and swat
like a cockroach against a closed can of Doom,
when really I knew--or thought I knew--
that one slipped step and whole systems of aid
could surely snatch me back,
stroking and sibilant, signing contracts.
But sickness, like the toilet, swallows sweepingly
with little to no care when I whinge that it’s just *so* unfair,
as if this was the only time loss and living would meet,
as if worse things weren’t happening mere metres
down the street.

While we wait, it whispers,
“Listen, in the end, what I found
is that even the page and the plant
both land up where they started:
back inside the ground.”

Genna Gardini

morning

the morning comes
even before night is done
the dreams hang about
like a stench casting doubt on reality
but day is here with all its responsibility
refusing to be denied a turn on the dance floor

dudzile zamantungwa mabaso

Bone Rhapsody

Do your bones know how
you wear your skin like a flag?

Confess!

It is the colour of surrender. And “salvation”.
How your un-civilised forefathers bleached history
pages. Just. To whitewash the war in your veins.
Tell me, do you bury the weight of their sins
in your garden, or your tongue?

And you. Bearing your black
like a funeral tale, a burial wail;
when will you wake?
Living at half-mast as if your birthright
is worth a vote and a bowl of soup,
while the kings of this land sell it out

from under your children.

And you. Whisper to your bones
how you live like water
leaking
out
the
bottom
of a bucket:
as if there is no one at home between
Black or White.
May the tornado in your mouth compel skeletons
to tumble out of closets of flesh -
grind them from flagpoles
into
chalk.

And teach us how to live...different.

Siphokazi Jonas

To my children

The dizzy heights
of morality,
attained by company
of the righteous
true vision
never seen
beyond the rose glass
smug
in its goodness—
a façade
afraid of truth
which brings uncertainty,
uncomfortable uncertainty
unlike Death
bellicose in its goodness,
a threat
to all, who believes
in his own goodness, a veil.

Connie Fick

My grandmother's hymn

At my grandmother's tombstone unveiling
the sun rests between lush-green mountains
Standing side by side.

Watching over her grave
three elderly women clad in isiXhosa gear,
colourful,
present,
bold

dance barefoot on unpaved ground
outside her rondavel.

As their feet greet the soil
the dust rises up and follows the sun
up above the thatched roof
like a bird in-flight.

The music vibrations feed the homestead
I cannot see the quorum of the music makers
eclectic tunes
hard to pin down to one style
I feel undertones of chanting, drums speaking,
pianos tap dancing
the refreshing streams of xylophones
I drift to the first memory of me and my grandmother
listening to a tempest gramophone
in my grandmother's house music was the only religion
long before it was introduced to me as
jazz.

Mthunzikazi Mbungwana

Loose change

Sunflowers asserting their right
to bigger petals.
New smiles forgotten
with the evaporated rainbow.
New myths, old
ones revived.
Changeable hearts
blooming, bursting.

Connie Fick

Evening Peace Sanctuary Robben Island, 2007

A hundred penguins sit on rock
separated by small pools.

So still.

Black and white jackets merge
hide beaks and bodies like zebra do when lion are around.
Some twist their necks this way and that
as if to sniff the air.

All wait in silence
still life in black and white on rock.

What secret sign will make them leave the sea
now gliding in without a sound;
make them stumble over mounds of stones
that decorate the beach in shining shades of red and brown.

Bold, one pair make their move.
Duck their heads as penguins do,
waddle inland arms akimbo.
Stop. Look round. Waddle on. Pause.
Look round, stop.

The others merely stare.

Wait immobile.

A fluttering like a hundred feathered whispers
breaks the spell.

I look up.

A Sacred Ibis flying low,
flaps its outstretched beak and legs across the sky.

And there high above in seas of tangerine cloud,
a perfect half moon gleams out
evening peace.

Mavis Smallberg

Glossary

<i>Abba</i>	carry an infant on the back
<i>Askari</i>	colonial/apartheid government soldier
<i>Baloyi</i>	witches
	<i>Re-Baloyi</i> we are witches
	<i>Re ya loya</i> we will be bewitched
<i>Basotho</i>	Southern African ethnic group who speak SiSotho.
<i>Buchu</i>	indigenous fragrant medicinal herb
<i>Com-tsotsi</i>	political activist turned criminal gangster
<i>Dop system</i>	payment of labourers in vineyards in wine
<i>Izinyoka</i>	electricity thieves. people who connect cables to access electricity illegally.
<i>MK</i>	Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress
<i>Nogal</i>	(Afrikaans) incredibly
<i>Nongqawuse</i>	Xhosa prophet from the 1800s
<i>Papsak</i>	wine contained in a silver foiled “flatbag.”
<i>Phuza-faced</i>	colloquial term describing someone who looks like a heavy drinker, literally, ‘drink face’.
<i>Oiyoh Township</i>	the locale where the majority of black people were forced to live during apartheid.
<i>Umakhulu</i>	grandmother, literally ‘big mother’.
<i>Zama-zamas</i>	illegal miners, literally ‘try-tryers’.

Contributors

Kristin Berkey-Abbott earned a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. She is the Director of Education at the Hollywood (Florida) campus of City College. She has published 3 chapbooks: *Whistling Past the Graveyard* (Pudding House Publications), *I Stand Here Shredding Documents*, and *Life in the Holocene Extinction* (both published by Finishing Line Press).

Michele Bombardier is a Northwest poet whose work has appeared in the *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Sukoon*, *Fourth River*, *Floating Bridge*, *Artemis*, and many others. She is completing her MFA in Poetry at Pacific University in Portland. She works as a speech-language pathologist with persons with stroke, brain injury, and autism.

Bill Brown is the author of ten poetry collections and a writing textbook. His newest books are *Late Winter* (2008, Iris Press), *The News Inside* (2010, Iris Press), *Elemental* (2014, 3: A Taos Press), and *Morning Window* (2017, Iris Press). He lives with his wife, Suzanne, and a tribe of cats in the hills north of Nashville.

Mark Burke's work has been published or is forthcoming in the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Sugar House Review*, and other publications.

Edward Derby's poems have appeared in *American Chordata*, *Rattle*, *Field*, *Prairie Schooner*, and others. He reviews poetry on TheRumpus.net. His short film *Wishbone* won Best Comedic Short at the 2017 Oregon Independent Film Festival. Straying from the Southeast, a black-throated blue warbler appeared on his porch in Oregon last winter.

John S. Eustis is a semi-retired librarian and avid reader. He lives with his wife in Northern Virginia.

Diana Ferrus (b. 1953, Worcester) works at the University of the Western Cape, from which she holds a Bachelor of Arts Honors degree. She writes in English and Afrikaans, is the founder of the Afrikaans Skrywervereniging (ASV), Bush Poets and Women in Xchains, and published her first collection of poetry, *Ons Komvandaan* in 2006 (Dianna Ferrus). Also in 2006, she co-edited and published (under the same publishing company) a collection of stories about fathers and daughters, *Slaan vir my 'n masker, vader*. Her company (aimed at publishing writers from previously disadvantaged communities), in association with UWC, went on to publish the stories of three former activists and unionists. In 2010, Ferrus wrote and published “I have come to take you home”, which went on influence legislation that resulted in the return of Sarah Bartmann’s to South Africa from Europe.

Connie Fick (1953, Grasmere) is a nurse by profession and works as a freelance writer for Takalani Sesame (television and radio). She holds a Masters in Creative Writing from Rhodes University and her work has been published in *Itch Magazine*, *Tyhini*, *Experimental Writing (vol. 1) Africa vs. Latin America*, *Botsotso*, and the *Sol Plaatje European Union Award for Poetry Anthology* (2016). Fick has also been featured in *To breathe into another voice: a South African anthology of Jazz Poetry* and worked for a number of years as the editor of monthly magazine, *Health and Hygiene*.

John Field lives in Glen Ellen, CA. A collection of his poems was published in England by The Bettiscomb Press, and his work has appeared in numerous magazines and journals in the United States. A retired English teacher, he received his M.A. at the University of Exeter in England.

Laura Foley is the author of six poetry collections, including *WTF*, *Joy Street*, *Syringa*, and *Night Ringing*. A palliative care volunteer, mother of three grown children and two granddaughters, she lives with her wife and two dogs among the hills of Vermont. Please visit her at: laurafoley.net.

Jennifer L. Freed's recent poetry appears or is forthcoming in various journals including *Zone 3*, *Connecticut River Review*, and *Worcester Review*; in anthologies including *Forgotten Women, a Tribute in Poetry* (Grayson Books 2017); and in a chapbook, *These Hands Still Holding*, a finalist in the 2013 New Women's Voices contest.

Sophia Galifianakis teaches at the University of Michigan, where she received her MFA in poetry. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Plume*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Arts & Letters*, *The Greensboro Review*, and other journals, and she has received scholarships from West Chester Poetry Conference, Poetry by the Sea, and Vermont Studio Center.

Vangile Gantsho (b. 1984, Queenstown) is a poet and cultural healer. She holds a certificate in Thought Leadership from the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute and a Masters Degree in Creative Writing from the University Currently Known as Rhodes. Her work was first published in *The Agenda* (2009), and has since published in *Sable* (2010 and 2017, UK), *Poetry Potion* (2013 and 2017) *Home is Where the Mic Is* (2015), *New Coin* (2017), *New Contrast* (2017), *Type/Cast* (2017), 2016 *Poets in McGreogor Anthology* (2017) and *Illuminations* (2017). Online, her work has been published by *Consciousness* (where she also worked as an editor), *LitNet*, *Letters to Obama*, *Badilisha*, *Poetry for Life*, *Vanguard Magazine* and *Black Lit Mag*. Gantsho released her self-published collection *Undressing in Front of the Window* (2015) and is currently working on the release of her second collection *red cotton* (2018).

Genna Gardini (b. 1986, Johannesburg) is a writer based in Cape Town. She holds an M.A. in Theatre-making from UCT, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Queen Mary University of London. Gardini has received various accolades for her work, including a 2016 Fellowship at the Institute for Creative Arts and the 2012 New Coin Poetry Prize. Her debut collection of poems, *Matric Rage*, was published by uHlanga Press in 2015. She works as a Drama lecturer at CityVarsity, and is the Poetry Editor for *Prufrock*.

Adam J. Gellings is a poet from Columbus, Ohio. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Ovenbird Poetry*, *Quarter After Eight*, and *Rust + Moth*.

Megan Gieske calls herself a wandering poet. Most recently, she traveled to South Africa to study race reconciliation. In 2017, she was a finalist for both the *Dan Veach Prize for Younger Poets* and the *New Millennium Writings 44th Poetry Prize*. She holds a BA in poetry from Asbury University.

Sarah Godsell (b. 1985, Johannesburg) is a historian and poet. She holds a PhD in History from Wits University, where she now teaches teachers to teach history. Her work has been published in *Marikana: A Moment in Time* (2013, Gecko), *Home is Where the Mic Is* (2015, Botsotso), *Astra Magazine* (2016, Finland) and the 2016 *Sol Plaatje European Union Anthology*. She published her debut collection, *Seaweed Sky*, in 2016 (Poetree).

Pamela Hammond is the author of two chapbooks, *Encounters* (2011) and *Clearing* (2012), produced by Red Berry Editions. Her work has appeared in *Tulane Review*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and others. A lover of nature, she has hiked and traveled in such places as Alaska, Hawaii, and New Zealand.

AE Hines is a poet and practicing financial advisor who lives in Portland. He's a member of the Academy of American Poets, and his work has appeared in recent and forthcoming issues of *California Quarterly*, *Third Wednesday*, *SLANT*, *Windfall*, *I-70 Review*, and other publications. He was awarded second prize in the 2016 Crosswinds Poetry competition.

Judith Hoyer's chapbook *Bits and Pieces Set Aside* was published in March 2017 from Finishing Line Press. Some journals that have published her poems include: *The Worcester Review*, *Pudding Magazine*, *PMS poemmemoiirstory*, *Off the Coast*, *Skylight 47 (Irish)*, *Spillway*, and *Naugatuck River Review*.

Rob Jackson has recent or forthcoming poems in journals that include *Southwest Review*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Exposition Review*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *THEMA*, *The Lyric*, and *Measure*.

Myesha Jenkins (b. 1948, Oakland CA) has lived and worked as an activist, then poet, in South Africa since 1993. She has published two poetry collections, *Breaking the Surface* (2005, Timbila) and *Dreams of Flight* (2011, Geko). Her work has also been published in *Isis X* (2006, Botsotso), *We Are* (2010, Penguin) and *Baobab* (2009). Jenkins is the 2013 recipient of the Mbokodo Award for Women in Arts – Poetry and has conducted workshops for People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) and Artscape. She is also the creator of *SA Fm Poetry in the Air* and co-founder of *Jozi House of Poetry* and the *Out There* sessions at The Orbit.

Marilyn E. Johnston's poetry has received six Pushcart nominations. Her first chapbook, *Against Disappearance*, was a Finalist for the 2001 Poetry Prize of Redgreen Press. She is author of two full collections, *Silk Fist Songs* and *Weight of the Angel*, published by Antrim House Books. She has recently retired from the staff of Bloomfield Public Library.

Siphokazi Jonas (b. 1986, King Williams Town) holds a Masters degree in English literature as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Drama and English. As a writer, performer and poet, she has written, produced and performed in three one-woman productions: *Poetry Under the Stars*, *Wrestling with Dawn*, and *Conspiracy Theory*. In 2016 she presented “Around the Fire” at the Artscape Spiritual Festival. Her poems “Mambhele,” “Harvest,” were both published in the 2016 *Sol Plaatje European Union Anthology*. In 2016, Jonas released her first live poetry DVD, *Weekly Service*.

Ronelda S. Kamfer (b. 1981, Cape Town) spent her childhood in Grabouw where her grandparents were farmworkers, later in Eersterivier a township on the Cape Flats. Her poetry has been published in *Nuwe stemme 3*, *My ousie is 'n blom*, and in *Bunker*

Hill. Kamfer's has published three poetry collections: *Noudat slapende honde* (2008, Kwela) won the 2009 Eugène Marais Prize, later translated into Dutch; *Grond/Santekraam*, (2011, Kwela) which was translated into Dutch (2012) and Italian (2016); and *Hammie* (2016, Kwela) recipient of the 2016 ATKV Woordtrofee (wordtrophy). She was the writer in residence in Amsterdam 2012 and La Rochelle in France 2013, attends numerous international literary festivals, and is currently writing her first novel, *Kompoun* about farmworkers in her native province, Western Cape.

Julie Kane is a former Louisiana Poet Laureate and Professor Emeritus at Northwestern State University. Her poetry collections include *Rhythm & Booze*, a National Poetry Series winner, and *Jazz Funeral*, winner of the Donald Justice Prize. With Grace Bauer, she co-edited *Nasty Women Poets: An Unapologetic Anthology of Subversive Verse*.

Kelsey Ann Kerr has a great interest in loss: holes both metaphorical and physical of the heart, holes in life left by the loss of parents, cauterized by love. She holds an MFA from Maryland and teaches there as well. Her work can be found, or is forthcoming, in *Stirring*, *New Delta Review*, and *The Sewanee Review*, among others.

Shameelah Khan (b. 1992, Johannesburg) holds two post-graduate honours degrees from The University of Witwatersrand, in Film, Visual and Performing Arts, and in Creative Writing. She has also studied Psychology and Islamic Sciences. Khan is the newly-appointed co-editor of an online arts magazine called *Odd* and a Production Course Administrator at Africa Film Drama Art (AFDA), where she also works as a junior lecturer. Her short stories "Lady of the Night", and "Like Winter", along with some of her poetry were both published in *Itch* and *Odd* magazines. Her documentary *Woman in the Dark* (2015) participated in *Africa in Motion Festival* in Scotland.

Karen Lazar (b. 1961, Springs) is a poet and English lecturer at the Maharishi Institute in Johannesburg. She was educated at the

University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where she also taught for 25 years. Her MA and PhD are in South African gender and literary studies. Her scholarship is mainly focused on feminist readings of Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer, as well as on pedagogy and narrative medicine. Karen is an active advocate for gender and disability rights. She is the author of *Hemispheres: inside a stroke* (2011, Modjaji). Karen had a severe stroke in 2001, from which she has partially recovered. She lives in Johannesburg, and is working on a new book of prose-poems.

duduzile zamantungwa mabaso (b. 1981) is a poet, scriptwriter, editor and publisher. She is the founder of Black Letter Media <www.blacklettermedia.com> where she is working to publish new voices out of Africa in print and online platforms such as the online and print poetry journal *Poetry Potion*. She has written scripts, storylined, edited for South African television shows such as *The Queen*, *Uzalo*, *Muvhango*, *Soul City*, *Tempy Pushas*, *Mamello* and *It's Complicated* to mention a few. She is an alumni of Durban Talent Campus, a top 60 SAB Kickstarter, a Mzansi 100 Young Independent and an urban recluse.

Busisiwe Veronica Mahlangu (b. 1996, Mamelodi) is the 2016/2017 Speak Out Loud slam poetry champion, winner of the 2017 Another Kind of Slam (Mzansi Poetry Academy) and the 2017 National South African Library Slam. Mahlangu was longlisted for the Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Anthology 2017.

Napo Masheane (b. 1979, Soweto) is a scriptwriter, poet, stage director, translator and acclaimed performer. She holds a Masters in Creative Writing from Rhodes University and has published two poetry collections: *Caves Speak in Metaphors* and *Fat Songs for my Girlfriends*. In 2015 Masheane became the first black woman to produce stage and direct a play: *A New Song*, at the Market Theatre Main Stage, and one of her monologues was chosen to be performed at the Royal Court in London. She is the winner of 2012 *Mbokodo Award* for theatre, holder of *Pan African Language Award*, PALA 2014 (for Sesotho Language) and part of the scriptwriting team that received the 2016 South African Film

and Television Award for the ETV drama series, Umlilo.

Lebogang Mashile (b. 1979, Pawtucket Rhode Island) is an award-winning writer, television presenter, actress and activist. She has authored two books, *In A Ribbon of Rhythm* (2005), 2006 recipient of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa, and *Flying Above the Sky* (2008); and co-wrote and starred in the stage adaptation of Pamela Nomvete's autobiography *Ngiyandansa* (2014). Mashile has participated in the 2008 stage adaptation of K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, as well as the poetry, music and dance production *Threads* (2015). She received the inaugural Mbokodo Award for South African Women in Arts and was cited as one of the Top 100 Africans by New African magazine in 2011. Mashile has two recorded albums, the latest, *Moya* (2017), a collaborative project with singer/songwriter Majola.

Mthunzikazi A. Mbungwana (b. 1981, Cala) is a poet and storyteller from a small village in the former Transkei, Eastern Cape. She works fulltime as a Media Relations Specialist for the South African Government. Mbungwana self-published her debut isiXhosa poetry collection, *Umnikelo* (2015) and has contributed to a number of literary journals such as: *LitNet* (2011), *Baobab* (2014) *Prufrock*, (2015), *Poetry Potion* (2015), *Consciousness* (2015) She has also been published in anthologies: *Home is Where the Mic Is* (2015, Botsotso) and *To Breathe into Another Voice: An Anthology of South African Jazz Poetry* (2017, STE Publishers).

Jackie Mondli (b. 1970, Soweto) is a black South African woman, writer, poet and teacher. Her writing has been published in *The Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Anthology* (2011 and 2016), Interpretative narrative for Zanele Muholi's *Somnyama Ngonyama* (2016) *Exhibition, LUMA Arles* (France), Descriptive narrative for Zanele Muholi's *Faces & Phases 10* (2016) *Exhibition, Johannesburg* (South Africa), *Our Hearts Are Joined – Letsema Stories* (2015), and most notably, the 2009 RSA Budget Speech – acknowledging the call for the provision of Antiretroviral Treatment for HIV positive women. Her poem

“Caster is Mokgadi” became the national rallying call for the 800m gold medallist, Caster Semenya, during the Rio 2016 Olympics.

Jolyn Phillips (b. 1990, Gansbaai) is currently working on her PhD in Literature at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and is a 2014 Mandela Rhodes Scholar. In 2013 she completed a Masters in Creative Writing at UWC. Since 2012, Phillips has participated in the Open Book and the Franschoek Literary Festivals. Her writing has also been published in *Aerodrome*, an online literary website, an anthology *This Land* (UWC CREATES) and *Ghost Eater and Other Stories* (Umuzi). *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and other stories*, her debut collection of short fiction won the prestigious National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences Best Single Authored Work for 2018. *Radbraak*, a collection of poems in Afrikaans, was published in 2017 (Human & Rousseau).

Arja Salafranca (b. 1971, Spain) has published three collections of poetry, *A Life Stripped of Illusions*, which received the Sanlam Award for poetry, *The Fire in which we Burn*; and *Beyond Touch*. Her fiction has been published online, in anthologies and journals, and is collected in her debut collection, *The Thin Line*, long listed for the Wole Soyinka Award. She has participated in a number of writers conferences, edited two anthologies – *The Edge of Things* (2011, Dye Hard Press) and *Glass Jars Among Trees* (co-edited with Alan Finlay) (2003, Jacana) – and has received awards for her poetry and fiction, most recently co-winning a SALA award for *Beyond Touch* in 2016. She lives in Johannesburg. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from Wits University.

David Salner has worked as iron ore miner, steelworker, machinist, bus driver, cab driver, longshoreman, teacher, baseball usher, librarian. His writing appears in *Threepenny Review*, *Salmagundi*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *North American Review*, *Nashville Review*, and many other magazines. He is the author of *Blue Morning Light* (2016, Pond Road Press).

Karin Schimke (b. 1968) is a Cape Town-based writer, editor and translator. Her articles and columns have appeared in many mainstream South African publications, including *The Sunday Times*, *The Cape Times*, *the Mail & Guardian* and *The Star*. Her debut collection of poetry, *Bare & Breaking* (2012, Modjaji) was shortlisted for the South African Literary Awards in 2013 and won the Ingrid Jonker Poetry Prize for a debut collection in 2014. She translated the love letters of Ingrid Jonker to André Brink, published as *Flame in the Snow* (2015, Umuzi), for which she was awarded the South African Literary Award for translation.

Francine Simon (b. 1990, Durban) is currently a PhD candidate in the English Department of the University of Stellenbosch. She has been published widely in South African journals, including *New Coin Literary Journal* (2015), on *bookslive.co.za* website (2013) and *Aerodrome online Literary Journal* (2015). Her poems “Tamil Familiars” (2012), “Rombu Unbu” (2014), “Tea,” “Granny. Called ‘Ma’” and “Licence” (2015) were all shortlisted Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Awards, and her collection *Thungachi* was released in 2017 by Uhlanga Press.

Mavis Smallberg (b. 1948, Cape Town) has been published in at least eight publications during and before 1994, including *Qabane Labantu: Poetry in the Emergency: Poesie in die Noodtoestand* (1989), *Siren Songs: An Anthology of Poetry Written by Women* (1989), *Breaking the Silence: A Century of South African Women’s Poetry* (1990), *Essential Things: An Anthology of New South African Poetry* (1992), *New Outridings* (1993), and *A Poetics Of Resistance: Women Writing In El Salvador, South Africa and the United States* (1994). Since then, her work has further been published in publications such as *A Gift of African Thoughts* (2000), *Women on War: An international Anthology of Writing from Antiquity to the Present* (2003), *Women Writing Africa* (2003), *Imagination in a Troubled Space: A SA Poetry Reader* (2004), and *The Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Anthology* (2011).

Mandi Poefficient Vundla (b. 1987, Soweto) has been working actively in the poetry industry for the past 7 years. She is the co-editor of *'Home Is Where The Mic Is'* (2015, Botsotso) and two time Word N Sound poetry slam champion. Vundla's work has been published in *12+One* (Botsotso), *Art For Humanity* (DUT Art for Humanity) and *Illuminations Literary Magazine*. She continues to travel the world, sharing her work and exploring the impact oral art has on shaping young developing voices.

Christopher Warner drives an old truck and works as a brakeman for Union Pacific Railroad. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Salamander*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Slipstream*, and elsewhere. He lives in central Illinois with his wife and three small boys.

Selome "Flow" Wellington (1984, Port Elizabeth) is a writer, poet and publisher living in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her work has been published in anthologies including: *Carved in Stone – Journey*; *Shattered Pillars – No Words*; *Uni-Verse- Al – My Erato*; and volumes six and seven of *Within and Beyond Shores*. She founded Poetree Publishing in 2011, with eleven titles to date, including her own poetry collection *The Undelivered Score* and the upcoming *Gautrained*.

Richard Widerkehr's new book of poems, *In The Presence Of Absence*, recently came out from MoonPath Press. His other books are *The Way Home* (Plain View Press) and three chapbooks, including *Her Story of Fire* (Egress Studio Press). Tarragon Books published his novel, *Sedimental Journey*.

Makhosazana Xaba (b. 1957, Greytown) has published poetry collections *these hands* (2005 and 2017) and *Tongues of their Mothers* (2008); and *Running and other stories* (2013). She is the editor of *Like the untouchable wind: An anthology of poems* (2016) and co-editor of *Queer Africa I* (2013) and *II* (2017) New and *Collected Fiction*, and *Proudly Malawian: Life Stories from Lesbian and Gender-nonconforming Individuals* (2016). For children, Xaba has published *MaDriver is late* (2006), *Imindeni* (2007), *Linjani izulu* (2007) and *Izinambuzane* (2008). She is

currently working on the release of her upcoming book, *Our Words, Our Worlds: Writing on Black South African Women Poets, 2000-2015*.

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers (b. 1966, Johannesburg) writes, performs and lectures in Creative Writing at Wits University, Johannesburg. Her poetry collections are *Taller than buildings* (2006) and *The everyday wife* (2010, winner of the South African Literary Prize in 2011), and *ice-cream headache in my bone* (2017). She co-edited *No Serenity Here*, an anthology of African poetry translated into Mandarin. (2010). Her short stories *The day that Jesus dropped the ball* (shortlisted for Pen/Studinski Prize 2009) and *Keeping everything the same* (winner: National Arts Festival/Het Beschrijf Writing beyond the fringe winner 2009). Her one-woman play *Original Skin* toured South Africa and abroad. She has read and performed at poetry festivals internationally and her work is translated into French, Dutch, Flemish, Burmese, Mandarin, Italian, German and Spanish and appears in local and international journals.



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